

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

Autumn 2025

Issue N°67

Dowry



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Picture: On St Peter's Square Pope Leo XIV blesses FSSP seminarians on pilgrimage to Rome last October.

Our wall calendar UK & Ireland 2026 is included for free for our subscribers in this issue – suggested donation £8.00. See FSSP England bank details at the back. Thank you for your support!

Latest FSSP statistics (www.fssp.org)

Total: 579 members (incl. 394 incardinated)

Priests: 387; priestly candidates 192

Average age of members: 39 years; Deceased: 16

14 priests ordained yearly on average (past 12 years)

Dioceses served: 151; Mass centres: 251

Personal parishes: 48; Number of houses: 139

Confraternity of Saint Peter: Total members: 8,776

Book for our annual Weekend of Vocational Discernment for men on 13-15 March 2026

Editorial: O Lord, Grant Us Many Holy Priests!

Dear Friends, thank you for your prayers for priestly vocations. God Himself orders us to ask Him for priests, as we read in St Matthew's Gospel: *The harvest is abundant but the labourers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out labourers for his harvest* (Mt 9:35-38). Can there be a worthier and more rewarding petition to God than requesting holy priests, better to sanctify our souls, preparing us for a holy death, and a favourable judgement leading to blissful eternity?

Admittedly, the path to the altar of God, *of God who giveth joy to [our] youth*, is not always easy to walk. Hearing the call is one thing, examining what it entails is another; but answering it through seminary application, and receiving formal confirmation from the seminary superiors to start seven years of training is yet another matter. At every step in the discernment and formation, obstacles may occur, such as interferences from the world, the flesh and the devil, or the legitimate realisation that one is destined to life in the world and marriage. Even after ordination accidents may happen, sadly, affecting a priest's physical or mental health, or his good standing.

Such sobering considerations should not deter one from examining the possibility of a priestly calling prior to other options. Why so? Because one can try consecrated life, but one cannot try marriage. Thus, it makes sense for a young man to look earnestly into the priestly (or religious) calling *before* becoming

sentimentally involved with a prospective wife.

The matter at hand is so grave and glorious that mere self-examination would not suffice. Guidance by a trusted spiritual adviser will be necessary, if available, please God. Additionally, a weekend of vocational discernment such as the one offered annually by the Priestly Fraternity of St Peter in the UK & Ireland is a rare opportunity to learn more about the distinctive purposes of life consecrated and life in the world. The conferences are not all about the priesthood (no sign-up sheet for FSSP seminaries). They envisage first our ontological calling

*one can try
consecrated life,
but one cannot try
marriage*

to God as his rational creatures; then our more likely response through life in the world and holy Matrimony; and finally the specificity of life consecrated, either as a religious sanctified by his founder's approved rule, or as a priest, whose *raison d'être* is the offering of the divine Victim at the altar, as superlatively expressed in the traditional Latin Mass. Twenty-four men attended our past weekend last February. Our forthcoming weekend will take place from Friday 13th to Sunday 15th March 2026 (*Laetare* Sunday) at Buckden Towers, near Bedford.

God hears your prayers. Our

Fraternity in the UK & Ireland is currently blessed with two deacons

(Deacon Conan McGonagle at OLGS and Deacon Niall Ó hAimheirgin in Reading) and six seminarians (David, Benjamin, Piotr and Darragh in Wigratzbad; plus Rafal and James at OLGS.) Congratulation to Piotr and James on their First Tonsure and First Incorporation into the FSSP last 18th October. We look forward to the priestly ordination of Deacon Conan McGonagle on Thursday 28th May 2026 in Omaha; to the diaconal ordination of David Kahn in Wigratzbad on 2nd May 2026; and to the Minor orders of our junior seminarians.

Encouragingly, the FSSP was requested to take part in the Vocation Panel hosted by Birmingham Auxiliary Bishop Timothy Menezes at the successful *WeBelieve* Festival at Oscott Seminary last July. Representing the FSSP, Deacon Stjepan Androic spoke amidst two religious sisters and a friar. We thank all of you for your support, in particular for your prayers for priestly vocations: please visit fssp.org.uk to learn about the Confraternity of St Peter, our global vocation prayer network. We assure you of our prayer this Advent. □



Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP
*Superior of the FSSP England
Apostolate*
Bedford, November 4th, 2025

Malleray

FSSP Seminarians on Pilgrimage to Rome

From October 4 to 10, our Theology

seminarians from America and from Europe met in Rome on pilgrimage. The occasion was the Jubilee of the Societies of Apostolic Life. This allowed them to attend the papal audience on Wednesday, where Father Joseph Lee, spiritual director of Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary in Denton, Nebraska, had the honour of meeting with Pope Leo XIV. While the seminarians sang *Tu es Petrus*, Fr Lee was able to assure the Holy Father of our prayers and offer him a pale for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The pale is loaded with symbolic value, since it is adorned with an embroidered depiction of the apparition to St Juan Diego of Our Lady of Guadalupe, also the Patroness of our American seminary. Earlier on, as the popemobile was driving along the front row where our seminarians stood, the Pope asked what community they were and one seminarian yelled “FSSP!” The week-long stay allowed our seminarians and priests to visit the Eternal City and pray at the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, as well as to celebrate holy Masses and Vespers in our parish church of the Most Holy Trinity of the Pilgrims.

