

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – Holy Week customs renewed**

## Image of the day

### Holy Week customs renewed

Clergy and laity from Dublin & Glendalough gathered in Christ Church Cathedral Dublin for the Chrism Eucharist on the morning of Maundy Thursday (March 28). Generally throughout Ireland Holy Week customs evoked a positive response from clergy and laity. See Cathedral Call below;

## News

### Canon for Meath & Kildare

**Rev William Steacy has been appointed by Bishop Pat Storey as the new Canon of the two cathedrals in Meath and Kildare.**

William is rector of Athlone Union of parishes. Originally from Co Wicklow he is married to Roberta, who is from Co Fermanagh.

The first installation will take place on Wednesday 8th May, 2024 at 7.30pm in St Patrick's Cathedral, Trim. The Dean of Kildare will also be installed to St Patrick's Cathedral Chapter on that evening.

The second installation will take place on Wednesday 22nd May, 2024 at 7.30pm in St Brigid's Cathedral, Kildare



## **Pope, looking healthy, has a busy four days leading to Easter**

**Pope Francis looked well as he began four intense days of events leading to Easter on Thursday, and renewed his own ordination vow on the day the Roman Catholic Church marks Jesus's founding of the priesthood the night before the crucifixion.**

Francis, who recently curtailed his speaking engagements because of fatigue related to bouts of bronchitis and influenza, read a long homily during a Holy Thursday "Mass of the Chrism" in St. Peter's Basilica.

Francis urged priests to be compassionate, admit when they have "strayed from the path of holiness" and avoid duplicity, dishonesty and hypocrisy.

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During the service, the 87-year-old renewed his vows along with thousands of priests in the basilica and blessed oils that will be used in Church sacraments.

Holy Thursday commemorates the day of Jesus' Last Supper with his apostles the night before he died.

On Thursday afternoon Francis presided at a traditional foot-washing ritual in the women's section of a Rome prison. (See links at Webinars etc below).

Francis is the first pope to hold the foot-washing ceremony outside churches, usually in prisons, homes for the elderly or hospices, continuing a practice he began when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires.

He is also the first pope to include women and non-Christians in the service. The ceremony echoes Jesus' gesture of humility toward his apostles on the night before he died.

On Good Friday, the day Christians commemorate Jesus' crucifixion, Francis presided at a "Passion of the Lord" service in St. Peter's Basilica and then attend a traditional evening Via Crucis (Way of the Cross) procession around at Rome's Colosseum.

He will preside at an Easter Vigil service today, Saturday and then tomorrow on Sunday read his twice-annual "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and world) message and blessing from the central balcony of St. Peter's to tens of thousands of people in the square below.

## **You are not forgotten, Bishop Poggo tells Sudan**

**Many Sudanese refugees have fled into neighbouring South Sudan, where an extreme heatwave has closed schools and destroyed harvests**

The secretary-general of the Anglican Communion, the Rt Revd Anthony Poggo, has visited Sudan, which is ravaged by civil war, to tell the population that they have not been forgotten by their fellow Christians.

Bishop Poggo made a “solidarity visit” to the country this week, almost a year after the conflict began. He preached in the Episcopal Cathedral in Port Sudan — sited in one of the few areas untouched so far by the conflict — and at an iftar as part of an interfaith meeting during Ramadan.

He told the congregation: “I have come to encourage you and to tell you that Sudan is not forgotten by the Anglican Communion. We pray for you often that peace comes to Sudan.”

Bishop Poggo is South Sudanese, and spoke of his own experience of war and displacement. “I know first-hand what it means to be a refugee or to be displaced. I have been displaced three times in the various conflicts in South Sudan.

“I want to encourage religious co-existence amongst you. Let us be bearers of peace in our communities, and call on





## **The secretary-general of the Anglican Communion, the Rt Revd Anthony Poggo**

the government and leaders to take responsibility. I appeal for respect of places of worship during this conflict, for all faiths. The Anglican Communion will do what we can to support you and the peace process in this nation.”

The Archbishop of Sudan, the Most Revd Ezekiel Kondo, said that Bishop Poggo was the first senior Anglican to visit the country since the conflict began — and an important symbol of solidarity for people who were suffering.

