

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – The Cross in Holy Week 3**



April 5, 2023

## Image of the day

### The Cross in Holy Week 3 -

### Clonard Monastery

Clonard  
Monastery is  
one of the  
most important  
assets in the  
church's  
mission in

Belfast and the northern dioceses. It is the base of the  
Redemptorists in the province. Some treats are allowed in  
Holy Week. Have a look at the website -

[<https://www.clonard.com/>]



## People and places

### Larne parish church hosts 'Quilts of Joy' for Easter

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## **An historic Larne church is to host a ‘Quilts of Joy’ display as part of Easter celebrations.**

The colourful display is all the work of the talented members of St Cedma’s Church’s Parish Piecemakers group.

The group explained what visitors can expect: “At St Cedma’s we have created a display of colourful quilts aimed at conveying the message of hope which the season of Easter brings. Once again they are the collaborative work of the twelve Parish Piecemakers and a triumph of their sewing skills.

"We would love to share these with the wider community and are holding an open afternoon on Saturday 15th April between 2.00pm and 4.00pm when there will be an opportunity to chat to see the quilts, chat to the stitchers and enjoy a cup of tea and a slice of homemade cake. A warm welcome awaits."

## **Good Friday concert in St Ann's, Dawson Street**

**On Good Friday a concert of sacred music will take place from midday in St Ann's, Dawson Street.**

The music will be meditative, including Allegri’s ‘Miserere’, Haydn’s ‘Seven Last Words of Christ’ and Rheinberger’s ‘Stabat Mater’. This will be sung by St Ann’s parish choir and they will be accompanied by the Con Tempo String Quartet.

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The concert will last until 1.40pm when there will be silent prayer for 20 minutes.

At 2pm, there will be a service of Litany and Ante-Communion sung by the parish choir.

The service will end at 3pm

You are most welcome to attend. This concert is

funded through the Church of Ireland's MindMattersCOI project and Benefact Trust.

## Good Friday concert in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

You are also invited on Good Friday to a special concert given by the Cathedral Choir to mark both Christ's Passion and his Resurrection.

St Ann's Church, Dawson Street

### Good Friday Sacred Concert

ALLEGRI MISERERE MEI  
HAYDN SEVEN LAST WORDS OF CHRIST  
RHEINBERGER STABAT MATER



Midday Good Friday April 7th  
ST ANN'S CHURCH CHOIR  
CON TEMPO STRING QUARTET

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This Project is Supported by the Benefact Trust and MindMatters Church of Ireland

 MindMatters COI  
• Reducing Stigma  
• Promoting Connections  
• Clergy Training and Supports  
• Mental Health and Faith

 BENEFACT TRUST



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Music includes Allegri's Miserere mei, John Rutter's Requiem, and music by Finzi, Casals, and Handel.

7.30 - 09.15 pm

There is a special €10 ticket

Book online now:

