



Holy Family scene at Clonard Monastery, Belfast

Dermot Farrell appointed Archbishop of Dublin



Pope Francis has named the Bishop of Ossory Dr Dermot Farrell as the new Archbishop of Dublin. The announcement came in a communique from the Vatican yesterday morning (Tuesday).

Dr Farrell (66) will succeed Archbishop Diarmuid Martin as the leader of the country's largest diocese and is expected to be installed early in the New Year, Michael Kelly reports in The Irish Catholic.

He has already signalled that co-responsibility and synodality – parishioners, priests and religious working in partnership – will be hallmarks on his ministry in Dublin. “The only genuine way into the future is a shared way, a way together,” he said speaking in the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Sean McDermott Street in Dublin yesterday morning.

“Everyone in this diocese — laity, clergy, religious, those who embrace apostolic charisms, as well as the women and men called to a more contemplative way — has something essential to contribute to the future of the faith in Dublin,” he said.

Dr Farrell said that the challenge for the Church is to dialogue with a changing culture without neglecting the truths of the Faith.

“The response of our time to the plurality of positions, diversification of behaviours and variety of cultures cannot go down a road of disillusion and disappointment. We are called to renewal...It is reaching out towards the other, listening to the other, meeting the other, serving the other.

“This dialogue with others does not mean diluting the radical nature of the Gospel or manipulating it by restricting its reach. People of faith must still have the courage to proclaim the One who is the Saviour in all His power and newness and mystery,” he said.

The archbishop-elect is one of the newest members of the hierarchy having been consecrated Bishop of Ossory in 2018. In his time there he is widely credited with pioneering pastoral initiatives and re-organising the diocese to respond to a shortage of priests. Shortly after his appointment to Ossory, Dr Farrell embarked on a widespread consultation process with parishioners about future priorities. He has also put renewed focus on sacramental preparation.

Primate of All-Ireland Archbishop Eamon Martin welcomed the appointment saying that “Archbishop-elect Farrell is a hardworking and personable colleague with many skills and



qualities to bring to his new ministry as Archbishop of Dublin.

“With my fellow bishops, and with laity, religious and clergy from across the country, I offer him my prayerful support as he undertakes the huge responsibility of shepherding the People of God in Ireland’s largest diocese and capital city,” Archbishop Eamon said.

Dr Farrell was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Meath in 1980. He holds a doctoral degree from Rome’s Gregorian University in dogmatic theology. In 1993, he was appointed vice-president of St Patrick’s College, Maynooth succeeding as president three years later. He served as president of the national seminary until 2007 when he was appointed parish priest of Dunboyne, Co. Meath. He continued in this role until his appointment to Ossory.

The archbishop-elect is known for his administrative ability and has served on various boards and committees including the board of Allianz Insurance, the governing body of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and as national director of the permanent diaconate, and he is currently chairman of Veritas.

Archbishop Martin – who tendered his resignation to Pope Francis last April on having reached the mandatory retirement age of 75 – will continue as apostolic administrator in Dublin until Dr Farrell is installed and takes over the pastoral governance of the country's largest diocese with more than a million Catholics and over 1,000 priests ministering in Dublin.

Dr Martin – who succeeded Cardinal Desmond Connell as archbishop in 2004 – is expected to retire to a parish in the diocese when Archbishop-elect Farrell assumes office.

Church leaders' views in declassified government files

Days after the IRA's 1994 ceasefire, the Irish Government did a secret deal with Gerry Adams to free IRA prisoners, a declassified government file reveals - and the Sinn Féin president wanted preferential treatment for 11 of the IRA prisoners in ROI jails.

At a lunch with the British Ambassador to Dublin and a senior NIO official, the all-Ireland Presbyterian church's two most senior figures expressed views which were described as "surreal", with one insisting that he wasn't Irish in any way.



Gerry Adams was ignorant of basic Protestant views and didn't think he had to persuade unionists to back a united Ireland according to a NI Declassified file

Files declassified at the Public Record Office in Belfast include a detailed briefing given to the government by Methodist minister the Rev Harold Good after he had met the Sinn Féin president in 1994.

Gerry Adams exhibited surprising ignorance of the splits between Protestants & did not think he even had to try to persuade unionists to back Irish unity, according to key peace process figure Rev Harold Good's account of meeting the SF president.

