



Surprising alliances, shifting allegiances - Changing of the Catholic votes in Northern Ireland?

A special feature in the Catholic World Report by Michael Kelly, editor of the Irish Catholic, commences -

“Social issues and common causes are making some Catholics reconsider cultural and political alliances leading up to crucial May 6th election”.

The writer comments, “Traditionally, Catholics voted for the moderate Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and the more hardline Sinn Féin party. The SDLP – despite the socialist-sounding name – has tended towards social conservatism and has been vehemently opposed to the introduction of abortion. Sinn Féin, on the other hand, supports the introduction of abortion.

“In the past most Catholics voted for the SDLP and Sinn Féin based on little more than the parties support for Irish unity. However, social issues are becoming more and more important. On the issue of same-sex marriage, for example, both parties that draw their support from Catholics campaign in favour of redefining marriage.

“The two main parties supportive of continued ties with Britain, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), have traditionally relied on the Protestant community for voters. The DUP, in particular, was hated by large sections of the Catholic community due to the firebrand rhetoric of former leader Ian Paisley, who infamously described Catholics as “vermin”.

“Recently, however, the DUP in particular has been on a charm offensive with Catholics. The party and the Catholic Church are at one on the issues of same-sex marriage and abortion. Catholic bishops recently met with senior figures in the party in a bid to have a so-called ‘conscience clause’ passed into law protecting religious freedom.

“Edwin Poots, a senior member of the DUP, thinks his party has more to offer Catholics than they might at first think.

“I actually think there is an educated, conservative Catholic vote out there, which the DUP is probably best placed to pick up. They want to ensure their kids get a good education, they are supportive of the doctrines of their Church.

“The doctrines of their Church largely coincide with the DUP. So conservative Protestantism and conservative Catholicism have an awful lot in common,” according to Mr Poots....”

More at -

[http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/3835/
changing_of_the_catholic_votes_in_northern_ireland.aspx](http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/3835/changing_of_the_catholic_votes_in_northern_ireland.aspx)
x

See also Christianity & Politics in Media digest below
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Irish Methodist Church has not advised on marriage equality vote

The Secretary of the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Reverend Donald Ker, in a letter to the Irish Times states -

“ Patsy McGarry (“Presbyterian Church urges No in marriage equality referendum”, April 22nd), in commenting on the church’s [comments](#) in advance of the referendum on marriage equality, includes the Methodist Church in Ireland among those churches which are calling for a No vote.

“While in its short statement the Methodist Church has reiterated its understanding that marriage is between one man and one woman, it has not sought to advise people on how they should vote. Our statement concludes with the words, “We encourage all to listen respectfully to each other in the church and society, and in doing so, to seek the will of God and the good of society.”

“Within Methodism, as within the community at large, we respect that fact that there will be those who have differing views about how the good of society and the will of God may be realised.”

Belfast Jesuit to head Boston College's Center for Irish Programs

Oliver Rafferty, SJ, an expert on the Catholic Church's role in the development of Irish nationalism, will succeed Thomas Hachey as the executive director of Boston College's Center for Irish Programs from Aug. 15.

Fr. Rafferty has published or co-published such books as *Irish Catholic Identities; George Tyrell and Catholic Modernism; The Catholic Church and the Protestant State: Nineteenth Century Irish Realities; The Church, the State and the Fenian Threat, 1861-75; and Catholicism in Ulster, 1603-1983: An Interpretative History*. He is working on two other forthcoming books, *The Church and the 1916 Rising and Violence, Politics and Catholicism in Ireland*.

“Oliver Rafferty is a leading historian of the Catholic Church in modern Ireland, and he will bring great energy and vision to the Center for Irish Programs,” said Provost and Dean of Faculties David Quigley. “I look forward to working with him as we build on the legacy of Tom Hachey's 15 years of leadership here on campus and in Ireland.”



Oliver Rafferty, SJ, will become executive director of the Center for Irish Programs this summer, following the retirement of Thomas Hachey, who has held the post since the center's inception in 2000.

“This appointment is an immense honor, and a tremendous responsibility,” said Fr. Rafferty, a native of Belfast who entered the Society of Jesus in 1981. “Boston College has a great reputation in the field of Irish studies, and it’s very well-deserved: There are outstanding teachers and researchers here. I’m very happy to have the opportunity to work in such an exciting place.”

Fr. Rafferty cited the Burns collections, where years ago he conducted some research for his doctoral thesis, as one of the most visible of BC’s Irish resources, along with the library’s Visiting Scholar in Irish Studies Chair.

“The roster of eminent writers, historians, authors and poets who have served as Burns Scholars is most impressive, and adds to the prestige of BC’s Irish programs.”

Fr. Rafferty said that in the coming months he plans to “do a lot of listening” to administrators, faculty and staff in BC’s Irish programs. “I want to hear what their visions, hopes and expectations are. Coming in as an outsider, I see things from a different perspective, but they are the ones who have the experience and the day-to-day knowledge.”

