



Church woman and HML to receive freedom of her own home borough



Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is to confer the Honorary Freedom of the Borough on Joan Christie CVO OBE, Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for the County of Antrim. Mrs Christie is a parishioner of Agherton, Portstewart in the Diocese of Connor.

Councillors agreed on the prestigious award to the Queen's official representative at a meeting of the local authority last year. And council has now announced the official conferment ceremony will take place at The Braid in Ballymena on Saturday, April 21, 2018.

The Mayor, Cllr Paul Reid, said: "The Freedom of the Borough is the highest accolade council can award a citizen. Since Mrs Christie

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was appointed Lord-Lieutenant, she has been an incredible representative of Her Majesty and a tireless ambassador for our area. “Mrs Christie is a true friend of the people of Mid and East Antrim and this award is recognition of all her hard work and commitment to our borough. She is unwavering in her support for our people and this council and exudes warmth and kindness at every one of her many personal engagements. We look forward to honouring a truly outstanding individual for her remarkable public service.”

Cllr Billy Ashe’s motion back in August read: “That this council confers the Honorary Freedom of the Borough of Mid and East Antrim on Mrs Joan Christie CVO OBE. This award is in recognition of Mrs Christie’s commitment and service as Her Majesty’s Lord-Lieutenant for the County of Antrim. Through her service, Mrs Christie has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to County Antrim, and an outstanding contribution to Mid and East Antrim.”

Welcoming the date for the ceremony, Mr Ashe said: “I have had the privilege of serving terms as Mayor of the old Carrickfergus Borough Council and also the first Mayor of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and I have witnessed first-hand Mrs Christie’s devotion and dedication to the people of our borough and County Antrim. “Mrs Christie has a dedication that should be set as an example to all in public service. Mrs Christie has also shown unique ability to help us all look at the bigger picture, bringing us all together and focused on a County Antrim basis.”

The motion was seconded by another former first citizen, Cllr Audrey Wales MBE. Cllr Wales said: “I have known Mrs Christie for many years and was delighted when she was appointed to serve as Her Majesty’s Lord-Lieutenant in September of 2008. I always knew Mrs Christie was exceptionally busy and committed to her role. However, during my terms as Mayor of our predecessor council of Ballymena and last year as Mayor of Mid and East Antrim I discovered just how busy she really is. Her dedication is inspiring, in particular how supportive she is of all the community groups and

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young people across the county.” Report courtesy of the News Letter

John Bell of Iona Community to give Changing Attitude lecture during General Synod week

John Bell, a member of the Iona Community, presbyterian minister, broadcaster, hymn-writer and international lecturer will be the Changing Attitude Ireland speaker at this year’s General Synod lunch-time session on Friday May 11

He has chosen the title, “God, Delight and Diversity”, and plans briefly to explore three subjects: problematic approaches to scripture, the created order as diverse by design, and the need for the laity to have their intelligence, experience and aspirations inform the Church’s deliberations on sexuality.

Bell was largely responsible for the Church of Scotland’s most recent hymnal, and with his colleagues has produced songs and liturgical materials which are used and have been translated across the globe. He regularly speaks at the Greenbelt Festival on issues relating to scripture, spirituality and justice. His work has resulted in the conferring of several academic and ecclesiastical honours, most recently the Thomas Cramner Award for Worship from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Last year, in response to the story of the teenager Lizzie Lowe, who took her own life rather than tell her parents about her sexuality, John Bell publicly came out as a gay man, admitting that he had remained single in order to work without compromise as a public Christian.

The Venue is the Spires Bar in the Armagh City Hotel during the lunch time recess on Friday May 11th at 1pm.



Legendary group Altan to perform at fundraising concert in Saint Patrick's Cathedral for World Refugee Day

Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, is preparing to give those seeking refuge in Ireland a warm welcome on World Refugee Day in June. People living in Reception and Integration Accommodation Centres in the Eastern Region will be invited to the cathedral for a Welcome Dinner on that day.

