

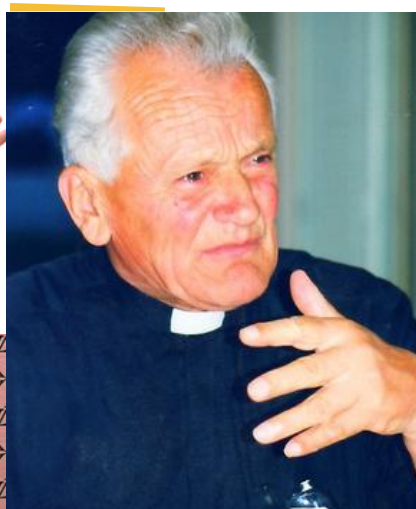
Free Magazine

FAITH MATTERS

Exclusive interview
with Barbara Dickson:
She knows Him
so well

Rita Ora, Dua
Lipa and
Mother Teresa
- what have
they in
common?

SUMMER
EDITION



Editors' Comments

You will see, from our front cover, that Barbara Dickson has kindly given us an interview this month which I'm sure you will find really interesting.

Fr Patrick van der Vorst has also given us an interview explaining why the use of religious art does not break the Ten Commandments. It's a debate that has raged on over the centuries and it is really useful to get a take on it from someone so knowledgeable in art.

You may not recognise the priest and the gentleman to the right of him in the pictures

above. They are Dom Simon Jubani and Blessed Qerim Sadiku, who both feature in our article on the development of Christianity in Albania.

Now, looking at the pictures on this page, you may be puzzled as to why *Louis Vuitton* should appear in our publication. Well, we're not going to tell you, you'll just have to read on to find out why!

The Editors

Picture Credits:
Patrick van der Vorst: Sotheby's Auctioneering
Louis Vuitton: Louis Vuitton
Dom Simon Jubani: Arouca Press
Blessed Qerim Sadiku: Theresa Marie Moreau

The interview:
Barbara Dickson 3

Christianity
in Albania 7

Baking with
Nicci 12

Religious Art
-Right or
Wrong? 14

Faith and
Science 18

Word Search 22

Music
Review 23

Young Faith 26

Palais des
Papes 29

Cover photo: Alan Clyde



Barbara Dickson



Spotlight on faith



Brian Aris

It's not surprising that *The Scotsman* described Barbara Dickson as Scotland's best-selling female singer. Having placed fifteen albums in the UK charts, two Olivier Awards for best actress, an OBE and a mention in the *Guinness Book of Records* for her duet with Elaine Page, who can argue with that claim?



Interview by Harrison Burt and Daisy Vallecillos Von Hagen

Barbara Dickson

Interview

What, in your childhood, inspired you to pursue a career in music and acting?

I didn't really think it was practical to have a career in the arts when I was young. It was only by singing in my local folk music club that I learned a repertoire. I never saw myself in show-business, but only in music!

Of the many songs you have written, which would be your favourite and why?

A recent song of mine, called *Goodnight, I'm Going Home* is my favourite, as I finished it and KNEW it was a good song, and no one had to tell me.

Of the films you've acted in, which one made the greatest impact on you?

I haven't been in film, only TV drama and on the stage. I think my favourite screen role on TV is Anita in *Band of Gold*. A programme about the lives of sex workers in Bradford, which was very ground breaking at the time, in the mid 1990s.



I never saw myself in show-business, but only in music!

Barbara Dickson

What do you treasure most in your marriage?

The great friendship and familiarity between myself and Oliver, my husband. Oh, and the blessing of our three children, who are in their 30s now. That's been a great addition to my life. I wouldn't have ever liked to have been a single person. I needed to have the partnership to feel complete.

What are your hopes and dreams for the future with your husband and your children?

Well, I'm almost 77 now, so my life has been long and eventful. I hope to be around a while longer but I'd like to see my children all settled. Like a lot of young people these days, two of my three sons are still single with no prospect of owning their own homes. It's very difficult. Despite that, I wish them all the happiness in the world.

My life has been long and eventful



What was the biggest difficulty you faced in your career?

I had a long while where I suffered from stage fright, due to my reputation. It's very difficult to be 'brilliant' all the time. Just try it!!! But seriously, it was a great strain, and it took years to overcome my fear of failure.



What was it like to receive an OBE?

The day of my receiving my OBE was very special and I was able to take my three sons out of school to go to the Investiture in Buckingham Palace where, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, made me feel very relaxed. Everyone is

The sureness of God's love and support...

so nervous there and it is a great occasion for family and friends. It's a huge honour and I am very proud of my achievement.

Why did you choose to become a Catholic?

I was raised a Presbyterian, but never felt happy with that worship as there was so little liturgy. I love the universality of our Church and the thought that Mass is celebrated everywhere in the world, the same. I love it! And it's a great comfort to me. My husband was a 'cradle' Catholic from London and I felt happy to join him when our children were baptised.

What do you find most valuable in your Catholic faith?

The sureness of God's love and support is always uppermost in my mind, even though I'm fearful and scared a lot of the time. He takes my hand and looks after me, despite my weakness.