The field of Irish studies itself is at a crossroads, Fr. Rafferty said, especially in its examination of Irish history.

In contrast to the generally high visibility of Irish literature – notably through the work of figures like Joyce, Yeats and Shaw, which forms part of the canon of English literature – Irish history has typically been viewed as a more specialized area of scholarship. But that may be changing, he said, as aspects of Irish history – such as the Great Famine or The Troubles – are increasingly seen as pertinent to the wider discipline. For example, 19th-century Irish nationalism as represented by Daniel O’Connell was, in some

ways, “the first mass democratic movement in Europe.”

He added, “Another consideration is that, unlike in the past, not all those who are interested in Irish history, literature or art are of Irish descent. There is far greater diversity among students and scholars in Irish studies. What are the implications of this, for teaching and research? There are many fascinating questions for us to explore.”

Last fall, Fr. Rafferty taught the course Ireland at War in the 20th Century and is currently teaching Ireland Since the Famine. His previous appointments include as the Wade Chair at Marquette University; visiting professor of Jesuit studies, history and theology at Loyola University Chicago; visiting professor of history at the University of Western Australia and Sogang University (South Korea); international Jesuit scholar at the College of the Holy Cross; and Hopkins Chair at John Carroll University.

In addition to authoring or co-authoring articles in a variety of academic publications, Fr. Rafferty has written for popular media such as *The Guardian*, *The Irish News*, *America* and *The Tablet*. He also has discussed various historical, theological and religious topics on BBC radio

and TV, RTE radio and TV and Ulster Television, as well as in US outlets.

Fr. Rafferty holds doctoral and master's degrees from Oxford University, a master's degree from Trinity College Dublin's Irish School of Ecumenics, and a master's degree in church history from Heythrop College at London University, where he also earned his bachelor's degree.

More at -

http://www.bc.edu/publications/chronicle/FeaturesNewsTopstories/2015/topstories/a-transition-ahead-in-bc-irish-programs-leadership.html?cq_ck=1429795130220

Down Cathedral re-ordered

A Service of Thanksgiving was held on Thursday 23 April in Down Cathedral to mark the reordering and redecoration of the Cathedral and to install three canons, including the cathedral's first two ecumenical canons. (See CNI March 25). Bishop Harold Miller presided over holy communion and dedicated the new lectern and holy table.

The cathedral sanctuary has been completely redesigned to make it more versatile for larger

services with a new polished limestone floor bringing everything onto one level. There are new seats for clergy, a holy table and the new lectern was a gift from Holy Cross Monastery. The furniture is made from stained American oak, brass and stainless steel and was crafted in Cookstown. At the two locations on the aisle where the Word of God is read or proclaimed a circular mosaic has been placed in the floor, each with a motif from the Book of Kells and words from the Gospels. A new sound system has also been installed and the cathedral's interior has been completely repainted.

The overall effect is one of space, light and calm – very much conducive to worship – and the versatility of the new layout has already been demonstrated during the diocese's St Patrick's Day celebrations with The Archbishop of Canterbury.

Dean Hull thanked Consarc for their work on the fabric and redecoration of the building; the builders, Hugh J O'Boyle; and Brian Quinn, Architect, who re-imagined the sanctuary and designed the new furniture. Brian was also responsible for designing the Benedictine Monastery at Rostrevor and the re-ordering of Donaghadee Parish.

The Dean also thanked the individuals and companies who gave so generously to the project – not least the churches of the diocese who contributed through the Bishop’s 1% Cathedrals Appeal. Finally, Dean Hull acknowledged his predecessors, especially Dean John Dinnen and others in the diocese whose initial vision has been realised in the beautiful cathedral we have today.

View a gallery from the service here

View a gallery of the reordering and redecoration here

Launch of www.meaningofmarriage.ie - Irish bishops web site

The Catholic Communications Office of the Irish Bishops’ Conference has launched a new website www.meaningofmarriage.ie.

This website will host relevant material which has been published by the Irish Bishops’ Conference, its councils, and by individual bishops.

Content on the new website includes:

- the Irish Bishops' pastoral statement *The Meaning of Marriage*;
- *Marriage is important – reflect before you change it*, a statement issued by the Irish Bishops' Conference on March 10 at their Spring General Meeting;
- *The Meaning of Marriage* weekly newsletters published by the Catholic Communications Office;
- marriage and family prayers;
- recent statements and homilies;
- comments by Pope Francis on marriage and family.

Ecumenical service introduces Roscommon Lamb Festival

On Wednesday evening at 8pm St. Coman's Church, Roscommon, will hold a Special Ecumenical Service to celebrate the launch of the Roscommon Lamb Festival.

