

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Tenebrae St Paul's Lisburn

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Tenebrae St Paul's Lisburn

St Paul's Parish Church, Lisburn commemorated Good Friday with a tenebrae service.

Christianity.Com introduces Its "Guide to a Tenebrae Service" thus - All the elements of the religious service Tenebrae have deep spiritual and biblical meaning.

The candles, darkness, and strepitus urge believers to meditate on Christ's sacrificial death. The service of Tenebrae invites us to reflect on what Christ did that "Good Friday"



[\[https://www.christianity.com/wiki/holidays/what-is-the-significance-of-the-religious-service-tenebrae.html\]](https://www.christianity.com/wiki/holidays/what-is-the-significance-of-the-religious-service-tenebrae.html)

News

Canon for Dromore

The Bishop of Down & Dromore, Rt Revd David McClay said that in appointing Myrtle he wanted to mark her long years of service in the diocese, her creativity and diligence as a pastor and her ability to lead the church into growth.

Myrtle said, “I am delighted and honoured to be appointed Canon in Dromore Cathedral. I am humbled that Bishop



David has asked me to fulfil this role and I am looking forward to contributing to the chapter and taking part in the diocesan life of the cathedral under the leadership of Dean Wilson.

Myrtle became incumbent of Newcastle in October 2021 following almost 21 years of ministry in St Saviour's, Craigavon. During that time, she also served as Chaplain to both Craigavon Area Hospital and Lurgan Hospital.

Born and raised in West Cork, Myrtle joined Church Army in the mid-eighties and worked for five years as a Parish Evangelist in St Matthew's, Belfast.

In June 1993 she moved to Lambeg Parish where her role was to establish a church presence in a working-class area of the parish previously unreached by the church.

On leaving Lambeg, she spent an enriching six months working alongside the Anglican Church in Canada as a Church Army volunteer.

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In December 2000 Myrtle returned to Northern Ireland to take up the post of Evangelist in Charge at St. Saviour's. She was ordained in the Church of Ireland in 2017 and became Priest in Charge in 2018.

Maundy Money recipients

Among the 150 recipients of Maundy Money in Worcester Cathedral on Thursday were Tom Stevenson of Lisburn Cathedral in Connor diocese and Mrs Ethne McCord, of Clogher Diocese.

Ethne, who was accompanied by her husband, David, was nominated for her active work in the diocese and also to the community.

The service was attended by Her Majesty the Queen, who was accompanied by the Bishop of Worcester, Right Revd John Inge. King Charles was absent due to his illness. However, King Charles spoke in a pre-recorded message, broadcast to the invited congregation.

Each of the nominated people, 75 men and 75 women, were presented with two purses containing coins following a tradition over many centuries.

Ethne is a parishioner of St. Salvator's Church, Glaslough in the Donagh Group of Parishes which also includes Tyholland with Errigal Truagh in Co, Monaghan and lives in Donaghadee, Northern Ireland.



Tom Stevenson of Lisburn Cathedral

A recorded message from King Charles was played. He read the first lesson (John 13.1–15), before relaying a personal message.

The tradition of presenting alms, he said, had its origin in the life of Jesus, “who knelt before his disciples and, to their great surprise, washed their travel-weary feet. And, as we have just heard, in doing so, he deliberately gave to them and to us all an example of how we should serve and care for each other.”

The UK, he said, was “blessed by all the different services that exist for our welfare. But over and above these organisations and their selfless staff, we need — and benefit greatly — from those who extend the hand of friendship to us, especially in a time of need.”

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Ethne McCord, of Clogher Diocese

The King continued: “The 150 men and women who have been chosen today to receive the Maundy Money from my wife are wonderful examples of such kindness; of going way beyond the call of duty and of giving so much of their lives to the service of others in their communities.



“This act of worship, here in Worcester Cathedral, reminds me of the pledge I made at the beginning of the Coronation Service: to follow Christ’s example ‘not to be served but to serve’. That I have always tried to do and continue to do, with my whole heart.

“It is my special prayer today that our Lord’s example of serving one another might continue to inspire us and to strengthen all our communities.”

The Bishop of Worcester, Dr John Inge, said that it was “an honour” to welcome the Queen to the cathedral. “This is an immensely special service, and I know it will mean a huge amount to those who have been chosen to receive the

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coins, all of whom will have given years of service to their local communities.”

Church warned on migrants

James Cleverley has warned churches not to allow asylum seekers to exploit the system by converting to Christianity.

In a message to Church leaders at Easter, the UK Home Secretary said there was a “real difference” between welcoming a new congregant and “vouching for a person in an asylum tribunal”.

