



Image of the day
The Robinson Library, Armagh



NI 100: No excuse for 'sniping', says Archbishop Martin

The leader of the Catholic Church in Ireland has said politicians should not use the centenary of Northern Ireland to "snipe" at each other, Mark Simpson reports on BBC News NI

Archbishop Eamon Martin said all political parties, including nationalists, need to recognise different viewpoints on partition.

A parliament was established in NI in June 1921, formally marking the political separation of the island.

February 22, 2021

Official events have been put on hold until later this year due to Covid-19.

Archbishop Martin, in an interview with BBC News NI, said the 100-year anniversary provided an opportunity for debate rather than division.

He said: "I would be very disappointed if the centenary became merely an opportunity to snipe at each other from opposite

corners, something that would exaggerate our differences. "I would be saying to all political parties - including those on the nationalist and indeed on the unionist, loyalist side - to try to recognise very differing perspectives and to bring to the conversation this year their own hurts, their feelings of disappointment or their feelings of frustration."

Archbishop Martin said the centenary provided an "opportunity for us to understand each other better on this island".

He added: "I know that many people in my own tradition will look back and see 1921 as a time which we lament - the partition of this island.

"I, and my fellow church leaders, will approach this year with great sensitivity, as an opportunity perhaps to build greater and deeper mutual understanding and also greater reconciliation."



The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the Rev David Bruce, said everyone needs to choose their words carefully.

"Many people will want to celebrate this centenary and by extension many others will want to lament it," he said.

"I think we need to speak into that reality, to speak in ways which are going to nourish our communities rather than further polarise them."

Chance to reflect

The Northern Ireland parliament which was established in Belfast in 1921 was based at the Presbyterian Church's

February 22, 2021

theological college in the south of the city until Stormont was built in 1932.

In spite of the political separation of Ireland in the 1920s, the main churches kept their all-island structures.

Archbishop Martin said that the centenary of partition provided an opportunity for reflection.

"That will also involve acknowledging the part that we in the churches have played down through the last century in perhaps allowing or, on some occasions, fomenting difference and discord between people on this island," he said.

"It really is important for us to recognise each other, even those of us who would like to see ourselves in an all-Ireland or in a united Ireland context, we have to realise that we



February 22, 2021

simply can't get there without finding a place for all of the legitimate aspirations on this island."

In September, the Northern Ireland Office set up a forum to discuss events to mark the centenary.

The main political parties were all invited but only the DUP, Ulster Unionist Party and the Alliance Party agreed to send representatives.

Irish Baptist students in Moira denied Covid cash

Students at the Irish Baptist College in Moira have been told they will not receive a special £500 payment aimed at helping students cope with the disruption to their studies caused by the Covid-19 crisis.

In a heartfelt plea to Economy Minister Diane Dodds, 24 Irish Baptist College students said they should not be shut out of recently-announced student support package.

The Irish Baptist College, which specialises in theological education and training, was established in Dublin in 1892, and moved to Northern Ireland in 1964.

Student Chair of the College, David Cameron from Ballymena, said the students were "deeply grieved" that the NI Government "had failed them, in these very difficult and challenging circumstances".

February 22, 2021

“As students studying in Northern Ireland we have experienced the same issues that other students in Queen's University and the University of Ulster have faced, including the impact on the student experience,” they wrote.

“We do not believe that NI students should be excluded on the basis that they are affiliated to another university,” they wrote.

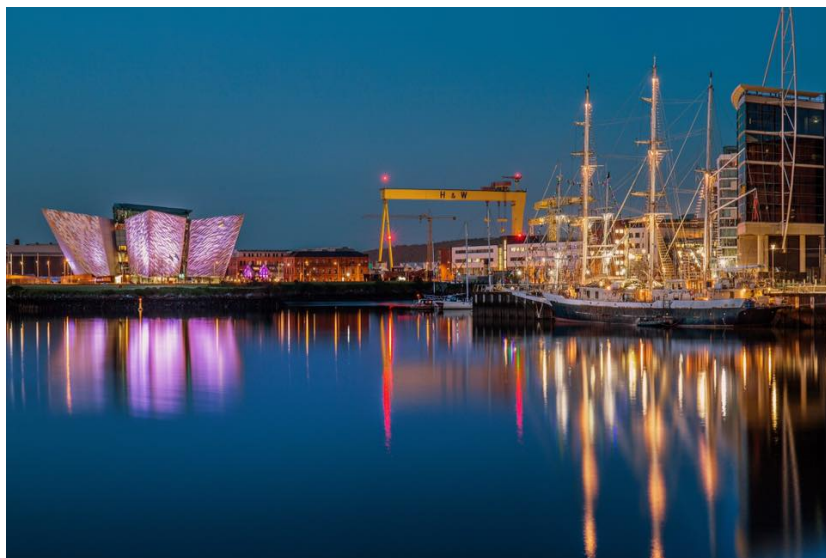
Their case was taken up by North Antrim MP Ian Paisley, who contacted Economy Minister Diane Dodds, a party colleague.