The Rev Good, who would later become Methodist President, spoke frankly about the encounter to Peter Smyth in the NIO's Political Affairs Division.

December 30, 2020

A confidential November 25, 1994 memo from Mr Smyth conveyed details of Methodist talks with both Mr Adams and separate discussions with the PUP leader, David Ervine.



The Rev Good (Photo above) provided considerable detail on what had been discussed, something reflected in a six-page memo — although even after more than two decades, significant sections of the memo have been censored.

The Rev Good, “a liberal cleric from the most liberal of the mainstream Protestant denominations”, said that Mr Adams seemed to think that they were “Paisleyites”.

Mr Smyth said: “One of the significant features which emerged from the encounter was the lack of awareness by Sinn Féin of the detail of the unionist position.

“In Good’s account, it was clear that Adams automatically identified the churchmen as unionists red in tooth and claw, and as Paisleyites under a slightly different flag.

“He was surprised when the churchmen revealed themselves to be paid-up members of the Joint Declaration school, who recognised the need for republican/nationalist concerns to be identified and addressed. The church recognised in specific terms that a process of political

dialogue would have to be seen to deliver tangible benefits if the republican movement were to continue to support it.”

The memo said that there had been “no dramatic revelations” and “in both cases, more significance is attached to the fact of the meetings having taken place than to the content”.

There was, he said, a “very clear message that both groups are keen to talk to Government, and that in Sinn Féin’s case at least, an extensive process of education may have to be gone through”.

As part of a programme of meetings with every political leader, the Methodist Church’s sub-committee of its Church and Government Committee had met Mr Adams on November 22 at their rooms in Elmwood Avenue. Mr Adams was “accompanied by an unidentified female Sinn Féin councillor”.

Returning to the Methodists’ engagement with Mr Adams, the civil servant said that “a certain myopia blindness also displayed itself in the discussion which took place on the principle of consent”.

Again relaying what the Rev Good had told him, he said: “Even after a protracted discussion on the nature of consent, Adams refused to accept that Sinn Féin had any responsibility for, or role in, persuading the unionists that unification of the island was in their best long-term interests.

“That was a problem created by the Brits and it was up to the Brits to sort it out – they had sole responsibility for showing the unionists where their best interests lay. In our conversation, Good acknowledged that the meeting was not

the forum where any significant departures from this line would be revealed: nevertheless, as a display of intransigence on a key issue it represented a disturbing portent.

“Slightly at variance with that, however, was a flicker of recognition by Adams that the pace of change had to be governed by what the (unionist) market would bear.”

David Ervine ‘ostentatiously humble’

PUP leader David Ervine exhibited exceptional humility during a meeting with the Methodist Church, the Rev Harold Good told the government.

NIO official Peter Smyth, said that in discussing his 1994 meeting with Mr Ervine, the Rev Good “provided much less detail” than he had about Gerry Adams.

The minister described Mr Ervine as “extremely polite, and at times almost ostentatiously humble – ‘I have a good message, but I am a bad messenger’ – continuously emphasising that his prison record gave many people an easy excuse for denigrating everything he is trying to do.

“He is desperately keen to serve the loyalist community, but is conscious of his lack of an electoral mandate.”

The memo continued: “Politically, provided that the Union is not threatened (a position the Methodists apparently did not explore), or cross-border institutions established on a dangerous scale (again not teased out) he is prepared to

display almost limitless flexibility and accommodation towards republicans/nationalists.”

Gerry Adams urged Dublin to return Aboriginal remains. No mention however of ‘the disappeared’

The NIO worked to secure a lump sum payment for the chairman of the Forum talks which preceded the 1998 Belfast Agreement because of the unforeseen stress of the job, a declassified file reveals.

Acknowledgment - Based on Sam McBride’s reports in the Belfast News Letter

Links -

[[] <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/surreal-moment-irish-presbyterian-leader-insisted-diplomats-he-wasnt-irish-3080032>]

[[] <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2020/12/29/news/john-hume-tried-to-restore-ira-ceasefire-through-an-initiative-with-protestant-church-leaders-2171732/>]

Major Christian Aid report identifies billion-pound disasters linked to climate change in 2020

The world has been battered by a series of billion-pound disasters linked to climate change from wildfires to storms this year, a report has warned.