To help fund this event, Saint Patrick's has announced a partnership with the exceptionally talented group, Altan, who will perform at a fundraising concert in the cathedral on Saturday May 19. The concert will be on the theme: 'An Irish Welcome'.

Altan have been travelling the world bringing their music to audiences far and wide for more than 30 years. They have just launched a new album, 'The Widening Gyre' and this event will be their first concert in Ireland in 2018. The funds raised will be put directly towards the Welcome Dinner for people who are seeking refuge and support in Ireland.

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The cathedral's Dean, the Very Revd Dr William Morton, said it was fitting that Saint Patrick's and the church be associated with World Refugee Day. "Saint Patrick's Cathedral is a place of welcome, friendship, openness, acceptance and inclusiveness, and therefore it seems so fitting that these wonderful events are being hosted within it and that, as a church, we are identifying with World Refugee Day and helping to combat the social issues which are involved. To make the World Refugee Dinner possible I am delighted that the concert by Altan will be taking place in Saint Patrick's. This is terrific news, and, in raising funds for the dinner, the concert will also greatly highlight the charitable outreach of the cathedral," he said.

Tickets for the concert are on sale now. Admission is €30 per person and tickets can be purchased on the Cathedral website www.stpatrickscathedral.ie. Doors open at 7.30pm. For additional information on the concert please contact Kelley Bermingham, Community Officer, on 01-4539472 Ext 210 or email community@stpatrickscathedral.ie

Celtic Camino Festival in Westport this weekend

Westport hosts the Celtic Camino Festival this weekend, when all aspects of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela will be celebrated by participants from Ireland, Spain, the UK, Hungary, Canada, the United States and Japan.

The festival starts on Friday 13 April at 7.30pm with a special screening in the W Cinema of Dónal Ó Céilleachair's documentary, *The Camino Voyage*, which tells the story of the journey by currach from West Kerry to Northern Spain by Breannán O Beaglaoich, Glen Hansard, Liam Holden, Brendan Moriarty and the late Danny Sheehy.

Speakers will include Camino guidebook author John Brierley, who will be focusing on how the Camino can be "a path of awakening, an inner-journey of self-discovery".

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Participants can travel 18km on foot along the Croagh Patrick Heritage Trail from Balla to Ballintubber Abbey (pictured right).

Saturday features a series of presentations, discussions and workshops on the history of the camino, particularly in relation to Irish participation in the journey.



Among the speakers are: Dr Bernadette Cunningham of the Royal Irish Academy, whose book on medieval Irish pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela is due for publication later this year; John Rafferty, who has published 12 books about the Camino using the pen name ‘Johnnie Walker’; Lanzada Calatayud of the A Coruna Tourism Agency, who has played a key role in securing the change that allows Irish pilgrims to complete part of their pilgrimage in Ireland in order to receive a Compostela; and Camino guidebook author John Brierley, who will be focusing on how the Camino can be “a path of awakening, an inner-journey of self-discovery”. On Saturday evening, there will be a gala dinner in the Hotel Westport with Irish and Spanish music for entertainment.

No Camino festival would be complete without some walking, and on Sunday many of the festival participants will travel 18km on foot along the Croagh Patrick Heritage Trail from Balla to Ballintubber Abbey, where Mass will be celebrated. There is an option to continue walking after that for another 7km on the ancient *Tóchar Phádraig* pilgrimage route. Anyone completing the full 25km distance will be entitled to receive a Celtic Camino Compostella.

For further information, visit: www.caminosociety.com/celtic-camino-festival-2018

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Irish Presentation Nun, Sr. Loreto Houlihan, is the Subject of a New Documentary – *Sister India*



Sr. Loreto with Irish Ambassador to India Brian McElduff

An Irish Presentation Sister is the subject of a documentary – *Sister India* – produced by Irish film-maker, Myles O'Reilly. Sr. Loreto, born Peg Houlihan near Carrick-on-Suir in Co. Tipperary in 1927 has spent 70 years teaching in India where she recently celebrated her ninety-first birthday. The film is currently being screened at a number of film festivals in Ireland and in India.