But in an official reply to the MP, the Department for the Economy (which is responsible for the grant scheme) said it did not have the legal power to include the college in the £500 grant scheme.

“As the payment is for Northern Ireland publicly funded Higher Education Institutions, this excludes the Irish Baptist College and other alternative providers which are not in receipt of recurrent grant funding from the department.

“The department simply does not have the legal basis to

make payments to such institutions,” the department said.



Last night the MP said he was “dismayed” by the department's blunt rejection of the 24

February 22, 2021

students' plea, and called for a rethink.

“These students face the same issues, hardships and problems as any other students,” he told the Belfast Telegraph, “and I think it merits a review by the department as to how they give out that money.

“This is not going to break the bank. A stroke of a pen in the department could resolve this.

“I take the view that this is a deserving case, and should received urgent and immediate reconsideration.” Mr Paisley said.

Catholic Church appeals to Taoiseach to allow some return to worship

Micheál Martin met four Catholic Archbishops to discuss Holy Week observance amid Covid-19 restrictions. Tim O’Brien writes in the Irish Times.

The Catholic Church hierarchy has expressed its strong desire to Taoiseach Micheál Martin that people might be allowed “to gather safely for the important ceremonies of Holy Week and Easter”.

At a virtual meeting with Mr Martin on Friday, Catholic Primate Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell, Archbishop of Cashel and Emly Kieran O’Reilly and Archbishop of Tuam Michael Neary emphasised the spiritual comfort and hope that participation in public worship brings to people of faith.

February 22, 2021

The archbishops reiterated their desire to return to worship, in particular during the season of Lent and with the approach of Holy Week and Easter. Easter this year falls on April 4th. Lent has already begun.

The archbishops asked that public worship resume when an easing of restrictions is considered. They also requested consideration of an increase in the number who may attend funeral Masses. A maximum of 10 mourners can currently attend.

The archbishops had asked for the meeting as part of ongoing dialogue regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on public worship.

The Catholic hierarchy reiterated its wish to continue supporting the public health message to protect health and well-being, especially among the most vulnerable.

A spokesman for Mr Martin said he thanked the archbishops for their support and acknowledged the importance of the Church community in many people's lives at a time of particular stress and worry.

He outlined the ongoing concerns regarding the spread of the virus, particularly the new variants that have been identified, stressing that any increase at all in mobility could have serious consequences for public health and put pressure on the health service.

Mr Martin said the concerns raised at the meeting would be given consideration and it was agreed to maintain dialogue as the Covid-19 situation evolves.



Right Reverend Dr Guli Francis - Dehqani

It's about justice' – England's first bishop for housing

The Church of England published a report on the housing crisis last weekend. Refugee-turned-bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani said she is serious about turning recommendations into actions.

“Housing is an issue of justice, which Jesus cares about intimately.” With these words Justin Welby, the archbishop of Canterbury, announced at an industry conference last month that he was appointing a bishop for housing. The news was greeted with surprise and curiosity, welcomed by some, dismissed as an irrelevance by others. What was the leader of the Anglican Communion doing addressing a

housing conference? And what can the third estate achieve where the first and second have so singularly failed?

For those watching more closely, the appointment of Bishop Guli Francis-Dehqani has not come out of the blue but is a response to the report published last weekend. “Coming Home” is the fruit of the heavyweight Commission on Housing, Church and Community established by Welby two years ago to examine the housing crisis in all its complexity from theological and practical perspectives. A bishop for housing sitting in the House of Lords is one of its recommendations.

The Church of England has political influence and a moral authority as well as, many would say, a moral duty to speak out – and of course it has done so in various ways over centuries. With a community in every parish, the Church is uniquely connected to the people at the sharp end of the housing crisis. It also owns a huge amount of land.

WCC honoured with Geneva Engage Award

The World Council of Churches (WCC) was honoured as a top non-governmental organization for its work during 2020, receiving a second-place Geneva Engage Award on 18 February for effective and inspiring social media outreach and engagement.

The WCC accepted the award during an online ceremony, along with other organizations in the category of “Non-profit Organizations and Associations.”