Discover more pictures about this pilgrimage and about life at two international seminaries on fsspols.org/news (American seminary) and on fsspwigratzbad.blogspot.com (European seminary).
(All pictures FSSP)



St Joan of Arc, A Prophetess For Our Times

Fr Jacques Olivier, FSSP, served in London in the mid-2000s. He is the author of a doctoral thesis in theology The Political and Ecclesial Prophetism of Joan of Arc. An expert on St Joan of Arc, having spent his childhood at the saint's favourite hermitage of Notre-Dame de Bermont near her home village of Domrémy where he currently resides, Fr Olivier tells us why this saint is of particular relevance to English Catholics.

What is new about this thesis on Joan of Arc?

Joan of Arc is the subject of a vast amount of literature, but she is most often approached either in a purely historical way, or through the prism of her exploitation for the benefit of a cause. I went back to the sources of the time (mainly the trials, and the testimonies of the time) in order to understand as truthfully as possible what had happened, so as to be able to answer a question that is rarely asked: why did God intervene in such a way in a dynastic quarrel? The answer to this question can only be found by turning the usual perspective on its head: it is not a question of divine action on behalf of the French and against the English, but of a message that God has come to give, both to the political powers, through the coronation of the king, and to the ecclesiastical powers, through Joan's answers in Rouen, in order to guide them in exercising their authority more effectively. Joan thus appears as a prophet of God who comes to warn and enlighten mankind at a crucial moment in their history, that of the decline of medieval Christianity. The extraordinary military epic, with its impossible victories and spectacular turnarounds, is merely the visible sign, the miracle, that accompanies Joan's message, in much the same way as the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves lends

credibility to the discourse of the Bread of Life in the Gospel.

What is at the heart of Joan's political message?

After giving his kingdom to God and acknowledging his omnipotence, the Dauphinⁱ is still in doubt. The opinion of the Poitiers commission, which saw no obstacle to Joan fulfilling God's mission, was not enough either. God then came to give the king a "great sign" in the form of an apparition of Saint Michael, angels and saints bringing the royal crown and a renewal of the special alliance between God and France. This major event convinced the king to put Joan at the head of the armies, which would lead him all the way to Reims. The coronation of the king is thus the heart of the political theology of Saint Joan of Arc: Christ the King legitimises and elevates the rules of succession by choosing a lieutenant on earth. Against all secularism or abusive legalism, Joan reminds us



that without divine authority, political power would not exist, because power is inherent in the order established in creation. The relationship between temporal and spiritual power, the Common Good and the notion of Christianity are also important components of this message.

You're also talking about a prophetic message for the Church?



positions of responsibility, whatever their “party”: they must be “of God” and not “of the world,” without submission or compromise. Other elements of this message also concern conciliarism, grace, the place of the supernatural and that of the laity.

What does Joan’s message offer us today?

The situation today is very similar to that of Joan’s time: from a human point of view, the situation, be it political, economic, social or religious, seems lost. Yet God’s grace can change everything, in just a few months, if He so wishes. The message given by Joan remains to be heard and put into practice in order to bear good fruit. Let us pray, like the lowly people of France in the past, that God will remember the special covenant he made with this country, and let us do our best in the battles, even if they sometimes seem futile. The epic of Saint Joan of Arc fills us with hope: “Men-at-arms will fight, and God will grant victory.”

Fr Olivier’s French original book *Le prophétisme politique et ecclésial de Jeanne d’Arc* (Cerf, 2021) is available on Amazon and awaits publication in English by Preserving Christian Publications. □

Joan’s voices continued to guide her right up to the day she died: her mission did not end with the coronation. Before the most eminent representatives of the University of Paris, then known as the “Sun of Christendom,” Joan proclaimed a divine message to warn the clergy about the exercise of their power. The heart of this message lay in the words spoken on Holy Saturday 1431: “God served first.” These

words, addressed to bishops and priests, invited them to refocus on their function of sanctifying the faithful and leading them to Heaven, without being subservient auxiliaries of temporal power or falling into clerical totalitarianism. In the context of the Rouen trial, a religious trial conducted at the request of the political authorities, this appeal is particularly timely, but it is also addressed to all other clerics in

(Both pictures are Wikipedia Public Domain. Left: Earliest extant representation of Joan of Arc; drawing by Clément de Fauquembergue (May 1429, French National Archives). Right: *Jeanne d’Arc* (*Joan of Arc*) by Albert Lynch, 1901.

ⁱ *Dauphin* is the title of the male heir to the French crown, equivalent to *Prince of Wales* for England.

Teenagers Love Norman Shrines and Castles

Forty-eight children and their parents, mostly connected with the Bedford-based FSSP Gregorian Chaplaincy, spent the first week of September on holiday in Normandy. Dowry asked some of the teenagers to share their impressions.

Felix and Henry (11 and 9)
As we drove up the drive to Château du Molay we were excited to start the week ahead – a week that proved to be full of friends, tasty food and adventures, with a strong emphasis on discovering our faith and France’s past. We visited fascinating museums, indomitable castles and many other interesting places, from the majesty of the great cathedrals to the simplicity and beauty of the Carmelite monastery. It was an exciting, joyful and prayerful week.