His comments came after Abdul Ezedi, the Clapham substance attack suspect, was granted asylum by a judge who accepted that he had converted to Christianity despite concerns the convicted sex offender was lying.

Writing in *The Sun* on Sunday, Mr Cleverly said: “We have met with senior Church leaders to explain Christian conversion is no guarantee of asylum being granted and we’ve stressed there is a real difference between welcoming new members to a flock and vouching for a person in an asylum tribunal.

“Allowing people to exploit the system risks detracting from the invaluable work Christians and the Church do every day for our society – today of all days.”

Ezedi’s body was pulled from the Thames last month following a manhunt after he was suspected of attacking his

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former partner and her children with an alkali substance in Clapham, south London, in January.

Bishop of London: Easter gives us hope in a war-torn world that light may come from darkness

There is something very special about London at Eastertime. As the days get longer, sunlight warmer, and the trees start to blossom, everywhere we look is suddenly a technicolour reminder of the promise of renewal and rejuvenation.

For Christians, this is a wonderful backdrop to our celebration of Jesus's resurrection and the promise of new life which that holds for our world.

At its core, the Easter story is one of hope; the hope of God at work in the darkness, bringing a new creation to all.

This desire to see a world born anew, where justice and peace prevail, could not be more relevant today. We are living in a period of great global instability, from the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza and the war in Ukraine, to the cost-of-living crisis closer to home.

It is at times like these, when millions struggle in poverty and in the midst of conflict, we should be grateful to those who give their time, effort and money to eradicate these injustices. As Bishop of London, I constantly see the vital work of churches and local communities in the capital, supporting the disadvantaged. Today, as I take up a new



The Right Reverend Sarah Elisabeth Mullally, Bishop of London takes up a new task as the Chair of Christian Aid

task as the Chair of Christian Aid, the international development and humanitarian agency, I am thinking of those in desperate need across the globe who long for the hope of new life promised at Easter.

For over 75 years, Christian Aid has been at the forefront of efforts to eliminate poverty and create a more just and equal

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society across the world. Its mission and driving force have remained steadfast through decades of societal and economic upheaval; to be effective stewards of creation in the face of worldwide threats to God's agenda of justice and peace.

Just as the darkness of Jesus's tomb gave birth to new life, hope is possible in the harshest of circumstances. When we partner with those most affected by poverty, conflict and the climate emergency, we aid God's mission of justice and peace to bring healing and new life.

Whatever your faith, I pray that this Holy Week is not only one of rest and quality time with loved ones, but that the Easter story inspires you to consider how we can all work together to bring new life, light and hope to our world.

Pope to Catholics in Holy Land: May hope arise from seeds sown in pain

In an Easter Letter addressed to Catholics in the Holy Land, Pope Francis expresses his spiritual closeness and paternal affection, and encourages Christians around the world to offer concrete support and prayers for peace, Christopher Wells reports.

Pope Francis has written to Catholics in the Holy Land, assuring them that they are daily in his thoughts and prayers.

"I embrace all of you, in the variety of your rites, dear Catholic faithful living throughout the Holy Land," he writes,

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adding, “In a particular way, I embrace those most affected by the senseless tragedy of war: the children robbed of their future, those who grieve and are in pain, and all who find themselves prey to anguish and dismay.”

In his letter, released on Wednesday, the Holy Father recognizes the special significance of Easter for those who live in the places sanctified by Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

Acknowledging the desire of Christians to remain in the lands they have dwelt in for centuries, Pope Francis says it is good that they should remain, and thanks them for their faith, charity, and hope.

The Pope goes on to recall his own pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2014, and repeats the words of Saint Paul VI, who warned of the “constant and dire threat” to peace and security, and to human values, of continuing tensions in the Middle East.

Pope Francis highlights the role of Christians in the Middle East in guarding the “places of our salvation,” as well as their “enduring witness, through \[their] sufferings, to the mystery of the Lord’s Passion.” “By your ability to rise anew and press forward,” he writes, “you have proclaimed, and continue to proclaim, that the crucified Lord rose from the dead.”

The Pope goes on to share the prayer he offers for and with the Christians of the Holy Land:

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“Lord, you are our peace (cf. Eph 2:14-22). You who proclaimed blessed the peacemakers (cf. Mt 5:9): set human hearts free from hatred, violence, and the spirit of revenge. We look to Your example and we follow You, Who are merciful, meek, and humble of heart (cf. Mt 11:29). May no one rob our hearts of the hope of rising anew with You. May we never tire of defending the dignity of every man, woman, and child, without distinction of religion, ethnicity, or nationality, beginning with the most vulnerable among us: women, the elderly, children, and the poor”.

