



## **Bishop Brendan Leahy says papal visit to Limerick “would be magnificent”**

The Bishop of Limerick, Dr Brendan Leahy, has said that “it would be magnificent” if Pope Francis were to visit Limerick in 2018, as did the late Pope John Paul II in 1979.

Speaking to the Limerick Leader newspaper following the announcement that the Pontiff is to

visit Ireland in August 2018, Bishop Leahy said that the visit of Pope Francis to Ireland in 2018 “is hugely significant in a national and church context.”

However, he cautioned that “It is highly unlikely Pope Francis, who will be 25 years older in 2018 than Pope John Paul II was when he visited, will take on an itinerary as busy as in 1979. But we can never say never and will certainly be hoping he will come to Limerick. I do know that on the three occasions I met him since he became Pope, his eyes lit up when I mentioned Limerick so it is possible that he stayed here at some stage. He certainly has an affection for Limerick.”

He added: “So many people in Limerick remember Pope John Paul II’s visit here in 1979. Pope Francis’ visit to Ireland in 2018 will trigger much nostalgia around that but, moreover, will help bring us forward as a Church and, indeed, nation. For those of us who will be fortunate enough to have witnessed two popes visiting Ireland, we will be, indeed, privileged.”

Bishop Leahy said that Pope Francis’ decision to visit Ireland, in particular, is significant.

“Europe has not been a place that has featured very high on his agenda in terms of nations visited. Yet he chose Ireland for the World Meeting of Families and has now confirmed he will attend,” he said. “There is something in this for sure. I believe he is being guided towards Ireland. He recognises what his visit can do for his people here and, particularly, those on the margins. He is also very much aware that people have suffered at the hands of representatives of the Church and that there’s much healing still to do. He is very much a universal pastor and his presence here will certainly help with that healing.”

Bishop Leahy said that Pope Francis’ visit to Ireland is coming at a hugely significant time for the Church in Ireland: “Pope Francis’ visit is hugely exciting for the Church, of course, but will also be a hugely significant moment for the nation. While we have a much changed Ireland since 1979 and we won’t be expecting the same type of numbers as then, there are few figures in the world, if any, that will attract the type of crowds that will want to see the Pope. Specifically for the Church, his visit is more than timely. We are now and will be in 2018 at a time

of great change in the world and for our Church, following a very difficult period.”

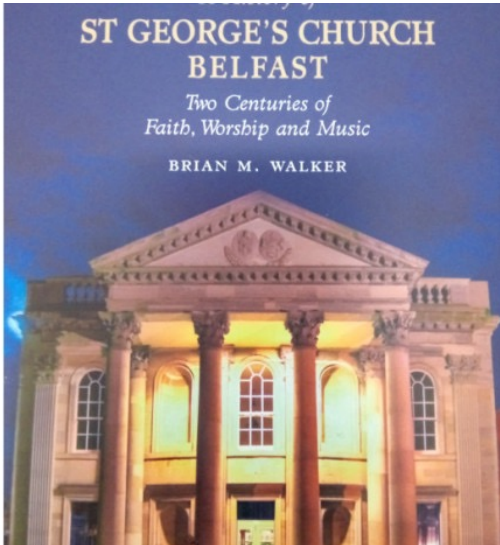
He continued: “We are very much in a process of regenerating the Church in Ireland so that it serves the needs of its faithful as they are today and will be tomorrow. Pope Francis’ visit here in 2018 will inject new energy into that process, which will be beneficial for the faithful but will also prompt those who are disillusioned with the Church to look at it again and see it as the Church of mercy and caring that Pope Francis wants it to be.”

## **Story of St George’s Belfast published**

The story of one of Northern Ireland’s most beautiful churches has been recorded in a new [book](#).

