

Church News Ireland



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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

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Image of the day

Willie John's Wooden Spoon

**Ballyclare
Rugby Club
was
delighted to
present the
£2000 raised
at their
Wooden
Spoon
Charity day
in March to the**



**charity's Ulster President,
Willie John McBride and
Chairman Peter Wood last
Saturday morning at The
Cloughan.**



The Wooden Spoon charity
focuses on improving the lives of
disadvantaged and disabled
children and young people in the

UK and Ireland through the power of the rugby community. Ballyclare RFC is proud to be a partner club of this very worthwhile cause.

News

GFA outdated in dealing with NI's old divides, bishop claims

The Good Friday Agreement is “outdated” when it comes to dealing with the old divides, according to the Bishop of Derry.

In a wide-ranging interview, Donal McKeown also told the Belfast Telegraph that “Northern Ireland is still a tribal society”, and that parties still “need the tribal vote to come out”.

However, Bishop McKeown said the 1998 Agreement that ended the Troubles “was based on the concept of there being Catholics and Protestants. Everyone fell into that category. But if you weren't in that category... that's outdated”.

“Much of the legislation on sectarianism is outdated in terms of assuming that if you're attacked for your political views, it's religious discrimination, it's that Catholic or Protestant label that's there,” he said.

He also urged the churches here “to challenge politicians to look at more than economics” as a measure of society, and

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instead to focus on improving quality of life so those on the margins are not left behind.

See full report in Perspective in CNI today page 21.

Belfast Marathon - Gladys did it for Christian Aid

**Gladys Ganiel
comments - Another
one done - I ran the
Belfast Marathon
today in 2.45.46,
placing third woman
overall and the first
woman from
Northern Ireland.**

I was hoping for a few minutes faster but I was isolated and on my own for most of the race, and my left shoe started falling apart at mile 21 (not impressed, Nike). But I will try not to complain! A special shout out to all the supporters on the course, especially from North Belfast Harriers - it was especially great to see the junior athletes cheering me on. Thanks as ever to coach Matt Shields, Marty Rea, Michael Brady at Benchmark Fitness, physio Ross Harris, Pilates instructor Tony Stanley, and Alan O'Hara.



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I also would appreciate your support for Christian Aid's 70k in May campaign: you can donate on my page here: <https://fundraise.christianaid.ie/challenge-2025/belfast-marathon-70k-may>

See article on Gladys in yesterday's issue of CNI.



RTE service by C of I Ethnic Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Justice Group

Sunday's Church of Ireland service of worship on RTÉ One television and RTÉ Radio 1 Extra was led by the Primate's Reference Group on Ethnic Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Justice.

The service was led by the Revd Dr Maithrie White-Dundas – with Bible readings in Malayalam, Shona, Irish and English – and the preacher was Archbishop John McDowell,

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the Church of Ireland's Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland. It is available now through the RTÉ Player.

Participants in the service included parishioners from Raheny, Lucan, and St George and St Thomas parishes in the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough, as well as members of the Church of South India living in Ireland.

The South Asia Forum 2025 is underway in Manchester

USPG says - We're thrilled to be joined by partners from the The Synod of The Church of North India, The Church of South India, Church of Pakistan Official, Church of Bangladesh, alongside other mission agencies and link dioceses.

With powerful reflections from leaders like The Rt Rev Dr Matthew Porter, Bishop of Bolton, it's an important time of shared vision, discussion, and fellowship on the Nicene Creed.

USPG, a key partner agency, is represented by Davidson and Nadia from our Global Mission Team.

Trump's portrayal as pope 'disrespectful', say Irish Catholic priests

The Association of Catholic Priests in Ireland described US President Donald Trump as “disrespectful” after he

shared an Artificial Intelligence image of himself as the Pope days after the Papal's death.

It was shared by Trump on social media and later reposted by the White House's official X account. The image emerged 11 days after the death of Pope Francis and just days before the papal conclave meets to elect his successor.

Last week Trump joked about his interest in the job. "I'd like to be pope. That would be my number one choice," he told reporters.

Co Cork-based Fr Tim Hazelwood, from the Association of Catholic Priests (ACP), said: "I concur with what the American bishops said, that it was disrespectful. It wasn't appropriate.

"We are still in mourning for Pope Francis. That mourning period ends on Sunday — ending nine days of official mourning. And I just think this was disrespectful."

