

Dowry

Summer 2022
Issue N°54

“O Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our most gentle Queen and Mother, look down in mercy upon England thy Dowry.”



In this issue:

Editorial: What Fear In The City?

The English Pope (Part One)

Homily for First Mass of Fr Gwilym Evans, FSSP

Can A Catholic Wear Tattoos?

Mgr Benson's Novels on Catholic Persecution

The Sacred Liturgy as a Secret Garden

Support our Apostolate

(Picture by Joachim Kahn:
Newly ordained
Fr Gwilym Evans, FSSP at his
First Solemn High Mass in England
on 7th August 2022)

Editorial: What Fear In The City?



Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP, Superior of the FSSP England Apostolate

Fear... *The city is rank with it!* This quote from a notorious villain besieging the White City of Minas Tirith in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* may apply to many a heart among our readers. Loyal Catholics feel oppressed and wonder how long they can hold out under growing pressure, both secular and ecclesiastical.

No sooner were basic liberties restored after the two-year ordeal of Covid-19 than liturgical freedom was undermined in July 2021 through *Traditionis Custodes*. Much prayer obtained from God's mercy a respite through the papal decree confirming the liturgical identity of the Priestly Fraternity of St Peter in February 2022. But this is so far the only known exception and, while most bishops have implemented the Roman document with pastoral sensitivity, the programmed annihilation of the traditional liturgy and communities worldwide has still not been called off. Meanwhile, war continues in the Ukraine and economic recession looms ahead, we are told, with energy costs soaring and food shortages predicted. Finally, a curtailing of fundamental rights after the Chinese template of a "social credit" system threatens the Western world. Adding to the sense of instability, news just broke about the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, R.I.P. Within the Church, confusion is rife about doctrine and discipline; priests are fewer than ever and vocations have dried up. So-called transgenderism now affects even Catholic families,

where parents feel spared on learning that their son still "identifies as a man" and goes out with a woman.

Some devout Catholics at a loss seek solace from unapproved prophecies and messages apparently shedding light on the present mayhem. Heaping food cans, brandy and candles in their garden sheds, they hide from their otherwise trusted pastors the dubious revelations they hold as genuine, even sharing those with fellow parishioners, but "not yet with Father who is such a good priest, only not ready to grasp the

"filial fear stemming from love"

message." They would be astonished if hearing that such concealment is alien to Catholicism, rather smacking of bad old Gnosticism. On the contrary, God made His revelation public through His apostles and entrusted His Church with the only valid interpretation of His Good News.

To a large extent all such sheep are victims of the current confusion. But unlike animals, humans have knowledge and free will. Therefore we sin if practically neglecting the prudent guidance of our priests and listening instead to self-appointed prophets and shepherds. Within the Church hierarchy on the other hand, those who fail the sheep through habitual blurring of the law of God in their preaching, and through the condoning of error or sin in their

laxed discipline, will answer to the divine Good Shepherd. We must pray for them to feed the flock of the Lord in faithfulness. But the crisis does not dispense us from seeking spiritual nourishment only where safely offered, namely, within the sacred conjunction of the Holy Eucharist, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Vicar of Christ. St John Bosco once dreamed of those three as a triple whiteness. A sheep that keeps within that triple protective wall as in a true "White City," as Tolkien might say, is guaranteed never to ingest poisonous grass or encounter a wolf. Such sheep will be spared worldly and heavenly terrors. Its only fear, a filial fear stemming from love, will be to offend the good Lord.

Our priestly Fraternity gives thanks for the work entrusted to us by the Church this summer, organising varied Catholic holidays for one hundred children and young adults, and a pilgrimage for the same number of adults; facilitating Confirmation for dozens of candidates at the hands of three bishops; and taking part in the thriving *March of Life* in London. Last but not least, we welcomed our newly ordained priest Fr Evans to Our Lady's Dowry, and Fr Gerard to Scotland: their arrival brings the number of FSSP priests serving in these Isles to a double figure for the first time. *Deo gratias!*

8th September 2022,



Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
□

The English Pope (Part One)

By young convert and historian Adam Mercer

Before the reformation of 1534, England was producing some of the Church's most celebrated priests and theologians. Even Henry VIII, with the help of Saint Thomas More, penned the *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, berating Martin Luther's Ninety-five Theses and the rise of Protestantism in Europe. Following the Catholic Relief Act of 1829, the number of great members of the Church began to increase exponentially, most notably with Cardinal Manning and Saint John Henry Newman. Despite this, there has only ever been one pope from England: Adrian IV.

In fact, Adrian is the only pope to come from anywhere in the British Isles; yet he is not well known to the Catholics of England. So who exactly was Pope Adrian IV? This first article will explain Adrian IV's life before his papacy, and the second article in a further issue of *Dowry* will explore his pontificate.

Nicholas Breakspear was born around 1100 AD in Hertfordshire, with little known about his early life, and most of what we do know of his life happening in his later years. He left for France to study canon law and, following this, travelled south to Avignon to enter the priory of St Ruf. He was soon appointed prior, keeping the monks to a very strict way of life, even by the medieval standards of a religious order. The monks protested against Breakspear on three occasions, causing him to be summoned to Rome. Due to this he garnered the interest of Pope

Eugenius III who saw a leader in the stern prior, and elevated him to Cardinal-Bishop of Albano, only the second Englishman to be promoted to that rank. As a consequence of his new position, he attended the Council of Rheims in November 1148.

There the Pope chose Breakspear to travel to Catalonia to assist the Crusaders against the Moors.

Whilst there he heavily reorganised the Cistercian Order, and although receiving complaints from his monks back in France that he had been missing for years, it proved to benefit the Church as the Count of Barcelona built many religious houses influenced by St Ruf in the land he was retaking from the Muslim empire.

