



Help save unique mosaics covering the walls of the Church of the Ascension, in Timoleague, County Cork



Tomorrow, Thursday, 13th May is Ascension Day, and there will be an open day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. at the unique Church of the Ascension, Timoleague, County Cork (with all covid-19 precautions and oversight in place).

Unique? Yes, it must be the only church building in Ireland where the interior walls are not only covered in colourful mosaics, but where also the story of those mosaics has local connections, as well as links to India.

It may look like a non-assuming country church on the outside, but inside it holds the secret of being completely overlaid with intricately designed mosaics, from floor to ceiling – a West-Cork marvel to behold.

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There are many stories of historical interest linked to the mosaics. Perhaps the most unusual concerns the mosaic memorial on the south wall. This was mainly paid for by the His Highness, the Maharajah of Gwalior, India, in gratitude for a locally born doctor, Aylmer Martin Crofts. Originally from the townland of Concamore, Crofts had become the Maharajah's personal physician for twenty years, and on one occasion, he helped to save his son's life.

Architect Jeremy Williams who wrote *A Companion Guide to Architecture in Ireland 1937-1921* said that this church

... transcended the sectarian divide between Irish Catholic and Protestant, the Indian Muslim and Hindu, personal friendship breaking up hereditary distinctions of caste and colour.

Sadly the mosaics have become threatened with deterioration, mainly because of water ingress, but a Conservation project is working as quickly as possible to save them. To celebrate what has been achieved so far with the Church of the Ascension Conservation Project, the church will be open to the public on Ascension Day, 13th May, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Adhering to COVID19 restrictions, this is an invitation for people to come and see inside and experience first-hand this remarkable building.

A considerable sum of money has yet to be raised to preserve the building. Contributions, no matter how big or small, are all greatly appreciated.

Donations can be made through the GoFundMe page at
Recently, the rector, the Reverend Kingsley Sutton, has

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produced a video to tell the story of this Church on the Argideen Estuary, County Cork. It is well worth watching.

To view the video 'Touching Heritage at the Argideen Estuary' click here -



C of I Youth Department's Young Leaders in Ministry Fund is once more open for applications

The fund is open to young people aged between 15 and 25 years who can demonstrate a current involvement in the Church of Ireland.

It seeks to support training and development courses, mission teams, leadership opportunities and placements that can be shown to:
significantly develop the faith of the young adult applicant;



grow the skills of the applicant especially, but not confined to, leadership skills; and be of significant use to the ministry of the Church of Ireland in the 12 months following the completion of the opportunity.

The next closing date is **Monday, 31st May 2021**, and application forms can be downloaded at the links below. Encouraging applications, National Youth Officer Simon Henry says: “The impact of Covid–19 on young people has been significant in many ways and as a Church we need to be continually supporting our young people in not just nurturing and growing their faith but also with opportunities to grow new skills and qualifications that will be of benefit to the Church of Ireland.

“CIYD’s Young Leaders in Ministry Fund aims to provide financial support to encourage more individuals from the Church of Ireland to undertake existing opportunities, both within and beyond the Church. This fund exists to grow young leaders, and as we look to a post–pandemic future, I would encourage clergy and youth leaders alike to direct churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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their young people aged 15–25 to apply to this fund – whether it is for a youth work qualification, internship opportunity, or perhaps more local mission over the summer period and beyond. The potential impact of this fund is huge and we have had a very encouraging response since the fund launched in 2019.”

Application form – PDF

Application form – Word document

Youth leaders are also encouraged to consider applying for the **Aurora certificate in youth ministry**, delivered by CIYD and designed to meet the needs of volunteer youth leaders who have busy lives and no formal youth work qualifications. The next course will run from September 2021 to May 2020, and more details are available at www.auroratraining.org.uk/eire

As Israeli-Palestinian violence escalates, Christian leaders voice concern

Christian leaders in the Holy Land expressed deep concern over growing Israeli-Palestinian violence, as the two sides clashed in Jerusalem and Israel launched airstrikes into Gaza, responding to rocket attacks.

“The violent events raging in occupied Palestine, which are still increasing in intensity daily, are nothing but an inevitable result of pressure and oppression practiced continuously by the occupying powers of the land of Palestine for more than seven decades,” said a May 11 statement from the Middle East Council of Churches.