One of the themes of the week was exploring France’s history in various museums. The D-Day museum, focusing on driving the Germans back from France’s beaches, was particularly interesting. The layout and design were immersive and impressive. Despite not speaking much French I was still able to enter into the lives of the soldiers who fought there. One particularly striking exhibit was a bunker dug into the cliff face next to the museum. We also found the footage of the D-Day landings very interesting.

The Museum of St Therese’s house was very different but still very striking. It was small, simple and beautiful with a gorgeous garden filled with roses, apple trees and shrubs. It was incredible being able to touch plants that St Therese’s father planted and that St Therese would have known. Seeing the simplicity and ordinariness of her toys and her life makes becoming a



great saint feel more accessible. She was a normal person, who prayed and loved God, and committed to lots and lots of small acts of love. This is possible for all of us.

We had the privilege of being given a tour of Château de Lassay, owned by one of Fr de Malleray’s relatives. The château itself was very interesting with lots of slots for canons. It was striking to see how a castle could be designed with arcs of fire in mind making it extremely defensible. It was full of surprises, such as the oldest holly tree in France, which was so tall and old that it had evolved so that its top leaves didn’t have protective spikes. It had a very exciting armoury with some interesting spears. The cellars which ran through the walls were dark and mysterious, with canon and crossbow slots in the buttresses. It was amazing to see the different layers of history, from medieval foundations to modern rooms which are currently lived in by the family.

A highlight was being able to raise and lower the drawbridge and watch the counterweights working.

As the spires of Mont St Michel rose above the treeline, it was breathtaking to know that we were about to walk in the footsteps of countless pilgrims as we made our way across to the island. The medieval streets wound up the hillside like a film-set and it was amazing to see all the huge thick walls and terraces mounting ever higher like a giant staircase. The abbey itself had some amazing architecture but it also felt quite empty and unloved since the revolutionaries had taken and used it as a prison. The bleakness of a building that should have been filled with sacred and holy things was sad to witness. Please God it will be restored to the fullness of its glory and majesty.

One of our favourite things to do in the evenings after very satisfying three-course meals was to go outside

to play sports with our friends. We played football and cricket and it was the perfect balance of competitive and friendly. Being able to experience all of these things with our friends as well as our family was wonderful and felt like we were all part of the same team. Being able to support each other and pray with each other was special in a way that you can only experience in such a place as Château du Molay.

Anthony (16)

The trip to Normandy is surely one to remember. Whether it was the magnificent battlements and cliffs on Mont-Saint-Michel, or the beautiful little house of Thérèse de Lisieux.

The fact that Tolkien based Minas Tirith in *The Lord of the Rings* on Mont St Michel was very interesting. Also, the fact that the four Saint Michaels of Europe, one in Ireland, one in Cornwall, the Mont-Saint-Michel in France, and the one in Italy, all perfectly line up if you were to place a ruler over them all. In this

way, they are all connected.

Aside from the religious aspect of the adventure, we then went to Omaha Beach, the landing site of the American forces on D-Day in the Second World War; the site that held one of the most consequential assaults in history. Although it was a victory, the memorial graveyard still stands endless with crosses; a deeply moving reminder of their great sacrifice. Aside from this, it is a very beautiful place; the gardens are stunning.

Apart from the adventures across the landscape, we needed a place to stay, and none was better than the elegant Château du Molay Littry. It was spectacular, with beautiful acres of land all around. The inside was very nicely furnished, and the food was lovely; likewise the staff!

The entire trip was one I thoroughly enjoyed, and I hope to return another time to discover even more mysteries of Normandy!

Juliana (15)

From the moment I stepped out of the car into the vast estate surrounding the château, I knew that this trip would be one to remember. It proved unforgettable, exceeding every expectation I had.

During our time in Normandy, we visited a number of remarkable sites, each one seeming more astonishing than the last. Among them were Caen Memorial Museum, Mont Saint-Michel, the home and convent of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, and the stunning Basilica of Sainte-Thérèse. As much as I loved every place we visited, one destination that stood out to me the most was Mont Saint-Michel. Not only was I mesmerised by the island itself, but the Abbey at its summit also. There was a sense of peacefulness up there that contrasted beautifully with the humming crowds below. Despite the relatively hollow interior, the architecture and sheer size of the Abbey made it completely worthwhile.

I enjoyed every minute of my time in



Normandy and am extremely eager to revisit when I'm older to explore even more of its sites.

Gabriella (13)

My favourite place that we went to was Mont Saint Michel Abbey. What I liked about it was that it was massive with a lot of rooms. I thought about how the monks found their way around and what it would have been like to look out of a window that high up every day. I was fascinated when Fr. de Malleray told us there was a line of shrines to Archangel St. Michel stretching across Europe. It was amazing to see the skull of St. Aubert in Avranches on the way back and to see the actual finger-sized hole and to think that St. Michael the Archangel actually touched it.

I found the talk the nun gave in the house at Lisieux and the one at the house in Alençon very interesting. Therese felt very real and near in the house and I loved receiving a "promise" from St. Zelig Martin at the end and seeing St. Therese's actual baby bib.

One evening, Fr. de Malleray had a Q&A Youth Group. We discussed everything from Fr. de Malleray's hobbies before he was a priest, to non-Catholic friends, to how long it takes to be a priest.

One of my favourite questions was about mortal sin and the three requirements needed.