In 1152, he was sent to Scandinavia as Papal legate. It is there that he did arguably his most notable work, despite not yet being Pope. He landed in Norway and quelled a civil war between rival kings, and then went on to establish the ecclesiastical province of Nidaros, covering all of Norway, Iceland, Greenland, as well as the Faroe, Shetland and Orkney Islands. In addition to this he oversaw the expansion of Nidaros Cathedral, which became the most



(gallica.bnf.fr, free use)

northerly medieval cathedral in the world. He then moved on to Sweden where he placed the Swedish Church under the control of the Archbishop of Lund, separating it from German influence and giving Sweden its own Catholic identity. Breakspear's mission in Scandinavia was seen as a diplomatic triumph, not just for the growth of the Church but also for bringing peace to the kingdoms. After leaving in the autumn of 1154, he was seen as "the apostle of Scandinavia", with the people calling him "the good cardinal" and a saint.

Upon his return to Rome he discovered that not only Pope Eugenius III had died, but also his successor Pope Anastasius IV. The College of Cardinals needed a successor, and who was to be picked but Breakspear himself? □

Homily for First Mass of Fr Gwilym Evans, FSSP

Given by Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP at St Mary's Shrine on Sunday 7th August 2022, Warrington

Dear Fr Evans, dear Gwilym,
By the grace of God, *“you have known, and that in this day, the things that are to your peace.”*

As you stand at the altar of God today, for your First Solemn High Mass at St Mary's Shrine in Warrington, you give thanks to God and Church, and so do we, for the immense grace of yet another priest. When so many men miss God's call, or ignore it, or lose heart when trying to answer it, you have faithfully responded: *“Adsum! Here I am, Lord.”*

Like every Catholic, but even more so, now as a priest:

You have realised that following the Prince of Peace, Jesus the Lord, is the only way to find true peace. You have recognised that belonging to “Bonnie Prince *Jesus*,” is the only way to end every war and strife. You have experienced that being incorporated into the Saviour “meek and humble of heart,” is the only way to secure peace beyond death, for eternity.

By the grace of God, *“you have known, and that in this day, the things that are to your peace.”*

The Lord Jesus came to bring peace to the world: *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid”* (John 14:27). What is that peace that you are

called to spread? It is divine grace. Grace is peace. Sin is war—against God and neighbour.

First, original sin had made you a child of wrath. Second, Holy Baptism made you a child of God. Then, reception into the true Church of God, the holy, catholic, and

apostolic Church, made you a son and heir; hence a lawful user of all the means of sanctification bestowed by Christ Jesus upon his Bride, Holy Church. Finally two months ago, in Bavaria, priestly ordination made you another Christ, implanting in your soul the priestly character.





From that moment, and forever, you have been empowered to perform actions beyond nature. You can now do what no man can do, however skilful, however zealous he may be. You can absolve penitents from sin; and you can change bread and wine into the Saviour. You can reconcile sinners in Confession, leading them into genuine peace. On the liturgical altar, at Holy Mass, you can enact again, unbloodily, the saving Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.

You act in the Person of Christ, in the confessional, in view of the sacred altar. There, in the holy of holies, in sacred silence, at your hands, through your voice, by your will, Christ reiterates his awesome sacrifice of the Cross. There, “*as often as this saving Victim is offered up, so often is furthered the work of our redemption*”—as teaches the famous Secret prayer in today’s 9th Sunday after Pentecost, quoted by Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium* # 3); quoted again by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (#1364). “*As often as this saving Victim is offered up, so often is furthered the work of our redemption.*” There, the reconciliation of men with God is

furthered. Satan had stripped us from divine friendship. Divine friendship had been torn away from us like, from a butterfly, its wings. Men had turned God’s enemies, like worms scorning the sun. In his mercy, God redeemed us from the slavery of sin. He granted us his gratuitous grace again, turning worms into butterflies.

Divine friendship was imparted in a special way to *priests*, as was told you, dear Father, at your ordination, in the “*Jam non dicam*” : “*I will not now call you servants: for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends: because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father, I have made known to you*” (John 15:15).

Sin is war. Grace is peace. Peace came at a cost, though. What cost? Peace cost the Most Precious Blood of Christ, shed for our sins, for our cleansing, for our liberation.

The Lamb of God was elevated toward heaven, as the definitive Victim to satisfy for all sins. The Son incarnate was offered to the Father, through his own hands, on

the altar of the Cross. “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so [had] the Son of man [to] be lifted up*” (John 3:14).

The Blessed Mother:

But where did this precious blood come from? Who had given this immaculate flesh to the Word eternal? Who had first joined together the holy hands of her Child to praise Yahweh? The Mother did it. The Mother gave it. The Mother gave *Him*. The Mother of God gave her divine Son Jesus for the redemption of the world. In the Garden of Eden, from the tree of good and evil, Eve of old once plucked the forbidden fruit. In the garden of Golgotha, the New Eve stood at the foot of the Cross, offering to God the fruit of her womb. Eve of old led all her progeny into the darkness of sin, under the tyranny of the devil. The New Eve opened for us again the gates of divine friendship, whence the life and light of grace flood upon us. “*Blessed [is she] among women!*” (Luke 1:42).

And yet, dear Fr Evans, the war is not over. The battle is being waged

still as we speak, within us and without us. A battle between the “seed of the Woman” (Gen 3:15) and the “brood of vipers” (Luke 3:7), as prophesied by God Himself right after the first sin. It is a battle between grace and sin, until the end of history. It is a battle between light and darkness, until the Last Judgement.

But because grace and sin are spiritual realities, worldly men can easily ignore them. Yes, grace and sin are manifested through actions, and they spread through laws, customs, and examples—good or bad. But one can easily focus on what appears, and forget the spiritual battle, invisible, in every man’s heart. Even in our streets and market squares, one can pretend that, so long as no bomb explodes, there is peace. Even in our parliaments, one can claim that, if the blood shed in our abortion mills is voted as *not* human, there is no *war*.