The event is "Thanksgiving for the flocks of the fields" and will include a creative variety of music, art, poetry and prose highlighting the biblical link between Christ as Shepherd and ourselves as "the sheep of His hand". The

service will be led by the Rector, Canon Liz McElhinney, Mgr Travers and Fr Mc Loughlin.

Is Baptist unity at risk over same-sex marriage?

British Baptists could be facing a bruising controversy over homosexuality, as one of the regional associations has dissented from the denomination's declared position, Christian Today can reveal.

Christian Today - The West of England Baptist Association (WEBA) – one of 13 regional associations of the Baptist Union of Great Britain – has effectively challenged guidance issued by the Union which says each minister can make up its own mind on the issue of same sex marriage.

The matter of what is and isn't allowed is complex for Baptists because of the way they are structured: each Baptist church is independent, but the Union is responsible for setting national standards for the conduct of ministers.

After same-sex marriage was introduced in the UK, the Union issued guidance at its Assembly last year.

They had options – they could have threatened to have withdrawn the accreditation of a minister who performed a same-sex marriage, but this



would effectively have meant deciding a church's theology for it.

Ultimately, the Union decided it cannot forbid churches from registering for same-sex marriages (if they want to) because of the Baptist 'Declaration of Principle'.

This is a sort of Baptist constitution which says that "each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer [Christ's] laws".

So the Union's guidance said ministers who conducted same-sex marriages wouldn't be disciplined for doing so.

But it also asserted a traditionalist view of marriage as "a union between a man and a woman, as the continuing foundation of belief in our Baptist Churches" – and said that while ministers might be able to celebrate a same-sex marriage for someone else, they wouldn't be able to enter into one themselves.

However the West of England Association appears to have flouted this guidance, and attempted to outlaw its churches from conducting gay marriages.

Its trustees issued its own statement to churches last summer, circulated in a prayer letter from the regional minister team leader, Rev Nigel Coles.

The trustees were severely critical of the Union's position, not just because of its inconsistency, but because, they said, it was unbiblical.

More at -

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/british.baptists.and.gay.marriage.will.it.split.the.denomination/52762.htm>

Media digest

Gallipoli commemorations

Prince pays tribute to thousands who lost their lives at Gallipoli - News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/prince-pays-tribute-to-thousands-who-lost-their-lives-at-gallipoli-1-6709373>

Gallipoli: 'Shrapnel burst as frequently as the tick of a clock' - Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/gallipoli-shrapnel-burst-as-frequently-as-the-tick-of-a-clock-1.2188465#.VTs98Eef> -4.facebook

Letters from Gallipoli: an officer's tale of bloodshed and defeat - Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-one/11561043/Letters-from-Gallipoli-an-officers-tale-of-bloodshed-and-defeat.html>

Archbishop Justin Welby statement on Gallipoli Campaign Centenary

<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org//articles.php/5539/archbishop-justin-welby-statement-on-gallipoli-campaign-centenary>

The Irish in Gallipoli: new online platform launched - Irish Genealogy News

<http://www.irishgenealogynews.com/2015/04/the-irish-in-gallipoli-new-online.html>

Marriage equality

Senator David Norris: "The Marriage Equality Referendum is just exactly that - about equality" - HeadStuff

<http://www.headstuff.org/2015/04/senator-david-norris-marriage-equality/>

Brian O'Driscoll lines up with Gay Byrne to support gay marriage in Ireland - Guardian

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/25/brian-o-driscoll-gay-byrne-same-sex-marriage-ireland>

Rise in nuns - Women entering religious life in England and Wales at 25-year high

The number of women becoming nuns has reached a 25-year high, according to the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/04/23/women-entering-religious-life-in-england-and-wales-at-25-year-high/>

<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/1997/0/female-religious-vocations-soar-to-highest-level-in-25-years-while-seminarian-numbers-dwindle>

Meet 'digital nun': the very modern Sister funding her monastery through apps - Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11557187/Meet-digital-nun-the-very-modern-Sister-funding-her-monastery-through-apps.html>

Christianity and politics

What are our leaders doing about religious persecution? - Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/general-election-2015/11561820/What-are-our-leaders-doing-about-religious-persecution.html>

Overturing the vested interest. Gordon Brown on Kier Hardie - Church Times

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2015/24-april/comment/opinion/overturing-the-vested-interest>

Methodism and world leaders: Wesley's sons and daughters - The Economist

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/erasmus/2015/04/methodism-and-world-leaders>

Will middle class Unionism vote DUP and will middle class Nationalism vote Sinn Fein in South Belfast? - Eamonn Mallie

<http://eamonnmallie.com/2015/04/will-middle-class-unionism-vote-dup-and-will-middle-class-nationalism-vote-sinn-fein-in-south-belfast/>

Humour

Is it still safe for Catholics to laugh at Father Ted? - Catholic Herald

<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/issues/april-17th-2015/is-it-still-safe-for-catholics-to-laugh-at-father-ted/>

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