

## Image of the day - Derry Cathedral

## Archbishop of York encourages hope in this new year



### The chapel at Bishopthorpe Palace, home of the Archbishop of York

**The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, is sharing short reflections throughout January 2021 on the theme, ‘Our Hope is Found’ as the country continues to combat the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic. His reflections will include a prayer or a poem, and the first of this nine-part series can be watched below:**

Archbishop Stephen said, “2020 has been an incredibly hard year for everyone, and it is going to be a long time before we begin to feel some semblance of normality return. We all need hope, and I believe that our hope is found in the



January 4, 2020

person of Jesus Christ. Knowing God through him brings life, peace, and hope that no matter what happens he is with us. As people listen to the reflections I pray they can see that as we trust in God and seek to follow him, we can have a peace which is beyond our understanding and a hope that is sure and steadfast for what is to come.”

In his first reflection, the Archbishop considers the story in the Old Testament of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who refused to worship the king’s golden idol. They continued to hold on to what they thought was right, putting their hope and trust in God, whether or not he rescued them from the fiery furnace into which they were to be thrown. Archbishop Stephen likens this to where we are today. We can trust in God whether times are good or bad. After The



## **Vanishing Lake near Ballycastle, County Antrim**

January 4, 2020

reading some verses of the poem 'Powers of Good', written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the new year of 1945, the Archbishop prays that the light of Christ may shine in our darkness. He then encourages everyone to send their prayer into Bishopthorpe Palace.



The Revd Hannah

Madin, who works as a Pioneer Minister in Scarborough said, "Taking time to pray with or for someone is such a joy and a privilege. Knowing that God cares for us is both humbling and uplifting. I have seen what a difference prayer can make. At the start of this new year, it's good to be reminded of the power and importance of prayer."

To access the reflections visit the Archbishop of York's website, Facebook page or YouTube channel.

Alongside the reflections, the Archbishop is encouraging anyone who wishes a prayer to be said for themselves or others, to send this in to Bishopthorpe Palace, where he will pray with support from The Order of the Holy Paraclete at Whitby.

If you would like to send in a prayer request, please complete the online request [here](#). You can also email:

January 4, 2020

[ office@archbishopofyork.org ] putting 'Prayer request' in the subject line.

If you would like to write your request for prayer, please post to: Prayers, Office of the Archbishop of York, Bishopthorpe Palace, Bishopthorpe, York YO23 2GE.

Please be aware that names may be shared with the Sisters of the Order of the Holy Paraclete in Whitby and that personal responses may not be possible.

Responses may be made here -

[[] <https://www.archbishopofyork.org/archbishop-york/about-bishopthorpe-palace/prayer-and-worship> ]

## **NIO minister viewed Sean Brady as 'more republican' than predecessor Cahal Daly**

**Sean Brady was described as “much more of an old fashioned republican” than Cahal Daly, his predecessor as Catholic primate, according to NIO minister Michael Ancram in 1996, Sam McBride writes in The News Letter, 02 January 2021.**

Mr Ancram's private secretary circulated a note of a November 12, 1996 meeting between the minister and new Catholic primate Sean Brady.

The note, declassified at the Public Record Office in Belfast, said: “The minister felt this was an interesting meeting which



### **Cardinal Sean Brady took over as primate in 1996**

demonstrated the significant difference in knowledge and perspective between Archbishop Brady and his predecessor.

“Brady is much more of an old fashioned republican but also seems less well informed. The minister feels there is work to be done here and he intends to repeat this exercise to explain HMG’s position.”

Two years earlier, in a December 12, 1994 despatch from the British Embassy in Dublin, the British Ambassador said that the Papal Nuncio had phoned that day to inform him that Sean Brady, then a parish priest in Cavan, would be announced as the new Coadjutor Archbishop of Armagh, the presumptive successor to Cardinal Daly. the following day.