“Other conflicts in the world can divert media attention from the situation in Sudan,” he said, “but peace is urgently needed as well as humanitarian aid for displaced people within Sudan and for refugees in the neighbouring countries.”

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The conflict in Sudan is causing a large-scale humanitarian crisis. More than 14,000 people have been killed, cholera is rife, and 5.6 million people have been forced out of their homes.

The conflict arose from a power struggle in the country's military leadership, which resulted in violent clashes between the regular army and a paramilitary force, the Rapid Support Forces, a year ago (News, 21 April 2023).

Many refugees have fled into neighbouring South Sudan, where an extreme heatwave has closed schools and destroyed harvests, worsening the existing hunger crisis. Temperatures are expected to stay at about 45°C for two weeks; the cassava crop, on which many depend, is rotting in the ground.

Canon Edward Jale Wani, from St John's, Kimu, in Kajo-Keji diocese, said: "It is much hotter this year than in other years. It's also harming our harvests. That is one of the big disasters that we are experiencing. As a Church, we are asking that some good Samaritans come to our aid."

Tearfund is one of the Christian charities working to support communities in South Sudan. Its country director for Sudan, Erickson Bisetsa, said: "Many people are already vulnerable and struggling with scarcity of food.

"This heatwave is yet another shock on top of the stresses climate change has brought us, such as flooding, economic instability, and conflict."

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# Cathedral call

## Special message from the King at Worcester Cathedral

**A special message from the King has been broadcast at the Royal Maundy Service at Worcester Cathedral.**

In it, Charles, who is being treated for cancer, expressed his sadness at not being able to attend the event in person as the "Maundy Service has a very special place in my heart".

The King, who is seen seated at his desk in Buckingham Palace, stressed the importance of acts of kindness "especially in times of need". He explained the service "has its origin in the life of Our Lord 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



## Armagh Cathedral Choir on Maundy Thursday



to them and to us all an example of how we should serve and care for each other.”

Although the King didn't directly refer to his health – or that of the Princess of Wales, who also has cancer – he spoke of the importance of kindness and care for others.

"In this country we are 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."

Queen Camilla attended the service, one of the oldest royal ceremonies dating back to the 13th century. Seventy-five men and 75 women who have been involved in helping the church and their communities received purses, including a 50p marking the Royal National Lifeboat Institution's 200th anniversary and specially minted silver Maundy coins valuing a total of 75 pence. It follows the tradition of the Sovereign distributing gifts according to the years they have lived.

In his message, Charles said:" 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.

"The 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.

"May God bless you all this Easter."

It is rare for a monarch to miss the annual event - Queen Elizabeth II missed only five Royal Maundy services during her reign, the last being in 2022, five months before her death.

King Charles is expected to make a public appearance on Sunday at the annual Easter service at St George's Chapel, Windsor.

## **Newly appointed Down and Connor bishop celebrates first Chrism Mass in Belfast**

**The recently appointed Bishop for Down and Connor has overseen his first Chrism Mass in Belfast, an important fixture for the Catholic Church in the lead up to Easter.**

Bishop Alan McGuckian was formally appointed last month, having previously served as Bishop for Raphoe.

The Chrism Mass is traditionally held during Holy Week for every Catholic Diocese. It is a rare sight as it gathers priests, deacons and representatives of the entire diocesan community together in one place with their bishop.

During the service, the bishop blesses three holy oils used during the year including the Oil of the Sick, the Oil of Catechumens and the Sacred Chrism.

The symbolism of the service also serves to renew the bonds between a bishop and his priests.

“It’s good for us to be here this morning. This unique mass in the church’s year when the mystery of God at work and the concrete signs and symbols of our church come very vividly together in the consecration of the Chrism and the other oils,” Bishop McGuckian told those attending St Peter’s Cathedral on Wednesday.

“We also acknowledge that other great sign of Jesus living among us, which is the priesthood.

“The bishop gathered with the priests. So let us, in the depths of our hearts, come into the hearts of this great mystery of which we believe is among us in so many different ways.”

Originally from Cloughmills, Bishop McGuckian’s appointment last month was seen as a homecoming after having spent many years of his career serving in Belfast.

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At the service to formally welcome him to the role, he had expressed hope that the reform of the Stormont Assembly would bring stability to the most vulnerable in society.