It was great to get to know the other girls better as we shared a room. I have made closer friends through that and it was lovely to relax with them at the beach at the end of the week.



Honour (17)

The decision to homeschool, to follow the Catholic faith is to live in a way that can sometimes seem alien to the modern world. It can feel daunting, and even perhaps sometimes isolating. But the challenges that come with being more intentional with our lives are more than made up for in friendships with others who carry the same deeply held values and beliefs.

The fellowships that are formed in these circles feel natural and are built to last. Good friendships support our desires to seek truth and draw us closer to God. In a world full of empty promises, we strive for union with God.

The recent rendezvous in Normandy, full of beautiful and vibrant families showcased the light that's shining in this world.

It was lovely to be able to develop friendships with these faithful families who are living signs of that light. They are a wonderful encouragement and inspiration to us younger folk!

During the trip, we gathered daily for Holy Mass and to explore historic

and holy sights like Mont Saint Michel, the Mémorial de Caen, and Lisieux, the home of Saint Therese. We were spiritually provided for by Fr de Malleray, who led us in prayer and delivered talks as we gathered in the evening and was incredibly generous with his time, patience and energy.

Not only were these trips accommodating for all ages, they were also thoroughly enjoyable! Our base in Normandy, included a spacious green area allowing for much liberty for younger ones, as well as employing a fine social aspect—the parents had a bar to keep them happy too, as they enjoyed evenings playing card games and chatting!

From all that I saw, everyone left the weeklong Normandy trip in high spirits, with new knowledge gained and new friendships made and old ones strengthened.

Hats off to the organisers for planning and executing such an amazing and memorable trip! We are all very grateful. □

(Pictures: Dowry)

Two Events for Priests and Future Priests

Clergy Retreat *This Sacred Victim*, 5-9 Oct 2026.

Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP will reflect on the liturgical role of the priest and the sacrificial nature of his ministry at the altar.

Drawing on the Church's long-standing liturgical tradition as expressed in the Traditional Rite of the Roman Church, the retreat will offer a deeper awareness of the Mass as making present the Sacrifice of the Cross.

The retreat will be an opportunity to gain a further understanding of this central aspect of the Mass and of the structure of the Traditional Rite, serving also as an enrichment for the celebration of the New Rite.

A preached retreat organised by The Christian Heritage Centre at Stonyhurst, Lancashire, for secular and religious clergy and seminarians.



Visit christianheritagecentre.com/events/this-sacred-victim/. □

Men's Discernment Weekend 13-15 March 2026,

Buckden Towers, Buckden, St. Neots, Cambs PE19 5TA: Starts Friday 5:00pm; ends Sunday 2:00pm



Is God calling ME? Matrimony, celibacy, monastery, seminary, Fraternity?

COME & SEE If you are a single Catholic man between 18 and 35 years of age, come and discern with us near Bedford. Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP will lead the weekend. There will be talks, Eucharistic adoration, Compline,

Holy Mass and informal chatting with fellow-guests. Possibility of private meetings with a priest, and of confession. Feel welcome confidentially to call, email

or write for any questions. Holy Mass each of the three days.

COST: £99.00 per person in total (bed + full board). FREE for unwaged and students – give whatever amount you can.

BOOKINGS & CONTACT: [not via Facebook] malleray@fssp.org (read by Fr de Malleray only).

ACCESS: Direct train from London St Pancras to St Neots, every half hour, duration 56 minutes.

The nearest towns are Huntingdon (5 miles NNE of Buckden) and St Neots (5 miles South of Buckden). Both Huntingdon and St Neots are served by the West Anglian Great Northern Railway line from King's Cross London to Peterborough. **Let us know if you would need a lift from the railway station.** There also are bus and coach links to both Huntingdon and St Neots from many parts of the country.

SHARE the NEWS: forward this page or the Facebook event: <https://fb.me/e/6BEXofhud> □

Power, Responsibility, and the Common Good

A Thomistic reflection for our times given by Fr Miklos Homolya, FSSP at the annual Juventutem Summer Weekend in July 20205 at Ampleforth Abbey

Dear friends in Christ,
It is a joy and privilege to speak to you today on a topic that is both ancient and urgently contemporary: the question of **power** — what it is, where it comes from, what it is for, and how we should respond to it as Catholics seeking to live lives of virtue and truth.

Let us begin by looking at how the world speaks about power today.

The Contemporary View of Power: A Struggle of Oppression

In the dominant political discourse, especially among progressive and Marxist-influenced thinkers, **power is understood primarily as domination**. Society, they say, is a web of unequal power relations — between rich and poor, men and women, white and black, native and immigrant, straight and queer, and so on. These inequalities, in their view, are not merely unfortunate realities; they are oppressive structures. Those who possess power — whether political, economic, or cultural — impose their will on others. Those

who lack power are victims, and liberation consists in dismantling these systems of domination.

Hence, modern politics becomes a project of deconstruction: to unmask and undo oppressive hierarchies, to redistribute power more equitably, and to free individuals to determine their own identity and destiny.

This is, at root, a **revolutionary vision** of man and society.

Moreover, this view tends to locate the source of evil not in the individual heart — not in sin or vice — but in **external structures**: unjust

(Christ's Charge to St. Peter, tapestry after a cartoon by Rafael; Chatsworth House, picture Malleray)





(*Ecce Homo*, by Antonio Ciseri; Wikipedia Public Domain.)

institutions, bad systems, toxic traditions. Reform society, they say, and man will flourish. Change the system, and we will change the world.