The hardback publication charts the [history](#) of St George’s, in the heart of Belfast, the News Letter reports

The Church of Ireland parish has this year been celebrating 200 years since its establishment in 1816. Designed by John Bowden, it is located on High Street, beside the Albert Clock, where the



Rivers Lagan and Farset met. The Georgian building, with its grand pillared portico at the front, was constructed on a site where Christians worshipped for at least 500 years before the completion of the existing church.

The book, which is full of illustrations and pictures, has been written by the distinguished historian, Professor Brian M Walker, formerly a lecturer at Queen's University in Belfast. An Anglican himself, he was an editor of the 2013 book 'Church of Ireland: an illustrated history'. This volume on St George's is more than 200 pages long, and includes photographs of its elaborate interior.



***Canon Edgar Turner and Bishop Arthur Butler survey bomb damage at St George's Church in central Belfast, 1973. The church was damaged many times in bomb blasts***

The book records the two physical threats to the very existence of the church: the 1941 Nazi blitz on Belfast, which damaged nearby buildings, and then the Troubles. In 1972 alone, St George's was damaged nine times by bomb blasts.

St George's holds traditional services that in style are considered to be the most 'high Anglican' in Northern Ireland. Its musical reputation is widely respected. Dr Walker explains in the book how it

can be traced back to the appointment of Edward Bunting as its organist in 1817.

The choir performed at Thursday evening's launch of the book, after a talk by Professor Walker and Fintan Mullan of the Ulster Historical Foundation. The audience included the current rector, Rev Brian Stewart, who has been in the post since 1994. • 'A History of St George's Church Belfast: Two Centuries of Faith, Worship and Music,' £19.99, has been published by the Ulster Historical Foundation

## **Vast majority of children 'in care' in Western Trust are Catholics, figures show**

The majority of children in care in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area – which includes Derry - are from a Catholic background, it has been revealed by Derry Now.

The Derry News uncovered the information after obtaining a copy of the Trust's six-month Corporate Parenting Report. As of September 30 last, there were 588 children 'looked after' by the Western Trust. Of these, 453 were Roman



Catholics, 77% of the overall total. The next highest religious group of children in care were Church of Ireland/England children who numbered 83 or 14% of the overall total.

They were followed by Presbyterian children of which there were just 19 in care or 3.23% of the overall population. Methodist children made up just 1.19% of the overall figure with seven children currently in the care of the Trust. Seventeen of the 'looked after' children were noted as having no religion and they made up 2.89% of the figures. The rest of the figures were made up of children designated as 'Other' or 'Other Christian'.



The report also revealed that 74% of children on the Child Protection Register as of the same date were Roman Catholics. A child protection register, is a list, kept by the social services, of children who are at risk or may be at risk of future harm and who there is a child protection plan for. Catholic children made up 247 of the overall number of 337 on the register. Church of Ireland and Church of England children numbered 44 or 13% with Presbyterians numbering just seven or 2%. Methodists made up 0.89% of the figure with just three children on the register. The number was completed by 36 children designated as 'none' or 'other'.

Catholic children also top the Children in need tables in the Western Trust area.

## **Bishops' deep concern at the growing level of homelessness in Ireland**

The Catholic bishops have expressed deep concern at the growing level of homelessness across [Ireland](#).

They called on people of goodwill to support homeless agencies in every way they can

“towards building a society where homelessness, and poor housing, which are an affront to human dignity, are eradicated forever.”

The bishops noted that, according to the Vincent de Paul [Society](#), “there are almost 90,000 households waiting for social housing in the Republic of Ireland – and over 2,000 children living in homeless accommodation in Dublin”.

Meanwhile, the latest official count by the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive found 142 rough sleepers on the streets of the capital, an increase of 56 per cent over the past year.

Such a reality was contrary to the social teaching of the [Catholic Church](#) which “informs us that each person, regardless of his or her economic or social position, racial or faith background, must be treated with full dignity,” the bishops said.

