

In Brief

LANARK: Nuns are among 12 people arrested over alleged historical abuse at Smyllum Park orphanage. Police Scotland said 11 women and one man, aged between 62 and 85, have been arrested as part of an investigation into the Lanark home which was run by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul and closed in 1981. Former residents spoke about their experiences of Smyllum Park at Scotland's child abuse inquiry earlier this year and police said 12 people have now been arrested, with a further four individuals to be reported to prosecutors. A Police Scotland spokeswoman said: "Twelve people, 11 women and one man, ages ranging from 62 to 85 years, have been arrested and charged in connection with the non-recent abuse of children. "All are subject of reports to Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal. Enquiries are continuing, it would be inappropriate to comment further." Detective Chief Inspector Sarah Taylor, from the national child abuse investigation unit, said: "Investigating child abuse offences is highly complex and every care is taken to ensure that enquiries are proportionate, appropriate and that victims' needs are central to our investigations. If you or anyone you know has been a victim of abuse or wishes to report abuse you should feel confident in reporting to Police Scotland. We will listen and we will take action regardless of when or where the abuse occurred."

PORTSMOUTH: A global synod on priests could help the church to end the "terrible" scandals of clerical child abuse, an English bishop told Pope Francis. He was among bishops from around the world who called for action after Pope Francis published his letter to Catholics about the clerical sexual abuse crisis. In an open letter to the Pope, Bishop Philip Egan of Portsmouth said an "extraordinary synod on the life and ministry of the clergy" would help to combat the scourge of clerical child sex abuse. Scandals in the United States, England, Ireland, Australia and Chile, Bishop Egan said, have proven that sex abuse by members of the clergy is "a worldwide phenomenon in the Church" that must be addressed. "The synod might begin with a 'congress', attended by the bishops but formed of laity and others expert in the clergy abuse scandals and in the safeguarding of children and the vulnerable," he said.

SVP join forces to help victims of monsoon

Anita Boniface

VOLUNTEERS all over Britain have been galvanised into action by the news of catastrophic monsoon floods in Kerala, southern India.

The volunteers – all members of the St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) – have been raising funds to distribute to local SVP members in Kerala so that millions of people affected by the floods in communities across the region can be given life-saving support.

The floods – the worst in decades – have so far cost 400 lives and destroyed 20,000 homes, with 800,000 people displaced, and the monsoon season is set to continue until early September.

Usually a tropical paradise famed for its wide sandy beaches and tall coconut palms – Kerala means 'land of the coconuts' – the region has been devastated by the torrents of water that have reached the very tops of the palms in places.

Thousands of people remain mar-

ooned, homes have been submerged and entire villages have been washed away. But local members of the SVP are helping feed and house their neighbours aided by money sent by their SVP colleagues in Britain.

There are more than 36,000 SVP members in Kerala who are doing their best to cope with the catastrophe that has beset their state, but the 10,000 members in England and Wales are busy organising fundraising activities to help them.

Johnson Varghese, president of

SVP India, who lives in Kerala and whose own home has been flooded, said: "Many have lost their lives and many have lost all their property. The heavy rains that have been falling have put the state in crisis. All rivers overflow and up to 24 dams have yielded. Thousands of people are in relief camps, but we are doing our best to support the population."

■ **To donate to the SVP's Kerala flood appeal, visit: www.svp.org.uk or telephone: 020 7703 3030**



Pope Francis is pictured with author Stephen Walford and family at the Vatican last year – Walford is the author of a new book which examines the Pope's provisions that would allow some divorced and remarried Catholics to receive Communion in certain circumstances.

Picture: CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

'There is continuity, not rupture in *Amoris Laetitia*'

Cindy Wooden

EVERYTHING in the document *Amoris Laetitia* on marriage and family life is based on Catholic Church teaching "always in continuity – without ruptures – yet always maturing", Pope Francis said.

In addition, when referring to specific ethical situations, "the exhortation follows the classical doctrine of St Thomas Aquinas", the Pope wrote in a letter to Stephen Walford, author of the new book, *Pope Francis, the Family and Divorce*.

The letter, sent to Walford after he, his wife and five children met with Pope Francis in July 2017, is included as the preface to the book.

"The exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* is a unified whole, which means that, in order to understand its message, it must be read in its entirety and from the beginning," the Pope wrote to Walford. "This is because there is a development both of theological reflection and of the way in which problems are approached."

Pope Francis said the exhortation "cannot be considered a '*vademecum*' (handbook) on different issues.

If the exhortation is not read in its entirety and in the order it is written, it will either not be understood or it will be distorted".

Walford, who lives in Southampton, began writing his book after publishing an open letter in 2017 to the four cardinals who, in late 2016, publicly released a list of critical questions, known as '*dubia*', about the pope's document. In his open letter, Walford defended Pope Francis' teaching and warned the four cardinals, two of whom are now deceased, that their position was being used by people attacking the Pope.

The new book looks specifically at Pope Francis' provisions that would allow some divorced and civilly remarried Catholics to receive Communion in certain circumstances and after prayer and discernment with their priests.

In his open letter, Walford had said: "The Pope's interest and pastoral concern is for those souls who love the Lord very much, yet find themselves in an extremely difficult situation; and because of this, I would say this is a very courageous Pope, sent by the Holy Spirit for these times, and

who has confronted the reality of a wounded Church, and a wounded world that must not be abandoned."

Although not a trained theologian, Walford attempts in his book to explain the theological and moral concepts behind *Amoris Laetitia*, including by looking at the meaning of marriage and family life, the development of doctrine in the Catholic Church, moral culpability and Pope Francis' teaching on mercy.

"We live in a time of great tribulation and the world has many wounded souls in need of compassion and mercy," Walford wrote. "The Church as mother has the ability to defend the doctrines on the indissolubility of marriage, the holy Eucharist, confession and mortal sin while, at the same time, finding merciful ways to approach those brothers and sisters who have found themselves in a second, civil union."

The author wrote that he hoped the book would "contribute in some small way to bring hope to those suffering souls in complex relationships, and to those who have been affected by the 'manufactured confusion' of papal dissenters".

Benedictine leader so ashamed over abuse

Simon Caldwell

THE leader of the Benedictines in England has again expressed regret over clerical sex abuse scandals in the Catholic Church.

Fr Christopher Jamison, the Abbot President of the English Benedictine Congregation, told worshippers at Buckfast Abbey, Devon, that the sexual abuse of children was "so bad and so wicked that words fail us".

His remarks came just weeks after a report by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse was severely critical of monks from two other Benedictine abbeys – Ampleforth Abbey in North Yorkshire and Downside Abbey in Somerset – for the abuse of children and for failing to deal adequately with the perpetrators.

"At this time in the Church we are deeply conscious of the imperfections of the Catholic Church throughout the world and that terrible abuse inflicted on young people of which we are so ashamed, especially the clergy," Fr Jamison said in his homily.

"We recognise that sometimes imperfection is so bad and so wicked that words fail us and we have to rely even more on the perfection of God."

Fr Jamison was preaching at a Mass in celebration of the Feast of the Dedication of Buckfast Abbey.

The abbey was founded in 1018 but was dissolved during the Reformation, only to become the only monastery church in the country to be rebuilt on its same site about a century ago.

The work was carried out by the monks over 30 years and the abbey was dedicated on 25th August, 1932.

The re-establishment of Buckfast means the abbey this year is celebrating the millennium of its foundation, and over the last decade extensive improvements have been carried out ahead of the event.