Asked to respond to the criticism, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said: "President Trump flew to Italy to pay his respects for Pope Francis and attend his funeral, and he has been a staunch champion for Catholics and religious liberty."

Elsewhere, a leading Jesuit priest has said he is willing to give Mr Trump the benefit of the doubt over the "deeply offensive" image.

American Fr James Martin, a consultant to the Vatican Dicastery for Communication, said: "Jesuits are always supposed to give people the benefit of the doubt. So even

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though I find this deeply offensive, I will presume that Mr Trump meant this light-heartedly (even though he had just recently returned from Pope Francis's Funeral Mass, and he has a Catholic Vice President who met with Francis the day before his death).

“But imagine the incandescent outrage, the swift condemnation, and the individual and joint protests from the US bishops if this had been done by Joe Biden or Barack Obama.”

The New York State Catholic Conference accused Trump of mockery.

“There is nothing clever or funny about this image, Mr President,” it posted.

“We just buried our beloved Pope Francis and the cardinals are about to enter a solemn conclave to elect a new successor of St Peter. Do not mock us.”



However, US Vice President and Catholic JD Vance said he was “fine with people telling jokes” when asked for his opinion of the image. Courtesy of report by Laura Lynott and Liam Tunney.

Education

Rainey girls cut hair to support friend and Little Princess Trust

The Rainey School family is incredibly proud of Iona, Katelyn, Anna, Ella, Amy and Chloe, who have demonstrated remarkable compassion, courage, and determination in support of their friend Emma.

By bravely cutting their hair, they have not only raised awareness for the Little Princess Trust but also contributed funds to this incredible charity.

The Little Princess Trust provides real hair wigs, free of charge, to children and young people who have lost their own hair through cancer treatment or other conditions such as Alopecia.

The Rainey girls posted “In light of our dear friend Emma’s diagnosis with Leukemia, we have made the heartfelt decision to raise funds for the Little Princess Trust. Emma has shown remarkable strength throughout her journey, inspiring us all with her thoughtfulness and kindness. In a

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beautiful act of solidarity, she has chosen to donate her own hair to the Trust”.

The girls' JustGiving page can be found at the following link:
<https://www.justgiving.com/page/foremma>.

Any small donation would be greatly appreciated.

Methody's Marathons in aid of MND Northern Ireland

Well done indeed to all the amazing runners from Methodist College, Belfast, who took part in the Belfast City Marathon Team Relay last weekend in aid of MND Northern Ireland.

The sixth form students chose MNDA as their charity for the year in memory of Cameron Saulters, the father of one of their form.

Cameron died of MNDA in November 2023 and the sixth form wanted to raise funds and awareness of this devastating disease which has deeply impacted someone close to them.

The College posted - We are so proud of all our pupils (and staff) for getting involved and raising money for this worthwhile cause. If you would like to support and make a donation you can donate through the School Gateway App or JustGiving:

<https://justgiving.com/campaign/mcb-mnda>

Universities play major role in ensuring women achieve their potential, such says Mary Robinson



Pictured at Queen's are (from l-r): Dr Ryan Feeney Vice-President for Governance and External Affairs and Registrar at Queen's, President of the Irish Federation of University Women Gisèle Scanlon, Former President of Ireland Professor Mary Robinson and President of the Queen's Women Graduates Association, Louise McMahon.

Universities play a major role in ensuring women achieve their potential, former President of Ireland Mary Robinson told a gathering of women graduates Irish Federation of University Women and the University

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Women of Europe at Queen's University Belfast last week.

The first of its kind, the cross-border conference was supported by the Shared Island Civic Society Fund and designed by the IrFUW to bring together hundreds of women graduates to participate in the “Irish Federation of University Women - Empowering Women: Fostering Cross-Border Engagement Across the island of Ireland” for the IrFUW’s centenary year.

QUB posted - So delighted to welcome IrFUW, UWE and women graduates from across Ireland and Europe to Queen's.