The award, presented by the Geneva Internet Platform and DiploFoundation, encourages convergences around development, human rights, digital and other policy issues between communities worldwide and International Geneva, host of many international negotiations with an impact across countries and continents.

WCC acting general secretary Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca said the award is a joyful recognition of the sharing and support within the WCC fellowship and beyond.

"Thanks to the WCC fellowship's strong interactions, our common voice resounds clearly in social media," said Sauca. "May we continue to be messengers of hope, unity and faith!"

WCC communication officer Annegret Kapp reflected that social media has helped the WCC bring people from

February 22, 2021

different regions and Christian traditions together to raise a common Christian voice. “Our member churches are doing great and creative work, and social media is one of the tools we use to help them learn from and be in solidarity with each other,” she said. “I am glad that in a year when many contacts were disrupted, WCC social media channels helped people stay connected across borders and barriers.”

Valter Hugo Muniz, also a WCC communication officer, said that analyzing social media statistics has helped track the impact of the WCC’s social media.

“We implemented a more campaign-driven approach combined with appealing visuals to help shape our voice in the various social media channels,” he said. “This award is a recognition for our effort to work more strategically, inspired by WCC's mission to promote unity and hope, even online, particularly now, during a pandemic.”

In its communication strategy, the WCC envisions itself as a catalyst for change for a world with unity, justice and peace at its heart, said WCC communication director Marianne Ejdersten.

She added that WCC’s communications also strive to be inclusive; the core of its work involves participation and, most of all, hope. “Our task is to ignite hope for a better world where human dignity prevails,” said Ejdersten. “Human dignity and equality must permeate all communications.”

One concrete example is the campaign #ThursdaysinBlack towards a world without rape and violence. The campaign is

February 22, 2021

simple but profound. Wear black on Thursdays. Share your Thursdays in Black photos on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, using hashtags #ThursdaysinBlack and #WCC!

Opinion - “Feigned amnesia” of Anglo-Irish history would not help create a better future - Michael D Higgins

Uachtarán na hÉireann Michael D Higgins wrote in the Guardian that a “feigned amnesia” of Anglo-Irish history would not help create a better future.

Michael D Higgins has said that there is a reluctance to criticise empire and imperialism, especially when compared to critique of nationalism.

This year marks the centenary of the end of the War of Independence, the Anglo Irish Treaty that led to the partition of Ireland; topics which an t-Uachtarán has been reflecting on in a series called ‘Machnamh’.

In The Guardian, Michael D Higgins wrote about how not accepting the negative impacts of imperialism has had an effect on the citizens of countries who had been colonised, and how a “feigned amnesia” around “uncomfortable” parts of Anglo-Irish history would not help create a better future.

Uachtarán Higgins wrote that at imperialism’s core was persuading its citizens of an “assumption of superiority of culture” to justify the othering of a population, and imperialistic injustices had a “brutalising effect” that left pain

February 22, 2021

and resentment “sometimes passed down through generations”.

“As I reflect on the topic, I am struck by a disinclination in both academic and journalistic accounts to critique empire and imperialism. Openness to, and engagement in, a critique of nationalism has seemed greater.”

He wrote of Ireland’s fight against the British empire: “From the perspective of the British imperialist mind of its time, attitudes to the Irish for example, were never, and could never be, about a people who were equal, had a different culture, or could be trusted in a civilised discourse of equals.

“From the perspective of the Irish, who had their own ancient language, social and legal systems and a rich monastic contribution to the world, this view had to be resisted.

Higgins argued that imperialism was masked as modernity to expand “cultural suppression, economic exploitation, dispossession and domination”.

“Such consideration also helps explain a reluctance in former imperial powers to engage now with their imperialist past and to examine that past with descendants of those previously colonised, many of whom still live with the complex legacies of that colonialism.”

An t-Uachtarán will host a seminar called ‘Empire: Instincts, Interests, Power and Resistance’ as part of his series Machnamh 100, which will “recall significant events in

February 22, 2021

Ireland a century ago, in the context of changes taking place within the British Empire”.

The seminar will be chaired by John Bowman, broadcaster and historian, and will include contributions from President Higgins, Professor John Horne (Trinity College Dublin), Dr Marie Coleman (Queen’s University Belfast), Dr Niamh Gallagher (St Catharine’s College, Cambridge), Professor Eunan O’Halpin (Trinity College Dublin) and Professor Alvin Jackson (University of Edinburgh).

The seminar will be broadcast on the RTÉ Player at 7pm on Thursday 25 February.

