

In Medio - a diary by Ella Messe

Sant-US, Sant-US, Sant-US

I'd best be quick about this piece, hence it's going at the top of the column - because it could well be too late by the time I reach the bottom. Anyway, at least at the time of writing, it was noted that a weekly "Solemn Mass in Latin" attending (though Ordinary Form, I hear) Catholic Republican candidate had made it as far as the Iowa caucus in the race to become the next US President (we'd all like a new one next January, yes?). Now, given that the heartland state's vote is usually the first in the 11-month long race to the White House, that may not sound so grand. Indeed, said candidate may already have been eliminated at one of the further caucuses or primaries due to have occurred by the time you read this. Although given that he only lost in Iowa by eight measly votes, he might be around to stay. Whatever, it's worth keeping an eye on the political career of one Richard John "Rick" Santorum - even a Latin name! - either this year or in 2016. Just one thing, though, when did being a Traditional Catholic, of sorts, qualify one as a "gay-bashing Christian fundamentalist"? I'll let you guess which "haevywieght", ahem, UK daily coined that.

The real tasse-d of ICKSP in England



Spotted on our cover star, Canon Olivier Meney's, table at his new home in New Brighton (I think it's mentioned in this issue!): some fine Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest crested crockery. Disturbing news, though. Whilst the coffee pot is adorned with ICKSP livery, the tea-pot is plain white! I trust locals will inform the good Canon that he's on the Tea-side of the Channel now. Earl Grey please,

Father.

Beat of a different drum

I've been told not to editorialise and present the following received missive, from Charlotte Goddard, Cambridge, in full. So: "Ella Messe, in her diary piece ('Benna-issimo!' - Mass of Ages 170) writes: *And to think 'wimmin' railed against such beauty (the churching of new mothers) by banging the discrimination drum. Any wonder precious few men*

hold doors for us now?

"I wonder if these comments too glibly attribute the decline of the churching ceremony to some of the more radical proponents of feminism? For 'railing against beauty' was never a driving force behind the decline of churching. Nor was 'banging the discrimination drum', which (though I prefer less militaristic terminology) tended to serve various feminist causes, including redress of social and legal inequalities but had little, if any, interest in the churching ceremony.

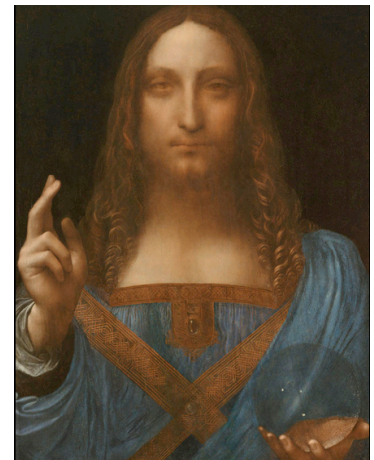
"Rather, in the Medieval church, the ceremony carried a symbolic significance of 'purification' of a new mother. With its corollary that she must have been in some sense 'impure' before being ceremoniously welcomed into the church, this idea sits uneasily in the modern mind for many, both men and women.

"This, together with the diminished dangers of childbirth and other social change, is the key reason why churching is now less often requested than before. This is by no means intended as criticism of the ceremony described in the article.

"On the question of holding doors, it is indeed sad if women have helped its decline. However, women must not expect only to be the beneficiaries here. To hold doors for others, irrespective of sex, is not so much a mark of chivalry as good manners. I am pleased to say that it is a practice still much honoured in my experience." Much appreciated, Charlotte.

Newsus Antiquior

I've not conducted too much research into the religious leanings of the BBC's news anchor and antiques doyen, Fiona Bruce - *mea culpa* - but I'm pretty confident she's not a Catholic. Thus I don't think she was being too



theologically subtle during the filming of her excellent recent TV documentary charting the restoration of yet another "lost" Leonardo da Vinci masterpiece, namely the quite stunning *Salvator Mundi* (pictured), which featured as a headline work at the recent "hottest ticket of the year" exhibit of the Renaissance polymath's finest strokes at the National Gallery. Captured on camera as she viewed the splendid image of the Saviour (painted, by all accounts, for King Louis II of France, circa 1506-13) in the New York studio which was the restoration HQ for the image valued at £120m, Ms Bruce issued one of her linger-long and breathless surveys - when you know she's really impressed - and was suddenly struck dumb by the sheer ineffability of the oil-on-walnut before her. Realising that she'd best utter something, she turned to a curator and simply said, without hint of irony or recognition detected by either party: "It has a real presence." EM