



## **C of I Archbishop takes part in first day of WMOF**

Archbishop Michael Jackson took part in the first day of the Pastoral Congress of the World Meeting of Families in the RDS (Wednesday August 22).

He contributed to a panel discussion which also included Archpriest Mikhail Nasonov, Rector of the Russian Orthodox Patriarchal Monastery of the Church of Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Dublin and Rabbi Zalman Lent,

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Chief Rabbi, Dublin Hebrew Congregation & Chabad–Lubavitch of Ireland.

The subject for discussion was ‘In the Light of the World: Celebrating Families in the Judeo–Christian Tradition’ and the session was moderated by H.E. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna, Austria.

In his address, Archbishop Jackson said that in both the Old and New Testaments there was a sense of families both in transition and in settlement. He looked at components of family understanding to present an idea of what a family in the Judeo–Christian tradition might be.

He suggested that there were various portrayals of the family in the Bible, both positive and negative. Because of our respect for Holy Scripture we presumed that there will be a good outcome in all things – a fulfillment of the hope and expectation that God would make it happen and would look after his people, he said.

However, he added that there was a need to recognise that there was a darker side to family life.

“Scriptural family life is more complex than the gloss we have all too readily put on it,” he stated.

“To any literal reading of the texts we need to add St Augustine’s principle of bene ‘uti malo’/making good use of the bad in order to understand the workings of God, however angrily it tests our faith, however reluctant we are to accept the outcomes. Scriptural family is no exception.”

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## Churchmen welcome Belfast Global Conflict conference to city

The Most Rev Noel Treanor, Bishop of Down and Connor, and The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde, representing the Bishop of Connor, spoke at a reception on the eve of the Global Conflict | Human Impact Conference in Belfast earlier this week.

They were guests at a reception and dinner in the Titanic Centre on Wednesday August 22. The Conference, which ran over two days, was hosted by Queen's University Belfast and the University of Chicago. Bishop Treanor and Dean Forde were also invited to say Grace at the dinner.

The conference takes place on August 23 and 24, and is coordinated through The Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts at the University of Chicago and the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at Queen's University.



Global Conflict | The Human Impact addressed the human cost of violent conflict and identify emerging strategies for conflict resolution.

**The Most Rev Noel Treanor,  
Bishop of Down and Connor**

Coming two decades after the Good Friday Agreement, timed to

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**The Dean of Belfast, the  
Very Rev Stephen Forde**



coincide with the Papal visit to Ireland, this conference offered a distinctive opportunity to assess the lessons learned from the peace agreement, as well as the daunting challenges and human toll of the world's current refugee crisis; the largest population of displaced people since World War II.

The academic agenda for the conference had been developed by The Pearson Institute and the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, incorporating the academic strength and excellence of two leading institutions while drawing upon the experiences of international leaders such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, former US Senator George J. Mitchell, former US Assistant Secretary of State Anne C. Richard and Dominic MacSorley, CEO of Concern Worldwide.

“Global Conflict | The Human Impact will bring together new insights and empirical findings to better understand the sources of violent conflicts and to explore new approaches to resolve them,” said Daniel Diermeier, provost of the University of Chicago. “We look forward to working with Queen’s University Belfast to convene scholars,

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leaders and practitioners in a city that has many lessons to teach about conflict and peacemaking.”

Professor Richard English, distinguished professorial fellow in the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at Queen’s University Belfast, said:

“Queen’s University Belfast is delighted to be working with the University of Chicago, and with such a diverse and influential set of experts, to address some of the world’s most pressing challenges in this compelling conference in Belfast.”

Gathering at Queen’s University, leading voices from around the world engaged in robust debate and discussed strategies that focus on reducing the prevalence of violent conflict and its tragic impact on people, especially families. Key content areas included:

- Northern Ireland: How peace was built
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- Colombia: The path to peace
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- Policy responses to the current global refugee crisis
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- Impact of the refugee crisis on individuals and families
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These panels highlighted evidenced-based research on various conflicts as well as first-person narrative accounts.

