



Sister Clare Crockett from Londonderry who died in Ecuador earthquake

Selfless life of heroic Sister Clare inspires Downpatrick woman's 500-mile Camino pilgrimage

Belfast Telegraph - A retired Downpatrick teacher will embark on the epic 500-mile Camino Way to

raise funds to help rebuild a school crushed in an earthquake in Ecuador that also killed a nun from Northern Ireland.

Carol Toner will undertake the intrepid trek after being inspired and moved by the story of Sister Clare Crockett. Sister Clare (33), from Londonderry, died when the school in Playa Prieta collapsed after the 7.8-magnitude quake struck in April.

At least 480 were killed and more than 4,000 injured in the South American country.

The body of Sr Clare, along with two other members of the Home of the Mother religious order, was recovered from the rubble.

She died protecting the children at the school, where she had been giving guitar lessons.

Like thousands of other people, Carol read about Sr Clare's death in the Belfast Telegraph and watched the coverage in the following days, including tribute pieces from those who knew and loved her.

Sister Clare's story of how she found her calling to become a nun made such an impression on



Carol Toner is fundraising in memory of Sister Clare

Carol that she felt compelled to contact the Crockett family in Derry to tell them about her idea for raising funds to help rebuild the school.

Speaking to the Belfast Telegraph, Carol explained: "I was very moved when I heard that a young nun from here had died in the earthquake in Ecuador.

"I think when someone local is involved in any world tragedy it makes it more real for people on the other side of the world.

"I think that initially I felt an affinity with Sr Clare, because I was a teacher too before I retired. Then I read her life story about how she had heard God calling when she was such a young girl with other ideas and plans for her life.

"The more I read, the more of an impression she made on me.

"But during the summer, when I was in Spain and walking along the Camino Way, her image kept coming into my mind."

The Camino Way - also known as Camino De Santiago - is a walking pilgrimage from France to Spain dating back to medieval times.

It is popular not just with people of faith, but also with hikers and hill walkers who do some or all of its 500 miles. Carol added: "I did part of the Camino Way earlier this year and met so many people from all walks of life. More at -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/the-selfless-life-of-heroic-sister-clare-has-inspired-my-500mile-pilgrimage-35323828.html>

Religion may be out of core curriculum for primary schools in Republic

Irish Times -

Religious education will no longer feature as part of the State's core curriculum at primary school under new proposals being considered by policy-makers.

Instead, schools will have the freedom to decide how much time they wish to spend on teaching religion as part of "flexible time". At present, schools typically spend up to two and a half hours a week on religion.

While the 1998 Education Act protects the right of schools to set aside time in each school day for subjects relating to the school's ethos, it does not stipulate the amount of time to be allocated.

Under proposals to be formally launched next month, the [National Council for Curriculum and Assessment](#) (NCCA) says a minimum of 60 per cent of the school day could be set aside for

teaching the core curriculum, such as English, Irish and maths.

Up to 40 per cent of the rest of the school day would be designated as “flexible time” for roll call, assembly, breaks, discretionary curriculum time and the patron’s programme.

This would give schools much greater freedom to spend additional time on literacy and numeracy, or other planned parts of the curriculum such as computer coding.

Schools would be free to decide how much, or how little, time they wished to spend on religious education.

The proposals form part of a major new blueprint on the structure and time allocation for a re-developed primary school curriculum.

They represent some of the biggest proposed changes to teaching and learning at primary school level in decades.

One of the most significant is that children in primary schools may not study traditional subjects until as late as 10 years of age.

Instead, there would be a much greater focus on creative play during the early years of primary school and broader areas of learning in later years.

The reforms are based loosely on some of the features of top-performing education systems in countries such as [Finland](#), as well as extensive research with Irish schools.

The NCCA said the proposals are intended to begin a discussion about the redevelopment of the primary curriculum.

An initial consultation will run through spring next year, including a major conference on March 28th in Dublin Castle. The NCCA will use the findings to draft an overview of a redeveloped primary curriculum, which will be the focus of further consultation in late 2017 and into 2018.

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) welcomed the consultation process saying there was a very real sense of overload among primary teachers. The union's general secretary [Sheila Nunan](#) said primary teachers were teaching seven curriculum areas with each one further sub-divided into more subjects.

More at -
churchnewsireland@gmail.com

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/religion-may-be-out-of-core-curriculum-for-primary-schools-1.2918634>

The 10 most valuable properties the Catholic Church handed over after Ryan Report

Journal.ie report -

Religious congregations still owe almost €15 million towards a fund set up to help people who experienced abuse in Irish institutions.