The Ambassador said: "The Nuncio explained that Rome had initially wanted a diocesan bishop for the job, but had changed their minds. He thought that Brady, who had spent 13 years in the Irish College in Rome, many of them as rector, would be a popular choice in the church here.

"Brady is not known to us."

## **RTÉ apology for Christmas offence is questioned by many**

**RTÉ has apologised after a number of people complained over a Waterford Whispers sketch segment in the New Year's Eve countdown programme, which was broadcast on RTÉ One television.**

In a statement, the broadcaster acknowledged that some viewers were offended by the sketch and said that around 1,100 complaints have been received so far.

It said: "RTÉ recognises that matters which can cause offence naturally differ from person to person, within comedy and satire in particular.

"Having reviewed the feedback and complaints received up to this point, RTÉ wishes to apologise to those who were offended by the segment.

"The formal complaints received by RTÉ are being entered into our complaints system and will be responded to in accordance with the relevant statutory process."

In the 'Waterford Whispers' news report, presented by former RTÉ News presenter Aengus MacGrianna, God is



**The Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland called on RTÉ to remove what he described as the "deeply offensive and blasphemous clip".**

described as being "the latest figure to be implicated in ongoing sexual harassment scandals".

In the clip, a man in a white robe is led to court while a voiceover from ex-broadcaster Aengus Mac Grianna explains: "In another shocking revelation this year, God became the latest figure to be implicated in ongoing sexual harassment scandals.

"The five-billion-year-old stood accused of forcing himself on a young middle-eastern migrant and allegedly impregnating her against her will.

"He was sentenced to two years in prison with the last 24 months suspended."

The clip ended with a line that movie producer Harvey Weinstein, who is serving a 23-year sentence in the US for



January 4, 2020

rape and sexual assault, had "requested for a retrial in Ireland".

The Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland called on RTÉ to remove what he described as the "deeply offensive and blasphemous clip".

In a tweet, Archbishop Eamon Martin said he was "shocked" that the programme's producer or editor "didn't realise how deeply offensive was a mocking 'news report' accusing God of rape & reporting his imprisonment".

He continued: "To broadcast such a deeply offensive and blasphemous clip about God & our Blessed Mother Mary during the Christmas season on 'NYE Countdown Show' on @RTE, @RTEOne & on Eve of the Solemn Feast of Mary, Mother of God is insulting to all Catholics and Christians".

Dr Martin also added the Twitter handle of RTÉ Director General Dee Forbes.





**New Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell has condemned RTE's comments about God "raping Middle Eastern Migrants" on their New Year's Show.**

He accused them of "mocking the divine" and "trivialising rape victims".

This criticism was echoed by Cllr Michael Sheehan, of Wexford County Council, who questioned whether the sketch would have made it to air if it had been poking fun at other religions.

Sheehan told the Irish Daily Mail: "I have to say, it exercised a lot of people, who were offended by it, and who thought it was crass and very bad judgment.

"I very rarely get people getting in touch regarding offensive broadcasts, but I got half a dozen calls and more messages from people saying how upset they were.

"I think they took a very serious topic and belittled it, and they essentially trashed a community of faith.

“I know it was tongue-in-cheek, but it was inappropriate and the wrong tone. How they could see that being part of a New Year’s Eve programme, I don’t get that at all.”

The Catholic Arena website meanwhile said RTE had “crossed a line” and called on the public to make a formal complaint to the Gardai.

"Under new hate crime legislation, Mac Grianna and RTÉ can be prosecuted. We encourage everyone to take the following actions: Call Donnybrook Garda Station and report the hate crime, which violates the new Harmful Communications Bill.”

Ireland’s Junior Minister for Special Education and Inclusion Josepha Madigan also expressed disdain for the sketch and, in particular, the way it made light of rape in a “flippant” way.

“Satire is an important part of free speech, but I am very concerned about flippant jokes being made about a topic as serious as rape,” she told the Mail.