Sessions also explored conflicts and humanitarian issues through the eyes of global leaders who are working on-the-ground to address these challenges.



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## Activists urge Church to change tack on LGBT issues

Gay rights campaigners have called for the Catholic Church to remove its stigma against the LGBT community.

Launching the Equal Future campaign in Dublin to coincide with the beginning of the World Meeting of Families (WMOF), campaigner Tiernan Brady said he wants to highlight the damage being done to children and young people.

The campaign is the largest global initiative of LGBT groups, including 60 countries worldwide.

Mr Brady said there is a "clear message" that members of the LGBT community were not welcome at the WMOF event in Dublin.

"We want to highlight the damage that is being done to children and young people as they grow up thinking that to

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be LGBT would be wrong, a disappointment or just bad luck but none of those are true," he said.

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"The sad truth is there is a clear message they are not welcome at the World Meeting of Families.

"LGBT looked to have stands and they were denied.

"Images of same-sex families were removed from all the material and I can't think of a clearer message to show LGBT people you are not part of this and you are not wanted in here.

"That's not what Catholic people feel and it's about time the upper management caught up with this.

"No child should ever grow up feeling they are less than others if they are or were to discern they are LGBT."

The founder and director of the Equality Campaign said he wants to raise awareness of the damage done to young people when the Synod of Bishops takes place at the Vatican in October.

Mr Brady added: "The Synod on Young People is a once-in-a-generation moment for us to shine a light on the role stigma against LGBT in its various forms affects the mental health of children and young people, and has for too long been overlooked.

"It is important for the Church to look at this as part of their stated desire to consider situations where young people face exclusion for social or religious reasons.

"Equal Future 2018 is calling on the Synod on Young People to consider the damage done as a consequence of



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the Church's teachings and reconsider its teachings on LGBT," Mr Brady said.

Wednesday's press conference, held beside the Royal Dublin Society where the WMOF is being held, heard directly from people from around the world and their experiences growing up Catholic and LGBT.

One of the contributors, Eros Shaw, was raised in a traditional Catholic family in China.

"As my sexual orientation became more and more apparent, stress from studies and uncertainties about the future also became more intensive, as did my feelings of guilt towards my parents," he said.

"But it did not stop my feelings from growing.

"From one day to the next, I struggled in agony.

"Later I participated the events of China Catholic Rainbow community.

"In there I met a great priest friend to be my spiritual director and friends who are seem with my case.

"I feel that I am free from the burden.

"It is not my fault that I am gay, I am also beloved by God."

Xorje Olivares lives in New York where he belongs to what its advocates term a "queer" ministry in a progressive parish.

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He grew up along the Texas/Mexico border spending 10 years volunteering as an altar server.

He said: "Towards those later years I already knew I was gay but couldn't quite figure out God's plan for me.

"The Church was no help, nor was my heavily Latino community, both of which were seemingly unwelcoming to kids like me back then, based off of comments made by certain authoritative figures."

On Wednesday evening, members of the LGBT+ community spoke of being welcomed into a parish in central London.

In 2013 LGBT+ Catholics joined the main congregation of Farm Street Church in Mayfair for evening mass.

Since then they contributed to every aspect of liturgical, spiritual and pastoral life of the church.

LGBT+ community member Nick O'Shea said he had been unsure of how to reconcile his beliefs and his sexuality before finding Farm Street.

"I'm from London and the key thing about London is that it's almost easier to be gay than be a Catholic," he said.

"I was lacking a framework for being gay and Catholic and how was I going to live a life that would be pleasing to God."

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Then Mr O'Shea said he googled "gay" and "mass" and "London" and learned of the church.

Fr Dominic Robinson said the aim was to create a safe environment for everybody.

"This was part of the whole process of what we call opening our doors," Fr Robinson said.

Mr O'Shea called on more parishes to create an inclusive environment for members of the LGBT+ community.