[Caranua](#) is an independent state body which was set up in 2012 to administer the €110 special investment account opened by the National Treasury Management Agency to help survivors.

It pays for services and gives grants to people depending on their needs and circumstances.

This fund is separate to the redress scheme but people are only eligible if they went through the redress board or received court awards.

A spokesperson for Caranua told *TheJournal.ie* that there have been around 5,000 applications for help since being set up in four years ago and



Religious orders still owe almost €15 million to a fund for abuse survivors.

around €58 million of the account has been used.

The Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton and gave a breakdown of contributions of €94.7 million

He added that €96.1 million in Ryan Report contributions have been lodged to the special investment account so far. In 2012, it was also agreed that 61 properties would be accepted

from religious institutions subject to good and marketable title and agreed valuations.

Now, 14 years later 13 of the properties have still to be transferred from the religious orders.

Of the 48 properties that have been fully transferred, the top ten most valuable were listed as:

1. Site at Merrion, Dublin 4
€8,900,000
2. Terenure Secondary School, Dublin 6
€4,500,000
3. Traveller Site at Blackrock, Co. Dublin
€3,045,000
4. St Teresa's, Temple Hill, Blackrock, Co. Dublin
€3,045,000
5. Two Properties at Tuam, Co. Galway
€3,020,000
6. St Anne's Secondary School, Dublin
€2,600,000
7. 23 Parnell Square, Dublin 1
€ 1,270,000
8. Holy Cross Gardens, Killarney, Co. Kerry
€ 1,270,000
9. Goldenbridge Group Homes
€ 1,269,700

10. Secondary School & Site, Ennistymon, Co.
Clare € **980,000**

The Education Minister added that “work is continuing to finalise the arrangements in relation to the remaining properties”.

A full list of the properties transferred can be [found here](#).

<http://www.thejournal.ie/catholic-church-properties-cash-redress-scheme-3094040-Dec2016/>

Church And State Should Be Separate Because Britain Is No Longer A Christian Country, Says Report

Christian Today -

The Church of England’s position as the established church with the Queen as Supreme Governor is “no longer tenable” and needs a rethink, according to a report today.

As churchgoing and belief in God continues to decline, the public role of religion in Britain needs “significant reform” says the [new report](#) from the National Secular Society.



***The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Queen.
Should the Church of England continue to enjoy the
patronage of the State?***

Its main demand is that the Church of England should no longer enjoy the patronage of the state.

The report notes that the Church of England is established only in England, not Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. The Church of Scotland is the national church in Scotland but has few privileges comparable to those of the Church of England.

“One of the greatest privileges of the Church of England is the 26 bishops from English dioceses with ex officio seats in the UK Parliament, which gives them significant power to introduce and amend UK-wide legislation,” the report says. “The UK parliament is the only one in the world where bishops have such seats.

“Other significant privileges include the Church’s currently pre-eminent role in national ceremonies, especially the coronation, and the monarch being the Supreme Governor of the Church, over whose liturgy and regulation Parliament has nominal control.”

The National Secular Society says this privileged status fails to reflect society as it is today and leads to inequity and unfairness.

The secularists also call for a moratorium on all new faith schools.

"The time has come to separate church and state in order to ensure equality and fairness for believers and non-believers alike," said the society.

Rethinking religion and belief in public life, which is being sent this week to all MPs, calls for Britain to "evolve" into a secular democracy with a clear separation between religion and state.

It says the current multi-faith approach is "at odds with the increasing religious indifference" in Britain.

More at -

<http://www.christiantoday.com/article/church.and.state.should.be.separate.because.britain.is.no.longer.a.christian.country.says.report/103314.htm>

China open to Vatican talks, but Catholics must be patriots

Irish Examiner & Belfast Telegraph -

China has said it is willing to have constructive dialogue with the Vatican - as long as its Catholics are loyal to Beijing and their religion is adapted to Chinese society.

A top official made the remarks at a meeting of representatives of China's official Catholic church

taking place this week in Beijing, state media said.

Wang Zuo'an, director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, said the Chinese government hoped that the Vatican could adopt a flexible and pragmatic attitude and take concrete actions to create favourable conditions for improving relations, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

China severed relations with the Holy See in 1951 after the communists took over and the officially atheistic government closed churches and imprisoned priests, some for decades.

Worship is officially allowed only in state-authorised churches outside the Pope's authority, although many of China's estimated 12 million Catholics are thought to attend underground churches.

Mr Wang stressed the importance of patriotism within religion and "pushing ahead with the sinicisation of Catholicism".

The ruling Communist Party has long feared that opposition to its rule could be spread by religious and other civic groups outside its control.