Read more at <https://ow.ly/mqKH50VljZP>

Cathedral Calls VE Day service of commemoration in Belfast

The service in St Anne’s Cathedral was hosted by His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of the County Borough of Belfast, Dame



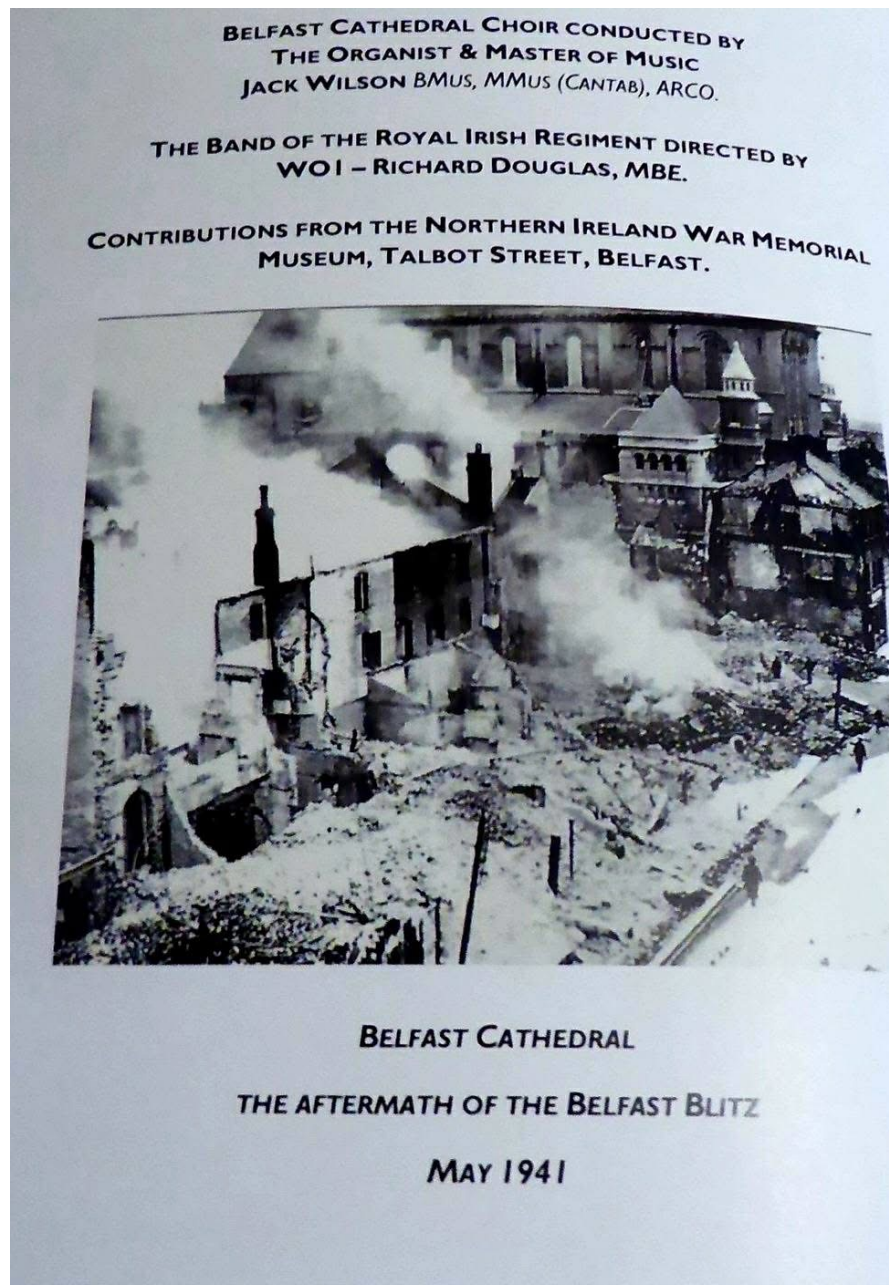


Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle, and the Dean of Belfast, the Very Reverend Stephen Forde.

In the order of service, the Lord Lieutenant said: “The unrestrained joy that brought tens of thousands of people onto Belfast's streets and across Northern Ireland on May 8, 1945 was at least, in part, a release of the fear and grief that had so characterised the years since the outbreak of war

in 1939,” she said.





“No one was unaffected, and freedom, independence and the preservation of democracy had been achieved at a hugely high cost.

“At this challenging time for Europe and the world, it is entirely right that we remember with proud sorrow the sacrifice of all who endured the vicissitudes of the Second World War, but imperative also that we reflect on our common purpose as a nation, as individuals and within our own communities. Each of us has a role to play.”

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Members of the Mothers Union from the northern dioceses attended the service. Photo below - the Cenotaph, Whitehall

Michelle O'Neill and Emma Little-Pengelly attended the Victory in Europe (VE) Day commemoration at St Anne's Cathedral on Sunday.