"If we're not careful churches could be empty and what we've got here is a thriving community of people," Mr O'Shea said.

"Do I think we need a gay mass on every street corner? No, personally I don't but I think what we do need is a welcome in every parish for people who no longer find it easy to associate with the Church."

## **NI's first humanist weddings to take place this weekend**

The first two humanist marriages to take place in Northern Ireland will occur this weekend after the Belfast Court of Appeal ruled in June that they must be legally recognised.

On Saturday Emma Taylor and Paul Malone will be getting married at Queen's University Belfast, while on Sunday Alanna McCaffrey and Ronan Johnson will be getting married in Co Fermanagh.

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Their celebrants are Stewart Holden and Lara Harris, both accredited by Humanists UK to carry out the ceremonies. Miss Taylor and Mr Malone said they were excited to be one of the first couples to having a legal humanist marriage.

“When we started planning our wedding, we knew we wanted something highly personal that is all about who we are as a couple, and that’s what humanist marriages offer,” they said. “

We think that many people in Northern Ireland will have the same view, so we’re very pleased that the law is changing.” Miss McCaffrey and Mr Johnson said that as a non-religious couple they wanted a very personalised and meaningful ceremony.

“That’s why we want a humanist one – because you can customise it to suit yourself,” they said.

## **Nuns arrested over alleged abuse at closed orphanage in Scotland**

Nuns are among 12 people arrested over alleged historical abuse at Smyllum Park orphanage.

Police Scotland said 11 women and one man, aged between 62 and 85, have been arrested as part of an investigation into the Lanark home which was run by the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul and closed in 1981.

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Former residents spoke about their experiences of Smyllum Park at Scotland's child abuse inquiry earlier this year and police said 12 people have now been arrested, with a further four individuals to be reported to prosecutors.

A Police Scotland spokeswoman said: "Twelve people, eleven women and one man, ages ranging from 62 to 85 years, have been arrested and charged in connection with the non-recent abuse of children.

"All are subject of reports to Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal. A further four individuals will be reported today.

"Enquiries are continuing, it would be inappropriate to comment further."

Detective Chief Inspector Sarah Taylor, from the national child abuse investigation unit, said: "Investigating child abuse offences is highly complex and every care is taken to ensure that enquiries are proportionate, appropriate and that victims' needs are central to our investigations.



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"If you or anyone you know has been a victim of abuse or wishes to report abuse you should feel confident in reporting to Police Scotland.

"We will listen and we will take action regardless of when or where the abuse occurred."

## **News briefs**

**+++Lisburn harvest service broadcast** - A Harvest Thanksgiving Service from Lisburn Cathedral will be broadcast on Sunday, 30th September, on BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio Ulster. The Service will be conducted by the Dean of Connor, the Very Revd Sam Wright, and will be broadcast at 8.10am for Sunday Worship (Radio 4) and 10.15am for Morning Service (Radio Ulster). The programme will be available after broadcast at [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007cphq](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007cphq)

**+++New pastoral assistant for Drumbo** - Jack Wilson who has been appointed to the newly created post of Pastoral Assistant at Holy Trinity, Ballylesson. Jack will be responsible for an exciting and growing youth and community work in the parish under the Minister-in-Charge, Revd Mervyn Jamison. Jack's home church is St John's, Moira, and he is well known to many of the young people in Down & Dromore as a leader at the Kilbroney Adventure Camps each summer. He will be introduced to the parish at morning worship on Sunday 2 September at 11.00 am. Please pray for Jack and

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for all at Ballylesson as they embark on this new adventure together.

**+++Union Theological Conference** - You are invited next Tuesday 28th to the 'Grace in the Christian Experience' conference from 9.30am-3pm. Admission is free, lunch available for £5 but reg at [reception@union.ac.uk](mailto:reception@union.ac.uk). One of our speakers is Dr M Cowan on – "The ways in which grace shaped Owen's polemical preaching"