Courtesy Alan Preston, and the Irish News



From the Maundy Thursday 2024 Eucharist Service in St Patrick's Cathedral Armagh which included the Renewal of Commitment to Ministry and the Blessing of the Oil to be used in the Ministry of Healing.

## **Maundy Thursday at Christ Church Cathedral Dublin**

**Clergy and laity from Dublin & Glendalough gathered in Christ Church Cathedral Dublin for the Chrism**



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## **Eucharist on the morning of Maundy Thursday (March 28).**

The service, which was sung by the Cathedral Choir, included foot washing and the consecration of oils, and clergy and lay ministers renewed their commitment to ministry. In his sermon, Archbishop Michael Jackson observed that there were so many stories within the story of Maundy Thursday, its new commandment and its foot-washing. It was like a kaleidoscope – it takes time for the features of the image to settle so that we can get our head around them.



## **Canterbury Cathedral Easter Sunday Eucharist to be live streamed**



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**The 10am Easter Sunday Eucharist with the Archbishop of Canterbury will be live streamed on**  
YouTube channel: <https://ow.ly/QHKI50R311L>

Find out more, including details of Canterbury's other Easter Day services at  
<https://ow.ly/f8Zq50R3110>

## **Live streams and recordings from Cork**

**Link to Easterday service at St Finbarre's Cathedral and archives of recent services at -**

[<https://www.churchservices.tv/corkstfinbarre/archive/recordings/7PN0fDBuUdGkaCF>]

## **Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books**

### **Pope Francis washes feet of 12 inmates at a Roman prison on Holy Thursday**

**Emotional scenes as Pope Francis, from his wheelchair, washes the feet of 12 female prisoners at Rebibbia prison, Rome, on HolyThursday**

It is believed to be the first time a pope has only washed the feet of women in the Holy Thursday foot washing ritual.



➔ CNN story: [https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/28/europe/pope-washes-feet-maundy-thursday-intl?cid=ios\\_app](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/28/europe/pope-washes-feet-maundy-thursday-intl?cid=ios_app)

➔ WATCH from 24.00: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=rV7J4Uk6sHw>

➔ LISTEN on CNN five things <https://edition.cnn.com/audio/podcasts/5-things/episodes/5a561216-8efd-11ee-a936-3f82215058f3>

## Perspective

### When God is absent and silent

**Like Jesus on the cross, our cries for divine intervention affirm our trust in God no matter what,**

## **says Rev. Dr Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir, Lutheran World Fellowship Vice-President for the Nordic Countries.**

In his Large Catechism Martin Luther talks about a God who is like “a kind father who cares for us so that no evil may befall us.” To believe that we are created and cared for by a benevolent God rings true to our experience when things are going well, and we do indeed feel loved and cared for. But when that is no longer the case, our understanding of who God is gets challenged. When suffering and evil take over our lives, we are likely to doubt our image of God, and start asking questions, like Where is my God? and Who is my God?

Traumatic experiences, caused for example by violence, or life-threatening illnesses, often trigger fundamental questions regarding our faith, including questions about God’s love for us. In the Old Testament, particularly in the book of Psalms, prayers of lament are frequent, where individuals or communities express their feelings of agony, outrage, and desertion. Lamentations include cries for help and are at the same time testimony of faith. The persons or the groups look to God, where they believe help is to be found, while they complain about God’s absence and silence. They seek help, at the same time they open up about the suffering they are experiencing.

Psalm 22 is a well-known prayer of lament, not least because it is cited by Jesus dying on the cross in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. In the beginning of the psalm, the person speaking accuses God of being far away, neither providing help nor responding to the desperate cry for intervention:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me,  
from the words of my groaning?  
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
and by night but find no rest.

— (Psalm 22:1-2)

When experiencing afflictions of some sort and facing God's silence and absence instead of help and comfort, it is important that people feel free to express their pain and despair. It is through lamentations that the suffering person is able to open up for God's help, and at the same time admit the inability to be one's own redeemer.

During Holy Week we are invited to contemplate the passion story and what message it has in store for us today. The fact that Jesus felt abandoned by God on the cross testifies to his truly human experience of anguish and fear of being left alone in his most desperate moment. What we can take from this testimony is Jesus' true identification with us in our moments of despair. Therefore, we should not be afraid to speak out, and lament, when we feel abandoned by God. While admitting our helplessness and need for God's rescue, we are at the same time affirming our trust in God who cares for us, no matter what.