<https://www.stpatrickscathedral.ie/event/goodfriday/>

**A Special Easter Sunday Midday  
Prayers  
led by Worldwide  
President Sheran Harper**

*Happy  
Easter*

He is risen  
He is risen indeed  
Hallelujah

Music: The Resurrection by  
The Spirituals Choir

*Mothers' Union Worldwide President  
Sheran Harper, AA*

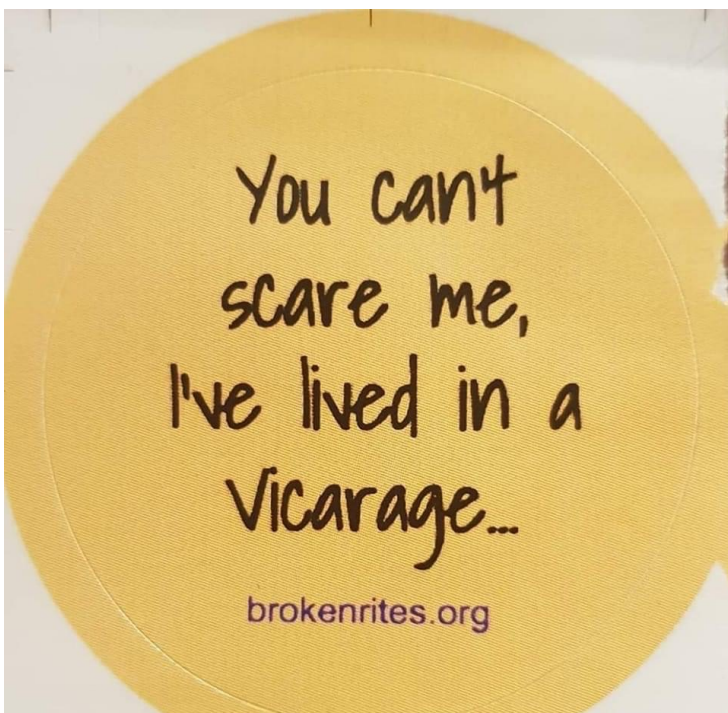
**Mothers' UNION**

**Be sure to tune in this week for a special Easter Sunday Midday Prayers led by Mothers' Union Worldwide President, Sheran Harper.**



## 82 Soap bags from St Paul's Mothers Union, Lisburn

**St Paul's Mothers Union, Lisburn, thanks everyone who supported their Soap Bag project.**



They were overwhelmed with the generosity. They have 82 bags completed.

They will be going to LVH. RVH Musgrave Mater and Woman's Aid.



## News

### **Ulster University report on education in Northern Ireland is incorrect and weakens case for equality - Controlled Schools' Support Council claims**

**The Controlled Schools' Support Council has issued a statement on an Ulster University report on education in Northern Ireland, published yesterday Tuesday, 4th April 2023:**

Yesterday's report from Ulster University, partially funded by the Integrated Education Fund, states that the significant underfunding in education is due to duplication.

The Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) would contend that this is an incorrect assertion and weakens the case for equality of education funding for our children and young people.

CSSC states - The report includes a misunderstanding of funding from external sources as well as questionable estimates based on attributed and not actual costs.

CSSC is concerned that the report allows the Secretary of State and others to question the fundamental requirement for Northern Ireland education to receive funding equal to other regions in the UK as highlighted recently by leaders in education.

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“In addition to the above concerns, this desk–based analysis has not included any engagement with those working across education and neither does it include any actionable recommendations.

“At a time when all education bodies in Northern Ireland agree that education here is significantly underfunded, the report will damage the case for equal funding for education here when compared to all other regions in the UK.”

CSSC supports children and young people being educated together and agrees with the need for transformation and investment in the education system in Northern Ireland.

CSSC concludes - ‘We need a vision and strategy for education that includes everyone working together and all voices being listened to. Our society is divided across a number of areas; however presenting education as being the problem is a misunderstanding of the role of our schools’.

## **Methodist Church in Ireland deeply concerned at lifting of eviction ban**

**With 11,754 people living in emergency accommodation in January 2023, a 25% increase over the course of a year, now is the time for the Government to be offering a clear plan of action with both short and long term goals.**



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The lifting of the eviction ban will increase further the number of those who are homeless. At a time when individuals and families are already struggling from the cost of living crisis, the Government should be putting in place more measures to protect those most at risk in our society. They are instead being plunged into more precarious situations.

We have already heard of eviction notices issued and from tomorrow, April 1st, we will immediately see the impact of this on our already stretched homeless services. Also, the consequences will be felt for decades on the nearly 3,500 children already living in emergency accommodation and the many more that will end up there because of the choices

made by  
Government last  
week.

We ask that the  
Government  
respond urgently to  
the needs of those  
who have received  
eviction notices and  
need to be most  
protected.

