



Image of the day - the choir Canterbury Abbey

People and places

Diocesan greetings to Jordanstown parishioner on 100th birthday

Bertha Christie, a parishioner of St Patrick's, Jordanstown, in the Diocese of Connor, celebrated her 100th birthday on Saturday August 7.

To mark this marvellous milestone, Bertha received a visit from the Bishop of Connor's Commissary, Archdeacon Stephen McBride, along with her rector, the Rev Canon Nigel Baylor, on Thursday August 5.

They were among the many guests who paid a socially-distanced visit to the sprightly Bertha as she celebrated her big day, including family, friends and the Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey, Councillor Billy Webb MBE.

One of 11 siblings born in County Donegal, Bertha was married to Fred who sadly died in 1992. A nursing professional all her life, she trained in general nursing at the Royal Victoria Hospital before moving into occupational health nursing in the industrial sector.

Bertha was something of a pioneer in this field, training in London and then encouraging companies to train other nurses in this specialist field.



Archdeacon McBride (left) and Canon Baylor (right) with former nurse Bertha Christie of Jordanstown Parish

“Some of the bigger firms employed nurses,” Bertha said. “I would have been responsible for looking out for health and safety issues and for other problems, including mental health. I saw a need for training these nurses as many were just out of school or straight from the hospital, and I identified nurses wanting to do the occupational health training.”

Bertha is modest about what she started, but her niece Angela Latimer pointed out that Bertha in effect set up the occupational health training for the Health Service in Northern Ireland. “Without this lady and her colleagues it would have been years before this came into the workplace. She was way ahead of her time,” said Angela.

