



***A nun inside St Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral on Sunday***

## **World wide church support as Egypt mourns 25 Christians killed whilst at worship**

Egypt's Coptic community held a funeral service yesterday, Monday, for 25 Christians killed in a bombing the previous day at a church next to the main cathedral in Cairo — one of the deadliest

attacks targeting the country's religious minority in recent memory.

The bomb went off during Sunday Mass at a chapel adjacent to St Mark's Cathedral, seat of the ancient Coptic Christian Church. No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack.

The coffins of the victims were laid in front of the altar, with their names displayed on the side facing the congregation.

The spiritual leader of Egypt's Orthodox Christians, Pope Tawadros II, led the service. At one point, he leaned on his staff and quietly prayed in front of the coffins. He had cut short a visit to Greece and flew home on Sunday after the bombing.

Only victims' relatives were allowed to attend the service at the Virgin Mary and St Athanasius church in the eastern Cairo suburb of Nasr City. Some of them screamed out in grief, while the rest quietly sobbed or sat somberly during the service.

Scores of black-clad monks, bishops and priests of the Orthodox Church attended Monday's

service, which was carried live by state television and private TV networks.

Previously, the deadliest attack against Egypt's Christians was a New Year's Day bombing in 2011 in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, for centuries the seat of the Orthodox Coptic Church. At least 21 were killed in that attack.

A state funeral was held later yesterday at a parade ground also in Nasr City, with President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi in attendance.

Egypt has seen a wave of attacks by Islamic militants since 2013, when the military overthrew President Mohammed Morsi, a freely elected leader and a senior Muslim Brotherhood official. Many of his supporters blamed Christians for supporting his ouster, and scores of churches and other Christian-owned properties in southern Egypt were ransacked that year.

Since 2013, authorities have waged a sweeping crackdown, outlawing the Muslim Brotherhood, jailing thousands of mostly Islamist dissidents and killing hundreds in street clashes.

Egypt's Christians have long complained of discrimination, saying they are denied top jobs in many fields, including academia and security forces.

The Church and many Christians have rallied behind el-Sissi, although there have been growing voices of dissent in the community. They say little has changed under his rule, with authorities failing to halt attacks on their churches and property.

## **Cairo bombing: Churches Together in England Presidents issue joint statement**

Archbishop Justin Welby has joined fellow Presidents of Churches Together in England in calling for prayer after the attack on Coptic Christians in Cairo yesterday.

The Presidents said: 'We heard with deep sorrow and concern of the attack yesterday on St Peter's Coptic Orthodox Church within the complex of St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo as people gathered to worship. We pray for those who have lost loved ones that they may know God's comforting

presence. We pray too for the nation of Egypt as it mourns. As we prepare once more to celebrate the coming of Christ, the Prince of Peace, our prayer is that all people of faith in Egypt, Muslims and Christians alike, may be strengthened in their quest for peace and their rejection of the crude and cruel tactics of the terrorists.'

## **Church of Scotland responds to Cairo bombing**

The Moderator of the Church of Scotland has written to the Coptic Church in Egypt to express his shock and sadness at the bomb attack on the Coptic Cathedral complex in Cairo. At least 25 people have been killed and dozens more wounded, with initial reports suggesting many of them are women and children.

Rt Rev Dr Russell Barr has assured His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, who is the leader of the strongest Christian presence in the Middle East and North Africa, the Church of Scotland stands in solidarity with Coptic Christians in these troubled times.



***Very Rev Dr Angus Morrison with HH Pope Tawadros II***

Dr Barr writes: “Such an attack against innocent Christians joining one another to worship God is despicable, the loss of life unimaginable, and I can only begin to imagine the grief and suffering of so many people.”

“I am aware that this attack strikes directly at the heart of the strongest Christian presence in the Middle East and North Africa and appears to be a direct attempt to fuel sectarian issues.”

“We pray the God of compassion and justice will give you the strength to face the challenges in front of you, and wisdom as you and your

community respond to this attack by showing the loving, healing and reconciling face of Christ.”