Broadcasts, resources and webinars

Christianity and climate change - Tearfund have put together this nine part film series on Christianity and climate change including study questions & a leaders' guide. This nine part series can help you take a closer look at the climate crisis and how Christians are called to respond. The series features Katharine Hayhoe, the internationally renowned Christian climate scientist.

[[] <https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/christianity-and-climate-change-film-series>]

Dietrich Bonhoeffer - Memories And Perspectives -

For those who want a close and intimate portrait of Bonhoeffer. This video follows the life of the martyred theologian as vividly recalled by those closest to him: his friends, family, and students. Included are Bonhoeffer family

February 22, 2021

photographs that have never been shown before. An emotionally wrenching documentary that probes the struggles and motivations of Bonhoeffer in a way that makes one ask anew: "What does it mean to be a Christian in the 20th century world?"

[[] <https://watch.redeemtv.com/videos/dietrich-bonhoeffer-memories-and-perspectives>]

“

I think the reconciliation project is a centuries-long project. If we got a united Ireland tomorrow we would still have to work on the reconciliation project. It will always be there.”

Mary McAleese



The Corrymeela Podcast *Episode 1 streaming now*

February 22, 2021

The Corrymeela Community podcast is live - The first episode, interviewing Mary McAleese — the former President of Ireland, lawyer, canon lawyer and theologian. Subscribe through Spotify or Apple or wherever you get your podcasts. Discussion questions and transcript available through show notes or website (link in comments)
To register -
[<https://player.fm/series/the-corrymeela-podcast>]

Rowan Williams answers the question 'Who is Jesus for you?' - at St Pauls London in 2019. This April, hear him in conversation about Resurrection with Paula Gooder. Find out more, register free and donate if you can here

[<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/resurrection-tickets-139827556987>]

Pipeworks presents IN MEMORIAM - In memory of those we have lost in the pandemic, and in gratitude to Ireland's front line workers. Filmed and recorded in Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin the event was streamed yesterday Sunday February 21st 2021 and is available on demand for 7 days afterwards. See also page 20 below.
[<https://bit.ly/2ZeliOa>]

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

February 22, 2021

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.

Pray for the launches of new Church Army centres of mission in Rochdale, Gwent Valley, North Sutton and Ipswich; that these will launch as planned and new staff will find ways to engage with their communities when they are appointed.

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.

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.



IN MEMORIAM

ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL DUBLIN

In memory of those we have lost in the pandemic, and in gratitude to Ireland's front-line workers.

FEBRUARY 21 2021, 7pm

KENNETH LEIGHTON

Concerto for Organ, String Orchestra and Timpani Op 58 (1970)

MAURICE DURUFLÉ

Requiem Mass Op 48 *performed in the composer's reduced-orchestrated version for organ and strings*

PIPEWORKS FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA AND CONSORT OF VOICES

TRISTAN RUSSCHER, Organ | DAVID LEIGH, Conductor

TICKETS €10: pipeworks.ie | eventbrite.ie

The concert will be available on demand for 7 days after the live stream of the recording.



Speaking to the Soul

As God's partners, we beg you not to accept this marvellous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it. For God says, "At just the right time, I heard you. On the day of salvation, I helped you." Indeed, the "right time" is now. Today is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 NLT

We are all tempted to take things for granted, but it's a strange fact that we normally take for granted the most precious and amazing gifts. The love of our family and friends for example. Or the reliable supply of clean drinking water and nourishing food. Or the freedom to worship God and to declare publicly what we believe. Our lives would be very different if any of those were denied us. But, honestly, how often do we consciously give thanks to God for these amazing gifts?

Now let's step it up a gear. Let's talk about the amazing gift of salvation and the promise of eternal life with God. It doesn't get better than that. Any gift you have ever received must pale into insignificance alongside those amazing gifts of God to us. But the fact is that, all too often, we receive this marvellous gift of God's kindness and then ignore it. Paul's intention is to wake up his Corinthian hearers and remind them that God's gift of salvation is not a nebulous and distant reality, but it's all about today. God wants us to be awake to his gift of salvation right now, because today is the day of salvation.

Christian faith changes our understanding of everything, but nothing is more dramatic than the way in which it transforms our understanding of today. Today is incredibly important,

February 22, 2021

however dull and ordinary it might seem, because God is at work setting people free. And today is the day when God wants you to experience his salvation, setting you free from your sins and fears and enabling you to be fully alive.

QUESTION

In what specific ways can you see God's salvation at work in your life today?

PRAYER

Thank you, dear Lord, for your gift of salvation. Help me to treasure it and never to take it for granted. Amen.