Aid agency Christian Aid has identified 10 major climate-fuelled catastrophes, which each cost 1.5 billion US dollars (£1.1 billion) or more – including Storm Ciara, which hit the UK and Europe in February.

Storm Ciara, which cost 2.7 billion US dollars (£2 billion) in total for Europe, caused deaths, flooding and power cuts, and damaged water supplies in the UK as it battered the country with high winds and heavy rainfall.

More extreme rainfall in Storm Ciara, along with Storm Alex, which hit the UK and Europe in October, causing flooding and power cuts in Britain as record amounts of rain fell, is an inevitable consequence of climate change, experts have said.

Between them, the two storms cost 5.9 billion US dollars (£4.1 billion) across Europe, the Christian Aid report said.

The costs of the storms' damage in Europe is dwarfed by some of the other major disasters identified in the report, which in many cases hit countries even as they were trying to battle coronavirus.

Scientists warn that rising global temperatures are already increasing the risks of more extreme weather events such as storms and heatwaves, and their impacts such as wildfires.

A record Atlantic hurricane season which battered the US, Central America and the Caribbean between May and November cost more than 400 lives and racked up 41 billion dollars (£31 billion) in damages, the Christian Aid report said.

The US was also hit by a record-breaking fire season which ravaged the west coast in the summer and autumn, costing a further 20 billion dollars (£15 billion).

Australia also saw devastating wildfires at the beginning of the year, fuelled by extreme drought and high temperatures brought on by climate change, which cost around five billion US dollars (£3.7 billion).

Elsewhere in the world, Cyclone Amphan struck the Bay of Bengal in May and caused losses valued at 13 billion US dollars (£9.7 billion) in just a few days while floods in China over several months cost 32 billion US dollars (£24 billion).

Both killed scores of people and displaced millions from their homes.

Locust swarms in east Africa after extreme rains destroyed crops, trees and pastures, and threatened food security, with an estimated cost of 8.5 billion US dollars (£6.4 billion).

While the events identified in the report focus on insured losses which tend to be more extensive and higher in richer countries, extreme weather events can be just as devastating in poorer, more vulnerable countries even though the price tag is lower, Christian Aid said.

South Sudan experienced one of its worst floods on record, which killed 138 people and destroyed the year's crops, the aid agency said.

Report author Dr Kat Kramer, from Christian Aid, said that for millions of people in vulnerable parts of the world climate breakdown was compounding the problems of the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The good news is that, like the vaccine for Covid-19, we do know how to fix the climate crisis. We need to keep fossil fuels in the ground, boost clean energy investment and help those who are suffering on the front line.

“Whether it be floods in Asia, locusts in Africa or storms in Europe and the Americas, climate change has continued to rage in 2020.

“It is vital that 2021 ushers in a new era of activity to turn this tide.”

She said the arrival of Joe Biden in the White House in the US, social movements calling for urgent action, post-Covid green recovery investment and a crucial UN climate summit hosted by the UK in November, “there is a major opportunity for countries to put us on a path to a safe future”.

Report can be read here:

[<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/our-work/counting-cost-2020-year-climate-breakdown>]

Becket a model of life and death, says Welby

St Thomas Becket is a “model of a life and a death”, the Archbishop of Canterbury has said, as he paid tribute to his predecessor on the 850th anniversary of his murder.



The Most Rev Justin Welby drew parallels between the 12th-century priest and modern Christians around the world who still face persecution for their faith.

“As the 105th Archbishop, I do not fear for my life even when entering controversial political discussions.

“However, around the world there are still those who face discrimination, persecution and death for their faith.

“St Thomas, our Canterbury martyr, gives us a model of a life and a death that bore witness to Jesus our true, eternal king and saviour,” he said.

Once the chancellor of England and a friend of Henry II, Becket drew the ire of his king and was brutally murdered by knights in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170. Henry had appointed him in order to consolidate his own influence, so was angry when Becket, who had been ordained only the day before he was made Archbishop, embraced the

religious lifestyle and began to defend the rights of the church.

Becket spent several years in exile from 1164, only returning to England after negotiations with the king.

