



## Image of the day - Holocaust Memorial Day

# Responses by Archbishops of Armagh to Research Report into Mother and Baby Homes

## **The Most Revd John McDowell**

Following the publication of the Research Report into Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland, The Most Revd John McDowell, Archbishop of Armagh and



Primate of All Ireland, has issued the following statement:

“The publication of the Research Report on Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland further reveals the suffering of women and children in relation to their experiences in these homes. We are grateful to the academic research team for the work that has gone into this report, which will help the Church reflect in greater depth on the issues highlighted.

‘Having had a chance to read the relevant chapters of the report, I acknowledge with shame that members of the Church of Ireland stigmatised women and children in a way which was very far removed from Christian principles and which resulted in an unloving, cold and judgmental attitude towards pregnant women who deserved better.

“The birth of a child should always be a time for happiness, and that many young women experienced it as joyless and cold is a matter for bitter regret. I am sorry and apologise for the role we played in treating unmarried women and their children in this way. They deserved much better.

“The Church of Ireland will be giving the report further careful consideration, and we would encourage any individuals or agencies who have relevant knowledge and records to co-operate fully with the independent investigation.”

### **Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin**

Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin issued a statement after the publication of the research report on Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene laundries in Northern Ireland, which revealed victims of rape and incest were put in facilities for unmarried mothers and their children.

“As a Catholic church leader in Ireland it is I who now feel embarrassed and guilty over the way in which we in the church contributed to, and bolstered, that culture of concealment, condemnation, and self-righteousness,” he said.

“For that I am truly sorry and ask the forgiveness of survivors. How did we so obscure the love and mercy and compassion of Christ which is at the very heart of the Gospel? Shame on us.

The persistence and the powerful testimonies of these same courageous survivors has lifted the lid on this dark chapter

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Shame on us.  
- Archbishop Eamon Martin**

**Statement by Archbishop Eamon Martin on the publication  
of Research Report on Mother and Baby Homes and  
Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland**



of our shared history and exposed our hypocrisy to the glaring light.”

## **Apologies**

Apologies have also been issued by the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland issued a statement yesterday - See CNI. Some survivors are pressing for a speedy public inquiry but there



are concerns surrounding the impact on some who suffered life-changing trauma of giving evidence.

A “victim-centred” independent investigation was ordered by Stormont ministers and should be completed within six months.

First Minister Arlene Foster pledged the voices of survivors would be heard “loudly and clearly”.

She added: “It was not their fault that they were raped or the victims of incest yet they were the ones who suffered and it appears to me that those who perpetrated the crime went scot-free.”

Around a third of those admitted were aged under 19 and most were from 20-29.

### **What are the report's key findings?**

It describes as a “conservative estimate” that over 10,500 women and girls entered the homes between 1922 and 1990

The majority of them were from NI (86%), with the remainder from the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain

About a third of those admitted were under the age of 19, with the youngest child to be admitted aged 12

A number were the victims of sexual crime, including rape and incest

Living conditions and care for residents were recorded in little detail but personal testimonies revealed “strenuous physical labour” being expected of them late into their pregnancies. The report features claims from women that they were subjected to labour like scrubbing floors during the final stages of pregnancy and were described as “fallen” and stigmatised.

It is “indisputable” that there was “considerable movement” of babies from some of the homes in NI to the Republic of Ireland

## **Holocaust must never be forgotten, says Charles**

**The Prince of Wales yesterday warned that “the task of bearing witness” to the Holocaust now falls to us all, as he insisted the atrocity must be remembered for ever.**

He suggested that, as the last survivors of the Holocaust die, it is time for younger generations to ensure their testimony remains alive, to “be the light that ensures the darkness can never return”.

‘The last generation of living witnesses is tragically passing, so the task of bearing witness falls to us’

The Prince, patron of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, recorded a message to open the virtual Holocaust Memorial Day event, hosted by the BBC presenter Naga Munchetty

yesterday evening. To end the ceremony, both the Prince and the Duchess of Cornwall joined in a national moment to reflect this year's theme, lighting a candle in their window at Highgrove, Glos.