## **Impact on Irish Methodist leader of New Zealand’s earthquake hit cathedral**

During a recent visit to New Zealand the Methodist President, the Rev Bill Mullally visited



the site of the old Christchurch cathedral, partly destroyed by the recent earthquake and held together by steel girders and frames. He looked on it with sadness and commented: 'Is this what we have become? Have the guts been ripped from us? Has our fabric been torn apart? Are our walls so teetering under their own weight that they would collapse without props?'



But half an hour later he visited the new, so-called Transitional Cathedral and his mood changed:

‘A parable of hope. A parable of what church could be. A parable of renewed mind. From the moment I glimpsed the Transitional Cathedral my spirit soared, resonating with the beautiful clean lines of this building. Built to meet the needs of the people in a time of crisis, an ingenious beauty has been birthed. Serenity echoes the clean elegant lines of the sanctuary.’

*The full text of the letter will be published in the January issue of the Methodist Newsletter*

## **Singing priest to pay tribute to his hero at special Christmas carol service**

A Meath-based parish priest who became an international singing star with Leonard Cohen's song, 'Hallelujah', will pay a special tribute to his hero at a carol service next weekend.

Two years ago, the parish priest of Oldcastle in Co Meath, Fr. Ray Kelly, shot to fame when he sang 'Hallelujah' at a wedding. The video of the event went viral and Fr Kelly has now performed all over the world.

The Concert of Carols in Oldcastle has always proved very popular with parishioners, but since Fr Ray shot to fame two years ago, the event has become a major attraction.

Speaking to the Meath Chronicle newspaper about the forthcoming Concert of Carols at Oldcastle, Fr Kelly said that "Ever since the death of Leonard Cohen in early November, many people have been asking me on my thoughts ...



***Fr Ray Kelly***

particularly since I recorded his song ‘Hallelujah’ with the words changed to suit a wedding.”

He continued: “I remember travelling up to Castleblaney in October 2014 to perform one of my first concerts, when Christian Seitz from Vienna, the producer of my first album, ‘Where I Belong’, phoned me excitedly, saying ‘great news, great news, Ray. Leonard Cohen has agreed to allow us to put ‘Hallelujah’ on the album with the words changed to suit a wedding.’ Needless to say it was great news because that

was the song everyone wanted to hear on the album. So I guess I owe Mr Leonard Cohen a big thank you for agreeing to that, and for the enjoyment it has brought to so many people as well as the enjoyment he has given through his music and poetry to the whole world.”

Fr Ray says his life has been pretty hectic, juggling work as a parish priest and concert performances, but his focus now is on Christmas in the parish of Oldcastle.

“I do hope as many as possible can come along on the night,” he said. “I will have local artist Ann Galligan with her beautiful voice, as well as my brother, Joe. Copies of my album, ‘Where I Belong’, and my Christmas album, ‘An Irish Christmas Blessing’, as well as a Christmas DVD of many of the Christmas songs recorded at the Concert of Carols last year, on the evening. It promises to be a great night, so do come along.”

He added: “May I take this opportunity to wish everyone who has stood by me and supported me a wonderful Christmas and many blessings in the New Year of 2017.” **The Concert of Carols takes place in St Brigid’s Church, Oldcastle at 7.30 pm on Sunday 18 December.**

## News Briefs

**+++ Dublin Black Santa** - charity appeal will be launched at St Ann's church, Dawson Street, at 2pm next Friday.

**+++ Cork's Great Adventure to Bethlehem** - The Church of Ireland parish of Ballydehob Union in West Cork, which includes the churches at both Ballydehob and Aughadown is hosting a children's Christmas event called: The Great Adventure to Bethlehem. This seasonal fun-filled festive morning will take place on Saturday 17th December, from 10am-12pm, in Ballydehob Community Hall. The cost for the morning is €3 per child and all children of primary school age are welcome to attend. The morning will include a Bible Story, Games, Christmas Craft, Snack, and Songs.

