

Church News Ireland



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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

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Image of the day – RAF harmony at Westminster Abbey





RAF Musicians had the honour of playing at the 'Together at Christmas' Carol Service at Westminster Abbey, which was hosted by HRH The Princess of Wales

Personnel from the Central Band of the RAF and the RAF Salon Orchestra accompanied stars throughout the service, including Paloma Faith, Gregory Porter, JP Cooper, Richard E. Grant & Olivia Dean



News

New C of I formation in Upper Shankill & Ballysillan area

A Facebook page for the Upper Shankill & Ballysillan Union has been created. “We are part of the Mid Belfast Rural Deanery, Diocese of Connor”.



This Union is made up of the following churches:

Holy Trinity, Ballysillan
Immanuel, Ardoyne
St Andrew's, Glencairn
St Columba's, Ballygomartin/Whiterock
St Mark's, Ligoniel
St Matthew's, Woodvale

Some of these churches have already closed for Sunday worship, so future Facebook posts will keep you up to date with where and when services will take place. Here is the link to the Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61563898151486>

“You will also be able to see what is going on throughout the Upper Union so please have a look and give us a like”.

On Sunday (yesterday) there was a united service in St Andrew's, Glencairn

Bishop visits 365 day Nativity

Bishop Alan of Down & Connor celebrated the Fourth Sunday of Advent with the parish communities at Nativity, Poleglass and St Colman's, Derriaghy.



Three points of light - A new carol for King's

Selwyn College alumnus Bill Ives was commissioned to write a new carol for this year's Festival of Nine

Lessons and Carols, broadcast live from King's College Chapel, Cambridge, on Christmas Eve.

This annual service was heard around the world by an estimated audience of 160 million listeners.



Every year since 1983, King's College has commissioned a new carol to be sung at the service. This year Bill, who writes as Grayston Ives, composed a setting of a new Christmas poem, Three Points of Light, by Peter Cairns, who sang in King's College Choir in the 1960s.

Bill tells us: 'Three Points of Light: the light of the star, the light of the shepherd's fire, and the light in the stable.

'The poem conjures a compelling rural scene and we are drawn in to the story by these three elements; lights which, together, form the Light of the World. The music aims to

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reflect the atmosphere of that scene: the cold, the stillness, the mystery, and the joy.'

The service was broadcast live on Christmas Eve at 3 o'clock on BBC Radio 4 and on the BBC World Service.



*Nativity
celebration at
Castlerock parish
church*



Gold, Frankincense and Sam at Armagh

There was a distinct contribution to the celebration of the Nativity by the parishioners of Armagh when the GAA Sam McGuire All Ireland trophy was processed.



Pope marks start of Vatican's Jubilee Year at Rome's main prison



Pontiff opens 'Holy Door' at high-security jail with a message of hope to 'open a new path'

Pope Francis opens a 'Holy Door' at a prison for the first time in history to mark the Catholic Church's year-long jubilee celebration, Josephine McKenna writes in Rome.

Pope Francis urged inmates to never give up hope as he inaugurated the Vatican's Jubilee Year at the high-security Rebibbia prison on the outskirts of Rome on Thursday.

The pope opened a "Holy Door" at a prison for the first time in history to mark the Catholic Church's year-long

celebration, which is expected to attract more than 30 million pilgrims to the Eternal City throughout 2025.

Speaking to hundreds of inmates, guards and staff at Rebibbia, Francis said he wanted to open the door to the prison chapel, one of only five to be opened during the Holy Year, as a way of sending a message of hope.

“I like to think of hope as the anchor on the shore and with the rope we are safe,” he said. “Do not lose hope.”

During his visit, Francis left his wheelchair, knocked on the door of the chapel and stepped across the threshold, duplicating a gesture he performed at the Holy Door of St Peter’s Basilica on Christmas Eve.

“I wanted each of us here, inside and out, to have the possibility of flinging open the door of our hearts and understanding that hope doesn’t disappoint,” he said.

The Pope also celebrated mass in the prison chapel. During his homily, Francis reflected on the reasons for his visit and told prisoners that hope was a way to “open a new path” to forgiveness and freedom.

The opening of the Holy Door at St Peter’s Basilica officially launched the Jubilee Year, a Catholic tradition which dates back to the year 1300 and is only held every 25 years.

Francis has long made prison ministry and mercy a central element of his pontificate and has made several visits to Rebibbia since his election in 2013.

The central role of prisoners will be underscored at the final event of the Jubilee Year, a special mass for inmates to be held at St Peter's Basilica in December 2025.