Abortion is at its highest in Britain this year, and probably worldwide. How we long for all Catholics, starting with every cardinal, bishop and priest, to proclaim with Vatican II that, “*abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes*” (*Gaudium et spes*, # 51 – “*nefanda sunt crimina*”). You have just heard it. Vatican II spoke loud and clear against this slaughter of our unborn brethren, calling it an “*abominable crime*.” And yet, considering the unprecedented magnitude of such evil, what deafening *silence* from most Church pulpits since then! It sounds as if the page numbers in editions of Vatican II have been swapped by mistake. Let me explain. Vatican II teaches that during Holy Mass “*at the proper times a sacred silence should be observed*” (cf in Latin “*sacrum*

silentium”, cf *Sacrosanctum Concilium* # 30). This *sacred silence* is an eloquent feature of the traditional Latin Mass, yet one often criticised by enlightened clerics, who mistake active participation with verbose and noisy liturgies. On the contrary, many among the same clerics dutifully “*observe a sacred silence*” about abortion; and also about contraception, the proven antechamber of abortion. Similarly, how we long for the environment to be protected, starting with the immediate environment of the child, that is, his mother’s womb, nowadays made his tomb.

As another Christ, dear Fr Evans, you will need to stand up for each of the little ones of God. The more innocent and vulnerable they are, the more urgent your loving intercession for their safety. This will include the Blessed Lord Himself in the sacrament of his Love, the Most Holy Eucharist, even in small fragments of hosts. Formed with perennial philosophy, as you were at our international seminary in Bavaria, you learnt from St Thomas Aquinas that a person is present regardless of the size of his body. This applies equally to the presence of a small human being in his mother’s womb, and of Jesus in a small fragment of sacred host. Just as you will stand up for our unborn brethren under threat of death, you will stand firm to protect the Eucharistic species from any irreverence or desecration. This will benefit all. Just as protecting the unborn child benefits his mother, his father, the surgeon and society at large, so does care for the Holy Eucharist benefit priest, laity, Church

and society at large. The opposite is true: the slaughter of the unborn seals the demise of civilization, while receiving the Eucharistic Lord unworthily causes spiritual death.

You chose to offer Holy Mass always according to the traditional form of the Roman rite, as was granted our priestly Fraternity by successive popes, a charism confirmed again by Pope Francis last February. You chose this liturgical rite not for sentimental reasons, but because you discovered that it is the safest setting, and the most eloquent, for the Eucharistic Sacrifice. You know well that this choice will not leave you idle. On the contrary, a growing number of souls, young and old, discover this treasured liturgy, and come closer to God through it. They need more priests. They need you.



In today's Holy Gospel, we heard Our Blessed Lord weep upon Jerusalem, foreseeing her annihilation by the Roman armies, for she "had not known the time of her visitation." Our apostate world, bent against natural and divine laws, was given every means to know the time of its visitation. The Western city, or polity, or civilization, was built upon and through the Christian revelation. It later expelled God and his Mother from its institutions, parliaments, schools, universities, army barracks, and medias. Nowadays, most of its churches are turned into mere civic buildings, when not into hotels, bars and indoor climbing walls. As to Catholic church buildings still dedicated to divine worship, many did not reopen after Covid, and in those in use, how strong is the love for the heart of our faith, Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament? For Jesus truly, really

and substantially present in every sacred host, with his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, in the "Eucharistic sacrifice ... the source and summit of the Christian life"? (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* # 11)?

Conclusion:

Dear Fr Evans, dear priest of the Lord: today you will offer to the Father, for the sins of the city of men, the Victim of Salvation. At the last Judgement, we will realise how every priest standing at the altar, elevating the Victim of reconciliation, averted evil from souls and from the world. Then we will see how, during its long history, the city of men was spared worse curses, because every morning, the priests of the Lord stood at the sacred altar, lifting up to the Father the Victim of reconciliation. Priests do more than avert evil: they convert it rather, through the almighty power

of Christ's sacrifice. That, we will realise at Judgment, seeing how the hearts of sinners were touched, their souls converted, through the raising of the sacred Body and Blood of the Lamb, upon the altars of sacrifice.

Let us give thanks today to God and Our Lady for your priestly vocation. Let us also give thanks to the holy martyrs and England and Wales, such as Saints Cuthbert Mayne and John Kemble, your namesake Philip Evans, and John Lloyd, John Jones, David Lewis, John Roberts, and Richard Gwyn; and also much earlier, the virgin martyr, our beloved St Winifred.

Let us give thanks for those who prayed for priestly vocations, and still pray, especially through the international prayer network of our Fraternity, the Confraternity of St Peter, with 8,400 members worldwide. With all these intercessors, let us pray today for our seminarians from the UK & Ireland: Miklos, Conan, Tom, David, Federico, and for all seminarians and priests.

Lastly, let us pray for many young men to hear and answer the call to the sacred priesthood. We need them. The world needs them more than ever. The Lord is calling them. Now. Young man, the Lord is calling you. Listen, and rejoice! And let us pray today, dear friends, that all of us, and all men, may live and die so as to be welcomed in the heavenly Jerusalem, hearing from the mouth of the divine Saviour: "you have known, and that in this day, the things that are to your peace." □

(Photos © FSSP: Ordination of Fr Evans by Archbishop W. Haas; First Mass at St John Fisher's FSSP personal parish in Reading with Bishop Ph. Egan preaching; FSSP parishioners at London 2022 *March for Life*.)



Can A Catholic Wear Tattoos?

Niall Patrick Carroll reflects on Fr Mike Schmitz's "Awesome Tattoo"

The question of tattoos in general might seem fairly straightforward in terms of Catholic moral theology. We are made in the image and likeness of God, and we are temples of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, defacing the body with anything contrary to that great dignity cannot be considered good. Certain tattoos are very clearly contrary to this dignity, such as satanic symbols, symbols which are repugnant to the Catholic faith, sexual or pornographic imagery, or slogans which are demeaning or offensive. However, what about a tattoo which displays a *Christian* symbol? Can a constant reminder of

one's belonging to Christ possibly be a bad thing?

Many readers will, no doubt, be aware of the popular American priest, Fr Mike Schmitz. He is undoubtedly one of the most influential diocesan priests in the world, with YouTube videos amassing millions of views and his *The Bible in a Year* being for several weeks the number-one ranked podcast on Apple Podcasts. His influence, particularly among young Catholics, should not be underestimated. In a recent video, he revealed that, while on a visit to the Holy Land, he got a tattoo on the wrist of his right arm. The tattoo

depicts a Jerusalem Cross above the IHS monogram—two unquestionably Christian symbols.