## **Parish giving falls by £40m in pandemic**

**Parish giving in the Church of England has slumped by about £40 million during the pandemic, the Church Times reports**

The latest figures presented to the Archbishops’ Council for the first ten months of 2020 are said to show a 7.8-per-cent fall in income compared with the same period the previous year.

The levels vary across the 42 dioceses: some have experienced a drop approaching 20 per cent, while others



have barely been affected. Four of the six worst-hit dioceses are in the north: Durham, Leeds, Manchester, and Sheffield. The other two are Truro and Lincoln. Bristol, Gloucester, Guildford, Oxford, Southwark, Southwell, and St Albans are among the dioceses that are reported to have felt the least impact financially.

Part of the fall can be attributed to church closures, loss of fees for services such as weddings, and reduced congregations because of social distancing or a fear of becoming infected in or on the way to church. Parishes that have relied on cash or cheques in the collection plate have suffered greater losses than those that have successfully promoted giving by standing order or direct debit.

Another factor is the loss of income from the hire of church buildings for outside events.

Parishes that earn much of their revenue from rent — for community groups and businesses — have also suffered loss of income.

In the latest Church of England Parish



January 4, 2020

Finance Statistics, 2018 (published in March 2020), parishes brought in just under £1.1 billion. Of this, more than £600 million came from parish giving (with tax recovered), £59 million from legacies, £40 million from fees, and £63 million from fund-raising and appeals. Total expenditure of parishes was £1 billion, the largest item of which was the diocesan parish share, which accounted for £340 million.

A spokesman at Church House, Westminster, said: “The major portion of churches’ income is from giving. Obviously this is dependent upon people’s ability to give, and many are and continue to suffer financially as a result of the pandemic; but levels of giving income have so far proven more resilient than might have been expected, and Storm



## **Bella comes ashore at Portstewart**

churches around the country are hugely grateful for the generosity of those who give.”

In March, the Church Commissioners announced a £75-million package of liquidity measures to assist dioceses whose finances would be adversely affected by the Covid crisis. A second package of £35 million was announced in May for short-term assistance to dioceses in 2020 and early 2021.

The spokesman continued: “The majority of the funding in the second package is being made available in grants to the dioceses in most need as they recover from the ongoing effects of Covid-19; 22 dioceses have already received grants.

“Notwithstanding the inevitable economic impact of Covid-19, the Church Commissioners are still planning to distribute over £900 million to support the Church’s work in 2020-2022.”

Covid-19 hospital admissions peaked at more than 20,400 this (*last*) week: the highest ever recorded during the pandemic. New coronavirus cases are exceeding 53,000 a day — another record. On Wednesday, the Government announced that dozens more regions across the UK — 20 million people — were due to move into tier 4 from midnight.

The president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, Dr Katherine Henderson, said on Tuesday that she saw “wall-to-wall Covid” when she worked at one London hospital on Christmas Day. “The chances are that we will cope, but we cope at a cost — the cost is not doing what we had hoped, which is being able to keep non-Covid activities going.”



Many churches have offered their premises for Covid vaccination and testing (News, 11 December), which a spokesperson for Church House described as “a great act of service and witness”. Each centre can process about 1000 people a day, and could be in use for up to a year.

In Rochester Cathedral, lateral flow testing is being conducted seven days a week in the crypt. The army installed ten booths to conduct community rapid-testing for residents, who get their test results in an hour. The crypt was sealed from the main building so that services could still take place.

The Chapter Clerk, Simon Lace, said: “There’s been so little we’ve been able to do during the pandemic; so we were keen to help. We want the cathedral to be seen as the centre of the community, for people of all faiths or no faith, and this is a great way to demonstrate that.

“The test centre is running very smoothly. Over 2500 tests were completed in the first week.” It is expected to operate until the end of February.

