



Image of the day
St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin



The Saint Patrick Centre in Downpatrick

International Spirit of Patrick writing competition

The County Down centre which tells the story of Ireland's patron saint has launched an international writing competition to celebrate its 20th anniversary.

The Saint Patrick Centre in Downpatrick is inviting young people to write about issues such as human trafficking and faith.

The International Spirit of Patrick Writing competition is open to young writers aged 16 to 20, as St Patrick himself was trafficked to Ireland, as a young person, around 400AD.

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St Patrick is believed to have been trafficked at age 16 and held captive in Ireland for six years before he miraculously escaped, having found God in his isolation and suffering.

Applicants are asked to compose 2,000 words on the theme of human trafficking and slavery in the world today or about finding God in challenging times.

Dr Tim Campbell, director of the Saint Patrick Centre, said: “We at the centre believe the issues of human trafficking and modern slavery, which cause so much suffering and torment in the world today need to be stopped and this can only be done when future generations engage and become involved.

“We also think that young people have a lot to say about faith at a time when our freedoms are curtailed by Covid.

“We invite young writers to choose one of these twin themes and we will publish the winners online.”

The winning essay writer will receive a brand new Apple i-Pad and their work will be reproduced on the Saint Patrick Centre website and social media channels.

Judges from the Saint Patrick Centre include Dr Campbell, author and broadcaster Martina Purdy and pilgrim guide Elaine Kelly.

The competition closes on March 12 and the winner will be announced on St Patrick’s Day.

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To qualify essays must be typed in English, no more than 2,000 words and emailed to education@saintpatrickcentre.com and entrants must be aged between 16 or 20 on March 17 2020

Report by Susanne McGonagle courtesy The Irish News

Garda Commissioner Harris reflects on his father's car bomb murder

It takes a long time to come to terms with something so traumatic' - Garda Commissioner Drew Harris on his father's car bomb murder

Garda Commissioner Drew Harris has said the murder of his father Alwyn in an IRA car bomb had a "profound effect" on his life and his policing career.

Alwyn Harris was an RUC Superintendent at the time of his murder by car bomb in 1989, and Commissioner Harris said it took him a "long time" to come to terms with his father's assassination.

Mr Harris, speaking on The Late Late Show, said: "you carry it with you every day".

"It takes a long time to come to terms with something as difficult or traumatic or as awful in your life. You carry it with you every day, every day I would think about my father," he said.



*Garda Commissioner Drew Harris.
(Picture by David Conachy)*

The Garda chief said going through such an atrocity gave him “an empathy for those who have been the victims of serious crime”.

“I would have spent a lot of service overseeing murder investigations and I always thought that was our opportunity to give the person who was a victim their last voice.

“In a lot of ways, it has had a profound effect on my outlook as to what policing should be. How it should look and indeed what should we do for those who may be without a voice or are marginalised in society,” Mr Harris said.

Commissioner Harris said he was “neutral” toward his father’s killers as, “they have never sought atonement and

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forgiveness is a two-way street". He admitted it took him years to get to a point where he wasn't bitter over his father's execution.

"In these things, you perhaps have a choice. I was married to Jane and we had our first son, and we had another three children after that, and you have a choice as to the household your children grow up into. I worked hard at not being bitter and I don't mean to be smart or clever or shine a halo when I say that because it was very difficult, and it took a long time to get to that point.

"At the same time, you have your own life to live, and no one would be more upset than my father if he thought I was just living in a bitter life," he said.

Mr Harris still has a lot he wants to accomplish in the second half of his five-year tenure and said it is an "honour" to lead the Gardaí.

Commissioner Harris pointed to "building on the reputation that the Gardaí already have," as his primary objective for the remainder of his leadership stint.

"Also, there's a lot that we want to do in terms of protecting the people of Ireland from things like domestic abuse, child abuse online and human trafficking. Also, other forms of organised crime as well".

The Belfast native said there have been great strides made against organised crime in Ireland with regard to the number of seizures of drugs and guns, as well as arrests made, but

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said the focus will also shift to pursuing “every red cent” criminal gangs have.

Referring to a particular organised crime gang which he did not name, Mr Harris said Gardaí are “determined to pursue them relentlessly” and to take “chips and chunks out of them until you bring them all to justice”.