Footage of the moment was included in a compilation video of survivors and others across the UK doing the same, as UK landmarks including the Houses of Parliament, the London Eye and Tyne Bridge were lit up in purple.

The Prince, 72, said: "As I speak, the last generation of living witnesses is tragically passing from this world, so the task of bearing witness falls to us.

"That is why The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, of which I am so proud to be Patron, has this year chosen the theme – Be the Light in the Darkness.

He added: "This is not a task for one time only. Nor is it a task for one generation, or one person. It is for all people, all generations, and all time.

"This is our time when we can, each in our own way, be the light that ensures the darkness can never return."

The ceremony includes contributions from Boris Johnson, Sir Keir Starmer and Sir Ed Davey as well as the first ministers of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and religious leaders including Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis. Among the celebrity readers were Bear Grylls, Tobias Menzies, Indira Varma and Rob Rinder.

To mark this year's Holocaust Memorial Day, Twitter developed a global emoji, a candle with a purple flame, while Royal Mail ran a special postmark for two days called Light the Darkness.

Last year, the Prince attended the World Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem. This was his first official visit to the city, during which he said the holocaust must never be allowed to become a simple fact of history.

"We must never cease to be appalled, nor moved by the testimony of those who lived through it," he said. "Their experience must always warn us."

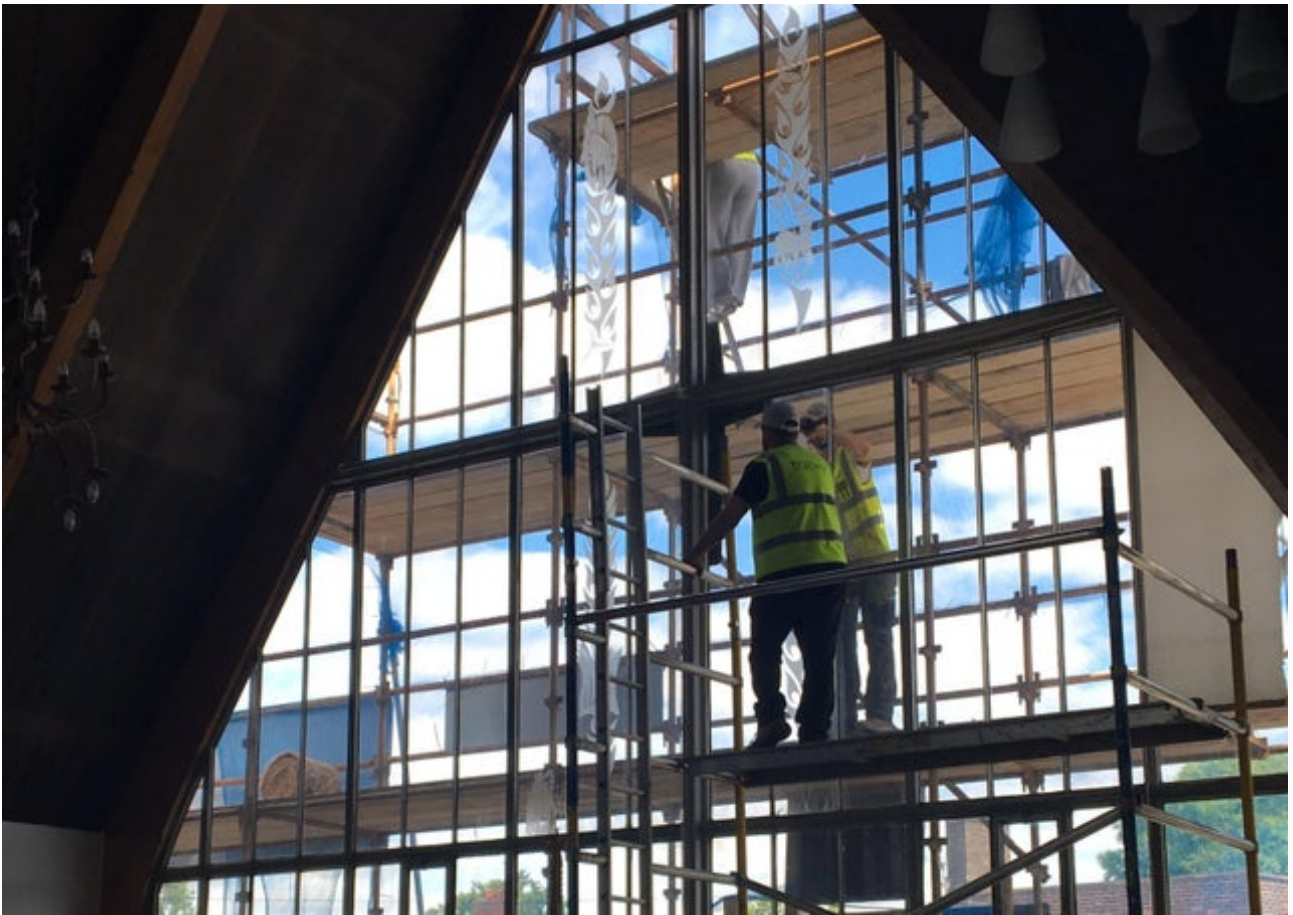
The Prince also made a pilgrimage to his grandmother's tomb on the Mount of Olives, laying flowers in memory of Princess Alice, who is renowned for saving a Jewish family from the Nazis during the Holocaust while living in occupied Greece.