But after Becket excommunicated several of Henry's allies and the Archbishop of York, the king is thought to have said aloud: "Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?"

This declaration led four knights to travel to Canterbury and murder Becket in his cathedral.

Following his death, a series of miracles were recorded and he was made a saint on Feb 21, 1173.

Canterbury Cathedral became a popular pilgrimage site until the shrine was destroyed by Henry VIII during the Reformation, 400 years later.

Martyr and archbishop of Canterbury

Thomas a Becket was born in Cheapside, London, on 21st December (which was the feast of St Thomas the Apostle) around 1120, the son of a prosperous London merchant, Gilbert Beket and his wife Matilda. The young Thomas was sent as a student to Merton Priory and later attended a grammar school in London, possibly St Paul's Cathedral school. After his father suffered some business problems Thomas had to leave school and begin to earn a living as a clerk. He first worked in the business of a relative, then later acquired a position in the household of Theobald of Bec, the Archbishop of Canterbury. His work took him on several



missions to Rome and he became a deacon.

Thomas's talents were noticed by King Henry II, who made him his chancellor. The two soon became close friends. When

Theobald died in 1161, Henry made him Archbishop of Canterbury. Thomas took this new role very seriously and changed from being a pleasure-loving courtier into a serious, simply-dressed cleric.

The king and the archbishop's friendship came under strain when it became clear that Thomas would now defend the church in its disagreements with the king. In 1164, realising the extent of Henry's displeasure, Thomas fled into exile in France, and remained there in a monastery until 1170. In June that year he returned to Canterbury.

On December 28 in 1170, four of the king's knights rode to Canterbury, entered the Cathedral and killed Thomas as he knelt in front of the altar. Thomas was venerated as a martyr immediately after his death and was canonized in 1173. In that year the king made a public penance at the shrine of the saint. The four knights who had fled to the north of

England after killing Thomas, went to Rome to ask forgiveness from the Pope.

The shrine of St Thomas a Becket in Canterbury Cathedral became one of the most important destinations for pilgrims in England for the next 360 years, until it was destroyed during the Reformation - in the time of another King Henry and another St Thomas.

Many churches and schools around the world have been named after St Thomas. His life story has been the subject of several novels, poems and dramas - most recently TS Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and Jean Anouilh's play *Becket*, which was made into a film starring Richard Burton and Peter O'Toole.

News briefs

Vaccine - Archbishop Jackson's concerns - Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin Michael Jackson has said "We must never forget that, in the distribution and the application of the vaccine, there are substantial justice issues of which we, in our own eagerness, might lose sight.

"We have neither permission nor entitlement to ease up in our vigilance or in our compliance. We and countless millions live in an unburst cloud of grief and loss and bereavement. Countless people suffer daily, indeed hourly, from human separation. We can never forget those who have died in the time of the coronavirus," he said.

"We are not asked to be individual Public Health Experts; we are not asked to be Covid-police of the actions of others in our community; we are asked to watch out for each other

carefully and positively and kindly and to do the same things for ourselves as for others by continuing the simple things: 'Keep our distance; Wash our hands; Wear our masks; Limit our contacts; Opt for ventilation'."

York wants to be the first to wish you a Happy New Year

- Join the Archbishop of York as he looks back at 2020 with both thanksgiving and sorrow, and prays that we will all know the peace of Christ in this new year.

What's your New Year's Resolution? In his sermon, the Archbishop challenges our mistreatment of the planet and asks us to treasure the words of peace and comfort and joy, just as Mary did.

Follow the Order of Service at cofe.io/NYEService

Christmas carols in six languages - Because of the Covid-19 lockdowns, not everybody around the world has been able to sing in church this year. But the Columban Lay Missionaries in several countries have gathered together with ordained members, students, co-workers and members of their communities to record a selection of Christmas carols in different languages on film.

The videos include carols from Ireland in Gaelic, as well as ones from Myanmar, Britain, Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

To hear the carols visit: [<https://columbans.co.uk/mission/5682/columban-lay-mission-christmas-carols/>]

Msgr Tom Stack - The death has taken place of Msgr Tom Stack, former parish priest at Milltown in Dublin, regular contributor to The Irish Times and frequent guest on radio and television programmes. He died peacefully at Our Lady's Hospice in Harold's Cross on Sunday.