Report courtesy independent.ie 12.02.2021

Research initiative at Armagh church library

Armagh Robinson Library has announced the appointment of a Curatorial Research Fellow, Dr Max Bryant, to work on its collection of prints, which were provided by the Library’s founder, Archbishop Richard Robinson, 1st Baron Rokeby. The 15–month post is funded by the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art which promotes the research, study and appreciation of British art and architecture. Professor Mark Hallett, the Centre’s Director of Studies, said that “we are delighted to be funding this research, and wish Dr Bryant well in investigating and interpreting what is a fascinating and important print collection”.

The collection, known as the ‘Rokeby Collection’, contains around 4,500 prints. Spanning the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, it includes examples of many of the best–known engravers working in Ireland, Great Britain and Continental Europe. According to Dr Bryant “the prints in the Rokeby Collection demonstrate the range and possibilities of the medium, from the dramatic violence of Goltzius to the serenity of Mellan and the psychological depth of Nanteuil.

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What is even more remarkable is that they survive together in the Library that was built to house them.”

Dr Bryant read English in St Catherine’s College, Oxford, and was a research student in history of art and architecture in St John’s College, Cambridge. His most recent employment has been with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where he held sequential Research Fellowships and was involved in curating the new British Galleries which were launched in 2020. His previous experience includes cataloguing prints and drawings for Cambridge University Library and working Country Life magazine. He is also the author of a book on the eighteenth–century collector Charles Townley and the history of his museum which was long–listed for The British Art Journal’s Berger Prize for excellence in the field of British Art History.

The Armagh Robinson Library was built in 1771 to a design by Archbishop Robinson’s architect, Thomas Cooley, and was established by an act of parliament in 1773. As well as the Rokeby prints, the Library holds some 42,000 books on medicine, science, history, law, politics, theology and travel, an important collection of manuscripts. and Archbishop Beresford’s archaeological collection. The Keeper of the Library is the newly appointed Dean of Armagh, the Very Revd Shane Forster, and the Director is Dr Robert Whan.

C of I ordinands in print

American publishers Wipf & Stock have announced the publication of Perspectives on Prayer and Spirituality, a

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volume of essays edited by the Director of the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, the Revd Dr Maurice Elliott, and CITI's, Lecturer in Missiology, Dr Patrick McGlinchey. As well as the editors there are contributions from CITI staff members, Dr Bridget Nichols and the Revd Dr William Olhausen, and from others who have, in recent years, been associated with the Institute – Bishop Ken Good, Canon Christina Baxter and Adrian Chatfield. Recent students, all now in the ordained ministry, also make contributions – Rob Clements, Suzanne Cousins, Rebecca Guildea and Ian Mills – while there is an ecumenical dimension with essays from Augustinian Kieran O'Mahony OSA and Janet Unsworth of the Methodist Church. Glowing commendations from luminaries such as Craig Bartholomew, Liz Hoare, Bishop Harold Miller and Elaine Storkey suggest that this a must read book.

The late St Fin Barre's tower master remembered as a proud guardian of bell ringing

The silence of late at the steeples of Cork's St Fin Barre's Cathedral may largely being go unnoticed; just a new normal, Noel Sweeney writes in Cork Echo.

But the sombre silence is apt, as the cathedral's tower master and lead campanologist, George Roberts, passed away after a short illness last Friday.

Not all ringing out of churches is a scratchy recording being blasted over loudspeakers, and George would be the first to set you straight on that.



*George Roberts, the tower master of St Finbarr's Cathedral.
Picture: Noel Sweeney*

He was a campanologist, a bell ringer; one of about 300 across the country. And, like most long-serving campanologists, he loved his craft and enjoyed nothing more than encouraging others to follow suit.

We met last July, when I was working on a project about the craft of circular bell ringing, and George was the go-to guy for campanology insights. This style of ringing is practiced at St Fin Barre's Cathedral, which is one of only 37 bell towers maintaining this tradition in the Republic of Ireland today.

George's passion for ringing, and for teaching others to ring, was integral to keeping the craft alive in Cork.

"I've been lucky enough to be tower captain here, which means trying to push people in doing new things, pushing

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beyond the elementary level, which is quite easy to learn,” George said.

“And, on the whole, learning new patterns keeps us challenged.”

Bell ringing attracts people from all backgrounds. “Computer coders like bell ringing because you can use code to write the music,” George said.

“Mathematicians like it because it follows the rules of group theory, and there are people who like it just because of the sound it makes. It doesn’t matter why you like doing it. You can be used in the bell tower at some level to pull a bell rope, make the noise, and keep this going. Every tower in the country needs more recruits.”

George’s journey into bell-ringing began on a Sunday in 1975, when he spotted a friend’s bike set against the cathedral wall.