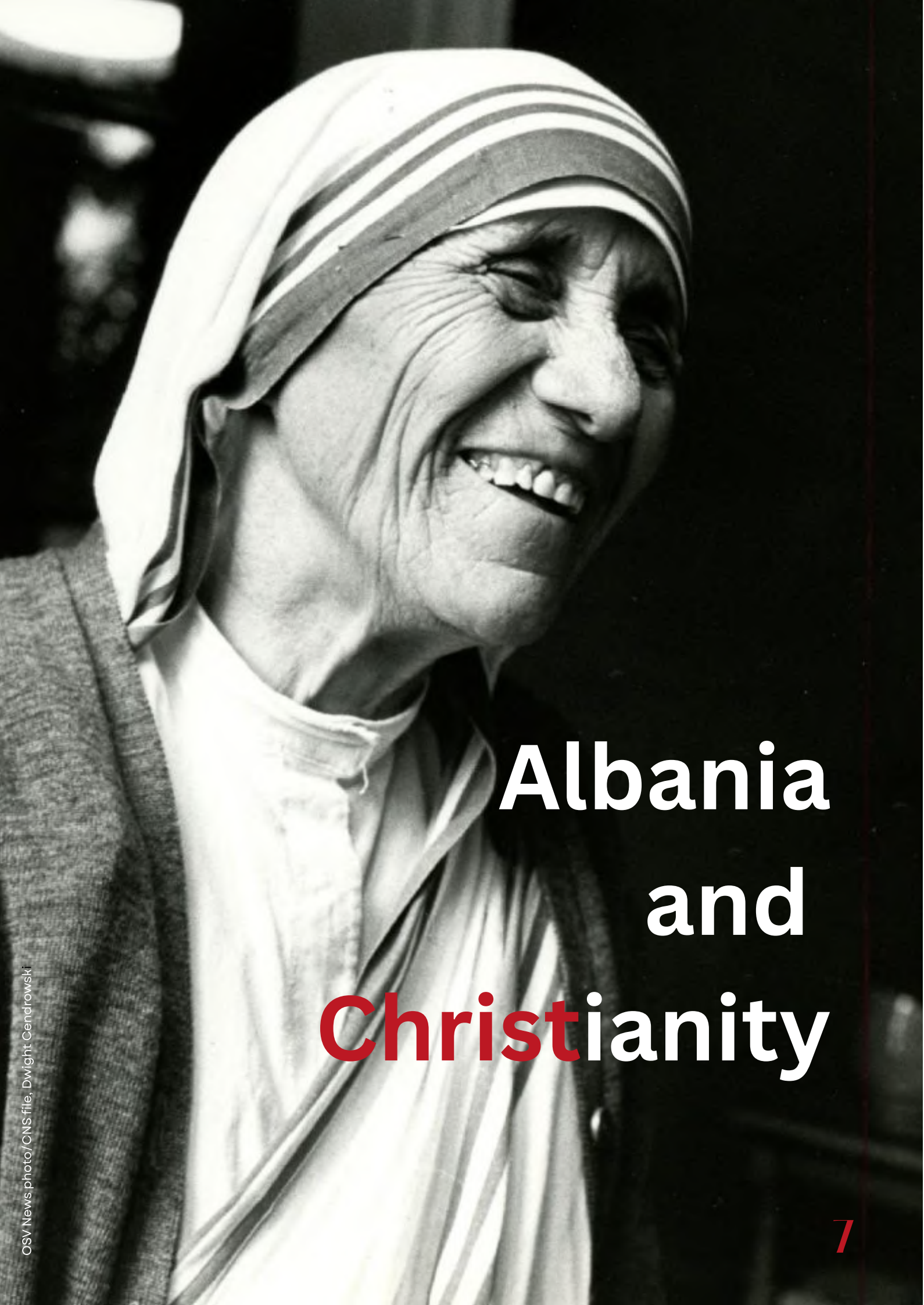
What advice would you give someone looking to make their way in music and acting?

I suppose these days, get the grades and go to drama school or music college. Learn your craft, be hard working and don't allow fame to derail you in your quest to make a career. It's easy to be successful for five minutes but not five years!

Unless stated otherwise, all pictures of Barbara Dickson are from her Facebook page.



6 *He takes my hand and looks after me*



Albania and Christianity



Ralph_PH

Type 'famous Albanians' into *Google*, and Rita Ora, Dua Lipa and, of course, Mother Teresa all feature in the top ten most famous Albanians.



Fitore Gashi

However, what of the development of Christianity in Albania? Not as well known as the three ladies above.



Holy Heroes

Mark Rrahista takes a closer look at Christianity in Albania.

Albania and Christianity



Albania is a small country in the eastern European bloc which is part of the Balkans. They have a population of about 2.8 million. Albania has been conquered many times but the 500 year rule by the Ottoman Empire was the most significant. The Albanian people have gone through many conflicts in which faith has been all over the place.

Starting with the Illyrian Empire, through to Communism and right up to today, we'll look at the development of Christianity in what was the first officially proclaimed Atheist country. The churches that stand today in Albania are testament to the influence of Christianity in a land that gave the world the most famous 20th century nun.

Albania started off as the Illyrian Empire, although they were really a collection of tribes, situated around the Balkans. They were an Indo-European population. In the beginning, Albania was influenced mainly by its neighbours, the Greek Empire and then subsequently, the Roman Empire.

Yet, how did Christianity come to the Illyrians in the first place? It is widely believed that St Paul was the first person to bring the message of Christ to the people of Albania. He spoke the Gospel of Jesus and the Illyrians listened. The power of the Word of God had started.