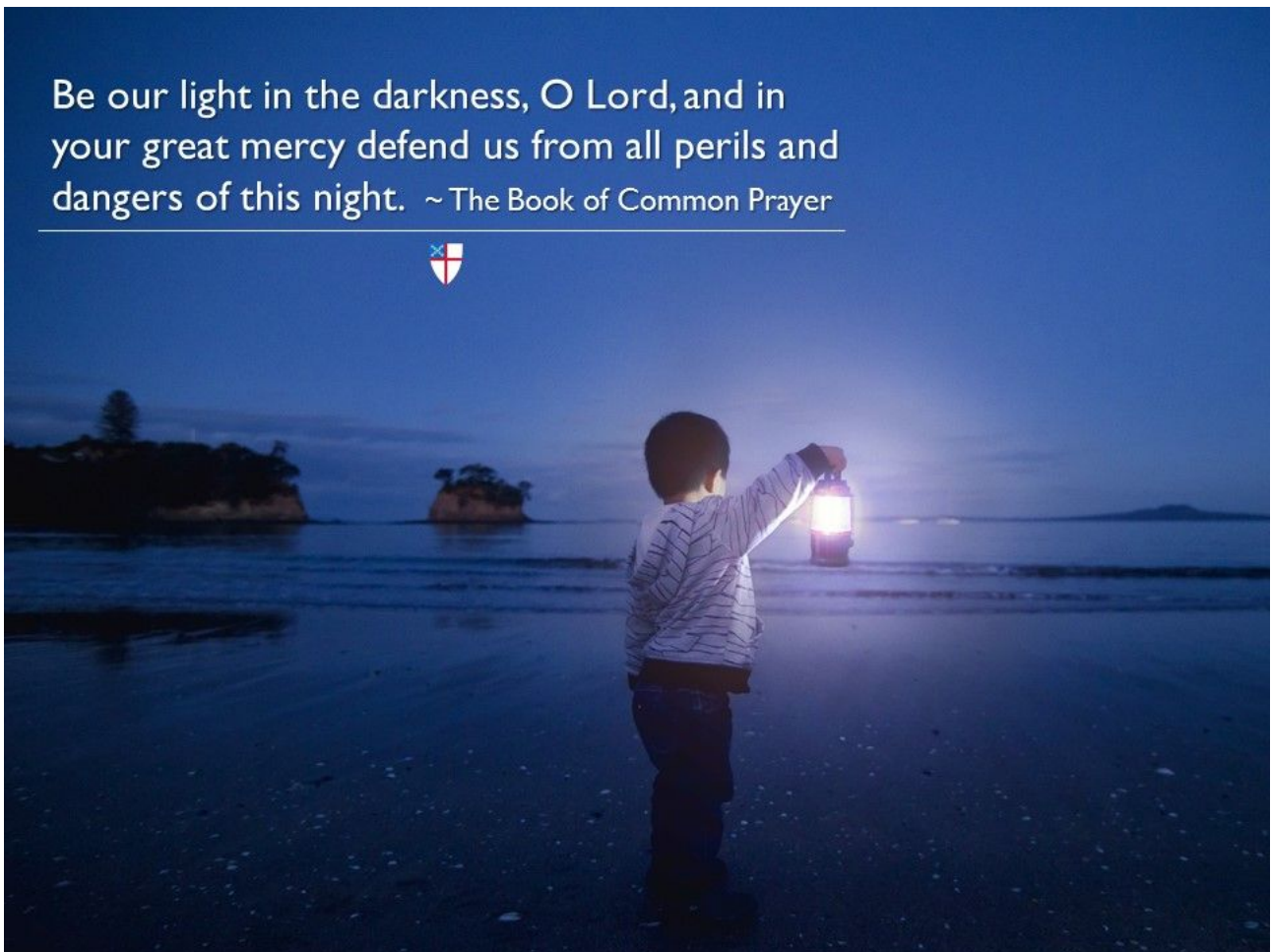
August 14, 2021

She worked for Courtaulds in Carrickfergus, BOCM and Unilever. “Even after she retired, Bertha continued to visit former employees of Unilever on their birthdays, driving herself all over Northern Ireland until she was 92,” Angela added. “She was still driving herself until after she turned 99!”

Although she says she didn’t have time for hobbies, Angela reminded her that she is a talented dressmaker. “Ah yes, I made all my own clothes,” Bertha said, modesty prevailing once again.

Wishing Bertha a happy birthday, Canon Baylor said Bertha was an active and valued member of Jordanstown Parish, and had been a regular attender at 9am communion and

Be our light in the darkness, O Lord, and in
your great mercy defend us from all perils and
dangers of this night. ~ The Book of Common Prayer



August 14, 2021

was a member of the parish Tuesday Club. She still lives in independently in her own home.

Archdeacon McBride brought birthday greetings from the Bishop of Connor and the diocese, and chatted to Bertha about her life and work over a cup of tea and cake.

J.A.M. Day Camps hit the sweet spot

Down & Dromore's popular J.A.M Camp for children going into P6, P7 and Yr8 became two one-day camps this year. Each camp had all the fun and excitement of a residential but crammed into a single very full day at the Kilbroney Centre.

The diocesan Children's Development Officer Julie Currie and her team of volunteers welcomed a total of 40 children from across the diocese over the two camps.

Julie reports, "The theme for J.A.M. Camp was Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my shepherd' – that God is our provider, helper and sustainer. The kids explored this theme throughout the day, as they journeyed through the muddy trail to stop and reflect on how God has been with them through this very difficult year and how he continues to walk alongside them daily.

"The kids enjoyed lots of action that included messy games, muddy trail, campfire and smores, making a bird feeder, on site play park, football and volleyball, kayaking and canoeing, river bouldering and waterfall slides, worship and a bible talk, hot chocolate and a yummy BBQ to finish.



“God really blessed us with great kids, a great team of leaders and great weather. We so enjoyed getting to know the kids from churches all over the diocese and seeing their personalities shine out as the day progressed.”

“Thank you to all the parents who entrusted us with the care of their children it really was a joy to spend time with each one”, Julie concluded.

Reports

As fires rage across the world, World Council of Churches expresses solidarity with churches and survivors

In a series of pastoral letters, World Council of Churches’ acting general secretary, the Rev. Ioan Sauca extended prayers to millions of people who are struggling to come to terms with the trauma and devastation wrought by the recent wildfires.

August 14, 2021

“It is becoming more and more obvious that the fires this year all over the world are not of the same scale as in previous years,” wrote Sauca. “They are part of the extreme phenomena increasingly observed as a consequence of the climate change.”

“This tragic situation is mobilizing many countries that are joining their forces to rescue those suffering from such a natural catastrophe,” he said. “We are also thankful for those professionals and volunteers who are participating in the operations risking their own lives.”

He also acknowledged that churches are providing comfort and counsel, hospitality and hope, strength and solidarity.

“I pray that God’s good grace and wisdom will empower and strengthen you as you continue to lead the people through these difficult times,” Sauca concluded.

Scottish bishop faces double investigation into claims of bullying

Claims of bullying made against Scotland's first female Bishop have prompted two formal investigations into her conduct.