*The statement  
above was issued  
by the Council on  
Social Responsibility  
of the Methodist  
Church in Ireland*



## Perspective

### **Holy Week - Optimism alone can't bear the weight of our lives: a talk by Archbishop Justin Welby**

**Look round and just look over your shoulders, if you can manage it, at the West window. I just thought it was worth a gaze. I think it's looking so beautiful this evening. I think one of the greatest blessings of this place is living somewhere and coming regularly to a place that is full of beauty. It's a wonderful gift.**

Everything in us causes us to respond to what we see and experience. We all have natural responses. Many of our reactions are simply because we are, in one sense or another, animals. When a zebra knows that it is being stalked by a lion, it runs. And within it, the adrenal glands are pumping out fight or flight responses into its muscles and brain. The same is true of human beings – a creak of floorboards downstairs in the middle of the night wakes us and we are suddenly very aware and very awake. Heart beating faster. Every sense to attention.

The zebra, if it escapes, will be seen 20 minutes later, contentedly chewing on some grass without a care in the world. The equivalent human being is sitting up in bed having to read a calming book when they discovered that the creaking floorboard was caused by the dog getting out of its bed. It happened to me last night, so you know that.





That's why I'm aware. Prolonged or repeated exposure to high stress has little impact on the zebra. In fact, it's a normal part of life. But it will leave the human with ulcers, PTSD, and an inability to live normally.

We also, as humans, imagine unreal dangers. Many people are nervous about flying, but quite relaxed about the statistically more dangerous car

journey after the flight. In other words, all of us live in two worlds at the very least. One of which is observed and experienced as the world around us. And the other of which is imagined as good, bad or ugly. And the imagined is often the one that shapes our emotions.

The preacher - to use the Hebrew title, Qoheleth, or Ecclesiastes - in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible declares that all life and existence is vanity. Everything is circular. What comes around goes around and nothing lasts.

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And whether the book is interpreted as an accurate portrayal of human life, or of human life without God, or, as one Jewish commentator puts it, whether it's the commonplace book of an aged and distinguished wisdom teacher, it is hard to say.

But what is clear is that this is someone who has an Eeyore tendency. Some of us are Tiggers, some of us are Eeyores. Probably some of us are many of the other characters in Winnie the Pooh. Rowan Williams once said to me, "There is almost no human situation that cannot be explained with the hermeneutical tools of Winnie the Pooh." Only Rowan could say that and be both humorous and profound at the same time.

The question asked is often whether these chemical and biological features of human physiology are determinative of what we're like. For example, Professor Susan Blackmore, who wrote a book called *The Meme Machine* in 1999, is a well-known atheist thinker and friend of Richard Dawkins, and an examiner of consciousness and human decision-making. We met and discussed the issues of choice and how we make human choices in an interview I did with her. Her theory is that nothing we do is truly chosen, but is all predetermined, down to the most banal moments of whether I'll have a banana for my supper, if there's one available, or choose not to have one this evening.

I do want to raise the issue of human moods, and identity and its foundations. This series, as you know, is life in three words; optimism, despair and hope. A question underlying all the three words is whether they are driven by mood and context and emotion or whether there is a genuine choice



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before God. To what extent are we free agents? There is an important link here to our emotions and the way we live our lives as Christians. In each of the readings, there is a prevailing emotion for the disciples or the crowds. On Palm Sunday, it's optimism. In Gethsemane and after the arrest of Jesus, it's despair. On Easter Day, it's hope. It's a rollercoaster of a week for the original disciples, but a rollercoaster that has two very unsafe points. The first two; optimism and despair. At each one of those, we can be thrown off the ride.

Optimism, or its sibling pessimism, is based on false premises. And despair is a normal reaction when the world fails to be as we expect. Many of you will remember the name Vaclav Havel, a great protester against communism in what is now the Czech Republic, it was then Czechoslovakia, who ended up having been in prison. The sort of European Mandela in some ways, many ways, as a President of the Czechoslovakia and then the Czech Republic. He wrote, "Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out." Or a British government minister during the talks on Northern Ireland, just over 25 years ago, as he came out each day from the talks was asked by the journalist, "Minister, are you optimistic?", and he invariably answered, "No. But I'm hopeful." He knew the difference.