## **Foster dossier alleges garda helped provos**

**First Minister Arlene Foster is to present a dossier to Taoiseach Micheal Martin early this month containing allegations the Irish state colluded with the IRA during the Troubles, Rodney Edwards reports in the Belfast Telegraph.**

The DUP leader will ask Mr Martin to study the file, which she says “points to collusion between the Provisional IRA

January 4, 2020

and gardai”, and provide answers on behalf of the Irish government.

“I trust this will be an opportunity to set out the concerns of many innocent victims and press forward with the Irish state being able to provide families with some answers,” the first minister said.

She will raise the findings of the Smithwick Tribunal, which confirmed there had been collusion that led to the murders of two RUC officers, Chief Superintendent Harry Breen and Superintendent Bob Buchanan, in 1989.

“The tribunal reported in December 2013, but to date no further action has been taken,” the DUP leader said.



**The Cavehill, Belfast**

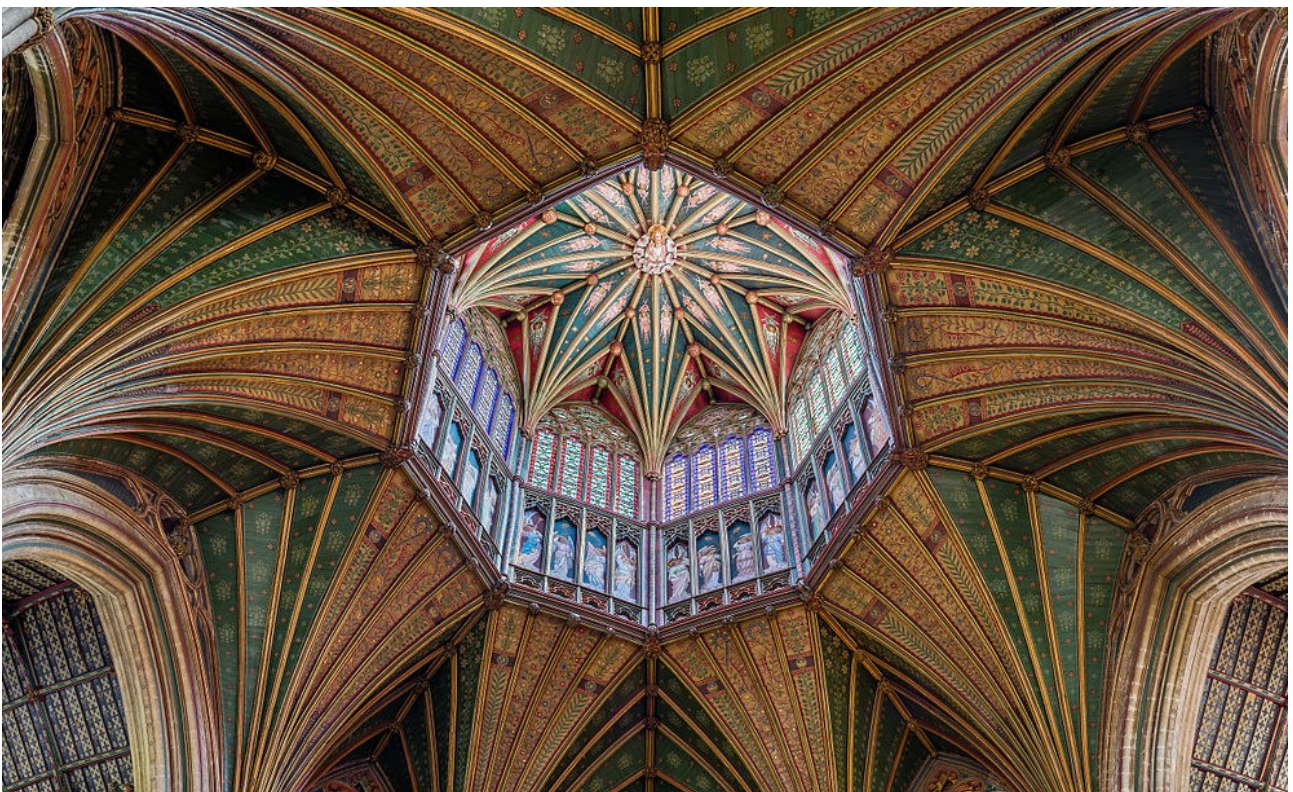


January 4, 2020

Mrs Foster will also detail “extensive allegations of collusion between the Provisional IRA and the Garda” in the murder of Ian Sproule (above), who was shot outside his house in Co Tyrone in 1991. “These allegations surround a copy of a Garda intelligence file which was leaked to the IRA and subsequently presented to journalists by the terrorists as justification for Ian's murder,” she said.

Mrs Foster claims gardai requested intelligence information about Mr Sproule from the RUC “weeks prior to his murder”.

“Within this context, the fears regarding the Garda's involvement in Ian's murder have been heightened by the fact that the findings of the internal Garda investigation into the alleged collusive elements have been withheld from the family for over 20 years,” she said.



**Ely Cathedral**



“This family, along with many others, respectfully seek answers from the Irish government.”

The DUP leader's intervention comes after former Police Ombudsman Baroness Nuala O'Loan said gardai and the PSNI must assist each another in investigating claims of collusion from the Troubles.

Baroness O'Loan added: “I think there should be every possible cooperation between the Garda and the PSNI in investigating these matters when people have died at the hands of the IRA or loyalists.”

## Pointers for prayer

Today we pray for the UK's new financial commitments in 2021. The recent Spending Review included the aid budget being slashed to just 0.5% of GNI and didn't commit to a permanent £20 uplift in Universal Credit.

Today we pray for people who will be homeless in 2021. As we look towards the new year, people experiencing homelessness will once again be faced with a new set of distinct challenges.