The idea for the film was sparked by another Irish woman, Áine Edwards, who has been living in India since 2003 where she runs a business consultancy service. “My many conversations with Sr. Loreto” she says “evoked a passion in me to produce a documentary on her. I wanted to not only share her story, but also to celebrate the work of so many other Irish educators in India, as this era draws to a close and another starts.”

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“The Irish legacy of education in India is one of Ireland’s strongest links with the country” says Áine. “The seeds have been sown for the Indian sisters to take this legacy forward for the next generation of children. Sister India was made to preserve not only the story of Sr. Loreto, but to remember all the Irish who have dedicated their lives in the service of education and community support in India.”

The first Presentation mission in India began in 1842 when four pioneering sisters from Ireland arrived in Madras (Chennai). The mission spread to many other states in the Indian sub-continent including Rawalpindi which later became part of Pakistan. Sisters from India went on to establish mission foundations Matlock in England, in Zimbabwe, and in Zambia. More recently sisters from India are also ministering in Thailand, Slovakia, Ireland, and the Holy Land. There are currently 165 sisters living and ministering in a number of states including Tamil Nadu, Goa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. They are involved in formal and informal education, social work, health and pastoral care, as well as justice, peace, and advocacy on behalf of those on the margins, especially women and children.

Film-maker Myles O’Reilly said that he is not very religious but was invited to follow Sr. Loreto Houlihan, and found her deep love of India and its people absolutely heart-warming and deeply resonant. “Sitting in front of her and listening to her talk was like being warmed by the hearth of an Irish fireplace on a rainy day hearing stories as she it from ‘the long ago’. I learned from her that India and its culture retains more of the life she left 70 years ago in Ireland than the country of her birth today, and so she chooses to live the rest of her days in India for that natural familiarity” he concluded.

Born into a large family in 1927, Peg Houlihan grew up in hard times, especially in the 1930s with a worldwide depression and an economic war between Ireland and Britain. By the time she was five years old, her mother was already a widow as her father, a blacksmith, had died. In 1943, 16-year-old Peg left her rural farmhouse in Tinhalla near Carrick-on-Suir in Co Tipperary. She joined the Presentation Sisters in the UK before departing for the distant shores of India. Her ship set sail from Liverpool to Bombay as the Second World War was drawing to a close, and she celebrated her 17th birthday on board. During that journey and its



many blackouts, Sr. Loreto bravely looked forward spending a lot of time on the ship learning the ancient Tamil language.

After landing at the port of Bombay, the rest of the journey was by train down to Madras. On arrival at the Presentation Convent, there was a letter waiting from her mother. It opened with “Céad míle fáilte” to India. Sr. Loreto speaks lovingly of that letter, as she knew it was a huge sacrifice for her mother to let her go. It was a gift of the utmost love for a mother to let her daughter go with the words “keep up your brave heart Peg, all will be well”. They never saw each other again.

Sr. Loreto dedicated her life to love and serve others through education in Chennai. After completing her teacher training at Church Park College in Madras, she went on to work as a primary school teacher spending most of her life at St. Joseph’s Anglo-Indian School in Perambur in north Chennai. The children in her class were six years old and over the years, she has taught three generations of families, and become a well-loved and respected person in the community. In class she says she was strict, but outside of school, “I didn’t have enough fingers for them to hold onto.”

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After Indian independence in 1947, the Indian government asked the Presentation Sisters to continue their education, and the doors were opened to the indigenous population, which in India is almost 80 per cent Hindi. The children were encouraged to celebrate their culture in the schools. Áine Edwards says: “the adults I meet nowadays who attended schools where Irish brothers and sisters were teachers, talk fondly of them and their education. The late chief minister of Tamil, Nadu Jayalalitha, has spoken of her school days at Church Park as being the happiest of her life.” What a great tribute to Irish missionaries who devoted their lives to the service of the people of India.