## **Funding boost to keep churches in good repair**

**Church and chapel buildings in Northern Ireland can apply for a share of £250,000 of funding awarded to the National Churches Trust from the Department for Communities.**

£200,000 will go to boosting the National Churches Trust's grants for urgent repairs and for the provision of modern community facilities such as toilets and kitchens.





A further £50,000 will be made available to churches and chapels developing repair and maintenance projects, including funding for drone surveys to help identify problems with buildings and to scope possible work.

Catherine Townsend, Head of Church Support for the National Churches Trust, said: “We are delighted with this £250,000 funding boost from the Department for Communities Historic Environment Division through their Covid-19 Culture, Languages, Arts and Heritage Support Programme.

“The money will allow us to keep more church and chapel buildings in Northern Ireland in good repair. That is especially important due to the challenge of Covid-19 and will help churches and chapels play their part in helping local people during these difficult times.”

Communities Minister Deirdre Hargey said: “I am delighted that I have been able to provide this support. This will help catalyse renewal activity and animate communities affected by Covid-19 by working with them to tackle the issues faced by our historic church buildings.

“Churches have been a critical element of the Covid-19 response and it is fitting that they now become part of our renewal through generating new works and transformed spaces.”

The National Churches Trust supports churches and chapels of all denominations that are open for regular worship.

The funding will help to boost the work of the National Churches Trust in helping church and chapel buildings in Northern Ireland.

The Trust’s work includes Treasure Ireland, ([www.nationalchurchestrust.org/treasure-ireland](http://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/treasure-ireland)) a project which is helping churches and chapels with maintenance, grants for repairs and tourism initiatives.

Since 2018, the National Churches Trust has helped 29 churches and chapels with funding of £185,000 for urgent repairs, provision of toilets, kitchens and other community facilities and essential maintenance.

This funding has been supported by the Pilgrim Trust, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Wolfson Foundation.

If you are interested in applying for a grant got to

[churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com)

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[<https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/our-grants/grants-northern-ireland>]

## **BBC Radio 4 Morning Service from Belfast Cathedral**



**BBC Radio 4's Morning Service on Sunday January 31 comes from Belfast Cathedral, and will be led by the Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev Stephen Forde.**

The service will be broadcast at 8.10am and you can tune in via radio or [online](#).

The theme of the Service is 'Belfast, a City Shaped by the Sea.' Also taking part are Dean's Vicar, the Rev Canon Mark Niblock, and Gillian McGaughey, Diocesan Reader. The Director of Music is Matthew Owens and organist is Mark Wilson. There will be a reduced Cathedral choir of four socially distanced sopranos.