A wounded Palestinian protester is evacuated during clashes with Israeli police outside Al-Aqsa Mosque at the Temple Mount complex in the Old City of Jerusalem May 10, 2021.

A day earlier, Christian leaders in Jerusalem said they were “profoundly disheartened and concerned about the recent violent events in East Jerusalem. These concerning developments, whether at the Al-Aqsa Mosque or in Sheikh Jarrah, violate the sanctity of the people of Jerusalem and of Jerusalem as the City of Peace.”

Sheikh Jarrah is a neighbourhood in East Jerusalem where dozens of Palestinians are under threat of eviction from Jewish settlers. In a separate statement May 10, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem said, “The forced eviction of Palestinians from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah is also an

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unacceptable violation of the most fundamental human rights, the right to a home.”

The latest round of confrontation began early May 10, as Israelis prepared to celebrate Jerusalem Day, commemorating what Israel views as the 1967 reunification of Jerusalem and Palestinians see as the start of the Israeli occupation.

Police say they were forced to respond when Palestinians attacked a police post, hurling rocks, fireworks and other objects at police from the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a Muslim holy site. The site also is considered holy by Jews, who call it the Temple Mount after the two Jewish Biblical temples that stood there.

Later in the day, Palestinian militants in Gaza launched hundreds of rockets into Israel, killing two people and wounding at least 10. In response, Israel launched airstrikes on Gaza, sent troops to the border and called up military reservists.

The Gaza Health Ministry said May 11 at least 26 Palestinians — including a woman and nine children — had been killed in the strikes. It said more than 120 people were wounded.

The Middle East Council of Churches said “lifting the occupation of the Palestinian people and enjoying their freedom, dignity and full rights are the means that lead to lasting stability and peace in the region.”

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Urging international leaders to enforce people's rights, the council said: "Violence only generates violence and hatred only leads to more hatred, racial discrimination only makes revolution, and extremism only breeds extremism, and deprivation only engenders uprising, and the only way out of this destructive cycle is to give everyone his rights, through recognition of the rights of the oppressed firstly and, secondly, by taking this recognition to the realm of implementation without procrastination or equivocation. "

In their statement, Jerusalem's Christian leaders said: "The special character of Jerusalem, the Holy City, with the existing Status Quo, compels all parties to preserve the already sensitive situation in the Holy City of Jerusalem. The growing tension, backed mainly by right-wing radical groups, endangers the already fragile reality in and around Jerusalem."

The Status Quo is a 19th-century agreement regulating jurisdiction of and access to key Christian sites in Jerusalem for Catholic, Orthodox and other Christian communities.

The statement from the Latin Patriarchate, which is similar to an archdiocese, said, "The violence used against the worshippers undermines their safety and their rights to have access to the holy places and worship freely."

The Latin Patriarchate said it opposed any attempt to make Jerusalem an exclusive city for anyone.

"This is a sacred city to the three monotheistic religions, and, based on international law and relevant U.N. resolutions, also a city where the Palestinian people,

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Christians and Muslims, have the same right to build a future based on freedom, equality and peace,” it said.

Throughout April and into May, Jerusalem has been engulfed in the worst violence in years as police prevented Palestinian youth from gathering at the Damascus Gate square during the evenings of the holy month of Ramadan as usual. Police said they were responding to TikTok videos showing Palestinians attacking religious Jews in the area. Tensions have also flared over pending evictions of Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah.

Ballymurphy victims were innocent, Moderator

Following Mrs Justice Keegan’s finding yesterday (11 May) that those killed in Ballymurphy, in Belfast in August 1971, ‘were entirely innocent of wrongdoing on the day in question,’ the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, issued the following statement.

“For the Ballymurphy families, today’s findings are a long awaited public declaration of the innocence of their loved ones. As they take in the news that they have waited 50 years to hear, it reminds us once more of the tragic and shattering past that Northern Ireland has witnessed, and the legacy of those times half a century on.

Dr Bruce concluded by saying, “For too many people across Northern Ireland, and indeed further afield, today would have brought back memories of loved ones whose lives

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were also cut short during what we casually call ‘The Troubles’. At this particular time they, along with the Ballymurphy families, are in our thoughts and prayers.”

PCI: ‘Reconciliation is key to any future legacy proposals’

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has reiterated its belief that that any meaningful approach to dealing with the legacy of Northern Ireland’s past must place reconciliation at its heart.