Before looking at Fr Schmitz's reasons for getting the tattoo and his explanation of how he knew he had made the right decision, we will go back about five years to a video he made entitled, "Can I get a tattoo?". This video is one of his most watched videos, amassing 1.6 million views as of June 2022. Fr Schmitz rightly pointed out that some tattoos could be instantly identified as inappropriate. For those considering getting a tattoo, he suggested that they get some t-shirts with their chosen tattoo design



(Unsplash/Sabrina May)

printed on them, and to wear that design for a full year. He concluded that if one still wanted that tattoo after a year, it might be a good sign that they are making the right decision. Does this mean that the rightness or wrongness of getting a tattoo – which without painful and expensive work to remove it, is a permanent mark – is merely a question of one’s feelings? The curious thing is that, although he did not say that it is wrong to get a tattoo, Fr Schmitz was not particularly encouraging. A ring, a tattoo or a t-shirt, he said, may be “too easy of an identifier.” What is more difficult, and that for which we should be striving, is to be identified as Christians by the way we live. This is how Christians have been identified from the beginning, as the second century *Letter to Diognetus* attests:

“They [the Christians] marry like everyone else, and they have children, but they do not destroy their offspring. They share a common table, but not a common bed. They exist in the flesh, but they do not live by the flesh... They are poor, yet make many rich. They lack everything, yet they overflow in everything.”¹

Returning to Fr Schmitz’s video of 28th April 2022, which in approximately seven weeks has received almost 275,000 views, it is interesting to see how his view of tattoos has changed. Despite having acknowledged a few years ago that he neither wanted nor needed a tattoo (and quoting Kim Kardashian, who, on the subject of tattoos, said, “You don’t put a bumper sticker on a Bentley”), he revealed how he had decided to get the tattoo. It is difficult to see precisely *what* changed his mind. Fr Schmitz says that about four years ago he read an

article about a Jerusalem tattoo parlour, Razzouk – it is the oldest tattoo parlour in the world, specialising in tattooing pilgrims to the Holy Land. Along with the article was a picture of a tattoo depicting a Jerusalem Cross and the letters “HIS.” In his own words, his response to the picture was, “If I ever get to Jerusalem, and I’m close by – if I ever get a tattoo, that’s the one I’m going to get.” In 2022 he found himself in Jerusalem, and Razzouk was only a

block from where he was staying! It is almost as if he *was meant* to get a tattoo, with this series of apparent co-incidences. The decision to finally get the tattoo seems to have been impulsive. He says, “One afternoon, I was like, you know what? I’m gonna do it. I’m gonna walk in and see if they have any room.” Lo and behold, they had a slot available, and now Fr Schmitz has this indelible mark on his right wrist – well, of course tattoos are not *completely* indelible; they can be removed through lengthy, painful and expensive procedures.

Fr Schmitz then explains how he knew he had made the right decision. He firstly says that he did not wait just one year to get a tattoo; he waited “about four or five years.” But surely this was not four or five years discerning whether or not to get the tattoo, since he acknowledged that he had previously neither wanted nor



(Unsplash/Bernard Hermant)

needed a tattoo. Another “proof” of the rightness of his decision was that he was not getting the tattoo to make himself happy – the tattoo had a purpose other than his happiness. He also did not experience any “buyer’s remorse.” Our feelings and instincts, however, while they may be correct, can be dreadfully wrong – we need something solid on which to make moral choices. We need only think of women who, tragically, claim that they do not regret having an abortion – their claim of having a clear conscience does not, and cannot, make their abortions objectively good. Furthermore, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* remarks, “Emotions and feelings can be taken up into the virtues or perverted by the vices” (CCC 1768).

Next comes a very interesting remark. Declaring his love for the Holy Name (something which I do not doubt for a moment), he says, “I

wanted it to be indelible... I want to not ever be able to take off Jesus.” This is a beautiful thought, no question about it. However, as Fr Schmitz

acknowledges in the same segment, some of the sacraments of the Church mark our souls with an indelible mark, namely Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders – all of which are imprinted on Fr Schmitz’s soul.

These marks are truly indelible: they are for eternity and can never be erased. Let us consider Baptism for a moment. It comes from the Greek, meaning “to dip.” In ancient times, garments were dipped (“baptised”) into a dye again and again until the desired colour came up. Bearing this image in mind, baptism is a tattoo beyond compare, for it is in baptism that we are “dipped” and we come out “dyed” with divine grace, become children of God, and made heirs to eternal salvation. No tattoo dye can compare with this! Furthermore, when St Paul exhorts the Romans to “clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 13:14), he is clearly saying that this is to be done by their manner of living. We put on Jesus Christ by abandoning “the ways of darkness” and putting on “the armour of light,” by passing “our time honourably, as by the light of day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in lust and wantonness, not in quarrels and rivalries” (Rom 13:12-13). Fr Schmitz also acknowledges that he



(Unsplash/Jon Tyson)

has a ring on his finger to remind him of his priesthood, which he takes off each night and puts on each morning. One may ask, why not a tattoo for this, to reflect the indelible mark imprinted on his soul at ordination? Conversely, why not a ring to symbolise his “putting on Christ”? I am sure many a priest would say that wearing the cassock or religious habit every day is a much more visible and, at times, difficult sign of their belonging to Christ.