“I joined the St Finbarr’s scout troops when I was 11 or 12,” George said.

“A few years later, when I was 14, I came up here (to the St Fin Barre’s tower) with some friends on a recruiting tour. One of my friends that day, the current Church of Ireland bishop, Paul Colton, stayed and learned how to ring.

“Two weeks later, I saw his bike outside and I went in. I don’t know why; I just decided, on the spur of the moment, to go and join him, and I’ve been ringing ever since.”

His longtime friend and colleague, Rev Cliff Jeffers, from Skibbereen, remembering George, said: “He had a great sense of humour, great skill as a ringer, and always encouraged you to progress within your ability. He never made anyone feel small. He lightened the practice sessions in such a big way. Such great humour, and he will be a great loss to the ringing community.”

Before the pandemic, the ringers, led by George, rang every Sunday for service and followed it up with a Wednesday-evening practice session.

Fellow campanologist and good friend, Guy St Leger, said: “George was the tower master at various points over the years. He will be a big loss to the tower, but we’ll just have to keep going.

“We learned how to ring at the same time, and have been great friends ever since. He was totally committed to ringing and was very good at it; a very competent ringer. Well able to ring the more advanced methods.

“He could ring anything; patterns that no-one else could ring. He was always trying to encourage new people and tried to show young people the ropes,” Mr St Leger said.

“It is hard to get people to commit, but he was always preaching the gospel of ringing and was a key figure in the St Fin Barre’s tower. He was a great proponent for people who might like to join; people from other walks of life.

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“He happily showed people around the tower and cathedral with enthusiasm. He saw it a bit like a sport.”

The day I met George, we spoke about churches that automate their ringing.

I remember him telling me, with a touch of dismay, that from his bedroom window, he could see a set of speakers hang from the wall of a local church for the very purpose of playing recordings of bell sounds.

And I felt that seeing those speakers every day had, in some way, fuelled his drive to keep the real thing going at St

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**DAY OF PRAYER FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE AND YOUTH MINISTRY**

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Finbarr's. He was extremely proud of his role as tower captain.

I recall him saying: "We are the external voice of this building. The choir are the internal voice, but they can be only heard over a short distance; using our big tuning forks, which is all a bell is, we can be heard all over the city; everybody comes out of here in a good mood."

George met his wife, Deirdre, through bell ringing and they had two children, Oliver and Gillian, who are both in their 20s.

His funeral took place in St Fin Barre's and it was streamed live through the cathedral's website.

Bishop Donal McKeown - Looking towards Lent

Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown sets out elements of ministry relevant both now and in the post-pandemic future

AS we face an uncertain future in civil and Church life, we are called together each week to learn from how Jesus ministers and to see what the core elements of our Church ministry are, however the post-pandemic future may develop.

When we have glimpsed how we need to reorientate our proclamation, we can enter the Lenten journey, asking that

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the Lord will remake us through penance, prayer and almsgiving.

Firstly, we see from Jesus that service is never merely a job.

We read in St Mark 1 of how Jesus went to Peter's family home, healed Peter's mother-in-law and had something to eat.

That evening, when the Sabbath had ended, he was swamped by crowds of suffering people, individuals tortured in mind and body.

After getting some sleep, he sought time to pray alone - and even then, people were still looking for him. So, he insisted on continuing his ministry, because that was why he had come.

Only a Church that has the commitment of Jesus will have credibility and speak with authority in his name.

Secondly, many of our parishes have worked very hard in response to the pandemic.

As we look forward to the re-opening of all our witness, it is important that we plan for a range of possible futures.

But pastoral plans are not merely concerned with sanitising seats or ensuring social distancing so that the regulars are reassured. That is important to facilitate Jesus' mission to the outsiders.



The Gospel tells us that we need to begin by asking what will be tormenting the people to whom Jesus wants to minister today.

If we focus our planning on those who always came, we may have numbers in Church but risk having little credibility as authentic witnesses to Jesus, who was concerned with the power of integrity and not merely with developing his slice of the religious market.

We will not inspire young people to dedicate their lives to the service of the self-sacrificing generosity of Jesus.

As with the great founders of radical religious orders and movements in Church history who are remembered for their prophetic work, our credibility today will be measured by the level of our crazy generosity in Jesus' service.

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When we canonise any political agenda, we risk selling our souls for an earthbound cause

When we give ourselves to Christ's service, our comfort ceases to be relevant, for he will ask us to do many uncomfortable things as a sign that grace is at work in our day.