As Illyrians they worshipped many deities linked to everyday life, health and the natural world. This form of belief was known as paganism, those in the south of the country may have adopted elements of the Greek belief system. However, by the time of

However, the expansion of the Ottoman Empire led to the invasion of Albania in 1385. Their control of Albania lasted all the way up to 1912 and explains the similarities of Albanian culture and words today to those of the Turkish people. Under Ottoman rule



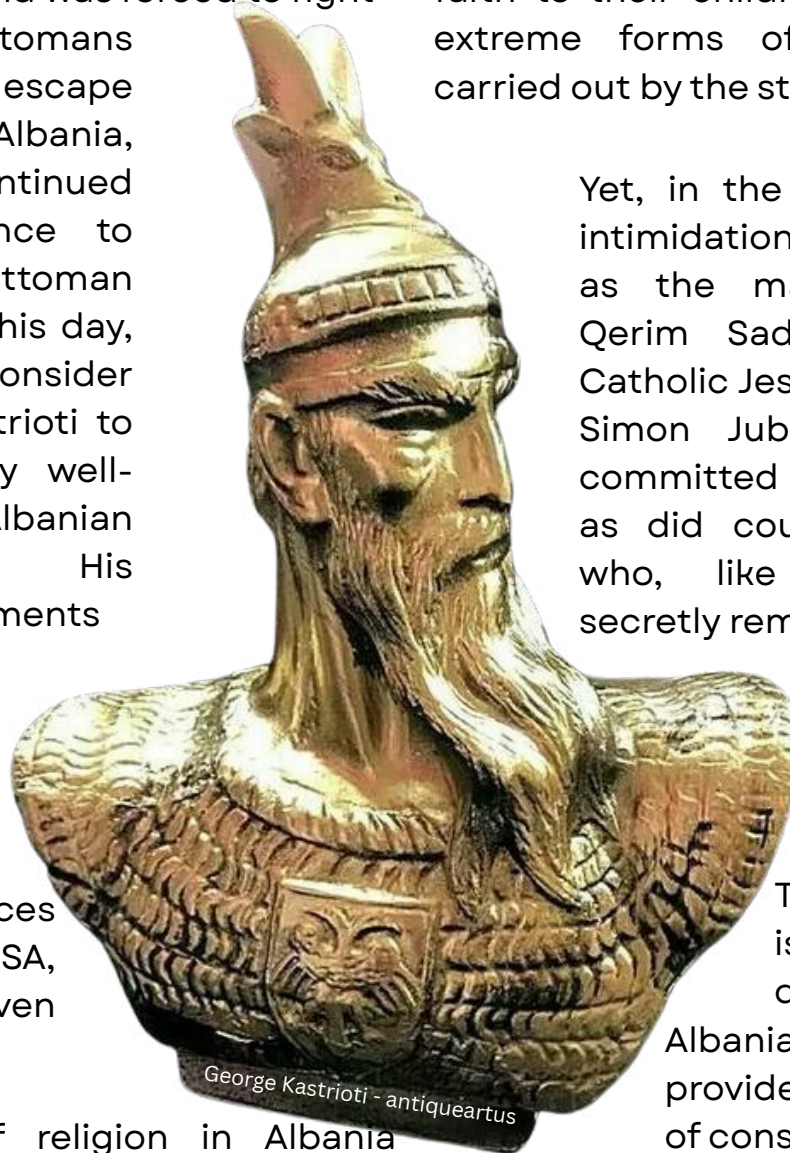
**Detail of
an Illyrian
belt buckle
discovered
on the
Balkan
Peninsula.**

Alaturka

the Roman conquest of Albania, there were pockets of Catholic communities who were persecuted until the 4th century when the Emperor of Rome, Constantine, converted to Christianity. From this point, paganism went into sharp decline.

Christians, Jews and other religious minorities endured discrimination and even persecution. Many battles were fought against the Ottoman Empire, such as the Battle of Albulena, in which 8,000 Albanians fought against 80,000 Ottomans.

Miraculously, the Albanians won and a song in honour of the event was composed. This victory by George Kastrioti, a Catholic Albanian Commander, was followed by other battles until 1468 when he was captured by the Ottomans and was forced to fight with the Ottomans until his escape back to Albania, where he continued his resistance to the Ottoman Empire. To this day, many consider George Kastrioti to be the only well-known Albanian hero. His accomplishments are celebrated world-wide, with statues of him in places such as USA, UK and even Switzerland.



Freedom of religion in Albania lasted for a relatively short period until the establishment of Communism in 1944, following the defeat of the Nazis at the end of World War II. Under the dictator, Enver Hoxha, all religion was banned, orders to destroy all churches and other places of worship were carried out

diligently. A blanket ban on religion was imposed as Hoxha thought it was all a 'scam' and a 'lie', and in 1967 Albania was officially declared an Atheist State. Fear among believers was such, that many parents dared not pass on their faith to their children for fear of extreme forms of punishment carried out by the state.

Yet, in the face of such intimidation, figures such as the martyr Blessed Qerim Sadiku and the Catholic Jesuit priest Dom Simon Jubani remained committed in their faith, as did countless others who, like my family, secretly remained faithful to Christ and His message of love.

Today the story is totally different. The Albanian constitution provides for freedom of conscience and religion. It declares that there is no official religion and the state is neutral in matters of belief. It recognises the equality and independence of religious groups, and prohibits discrimination based on religion. No doubt Blessed Qerim Sadiku and Dom Simon Jubani would approve.



SPINACH & FETA SCONES

Baking with Nicci



These high protein and gluten free scones are great for a picnic.

Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil
5-6 spring onions, finely chopped
100g fresh spinach, chopped
250ml egg white
200g ground almonds
250g feta, crumbled
1tsp baking powder
Salt & pepper



SERVING

12 scones



BAKING TIME

35 MINS

Method

Preheat oven to 400F/200C/180C fan.

Heat the oil in a pan over medium/high heat and fry the chopped spring onions for 1 to 2 minutes until softened.

Add the chopped spinach and cook until wilted, about 2 to 3 minutes.

Season with pepper and a little salt (remember the feta will be quite salty).

Remove from heat and leave to cool.

Combine egg whites, ground almonds, feta, spinach mixture and baking powder in a large bowl.

Use an ice-cream scoop or dampened hands to form 12 balls and place on a baking tray with parchment paper.

Bake for 20-25 mins until slightly golden.

Cool before serving.





