

the seat of the emotions. It is ironic that the “positivism” of science and reason are disparaged in the lecture. It may well be true that we cannot conduct religious conversations without using metaphor, but surely there is an obligation to do so prudently? Archbishop Nichols argues that “the fashioning of a listening heart is a crucial part of our desire to engage with society”. Maybe we should also avoid obscurantism.

Paul Burgess
Manchester

Not the language of the barbecue

I propose a competition to find the worst translation of a prayer in the New Missal over the Christmas period. The 23 December Prayer Over the Gifts might take some beating: “May this oblation, by which divine worship in its fullness has been inaugurated for us, be our perfect reconciliation with you, O Lord, that we may celebrate with minds made pure the Nativity of our Redeemer.”

There is no doubt that this is not the language of the barbecue so despised by Cardinal Pell for our liturgy, but then I wonder what language it is at all. Herewith the proposed translation of the 1998 Missal.

“Lord God, let the sacrifice you have given as the full expression of the Church’s worship establish us firmly in your peace, that we may celebrate with untroubled hearts the coming birth of our Saviour.” No “barbie language” this, just simple and elegant English!

(The Rev. Dr) Sean E. Hall
Washington, Tyne and Wear

How appropriate that as we celebrate Charles Dickens at 200 the Church should take us back to Dickensian language in the current translation of the Mass and embody some of Dickens’ characters. Is there not something of Miss Havisham in her living in the past decked out in the language of dusty, lacy cottas or perhaps of Uriah Heep in this new way of talking to God?

(Sr) Gillian Price
St Elizabeth’s Convent, Much Hadham, Hertfordshire

Editions of the new Missal

Following your report (News from Britain and Ireland, 3 December 2011) on the failure of the Catholic Truth Society (CTS) to meet the demand for the new Missal, Fr Beattie (Letters, 10 December 2011) asks whether the CTS, given its monopoly over the Missal, is contravening EU competition law. In its publication “Competing fairly”, the UK’s Office of Fair Trading does indeed list, inter alia, charging excessively high prices and limiting production as indicative of the abuse of a dominant position to restrict competition in a market. Perhaps of more concern to

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English-speaking Catholics is the use of a dominant position apparently to restrict redemption. No longer do we say that the Holy Blood was “shed ... for all” but instead “poured out ... for many” while salvation remains “for us men”.

(Dr) Frederick Wheeler
Stockport, Greater Manchester

Too high a price

It was with dismay that I read that Opus Dei theologian Mgr Fernando Ocariz, negotiating with the dissident Society of St Pius X (SSPX), intimated that Rome is open to new interpretations of the Second Vatican Council (Church in the World, 10 December 2011). When does reform of the reform become outright refutation of the reform? Those eminent Council Fathers who struggled to usher in a new era of renewal against strong curial intransigence must surely be turning in their graves. It seems inconceivable that a relatively small group, one not known for past submission to the Magisterium, could wield such disproportionate influence in order that the Church might be able to portray an image of dubious unity. Past statements of the SSPX would indicate that any new-found compatibility must be seriously open to question. If the price we have to pay for such putative “unity” is a disavowal of what the council laboured so assiduously to enact, then that price is far too excessive.

(Fr) Bernard Moylan
Watsons Bay, New South Wales, Australia

Sistine online

Laura Gascoigne (31 December 2011) writes very interestingly on Michelangelo’s illustrations of Genesis 1-9 on the Sistine ceiling, telling us, too, where to stand to see them. But on the web you can move excellent images of the entire chapel around your screen simply by going to www.vatican.va/various/cappelle/sistina_vr

(Professor) David Luscombe

University of Sheffield

The prophecies of Malachy

Following Robert Mickens’ article on “Conclave contenders” (31 December 2011), it might be of interest that, according to the twelfth-century Irish mystic Bishop Malachy, (or a sixteenth-century forger!), the next Pope is to be the last and is “Peter the Roman”. The “tags” of Malachy have been remarkably accurate: “*De Labore Solis*” for John Paul II and “*De Medietate Lunae*” (“of the half-moon”) for his Pope-for- a-month predecessor. The present Pope is “*De Gloria Olivae*” – less obvious!

(The Revd Canon) Frank Pickard
Northampton

Water shortage

Peter Kemmis Betty’s letter (31 December 2011) regarding “personal preparatory rites” at the Offertory reminded me of the story of the young altar boy who forgot to fill the cruet with water before Mass. At the appropriate time he moved forward and said to the priest: “I’m sorry Father, but there’s no water to wash away your iniquities.”

Neil Tully
Flint, Flintshire



The living Spirit

We think of prayer as something we do for God whereas prayer is essentially a gift. Prayer is intimacy with God and it is God who offers this intimacy. We respond. There is only one Christian prayer and that is Jesus, the New and Eternal Covenant, the union in person of God and man. All Christian prayer is essentially through him, with him and in him. That we should pray is as much a command of the Lord as that we must love our neighbour. Further, our prayer must be “in my name”. “Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name ... (John 16:23-24). The implications of this simple command are immeasurably profound. If we ponder it carefully, we shall see that it must eliminate any claim to a spiritual competence of our own and, consequently, remove the burden of anxiety we feel at our helplessness and incompetence – a “burden” that is not the Lord’s. The God revealed in Jesus is like a loving mother who, seeing her little one struggling to climb the stairs to reach her, runs down and lifts up the child to her heart ...

Sr Ruth Burrows OCD

Love Unknown
(Burns & Oates, an imprint of Continuum, 2011)

Who does not feel the need for a “star” to guide him on his earthly journey? Individuals and nations both feel the need. To satisfy the universal yearning for salvation, the Lord himself chose a people to be the guiding star for “all the families of the earth” (Genesis 12:3). With the Incarnation of his Son, God then expanded his choice to every people, no matter what their race or culture.

Pope John Paul II
Homily on the Epiphany, 2002

And when Jesus had been baptised, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 3:16-17

Tomorrow is the Solemnity of the Epiphany and Monday is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord