

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Penelope's visit

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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

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Image of the day



Penelope the donkey's visit to St Canice's

As we thought about the message of the Palm Sunday donkey, it was so good to have Penelope at Eglinton parish church.

Canon Hoey commented - She seemed strangely reluctant to come inside (like some two-footed mammals we know) but was so gentle with the children afterwards that we forgive her for her stubbornness!

The cross on the back of the donkey reminds us, of course, of the meaning of this this most holy of weeks. Thanks to

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Alison and Faith for all the trouble they went to to bring her along.

News



From Hawthorn to High Cross - St Carthage's Church Rahan

The Heritage Interpreter for the Ancient Church and Graveyard of St. Carthage, Anna Orman, has secured a Creative Irl grant to commission a truly unique mixed-media Celtic High Cross for the church.

The Celtic High Cross will be made from a branch of the fallen hawthorn tree that once stood guard just beyond the boundary.

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60 Christians killed in Plateau State, Nigeria

More than 60 Christians have been killed by radicalised Fulani militants in a series of violent attacks in Plateau State, Nigeria.

The assaults, which occurred on 2nd and 3rd April 2025, targeted seven Christian communities in Bokkos County, including Hurti village, where over 40 individuals lost their lives.

Maren Aradong, a local leader, told The Christian Post that more than 1,000 Christians were displaced, and 383 houses were destroyed by the bandits.

The violence, which began on 2nd April, saw armed Fulani militants arriving on motorcycles before attacking the communities and looting food stores and homes.

Farmasum Fuddang, chairman of the Bokkos Community Development Council, said: "Initially, 21 Christians were killed on 2nd April, but by the next day, 40 more Christians were slaughtered, bringing the death toll to more than 60."

Governor Caleb Mutwang of Plateau State said that the attacks were aimed at innocent communities and amounted to "genocide".

Amnesty International also condemned the violence, noting that at least 1,336 people were killed between December

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2023 and February 2024 in Plateau State, with numerous villages repeatedly attacked.

"The government left them at the mercy of their attackers", the organisation said.

Christian leader Rev Tongsmangs Dasbak called for urgent federal intervention, saying: "The ongoing security crisis in Plateau state has reached alarming levels."

Church leaders in Ukraine denounce deadly Russian missile

Church leaders in Ukraine have denounced a Russian missile strike that killed 20 civilians, half of them children.

The attack, which struck a residential area and playground in President Zelensky's hometown, Kryvyi Rih, last Friday, occurred during renewed diplomatic efforts for a US-brokered peace deal.

Three days of national mourning followed.

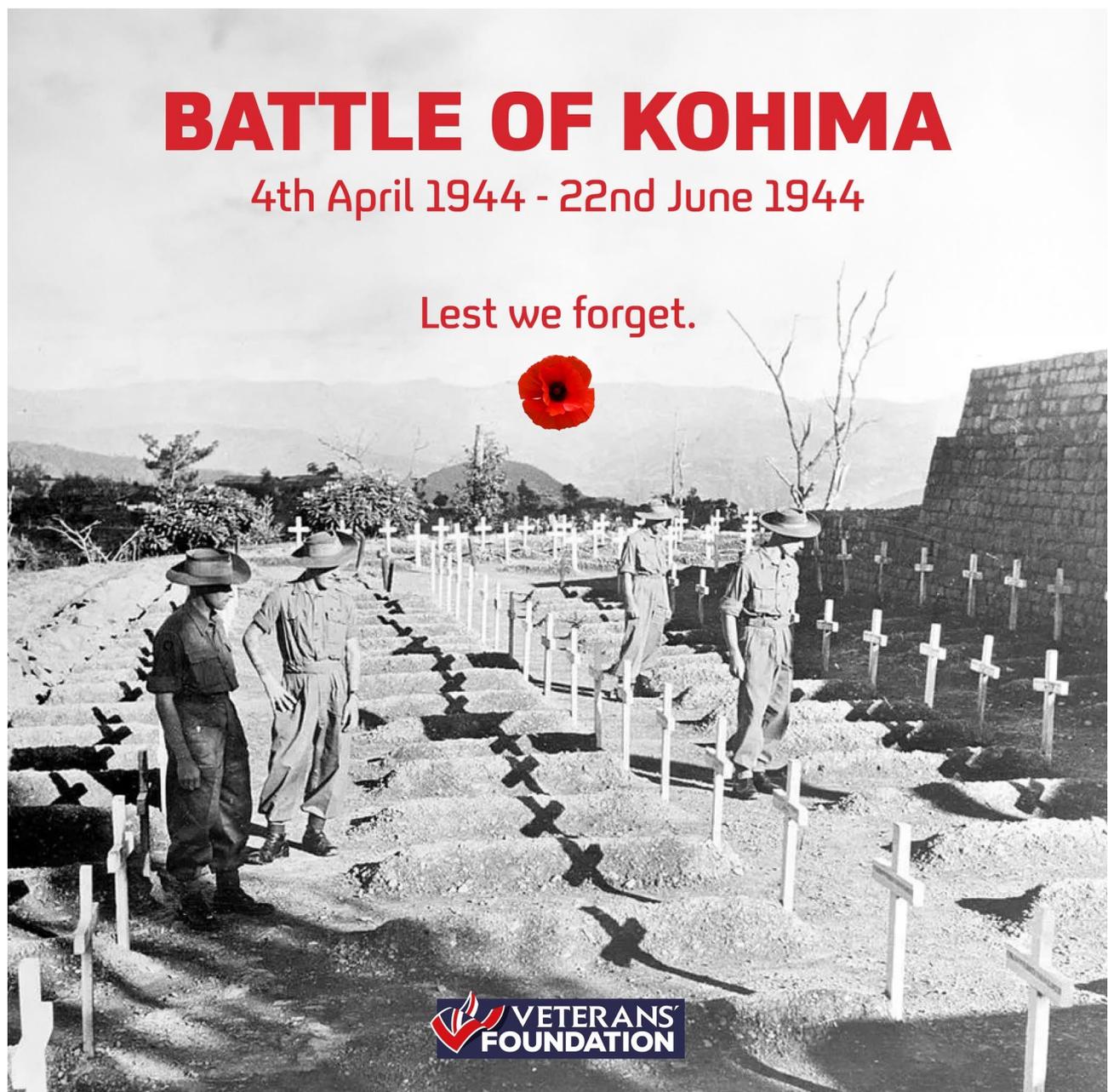
Metropolitan Epiphany, head of Ukraine's independent Orthodox Church, criticised the moral claims of Russia's leadership.

"As Orthodox Churches worldwide honoured the Blessed Virgin with due praise, this 'Holy Russia' launched a missile at a residential area and children's playground," he said. "Is

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it through such actions that the Kingdom of God will be created?”

He added that Russia kills Ukrainians daily with drones, bombs, missiles, and other deadly weapons, and warned that those “dressed in church vestments” who justify the violence “will be condemned as accomplices in sin”. Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, said other towns “burned again” over the weekend.



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“While the international community talks about a truce and ceasefire in Ukraine, the aggressor mocks these efforts and continues killing innocent people,” he said. “Those innocently murdered have drunk the cup of suffering and death to the end, but there is hope in this for resurrection and eternal life.”

The strike injured over 70 people and damaged dozens of homes and schools. Ukrainian media reported it as one of the worst attacks on children since Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022, as reported by Church Times.

Roman Catholic Bishop of Lviv, Eduard Kava, said the attack, by “animals who consider themselves people”, revealed “the whole truth” about a regime that “holds nothing sacred”.

King Charles and Queen Camilla hear music written for their 20th anniversary at service

The King and Queen have attended a church service near Balmoral where they heard a new piece of music celebrating their 20th wedding anniversary.

Charles and Camilla waved to onlookers as they exited their car outside the tiny granite Crathie Kirk, which is near Balmoral, Aberdeenshire, yesterday.

Charles was in a kilt and tweed jacket while Camilla wore a blue coat with a tartan lapel and a red hat decorated with a feather.

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Before entering the church the couple were given a hand-written manuscript of the new piece, called *The Weather of My Being*, by its composer Professor Paul Mealor. Professor Mealor, who has created music for a number of royal events including the Prince and Princess of Wales's wedding and several of Charles's birthdays, also gave the royal couple a volume containing all the music he composed for their coronation in 2023.