Earlier this year, Dr Barr’s predecessor as Moderator, Very Rev Dr Angus Morrison met His Holiness Pope Tawdros II in Cairo during a two week visit to Church of Scotland partners in Egypt. The letter includes a message of condolence from Dr Morrison on this most recent atrocity faced by Egypt’s Christian community.

He writes, “All of us in the visiting Scottish group recall with great pleasure the time spent with Your Holiness, and our Coptic brothers and sisters earlier this year, and the gracious hospitality you showed to us. As members of the one family, be assured of our strong and prayerful solidarity at this painful time”

The Church of Scotland’s Mission Partner in Cairo, Colin Johnston, has been working as part of the Christian community in the city since May. He took to social media to describe the tense and angry atmosphere in the city following the bomb blast. Colin says he was initially unaware of the blast as he had been worshipping in Cairo’s Anglican Cathedral yesterday, but went to the scene when he heard of the attack.

He said, “Obviously Christians are feeling very vulnerable, and a number of churches are closed with their gates locked. I passed the cathedral this afternoon and found a tense situation with people protesting, obviously angry about what had happened. This follows the killing of 6 policemen on Friday near the pyramids so let's hope and pray there is no escalation of violence.”

## **Pope to Coptic patriarch: ‘We are united in the blood of our martyrs’**

Pope Francis has phoned Coptic Orthodox Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria, expressing his prayers and condolences for a terrorist attack at the Cairo cathedral that left 25 people dead.

“We are united in the blood of our martyrs,” the Pope told the Orthodox patriarch, according to a Vatican statement.

The patriarch thanked Pope Francis for his closeness at such a sad time and asked his continued prayers for the Copts and for peace in Egypt, the statement said.



On a December weekend bloodied by terrorist attacks in Egypt and Turkey, Pope Francis condemned the violence and urged people to hold fast to their faith and renew their commitment to upholding basic human values.

After reciting the Angelus Pope Francis offered prayers for the “victims of savage terrorist attacks” in Egypt, which also wounded dozens, and in Istanbul, which killed close to 40 people, mainly police.

“The places are different, but the violence is the same,” Pope Francis said. In response to the “death and destruction,” there is only one response: “faith in God and unity in human and civil values.”

The Pope also told the crowd in St Peter’s Square that each day in prayer he is close to the people of the besieged city of Aleppo, Syria.

“We must not forget that Aleppo is a city and that there are people there: families, children, elderly, sick,” he said. “Unfortunately we have become used to the war and destruction, but we must not forget that Syria is a country full of history, culture

and faith. We cannot allow this to be negated by war, which is a pile of abuse and falsity.”

## **Canon from Jerusalem given warm welcome in Glendalough**

St Kevin's Church in Hollywood was full last week for a midweek service of Morning Prayer. Clergy from all over Glendalough joined parishioners of Blessington Union of Parishes and from the surrounding areas for the service to welcome visitors from the Diocese of Jerusalem.

St Kevin's is an ancient pilgrim church where pilgrims on their way to Glendalough could receive a blessing. Recently the church was one of the starting points for the Camino de Glendalough and pilgrims who undertook the full camino along St Kevin's Way again received a blessing. The Rector, the Revd Leonard Ruddock, said they were delighted to revive the tradition.

Speaking during the service, Chaplain to the Archbishop of Jerusalem, Canon David Longe, said their visit to Dublin & Glendalough under the Jerusalem Link partnership, had been an



***Canon David Longe and Archbishop Michael Jackson with clergy and members of the council for mission in Glendalough.***

incredible learning experience. He said he hoped people would make a return visit to the Diocese of Jerusalem to see the work of the Living Stones, as Christians in the Land of the Holy One often describe themselves. He said they are descended from the Christians of Pentecost and their extraordinary stories, which he had heard in his 15 months as Chaplain, had filled him with faith.