PCI’s Moderator, Right Reverend Dr David Bruce, was speaking following yesterday’s (11 May) State Opening of Parliament and the UK government’s announcement in The Queen’s Speech, that it would bring forward new legislation on legacy.

In a statement from Assembly Buildings in Belfast, Dr Bruce said, “While we await the actual detail of this new legislation, upon which we will comment further, it is clear that a balanced and broad-based approach, which commands cross-community support is urgently needed.

“Any framework that deals with the complex legacy of Northern Ireland’s past needs to rest upon the important principle of reconciliation worked out through storytelling, justice for victims and information recovery. If Northern Ireland is to move forward, and its people flourish, reconciliation must be at the heart of any future process.”

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Dr Bruce explained, “The Christian understanding of reconciliation rests upon the coming together of both love and justice. Love sent Christ to be with us. Justice sent Christ to the cross. Both were needed to reconcile us to God. So it is in the realm of human life. Love and justice need to come together, as the foundation of reconciled relationships.

“Reconciliation is about the work we do now to restore relationships broken by the past, in a way that can lead to a better and shared future for us all. In fixing our gaze on the past, it can be all too easy to forget that we need to live together in the present.

“It is our hope and prayer that being able to address the past effectively will enable us all to reimagine and create a better future, one that is based on a reconciled community at peace with itself. This, however, will require deep engagement with the people of Northern Ireland, especially those who have suffered the most, the victims and survivors,” Dr Bruce said.

“Many victims and survivors come from our Presbyterian family. It is impossible to quantify the suffering that violence visited on them and so many other innocent people. There was no moral justification for the illegal taking up of arms, either republican or loyalist. Then as now, history cannot be rewritten in an attempt to portray as legitimate, what was morally repugnant and totally unjustified. In the same spirit, there can be no justification for the illegal misuse of force by agencies of the State commissioned to uphold the law. In both situations, where cases are brought and wrongdoing is proved, justice must be served.”

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Dr Bruce concluded by saying, “With some of the children of the Troubles now in their 50s, and a post-ceasefire generation approaching 30, an effective, workable and agreed approach to dealing with the past is long overdue. We await the detail of what is proposed and reiterate our call for a process that has reconciliation at its heart, promoting healing between and within communities. Only then can we truly learn to live with one another in the present, lay the foundations of a better future, and begin to deal effectively with many of the unresolved issues that have been left in the wake of our past.”

Put up ‘counter-statues’ next to contested monuments, Church of England suggests

Do not destroy controversial monuments but commission counter-statues to sit alongside them, the Church of England has suggested to parishes and cathedrals, Lizzie Roberts reports in the Daily Telegraph.

Guidance published by the Church sets out to address issues of “contested heritage” in its 12,500 parishes and 42 cathedrals, to focus on the “memorialisation of people or events connected with racism and slavery”.

“This is not about judging people in the past by the standards of the present, but about how items of contested heritage, and wider issues of under-representation, affect our ability to be a Church for all in the 21st century,” the guidance says.

Becky Clark, the Church's director of churches and cathedrals, said: "With this guidance, the Church is seeking to provide a framework for parishes and cathedrals to lead discussions about how the heritage in our buildings can best serve our commitment to be a welcoming and inclusive Church today.

"The issues of contested heritage require us honestly and openly to discuss ways in which our buildings can demonstrate our commitment to social and racial justice as a reflection of our faith in Jesus Christ." The guidance suggests more than 10 options for altering controversial monuments but adds that "it is doubtful that any of the options will serve as redress", but they could still "make a powerful statement and provide an important means of balancing the narrative".

One such suggestion includes commissioning an artist to make a "site-specific piece, whether temporary or permanent" to "stand in juxtaposition to the contested heritage item". The guidance adds such a piece could be a "memorial to those who have been underrepresented or oppressed, or a retelling of a Bible story using more diverse and inclusive imagery".

It comes after Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, called for church statues to be reviewed to assess if they "should all be there", in the wake of last summer's Black Lives Matter protests, one of which led to the statue of Edward Colston, the 17th-century slave trader, being thrown into Bristol harbour.

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Other suggestions for altering controversial statues include moving the object, or parts of it, to storage, covering a piece of text or symbol that has “offensive connotations” or permanently transferring the object to a new owner such as a museum.