Pope Francis calls on the inmates of Rebibbia prison: 'Do not lose hope'

The 88-year-old Pope's message of hope is particularly timely in Italy, when prison overcrowding and inmate suicides are at all-time highs, according to the Antigone Association, which monitors prison conditions.

According to Antigone's 2024 report, a record 88 prisoners committed suicide in Italian jails this year — at least 23 of them were aged between 19 and 29. Italy's inmate population is estimated to be well above capacity and inmates have staged hunger strikes and riots at several prisons during 2024.

Francis' outing to Rebibbia was his final major event of the week after he celebrated Christmas Eve mass at St Peter's Basilica and urged an end to global conflicts in his traditional Christmas Day blessing to pilgrims.

Clergy and ministry

C of E report says social media risks making people more stupid

Social media risks making people stupid, according to a Church of England report.

It claims the public are increasingly "trigger happy" online, and less discerning about the information they share.

Church leaders are concerned that the public is becoming "deluded" about how well informed they are and "are in danger of becoming stupid".

The report, 'Trust and Trustworthiness in the Church of England', summarised a review launched in 2022 to judge public trust in the institution.

One experiment suggested in commentary contained within the report images what it would be like for a "keyboard warrior" to have to explain their social media posts "to Christ".

One of the barriers to trust in general, the report states, are social media sites which “give us the illusion of having access to reliable information” and that the public, while stuck in echo chambers, are “becoming less, not more, informed”.

The report adds: “We delude ourselves into thinking we are more informed because of the ease of access to volumes of information.

“However, through our indiscriminate use of social media we are in danger of becoming stupid in our judgement of where to place our trust.”

The report, overseen by the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, the Right Rev Martin Seeley, said this view of the facts has resulted in the public being “trigger happy in our amplification, pace and tone of judgement on our individual leaders”.

The report states: “The use of social media by some has become a pervasive and corrosive dimension of our society and the Church.”

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

BBNI Podcast : Prosperity Gospel, cold showers and a goat

Season 3 of the BBNI Podcast is out now. Why not take some time to listen to a few of the Episodes.

Season 3: Episode 5 Podcast with Danny & Deborah:
Prosperity Gospel, cold showers and a goat.

Watch & Subscribe or on YouTube:

<https://lnkd.in/ehSM5cX6>

Listen & Subscribe on Spotify:

<https://lnkd.in/eDMWJwDE...>

Listen & Subscribe on Apple:

<https://lnkd.in/ehCMqpst>

How to Read a Poem - Paul Muldoon

The Ireland Chair of Poetry Trust has welcomed the Ireland Professor of Poetry, Paul Muldoon, back to Irish shores in 2025, where he will be based at University College Dublin for the Spring semester.

From January 22nd until April 16th he will host a series of discussions entitled How to Read a Poem. The seminar series asks the public to address certain questions such as 'How do we make sense of the contemporary poem? Are there any strategies we might find helpful?' Professor Paul Muldoon then leads an open discussion on poems published in literary journals and magazines that week. All are welcome. The only prerequisite? An open mind.

The How to Read a Poem series will take place in the Museum of Literature Ireland, 86 St. Stephen's Green,

The Ireland Chair of Poetry 

How to Read a Poem

with Paul Muldoon



Dublin 2, on Wednesdays from 3:30 – 5:30 pm on the following dates:

January 22nd and 29th

February 5th, 19th and 26th

March 5th

April 2nd, 9th and 16th

26th February event which will take place in the Rose Room of MoLI - please note that the Rose Room is not wheelchair accessible.

<http://irelandchairpoetry.org/paul-muldoon-spring-series-2025/>

Derry Central Library ‘New Year New You’ book stand

With 2025 on the horizon and a new year in our midst, the brilliant Elissa put together the ‘New Year New You’ book stand in Derry Central Library

All are welcome to come and select books on new beginnings, mindfulness and wellbeing looking ahead into the New year. Happy New Year!

Poem for today

Out in the Fields with God

By Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

The little cares that fretted me,
I lost them yesterday
Among the fields above the sea,
Among the winds at play;
Among the lowing of the herds,
The rustling of the trees,
Among the singing of the birds,
The humming of the bees.

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The foolish fears of what may happen,
I cast them all away
Among the clover-scented grass,
Among the new-mown hay;
Among the husking of the corn
Where drowsy poppies nod,
Where ill thoughts die and good are born,
Out in the fields with God.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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

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