There's a grain of truth here. Institutions matter. Structures can corrupt. But there's something profoundly missing too — something we, as Catholics, must not forget.

"With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility" — Or Is It the Other Way Around?

You've likely heard the old saying, "With great power comes great responsibility." It's the kind of moral

wisdom you'd hear from your parents — or Spider-Man's uncle.

And while it captures something noble — that power should be exercised responsibly — **it puts the order backwards.**

According to the Thomistic and natural law tradition, **responsibility, or duty, precedes power.** That is, **power is given for the sake of a duty.** It is not something we grasp for its own sake, or wield merely for our personal good, but something granted to fulfil a responsibility — a vocation.

We can see this clearly in examples from everyday life. Consider a surgeon. He has the power to cut

open the human body, to remove organs, to prescribe dangerous medications. That's not a power anyone should have unless they have first accepted the responsibility to heal. The power comes with, and for the sake of, the duty.

Or take the example of a teacher. His authority in the classroom is not there for ego or status, but to fulfil a responsibility to educate, to form minds, to lead students into truth.

Another example: consider the captain of a ship. The captain has command over the vessel, can give orders that must be obeyed, can direct the crew and even override their protests. But that power is

entirely for the sake of the ship's safety and the welfare of those on board. It is not a personal privilege but a role of immense burden. When the ship is in danger, the captain is the last to leave. His duty justifies his power.

You could also think of the example of a firefighter. He has the authority to break down doors, to direct people in emergencies, to make split-second decisions that affect lives. This power is not about control — it's about protection. His authority only makes sense because of his duty to save life and preserve safety.

Power is not the origin; **it is derivative**. It flows from a calling, from a responsibility rooted in reality and, ultimately, in God.

This is a foundational principle of **natural law**. If you want to know what a thing is for, look at what powers and capacities it has. If a bird has wings, it is made to fly. If a man has reason and will, he is made to know the truth and love the good. And if someone is given authority, it is because he is called to serve.

So to repeat the point here: in the Christian understanding, **power follows responsibility**. Not the other way around. That turns our cultural assumptions upside-down.

The Natural Hierarchies of Power: Ordered Toward the Common Good

This principle applies not only to individuals, but also to relationships

and institutions. Power in society is not a dirty word. It is necessary — but it must be rightly ordered.

Take, for example, the natural power of a **father over his family**. A father is not a tyrant. His authority is real, but its purpose is the good of the household: to protect, to teach, to correct, to guide. His duty is to love and provide, to lead by sacrificial example. That is why he is entrusted with power.

Think of St. Joseph. He had no biological claim to Jesus. He was not a learned rabbi or prince. But God entrusted him with authority over the Holy Family because he was obedient, humble, and faithful. He exercised that authority in silence and sacrifice. That is the image of

(Talk to teenagers about the Catholic martyrs at the Tower of London, October 20025 – picture FSSP)





(King St Louis IX of France embodied the saintly use of political power. *Apotheosis of St. Louis*, sculpture by C.H. Niehaus; picture by Ryan Ashelin; Wikipedia Public Domain - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:King_louis_statue_tonemapped.jpg)

righteous power.

Or consider a mother's authority in the home. She has immense formative influence over her children. Her power is not institutional, but it is profound — shaping habits, forming conscience, nurturing life. Her authority is exercised constantly, quietly, and out of love. It is a power rooted in the responsibility to nurture and teach, to love and correct. This too is a natural hierarchy, and a beautiful one.

The same is true of a **bishop over his diocese**. The bishop does not rule for personal glory or comfort. He shepherds his flock in Christ's name, responsible for their souls. The mitre and crozier are not signs of privilege, but signs of burden: *"Feed my sheep,"* says the Lord.

Consider St. Charles Borromeo. As Archbishop of Milan during the plague, he did not flee the city like others. He stayed, ministered to the sick, organized relief, and gave away his own wealth. His episcopal power was not ornamental — it was functional, sacrificial, and deeply pastoral.

Or consider the role of a **judge** in a courtroom. He has power to sentence, to punish, to interpret the law. But that power is not for his own opinion or agenda. It is exercised in service of justice. It is constrained by law, tradition, precedent, and conscience. His power exists for his duty to uphold the common good.

The same applies to **political power**. The ruler bears the sword — not for

his personal gain, but to safeguard justice and peace in society.

All these examples show the same pattern: **power is entrusted to those who have a responsibility to serve others**.

St. Thomas Aquinas puts it clearly: *"A law is nothing else than an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community"* (ST I-II, q.90, a.4). The ruler's power is real, but its end is the common good — not arbitrary control.

Let me repeat that point: power is meant for service. In every legitimate form of authority, power exists to fulfil a duty, directed by reason, ordered to the good of others. That's what makes it just.

The Liberal Suspicion of Power and the Reality of Sin

And yet — if this is true, if power is meant for service and ordered to the good — why is there such deep suspicion of authority in modern political thought, especially among liberals?