The composer said he decided to mark Charles and Camilla's anniversary by “set(ting) great poetry to music”, which he said combined the King's love of music with the Queen's love of literature.

He went on: “So I wrote it, and then sent it to them, and then they said, 'why not perform it now, just literally after the wedding anniversary?’

St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral,
Armagh



The Dean and Chapter invite you to attend
A SERVICE OF
REMEMBRANCE WITH THANKSGIVING
ON THE EVE OF THE
80TH ANNIVERSARY OF
VE DAY

Wednesday 7th May 2025
at 7.30 p.m.



VE DAY ©
80TH ANNIVERSARY
A SHARED MOMENT OF CELEBRATION
8 M A Y 2 0 2 5

“So we had the premiere today at the service, which was very powerful”.

The new piece was performed by St John's Festival Choir during the hour-long service. Asked for their reaction to hearing the performance, Professor Meador said: “They were beaming, it was very nice, and they thanked me very much at the end.”

Education

12 Dublin schools to get free hot meals from September

Good news as the following local schools will become part of the 2,850 offering all pupils a free hot school meal from September.

Taney Parish NS, Dundrum
St Brigids Boys N S, Cabinteely
St Brigids Girls N S, Cabinteely
Holy Cross N S, Dundrum
Rathfarnham Educate Together
Gaelscoil Thaobh Na Coille, An Chéim (Stepaside)
Ballinteer Educate Together N
Stepaside Educate Together NS
Gaelscoil Shliabh Rua, Baile Uí Ógáin (Ballyogan)
Gaelscoil Na Fuinseoige, Baile an Teampaill (Churchtown)
Goatstown Stillorgan Primary School
Rathfarnham Parish N S



From September, 450,000 children will be receiving a free, hot, school meal and I'm pleased to say that a review of the nutritional value of the meals provided by a registered dietician, Neil Richmond TD



Former student of Sullivan Upper School wins cup and new blazer



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Cathedral Calls



**Ferns
Processional
Cross
dedicated in
memory of
Dean and wife**

**Bishop Adrian
Wilkinson writes,**

Church News Ireland





“It was a personal joy to be in Christ Church Cathedral Waterford for the Palm Sunday Procession and Liturgy.

“At the start of the service I blessed and dedicated a new Processional Cross given by the Earl family in memory of the Very Revd David and Mrs Christine Earl. I knew them as a teenager when David was Dean of Ferns”.

Arma Christi, the instruments of Christ’s passion at Westminster Abbey

On the Lent array, these are arranged on either side of a symbol of the Lamb of God.

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Looking at the full list of them below, which are the ones that resonate most with you? What image from the Passion helps draw you into the reality of Holy Week?

The tools of Crucifixion, including the nails, ladder, hammer and pincers.

The pillar and whips from the Flagellation of Christ.

The Crown of Thorns and the Cross.

The lance which pierced Jesus' side, and the sponge of sour wine.

The Lamb of God, victorious over the grave. [centre]

The rooster that crowed after Peter's third denial of Jesus.

The hand which slapped Jesus' face, and the vessel of myrrh used to anoint the body of Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea or the women at the tomb.

The seamless robe, with the dice used to cast lots for it.

The four wounds on Christ's hands and feet, surrounding the Sacred Heart of Christ

<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/lent-and-holy-week-2025/palm-sunday>.

Clergy and ministry

Ordained Local Minister and National Park Education Officer

Listen to TLK news latest podcast where Stephen Fletcher talks to Revd Carole Reynolds an Ordained



Local Minister of the Kilcummin Parish in Oughterard, Co Galway.

As well as being an OLM Carole is also the Education Officer in the Connemara National Park and talks about her work there and enjoying the beauty she finds in her 'office'. Click on the image below to listen. You'll find this and all of Stephen's other podcasts at tlk.ie/podcasts/

King's Award for Voluntary Service presented to St Augustine's church volunteering group

Civic dignitaries joined parishioners, volunteers and friends of St Augustine's Church in Londonderry, on Palm Sunday, to see the King's Lord Lieutenant for the County Borough of Londonderry, Ian Crowe M.B.E., present a King's Award for Voluntary Service to the church's volunteering group.



