



## Image of the day - Dignity

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This fifty-foot sculpture was unveiled in South Dakota a few years ago. It's called 'Dignity' and was done by artist Dale Lamphere to honour the women of the Sioux Nation.

## Dublin parish wins major conservation award

**St Doulagh's Church, Balgriffin has won the [John Betjeman Award](#) (Ireland category) for sensitive external stonework conservation. The award is presented by the [Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings \(SPAB\)](#) Ireland.**

Dating from the 12th century, St Doulagh's is believed to be the oldest stone-roofed building of its type still in use for worship in Ireland. The judges were impressed by the intention of conservative repair, the retention of original fabric and the honesty of the repairs to the stone roof carried out by Oldstone Conservation.

These are all objectives of the SPAB approach. [SPAB Ireland](#) hopes to present St Doulagh's with their certificate later in the year. Established in 1990, the award celebrates excellence in the repair of places of worship of all denominations and faiths. To celebrate its 30th year, the award was to include places of worship in Ireland. Shortlisted projects were



Holy Trinity, Errislannan, Co Galway for the repair of vandal and storm damage and St Bartholomew's, Ballsbridge, Dublin for conservation of belfry stonework.

The church, 12 km north of Dublin, is dedicated to St Doulagh, an anchorite who is thought to have lived and prayed there in the seventh century. The oratory has a unique and beautiful stone roof.

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The work was part of the five year “2020 St Doulagh’s Church Conservation Project” proposed and undertaken by the Select Vestry’s Glebe’s Committee of the United Parishes of Malahide, Portmarnock and St Doulagh’s.

This initial phase of the plan was to investigate the increasing ingress of water and damp through the stone fabric of the structure and then sympathetically repair and prevent further deterioration of the medieval building.

After detailed examination of the failing pointing and stone surfaces, it was deemed necessary that considerable areas of the ancient stone roofs required to be re-bedded and sections repointed with appropriate lime mortar. The eastern gable and window stonework also received remedial attention to stall spalling of the soft sandstone surrounds.

The committee engaged Lisa Edden of CORA Consulting Engineers for the works. Her dedication and enthusiasm for the project at times even exceeded that of the parish team.

The work was carried out in close cooperation with Christine Baker the Heritage Officer and Helena Bergin the Architectural Conservation Officer of Fingal County Council who advised and guided the committee and were instrumental in the parish

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obtaining significant heritage funding from The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltach.

The conservation work was undertaken by Jimmy O’Friell of Oldstone Conservation and his team of dedicated traditional stonemasons including Kieran O’Connor and Martin Daly.



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As the stonework continues to slowly dry out, the results of the external conservation work can already be seen in a significant reduction of internal biological growth.

The project was financed from the Historic Structures Funding (HSF) Grants and from parish funds, along with contributions from funds raised specifically for the project by The Friends of St Doulagh's Church.

“We are very proud to have been the outright winners of the prestigious SPAB John Betjeman Award and consider that the winning is testament to engaging the right professionals for the task,” the Vestry Committee of Ken McAllister, Derek Moffatt and Ian Watkins stated.

## **Lenten Bible reading fund raiser for Tuam diocesan Water Drops project**

**The United Dioceses of Tuam, Killala and Achonry are raising money for a new project in the Diocese of Kajiado in Kenya.**

The Very Revd Alistair Grimason, the Diocesan Communications Officer, says, “We will be partnering with Water Drops and raising money for a pump house which is planned for the new bore hole at Imaroro to provide fresh, clean water for the village and surrounding communities.

# We're reading the Bible for lent



**Sponsor us  
€10 per chapter  
[idonate.ie/tka/water](https://idonate.ie/tka/water)**

**the target is £10,000 stg (€11,500)**

“The target is £10,000 stg (€11,500). We’re reading the entire Bible and are hoping you will sponsor us! The parishes are rostered to take a week of reading each – the activity will take place on Zoom, daily throughout Lent. A total of 1,189 Chapters.