A famous quote from Lord Acton says: *"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."* This view has become almost a modern dogma. We hear it invoked whenever people push for decentralization, transparency, or checks and balances. And in many cases, this caution is wise. But let's pause and think: is it true, in all cases, that power corrupts? **God** is all-powerful, yet He is perfectly good. **Christ** says, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"* — and yet His kingship is one of humility and sacrificial love. This statement is manifestly **not** true in all cases.

So perhaps the problem is not power itself, but the kind of creature to whom it is given.

Here is where the Catholic doctrine of **original sin** is so crucial. Power in itself is not evil. But we are wounded. Our nature is fallen. We are inclined to pride, greed, self-interest. And so, yes — when flawed human beings wield great power, they often misuse it. Not because power corrupts per se, but because we are already corrupted and inclined to corruption.

Ironically, progressives often seem to **both deny and presume** this doctrine at once. On the one hand, they act as if human beings are naturally good, and all evil stems from bad institutions or unjust systems. On the other hand, they

are deeply suspicious of any concentration of power — as if they knew that those in authority can't be trusted.

This is the contradiction: if man is basically good, why fear giving him authority? But if man is fallen, then we need a more realistic view — not

only of political institutions, but of the human heart.

Only the Christian tradition, especially as articulated by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, gives us a coherent framework: power is good, when ordered rightly. But we must be

(Ghent Altarpiece, or Adoration of the Mystic Lamb, panel with the Blessed Virgin Mary, from the polyptych by Jan van Eyck and Hubert van Eyck; picture by Web Gallery of Art on Wikipedia, Public Domain)



vigilant, because fallen men can twist good things toward evil ends.

Anthropology Matters: The Thomistic vs Liberal View of Man

Underlying this whole difference is a deeper divide: how we understand **what man is**.

For the Catholic — and especially for St. Thomas — man is a **rational animal**: a being with a body and a soul, with intellect to know the truth and will to choose the good. He is made in the image of God, called to communion, ordered toward beatitude.

Freedom, in this view, is not the power to choose anything whatsoever. It is the power to choose well. Freedom is perfected in virtue — when the will aligns with reason and seeks the good.

Contrast this with the dominant **liberal anthropology**: man is essentially a **free agent**. His identity is his autonomy. His dignity lies in his ability to choose, regardless of what he chooses. The only evil is coercion; the only sin is to limit another's freedom.

This leads to the famous liberal maxim: *"Your freedom ends where mine begins."* Sounds neat, but what does it imply?

It means that all social norms — especially those rooted in religion or tradition — are suspect, because they might constrain someone's self-expression. Hence, the liberal agenda tends to erode institutions like marriage, family, and even objective truth. Anything that suggests a right or wrong way to live is seen as oppressive.

This is why sexual morality becomes radically privatized: so long as there is consent, anything goes. This is why gender becomes fluid, and family becomes redefined. Because the highest good is not virtue or truth, but individual choice.

But this is a fragile anthropology. It misunderstands freedom, isolates the individual, and leads to confusion and chaos. It forgets that we are not gods — though, that was exactly that the serpent was tempting Eve with: you will be like gods. Instead, we are creatures, made for relationship, truth, and the common good.

The Catholic Response: Truth, Virtue, and Law as Teacher

The Thomistic view is profoundly different. Because man has a nature — given by God, wounded by sin but capable of grace — he also has a proper end: **union with God through the pursuit of truth and virtue**.

Freedom is not the ability to do whatever I want; it is the ability to do what I ought. Laws and institutions are not shackles, but **teachers**. Good laws help form good habits. Good institutions help shape virtuous citizens.

That's why the Church calls **just authority a gift**, and **obedience a virtue**.

In political life, when power is rightly ordered and limited by the natural law and the common good, it becomes a source of flourishing. When disordered — whether by tyranny or lawless license — it leads to ruin.

The Fruits of the Progressive Project

What are the fruits of this disordered view of man and power?

We see it in the breakdown of families, in the crisis of authority in schools and churches, in the loss of trust in institutions. We see it in a generation that feels rootless, anxious, disoriented — because they have been taught that freedom means doing whatever they want, while being denied any coherent vision of what they are made for.

And politically, we see societies fragment into competing identity groups, each demanding power and recognition, but unable to agree on any shared good.

When power is divorced from duty, it becomes dangerous. When freedom is detached from truth, it becomes destructive.

Only the true understanding — of man as rational and social, of power as responsibility, of law as reason for the common good — can heal these wounds.

An Exhortation to You, the Faithful Young

But here, dear friends, is where you come in.

The Church needs **young adults like you** — who have a clue about the truth about man, power, virtue, and society. We need **fathers and mothers, teachers and leaders, religious and lay apostles** who will wield what power God gives them not to dominate, but to serve.

Learn your faith. Live the virtues. Discover your vocation. Don't be afraid of authority, or shy away from leadership — but purify it, sanctify it, and direct it to the common good. Because power, rightly understood, is a **participation in the authority of God**. And He gives power not so that we may boast, but so that we may build — families, parishes, cultures, and, by grace, even a society.

Let me end with the words of Our Lord: *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them... but it shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant"* (Matthew 20:25–26).