The question still remains, however: what does the Church say about tattoos? Apart from mentioning non-therapeutic mutilation of the body in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2297), the Church appears to be silent on the matter. However, the silence of the Church on a particular matter cannot be interpreted as assent or a judgement that the matter in question is morally good. There are always principles which may help us discern what is right. An obvious consideration when it comes to permanently

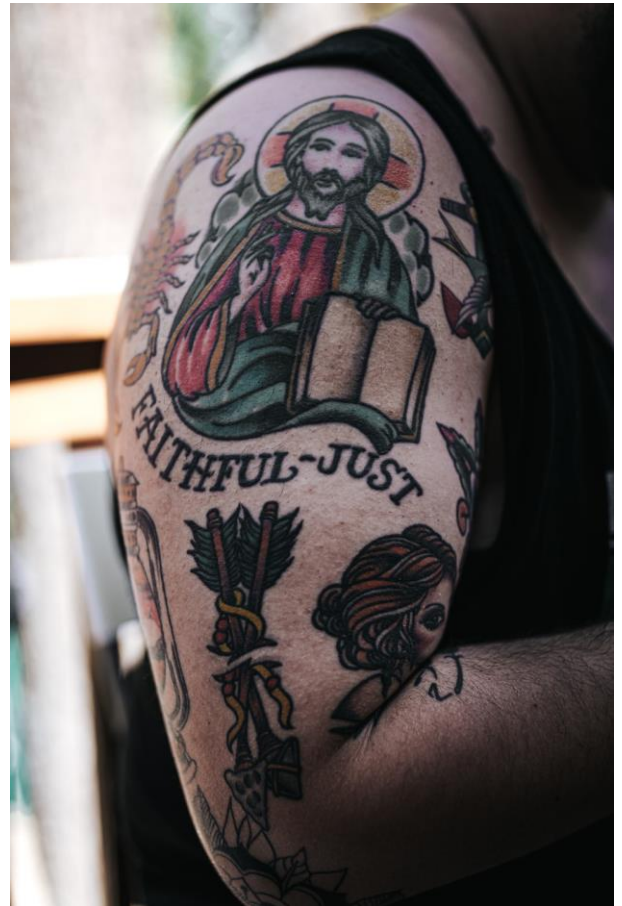
marking the body with a tattoo is that of God’s creation of man. Man is created by God *for Himself*. Our bodies are not ours. Furthermore, as St Paul reminds us, our bodies are shrines of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor 6:19), and since a great price has been paid to ransom us, we should “glorify God by making [our] bodies the shrines of His presence” (1Cor.6:20). These realities have consequences: if my body belongs to God and is a temple of His Holy Spirit, I am not free to do with it whatever I wish. To draw an analogy: if a neighbour entrusted their home to me while they went on holiday, I clearly would not have the right to deface their home with graffiti. But that is not all – neither would I have the right to paint an exquisite painting on the front of their house, even if it were on a par with the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Even if one were to argue that one can glorify God through tattoos on their body (to “adorn” the temple of the Holy Ghost), the point still remains: we have been bought and paid for. “You are no longer

your own masters. A great price was paid to ransom you” (1Cor.6:19).

The Church also gives us guidance on such matters in the form of Her teachings on the virtues. In this instance, it appears that the cardinal virtue of prudence is an important consideration. Prudence was defined simply by St Augustine as “the knowledge of what to seek and what to avoid” (Augustine, *83 Questions*, 61.4). As St Thomas Aquinas further remarks, not only does prudence concern the question of *how* one should act, it concerns the question of how one should act in *concrete* and *individual* situations (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q.47, art.3). Even if one were to argue that there is nothing wrong with a Catholic getting a tattoo, one must ask is it *prudent* to do so. Depending on one’s particular state in life, it may be more or less proper. Take, for example, the Catholic actor Mark Wahlberg. In 2012 it was reported that he had gone through the painful and expensive process of having all of his tattoos removed – including a tattoo of a Rosary around his neck, with a Crucifix and the words “In God I trust” over his heart. One of the reasons he gave for having them removed was that he did not want his children getting tattoos. Naturally, this action would not guarantee that his children would not get tattoos, but he was acting with regard to his position as a father and a role-model to his children. With regard to Fr Schmitz and the question of prudence, we may ask: Is there a difference between Mike Schmitz getting a tattoo and *Father* Mike Schmitz getting a tattoo? Surely the answer is a resounding “yes!” Firstly, he is a priest and, as such, he should not be seen to be succumbing to this largely secular trend of tattooing the

body. Secondly, he is also a role-model to many. His videos and podcasts have reached millions of people, particularly young, impressionable people.

Responses to Fr Schmitz’s video are mixed: some viewers like his tattoo very much, while others clearly do not believe it is right to tattoo one’s body. One viewer, Sandi, recounted how, as a youngster, she and her cousin decided they would each get a Rosary tattoo on their left hand when they turned eighteen. Her brother dissuaded her from getting the tattoo, saying, “Keep the Cross in your heart and people will know you belong to Christ.” Although she felt her brother was being a spoilsport, over a decade later she is now grateful to him. There are others who mention their wish to get a tattoo of the Miraculous Medal. This raises an obvious question: why imprint the Miraculous Medal on the body when Our Lady specifically asked St Catherine Labouré to have a *medal* struck with the images which had been revealed to her? Furthermore, Our Blessed Lady told St Catherine that great graces would abound for those who wear the medal with confidence around their necks. After St Catherine’s initial vision of 27th November 1830, the same vision was repeated a further six times in the following months –



(Unsplash/Brandon Morales)

an indication that what was revealed to her was to be executed precisely. Whether we speak of the Miraculous Medal or the Brown Scapular of Mount Carmel, surely wearing the object itself is of objectively greater spiritual value than a tattoo of the image, given the promises from Heaven attached to *wearing* the object.

To take one more comment from Fr Schmitz’s video, one viewer asked, “What if a priest decided to dye his hair blue in honour of the Blessed Virgin?” Some readers may accuse this viewer of sounding rather hysterical – Fr Schmitz may have gotten a tattoo, but he is hardly going to dye his hair blue in honour of Our Lady. This may well be correct. However, it does raise some pertinent questions. Firstly, how “far” can a priest go in terms of altering his physical appearance before such alterations become

inappropriate, offensive, unacceptable or sinful? Secondly, does the intention (i.e. honouring Our Lady or getting a religious tattoo) necessarily make an action good? One can mean well but still cause immense damage to a situation or a relationship. The desire to honour Our Lady by dying one's hair blue or to have a constant reminder of one's belonging to Christ by getting a tattoo could have unintended consequences with regard to how the priest is viewed by others. Will his flock now see in him, despite his video explanation, worldliness, vanity, immodesty, lack of simplicity of life? The fact is that, while the priest is a man like any other in his nature, inclinations and human weaknesses, he *is* different. St Joseph Cafasso gives a stern and unambiguous reminder of this fact: "The ecclesiastic by virtue of his vocation has been separated from others, raised up and transformed into a different man; therefore the life of others cannot be adapted or suitable for him; therefore in his habits he must be a different man and live differently."ⁱⁱⁱ On the subject of the modesty of the priest, St Joseph Cafasso continues, "It [the modesty of the priest] is a continuous sermon, a manner of preaching that makes the priest all tongue from head to foot. He preaches with his eyes, with his hands, with his feet, and even with his hair, and this manner of preaching is so strong and efficacious that it never goes without fruit, because it either gains the person who sees it or condemns



(Unsplash/Trevor Buntin)

him."ⁱⁱⁱ A sobering thought for every priest, surely.

