

NOTEBOOK

• QUOTE OF THE WEEK •

"I've tried to have moral courage - difficult sometimes when it means standing up against your close friends and colleagues."

BARONESS (SHIRLEY) WILLIAMS

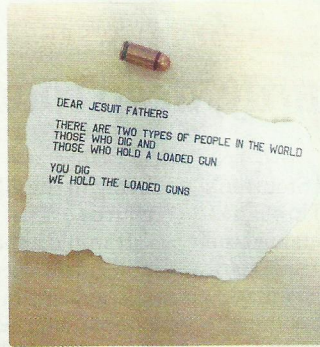


Silence under fire

Mount St Joseph Retreat Centre, run by the Jesuits in Malta is, they say, "an invitation to leave the fast pace of modern life and enter into a haven of peace and quiet." Now that calm has been disrupted in a highly dramatic way.

There are plans to build the country's largest shooting range complex on neighbouring land - which is likely to pose a major challenge to holding silent retreats.

The proposal by company U-



Group Malta is to build three ranges - which would offer clay-pigeon and paintball shooting - in nearby barracks and on a stretch of public land.

The Jesuits who run St Joseph's, in Mosta, are vigorously opposed to the building plans and the order

have been lobbying the Government about the matter. And the order's refusal to keep quiet appears to have led to a nasty threat.

The Jesuits received a bullet enclosed with an anonymous letter, pictured, saying: "There are two types of people in the world, those who dig and those who hold a loaded gun. You dig, we hold the loaded guns."

It is a reference to a scene in the classic spaghetti Western *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* in which Clint Eastwood's character, Blondie, shows the Mexican bandit, Tuco, a gun and orders him to dig a hole in the desert - a barely veiled threat that if he does not obey orders he will be shot.



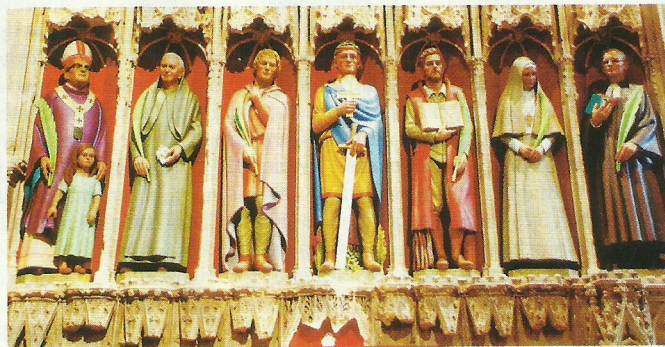
School for politicians?

While we reported last week that the number of Catholic and Catholic-educated MPs in this Parliament is likely to be fewer than the last one, Oaklands Catholic School, in Waterlooville, Hampshire, can count at least two new government ministers among its alumni. These include Caroline Dinenage, the new Equalities Minister, and Penny Mordaunt (pictured), a junior minister at the Department for Communities and Local Government. Jon Cruddas, who was the Labour Party's policy coordinator, wrote in *The Tablet* about how he was inspired at Oaklands by Sr Ita Conlon. He described her as "a one-person engine in terms of social mobility and nurturing education potential".

Tale of two meetings

One is an imposing Victorian building in Headingley in Yorkshire, and the other is a villa in the Alban Hills set in woodlands, with a swimming pool and lakeside views. Which would you prefer if you were holding a meeting?

Not surprisingly, the Catholic bishops, rather than opt for Hinsley Hall - owned by the (Catholic) Diocese of Leeds - picked the other, Villa Palazzola, 18 miles south of Rome. And while the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales spent several days on retreat at Palazzola in April, during the same month the Church of England's bishops met at Hinsley Hall, usually the setting for the Catholic bishops' biannual gathering. With this description on Palazzola's website - "Your shoulders start to relax within hours of arrival ... as its tranquil calm weaves its spell ... the only thing you'll want to rush to is lunch" - one can see why the Catholic bishops left their Anglican confrères to it in Leeds.



ST ALBANS MARTYRS

ECUMENICAL SAINTS

As a cathedral named after Britain's first martyr, it is fitting that St Albans has just installed statues of seven new martyrs with a strong ecumenical theme.

Among them is the former Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero (far left), who is to be beatified today. (A figure of him also appears on the west front of Westminster Abbey, since he is also recognised as a martyr by the Church of England.)

St Alban Roe, one of the 40 martyrs of England and Wales, appears, and, from the other side, George Tankerfield, a Protestant burned to death in 1555.

TABLET COMPETITION

AND THE WINNER IS...

In our Easter issue we ran a competition to win an eight-day pilgrimage for two to Malta. We asked entrants to tell us where the traditional site of St Paul's shipwreck is. Congratulations to Mary Glennon from Warrington, in Cheshire, the first person whose entry was drawn at random and who gave the correct answer of St Paul's Island. There were also 10 runners up who will each receive a copy of *Praying the Rosary* by Fr Denis McBride. Thank you to all who entered.

End of an era

You might call it the secularisation of transport. After more than a century trams in Toronto, Canada, will no longer make special stops at churches on a Sunday. A spokesman for the city's Transit Commission said: "We don't have similar stops for temples or mosques or other places of worship in the city." He added: "We are a secular society and times have changed."

Sunday stops were approved by the city in 1897 but only fully implemented in the 1930s. St Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church is objecting to the change, saying elderly parishioners will find walking the extra distance difficult in bad weather.