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Looking ahead to the service, Dean Forde said: “The cathedral parish includes the whole of Belfast Port, which has featured in many news reports about Brexit over the past month.

“January 31 is the anniversary of the sinking of the Larne Stranraer ferry, the Princess Victoria, at the mouth of Belfast Lough in 1953, when 135 passengers and crew, including all the women and children, were lost out of a total of 179.

“Thirty three of those lost on that day lived in Belfast, including the Deputy Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.”

Anyone who can't tune into the service at 8.10am this Sunday will be able to listen again at the [BBC Radio 4 online](#).

## **Thief using hook suspected of stealing thousands from church collection boxes**

**Gardaí have arrested a man for questioning about a series of thefts from churches in east Co Cork which involved thousands of euro in cash being fished out of collection boxes.**

Gardaí in Cobh were alerted by a priest in nearby parish on Sunday after he discovered that somebody had been stealing money from the collection box in which people had been placing their station dues.

The priest became suspicious after he found cheques from people in another parish deposited in his collection box after



the thief discarded them as he did not want to risk being identified when trying to cash them.

The priest then checked church CCTV footage and saw a man using a hooked piece of wire to remove envelopes containing cash from the box. He contacted gardaí in Cobh, who mounted a surveillance operation.

The man returned to the church on Monday to try and take more from the collection box but gardaí moved in to arrest him and following a car chase along the N25, he was stopped near the Jack Lynch Tunnel in Dunkettle.

The Romanian national was arrested and taken to Cobh Garda station where he was detained under Section 4 of the Criminal Justice Act, which allows gardaí to hold a suspect for up to 24 hours.

Detectives obtained CCTV footage from a number of churches and are questioning the man about the theft of station dues from churches in Cloyne, Middleton and Carrigtwohill as well as a church in west Waterford.

They have also frozen the man's bank account as they believe it contains the proceeds of the man's thefts from churches in east Cork over the past two weeks.

The Diocese of Cloyne had become aware of the issue and last week wrote to its priests urging them to be vigilant to the possibility of a thief targeting locked collection boxes in churches. The diocese explained that suspicions had arisen when cheques from parishioners in one parish were found in



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the collection box in another having been removed from the locked box.

There were initially suspicions that the thief might have had a master key to open all the collection boxes as none were damaged, but CCTV footage later showed a wire hook being to fish out envelopes.

It is understood that priests in the parishes targeted plan to make contact with parishioners who made donations to try and establish how much cash was taken, but the total is believed to run to thousands of euros.

Report by Barry Roche courtesy of The Irish Times.  
25.01.2021

## **'Moral Evils': Pope And Bishops Clash On Pro-Choice Catholic Biden**

**Washington — On Jan. 20, President Joe Biden became only the second Catholic to hold the highest office in U.S. government, Timothy Nerozzi writes.**

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) released a letter on the day of Biden's inauguration, directly and pointedly calling attention to Biden's liberal platform.

"I must point out that our new President has pledged to pursue certain policies that would advance moral evils and threaten human life and dignity, most seriously in the areas of abortion, contraception, marriage, and gender," wrote

José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles and President of the USCCB. “Of deep concern is the liberty of the Church and the freedom of believers to live according to their consciences.”

Biden, who regularly attends Mass and has made his faith a cornerstone of his campaign for office, contradicts Catholic teaching on a slew of moral and social issues. His stances on both abortion and gay marriage in particular oppose the morals of the Catholic Church.

Archbishop Gomez named abortion as Biden’s most pressing divergence from Catholic morality.

“For the nation’s bishops, the continued injustice of abortion remains the ‘preeminent priority.’ Preeminent does not mean ‘only.’ We have deep concerns about many threats to human life and dignity in our society,” Gomez wrote. “But as Pope Francis teaches, we cannot stay silent when nearly a million unborn lives are being cast aside in our country year after year through abortion.”