Archbishop Michael Jackson spoke of the Jerusalem Link and their hope that the friendship between the two dioceses would continue to deepen. He urged those present to bring refugees into their conversations and said that many refugees who come into this country will be from Archbishop Suheil Dawani's diocese. He described the situation for refugees in Lebanon in the Diocese of Jerusalem, some of whom are new refugees but others have been refugees since 1948.

He highlighted the Dublin & Glendalough diocesan appeal which is raising funds for an accommodation project being undertaken by the Irish Refugee Council.

Many of the clergy and some members of the diocesan Council for Mission accompanied Canon Longe on a visit to the Monastic City of Glendalough where Archdeacon Ricky Rountree and the Revd Brian O'Reilly led a brief tour.

## **Glaswegian ordained in Raphoe**

Most Rev Philip Boyce, O.C.D., Bishop of Raphoe ordained to the Priesthood Father

Damien Nejad, a native of Glasgow whose mother comes from Annagry.

The Cathedral of Saints Eunan and Columba was filled on Sunday 11 December 2016, with family and friends of the new priest for the nearly two hour ceremony. Also in attendance were over 50 priests from the diocese and further afield who concelebrated the Mass.

Bishop Boyce in his sermon said: “in our Eucharistic celebration here today at Saint Eunan’s Cathedral, we have an added reason for joyful hope and expectancy. A young man, Damien Nejad, approaches the steps of the altar and presents himself for ordination to the priesthood in the Diocese of Raphoe. He is following Christ’s call to be with the Master for the rest of his life and to serve the people entrusted to his care. Ordination day is always a day of joy and gratitude: joy at the precious gift received, gratitude to the Lord for calling a young man to his exclusive service in the ordained ministry”.

The newly-ordained priest celebrated his first holy Mass in the parish of Annagry in the Church of Saint Mary Star of the Sea, yesterday evening

and afterwards give his first blessing to all present.

## **Joyful reopening of Dundonald Presbyterian after a £1.85 million refurbishment and extension**

Presbyterian Moderator, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frank Sellar officially reopened Dundonald Presbyterian Church at the weekend after a £1.85 million refurbishment and extension programme.

The church and the adjoining old National School, which are located at the heart of Dundonald village, were built in the mid 19th century. The congregation itself is one of the oldest Presbyterian congregations in Ireland having had its first minister installed in 1645. Today, around 350 families attend the Church.

During his address, Dr. Sellar said that it was a wonderful opportunity to be in Dundonald to see and hear what the congregation was doing in Jesus' name. "My warmest congratulations to the minister, session and congregation on the

completion of this marvellous building project,” the Moderator, said.

“It is my hope that as you anticipate the exciting future ministry entrusted to you within this community, using the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 12 verse 12, I pray that strengthened by the Holy Spirit you will be joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer.”

Dundonald Presbyterian’s minister, Rev. William McCully, said that the church had needed substantial repair and refurbishment, so the congregation took the opportunity to remodel, modernise and extend the building to provide contemporary 21st century facilities that could better meet its needs and the community’s.

“Our new complex is absolutely incredible. I just love it. Its a fine, modern, pleasant and bright space to be in that offers a welcoming experience to everyone who enters, and I am so glad that the Moderator can be with us today,” Mr. McCully said.

“While at the end of the day a building is only four walls and a roof and will never bring anyone into the Kingdom of God, nevertheless we now

have a wonderful resource that God can use for His Glory. By gospel endeavour, as well as working and networking with other local churches, we can increase our opportunities to reach those who as yet do not know Jesus.”

The project took some 14-months to complete, during which time the congregation continued to meet in the Church halls. The remodelled ground floor has been transformed into a fully equipped 300-seat worship centre with a dedicated children's crèche, a large entrance foyer, office, coffee bar and social space. The first floor can also better accommodate the church's children's and youth work on Sundays, as well as various activities during the week.

Mr. McCully concluded by saying, “It is my hope and prayer that we will now be able to connect in a better way than before with people of all generations in Dundonald, but particularly the missing generation who have lost touch with the church and who as yet, do not know Christ.