The Rt Rev Anne Dyer, the Anglican bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney, is facing a number of accusations from priests and church staff who say she made their working lives "intolerable".



The claims have prompted the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) to conduct an independent review of the situation. Another investigation led by church trustees in Aberdeen found that Bishop Anne had behaved in an "unchristian" manner, according to leaked information obtained by the Times.

Bishop Anne was involved in the closing of St Andrew's cathedral in Aberdeen and a relocation to the city's St Mary's Church, which then became a temporary cathedral. She claimed that Christopher Cromar, the director of music at St Andrew's, became "agitated and angry" after being told his services were no longer required. After a series of "robust" emails were exchanged between the pair, Cromar was reportedly ordered to return his key and never return to the church.

Bishop Anne claimed that she was so “terrified and shaken” by Cromar's behaviour that she locked herself in the vestry of the church, convinced that she was going to be attacked.

The trustees' findings disputed this version of events, noting that "none of the witnesses support the assertion of Bishop Anne that Christopher Cromar was agitated".

The initial review also noted that Bishop Anne deemed Cromar's actions to be "unforgivable", before suggesting that this view is "difficult to reconcile with the Christian values espoused by the church".

According to a friend, Cromar attempted to publicly tell his congregation how poorly he felt he'd been treated by the leadership, but when he attempted to address parishioners from the front of church, he was drowned out by the organ.

"After the mass had finished — at a point where people have previously been invited to have their say - he stood up," the friend and churchgoer told The Times. "All he was able to say was ‘good morning’ before the organ started and he was drowned out.”

Lord Glenarthur, a church member and a former minister for Scotland, wrote to The Most Rev Mark Strange, primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, in January after becoming increasingly concerned by Bishop Anne's conduct. Lord Glenarthur said that the trustees' findings were “devastating” and called for the second review to be made fully public.

August 14, 2021

The trustees said they were “deeply disappointed” that their report had been leaked, adding that the bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney "supported the process but did not agree with all of the report’s findings".

The SEC says their review is now complete and that the findings will be shared with the College of Bishops. They noted that the report is not being made public at this stage.

Books, Broadcasts, Resources and Webinars

Impact of the Great War on the lives of women in Ireland

Join Dr. Fionnuala Walsh, Assistant Professor in Modern Irish History, UCD, as she discusses the impact of the Great War on the lives of women in Ireland and of the vital - but often overlooked - involvement in the war effort. The talk will be hosted by Louth Library Service's Historian in Residence Dr. Thomas Tormey.

Date: Tuesday 17th August at 7.30pm

Register: <https://www.crowdcast.io/e/irishwomengreatwar/>

The Nations’ Climate Sunday Service on 5 September

You can join in, live from Glasgow Cathedral, to celebrate churches across Britain and Ireland taking action for the climate, and to present our commitment to government?

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

Faith in feminism podcast

ICYMI Theologian, poet and author Nicola Slee talks to [@nomadpodcast](#) about when she first encountered feminist theology and its potential to challenge, inform and enrich our Christian faith and practice. Her new book is *Fragments for Fractured Times*(2020) SCM Press

Book review - Catholic Guide to Miracles by Adam Blai

Something nobody can explain: The Catholic Guide to Miracles - Separating the Authentic from the Counterfeit - by Adam Blai. Manchester New Hampshire. Sophia Institute Press 2021.

Fifteen minutes walk from my home in England is a gallery in stained glass of healings at the tomb of Saint Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, murdered in his cathedral. Many miracle stories can still be traced there, almost 500 years since the martyr's shrine was destroyed under Henry VIII.

In 2020 a shrine was reinstated in Saint Thomas's Catholic church, a hundred yards away, but I have not yet heard of any miracles there. On the other hand, there have been occasions when each of my children came close enough to accidental death for me to be immediately and eternally



[Review by Maurice Billingsley](#)

grateful to God for their preservation. Divine intervention? It felt like it!

So what is a miracle? Adam Blai starts with Thomas Aquinas's definition: 'a true miracle is something that has a cause that is absolutely hidden from everyone, and that nobody, no matter how knowledgeable, can explain'. (p 2) Creation was the first miracle, the Universe made out of nothing.

Adam Blai takes us through Old Testament Miracles: for example, the healing miracles brought about through the prayer of Elisha and Elijah before him, each restoring to life the son of a woman benefactor. Strangely though, Blai does not acknowledge that many of the Plagues of Egypt have plausibly been ascribed to natural causes.