From Limerick, Msgr Stack was educated at Crescent College there, UCD, Clonliffe College in Dublin and Harvard University. As well as his work in journalism, he was a member of the Radharc film documentary team that produced award-winning programmes on religious, social and cultural topics for RTÉ between 1961 and 1996.

From 1975 he was deputy director at the Catholic Communications Office for a period when it was based in Booterstown, Co Dublin. He was also author of a number of books, including No Earthly Estate: God and Patrick Kavanagh: An Anthology. Patsy McGarry in the Irish Times.

Letter in Daily Telegraph - Doctor on the move -

Sir— At Queen's University, Belfast, in the early Sixties, our medieval history lecturer was Dr Lewis Warren. His doctorate (Letters, December 24) had been earned at Exeter College, Oxford, with a thesis on the 14th-century Archbishop of Canterbury, Simon Sudbury.

Later, he told the story of travelling to an evening function outside Belfast during the Troubles and being stopped at a roadblock.

The UDR corporal looked at the proffered driving licence and quickly told him: "If you're out this late, Doctor, it must be an emergency. You'd better be on your way."

Edward Orr, Newbury, Berkshire

Pope Francis said - it is, “good to think back on our lives with the grace of remembrance,” because, “the grace of remembrance helps us to grow in the spirit of gratitude.”

The long read

Europe’s 4 Anglican Church Bodies Form Tighter Bond

The bishops of Anglicanism’s four church bodies in continental Europe have formally committed to consultation in electing new bishops and appointing clergy to serve in their geographically overlapping jurisdictions.

They also promised closer cooperation in appointing clergy in places where another jurisdiction also has a congregation and to coordination of new mission work in these communities. The jurisdictions of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches and the Diocese of Gibraltar in Europe fully overlap, and the Church of England diocese also has several congregations in Spain and Portugal, the home of the Spanish and Lusitanian Churches.

Mark Michael writes in The Living Church

[[] <https://livingchurch.org/2020/12/16/europes-four-anglican-church-bodies-form-tighter-bond/>]

Pointers for prayer

Today we pray for COP26. The global climate conference, rescheduled from 2020, will be taking place in Glasgow in 2021. We pray for ambition and action from world leaders

on climate change, and pray that those already affected by climate chaos would be kept safe.

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph & Mary, and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas and the blessing of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit be with you. Amen

Almighty God, you make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our redeemer, we may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our judge. Amen.

Today we pray for the transformation which Jesus brings. This Christmas, we remember the coming of Jesus to our world, and the promise of hope which that brings with it.

Speaking to the soul

At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. (This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.) All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census.

Luke 2:1-3 NLT

I am delighted that in our highly secular society Christmas still has a very secure place. No one could possibly miss the fact that it is Christmas! All attempts to replace Christmas with a festival such as Winterval have failed miserably. But even so we have a problem because the birth of Jesus has

become inextricably tied together with Father Christmas and Rudolf the Rednosed Reindeer and other imaginary characters. It's really important that we recognize that Jesus' birth was a historic event, and here Dr Luke gives us the facts.

Jesus was born during the long reign of Augustus Caesar who ruled the Roman Empire from 27BC to 14AD. During his reign he established the Pax Romana which led to a period of relative peace for more than two centuries. He ruled the Empire tightly and one of his initiatives was to hold a census and Quirinius, as governor of Syria, was given responsibility for covering the area of Judaea. Luke gives us these very specific details because he wants the world to know that God broke into human history in a decisive way by sending his son to be the Saviour of the World. If Jesus was not a historical figure then the whole of Christianity crashes to the floor.

This is what is known as the miracle of the incarnation – of God taking on flesh and becoming part of our world through his son, Jesus. As we enjoy our Christmas celebrations we are marking the fact that Jesus entered into the rough and tumble of normal human life. You might have thought that Jesus, as the Son of God, would have been given special treatment as he entered the world – but no. Jesus entered the turbulent Roman world and faced all the indignities, regulations and limitations of a country living under occupation. This is no fairy story! Truly God had come to live on earth.

QUESTION

What do you find most amazing about the Christmas story?

PRAYER

Loving Father thank you that you loved us so much that you were willing to send Jesus to our confused, cynical and sinful world. Amen.

