

Archbishop of Sydney: 'Hell has touched us'

Spectacular multi-sensory experience as St Anne's Cathedral is transformed on New Year's Eve



Visitors to St Anne's Cathedral on New Year's Eve should prepare for a spectacular multi-sensory experience as the cathedral becomes a canvas for some breath-taking projected images and lighting effects. The display will be part of Down and Drmore's diocesan celebration, themed 'Lights to the World' and hosted by Bishop Harold Miller.

The lights are just one element in what should be a wonderful evening as the diocese marks the end of a full year of 24-7 Prayer and the start of a Year of

Mission. There will be something for all ages with good food, live music and worship before we bring in the New Year and step out into the Year of Mission 2015 together.

The programme starts at 9.00 pm with a gathering over hot food and drinks and live music. There will be crafts for children and an opportunity to finish the year with prayer at one of the interactive prayer stations.

At 10.30 pm it will be time to look back at an amazing year of prayer and to worship with music both traditional and contemporary. Looking forward to the Year of Mission, Bishop Harold will share a message just ahead of midnight when we will bring in 2015 and leave the cathedral as 'Lights to the World'.

Leading up to New Year's Eve, Belfast Cathedral will be the venue for the last 3 days of continuous prayer.

Anyone is welcome to come and pray in the Chapel of Unity between 7.00 am and 7.00 pm on December 29, 30 and 31 and you may also

Long serving staff members marked by Presbyterian Church Social Witness board

The Director of the Presbyterian Church's Board of Social Witness, Lindsay Conway, welcomed 17 members of staff, who work in a range of residential homes and units run by the Board across Northern Ireland, to Assembly Buildings in Belfast. Staff travelled from Thompson House, a hostel for ex-offenders situated on the Antrim Road in Belfast; Harold McCauley House, a 32 bed nursing home in Omagh and Ard Cluan House, a 13 bed residential home in Londonderry, as well as Belfast based Carlisle House, Corkey House and Adelaide House.

Each of the 17 people have served over 20 years each with the longest serving employee, Kim Smith from Sunnyside House in Bangor, employed in the 45 bed residential care home since 1986.

Speaking after the ceremony, where specially engraved Bibles were presented by the Clerk of the General Assembly the Rev. Trevor Gribben, Lindsay said, "It is only right that we celebrate, appreciate and value the work that our staff do, and have been doing for a considerably long period of time. The nature of social work and social care demands a team approach and as providers of over 140,000 bed spaces per year, our staff teams are vital to us delivering on our aim of living out the love of Christ within our communities.



Some of the long serving members of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Board of Social Witness pictured after a ceremony in Assembly Buildings in Belfast where Rev. Trevor Gribben, far right, presented Bibles to mark the occasion. Also in the picture is Director of the Board of Social Witness, Mr. Lindsay Conway (far left).

“Collectively, the 17 people have worked for PCI for 402 years – that is a massive commitment in often difficult and challenging circumstances. I know they have gone the extra mile and in some cases, the extra ten miles, in delivering quality care to often vulnerable people.

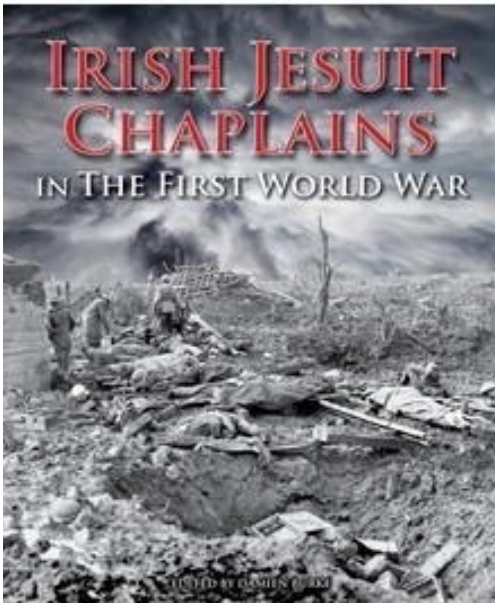
“Today was an opportunity to thank them individually and collectively, for their tireless dedication and mark the faithful service they have provided in the Lord’s name.”

Book spot - Irish Jesuit Chaplains in the First World War

At a time of great turmoil at home in Ireland, thirty-two Irish Jesuits signed up to minister to Catholic soldiers on the European battlefields of the First World War. Damien Burke, assistant archivist to the Jesuit Province, has edited a wide ranging collection of essays on eleven Irish Jesuit Chaplains.