It is the New Testament that tells of the greatest miracle:

August 14, 2021

And if Christ has not been raised, then empty [too] is our preaching; empty, too, your faith. (1 Cor. 15:14)

In the years before the cross and resurrection, Christ performed many miracles, miracles that Blai tells us 'were proofs beyond His words of who He was' (p13). Those who see the Church's preaching as empty will explain them away, and many of the healings at Thomas's shrine could now be attributed to natural causes. The Church is well aware of this, which is why so few - 60 or 70 - healings at Lourdes in 260 years have been verified as miraculous, a minute proportion of the pilgrims who visit in hope of healing. Blai, like the Church herself, is not naive in the face of healing miracles, but he points out that they are the miracles most open to investigation and so are resorted to in the process of canonisation of saints.

There are, of course, other miracles - he cites the appearances of Mary through the ages, and the healings and other phenomena that people other than the visionaries themselves have witnessed. There are also apparently supernatural events recorded around certain saints: stigmata, levitation, bodily incorruption, and miracles deriving from the Eucharistic elements. Although many such stories were reverently told in my Catholic school, a more mature faith leaves them open to question. Adam Blai accepts God's interventions but he would not build his faith on these accounts.

In fact Blai is at pains to point out that there are counterfeit miracles. Discerning the difference between supernatural miracles, counterfeits brought about by demons, and mental illness is an important part of his work for the Church (p129);

August 14, 2021

for example, once correctly diagnosed the mentally ill person may be led to accept appropriate help. Yet there are those whose delusions are deep-rooted but also have the charisma to attract others to what becomes a dangerous cult.

Counterfeit, charismatic faith healers are another dangerous group who use people's fascination - or gullibility - around miracles to line their own pockets, dividing families in the process.

A greater concern for Blai in his work, if not for the average believer who may live a lifetime without coming across such people, is demonic possession and fake miracles. A devil cannot produce a real miracle, but can set up counterfeits, and during exorcism may cry out in protest at being evicted.

I knew someone who was using a ouija board which went silent when, unknown to her, the local priest called on her parents; another young woman was greatly distressed to be told that her boyfriend was soon to die horribly in a road accident. The spirit that may be conjured up in such seances cannot be relied on to be truthful, as I told her; the accident did not happen, but the distress was real and hurtful. The reader will find a full exposé of the ouija board in this volume.

If miracles and the supernatural interest you, this book will give substance to your enquiries. It's important not to get carried away by miracles that add nothing to the revelation of God's love for all women and men in Christ Jesus. See them as a new expression of his love, for one person or for

August 14, 2021

many, often for a limited time, like the miracles at Becket's tomb in Canterbury.

I was glad to read this wise paragraph from Adam Blai's conclusion (p164).

“Real miracles are proofs of God, but we cannot build a faith based only on them. We need a living relationship with God through His Church. The main vehicles of grace are the Word of God and the sacraments, instituted by Christ. The centre and goal of Christian faith is a living relationship with Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit”.

Poem for today

Inniskeen Road: July Evening by Patrick Kavanagh

The bicycles go by in twos and threes -
There's a dance in Billy Brennan's barn tonight,
And there's the half-talk code of mysteries
And the wink-and-elbow language of delight.
Half-past eight and there is not a spot
Upon a mile of road, no shadow thrown
That might turn out a man or woman, not
A footfall tapping secrecies of stone.

I have what every poet hates in spite
Of all the solemn talk of contemplation.
Oh, Alexander Selkirk knew the plight
Of being king and government and nation.

August 14, 2021

A road, a mile of kingdom. I am king
Of banks and stones and every blooming thing.

Pointers for prayer

Intercessions from Tenth Sunday after Trinity Year B– 8th
August 2021

Everlasting God Help us to understand the way that you would like things to be done and to be ready to follow your ways until we too can enter the wide open doors of heaven.

Almighty God you want us hold the needs of our sisters and brothers in Christ as dear to us as ourselves. Help us to love our neighbours as ourselves as we offer our thanks and our intercessions on behalf of the church here in the Costa Blanca and throughout the world.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Creator God, you call us all to love and serve you with body, mind, and spirit. Help us to demonstrate our love for your creation and the world in the way that we live. Open the hearts of those with power both elected and non-elected and give them compassion in all that they do for the good of the people that they lead.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

August 14, 2021

Creator God we pray for all those here in the Costa Blanca on holiday this Summer despite the ongoing restrictions imposed because of the Pandemic. Thank you for the refreshment which holiday brings to their lives, for the freedom from routine and for the new experiences and opportunities they have as they explore our countryside and relax in our resorts. Thank you for the gift of your wonderful creation and help us to be good steward especially in our leisure time and also to continue to take all the necessary precautions for the safety of ourselves and others.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Loving God friend of those in need, your Son Jesus has healed so many in body, mind and spirit. We hold before you those still burdened, those seeking healing, those in need within the church and the world.