*By Rev. Dr Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir, LWF Vice-President for the Nordic Countries. She is an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland and Professor of Theology at the University of Iceland*

## In the media

### Western People - Councillors call out 'discrimination' of Church of Ireland school

**Elected members of Mayo County Council have said a Westport national school is the victim of "blatant discrimination", Keith Bourke writes.**

Holy Trinity National School in Westport has recently been told that its Altamont Street site will now be used as temporary accommodation for the Sacred Heart Secondary School.

The Department of Education informed the Board of Management of Holy Trinity NS that it has identified the old Scoil Phádraig NS building and the site on Altamont Street as a "solution for urgent temporary accommodation needs" for the Sacred Heart Secondary School in Westport. The building had been earmarked as the location for a new home for the Church of Ireland national school.

Holy Trinity NS had been battling for almost 15 years to secure a new school after its modest building was deemed not fit for purpose by the Department. After many false dawns, the school finally believed their new location was secure and design plans were drawn up.

At a recent meeting, the Department of Education was unable to tell Holy Trinity representatives how long the site would be used by Sacred Heart.



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Cllr Brendan Mulroy said the Department of Education is "picking on a Church of Ireland school", and accused it of "using an iron fist".

"It's absolutely shocking," said the Fianna Fail councillor who said he has contacted Minister for Education and party colleague Norma Foley on the matter.

"It's totally wrong," added Independent Cllr Christy Hyland. "The Department of Education is dividing two communities," he stated.

"This smacks of discrimination," added Independent Cllr John O'Malley.

Cllr Hyland asked that the council step in and offer an alternative site for the temporary classrooms needed by the Sacred Heart Secondary School. He suggested the former Convent site in the town could be utilised. However, the council's chief executive Kevin Kelly did not believe this proposal would be possible.

## **Dundalk Democrat - Dundalk's Green Church renovation part of PEACEPLUS action plan**

**St Nicholas' Church of Ireland Dundalk, known locally as the Green Church, has been included in Louth County Council's proposed PEACEPLUS Action Plan, with around €812,000 proposed for renovation works to make the church more suitable and usable.**

The PEACEPLUS Action Plan was noted by councillors at the Louth County Council March meeting, after it had been agreed by the PEACEPLUS Partnership on 6 February and subsequently approved by the Local Community Development Committee on 19 February, with the value of the project coming to €4,679,354.

The plan for the church comes under the Community Regeneration and Transformation theme of the PEACEPLUS Action Plan. It was informed by and based on reasons including:

Encouraging as wide an engagement across the Louth area as possible through the activities including in disadvantaged areas and with target groups;

Wider needs analysis linked to other strategies - both local and regional, such as Economic, culture and arts, sports and biodiversity, climate change, etc;

Fit and alignment with Louth County Council's Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP);

Previous PEACE IV projects

The church, which has a capacity for around 600 people, boasts a long track record of hosting and organising musical events, with previous events including: "Carols by Candlelight" service; Harvest Festival; and the provision of a venue for groups or artists, including, Louth Contemporary Music Society, the Oriel Traditional Orchestra (a Ukrainian chamber music group), and Music Generation.

Modernisation and restoration of the church is needed, the Plan indicates, to allow it to continue to host events and also grow in its capacity to do so, with the following works proposed:

Reintroduction of the Southern Gallery with an access stairway (dedicated education and rehearsal space)

Internal decoration

Upholstery of wooden seats

Upgrading of toilets

Improved lighting and sound equipment

Improved access

The Louth County Council PEACEPLUS Partnership says that the renovation project will make the church significantly more suitable and usable. In its current use, it is seen as allowing communities come together in a shared space with a shared goal, and demonstrates the role of the PUL (Protestant/ Unionist/ Loyalist) community in the heart of Dundalk and allows for cross community integration via a shared interest.

The Partnership envisages that the project could run in cooperation with organisations such as Music Generation, Comhaltas Ceoilteoirí na hÉireann, the Louth Contemporary Music Society, and reach out to across communities of the North East region of the island. It adds that if the project were to proceed then the capacity of the church to host events on a cross-community basis would be greatly enhanced.

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# Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site



**Tail piece - Peter Brookes in The Times**

## Church News Ireland

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