Religious Art Right or Wrong?

Guido Reni - Golden Artists

Is religious art breaking the second commandment?

Becky Moubourgoulou put this question to ex-Dragons' Den winner, Patrick van der Vorst

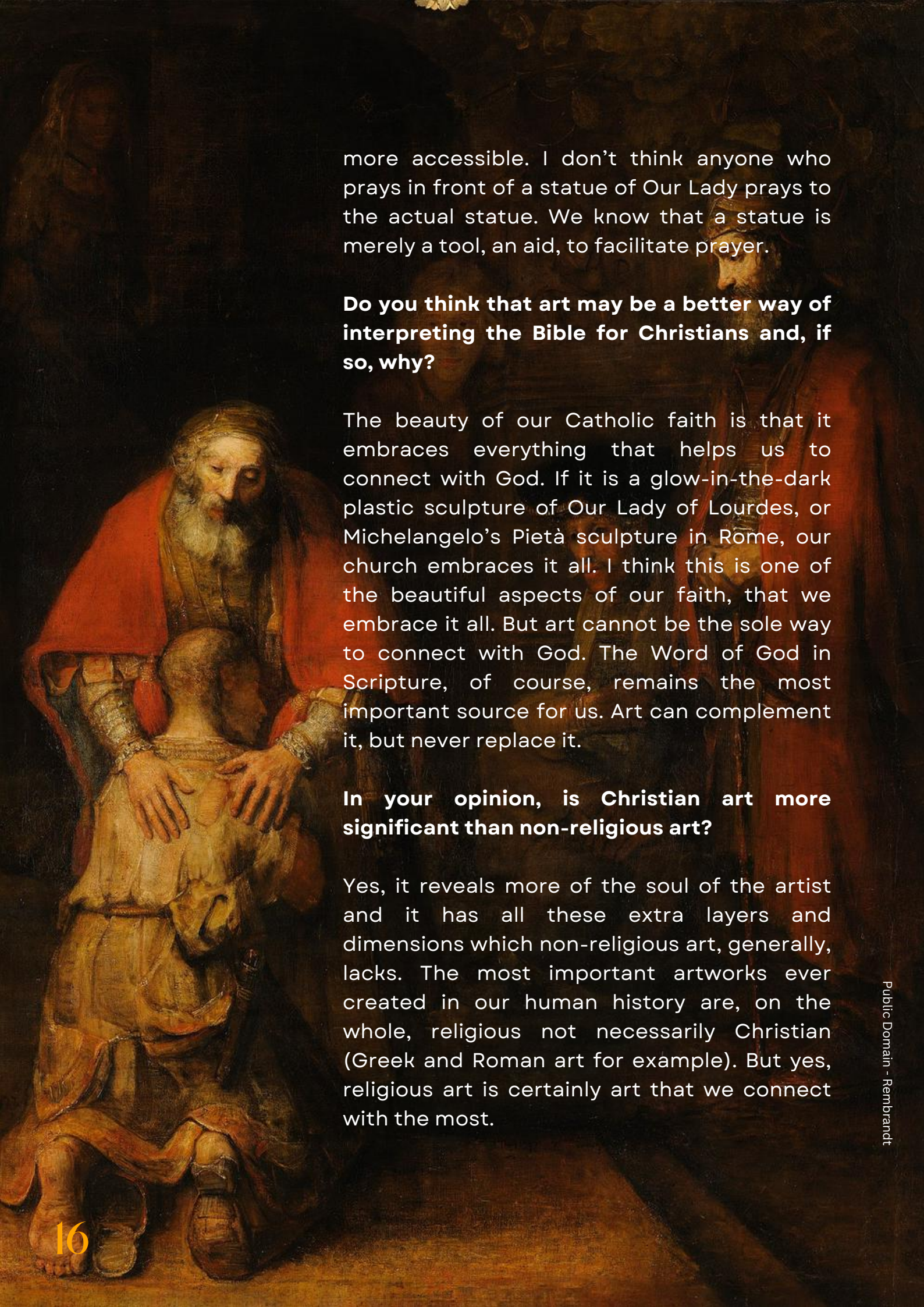
Catholics are sometimes criticised for their use of art by other Christian denominations who argue that sacred art breaks the second commandment. What would your response be?

As Catholics, we see art as an integral part of our faith. As God created His Son in His image, and as Jesus is the image of His Father, it means that God Himself uses ‘images’. So if it is good enough for Him, it is good enough for us. We are not only allowed to use images but, in fact, when we create art and images, we participate in God’s creative process. It is a form of participation in the divine.

In what ways do you think Christian Art brings people closer to God?

Christian Art is simply a doorway to
make God, Our Lady and the Saints





more accessible. I don't think anyone who prays in front of a statue of Our Lady prays to the actual statue. We know that a statue is merely a tool, an aid, to facilitate prayer.

Do you think that art may be a better way of interpreting the Bible for Christians and, if so, why?

The beauty of our Catholic faith is that it embraces everything that helps us to connect with God. If it is a glow-in-the-dark plastic sculpture of Our Lady of Lourdes, or Michelangelo's Pietà sculpture in Rome, our church embraces it all. I think this is one of the beautiful aspects of our faith, that we embrace it all. But art cannot be the sole way to connect with God. The Word of God in Scripture, of course, remains the most important source for us. Art can complement it, but never replace it.

In your opinion, is Christian art more significant than non-religious art?

Yes, it reveals more of the soul of the artist and it has all these extra layers and dimensions which non-religious art, generally, lacks. The most important artworks ever created in our human history are, on the whole, religious not necessarily Christian (Greek and Roman art for example). But yes, religious art is certainly art that we connect with the most.