HM Lord Lieutenant, Ian Crowe MBE. Among the civic dignitaries in church for the service and presentation were the Vice Lord Lieutenant, Alan Moore OBE; the Deputy Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Alderman Darren Guy; the High Sheriff of the County Borough of Londonderry, Brian Dougherty; and Deputy Lieutenant, Mrs Joan Doherty MBE.

The team were recognised for “overcoming isolation and extending welcome through inclusion and events at a polarised interface”. Equivalent to an MBE, KAVS is the highest Award given to local voluntary groups in the UK, and they are awarded for life.

The presentation was made by the Lord Lieutenant to parishioner Ivan Taylor during the Morning Service, which was led by the Rector, Rev Nigel Cairns. "In my view," the



The presentation was made by the Lord Lieutenant to parishioner Ivan Taylor

Rector told the congregation, "this award recognises all the community-facing volunteering that takes place from here. And it doesn't only honour current work. It's also testimony to the decades of volunteering that has gone on, and we very much stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us in this important work."

The sermon was preached by the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Andrew Forster, who said that the city's founder and patron saint, Columba, who built his monastery on the site would be delighted.

"This church has a special place in the hearts of many people,' Bishop Andrew said. "It finds a place in the hearts

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of tourists who walk past or come in to visit. It finds a place in the lives of people who come past it day by day, in this city, because it is such a beautiful place – 'the wee Church on the Walls'.

"Isn't it amazing to think that all those years ago, on this very plot, on this site, Columba – the founder of our city – built his monastery? Back then, this monastery, this place, was a place of worship, it was a place of care – one for another – and it was a place of outreach to the community. All these years later, it's still a place of worship, a place of care – one for another – and a place of outreach to the wider community. Columba would be delighted. Columba would be proud today, as we all are.

"The wonderful thing about this church is that it's not simply an attractive building on a tourist route through our city; it's a place of love, it's a place of hope, it's a place of kindness and it's a place where the light of Christ shines.

"It's a singular honour," the Bishop said, "for St Augustine's to be awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service. And here we are, today, in the presence of so many distinguished guests, but especially of those who have made this happen – the volunteers who have loved this church for generations; the people who give heart, who give soul, who give energy to this place of worship.

"Today, as Bishop, I want to thank you. Today, as Bishop and as friend, I want to say – in the truest sense – how proud we all are of St Augustine's, this day, because this church has stood here through the very worst days in the history of this city that we love, and in the best days of the

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history of this city that we love. I want to thank you for being here, for blessing, for sharing light and love and human kindness."

"It's a triumph today," Bishop Andrew said. "It's a triumph to go through the whole process – the application and the assessment – and to receive the award. I know the volunteers here and those who have done this for many, many years – for decades – won't mind me, at all, saying that behind all of this is a really good leader, and you have an excellent leader in your Rector. I want to thank you, Nigel, for your leadership; for the drive and the heart and the ambition that you bring to this parish to be a place that is on the map not just because it's 'the Wee Church on the Walls', but on the map because it's a place of love, and welcome and ministry.

Created in 2002 to celebrate the late Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee – and previously known as The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS) – the Award has been shining a light on the fantastic work of voluntary groups from all across the UK. His Majesty The King pledged to continue the Award to ensure that volunteers from across the UK were recognised for the services they provided within their communities.

Among the civic dignitaries in church for the service and presentation were the Vice Lord Lieutenant, Alan Moore OBE; the Deputy Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Alderman Darren Guy; the High Sheriff of the County Borough of Londonderry, Brian Dougherty; and Deputy Lieutenant, Mrs Joan Doherty MBE.

Resources

RSCM releases toolkit on how to build junior church choirs

Help is at hand for churches wanting to set up, strengthen, or rebuild a junior choir.

The new Young Voices Toolkit, from the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM), is a step-by-step guide to involving children and young people in leading music in worship: a means of engagement, it believes, to which they readily respond.

“Do we have to turn off our personal music devices?”