May we, like Him, use whatever power we are given — in family, Church, or society — not to be served, but to serve. And may the Virgin Most Powerful guide us on the path of truth and virtue. Amen. □

Black Robe: Zeal for Souls in New France

Fr Armand de Malleray, FSSP reviews a film about missionary Jesuits in Canada

In 1991, Bruce Beresford directed *Black Robe*, a historical drama film about seventeenth-century Jesuit missionaries sent to “New France” (in present-day Canada). A mere five years earlier, Roland Joffé’s had directed his celebrated film *The Mission* about Jesuit evangelisers in Paraguay. The title of Beresford’s film *Black Robe* refers to the nickname given to the priest by the Indians in reference to his Jesuit cassock.

To evangelise an Algonquin tribe, main character Father Paul LaForgue, a young Jesuit from France, must travel one thousand five-hundred miles across hostile territory. But his party is attacked by Mohawk Iroquois. Having escaped the night before his execution (with

only one finger cut off so far), the missionary manages to baptise a Huron tribe, who will soon be tragically decimated by the Iroquois.

The film was adapted by best-selling author Brian Moore from his 1985 eponymous novel. Actor Lothaire Bluteau most credibly plays the quiet, recollected and determined young Jesuit. The few flashbacks depicting his youth and vocation while still in France are poignantly understated. Thus, the audience learns that Father LaForgue renounced a life of material wealth and of cultural refinement, as well as the comfort of family affections. Those sharply contrast with the utter destitution and helplessness of his chosen condition on board the Indian canoe. There is no doubt as to the

selfless, and indeed sacrificial, motivation of the courageous missionary. For no other reason does he expose his life than that of bringing Christ to “the poor souls kept in the darkness of paganism.”

Surprisingly, given the supernatural outlook, the only time Holy Mass is hinted at is when Iroquois warriors empty Father LaForgue’s travel bag, opening his sacred vessels and putting on his Roman chasuble. The French Catholic layman who accompanied the priest could surely have acted as altar server, allowing the missionary to perform the most important action for the success of the mission.

On several occasions Father LaForgue baptises using his own





(Relics of the American Jesuit Martyrs; picture by Justin Bonyun, Facebook;
Statue of St. Jean de Brebeuf at Martyrs Shrine Midland, ON; picture by JFVoll; Wikipedia Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license)

saliva, an invalid matter, despite having river water nearby, or snow to quickly melt. Such an implausible mistake must be ascribed to the film director or novelist surely, rather than to seventeenth-century Jesuits who would have known better. Time and again the Indians accuse the priest of being a demon. The supernatural opposition between actual demonic powers at work among the pagan tribes and the candid truth of the Gospel is well attested and unobtrusively depicted.

Not the least of the missionary's suffering is the absence of conversions among his Indian companions. Not one embraces

Christianity, while at the end the Huron tribe seems to accept baptism out of superstition (to save them from a disease) rather than because they have understood and accepted salvation brought by Christ. Even his Catholic fellow-Frenchman leans towards the pagan beliefs of the Indian female he is enamoured with. In fact, very sparse are the scenes when Father LaForgue overtly explains elements of Christian doctrine. One would have expected to see more of his catechetical endeavours.

May we add a modesty *caveat* for the sake of the audience: the promiscuity within the travelling

party, true to circumstances as it may be, should have been hinted at rather than overtly displayed.

Well-researched and faithfully put to the screen, *Black Robe* is a fair tribute to the superhuman courage and perseverance of the European Jesuits such as Saints Isaac Jogues and John of Brébeuf, who left everything behind and risked their lives daily under harsh natural and weather conditions, not to mention the often-hostile indigenous tribes they sought to win over to Christ. The film was well received and was a commercial success. □