In May last year President Xi Jinping called for religions to adapt to Chinese society, which he termed the "sinicisation of religion".

Beijing insists that the party-controlled Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association has the authority to appoint Chinese bishops, a right that the Holy See says belongs to the Pope alone. This dispute over bishop nominations is the most vexing stumbling block preventing the re-establishment of diplomatic relations.

Pope Francis said earlier this year that Beijing and the Vatican had resumed working groups on the naming of bishops issue and although he was "optimistic" of an agreement, it would take time.

Just last week, the Vatican said it was saddened that the ordination of two new Chinese bishops was marred by the presence of a bishop ordained without the Pope's consent.

It also said it was awaiting the outcome of this week's meeting of the Chinese Catholic Church and hoped it would give Catholics in China confidence in the Vatican-China dialogue.

Washington's Episcopal National Cathedral to host customary post-inaugural prayer service

Episcopal News Service

[Washington National Cathedral](#) will again play out one of its traditional roles in U.S. life next month by offering Donald Trump and the nation a chance to come together in prayer.

The 58th Presidential Inaugural Prayer Service will take place Jan. 21, the day after Trump is sworn in as the country's the 45th president. No other details have been made public.

"The cathedral is a sacred space for the nation to come together at moments of national importance, including the inauguration of our presidents," a statement from the cathedral said.

"The Inaugural Prayer Service is a moment for our next president to pause and contemplate the incredible responsibility he has been entrusted with and to listen as the faith community offers prayers for the office of the president."

Official confirmation of the service came when a schedule of inaugural events was posted on the [Presidential Inauguration Committee website](#). No



Then-Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, third from left in front row, joined faith leaders from around the country Jan. 21, 2009, for the Presidential Inaugural Prayer Service at Washington National Cathedral that culminated the Obama-Biden inaugural events. The service, traditionally held the day after the inauguration, will be offered again Jan. 21, 2017, for Donald Trump and his administration.

other details were released either by the committee or the cathedral.

Beginning with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first inauguration in 1933, presidential inaugural prayer services have taken place at the cathedral, which calls itself a "house of prayer for all people." That tradition has been

more recently consistent since President Ronald Reagan's second inauguration in 1985. The exception was President Bill Clinton, who chose Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church, the historic black church in downtown Washington, for both of his inaugural prayer services. Washington National Cathedral has also been the location of funeral and memorial services for nearly all the 21 U.S. presidents who have died since the cathedral's founding.

The cathedral dean, the bishop of the Diocese of Washington and the Episcopal Church's presiding bishop traditionally have had roles in the service. "I will be at the National Cathedral praying with [Trump] and all those who gather for the post-inauguration prayer service, which we just gathered to plan yesterday," Washington Bishop Mariann Budde said in [a Dec. 20 interview](#) on NPR's "The Diane Rehm Show." The show focused on faith leaders working to unite a country divided by the presidential campaign and Trump's election.

"I will be praying with and for the president and his new cabinet and all those – and the country," Budde said. "All faiths will be represented, at his

request, and we will pray for the good of our nation.”

Typically, the services have been both ecumenical and interreligious. The service held Jan. 22, 2013, [to mark the beginning of President Barak Obama's second term](#) included nearly two dozen religious leaders, representing Roman Catholicism, mainline Protestantism, evangelical Christianity, Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism.

The same was true in 2009 for the [service at the beginning of Obama's historic time in office](#).

Nearly 3,200 people attended the invitation-only service, including members of the administration, Congress, the diplomatic corps, faith leaders and other invited guests.

The Washington Post [reported](#) that Trump plans to attend a private family church service at [St. John's Episcopal Church](#) near LaFayette Square near the White House the morning of the Jan. 20 inauguration. The parish has traditionally offered that opportunity to incoming presidents.

The cathedral service will be held on a Saturday morning, during the Jewish Sabbath, when observant Jews are forbidden to drive or use

electricity, among other restrictions, potentially complicating efforts to find a rabbi to participate in the service, [the Associated Press noted](#).

Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner are Orthodox Jews and would face the same Shabbat limits. The inauguration is constitutionally mandated to be held on Jan. 20, and the prayer service is usually held the next day.

Johnnie Moore, a member of Trump's evangelical advisory board, which meets weekly, told the Associated Press that decisions about religious events related to the inauguration would be made by the president-elect's aides, not the advisory group on which he sits. "It's going to be reconciliatory," said Moore, a public relations executive who leads [The KAIROS Company](#). He said the ceremony will underscore "the president-elect's commitment to having a presidency for all Americans."

– Report by the Rev. Mary Frances Schjonberg, editor and reporter for the Episcopal News Service.