Mood matters. In all spheres of life an optimist can take far too much risk. For example, when driving a car, convinced that he (it normally a he) is such a good driver that he will be fine. Those risks may be far greater than imagined. A

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pessimist can be so cautious that they won't even get into the car. An optimistic generally bets everything on a bold stroke. A pessimist bets nothing at all. But in order to make the right decision, there needs to have been a realistic assessment of their own and the other side's force. And one of the key dangers of optimism or pessimism is a worldview that does not understand the situation.

'Hosanna,' they cried. 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Blessed is the King of Israel.' For the crowd, it was a moment when the promises of the past had finally met their dreams for the future, and there was an outburst of optimism. It seemed reasonable. I am an Eeyore, by the way. We will all have moments of optimism, but we'll also all have moments of pessimism. And there's nothing wrong with optimism or pessimism, as long as they're not too determinative of what we do.

The people in Israel, the Jewish people knew that the long-promised victory and liberation would be brought by a king, a Messiah like David, to restore Israel to independent glory. But because the crowds have one particular view of the future, which they interpreted in the light of that worldview, their hermeneutics was skewed by their worldview. They'd fallen into the habit of thinking they would shape their future in the way that God would then support, rather than that God would shape it in the way he wanted. And Jesus, knowing exactly what he was doing, acts in fulfilment of the key prophecy in Zechariah. "Your king is coming seated on a donkey's colt." All the signs aligned. Here comes the king Israel have been waiting for. And what was so good about that?

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This was the moment that God would finish everything he'd promised his long-suffering people. This was the beginning of a revolution that would see the world changed forever, but not in the way that the crowd or the disciples imagined and longed for. It's very rare that I quote Donald Rumsfeld, but as he famously said, "There are known knowns. There are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns, that is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know." And it's not as ridiculous as it can sound. And it's not just other people. Our temptation as human beings, all of us, is to put our trust in the things we can hear and touch and hold onto. By instinct, we are materialists. And what we see and hold and touch is part of our fallen world.

Optimism is generated in business or sport or war or other human activities, by past success or by false information. So is pessimism. Each is self-reinforcing, not least because of the brain chemicals. Experience can swing us wildly from courageous and irrational optimism to over-cautious pessimism. John Maynard Keynes - and I know that's controversial, but I still think it, the greatest economist of the 20th century – in his great work on the theory of money, says: "The loss in the economy of animal spirits is what leads to recession and depression." That is of optimism. We invest when we're optimistic. We know the disciples and the crowd don't understand Jesus' words that the Messiah must suffer and be crucified. And so, they base their response on Palm Sunday on what they see and what they think they know. And this is why optimism turns so quickly. It is entirely dependent on us and what we know and what we



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think we perceive. Our perceptions and opinions change our moods.

They change chemically what's going on inside us. There are many unknown unknowns in our lives; sickness, bereavement, estrangement from someone we love. They all knock down all of our plans for the future.

The Anthony Gormley sculpture Dean David will speak about is a reminder of our transience, our limitedness, the precariousness of our existence. It hangs over the tomb, or the burial place, of Thomas Beckett, who knew the risk of proclaiming God's word to a king. In Jeremiah Chapter 36, Jeremiah and Baruch write down the prophecies God has revealed to Jeremiah in the hope that people, that the king, will be spurred to mend his ways when God's will is revealed to them.

But as the scroll is read to the king, he cuts it up and burns it. He does not want the unknown unknown revealed. Jeremiah must, and naturally will have had, a moment of optimism when the king's advisors came and said, 'Come and see the King, he said he'll read what you've written.'

Abraham and Sarah, longing for children, abused their power. Abraham has a child with the enslaved Hagar rather than waiting on God for Isaac. He seeks to build his own future rather than to trust the promises of God. So, in optimism, we build things on our own shaky foundations and they come crashing down. Jesus is not coming to conquer the city of Jerusalem and the Roman occupiers – well, not in the way they think. Neither will he liberate the Jewish people in the way they think. And so, the crowd turns on him.