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The First and Deputy Deputy First Ministers sat together at the event to mark 80 years since the formal acceptance by the Allies of Germany's unconditional surrender in World War Two.

Dame Maria Eagle MP was also present, as well as DUP leader Gavin Robinson and his wife Lindsay.

Members of All Ireland Mothers' Union are pictured at the Civic Service to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day held in Belfast Cathedral on Sunday 4th May (Photos: Abigail Halligan).

Events

Portrush's 'My Fair lady' is in Coleraine

Portrush Music Society proudly presents the wonderful and witty masterpiece that is 'My Fair lady'! Make sure not to miss out on an evening of music, fun and entertainment.

Between 27th and 31st May in Coleraine Leisure Centre. Evenings start at 7:30pm and there is a Saturday Matinee at 2pm.

Tickets start from £19 and are available from Ticket Source. They will be sure to sell out fast.

Its not long until Coleraine comes alive with this Golden Age Classic from Portrush Music Society.



Rutter's Wind in the Willows at The Mill & The Courtyard Theatre

The Ulster Consort and Matthew Owen are hugely looking forward to working with Father Eugene O'Hagan of The Priests.

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He will be the narrator in Sir John Rutter's charming setting of "The Wind in the Willows" on Friday 9 May (7.45pm) at the Theatre at The Mill & The Courtyard Theatre, Newtownabbey - just 15 minutes from the centre of Belfast. There are other works by Rutter, alongside Bob Chilcott's "Little Jazz Mass" and some other little gems.

Tickets are available at the door on the night, or in advance via: <https://theatreatthemill.com/book/?show=111401>

Church Planting and Revitalisation Conference

Taught By: Alan McWilliam – Cairn Movement

Date: May 15, 2025 - May 16, 2025

Time: 9:00am - 3:30pm

Venue: Belfast School of Theology

This event is designed for church leaders, planters, and teams looking to revitalise existing churches or start new ones with a strong foundation of discipleship and outreach.

Limited Spaces. Info & Signup: <https://www.bst.ac.uk/events>

Email: info@bst.ac.uk

Tel: +44 (0) 28 9030 1551

Cycle against suicide

Belfast Mental Health Awareness Cycle aims to bring people together, building a network of support,

understanding, and empathy. By participating in this cycle, you are challenging the stigma surrounding mental health and creating an environment where people feel safe to share their stories.

This event set out to help break the stigma around men's mental health. In every year since 2001, more than 70% of suicide deaths in Northern Ireland have been male.

Men, like anyone else, deserve the space to articulate their struggles to seek help without fear of judgment. By dismantling the stigma surrounding men's mental health, we cultivate an environment where emotional express is not a sign of weakness but a testament to resilience.

Join our Belfast Awareness Cycle and come out in support of a society that values, supports, and celebrates mental well-being. (This event is open to men and women, of all abilities. Women's involvement is crucial providing invaluable perspective and encouragement, promoting integral wellness for all).

Details

Date: Saturday, May 17th, 2025 – (For Mental Health Week)

Type of Cycle: Road Cycle – 2 Routes 40K or 55K

Cost: £20

What is included: Lunch, T-shirt

Register Online: <https://eventmaster.ie/event/9vGnsw5HWJ>

Notre-Dame's legendary organist coming to Portico of Ards

We are thrilled to welcome Notre-Dame's legendary organist, Olivier Latry, to Portico of Ards for an unforgettable evening of music!

A virtuoso of the organ, Olivier Latry has graced the world's most prestigious stages and continues to captivate audiences with his extraordinary talent and improvisational brilliance. From his role as titular organist at Notre-Dame Cathedral to his international performances, he remains a true pioneer of the organ world.

01 June 2025 | 3.00-4.30pm. Book your tickets now!
Visit Ards and North Down Culture - Ards and North Down
Ards and North Down Borough Council Arts Council of
Northern Ireland

Perspective

'There's no doubt Northern Ireland is a tribal society, and in a democracy you need the tribal vote to come out'

Bishop of Derry, Donal McKeown believes that the ongoing division in society is to the benefit of some people while he insists that due to changing

demographics the Good Friday is now outdated, writes Garrett Hargan in the Belfast Telegraph.

The Good Friday Agreement is “outdated”, Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown has said, as he pointed to entrenched sectarianism and the “reality of people who like to promote tribalism” in Northern Ireland.