Biden has made unity and reconciliation major talking points of his presidency, promising to do his best to mend an increasingly politically splintered nation. Gomez wrote that he hoped in this spirit, Biden would be willing to negotiate and collaborate on fixing the problem of abortion at its root cause.

“My hope is that we can begin a dialogue to address the complicated cultural and economic factors that are driving abortion and discouraging families,” he said. “My hope, too, is that we can work together to finally put in place a



**Cardinal Blase Cupich of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago prays as names of homicide victims are read during a prayer walk through Chicago's Englewood neighborhood on the city's South Side, April 14, 2017. (Wikimedia Commons)**

coherent family policy in this country, one that acknowledges the crucial importance of strong marriages and parenting to the well-being of children and the stability of communities. If the President, with full respect for the Church's religious freedom, were to engage in this conversation, it would go a long way toward restoring the civil balance and healing our country's needs."

The USCCB's letter was very quickly challenged by Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago. Cardinal Cupich, one of the most prominent and respected Catholic

clergymen in the United States, criticized the letter publicly on the same day it was released.

“Today, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued an ill-considered statement on the day of President Biden’s inauguration,” Cuprich wrote in a social media post.

Cuprich alleged that the letter was written without the input of all relevant parties, saying, “Aside from the fact that there is seemingly no precedent for doing so, the statement, critical of President Biden, came as a surprise to many bishops, who received it just hours before it was released.”

“The statement was crafted without the involvement of the Administrative Committee, a collegial consultation that is normal course for statements that represent and enjoy the considered endorsement of the American bishops.”

Cupich concluded saying that the release of the letter without his approval was a “failure” of the conference, and urged clergymen to be more unified in their work moving forward.

“The internal institutional failures involved must be addressed, and I look forward to contributing to all efforts to that end, so that, inspired by the Gospel, we can build up the unity of the Church, and together take up the work of healing our nation in this moment of crisis,” Cupich wrote.

Pope Francis also released a letter of congratulations to Biden on the day of his inauguration.

In contrast to the explicit and confrontational tone of the USCCB's letter, Pope Francis's message was subdued and more focused on a vague encouragement for morality.

"On the occasion of your inauguration as the forty-sixth President of the United States of America, I extend cordial good wishes and the assurance of my prayers that Almighty God will grant you wisdom and strength in the exercise of your high office," Francis wrote.

The closest that Pope Francis came to mentioning Biden's heterodox policy-making was a mention of respect for "those who have no voice."

"At a time when the grave crises facing our human family call for farsighted and united responses," the pope wrote. "I pray that your decisions will be guided by a concern for building a society marked by authentic justice and freedom, together with unfailing respect for the rights and dignity of every person, especially the poor, the vulnerable and those who have no voice."

The papacy has a long tradition of correspondence with world leaders at the beginning of their terms. Presidents Donald Trump and Barack Obama both received similar letters in the past.

"I likewise ask God, the source of all wisdom and truth, to guide your efforts to foster understanding, reconciliation and peace within the United States and among the nations of the world in order to advance the universal common good. With these sentiments, I willingly invoke upon you and your family



and the beloved American people an abundance of blessings."

Report courtesy of Religion Unplugged and Timothy Nerozzi. Timothy is a writer and editor from northeastern Pennsylvania. He covers religious issues with a focus on the Catholic Church and Japanese society and culture. Article first published January 21, 2021

## Resources and webinars

**Faith Based Module Training** - Flourish offers Faith Based Module Training that explores the relationship between theological understandings of suicide and mental health and how this translates into pastoral action.

Claire Hogart of Flourish comments - "We also offer Self-Care Training that looks at the importance of self-care, the serious effects of 'burnout' and how to develop and implement a personal self-care plan for ourselves.

"The NI Protect Life strategy (2006) highlights that 'Churches are at the forefront in caring for families and communities who have been affected by the suicide of a loved one. This support, which takes many forms, is long term and holistic; however regular exposure to distress, worries, problems and the responsibility of providing support can have a substantial impact on the clergy, that can lead to 'compassion fatigue'.