The same crowd that welcomed Jesus as the one who comes in the name of the Lord, when given the choice five days later, choose Barabbas instead. A name, incidentally, that means son of the father. Perhaps it's each of us. We choose ourselves over Christ because we're optimists in some ways when it comes to the intangible and we choose ourselves over Christ who dies our death. But if we just paused and remembered the host of unknown unknowns, and that our vision of the world is not the full picture seen by God, and our optimism cannot hope to stretch to encompass the possibilities of Jesus and put our faith in God rather than having faith in ourselves.

As we consider the unknown unknowns, I want to remind us of what is a known unknown to us or known known to us, but an unknown unknown to so many people, which changes every person's world. And there's a clue to the point of these three talks. That the revolution we need is in this. That the unknown God, as God is described in John chapter one, nobody has seen God, nobody has known God. That the unknown God who has taken flesh in Christ. And in so doing, in his living and teaching, his suffering and dying reveals the greatest unknown to each of us. The height and depth and length and breadth of the love of God.

The statue downstairs in the crypt hangs between heaven and Earth. The figure of nails, it is embodied, it moves a little with the breeze. It inhabits a particular place and sees things, and is itself seen from a particular angle. Around it is the sacred space of the centuries. It is held up by threads we can barely see. And just so we cannot see just how God holds our brittle bodies up the whole time. We cannot fully

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understand how our fragile forms take shape and have purpose on Earth.

We cannot understand that the world is under the control of God. We don't see that. We see what we can touch and feel. We cannot understand that the church is loved by God and will be protected even when its silly members and sillier archbishops do silliest things. Our temporary and mercurial nature gives form to false optimism which shifts and changes as much as we ourselves do. The statue marvelously follows when there is no air moving in the crypt. The ever-shifting influence of magnetic north, not the fixed point of geographical north.

Optimism is natural and so is pessimism. They come from within us. They are a normal part of life. They are response to what happens. But when we put our whole weight on our own calculations, we find that what we expect has left out so much that matters that our optimism or pessimism points to different things, for a whole host of reasons we do not understand. They cannot bear the weight of our lives.

## Poem for today

### As you go through life by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Don't look for the flaws as you go through life;  
And even when you find them,  
It is wise and kind to be somewhat blind  
And look for the virtue behind them.



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For the cloudiest night has a hint of light  
Somewhere in its shadows hiding;  
It is better by far to hunt for a star,  
Than the spots on the sun abiding.

The current of life runs ever away  
To the bosom of God's great ocean.  
Don't set your force 'gainst the river's course  
And think to alter its motion.  
Don't waste a curse on the universe--  
Remember it lived before you.  
Don't butt at the storm with your puny form,  
But bend and let it go o'er you.

The world will never adjust itself  
To suit your whims to the letter.  
Some things must go wrong your whole life long,  
And the sooner you know it the better.  
It is folly to fight with the Infinite,  
And go under at last in the wrestle;  
The wiser man shapes into God's plan  
As water shapes into a vessel.

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

**ST. COLUMBA'S**  
**DERRYVOLGIE**  
TO KNOW CHRIST BETTER AND TO MAKE HIM BETTER KNOWN

# Easter 2023

**Palm Sunday - Sun 2 April 10.30am**  
(Prayer event from 10.00am as engage with each other for our community)

**24 Hours of Prayer - Wed 5 April 7.00pm - Thurs 6 April 7.00pm**  
(Sign up in the porch)

**Maundy Thursday Service - Thurs 6 April 7.30pm**

**Messy Easter Family Event - Fri 7 April 10.30am**  
(craft, treasure hunt, stories and much more)

**Good Friday Service - Fri 7 April 7.30pm**

**Easter Sunday Celebration - Sun 9 April 10.30am**

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## 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](mailto:houstonmckelvey@mac.com)