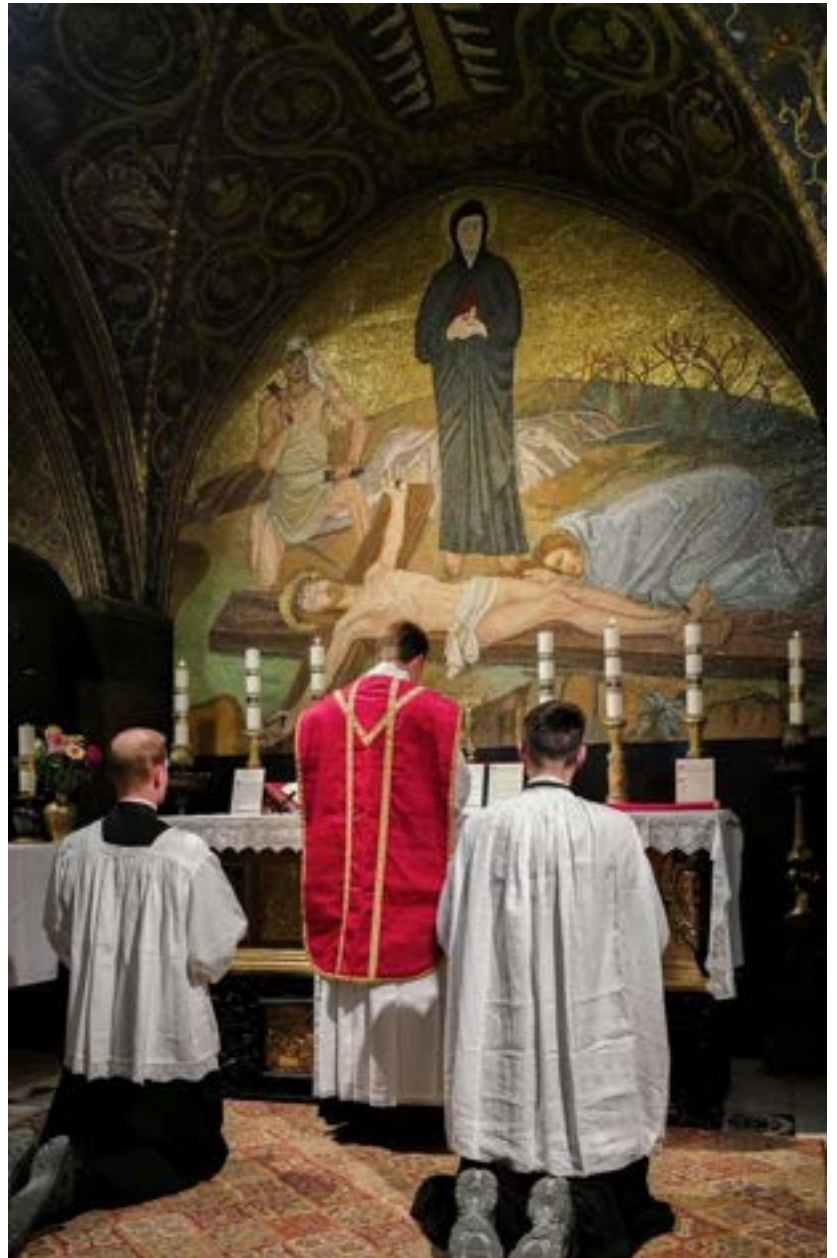
Scripture and Stone: Life in Jerusalem

Fr Gwilym Evans, FSSP, studied Hebrew and Arabic at Cambridge before converting and joining the FSSP, at whose European seminary in Bavaria he was ordained a priest in 2022. After ministering in England he was sent for scripture study to Jerusalem where he has spent the last eighteen months, coinciding with the Gaza War.

If these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” (Lk 19:40)

Most mornings, just before sunrise, I walk through the quiet streets of Jerusalem’s Old City to celebrate Mass at the Austrian Hospice on the Via Dolorosa—the same path Christ walked to Calvary, where the sacrifice I’m about to make present on the altar first took place. Every building that I pass is made of that same distinctive pale, honey-coloured limestone, known as ‘Jerusalem stone’. This stone has absorbed centuries of prayer and pilgrimage, but also the age-old tensions that make Jerusalem both sacred and contested ground.

My journey begins at the Priory of St Stephen, just outside the city walls, where I live with the Dominican friars on the site of the Protomartyr’s martyrdom, according to the oldest tradition; a Byzantine basilica, dedicated to St Stephen, stood here already in the 5th century. The Priory is also home to the École Biblique, where—since 1890—the *text* of the Bible has been studied in its geographical *context*. This approach was the vision of its founder, Servant of God Marie-Joseph Lagrange (1855–1938), who insisted on confronting the Sacred Book (the *document*) with the Holy Sites (the *monument*), unifying Scripture with archaeology and history. This methodology reflects the ‘incarnational principle’ of Catholic exegesis: that Sacred Scripture is both fully human and fully divine (Dogmatic



(Above: Fr Evans offers Holy Mass at the Holy Sepulchre. Top right: a model of the old City of Jerusalem. Bottom right: On 19th January 2025 Fr Evans presented to Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa OFM, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, a donation raised by the FSSP in the UK in assistance to Catholics in need in the Holy Land. Pictures Evans, Malleray.)

Constitution *Dei Verbum* §13).

“The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” (Ps 117(118):22)

Living and studying in Jerusalem is to see Scripture in three dimensions. The ultimate expression of this is at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where I regularly have the privilege of offering Holy Mass at the very site of the Crucifixion on Calvary or within the Tomb of the Resurrection. Here, and especially in the context of the living liturgy of the Church, the word of God becomes flesh in the witness of these holy stones. There, for example, the psalmist’s parchment comes to life: the rejected rock of Calvary becomes the source of salvation. Each Mass celebrated here is a profound encounter with the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ—where *hic* (here) becomes *nunc* (now), and the story of salvation is made present before our eyes.



Beyond Jerusalem too, the stones of the Holy Land continue to speak. On our travels to holy and archaeological sites across the country, I walk among ruins and along roads, which offer a living and tangible commentary on the divine word. The stones themselves are invisibly etched with salvation history; they bear witness to God’s enduring love and the truth of His saving plan, unfolding through the ages.

“Like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house.” (1 Pet 2:5)

St Peter’s call for us to be living stones takes on a new meaning in this environment. Walking these streets, touching these ancient walls, one senses how stones endure through times of faith and of conflict alike—and how we, too, are hewn by God’s grace to be part of His spiritual house, His Church. Over the past year, it has been a particular joy to welcome pilgrims who made the journey here, undeterred by the region’s challenges, and to walk with them in the footsteps of Christ—from friends and parishioners in the UK to priest confrères from around the world, and even two brave FSSP seminarians from Wigratzbad.

Each morning, as I return from Mass through these same limestone streets, I’m reminded that I’m not just studying the story of redemption here—I’m living within it. The stones are patient witnesses, and—for now—I get to be one too. □



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Above: FSSP seminarian Piotr, from London, receives First Tonsure and dons the cassock last 18th October at our European seminary in Germany. (Photo FSSP)

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