## **Pope Francis' Christmas Card: Why It contains 2 Images of Baby Jesus**



For the past three years, Pope Francis has personally hand-picked his Christmas card to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. This year, the card he chose is special since it featured two baby Jesuses.

The image he chose is the artwork made by Giotto di Bondone, which is a 14th-century fresco of the nativity in Assisi. For the pope's card, the image is accompanied by a verse from the book of Isaiah.

The card shows typical images found in a nativity scene, such as shepherds, angels, and animals, according to the **National Catholic Register**. It also shows the Virgin Mary cradling the baby Jesus.

But this particular image stands out because there's a midwife holding another baby Jesus.

Enzo Fortunato, press officer of the Sacred Convent of Assisi, said the two baby Jesuses are meant to exhibit both the human and divine nature of Christ.

"The first is represented by the two midwives who are located next to one of the baby Jesuses,



***Italian artist Giotto's 14th century fresco of the Nativity in Assisi.***

embracing, wrapping and supporting him," he explained. The embrace is symbolic because it means Jesus has been deemed as "a part of the humanity to which we belong."

As for the swaddling clothes, he said these point out "the need to alleviate the suffering of others." The image of breastfeeding signifies alleviation from hunger, while the suffering of the cold

shows how Jesus had been "forced to leave His native home."

Fortunato is not surprised the pope selected the image, saying it is relevant in today's society, what with migrants in need of new homes. Through this Christmas card, the pope is expressing his unity to those who have been marginalised.

"It's really here where we are called to perceive, through our gestures, God with us. It's Christmas," wrote Fortunato. "And it's these peripheries through which the pope would like the fresco to help man to become aware of God through the gestures of everyday life."

## **Mothers' Union tell UN "for too long women have been judged by wealth" and change is needed**

Mothers' Union has called on the United Nations and national governments worldwide to reimagine the current global economic system to ensure women have equal access and rights to economic resources . In a statement to the United Nations Commission on the Status of

Women [UNCSW], which was timed to coincide with International Human Rights Day on 10th December and marking the culmination of 16 Days of Activism to highlight gender-based violence [GBV], Mothers' Union says that a radical change in approach is required if sustainable progress is to be made.

Bev Jullien, CEO of Mothers' Union, which represents 4 million members in 83 countries worldwide, said; "Too often women have been valued according to the economic wealth they can generate rather than their intrinsic value. We must reimagine the current global economic system to ensure that no one – especially women - is left behind."

A delegation of Mothers' Union representatives from across the world, will travel to the UN's global forum on gender equality in New York next March to lobby on women's economic empowerment. They will call for governments to prohibit any form of discrimination against women and enshrine in law equal rights in the workplace, including the right to employment, equal pay and freedom from discrimination which prevents the appointment of women to senior positions.



Mothers' Union will also call on governments to recognise, under law, that financial control is a form of abuse, and for increased training and sensitisation around this issue. The charity is also calling for efforts to be made to improve understanding of the impact of gender-based violence on women's economic empowerment and a commitment to ensure that women are included in peace and reconciliation initiatives.

Mothers' Union will also take time to stress that wealth does not protect against gender-based violence. Bev Jullien said, "Despite some progress, economic empowerment is not simply wealth accumulation – rather economic empowerment is the freedom, choice and ability to obtain and control economic resources."

Speaking of her experiences at the grassroots, a Mothers' Union Community Development Coordinator in Madagascar, highlighted that despite the key role that faith, civil and community leaders have in addressing these

issues, governments need to do more to enforce change. “Women sometimes lack self-esteem, or have been educated to obey men. Sometimes there is no follow up or monitoring of the law implementation. Awareness raising with women about their rights is not enough: more advocacy and sensitisation is required.”

Throughout 16 Days of Activism, a major Mothers’ Union campaign has been under way to shine the light on gender-based violence with the clear message that ‘It’s Not OK’ [#itsnotok]. The campaign highlights the many forms that GBV takes, from controlling behaviour by a partner to rape as a weapon of war.