“We’re hoping that people will sponsor us €10 per chapter. More info at [tuam.anglican.org](https://tuam.anglican.org) and you can contribute at [idonate.ie/tka/water](https://idonate.ie/tka/water)”

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## **‘Journey to the Cross’ - virtual pilgrimage in Derry & Raphoe**



**Scores of people – young and old – from more than a dozen different parishes, including pupils from an RE department in a local secondary school, have signed up to take part in a virtual pilgrimage in the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe.**

‘Let’s Journey to the Cross’ is a joint initiative by the diocese’s Children’s Ministry, SEEDS, and its ministry for young people, Derry and Raphoe Youth.



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Would-be pilgrims were asked to sign up for the Lenten initiative so that between them they would complete the 3,500 miles from Derry and Raphoe to the Holy Land. Among those taking part will be Bishop Andrew Forster. The initiative is being coordinated by Derry and Raphoe's Diocesan Children's Officer Kirsty McCartney. Kirsty had invited people to walk in their own communities – and within their own 'bubbles' – so that their journeys would comply with local Covid guidelines.



## Pilgrim country - Errigal

“Families and those taking part will be using their daily exercise, in their local areas, to make up the miles,” Kirsty said. “For some this will be walking, while others may cycle, skip, hop or even scoot! It's about spending

time outdoors and being with God.

“This journey is not only about physically covering the miles,” Kirsty explained. “We will be able to journey together spiritually as we spend some time looking at journeys Jesus took in the Gospels. Our first journey, on Ash Wednesday, will look at the Temptations of Jesus. Each week the different ideas will be posted on our Diocesan Website and our Facebook page. There will be a range of activities to take part in.”

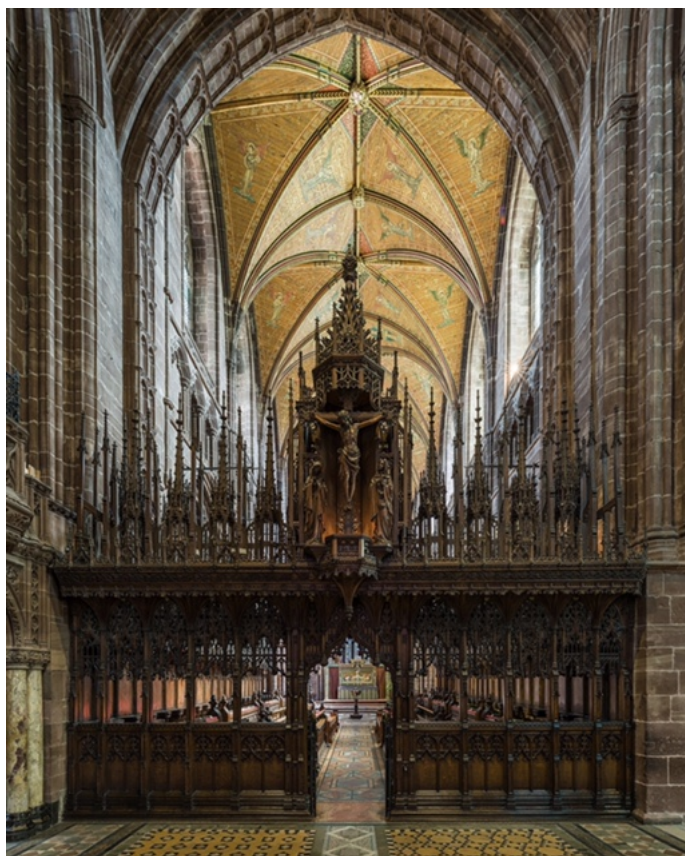
Kirsty says the virtual pilgrimage has been so popular, they're on course to walk the whole distance to Jerusalem and back again. With people still signing up, participants have already pledged to complete a total of more than 6,000 miles. “This means by the time we get to Easter Sunday, we will have covered the distance to the cross and then some, and with more miles being tallied as we go, I am hopeful we'll be able to cover the distance not only to the cross, but the return journey as well.”