Thirdly, Jesus engaged with the people who were in front of him. He did not choose them.

We face many painful situations in our diocese and country. That is why I am amazed at the number of social media posts that I get which are passionate about the outcome of the US elections.

I don't doubt that there are many people who are interested in US politics. But Christians on this island are called to deal with the realities that we face here, not wasting energy in taking sides in a political soap opera 3,000 miles away.

When we canonise any political agenda, we risk selling our souls for an earthbound cause.

During the awful years of the Troubles here, Church leadership sought to articulate concerns without being conscripted into taking sides in a bitter war.

When the divine voice of Christ is hijacked by a worldly movement, we have lost our ability to witness in Jesus' name.

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When we espouse the political agenda of a particular leader, we forget that Jesus resisted the temptation to acquire political power by compromising the Gospel.

Jesus has a radical message for every generation. And how does he sustain his ministry, in face the temptations to take an easier route?

He makes time for communion with his Father in prayer. Christianity has a political impact on how we run society, but it is always based on a divine manifesto and not on human power games.

It is nourished by prayer, sacraments and grace and not by testosterone. It shows itself in hearts that are full of service and never puffed up with arrogance.

As Job writes, life is tough for most people much of the time. That is the messy reality that Jesus faced and that he asks his followers to engage with today.

Prayer is not a cosy escape from the messy world outside. The prayer and sacramental life of the Church are where we are nourished to face the harsh realities of so many lives in Jesus' name.

Jesus revealed God's love and mercy from Galilee to Calvary. It will never be revealed today if Church is too concerned about its own rights or status.

Bishop Donal McKeown has a 'Scripture Saturday' series of videos which present the Gospel "in brief and easy to understand snippets".

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The videos, which are part of the Derry Diocesan Youth programme and generally around five minutes long, can be found here -

<https://www.derrydiocese.org/scripture-saturday>

Pointers for prayer

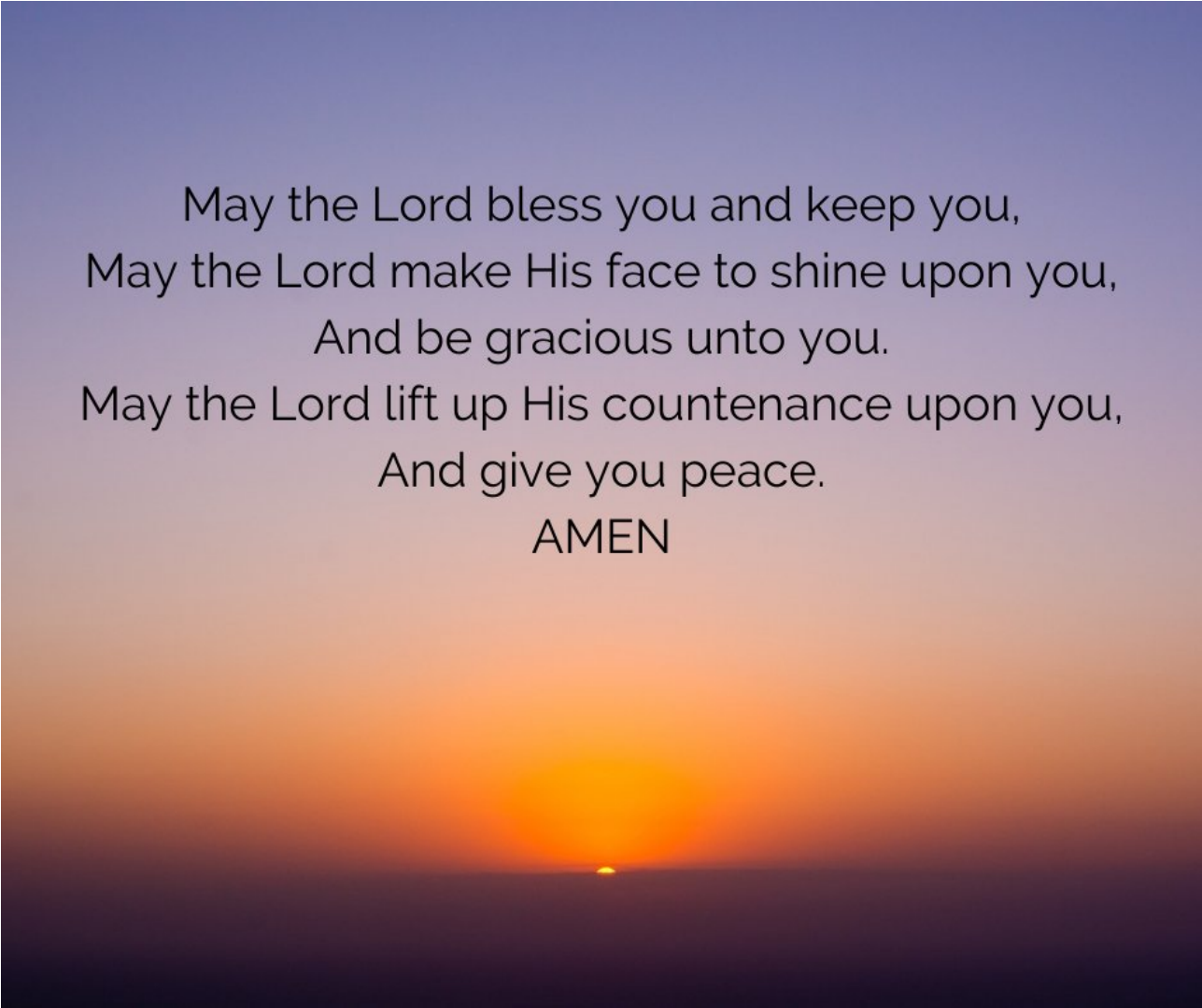
Today we pray for protesters in Russia. After opposition politician Alexei Navalny was arrested last week, widespread pro-democracy protest has broken out nationally, with many peaceful protesters arrested. We pray for the preservation of the right to protest.