As well as securing an investment from Deborah Meaden and Theo Paphitis on *Dragons' Den*, Fr Patrick van der Vorst has set up the hugely popular *Christian Art* website (<https://christian.art/>). The website helps subscribers to connect with the Gospel through works of art.

In addition, before being ordained a Catholic priest, he studied Law at Leuven in Belgium, became deputy director at Sotheby's and founded *ValueMyStuff* in 2009.

As a former director of Sotheby's Auction House, what is the most inspirational Christian art you've ever seen?

I think it was a painting by Rubens (the *Massacre of the Innocents*) that we sold when I was there. I discovered it in a monastery in Austria. It sold for a staggering £48 million. The religious sisters were very happy with the result!


How did you develop a love for art?

From a young age I always read up on art. The beauty of art has always seduced me and nurtured me.

Were friends and family supportive of your decision to become a Catholic priest?

Yes, everyone was so supportive. I thought that maybe I would lose some friends in the process. But literally, all of my friends have remained and supported me throughout the process on my way to the priesthood. It has led to some very beautiful and, sometimes, difficult discussions with them but everyone has been super supportive.

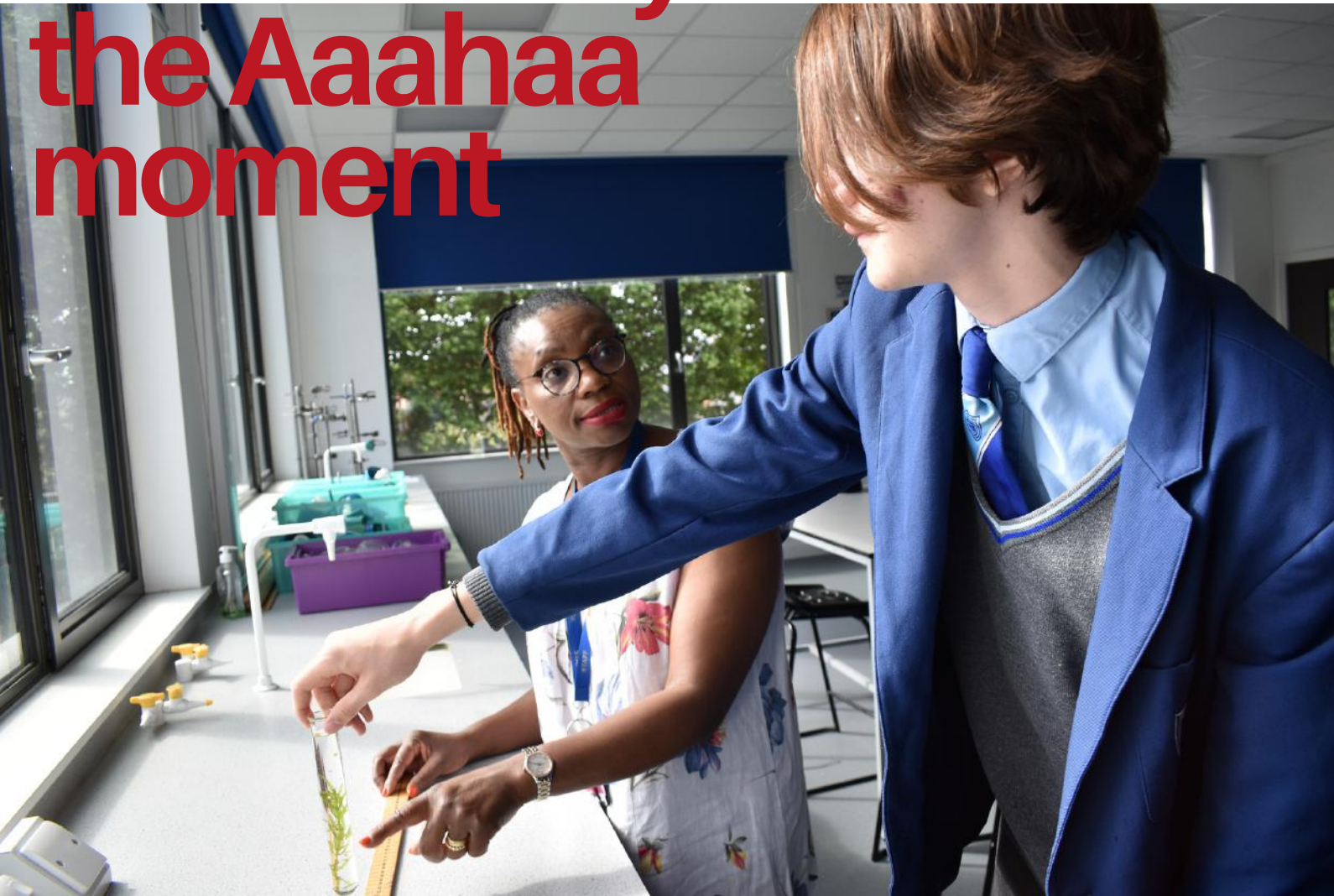
Many of my friends don't go to church anymore, so they were fascinated by my choice to put myself forward for the priesthood. They saw it as an extreme choice. Many of them told me, 'why don't you just do charity work for the rest of your life instead of giving your whole life away?' I think they now understand more why I took the choice, as they can see me being very happy; a more profound happiness than before. I pray and hope that some of these friends may return to the Church at some stage in their lives.

A portrait of Lydia Spouge, a Black woman with short dreadlocks, wearing glasses and a blue lanyard with 'STAFF' written on it. She is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is white.

faith and science: what's the chemistry like?

Lydia Spouge,
teacher of Science
at St John Bosco
College, talks to
Sahar Hanafi
about how her
passion for Christ
and Science works
so well.

that spark in students' eyes - the Aaahaa moment



What inspired you to become a science teacher and what feeds your passion for teaching science?