## **Opinion - Does the C of E have a future?**

**Instead of protecting local parishes, the institution is seizing on every faddish, identity-politics issue**

**Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali writes in the Daily Telegraph.**

Like many institutions, the Church of England has been hit hard by Covid. Church closures, and the present limited opening, have emptied both pews and collection plates. In such circumstances, it is necessary for any organisation to



concentrate on its core tasks. For the Church this means the spiritual care of the nation, and practical help for those in need of company or counselling, food or shelter. Many clergy and congregations have been doing just that, and these unsung heroes need to be acknowledged for their great work.

The institution, however, seems engrossed either in lengthy, costly and far-

fetches “safeguarding” allegations against prominent church figures, or in jumping on to every faddish bandwagon about identity politics, cultural correctness and mea culpas about Britain’s imperial past.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that a new report commissioned by the Church, “Money, People and Buildings”, recommends massive cuts in the very areas that make up what is most valuable about the institution, while saying little about the future of its still huge bureaucracy and its power over the totality of its resources.

As the one who led the Millennium review into the Church’s human and financial resources, I know that its most precious assets are the people at the coal face: the army of clergy and lay people who keep churches, schools, food banks, advice centres and much else open.



Every community in England would be poorer without them. Cutting clergy numbers, as is being suggested, should be the last thing contemplated. Their work helps to give a community its character, rooted in history, caring for its own and outward facing in its concerns. Bishops, similarly, are identified with a place; they bring community leaders together for a common task.

This is not to say that radical reorganisation would not be beneficial for the Church. The paid clergy need to be trained and deployed so that their skills are used optimally.

However, a focus on slimming down paid clergy ignores the fact that a huge bureaucracy of “specialists” has proliferated. We need to ask whether the tasks they perform

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can be done by parish clergy and bishops instead. Senior parish priests can examine people wishing to go forward for ordained ministry.

Suffragan (or assisting) bishops can take on portfolios at present held by full-time specialists. Existing cathedral posts can be used for those specialists deemed essential for the Church's work. At the national level, meanwhile, the Church's bureaucracy is still organised for a much bigger church with a much bigger national role. There needs to be significant pruning here. The Church should do at the national level only what cannot be done locally, and bring together its separate bureaucracies in a single supportive office.

One of the glories of the Church is its 16,000 churches, rooted in communities and often important landmarks. They are also, of course, one of its greatest burdens: small numbers of worshippers in hamlets or poorer urban areas are expected to look after buildings of great historic worth or of forbidding size.

It is good to know that some state funding will be available for churches in the post-Covid dispensation, but such funding can often be ad hoc and uncertain. We need an overarching concordat between Church and state on managing church buildings so that congregations can be set free for ministering to people's souls.

But the biggest concern is surely the size of those congregations. Many new people have been reached by the Church going online during the pandemic. Alleluia to that! But some of these will be lost after the pandemic, as well as

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some of the previous regulars who will not return to physical services.

What is being done to make sure that people are disciplined for membership of the Church? How can churches be equipped to reach out not only to their own members but to the fringe and to the casual visitor who, like Philip Larkin, only step inside “when nothing is going on”? At present, there appears to be no answer to these questions.

The Church has much going for it in its people and buildings. Rather than getting rid of those, let us revitalise them for serving the nation’s spiritual, mental and physical needs.

*Michael Nazir-Ali is a former bishop of Rochester and is now president of Oxtrad. Follow him on Twitter @MichaelNazirAli*

## Pointers for prayer

Almighty Father,  
whose Son was revealed in majesty  
before he suffered death upon the cross:  
give us grace to perceive his glory,  
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him  
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

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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.

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.

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.

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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

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.

Holy God,  
you know the disorder of our sinful lives:  
set straight our crooked hearts,  
and bend our wills to love your goodness  
and your glory  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **Speaking to the Soul**

**Pastoral message  
by Bishop of Raphoe, Alan McGuckian SJ,  
for Lent 2021**

We're almost a full year into the Pandemic now. What has it meant for you? I'm addressing that question to everybody



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who reads this in the full knowledge that the answer will be utterly unique in every case.

For one person this time will have brought the greatest personal tragedies of a lifetime as a result of sickness and loss of lives. For another it will have meant serious limitations and loss, frustrations and disappointments. For others still it will appear as a time of challenge, refocus and even renewal of commitment in life.