Despite the apparently growing acceptance of tattoos in the Western world, it is interesting to note that there still remain some prominent exceptions in 2022. A recent advertisement by Emirates Airlines for cabin crew had a list of seven initial criteria designed to help readers know if the job might be a good "fit" for them. One of the seven criteria was that cabin crew were not permitted to have visible tattoos while in uniform. In fact, the advertisement was even more specific: even visible tattoos which could be covered up by a bandage or make-up were not permitted. Apart from another requirement which required prospective candidates to be able to reach up to a certain height, this was the only requirement concerning physical appearance. It is likewise noteworthy that many of the armed

forces do not permit visible tattoos. The British Army, for example, specifically states that people with tattoos which would be visible on a passport photo cannot be admitted. Interestingly, its guidelines state that, while a soldier may have tattoos on his forearm, "most soldiers keep their saluting hand clean out of respect." The Irish Army does not permit tattoos which are visible above the collar. The US Army does not permit tattoos which are visible above the collar or below the wrist. All of this is despite the undeniable growth in popularity of tattoos and the apparently growing acceptance of them by wider society. So, why do such organisations forbid them? I would venture to suggest that, while tattooing may not necessarily be sinful or wrong, it is at very least *unseemly* in many settings. While Fr Schmitz might claim that his tattoo only points to Christ and his love for Him, a person with a "Fly Emirates" slogan tattooed on their hand will not be employed by the airline they so boldly and enthusiastically endorse.

Let us return for a moment to the question of religious imagery in tattoos. An argument which appears frequently to justify tattoos such as the one purchased by Fr Schmitz is that it is custom for certain Christian groups to have a small Cross tattooed on the wrist. The Coptic Christians of Egypt are usually invoked as many of them, to this day, have a small plain Cross tattooed on their wrist. While it is

the case that this tattooing is now done as a tradition, its origins go far beyond merely wishing to show that they are Christians or that they “want to not ever be able to take off Jesus.” There is a serious historical element dating back to the Muslim invasion of Egypt in 641. As well as the changes this brought to language and culture, there was a persecution of the Copts. They endured forced conversion to the Muslim religion and heavy taxes were imposed on families which wanted to remain Christian – these families were identifiable by the Cross on their wrists. In addition, if a family could not pay the taxes, the young Christian boys would be taken away, forced to convert to the Muslim religion and transformed into state soldiers – many parents tattooed their children’s wrists so that, if that fate befell them, they would always have a reminder of their Christian roots.^{iv}

We see, therefore, that the Coptic Cross tattoo has its origins in Muslim persecution, cultural upheaval and forced renunciation of the Christian faith. It may be noted that the tradition of Christians in Bosnia and Herzegovina tattooing themselves with religious symbols has its roots in persecution similar to that suffered by the Copts.^v This is all a far cry from Fr Schmitz, or any Catholic for that matter, permanently marking their body on a whim, because they want to be always reminded of Christ, or simply because they think it would be “cool” to have a tattoo. Although it is undeniable that Christianity is undergoing serious persecution in many parts of the world, most Catholics in the Western World are able to display their Catholic faith in relative freedom and are not suffering forced defection from the



(Unsplash/Annika Gordon)

faith. Nor, indeed, is Fr Schmitz in the same position as the medieval Crusaders and pilgrims to the Holy Land who, to ensure a Christian burial in the event of their death, were often tattooed with a Cross.

It may not be a sin for a Catholic to get a tattoo. It may not be a sin for a Catholic *priest* to get a tattoo. However, it is surely, at very least, *unseemly* for a priest to get a more or less permanent mark on his body, even if that mark does remind him of Christ. There are, after all, many ways by which the priest can be reminded of his dignity and duties, and the Church certainly gives the surest guidance for this: the life of prayer, centred on the Divine Office and the Sacrifice of the Mass, the cultivation of a deep interior life through spiritual reading and contemplation, and striving to be *alter Christus* to others in whatever ministry is entrusted to him. The wearing of the cassock or the religious habit also serve as a very physical reminder of precisely *who* and *what* the priest is. Finally, while the ink of a tattoo will mark the body somewhere below the epidermis, it is superficial in more ways than one when compared to

the indelible mark imprinted on the soul of each baptised and confirmed person and, additionally, on the soul of every priest. These are truly indelible marks, which will last for eternity. These marks will be the cause of our rejoicing at our judgement if we have lived good and holy lives, and they will be the cause of our shame if we have not. Can any tattoo come even remotely close to these seals placed on our souls by God Himself? □

i *Letter to Dionetus*, Ch.5.

<https://www.christian-history.org/letter-to-dionetus.html> (Accessed 11/06/2022).

ii St Joseph Cafasso, *The Priest the Man of God*, trans. by Rev. Patrick O'Connell. Charlotte, NC: Tan Books (1971), p. 11.

iii *ibid.* p. 43.

iv This information on the origin of the Coptic Cross tattoo is taken from *The Meaning of Our Coptic Cross Tattoo* by Alessandra Bishai.

<https://sttekla.org/posts/youth/the-meaning-of-our-coptic-cross-tattoo/> (Accessed 02/07/2022).