Addressing the prospect of a united Ireland, the Church leader said there is a challenge for politicians north and south to convince the population of how a change to the border would not only benefit the economy, but improve the “quality of life” for those currently on the margins of society.

Growing up as part of a “big clan” in a mixed rural community in Randalstown, Bishop McKeown spent most of his life east of the Bann but now has a great fondness for Derry and its people, having spent 11 years in the north west.

“Derry is, somebody said to me, a good fit for you. It's big enough to have variety: tourism, culture, a local radio station, all of those things, there's a strong sense of local identity, and yet there's a strong sense of being a big village,” he said.

The 75-year-old is “remarkably happy” with numbers attending Mass in Derry, he said, with “plenty of green shoots. coming through young people, which reflects what's happening in a number of European countries”.

The cloud of historical institutional abuse does however still hang over the Church. Survivors are adamant that Churches

should provide compensation but reports say they have not been cooperative.

Given the Catholic Church is known to have sold off assets, the bishop accepted “some parishes do have money” but said those who suffered were in institutions run by religious congregations who are charities in their own rights and “each section of the Church has to be responsible for its own area”.

Pressed on whether the Derry Diocese is fulfilling its responsibilities by ensuring institutions do contribute to a compensation scheme, he added that there are “certainly plenty of meetings that go on to ensure that we can face these realities together without damning anyone”.

He is of the view that “throwing money at something doesn't solve all the problems” and said the Church has spent “millions providing counselling for people”.

Proud of cross-community relations between Churches in Derry, Bishop McKeown said he is “standing on the shoulders” of past leaders such as Bishop Edward Daly and Bishop James Mehaffey. They were founder members of the Inner City Trust — a charity first set up to drive the reconstruction of bombed-out buildings in the city centre.

Those inter-religious connections remain strong to this day with Bishop McKeown and Church of Ireland Bishop Andrew Forster using their influence to speak out against a recent upsurge in sectarian violence between young people in Derry.

Tensions which sources said have been simmering in the Waterside, spilled over last weekend when two Catholic boys were viciously attacked — an incident captured on phone video.

It sparked a feud between rival gangs in Catholic and Protestant communities with a spike in anti-social behaviour and criminal damage — TikTok now used as a virtual battleground for disillusioned young people to goad one another.

Bishop McKeown remarked on the persistent scourge of sectarianism in Northern Ireland. The Bishop referred to a book by Professor John Brewer on anti-Catholicism in Ireland in 1600-1988, which theorised that sectarianism is “a resource which exists because it benefits some people”.

He added: “Somebody is riding on the back of anger and John Brewer is saying it's a resource, we have to not just ask about who's doing things, who's stoking the fires that allows that to happen, that doesn't condemn that happening.

“Northern Ireland is still a tribal society, and in a democracy you need the tribal vote to come out.

“I'm not saying that the big parties are actually encouraging it, but certainly there's always somebody who's not complaining when that happens.”

He added: “Now, gangs happen. There's the gangs in New York, there's the gangs in Cape Town, there's gangs everywhere, and that's almost a default position for some young people.

“But I think we have to have people in our society who are saying, 'this is not helping you'. It's disappointing, but we want to have a city here that's proud of its past and looks forward to the future.

“It's dangerous, because people get hurt. And it's very divisive, particularly at this stage of the year as we're looking forward into the summer.”

Encouraging people to move away from sectarianism and build a better future, he said Derry has “huge indigenous resources of self-respect, of culture, of identity, of belonging, of community, of compassion, and we can bring those to the table.”

Many people in Derry feel the promised peace dividend has been non-existent.

Commenting on the Good Friday Agreement and constitutional future of the island, Bishop McKeown said: “I keep saying, the war is over here but the conflict is alive and well, there is still the battle over where Northern Ireland's future lies. Is it within the UK? Is it within a united Ireland? And that struggle continues.

“Well, I think certainly the Good Friday Agreement is now 26 years, 27 years old. It was based on the concept of there being Catholics and Protestants. Everyone fell into that category. But if you weren't in that category... that's outdated.

“Much of the legislation on sectarianism is outdated in terms of assuming that if you're attacked for your political views,

it's religious discrimination, it's that Catholic or Protestant label that's there.

“I think certainly we have to look and see, particularly post-Brexit, how we can do the best for people in this part of the island and then the whole question of united Ireland, in some ways, if it doesn't improve life for Ballyfermot and Ballymurphy (deprived areas South and North) — then you can change borders all you want...”