Globally, the campaign is calling on governments and leaders to ensure that national, local and customary laws prohibit all forms of violence against women. The campaign also calls for survivors to have access to justice and support services, and that perpetrators are prosecuted and rehabilitated.

## **News briefs**

### **+++ Canon appointed to Belfast Cathedral -**

The Revd Gillian Withers is to be a diocesan canon in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

Commenting on his appointment, Bishop Harold Miller said, "Gill had exercised a faithful ministry in the Diocese of Down and Dromore, and particularly in her work on the Ards Peninsula. I have known Gill since she was one of my 'young adults' when I was a curate at St Nicholas Carrickfergus. Her formation and ministry have been both in Connor and Down and Dromore, and that, along with her musical talents, make her a perfect person for this canonry."

### **+++ 'Blue Christmas' at Saint Anne's, Shandon -**

Christmas is not a jolly time for everyone. If you are someone who finds Christmas tough going, Saint Anne's Church, Shandon, Cork invites you to a 'Blue Christmas' on Wednesday, 14th December at 7.30 p.m. A 'Blue Christmas' will be a quiet reflective Service to help people connect with the comfort and hope at the heart of the Christmas story while acknowledging that this is not a joyous time for everyone, for whatever reason: bereavement, loneliness, anxiety or loss, for example. All welcome.

**+++ ‘Christmas Cracker’ concerts at Belfast Cathedral** - Join members of Belfast Cathedral’s music department for a series of ‘Christmas Cracker’ concerts of much-loved Christmas music!

The concerts take at lunchtime from Monday December 19 – Friday December 23 as follows.  
Monday 19th – Jack Wilson, organ  
Tuesday 20th – Sopranos of the Cathedral Choir  
Wednesday 21st – Ian Barber, organ  
Thursday 22nd – Mark Tilley, tenor  
Friday 23rd – David Stevens, organ

Concerts on Monday to Thursday take place at 1.30pm, and the concert on Friday is at 2pm. Admission is free! St Anne’s Cathedral’s very popular Carols for the City Carol service takes place on Sunday December 18 at 3.30pm. Black Santa will be on the steps throughout this week of Christmas Cracker concerts collecting for charity – a tradition now in its 40th year.

**+++ Rathmore Grammar School's Advent Carol Service** - St Patrick’s, Donegal St., Belfast, was packed with visitors on Sunday evening for Rathmore Grammar School's annual Advent Carol Service. The Church looked



particularly festive with its suspended Advent wreath, life size crib and two 18ft Christmas trees festooned with no less than 6000 lights. If you're passing through Belfast City Centre this Christmas, be sure to pay a visit to St Patrick's.

**+++ Annual Glendalough Clergy Day -** Clergy from the Diocese of Glendalough gathered in Laragh, County Wicklow, on Friday (December 9) for the annual Glendalough Clergy Day. Following a service in St John's Church, Laragh, clergy proceeded to the Wicklow Heather Restaurant for their meeting which was attended by Archbishop Michael Jackson and Dean Dermot Dunne. The gathering was organised by the Archdeacon of Glendalough, the Ven Ricky Rountree and was followed by lunch.

**+++ Antrim deanery assists food bank -** Parishes within Antrim Rural Deanery raised more than £1,000 through collections held over the course of six Lenten Lunches. At a recent meeting of the Rural Deanery, a cheque for £1078.74 was presented to Fionnuala O'Donnell, foodbank co-ordinator with Oasis Caring in Action, Antrim, by the Rev Canon Derek Kerr, Vicar of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion.

**+++ Spring Harvest vacancy** - The organisation has announced : We're looking for a Head of Sales and Marketing to lead our marketing and customer service teams. Find out more: [http://www.springharvest.org/jobs/head-sales-marketing ...](http://www.springharvest.org/jobs/head-sales-marketing...)

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

### **Tralee soup kitchen feeds over 100 people in a day**

Irish Times

She and Colette Price, both married and working, set up the kitchen together from the **Church of Ireland** parish centre. Wholesome home-made soup ..