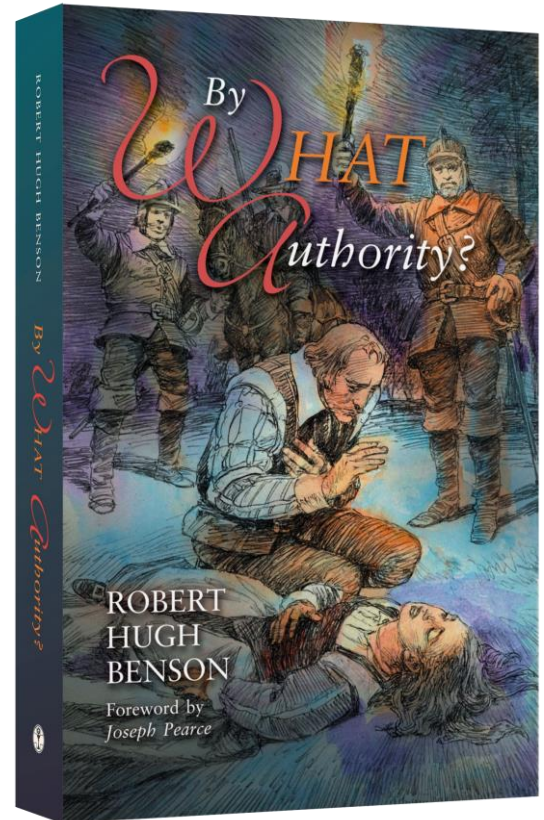
v *The History of the Traditional Croation Tattoos and the Forms they Contain*, <https://tattooartfromtheheart.com/blog/the-history-of-the-traditional-croatian-tattoos-and-forms-they-contain/> (Accessed 02/07/2022)

Mgr Benson's Novels on Catholic Persecution

Readers of *Dowry* will no doubt be interested to see Silverstream Priory's recent release of two historical novels by Robert Hugh Benson. Each of these classic Reformation novels includes a new foreword by Catholic literary scholar Joseph Pearce (author of biographies of Chesterton and Tolkien), seven specially commissioned illustrations, and entirely re-typeset text.

'Enjoyable as it is edifying,' Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP writes, 'Benson's historical novel *The King's Achievement* helps us third-millennium readers become more familiar with the heroic times of anti-Catholic persecution in England.' Benson's inspiration for this novel comes from the time of the dissolution of the monasteries during the reign of Henry VIII. Love of the Mass and our Lord vie with love of wealth and power as the actual deeds of historic figures such as Thomas More, John Fisher, and Cromwell are woven into a 'harrowingly romantic tale' of the Faith in England. Fr John Hunwicke describes this novel as 'exciting and as page-turning as a modern thriller.' Dr Timothy Kelly, Fellow of Blackfriars Hall, says: 'in an age of Hilary Mantel, this eagerly awaited republication provides an urgent corrective to the popular notion that King Henry VIII's reign amounted to anything but the greatest tragedy in the history of the British Isles. This...is essential reading to all those interested in the national and personal complexities of the English Reformation.'

A loose sequel to *The King's Achievement*, the story of 'two young people caught in a conflict of ideals' is the subject of *By What Authority*. Set in the England of Elizabeth I, Benson engages with the difficulties of Puritans and Catholics 'in a manner that contradicts the biased narrative still taught in many schools,' according to Fr Patrick O'Donohue, FSSP. From another quarter, Dr Melinda Nielsen, a home-schooling mother and professor of Classical Literature at Baylor University (Texas, USA), welcomes this new edition with high praise: 'At last in print again, *By What Authority?* brings to life one of the most crucial stories in Church history—the battle for the soul of England. Blending wit, chivalry, theological insight, and deep sympathy with all Christians of goodwill, Benson leads the reader inside the minds and hearts of Reformation England, dramatizing how the Lord uses small acts of fidelity to raise up joyful saints and martyrs in every generation. With its lively illustrations and helpful notes, Cenacle Press's new edition is a must-have for every Catholic home (and home-schooling) library.'



An apostolate of the monks of Silverstream in Ireland, the goal of the Cenacle Press is 'to show something of the Highest Good to every reader who picks up our books' and to show that the Benedictine tradition has 'something beneficial, worthwhile, and encouraging in it for every believer.'

These and other fine books are available for purchase from The Cenacle Press website cenaclepress.com, as well as amazon.co.uk and other retailers. □

The Sacred Liturgy as a Secret Garden

The well-known children's story *The Secret Garden* lends itself to a religious and modern interpretation. Like orphaned children in desperate need of spiritual comfort, many Catholics discovered the traditional Latin Mass thanks to the Covid pandemic. Thirsting for Confession, for Eucharistic adoration, or for Holy Communion administered with reverence, they rejoiced when finding all this and more in traditional worship.

The Sacred Liturgy as a Secret Garden, a short book, offers an analogy between Frances Hodgson Burnett's pre-WWI tale for children and the revelation experienced in the 2020s by a growing number of adults stepping into the grace-filled haven of the traditional Roman liturgy.

Instead of theological arguments, the book uses fiction and history to help the reader grasp better why the traditional liturgy, architecture and devotions happily answer the needs of souls. Across a few dozen pages, readers young and old, even without theological formation, discover that a place of spiritual nourishment awaits

them within the time-proofed traditions of Holy Mother Church. Its small format and accessible approach make *The Sacred Liturgy as a Secret Garden* an easy introduction for average Catholics, yet non familiar with the traditional liturgy, to discover its riches.