He continued: “I think our job as Churches would be to challenge politicians to look at more than economics, because if we have an economically successful system where large number of people are dying from suicide and addiction, just measuring GNP (Gross National Product) as a sign of how civilised a society we are is a very limited parameter to measure all of those things.

“I think we'd challenge politicians by saying, how would any change in the Irish border actually improve the quality of life? Not the income, but the quality of life for those who are currently losing out in a heavily capitalist or capitalism-dominated society.

“How do we make sure that those who are left behind are included, I think Pope Francis wanted to include those who were left behind.”

On the issue of a lack of education funding in the city, he commented on the fact St Eugene's Primary School's application for a roofing scheme in 2017 had been overlooked. That has left the junior school building condemned with young people now accommodated in a hut.

He said: “Certainly a school that's unusable because the roof is leaking has to be a number one priority. It can't be further down the list.”

Another school he's well acquainted with, Bunscoil Cholmcille, has been stuck in temporary huts for 30 years which are now disintegrating due to a maintenance backlog of £1.4m. Bishop McKeown said the school which has been seeking a new-build for many years is in a “shocking condition”.

He explained that the department wants the city to “rationalise” its Irish language offering. However, he views bilingualism as “very valuable” and said schools want to expand their contribution to Irish language education, adding, there's a demand for it and high quality Irish language teachers graduating from major universities.

Asked if the best way to bring young people from different backgrounds together is through integrated education, the Bishop is unconvinced. He said: “We have to maximise the number of people from different backgrounds, whether they're racial backgrounds, religious backgrounds, whether they're grammar school and secondary schools, which can be a big divide as well.”

He said “a good number of the most integrated schools are Catholic schools”, to the example St Joseph's Boys' School in Creggan having a Muslim head boy in recent years and St Eugene's PS receiving a racial equality award for “welcoming diversity”.

In a society where housing tends to be segregated, the Bishop said there wouldn't be many unionists living in Creggan which makes integration difficult.

He praised the standard of secondary education in the city but said opportunities dry up for young people in the north west whenever they leave school. Ulster University's Magee campus is in a state of transition and unlike Belfast or a place like Mid-Ulster there is no industrial base that is needed to “encourage young creative people to stay here”.

Poem for today

JAZZ

by William Chene

Somewhere between the wide open spaces
And those tiny, secret places in the heart,
The sound of nursery rhymes and temple chimes
Mingle with incense and nonsense
Until even the air has to smile.
That's where you'll find me, in my hiding place,
Making up rhymes and trying to keep time
To the pace of the tick tock tick of a million clocks,
All running at different licks, telling different times.
Each one an event in my life, a birth or a death...
It's hard to get the meter right when the passing of time
Is split just two ways between day and night
And I am like a river of words that keeps getting lost
In those forgotten cemeteries and back water tributaries
That run so deeply through my soul.

Once, in a dream someone stole from sleep and gave to me,
A child asked me, "What is jazz?"
And suddenly I wake up sitting on a hill in Tibet with the Dali Lama.
He smiles and looks on as a long line of Buddhist monks
March single file wearing cowboy boots
And bright orange suits of the latest style.
And all the while, there is a thick pushy wind.



It makes a golden baritone sax begin
To sing its song of long and low strung out notes.
They seem to randomly float but still ring true
While extended chords hang in the air like sweet perfume.

And then, from nowhere comes a random, driving, rhythm
sound

As the back beat races like a pounding heart
With its hand slapping bass
And its drums in your face and you know right from the start
It's full of wisdom and pain, with a sound so cool
Even John Coltrane would have to smile and say, "Yeah,
that's ok".

Cause no one can touch this beat
By just snapping their fingers or tapping their feet,
You see, jazz is a different kind of pain
It hurts like the blues but doesn't ever complain
And nobody can tell you how or why
Because the words never come out the same. Might as well
try counting fireflies in a jar
Till you think you know how many there are...
Or wait till that line of be-bop Buddhists finally come home
Lured by Zen poems and nursery rhymes
To my hiding place where the sacred chimes
Always play at $\frac{3}{4}$ time to the sound of a high hat symbol
Made of brass and silk that whispers to the world
"I always loved you", as the sound of temple bells
Play softly, behind a music that never tells.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at houstonmckelvey@mac.com

Church News Ireland

www.churchnewsireland.org

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

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