(Short Silence)

(add names of those requesting prayer)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Merciful God we pray for all who grieve for loved ones who have died. Be with them in their sorrow, lead them with your love to accept their loss and to go on with their lives. We raise before you those who have died recently and those whose anniversary falls at this time

(Short Silence)

August 14, 2021

(add names of the recently departed or on Anniversary list)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

God of power, hear our prayers, and through the ministry of your Son free us from the grip of the world and all that is evil. Lead us as we go forward into another week strengthened and upheld by your love, the knowledge of the Gospel and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Merciful Father: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

Intercessions for Eleventh Sunday after Trinity Year B – 15th August 2021

Everlasting God as we approach your throne in the House of Wisdom in humility and simplicity we ask that you will hear our prayers of thanksgiving and intercession.

Almighty God we pray for our churches in The Costa Blanca and ask that our church here in..... be given a clear vision of what is needed to be both focused and relevant in all that is good and serves your purpose of spreading the Good News to both residents and visitors.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Creator God we thank you for the beauty of the created world; for its wonderful variety and the bounty that it brings forth. Help us all to be good stewards showing love and

August 14, 2021

friendship to all peoples and the enjoying the warmth and light they bring to our lives. Be close to all who govern ensuring the decisions that they make, day by day, are made for the benefit all of the people entrusted to them in their leadership.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Father God we pray for our own communities and all of our neighbours. We thank you also for our families and friends, raising before you those we know with particular needs. May your peace and love surround them bringing with it comfort and strength.

(Short Silence)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Gracious God we thank you for those we know who are on the road to recovery and for the miracle of healing. We pray for all who minister to the sick and infirm, both at home and in hospital care centres. We name before you now, those we know who are ill or in need of our prayers asking that through these requests they may all experience the light of the Gospel and a real sense of your healing presence.

(Short Silence)

(add names of those requesting prayer)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

August 14, 2021

Merciful God we pray for those whose lives have been shattered by the death of someone close and dear to them. We pray for members of our natural and church families who have died and whose anniversary we remember now.

(Short Silence)

(add names of the recently departed or on Anniversary list)

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Faithful God receive our intercessions and thanksgiving on behalf of the church and the world. Hear our prayers and reward our stewardship of this earth with the riches of heaven.

Merciful Father: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen



Speaking to the Soul

Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement. And I ask you, my true partner, to help these two women, for they worked hard with me in telling others the Good News.

Philippians 4:2-3 NLT

There's nothing new about people falling out with one another! It has been a feature of life from the very beginning as we learn from the story of Cain and Abel. The question is, "what do we do when it happens?" and Paul here offers some helpful advice.

The first step is for those who disagree to seek to resolve their differences. We have no idea what the women disagreed about. Presumably it must have been fairly serious for Paul to go to the trouble of making mention of it in his letter. He reminds the women that they belonged to the Lord and that is a crucially important fact. Belonging to the same family doesn't mean that disagreements won't occur but it does mean that we are not alone in seeking to resolve the situation. We can pray together and seek God's guidance. Normally, in my experience, if there is a willingness to find a way through a disagreement, it can be found. Sometimes the best that can be done is to agree to disagree. We agree to respect one another even though our views are so different, and affirm our love and commitment to one another as family members.

August 14, 2021

Sometimes no amount of conversation between the people who disagree resolves the situation. Paul clearly senses that Euodia and Syntyche need some help and asks his “true partner” to offer assistance. This isn’t an easy role, but it is a vital one and as a Good News community it is important that every church can identify people who can act as peace-makers. This is a tough task and requires much love, grace and wisdom. There are times when even the most able peacemaker cannot resolve a situation and there needs to be an agreement to part company. This was Paul’s own experience when, after a difference of view with Barnabas, they decided to go off in different directions. At all costs what it is vital is that disagreements are addressed and not allowed to rumble on for years causing pain and yet further division.

QUESTION

What have you found to be the best way of resolving disagreements?

PRAYER

Lord God, help me to be a peace-maker today.