“Music has that unique power,” the director of the RSCM, Hugh Morris, said. “We can harness this to bring a new generation into the life of the Church and ensure a bright future for church music. Many churches are currently experiencing a resurgence here, driven by new ways of working, and there are plenty of good examples and success stories in the Toolkit to inspire us all.”

The kit, which RSCM members can download, draws on the experience of others who have built junior choirs in their churches, and contains case studies and practical guidance on recruiting, retaining, and developing young singers. It has been created by David Fawcett, a composer, and the assistant director of music at St Mary the Virgin, Swanage, in Dorset; and the RSCM’s Junior Choirs Project Officer, Oliver Walker.

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Mr Fawcett started his own junior church choir after Covid lockdowns in 2022. It now has 16 members, singing alongside the adult choir in two choral services each month.

“For a long time, I thought it was too difficult to involve children and young people in my church choir,” he said. “But then I saw that others were succeeding, and I decided to learn what I could from their work and experience.”

The RSCM will celebrate its centenary in 2027. Taking the view that relatively few primary schools are equipped to deliver musical experiences and pathways into a life of music-making, it is investing in the current generation.

“While the challenges can seem daunting, with fresh thinking it is possible to put children and young people back at the heart of music ministry,” Mr Morris believes.

Perspective

Christian love is the eternal cure for hatred - Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York

The essence of the Palm Sunday message remains the same today as it was 2,000 years ago – Jesus’s humility can vanquish all

On Palm Sunday, we remember Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Riding on a donkey to cries of “Hosanna!”, Jesus entered the city, with palm leaves strewn across his path.

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Across the country today, church services will mark the occasion by giving people their own palm – though not as the leaves that once welcomed Jesus as king. Instead, these palms will be folded into small, handheld crosses. Crosses that remind us that this part of the story does not end in worldly triumph – but in death and only from there to new life.

The crowds thought Jesus had come as a king to lead Israel against the Romans, but instead of power and glory, Jesus chose what appears to be ignominy and defeat. This seems nothing short of absurd.

However, on the Cross, more than anywhere else, Jesus is demonstrating what God's power is actually like. Our human categories of power, those that come from position, ability, reputation, education and training, are limited and provisional. They shrink back when they see the power of love.

The power of the Cross is the power of love to completely absorb and neutralise all that is thrown at it, even death itself

The crowds said of Jesus that “he taught as one who had authority”. I think what they meant was authenticity, which of course, in every age, carries the greatest authority. What Jesus says is matched by what he does. His difficult teaching about going the second mile and loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you is lived out. There is consistency.

Then there is the power of undefended love.

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In his passion and death, Jesus demonstrates a self-giving humility which, we discover, is the essence of divinity.

Divine power isn't quite the power that we thought it was or wanted it to be. It is humble. It is an embodiment of the "strength made perfect in weakness" that Paul speaks about (2 Cor 12:9). The message of the Cross is indeed "foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18).

It is the triumph of love. The power of the Cross is not the power to overcome sin and evil by the exercise of greater strength or superior might, but the power of love to completely absorb and neutralise all that is thrown at it, even death itself. Christ forgives those who nail him to the Cross. He reaches out to those who are crucified alongside him. He refuses to fight back.

The crowds taunt him, saying: "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God." But he is actually saving everyone – by losing himself. He is authentically walking the second mile of undefended love that he says should be the mark of his followers.

The palm crosses we hold remind us of taking up the Cross of Christ every day. For this is the only way that hatred, oppression, self-righteousness, and the avarice that will swallow everything and everyone whole, will be defeated. It is the pattern of Christian discipleship.

When we say the Lord's Prayer we end by saying that power and glory belong to God, and we put ourselves in the right relationship with God as children of God's kingdom.

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We break free from the bonds of self-interest. We reclaim those values that help us to look out for our neighbour, offer care in our communities as the Church does week in week out, and at the same time commit ourselves to rebuild the international partnerships for social and economic well-being and justice that our world is losing at the moment.

Hatred cannot win if we live lives of authentic, undefended loving. Or at least, just try. Which is the invitation of Palm Sunday. To hold a palm cross. To follow something other than yourself.

Stephen Cottrell is the Archbishop of York

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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**Link in Monday through Saturday from
early morning**

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