**+++ Certificate in Christian Studies develops** - In Cashel, Ferns & Ossory on Saturday the new intake of the Certificate in Christian Studies matriculated in Kilkenny. This is the fourth cycle and this year includes participants from the diocese of Cork as well as those from CFO. The first module is Liturgy and Worship the Study Day centred around a field trip to a range of local



churches and cathedrals. The programme is one of two recognised courses for Lay Reader training and is also open to general interest participants. The certificate is within the ecumenical partnership with St Patrick's College, Maynooth, and is under the leadership of the Very Revd Tom Gordon, Diocesan Director of Adult Education.

**+++ Puppet Training Day** - Church of the Good Shepherd in Monkstown is hosting a Puppet Training Day by One Way UK. This takes place on Saturday January 21 2017 from 10am until 4.30pm, with registration from 9.30am. Tea/ Coffee are included, but participants need to bring a packed lunch. Cost is £15 per person. To book go online: [www.onewayuk.com](http://www.onewayuk.com) or telephone: 01472 241068 For more details contact Liz on 07896 339771

## **News links to reports on faith, politics and education**

### **Ireland about to take a wrong turn on education**

Irish Times

Breda O'Brien comments

[http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/breda-o-brien-ireland-about-to-take-a-wrong-turn-on-education-1.2899637?utm\\_source=dlvr.it&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/breda-o-brien-ireland-about-to-take-a-wrong-turn-on-education-1.2899637?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter)

## **NI Teachers lose out as retirement scheme cut back**

Belfast Telegraph

[http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/teachers-lose-out-as-retirement-scheme-cut-back-35282562.html?utm\\_source=ipad\\_share&utm\\_medium=ipad\\_app&utm\\_campaign=clickbacks](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/teachers-lose-out-as-retirement-scheme-cut-back-35282562.html?utm_source=ipad_share&utm_medium=ipad_app&utm_campaign=clickbacks)

## **16% drop in Northern Ireland further education college numbers**

BBC News

There has been a 16% drop in the number of students going to further education colleges in Northern Ireland over the past three years.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-38252819>

## **Irish faith leaders sign joint declaration calling for peace in the Middle East**

Irish Times

Signatories to the declaration included: **Church of Ireland** Archbishop of Dublin Michael Jackson; Fr Timothy Bartlett, secretary general for the World ...  
<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/irish-faith-leaders-sign-joint-declaration-calling-for-peace-in-the-middle-east-1.2898012>

## **How news of Papal visit to Northern Ireland sees rise of religious intolerance again**

Belfast Telegraph

Alf McCreary writes...”For years now the **Church of Ireland**, the Irish Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Church have been courting the Church of Rome, treating her as ...

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/features/how-news-of-papal-visit-to-northern-ireland-sees-rise-of-religious-intolerance-again-35279895.html>

## **Catholic bishop and the DUP sing from the same hymn sheet when it comes to their opposition to abortion**

Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/editors-viewpoint/catholic-bishop-and-the-dup-sing-from-the-same-hymn-sheet-when-it-comes-to-their-opposition-to-abortion-35282778.html>

## **Mirror**

Report that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby has backed the paper’s campaign for scrapping fees for children’s funerals. A spokeswoman is quoted saying : “The Archbishop firmly agrees that local authorities should not charge for children’s funerals. He has personally never charged – from the time he became a parish priest.”

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/scrapping-child-burial-fees-grieving-9433622#ICID=nsm>

[churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com)

## **S Tel**

Report that hundreds of CofE churches in London have been warned that the South Korean charity, Parachristo, is a “cult” intent on finding “recruits” in their congregations. Article notes that among the CofE churches expressing concern is HTB, with a message circulated from vicar Nicky Gumbel to its network of churches. The diocese of London’s safeguarding team has also circulated a note saying that a number of concerns have been raised by parishes about the group’s activities and so a call for vigilance has been issued to all churches in the diocese.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/10/exclusive-churches-warned-deceptive-cult-linked-south-korea/>

Focus on the Korean leader of Parachristo

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/10/korean-religious-leader-collision-course-church-england/>