Courtesy Daily Telegraph - 11.05.2021

Opinion - The Church should protect our heritage, not denounce it - Michael Nazir-Ali

I fear the Church of England has yet again allowed itself to become embroiled in identity politics. In recent months we have seen its leaders condemn the Church as “institutionally racist”, and a controversial report that recommended the adoption of positive discrimination and revision of the Church’s theology, , Michael Nazir-Ali writes in the Daily Telegraph

Now, churches and cathedrals are being urged to review their monuments and plaques. Those associated with slavery and empire may not be removed, but parishes will be encouraged to commission counter-examples.

There is no question that racism must be taken seriously – but conceding ground to divisive identity politics is no way to do so. Much of the woke discourse on race is built on Critical Theory, a Marxist-inspired school of thought that ultimately seeks to create conflict between classes, races and sexes so as to bring down the patriarchal and

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“bourgeois” old order. The Church, even if it appears this time to have stepped back from the brink, risks allowing this world view to shape its approach to the legacy of slavery and empire.

These are, of course, not the same thing. Some empires have been wholly evil but others, like the British, have been a mixture of good and bad. Alongside the undoubted exploitation, there are examples of indigenous people helped by infrastructure, education and the encouragement of democracy and civil society.

People, too, are a mix of good and bad. Is it really right to write someone off as evil if they were connected to slavery? John Newton, the captain of a slave ship, repented of his trade, was ordained in the Church of England and, as well as writing the hymn Amazing Grace, became a prominent abolitionist. It is hardly Christian to condemn him out of hand, as the woke might like to do.

The Church has a long and creditable history in challenging slavery. St Anselm of Canterbury, in 1102, declared it to be against divine law. Evangelicals like William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect campaigned relentlessly for the abolition of the slave trade and then slavery itself. The Church should be holding up these figures as examples to be followed in our own fight against exploitation, inequality and racism.

The Church of England is a significant custodian of our heritage. It has to exercise its stewardship with prudence and in partnership with local communities. It needs not only to consult but to reach agreement on how it deals with monuments and artefacts. Where this is not possible,

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consistory courts, presided over by an independent judge, allow disputed matters to be heard before making a judgment, which is then open to appeal. Matters of local significance are fully considered in such courts – a better way of settling matters than diktats issued by Lambeth Palace and Church House.

One final question is that of resources. Churches have been hit hard financially by the pandemic. At a time when they need to support hurting and grieving people, resources should be directed to outreach and pastoral work, not to second-order issues that distract from its core tasks.

While repenting of our failures, we should celebrate the virtuous pages and people in our history. Let us learn from them as we chart a course for a just, loving and free society. It would be wonderful for the Church to lead such a positive vision instead of being hostage to every contemporary fad and every claim of victimhood.

Michael Nazir-Ali is a former bishop of Rochester and is now president of Oxtrad

Courtesy Daily Telegraph - 11.05.2021

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

National Churches Trust's Treasure Ireland initiative

Parishes in Northern Ireland are reminded that the grants deadline for the National Churches Trust's Treasure Ireland initiative is approaching on Tuesday, 1st June. Parishes are

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encouraged to get in touch with the Representative Church Body's Property Department to find out more:
property@rcbdub.org

Fantastical Monuments

The Church Monuments Society's lecture on 'Fantastical Monuments – Thomas Dingley's Observations in Ireland 1680–81'. A free event on Saturday, 15th May, at 5.00pm. Booking details are available here.

[[] https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/fantastical-monuments-thomas-dingleys-observations-in-ireland-1680-81-registration-147405123693?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch&keep_tld=1]

Sustainability and the Built Environment

A webinar hosted by the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA) Ireland on Thursday, 20th May, at 12.30pm. Click here for booking information. Free of charge.

[[] https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/roi200521-republic-of-ireland-sustainability-and-the-built-environment-tickets-150153917409?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch&keep_tld=1]

Vernacular Irish Buildings Lecture Series

A 10–part online Vernacular Irish Buildings Lecture Series, with SPAB Ireland, is to start in August and run weekly until October. Details of this and a new podcast series will be released soon. Check in at SPAB's website for more information.