So, I ask you again; how has it really been for you? Is there something of all of the above going on for you? Challenge along with tragedy; refocus coming from frustration?

The most glorious and significant thing about your life is that it is a walk with God. God is the centre of all things. To know God and to love and serve Him in the bits and pieces of your life, is always a possibility no matter how your life seems to be at any moment. You might doubt God; God doesn't doubt you. Perhaps you feel totally unworthy of God's love and concern; it may make no sense to you but God is desperately keen to be in relationship with you. Opening our hearts to God, worship of God is the most worthwhile and important thing that human beings can do.

This pandemic experience may have made that very difficult for you. On the other hand it may have opened your heart up to see it afresh.

It has been said by some persons in public service that 'religion is non-essential', that gathering for Mass and other religious services is less important than shopping or physical exercise or many other things. I know that some of

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you feel that, by cooperating as fully as we are with the government, we are acquiescing in the falsehood that God and his service and our public witness to him are not essential. Parish communities all over Ireland took the utmost care to make sure that our churches are as safe as possible, and I am grateful for the dedication of clergy and countless numbers of volunteers who made this happen. I want you to know that I long for our churches to be open for Mass and the sacraments as soon as possible. We need to let our political leaders know that God and our worship of Him are central to us; they are utterly essential. Pope Francis pointed out recently that; ‘the right to worship must be respected, protected and defended by civil authorities like the right to bodily and physical health’.

And now Lent is upon us; and Lent is not a dreary burden but a marvellous annual, God-given opportunity for a personal and communal shakeup. I invite you wherever you are at – even in the midst of tragedy – to see Lent as a gentle and generous invitation from God to open your heart to new beginnings, to a new and deeper walk with God in your life.

But, Lent has to be about a personal choice. I invite you to ask yourself: Am I slipping away from a sense of God? Does this long break from the public practice of the faith mean that I or those close to me are getting out of the habit? Will it simply seem not so important going forward? Could you be saying to yourself: “We got by without it for months on end ...maybe it’s not that important,”?

Use this time of Lent to take stock. Where am I on my journey with God? What is God saying to me at this

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moment? Be certain that he is calling you to turn towards him and come close. He is saying: ‘Come back to me with all your heart,’ or simply, “Come to me you who labour and are heavy burdened and I will give you rest.”

So, what do we do? We pray. If you don't pray much put some new act of prayer into your day, every day. Do it, whether you feel like it or not. If it is the case that you say an awful lot of prayers already, then what you need to do is to be quiet; spend some time each day in silence and let God speak to your heart. In fact, all of us need to put at least some minutes of quiet into our day when we let God show us what is really going on. You could make a practice of joining something online. One of my most profound experiences over this pandemic has been leading *An Tobar Domhain* at 9.15pm from our Cathedral on the Cathedral webcam ([www.churchservices.tv/letterkenny](http://www.churchservices.tv/letterkenny)) and Raphoe Diocese Facebook page. To know that I was joined by the People of God from across the Diocese helped me to stay connected with God and his people. You will be most welcome to join me and the Cathedral team each evening at 9.15pm during Lent for this time of Rosary and quiet reflection on our lives.

The second thing is make a sacrifice. Discipline yourself in relation to something you like as a sacrifice. You know-what it should be. The-most important reason for our taking on prayer and fasting this Lent is not about any agenda of our own however important it is. The overarching good reason for praying more intensely during Lent and for backing the prayer up with a genuine sacrifice or fast is to beg God to live in our hearts. Eastern Christian theology says that what happens through the life of prayer, the sacraments and

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Christian living is that we become like God. God takes us where we are at, however weak and sinful we feel ourselves to be, he will slowly but surely over time make us more like Himself.

That is the purpose of human life, of every Christian life; to become like God. Lent is a special time for committing to that process. It is not our work; it is all God's work but it cannot happen without our cooperation. Lent, our time of prayer and sacrifice, is that cooperation.

So many of us are longing for the day – let it be soon – when we can gather together to celebrate God's love especially in the Holy Mass. However, no matter what happens or when it happens, Lent is a great gift NOW. Let us turn to God with all our hearts.