## **Tel/BBC/Ind/Sun/Exp**

Report that the roof of Reigners Bible Church in Uyo, south-east Nigeria, as collapsed killing up to 200 people attending a bishop's ordination.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/10/least-10-reported-have-killed-collapse-church-southern-nigeria/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-38279101>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/nigeria-church-roof-collapse-bishop-uyo-latest-a7467851.html>

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/video/news/at-least-60-worshippers-reported-to-have-died-after-a-church-roof-collapsed-in-nigeria/>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/742163/nigeria-udo-church-dead-roof-collapses-worshippers-christian>

## **Mail on Sun**

Report that children could be taught in schools to stop using the terms 'boys' and 'girls' – in case they discriminate against transgender pupils. The advice comes in a new guidebook, from a Government funded body, being distributed to both primary and secondary schools. The advice is criticised by a number of people including the Bishop of Chester, Peter Forster, who said: 'This is likely to sow more confusion than clarity.'

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4020872/Stop-calling-boys-girls-Advisers-paid-200k-help-train-teachers-claim-using-sex-specific-classrooms-unfair-transgenders.html#ixzz4SWcvT9Sn>

## **S Times**

Report that former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey has accused a property speculator of “reflecting the worst features of capitalism” after the company blighted plans to sell his home.

Article says that Lord Carey and his wife have abandoned their attempt to downsize from their five-bedroom house, because a development company has applied for permission to build an estate directly in front of their home in Newbury, Berkshire.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ex-archbishop-left-in-wilderness-by-developer-sq8gwc2kv>

## **S Tel**

Report on the death notice of Royal Navy officer Jack Webber, who specified that no flowers should be laid at his grave and urged people to “give a bunch of flowers to a complete stranger and tell them they're absolutely marvellous”.

Article features Rev Martin Wroe, a writer and priest at St Luke's church in West Holloway, who approached total strangers and presented them with a bouquet in accordance with the Mr Webber's wishes.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/10/vicar-acts-navy-officers-last-wish-give-strangers-flowers/>

## **BBC/Ind**

BBC reports that more than 750 children have been brought to the UK from the migrant camp in Calais, the Government has said. Includes ref to previous comments by former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams who had accused the government of foot-dragging. Ind reports that the fates of more than 1,000 refugee children are “hanging in the balance” after the Government ended the current phase of transfers from France to the UK, campaigners have said and includes comment from Bishop of Croydon, Jonathan Clark.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38270251>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-refugees-calais-camp-jungle-transfers-uk-home-office-croydon-numbers-citizens-uk-a7466416.html>

## **Times**

Report on a community nativity play with a difference at St Clare’s church on the Warren Park estate in Portsmouth. The cast of 36 people is mostly drawn from the housing estates on which it is being staged, and also includes three camels and two donkeys.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/donkeys-and-camels-in-star-roles-in-alternative-nativity-qd6rtptlz>

## **Times**

Feature on choristers at St Paul's Cathedral

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/young-choristers-tune-up-for-busiest-time-of-year-w5pcg2ffl>

## **Comment**

### **Yorkshire Post**

Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines, writes that it is not every day that a Church of England bishop sparks a constitutional crisis. Especially not a Yorkshire bishop. "But, that is exactly what happened 80 years ago. The then Bishop of Bradford, Dr Alfred Blunt, delivered a carefully prepared speech to the Bradford Diocesan Conference (today it would be to the diocesan Synod) in which he referred rather pointedly to the rather deficient piety of the soon-to-be crowned King Edward VIII. However, to understand the speech, it is first necessary to know something about the context in which it was delivered."



<http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/opinion/nick-baines-bishop-s-speech-that-led-to-fall-of-a-king-and-abdication-crisis-1-8283098>

## **Times**

Baby Jesus in the manger is adored by Muslims too.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/baby-jesus-in-the-manger-is-adored-by-muslims-too-d39msqcxs>