Today, Sr. Loreto says she is “blessed with strong faith, good sleep, and no regrets”, and intends to live out her life in her beloved India. Venerable Nano Nagle – founder of the Presentation Congregation - has been her role model in life. Nano is known as “The Lady of the Lamp” - a pioneer of Catholic education in Ireland during times of penal law.

Reaction to the film has been very positive as typified by Jennifer Bastian in Australia: “My sisters and I were students of St. Loreto at St. Joseph’s Presentation Convent in Madras many years ago. We now live in Australia. Sr. Loreto is a true example of Christ’s love for humanity. She is one beautiful human being” she said.

Sister India has already been screened at the Dingle International Film Festival and the Silk Road Film Festival. It will be shown at the Fastnet Film Festival on 23-27 May and at the International Christian Film Festival in Florida. Then in August, it will be shown at the Ink Well Theatre in Tracton, Co. Cork on 18th, and at the Clare Island Film Festival.

2018 is the tercentenary of the birth of Nano Nagle and will be marked by a programme of commemorative events at Nano Nagle Birthplace (www.nanonaglebirthplace.ie) at Ballygriffin, Mallow. The film will be shown there and also at Nano Nagle Place (<http://nanonagleplace.ie>), Douglas Street, Cork City.

Sweden's Lund cathedral to host first Catholic Mass since Reformation

The decision by the Lutheran Church of Sweden to offer a temporary place of worship to a local Catholic parish reflects the spirit of Pope Francis' visit to the city in 2016 for a joint ecumenical commemoration of the Protestant Reformation

The medieval cathedral in the southern Swedish city of Lund will be the setting for a Catholic celebration of the Eucharist for the first time since the days of the Reformation.

The chaplain of the Lutheran cathedral and the Catholic parish of St Thomas announced on Tuesday that the initiative follows on from the historic visit of Pope Francis to the city in October 2016 for a joint commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Since the Pope and leaders of the Lutheran World Federation stood together in the ancient cathedral, praying for forgiveness and pledging themselves to closer spiritual and practical cooperation, Catholics and Lutherans in Lund have been meeting regularly in each other's churches for ecumenical Vespers.

Strengthening Lutheran-Catholic relations

One of the main promoters of this monthly initiative is the chaplain of the cathedral, Rev Lena Sjöstrand, who says the papal visit to Lund and the nearby city of Malmö "touched so many people".

She says that through these continuing celebrations, people are happy to see that the visit was not merely "a one-off event", but rather a concrete way of strengthening relations between the two Christian communities.

This autumn, the Catholic parish of St Thomas will close for major restoration work and the cathedral has offered to host the community on Sundays. The first Catholic Mass since the Reformation will be celebrated there on October 21st and will continue on a weekly basis until the parish church is ready for use again in the spring.

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From Conflict to Communion

Promoters of the initiative note that the development also reflects the spirit of the 2013 joint document 'From Conflict to Communion', which focused on the fruits of fifty years of dialogue since the Second Vatican Council.

The ancient cathedral, dating back to the 11th century, was originally dedicated to St Lawrence and became the religious heart of the region during the Middle Ages. It is one of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture in Europe, drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

Common journey of reconciliation

Beneath its austere stone arches, Pope Francis and the Lutheran leaders spoke of their “common journey of reconciliation”. They also signed a joint statement recommitting Catholics and Lutherans to witness more closely together, “to remove the remaining obstacles” that stand in the way of full Christian unity.

The statement urges parishes and communities “to be bold and creative, joyful and hopeful” in their common witness and service to their neighbours in need. This latest ecumenical initiative is another important milestone, putting into practice the spirit of that historic encounter.