Praise for *The Sacred Liturgy as a Secret Garden*

A very clever treatment of the novel *The Secret Garden*. That well-known children's story should be read twice—firstly, as any reader would read it just for enjoyment, and

then again after reading Fr de Malleray's fascinating hermeneutic of tradition, because the enjoyment and appreciation would be much greater. —**Leo Darroch**, former President of the International Federation Una Voce

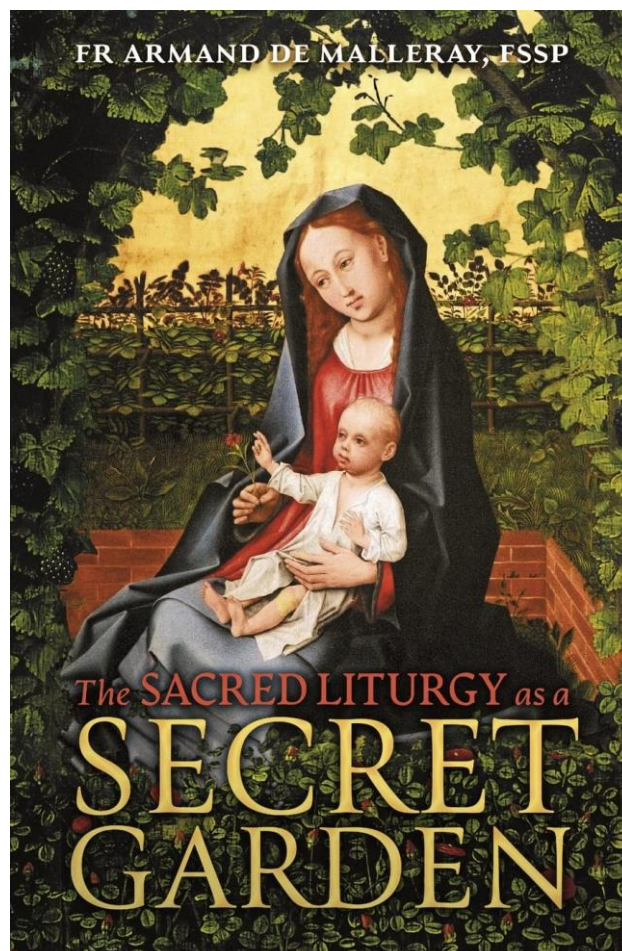
An imaginative essay, whose poetic nature is a timely invitation to rediscover the forgotten riches of the Church's traditional liturgy. —**Fr Simon Henry**, BA MA, Director of St Peter's International College

This essay is intriguing, creative and sufficiently provocative to maintain the reader's interest. The variety of expression is refreshing. Readers of all ages will enjoy discovering the liturgical treasures that lie hidden in the *Secret Garden*. —**Fr Neil Brett**, former head teacher

Order the short book directly on the publisher's website in Europe and America. Printed in the UK, it will be posted to British readers without custom charges: aroucapress.com/books/sacred-liturgy-garden.

Also available on Amazon.

Size: 5.25 x 8 inches; 100 pages □



Support Our Apostolate

Thank you for your generosity.

FSSP ENGLAND (& Wales):

Cheques in British Pounds payable to FSSP England, to be sent to: FSSP, St Mary's Priory, Smith Street, Warrington WA1 2NS, England.

Bank transfers: Account Name: FSSP England • **Account number:** 02027225 • **Sort code 30-93-04** • Lloyds Bank, Palmerston Road Branch

Are you a taxpayer? Help us maximise your donation through Gift Aid. Please ask us for a Gift-Aid form. FSSP ENGLAND is a registered charity: number 1129964.

All other donations sent to us in England will finance our development and apostolate in England & Wales.

FSSP IRELAND:

Fr Patrick O'Donohue, FSSP: office[at]fssp.ie

21 The Folly, Waterford City X91KWD8, Ireland

Website: <https://fssp.ie/>

Contact for financial matters: David O'Brien, Valley View, Knocklahaun, Killinierin, Co. Wexford Y25 F406
Email finance[at]fssp.ie
Bank of Ireland; Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2.

Account name: Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter. Account No.: 40483756
IBAN: IE36BOFI90149040483756
BIC: BOFIII2D

FSSP SCOTLAND:

Fr Brendan Gerard, FSSP, 6 Belford Park, Edinburgh EH4 3DP. Tel.: 0131 332 3750;

Email: fr.emerson@fssp.co.uk

The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter in Scotland is a registered charity (no. 1083419; no. SC038552).

Cheques should be made out to "Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter". Gift Aid Forms on request.

Website: fsspScotland.org

LiveMass Apostolate:

Many people in and outside the UK benefit from our Warrington-based daily broadcast of Holy Mass with daily homily, especially under lockdown. We request your financial support for this worldwide apostolate. You can easily donate online via our Warrington/LiveMass 'Donate' button on <https://fssp.org.uk/donate/>. Thank you.

Homilies & Conferences:

New St Mary's Warrington YouTube channel, with homilies for Sundays and feasts uploaded permanently:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_NVY7jpDIhANiwjng1gN0w

Also, conferences & homilies on <https://vimeo.com/livemass>.

More of them on the Juventutem London Video page:

<https://www.facebook.com/londonjuventutem/videos>

Audio podcasts of clergy conferences by Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP:

<https://radioimmaculata.org/various-podcast/fssp-conferences>

Pictures: browse through hundreds of amazing pictures of our liturgies, summer camps and other pastoral activities on the FSSP Flickr page:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/138056205@N08/albums>

Vocation Weekend

25-27 Nov 2022, Warrington:

for single Catholic men 18-30.

Come and discern the will of God!

Contact/bookings: malleray@fssp.org

DOWRY Magazine

Is our shared printed medium all across these Isles. We therefore invite readers from Scotland and Ireland to make this publication more widely known, as well as in England and Wales. *Dowry* is given to you for free, but contributions are welcome since each copy of *Dowry* costs £2 to produce, print and post. Please also visit our websites, where you will find regular news and updates, and the full series of *Dowry* readable online: fssp.org.uk/category/dowry/. Email us your comments to be included in our forthcoming readers' feedback section.

New: find articles of past issues of *Dowry* conveniently sorted by topic here: <https://fssp.org.uk/dowry-articles/>

Subscribe to Dowry Magazine:

Visit <https://fssp.org.uk/manageprofile/register.php>

Contact FSSP ENGLAND:

**Priestly Fraternity of St Peter,
St Mary's Priory, Smith Street, Warrington
WA1 2NS Cheshire, England**

01925 635 664

warrington@fssp.org

fssp.org.uk

(Picture: Annual *Juventutem UK* summer weekend for young adults in Stonyhurst, July 2022: [instagram.com/fssp.warrington](https://www.instagram.com/fssp.warrington))