Assuring them once again that they are not alone, the Pope promises that the universal Church will demonstrate solidarity through “prayer and practical charity.”

"Soon we hope to return among you as pilgrims, to draw near to you, to embrace you, to break with you the bread of fraternity, and to contemplate the tender shoots of hope that spring from the seeds you are sowing in pain and nurturing with patience," he says.

Then, after thanking the “bishops, priests, and religious” for their work among the people, the Holy Father prays that “in the crucible of suffering... the precious gold of unity may be purified and shine forth” among Catholics and with other Christians, to whom he expresses his “spiritual closeness and encouragement” and assuring them of his prayers.

Concluding his letter, Pope Francis invokes upon Catholics in the Holy Land the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, “daughter of your Land.”

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And he calls on Christians throughout the world “to manifest their concrete support for you and pray tirelessly that all the people of your beloved land may dwell at last in peace.”

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

An Easter Message from the Rt Revd Michael Burrows, Bishop of Tuam, Limerick & Killaloe

[https://www.facebook.com/watch/?comment_id=972444047822133&v=1511787769682798]

[<https://fb.watch/r999RlyKcJ/>]

Perspective

Easter comment by Archbishop of Canterbury

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

Throughout the world, these words will resonate in many languages, from churches to homes to makeshift shelters and refugee camps.

‘Christ is risen’ proclaims that whatever the circumstances of our world today, God is ever transforming it, reshaping it,

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and that the shape of things to come will be infinitely more glorious than anything we know right now.

On this Easter Day, we are filled with joy at what God brings, yet we remember all those for whom joy is hard won, and overshadowed by the realities of war, conflict and death. We remember that to proclaim the Christ who died and rose again is to proclaim a radically different reality that challenges all the powers of this world, and all the forces that work for death instead of life. And so today, in solidarity with all for whom this day is difficult, we proclaim:

Christ is risen!

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” — Luke 24:5-7

In the media

Sunday Life - Just hours from arrest... Donaldson at Easter service

Drama unfolds on religiously symbolic week for party still so wedded to religion. Leader's sudden unprecedented in NI political life.

In his final public sighting as DUP leader, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson was at Stormont for a Christian Easter service.

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It was Wednesday evening and there was a feel-good sense in Parliament Buildings. The DUP and Sinn Fein had been working together harmoniously for eight weeks, and now politicians were coming together for an uplifting ecumenical concert.

With Donaldson in the audience, prayers were said for political leaders, and at the end the relaxed DUP leader went to have his photo taken with Eurovision winner Dana, who was singing at the event.

Hours later, one of Northern Ireland's most powerful men would be wakened from his bed by detectives in a dawn raid, and would spend the rest of that day in Antrim Custody Suite — the same 20-cell facility to which Gerry Adams was taken a decade ago for questioning about the murder of Jean McConville.

After 14 hours, Donaldson had been charged with multiple serious sexual offences, and his wife Eleanor (57) charged with aiding and abetting additional offences before both were released.

Within two hours, the DUP leader's social media accounts vanished. Even his personal website went offline. At the same time, reports emerged that a 61-year-old man from Co Down had been charged with serious sexual offences. Rampant speculation linked the two, yet inside the DUP many people still knew nothing about the true position.

At 1pm on Friday, a DUP statement announced that Donaldson's time as leader was up because he'd been charged with “allegations of a historical nature”. The party

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officers suspended him from the party, and put his deputy, Gavin Robinson, in as interim leader.

This was Northern Ireland's GUBU moment: grotesque, unbelievable, bizarre, and unprecedented. Northern Ireland is convulsed with speculation about what has happened. Donaldson denies the allegations against him, and it will be for a court to decide whether or not he is guilty.

But regardless of the legal outcome, this situation is unparalleled in Northern Irish history. Political leaders have been abruptly dumped here before, some in outlandish circumstances. There have been leaders stabbed in the back or stabbed in the front by their colleagues, but this is something of a different order of magnitude.

The sense of shock is absolute. Whatever one's view of Donaldson or the DUP, this came from nowhere. Often there are whispers about a scandal which politicians and journalists pick up long before a story breaks; with this, there was nothing. For many people, the shock is amplified by the deep religiosity of the DUP in general and Donaldson in particular.

Piety and politics have been entwined in the DUP ever since Ian Paisley's party grew out of the Protestant Unionist Party. Not all its members are religious, but all its members know that it is a religious party. Peter Robinson, who was there for the 'Save Ulster From Sodomy' campaign and other religious crusades, maintained the party's stance while carefully rebranding.