The letters, telegrams and photographs sent back by the chaplains from the front to Ireland, give first-hand accounts of the life and experiences of these brave priests.

Thirty-two Irish Jesuits served as chaplains in the First World War. They served on the battlefields of France, Belgium, Egypt and Mesopotamia. Four were killed: Frs. John Gwynn (12 October 1915), William Doyle (17 August



1917), Michael Bergin (12 October 1917) and John Fitzgibbon (18 September 1918) and and two died from illness: Frs. Austin Hartigan (16 July 1916) and Edward Sydes (15 November 1918). Eleven Irish-born Jesuit chaplains of the English Province served. Fr. Timothy Carey (Limerick) and Fr. Walter Montagu (Derry) both died on active service.

The chaplains worked alongside the troops and were exposed to the same dangers and threats. Their presence and proximity earned the respect and admiration of men and officers.

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Archbishop of Sydney: 'Hell has touched us'

Catholic Herald -The recently appointed Archbishop of Sydney Anthony Fisher has told a memorial service for the victims of Monday's siege that "hell has touched us".

During the service on Tuesday at Sydney's St Mary's Cathedral, the archbishop paid tribute to Tori Johnson, 34, and Katrina Dawson, 38, who died along with Man Haron Monis, the Iranian gunman who took over the Lindt Chocolate Cafe in the Australian city's central business district.

Mr Johnson was reportedly killed after trying to snatch Monis's gun. It has also been reported that it was the shooting of Mr Johnson that led to armed police entering the shop and ending the siege.

During his homily the archbishop said: "We are not used to hearing words like 'siege', 'terrorist', 'hostages' and 'security forces' associated with our city."

He continued: "Yet for the past day and night we were subjected to pictures and sounds we tend to associate with alien lands. In a café only two blocks away from St Mary's Cathedral, only one block away from the Supreme Court, even closer to the New South Wales Parliament, the Reserve Bank and the Channel 7 studio, hostages were pinned for hours against the windows and forced to hold up a flag which blasphemously used the name of God as a threat. The distress was visible on their faces, as was the relief of

the first five to escape. We went to bed hoping to wake to good news. But despite patient efforts to maintain calm and negotiate there were, in the early hours of this morning, flashes of gunfire, intervention by our police to save lives, merciful escapes, but finally death. Hell had touched us.”

Speaking to more than 2,000 people at the memorial service, Archbishop Fisher described Tori Johnson as a hero, saying that while his bravery resulted in his own death, his actions led to “freedom for most of the hostages”.

Archbishop Fisher said: “Reports have emerged this morning of the heroism of the male victim of the siege. Apparently seeing an opportunity, Tori grabbed the gun. Tragically it went off killing him, but it triggered the response of the police and eventual freedom for most of the hostages. Reports have also emerged that Katrina Dawson was shielding her pregnant friend from gunfire. These heroes were willing to lay down their lives so others might live, imitating the sacrifice of Christ who said that there is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for each other (Jn 15:13).”

The archbishop reminded his congregation that love was stronger than hatred or violence. He said: “Leaders of all religious, political and ethnic backgrounds are calling for calm, for prayer, for support for each other. Services are being offered for the victims, their families and friends. The darkness need not overcome the light. Indeed, the Christmas-Easter-Christian message is: it cannot! There is something greater than hatred and violence. There is Love, that humble, self-donative Love that comes in the shape of the Christmas Babe, the Prince of Peace. He can soften the hardest hearts. He can convert the most hardened sinner. Come Prince of Peace. Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

During the siege a number of the hostages were forced to hold up a black Islamic banner at the cafe’s window. It has also been reported that during the siege the gunman Monis demanded delivery of an ISIS flag and a meeting with Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott. Monis was granted political asylum by Australia in 1996 and was on bail facing a number of charges, including being an accessory to the murder of his former wife. He was also facing more than 40 sexual and indecent assault charges.

Pakistani Catholic leader decries ‘barbaric’ attack on school

The Catholic Church in Pakistan has joined the chorus of condemnation of the deadly attack by Taliban on an army school in Peshawar that has left at least 126 children and others dead and 250 injured.

“This is a barbaric, inhuman and cowardly act,” Cecil Chaudhry, executive director of the National Commission for Justice and Peace of the Pakistan Catholic Bishops’ Conference, told Catholic News Service after the attack on Tuesday.