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[[] <https://www.spab.org.uk/whats-on/courses/repair-old-buildings-course-2>]

King George VI Funding Available for youth groups

King George VI awards are offering £500 to youth groups for equipment/programmes or trips. The application is very simple and quick to fill in, you can find out how to apply using the link below.

[<http://kgviyouthawards.org.uk/>]

Launch of St Martin-in-the-Fields' brand new summer concert series - ReSound!

“With six weekends of online and in-person concerts from 20 May to the end of June, we are excited to be putting St Martin's at the heart of music-making in the capital.”

Internationally-renowned performers include Soul Sanctuary Gospel Choir, I Fagiolini, Rachel Podger, Anna Lapwood, Benson Wilson, Julius Drake, The Hermes Experiment, Melvyn Tan, Art Deco Trio, Will Todd and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Visit the website for details <https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/about-our.../resound/>

Media review

Ballymurphy inquests

The coroner found that all the deceased were entirely innocent of any wrongdoings on the day in question'. She attributed nine of the 10 fatal shootings in Ballymurphy in

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August 1971 to the British Army and said the use of lethal force by soldiers was not justified

Tears and applause in Corpus Christi Church

Families, survivors, supporters and Ballymurphy parishioners gathered in Corpus Christi Church yesterday to hear a coroner deliver her verdict on the shooting dead of 10 innocent people. Among them was a man who had been shot but survived.

Coronavirus news

Yesterday the Northern Ireland Department of Health recorded one additional Covid-19 related death and 89 new infections in Northern Ireland in the previous 24 hours. It takes the coronavirus death toll since the beginning of the pandemic to 2,148.

Nearly half-a-million people in Northern Ireland, more than a third of the entire adult population, has now had two coronavirus vaccine doses. Health Minister Robin Swann said the vaccination programme has “already saved many lives”.

Catholic churches in Germany bless same-sex couples in defiance of Pope and Vatican ruling

Irish Post

Over 100 Roman Catholic churches across Germany held official blessings for same-sex couples earlier this week, two months after a controversial Vatican statement, overseen by

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Pope Francis, said the church cannot bless same-sex unions as 'God doesn't bless sin'.

The blessings were held on 10 May after a group of priests and volunteers said they wanted to "raise our voices and say: We will continue to accompany people who enter into a binding partnership in the future and bless their relationship.

[[] <https://www.irishpost.com/news/catholic-churches-in-germany-bless-same-sex-couples-in-defiance-of-pope-and-vatican-ruling-212093>]



Pointers for prayer

Mighty God,
in whom we know the power of redemption,
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning

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when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,
we will share in his resurrection,
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love,
and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his
resurrection,
teaching them to love all people as neighbors.
As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbours with whom we share it.

... *Petitions*...

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Open our hearts to your power moving around us and between us and within us, until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy, in communities transformed by justice and compassion, and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul - New Life

A Reading from Romans 12:1-21

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God — what is good and acceptable and perfect.

3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. 6 We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; 7 ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; 8 the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; 10 love one another with mutual affection; outdo one

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another in showing honor. 11 Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” 20 No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Meditation

In many ways, today’s lessons are the verses for our time. “Do not be conformed to world,” writes Paul to the Christians who are at the political center of the world in Rome, “but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” Unlike Paul’s original audience, most of us have a long history of a culture deeply shaped by Christianity. Conforming to that world was full of its own dangers, but it’s helpful to recognize that our times are different, with communities and cultures which have not been influenced, or forget they have been influenced, by Scripture and Christian teaching. Being Christian may take more swimming — or at least different

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strokes — against the stream than it did at other times and places.

“But be transformed...” What does transformation look like? It’s worth pondering. “By the renewal of your mind.” Somehow I find the translation that says “renewing your mind,” more helpful. To have your mind continually made new — it’s to be malleable to the movement of the Holy Spirit, to be able to see things in truer and truer light, to be able to alter the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves and our families and our lives in the new light cast by the revealed God who is the truth.

Obviously there’s something here about the importance of belief, about learning more about our faith — but there’s something else, something less cerebral. “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice... which is your spiritual worship.” God gives us sacraments to convey his grace and asks us for our bodies. Perhaps our minds are renewed in much the same way — through our skin. It’s not just ideas that need to be offered, renewed, and transformed, but the tasks of our hands, and the hours of our days. Renewed minds should yield transformed lives, lives that look different from those lived “in the world,” no matter what our time or place.