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On her first day as his successor, Arlene Foster told me that the party would continue to have “very strong Christian values”.

When Edwin Poots replaced her, he was even more committed to the fusing of God and government. And when he was replaced after 21 chaotic days, it was by Donaldson, a man who wore the Christian fish symbol on his lapel right up until the end, at that concert last Wednesday night.

There has long been a contradiction in how many DUP members view the ups and downs of political life — of which this is the greatest down in its 52-year history.

Clifford Smyth, a DUP member who was close to Ian Paisley in the 1970s before falling foul of him and being expelled, later observed: “Every election victory is interpreted... as a special sign of God's blessing upon a party which seeks to magnify His name and uphold the cause of Protestant Ulster.

“Electoral reverses suffered by DUP candidates have never prompted the opposite reaction amongst the more spiritually-minded party activists: that the rejection of the candidate should be adjudged as the disapproval of the Almighty.”

And yet, the unique circumstances here mean that some of the DUP's shrinking but still highly influential band of religiously-zealous members are likely to see the events of last week as evidence of divine displeasure.

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In their view, Donaldson had abandoned past principled positions on the Irish Sea border, expediently pretending that he had got rid of the trade barrier when in fact it obviously remained.

This is anathema to a section of the party; its roots lie in standing lonely outside the camp of the establishment and protesting loudly, not compromising for the sake of power. Some of those people will see this Good Friday catastrophe as divine judgment.

To do so would be entirely in keeping with how the party has linked the everyday and the spiritual.

When Margaret Thatcher signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985, Paisley thundered in prayer from the pulpit of his cavernous Martyrs' Memorial church: "We hand this woman, Margaret Thatcher over to the Devil that she might learn not to blaspheme.

"We pray that the world may learn a lesson through her fall and through the ignominy to which she shall be brought. Oh God, in wrath, take vengeance upon this wicked, treacherous, lying woman."

Just because DUP members don't speak like that these days doesn't mean that these concepts are suddenly foreign to all of them, even if many now have more prosaic ways of understanding what has befallen their party.

Under the man who now leads the DUP, that language is never likely to be heard — and within the party he is expected to move it further from its hardline roots. Gavin

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Robinson is a protege of Peter Robinson (although they aren't related), the pragmatist whose organisational skills and ruthlessness moulded the erratic charisma of Paisley into something which became much more than Paisleyism.

Having joined the party as a schoolboy, the man who now leads the DUP temporarily — but is likely to win the job permanently, even if there is a contest — was immersed in its east Belfast operation.

After training as a barrister, in his early 20s Peter Robinson as first minister brought him into Stormont Castle as one of his special advisers. He cleared the way for him to become a Belfast councillor, lord mayor of the city and ultimately it was the younger Robinson who won back the East Belfast House of Commons seat which had long been Robinson senior's until Alliance's Naomi Long's stunning victory in 2010.

Gavin Robinson's politics are close to those of the man he has replaced. Both are pragmatic moderates who believe in devolution. Robinson was one of the few DUP members heavily involved in negotiating Donaldson's deal to restore devolution. He therefore needs that deal to work — not just because he believes in it, but because his reputation is tied to its success.

Even if a hardliner was to dislodge Robinson in a leadership contest, there's no discernible logic to collapsing Stormont. Having spent two months making arguments in favour of devolution and pretending to have got rid of the sea border, the DUP would look like fools if they were to suddenly go back to a policy of boycott.

Significant numbers of moderates would be more likely to leave in those circumstances (tellingly, for all the internal displeasure at Donaldson's deal, not a single hardline member has left).

It's more likely that Robinson feels the need to buy off some of his senior colleagues by toning down the 'love-in' between Emma Little-Pengelly and Michelle O'Neill. Working with Sinn Fein is something every DUP member got over a long time ago; looking like they're enjoying it is something many of them find incomprehensible.

But the impact of Donaldson's fall is about more than the DUP. As the leader of unionism, he had a wider responsibility. One intelligent unionist not given to melodrama texted me on Friday evening to say: “They have destroyed everything they have touched. It's really remarkable. It feels like the end of days now.”

Donaldson's gushing official biography records how his Presbyterian minister urged him to join the ministry, something to which he gave “serious consideration”.

But the young politician told the cleric that “his idea was not to use (politics) as a vehicle for personal advancement, but as an avenue for upholding, and demonstrating, in a public and practical way, Christian values and beliefs”.

For those who voted for Jeffrey Donaldson on that basis, the events of the last few days have rocked them in ways which go way beyond the political.

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Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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