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/tralee-soup-kitchen-feeds-over-100-people-in-a-day-1.2901810>.

### **BBC/Guard/Tel/Times/Ind/Mail/Express/ Christian Today**

Reports that at least 25 people have been killed and 49 have been injured by a bomb explosion during Sunday worship in a chapel adjoining Egypt's main Coptic Christian cathedral, the Grand Cathedral of St Mark in Cairo. A statement issued by Bishop Angaelos, General

Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the UK is quoted in Christian Today. The Telegraph quotes the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, who wrote on Twitter: "Today Christians in Egypt have again suffered a terrible attack. Let us pray in lament, protest and in hope for them, martyrs for Christ."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-38283578>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/11/egypt-bomb-blast-cairo-cathedral>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/11/least-26-dead-bomb-explodes-inside-coptic-christian-church-cairo/>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/churchgoers-massacred-as-attacks-rage-across-borders-tdh236ctb>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/egypt-bomb-cairo-coptic-christian-church-cathedral-dead-killed-terror-isis-death-toll-latest-a7468066.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-4022440/Bomb-spreads-carnage-loved-Egypt-church.html>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/742228/protest-Cairo-Egypt-bomb-coptic-catholic-cathedral-terror-attack-Abbassiya-st-mark>

## **ITV/South Wales Evening Post**

Reports that Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has backed Swansea East MP Carolyn Harris' campaign for scrapping fees for children's funerals. ITV quote a spokeswoman for Lambeth Palace speaking to the Sunday Mirror: "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.itv.com/news/wales/2016-12-11/archbishop-of-canterbury-backs-welsh-mps-campaign-to-scrap-child-funeral-costs/>  
<http://www.southwales-eveningpost.co.uk/archbishop-of-canterbury-backs-swanseas-east-mp-s-campaign-to-end-child-burial-fees/story-29974506-detail/story.html>

## **Northern Echo**

Reports that the Archbishop of York has celebrated his six-month pilgrimage through the York diocese. Dr Sentamu's journey took place between December 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 and the middle of May this year. In a programme broadcast by *BBC Radio York*, the Archbishop's staff looked back on the pilgrimage of prayer.

## **BBC/FT/Mail/Ind**

Reports that at least 100 bodies have been recovered from a church that collapsed in the south-eastern Nigerian city of Uyo. The roof of the church caved in on worshippers who had gathered for the ordination of a bishop on Saturday.

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-38279101\](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-38279101)

<https://www.ft.com/content/8000d608-bfb7-11e6-9bca-2b93a6856354>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-4021936/Nigeria-church-roof-collapse-leaves-50-dead.html?http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/nigeria-church-roof-collapse-death-toll-latest-news-a7468006.html>

## **Sun**

Reports that the Revd Kate Bottley joined a charity trip to Lapland with some seriously ill children for BBC One *Songs of Praise* programme.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/tvandshowbiz/2376290/gogglebox-star-reverend-kate-bottley-wows-songs-of-praise-fans-as-she-joins-seriously-ill-children-on-a-trip-to-lapland/>

## **Northern Echo/Sunderland Echo**

Reports that the Revd Arun Arora, currently the Director of Communications for the National Institutions of the C of E, is to be the new vicar of St Nicholas church in Durham Market Place (see above)

[http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/14959976.Church\\_communicator\\_announced\\_a\\_s\\_new\\_Durham\\_vicar/](http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/14959976.Church_communicator_announced_a_s_new_Durham_vicar/)

## **Mail**

Further coverage 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.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4023276/Carey-s-fury-developer-halted-bid-downsize-Planning-application-stops-former-Archbishop-Canterbury-selling-home.html>

## **Metro/Mirror**

Reports that a nurse who gave a patient a bible she did not want and spoke about religion with patients has said she will fight her dismissal. Sister Sarah Kuteh, with the help of the Christian Legal Centre, is taking Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust to an employment tribunal for unfair dismissal.

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<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/how-could-telling-anyone-jesus-9435551#ICID=nsm>