As I grew up at school, my love for science also grew within me. I was always curious how the world works. Being a science teacher gave me the tools to explore that curiosity and I wanted to share that sense of wonder with others. That made me feel that teaching science was a natural calling.

What continues to feed my passion is seeing that spark in students' eyes, the Aaahaa moment when they understand the concept or begin to see the world through a science lens. I love creating an environment where students feel safe to explore, make mistakes and grow. Helping them to connect science to everyday life and showing them they are capable of more than they thought. That's what keeps me inspired every day.

faith and science:

Has teaching Science ever deepened or challenged your faith in any way?

Yes, teaching Science has both deepened my faith and challenged it at times, but always in ways that ultimately strengthened my relationship with God.

On the one hand, science deepened my faith by revealing the intricate design and order of the universe. Whether it's the precision of physics, the complexity of biology, or the vastness of space, I see reflections of an intelligent Creator behind it all. As I teach, I often find myself marvelling at how creation works harmoniously, which affirms the belief that faith and reason can coexist beautifully.

On the other hand, science has challenged my faith in moments where certain theories or findings seemed to conflict with spiritual beliefs. However, those challenges pushed me to dig deeper into scripture, theology and scientific understanding and to grow in humility. I have learnt that faith is not about having every answer but trusting God even as we continue to ask questions. Wrestling with these tensions has actually matured my faith, not weakened it.

In the classroom, I strive to model curiosity, integrity and respect, encouraging students to think critically, ask questions, and explore how science and belief can engage in a meaningful dialogue.



'faith is not about having every answer'

How do you expect to influence your students, not just academically but in terms of their life values or sense of direction?

While academic success is important, I believe the true goal of teaching is to help shape character. I try to model values such as integrity, curiosity, perseverance and compassion. I ask my students to be critical thinkers and to ask meaningful questions and to treat others with respect. My hope is that they leave my classroom not only with knowledge but with a stronger sense of purpose and moral grounding.

What encouraged you to teach in a Catholic school rather than a non-religious school?

Teaching in a Catholic school has given me the unique opportunity to integrate faith with learning. Here, I can support students academically while also nurturing their spiritual growth.

I also value being part of a community where we can pray together, discuss moral issues

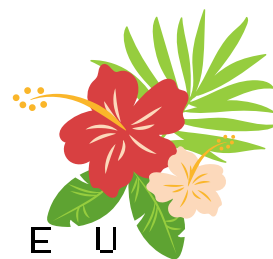
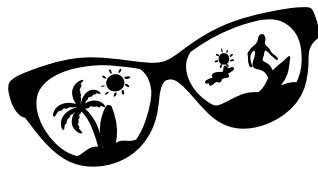
openly, and guide students to develop both their intellect and their character in light of Gospel values. The holistic approach is what drew me here and what has kept me here.

What is the greatest lesson that teaching has taught you?

Teaching has taught me humility and the importance of life-long learning. No matter how much experience I gain, each student, each class, brings new perspectives and challenges. I have learnt that patience, empathy, and a listening heart often go further than my textbook. Most of all, I have come to understand that teaching is not just about imparting knowledge - it's about building relationships and helping others to fully discover their potential.



faith and science



Word Search

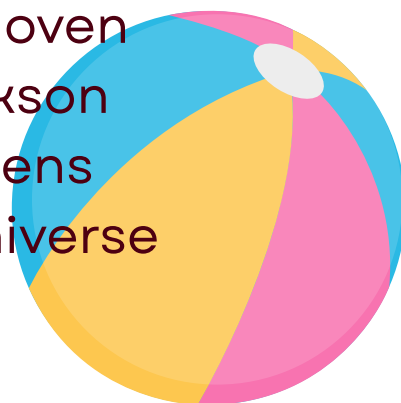
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S	C	I	E	N	C	E	N	O	J	A	C	L	A	V



**All the words in this word search
feature somewhere in this edition of
*Faith Matters.***



Art Avignon Beethoven
Cajon Cruise Dickson
Faith Illyrian Rubens
Science Sonata Universe





Public Domain



Music Review

Doug Wells

Ludvig van Beethoven was born in Bonn in 1770 to a musical Catholic family, where his father was a singer at the Electoral Court of Bonn.

Tutored by his father and Christian Gottlob Neefe, he moved at the age of 22, already a Forte Piano virtuoso, to Vienna, a centre of musical excellence, to study under Joseph Hayden, whom he had greatly revered.

In the age of Enlightenment, with Classicalism moving into Romanticism, he mixed the three genres. However, he had less need of the way to mix words and music in the Romantic fashion; to him the music was everything.

He also struggled throughout his life to take on the role of servant to his patrons and to the Church of his youth, becoming perhaps more

Humanist than religious.

Regrettably, by the age of 32 his hearing had deteriorated to such an extent, that it caused him to be isolated and depressed and to write, what became known as his *Heiligenstadt Testament*, a letter penned to his brothers Carl and Johann. Within this document he declared that all his previous work had been of no value and yet it contained eleven of his piano sonatas, six quartets, a symphony and a concerto which, still today, are greatly revered. The document was never sent and only found upon his death.