“It is beyond imagination how innocent children of army personnel could be targeted like this,” said Choudhry.

News reports said the Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for the attacks, claiming it as “retaliation” for ongoing army operation against the insurgents in the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan.

According to South Asia Terrorism Portal, nearly 13,000 people have been killed in army operations from 2005 to February 2014 in Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province with Peshawar as its capital.

Reports say casualties have been much higher with the Pakistani security forces stepping operation against the Taliban in 2014 in the porous border areas with Afghanistan.

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who rushed to Peshawar, described the attack as a “national tragedy”.

The massacre in the school, Choudhry said, “calls for addressing issues of linguistic, ethnic and regional diversities as one nation.”

He called it “unlikely” that the massacre was linked to the Nobel Peace Prize being conferred on Pakistani schoolgirl activist Malala Yousafzai a week earlier.

Malala was shot by Taliban gunmen in October 2012 for standing up for education of girls in the troubled province where Taliban opposes education of women.

Churches in Japan are witnesses of peace and justice - WCC leader

ACNS - “Churches in Japan are true witnesses of Jesus Christ through their words and deeds. Their strength even in a minority situation is impressive. Their voices in critical times are significant for Japan, paving a way towards justice and peace,” said the Revd Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) during his visit to member churches of

the WCC in Japan.

Tveit went on to say that the WCC needs its member churches in Japan as a “voice of truth”. He said their engagement and contributions to the ecumenical movement are crucial.



The WCC general secretary was in Japan from 3 to 10 December.

In his sermon at the Nara Anglican Church, Tveit said, “As fellow pilgrims on the pilgrimage of justice and peace, Christians in the Anglican and Catholic churches in Japan have defined their mission and ministry together to be kyo-ho-sei (walking together),” Tveit said.

Tveit also spoke at the Christmas Prayer for Peace at the Sanjo Catholic Church in Kyoto. The prayer was organized by the Kyoto Council of Churches which includes the United Church of Christ in Japan, the Korean Christian Church in Japan, the Anglican Church in Japan, the Baptist Convention in Kyoto, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Kyoto, among other congregations.

In his meeting with the leaders of the Korean Christian Church in Japan, Tveit listened to their concerns over the rise in hate speech directed against the Koreans in Japan. He observed the irony that the right to freedom of speech was being abused and misused by the majority to oppress the minority, undermining democratic values.

“The visit from the WCC general secretary was a source of encouragement for us,” said Rev. Dr Renta Nishihara, WCC Central Committee member from Japan. “Japanese churches are surely minority and we sometimes feel a sense of separation. However we are connected with the fellowship of global churches through the WCC, and we are not alone!”

The WCC general secretary also visited Sendai, a city devastated by the earthquake and subsequent tsunami which claimed more than 2,000 lives. Visiting temporary shelters for displaced families who lost homes to the tsunami, Tveit spoke with the residents and listened to their stories of trauma and concern for the future.

Tveit also attended a meeting hosted by the Emmaus Centre operated by the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ). He heard of how Christian organizations are responding to the dangers of radiation contamination from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor. Tveit encouraged the churches to strengthen their advocacy in raising the awareness of the dangers of nuclear energy, taking practical steps toward creating a nuclear free world.

Tveit also met with Metropolitan Daniel (Nushiro) of All Japan and visited the Holy Resurrection Cathedral (Nikolaido). The WCC general secretary expressed his gratitude for the participation of the Orthodox Church in Japan at the WCC Busan Assembly in 2013. He shared his hopes that the Orthodox Church in Japan will continue to enlarge its ecumenical engagement with Christian churches in Japan as well as with the WCC.

The meetings with member churches in Japan culminated in a visit to the Anglican Church in Japan (Nippon Sei Ko Kai) where Tveit met with Archbishop Nathaniel Uematsu, who expressed his appreciation for the WCC's statements on Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, a nuclear free world and calling for justice for the "comfort women" forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army before and during World War II.

While in Japan, Tveit participated in the 4th Global Inter-religious Conference, where he expressed concern at the Japanese government's initiative to reinterpret or change Article 9 of the Japanese constitution. Adopted as part of the constitution in 1947, following the Second World War, the clause outlaws war as a means for Japan to resolve international disputes.

[Sermon from the WCC general secretary: The Voice that Tells Us the Way to Justice and Peace](#)

[WCC general secretary expresses concern over Article 9 of the Japanese constitution](#) (WCC news release of 4 December 2014)

[WCC member churches in Japan](#)