Today we pray for COP26. The global climate conference, rescheduled from 2020, will be taking place in Glasgow in 2021. We pray for ambition and action from world leaders on climate change, and pray that those already affected by climate chaos would be kept safe.

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas and the blessing of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit be with you. Amen

Today we pray for the transformation which Jesus brings. This Christmas, we remember the coming of Jesus to our world, and the promise of hope which that brings with it.

Today we pray for those facing redundancy at present. This year, record numbers of people were made redundant during lockdowns and waves of the coronavirus, as Government support changed.

## Speaking to the soul

**That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them.**

Luke 2:8-9 NLT

Of all the many surprises in the Christmas story this surely is one of the greatest. We have long since got used to the fact that the birth of Jesus was announced to shepherds, but they were surely the last people who you would have expected to hear about it. They were always last to hear the news. Their work forced them to live away from their communities. But more than that, shepherds were smelly and ritually unclean because of their work. How amazing that God gave them the front seats in the Christmas story!

If we had been given the responsibility of compiling an appropriate guest list to welcome the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, I would guess that shepherds might well have not made an appearance. We would certainly have included the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. If Jesus was their Messiah surely it would be crucial for them to be there? And then we would have thought about him meeting faithful worshippers

January 4, 2020

who had been praying for this moment for years. We could have come up with a long list quite easily but the idea of including some smelly, ritually unclean shepherds from the fields might well not have occurred to us.

But it did occur to God, and during Jesus' ministry he consistently reached out to people who lived

on the margins of society or beyond. The tax collectors, the prostitutes, people suffering from leprosy, the children – they were all really welcome because the Kingdom that Jesus came to bring was open to everyone.

It is tragically true that every society pushes some people to the margins. In our own day it is often determined by ethnicity, colour, age, wealth and physical fitness. That means that as we follow Jesus we need to keep a special eye on those who might get overlooked – because God will never overlook them, and he calls on us to embrace them with his love.





January 4, 2020

## QUESTION

Who are the equivalents of the shepherds in our own society?

## PRAYER

Thank you Lord that your love reaches out to all. Help us to pass on your love to those who are overlooked by society. Amen.