"Flourish believes we have an obligation to recognise the huge demand on churches and their clergy in their pastoral

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care and help ensure an appropriate programme of self-care to strengthen our own physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual health and wellbeing ‘

“Every year Flourish hold an annual conference and this year, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the conference will be held online on Friday, 19th February. I have taken the liberty of attaching the promotional materials for this and would be grateful if you could forward this email and the materials to any colleagues who you feel may be interested in taking part. The conference is open to all clergy but if you require any further information on the conference or the work of Flourish, then please don’t hesitate to contact me or visit the website at [ [www.wewillflourish.com](http://www.wewillflourish.com) ]

“Links to other resources which have been developed in partnership with and supported by the Public Health Agency  
**Download Flourish Sunday** – worship resources for free  
[ ] [www.wewillflourish.com/positive-mental-health-sunday/](http://www.wewillflourish.com/positive-mental-health-sunday/)

**Download Flourish Self-Care Toolkit** for free  
[ ] [www.wewillflourish.com/flourish-self-care-book-press-2017-2/](http://www.wewillflourish.com/flourish-self-care-book-press-2017-2/)

Claire’s e-mail address is - [ [claire@lighthousecharity.com](mailto:claire@lighthousecharity.com) ]

## Pointers for prayer

Urgent Prayer Request from the Province of Alexandria: The Anglican Church of Ethiopia have asked for our prayers as they see the results of the Tigray crisis unfold. One church

leader has described “thousands of people internally displaced just living in empty fields.”

[[] <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/01/1082492> ]

Today we pray for Mozambique. A cholera outbreak combined with a growing humanitarian crisis after fighting in a northern province displaced more than 500,000 people last year has led to the UN calling for help in the region.

Today we give thanks for those raising awareness of leprosy around the world. It's World Leprosy Day next week, when advocates challenge myths and spread awareness about leprosy, which is totally curable, globally.

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.

Let's remember and thank God today for friends and connections with different church traditions, and pray that we'll fully embrace and enjoy the richness of diversity that we all bring to worship and service.

We pray today for God's help as we unite across denominations to bring hope and practical care to those in need, and ask that any differences and misunderstandings will be overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today we pray for those facing food insecurity globally. Coronavirus, conflict and cuts to UN funding are increasing the risks of food insecurity and malnutrition in 2021, in particular in South Sudan.

Prolonged restrictions and times of isolation can lead to a loss of confidence in venturing out and interacting with others. We pray for all who are experiencing this and ask God to help us gently reach out with encouragement and understanding.

## Speaking to the Soul

Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.”

Luke 1:38 NLT

We know the story of Jesus’ miraculous birth so well that no part of it is a surprise to us. So we’ve really got to work hard to imagine how completely and stupefyingly incredible this moment was for Mary. She is probably a teenager and may well never have been outside the rural Galilee region where she was born. The news that she is going to have a baby was shockingly surprising at every level. She knew that she was a virgin and that having a baby was therefore a complete impossibility. But she listens attentively to the angel’s words and is assured that, crazy as this all sounded, nothing is impossible with God.

Her response is extraordinarily impressive. She describes herself as the Lord’s servant and accepts the future that God had chosen for her. To be a servant would normally be

seen as demeaning. We probably instinctively think of the TV series Downton Abbey: of the way in which servants, living below stairs, were given all the heavy, dirty and difficult work to do to enable a few people to live lives of incredible luxury. Being a servant doesn't sound remotely attractive. But Mary recognized that it had all had to do with who you were serving and to be a servant of the Lord was the highest privilege of all.

This story of Mary might feel utterly remote from your life. However, it isn't. God invites all of us today to be his servants and he wants us to see that this is the highest privilege of life. It doesn't get better than this – not for Mary and not for us.

## QUESTION

What does it mean for you to be the servant of the Lord today?

## PRAYER

Thank you Lord that because of your love for me you invite me to be your servant. Help me to be more like Mary and to embrace joyfully the future that you have for me. Amen.