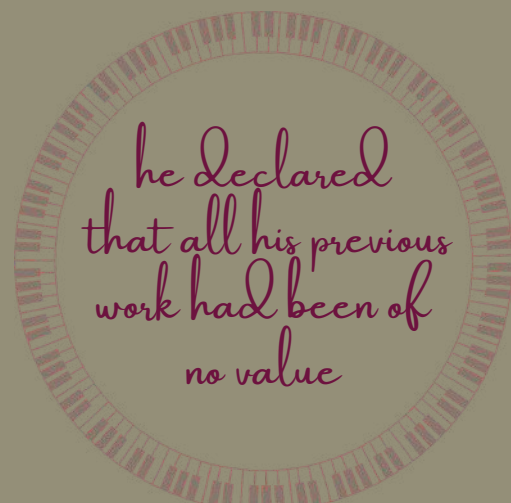
We all know Beethoven by the haunting melody of the *Moonlight Sonata No. 14 in C Sharp minor*, written in 1801 possibly, prior to the letter being penned. At this point, from *Eroica* onwards he wrote the *Sonatas 16, 17 & 18 Ein Neuer Weg* (A New Way) often termed a sonata about a sonata, or music about music. Played on a Forte Piano of his day, it has a slight hollowness compared to today's Piano Forte, but the wonderful invention of the sonata form comes to the fore in these three, and the fifteen variations of the theme of *Eroica* that followed.

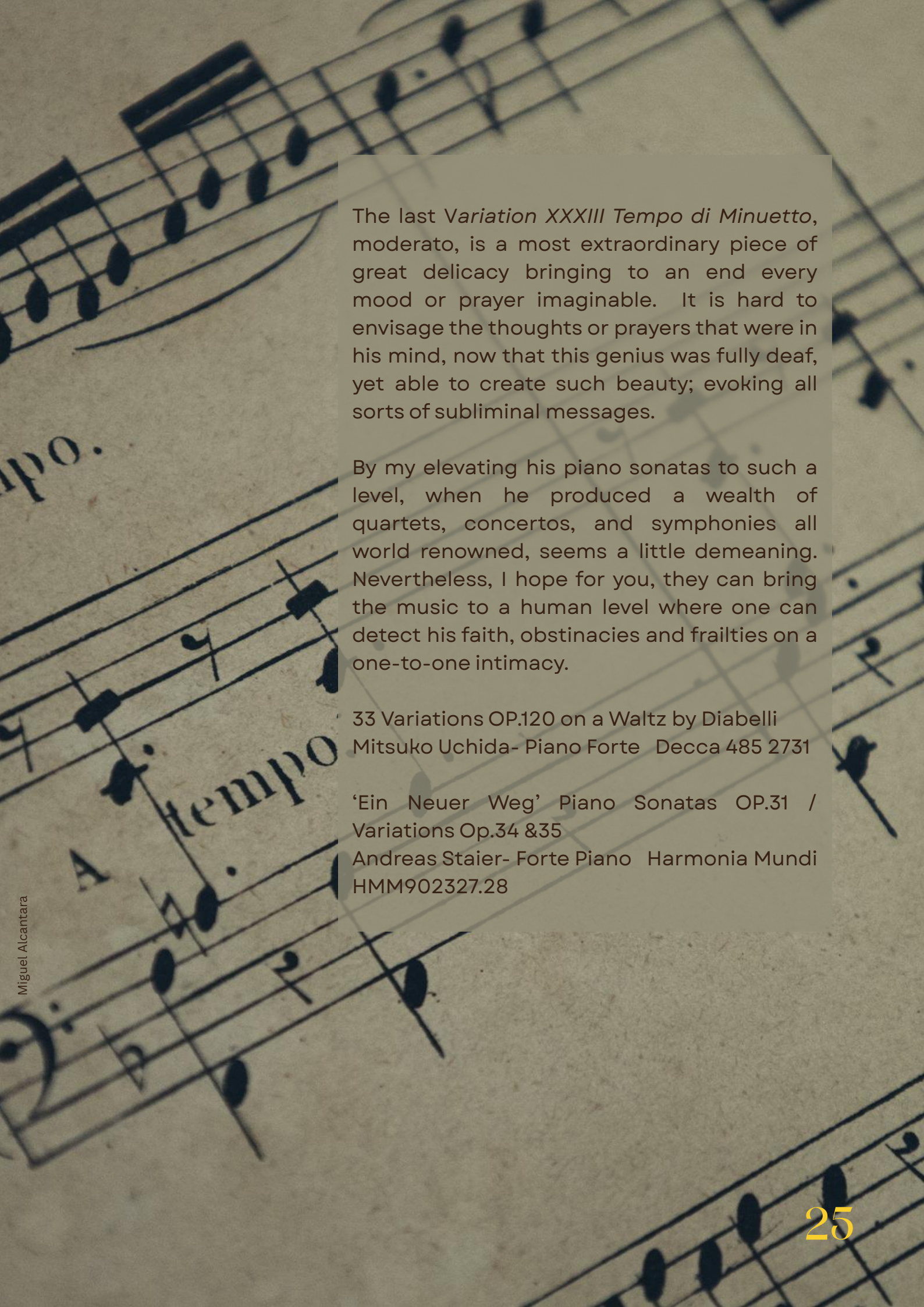
So much of his later music had developed in this sonata form with the base of Exposition,

Development and Recapitulation, or perhaps *Variations on a Theme* being more of a modernism.

I have bored you before with my great enjoyment of a solitary instrument being able to express all aspects of human and religious feelings, often fitting a personal need, without the accompaniment of words relating to a specific occasion in a church calendar. So unlike the forms of repetitive beat music of Africa or modern bass lines, which can induce fervour often in a trance-like state, variations on a theme can be contemplative and thought-provoking. Indeed, it particularly brings to mind the late piano work, a rendition of *Variations Op.120 on a Waltz* by Anton Diabelli.

Using it as a promotion, Diabelli invited 50 of the most renowned musicians of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to provide a single variation on a waltz theme provided by him. Never to be outdone, Beethoven, over a few years, submitted 33.