Pray for all teachers and parents involved with students or their children. We ask for stamina and creativity as they seek to educate in less than ideal circumstances.

It has been announced that on Ascension Day - 13 May 2021, Bishop Hosam Naoum will be installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, bearing the title Archbishop. Please pray for Bishop Naoum, his family and the Diocese.

Pray that the right person will be appointed to lead Church Army in the next chapter. Pray for wisdom for the Board members as they meet to decide who will be appointed.

We think today of families who are struggling to cope with the ongoing restrictions to normal life, especially those who live in small homes with no outside space. We pray for an abundance of tolerance to help ease their less than ideal circumstances.



May the Lord bless you and keep you,
May the Lord make His face to shine upon you,
And be gracious unto you.
May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.
AMEN

Today we give thanks for young climate activists. A UN survey shows that demand for green business and jobs is particularly high among young people, who have been a driving force behind getting the issue onto the political agenda.

We remember with thanks the numerous Mothers' Union members who, over the years, have used their God-given gifts to change the world. We pray that, in our day, we'll also be willing to use our gifts to help transform lives and communities

Today we pray for Mozambique. A cholera outbreak combined with a growing humanitarian crisis after fighting in

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a northern province displaced more than 500,000 people last year has led to the UN calling for help in the region.

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

Lord Jesus, you prayed that we would all be united together so the world would believe and experience your love. Help us to put aside that which keeps us apart and work together to share your love through our actions and our lives.

Speaking to the Soul

While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life.

2 Corinthians 5:4 NLT

Our society tries to avoid talking about death. Paul could not be more different! For Paul it was an incredibly exciting subject because he was convinced that his life was in God's hands and so he could be completely confident about the future.

Paul has two pictures that he uses in his teaching about death. First, he speaks of our bodies being like a tent. Tents are temporary and the day will come when the tent is taken down so that we can live in an eternal home in heaven. And he also talks about our bodies being like a set of clothes. They will do for the moment and indeed we are quite

comfortable wearing them. But God has a much better set of clothes waiting for us, and we should be looking forward to the day when we will be able to wear them. Our temporary human bodies will be swallowed up in life.

For the Christian it is always true that the best is yet to be. Understandably we are all very unsure about the future. The idea of death and what lies beyond it is, by definition, outside our experience and understanding. That means that the big issue is trust. We need to place our trust firmly in God knowing that wherever he leads us it is bound to be good. I have firm memories of our annual family holiday. As a little boy I never had any idea what the destination was or how we could possibly get there. But what is more, I didn't need to know. My father had made all the plans and everything worked out smoothly and happily. If a human father has the ability to plan a family holiday, how much more sure we can be that our perfect heavenly father can plan our future.

QUESTION

How should Paul's teaching about death affect your own thinking?

PRAYER

Loving Father, thank you so much that I can look to the future with peace and confidence. I place myself in your hands and trust you for all that is to come. Amen.



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