The last *Variation XXXIII Tempo di Minuetto*, moderato, is a most extraordinary piece of great delicacy bringing to an end every mood or prayer imaginable. It is hard to envisage the thoughts or prayers that were in his mind, now that this genius was fully deaf, yet able to create such beauty; evoking all sorts of subliminal messages.

By my elevating his piano sonatas to such a level, when he produced a wealth of quartets, concertos, and symphonies all world renowned, seems a little demeaning. Nevertheless, I hope for you, they can bring the music to a human level where one can detect his faith, obstinacies and frailties on a one-to-one intimacy.

33 Variations OP.120 on a Waltz by Diabelli
Mitsuko Uchida- Piano Forte Decca 485 2731

‘Ein Neuer Weg’ Piano Sonatas OP.31 /
Variations Op.34 & 35
Andreas Staier- Forte Piano Harmonia Mundi
HMM902327.28

Father,
I don't know what
I've
done wrong.
My children
no longer
believe in God.
Such is the lament
of many a parent.
Well, what of
those
that still do
God?



**Brothers
in
Faith**

Siblings Luke and Harrison talk about their faith


Luke: I'm not too different from any other teen, playing sports, video games and going to school. On a Sunday, though, I go to church where, unlike school, most kids wouldn't go if they didn't have to. Church is a place where I am happy and willing to go to, not only to meet with my Christian friends, where we play football or perform music for our church's band, it's a time for me to go and learn about God and a great opportunity to praise His name. This allows me to be grateful for the gifts God gives me to fulfil His promises.

At school, living my Christian faith can be difficult at times, as a lot of people have questions about why I am Christian, to which I answer joyfully. But then they later bring up how Christianity doesn't fit their own world view, which I try to explain, and I even

invite them to come to church with me, or to any other events my church congregation is putting on. This enriches my faith in Jesus and His plan for the world. On top of this, I remember parts of songs we sing in church, for example, a song called *Behold the power of His word* which says 'Generations rise, generations fall, but His word is living and His word is strong, evermore'; it reminds me of God's everlasting love for His whole creation.

I am currently going through the *Book of Acts* with a leader at my youth group. This is in between my school work and my circus club and troupe, which I have been attending on Saturdays and Tuesdays, since I was in Year 2 and my football, which I have been more recently engaged in.

So, going back to the original question, being a Christian as a teen doesn't make my life boring but, in fact, the very opposite; it allows me to connect with more people and to be closer to our Saviour, Jesus Christ.



I'm Not too
different
from any other
teen

Siblings Luke and Harrison talk about their faith

Harrison: When Luke and I were five and six years old, we were baptised. Luke was well behaved while I ran and hid under the table, refusing to come out. I didn't want to get wet. At this point, we were both welcomed into God's family and have been growing in His love and faith ever since.

We attend *The Bridge Church Battersea*, where we meet every Sunday afternoon. We are leads in the music worship teen band. I lead with guitar and also play cajón. Luke plays piano along with an additional guitarist and cajón percussionist as well as a lead singer. We aim to play two Sundays every month. Luke also leads the tech at church. He sets up the slides and music for live streaming to *YouTube* and manages the sound system. We also both help out as youth



leaders in a sister church's kids club for primary aged children, once a month. We are trying to follow Jesus by being servant hearted, using our skills and capabilities to serve.

At school, we both play music at Mass and are in the school band. Outside of school, we both play football and hold matches and tournaments with friends. Luke is part of a circus troupe that has performed in the Lord Mayor's and New Year's day parades, as well as performances at big top venues.

My favourite verse, I like to remind myself of each day, is *Romans 10:9* 'If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved'. We learnt this verse as part of a song at a Bible festival and it's stuck with me.

I ran and hid
under the
table

LOUIS VUITTON MEETS PALAIS DES PAPES

When creative director, Nicolas Ghesquière, of Louis Vuitton, booked Palais des Papes for the fashion brand's *Cruise* show, little could he have known that it would coincide with the election, in May 2025, of Pope Leo XIV. When asked about the coincidence Ghesquière reportedly responded, 'There is something very strong about believing'.

Alexandre Marques decided to find out more about the Palais des Papes.



Myles Kalus Anak Jihem



In Avignon, The Palace of the Popes is one of the largest and most important Gothic buildings in Europe. It served as the home of the Catholic popes during a unique period in the 14th century when the papacy was based in France, and not Rome.

The Avignon Papacy (1309–1377): The papal court had been moved to Avignon by Pope Clement due to the political unrest in and close to Rome. For nearly 70 years, seven popes ruled from this city, strengthening the Church's ties to France. This shift allowed the French crown to apply greater influence over the Church.

Building the Palace: Construction was started in around 1335 under Pope Benedict XII and continued under Pope Clement VI. The building is part fortress, part palace, and is known for its huge halls, towers, and beautiful frescoes. The vast complex shows the wealth and ambition of the papacy at the time.

Decline and Damage: The papacy returned to Rome in around 1377. The palace was later used as a military barracks and suffered damage during the French Revolution. Without its original purpose, the palace was in neglect and was later repurposed by the military.

Restoration and Legacy: In the 20th century, restoration brought the palace back to life.

Today: It is a museum and a cultural hub, hosting events like the *Avignon Theatre Festival*. It welcomes over half a million visitors each year, and even Louis Vuitton held their recent fashion show at the Palace of the Popes in May 2025.

A LASTING SYMBOL OF POWER



Jossuha Theophile

The Palace of the Popes is a lasting symbol of religious power, architectural beauty, and European history transforming a moment of crisis into a monument that still inspires today. It's walls tell the story of a Church that once ruled not only souls but kingdoms.



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foundation of Salesian College back at the end of the 19th century. We are open for visits. Simply call us on 0207 924 8310 or email tours@sjbc.wandsworth.sch.uk to book your tour.