



**Image of the day - Church of the Ascension
in Timoleague**

Reports

Westminster is imposing an unjust law - Northern Catholic Bishops

Compassionate care for a woman and her unborn child in pregnancy is not simply a healthcare issue say Catholic bishops slamming Westminster Government policy.

The Northern Catholic Bishops in a statement issued yesterday said, “ We encourage everyone who believes in the equal right to life and compassionate care for a mother and her unborn child to ask local candidates and political parties to explain their position on these interventions and on this most fundamental of all issues”.

The Bishops stress that the proposals also threaten the fragile balance of relationships at the heart of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

The text of the statement by the Bishops on the direction of the Secretary of State to introduce abortion services to Northern Ireland follows -

The decision last week by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis MP, to direct the NI Executive and Department of Health to make abortion services available in Northern Ireland by 21 March 2022, is gravely disquieting. It is the latest in a line of decisions by the current Westminster Government which we believe

threaten the fragile balance of relationships at the heart of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

Sadly, some of our local political parties seem content to welcome this unilateral move by Westminster on an issue which is of fundamental importance to local voters, while rightly challenging such unilateral impositions on other issues.

“Westminster has imposed an unjust law. Christians, and all people of good will, can never ignore the fact that unborn children are human beings worthy of protection” – Northern Catholic Bishops

With many others, from a wide range of moral, philosophical and religious backgrounds, we have consistently held that the right to life of every person, irrespective of stage of development or ability, is the prior and essential right of all other human rights. Our shared search for peace is driven in no small part by our collective rejection of the brutality and demeaning of human dignity that occurs when the right to life is diminished in any way. Thankfully, we live in an age when sensitivity to the preciousness and fragility of all life on our planet, even in its most microscopic forms, is better understood and appreciated. The failure to extend this sensitivity and care to our own fellow human beings in the womb, as well as to mothers in pregnancy will, we believe, one day be seen as a grave moral blindness on the part of this generation and a profound dereliction of our responsibility to uphold the most basic human right of all – the right to life.

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In unilaterally imposing this direction on the local Northern Ireland Assembly to provide abortion services, it is as if the Westminster Government, and those local parties who have supported them, believe the answer to the issue of providing compassionate care for a woman and her unborn child in pregnancy can be framed simply and exclusively as a “healthcare issue”. Absent from the discussion however are the thousands of unborn children, who have no legal protection and whose humanity is excluded from the political equation. It is for this reason that the argument for the protection of all human life can never be abandoned or referred to human rights experts alone. Westminster has imposed an unjust law. Christians, and all people of good will, can never stand silently by and fail to raise their voices at any attempt to ignore completely the fact that unborn children are human beings worthy of protection.

As our society prepares in coming months to engage in the ultimate expression of democratic participation – the election to our local Assembly – we encourage all Catholics, and those share our view on the inviolability of all human life, to reflect carefully on the issues raised by this succession of unilateral impositions by the Westminster Government. We encourage everyone who believes in the equal right to life and compassionate care for a mother and her unborn child to ask local candidates and political parties to explain their position on these interventions and on this most fundamental of all issues.

This statement is issued in the names of Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All-Ireland and Apostolic Administrator of Dromore; Bishop Noel Treanor, Bishop of Down and Connor; Bishop Donal McKeown,

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

Bishop of Derry; Bishop Larry Duffy, Bishop of Clogher; and, Bishop Michael Router Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh.

Facebook: Faith organizations and social media are a natural fit

“Faith organizations and social media are a natural fit because fundamentally both are about connection” – Facebook’s COO, Sheryl Sandberg introducing an online resource hub with tools to build congregations on the platform.

Facebook has a global faith director. It is partnering with churches and denominations, especially evangelical and Pentecostal, requiring nondisclosure agreements. It held a faith summit last month that included “testimonials” from faith leaders. It is developing new products like prayer sharing where you can post a prayer request and others will respond — and features like ads during streaming of worship services.

The New York Times and Reuters both have reports.

The New York Times:

The partnerships reveal how Big Tech and religion are converging far beyond simply moving services to the internet. Facebook is shaping the future of religious experience itself, as it has done for political and social life.... Leaders of the Church of God in Christ, a largely African American Pentecostal denomination of roughly six million members worldwide, recently received early access to several of Facebook’s monetization features, offering them

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new revenue streams, said the denomination's social media manager, Angela Clinton-Joseph. They decided to try two Facebook tools: subscriptions where users pay, for example, \$9.99 per month and receive exclusive content, like messages from the bishop; and another tool for worshipers watching services online to send donations in real time. Leaders decided against a third feature: advertisements during video streams.

...For churches like [Hillsong Atlanta](#), the ultimate goal is evangelism.

[Hillsong's pastor] is partnering with Facebook, he said, "to directly impact and help churches navigate and reach the consumer better."

"Consumer isn't the right word," he said, correcting himself. "Reach the parishioner better."

[Reuters:](#)

... Facebook's head of faith partnerships Nona Jones told Reuters in an interview ... prayer posts are used to personalize ads on Facebook, like other content. A spokesperson said the data could feed into how Facebook's machine learning systems decide which ads to show users. Advertisers will not be able to directly target ads based on the content of the prayer or use of the feature, the person said. The spokesperson also said prayer tool use would not be factored into the categories that ad buyers already use to slice up Facebook audiences based on a demonstrated interest in topics, like "faith," or "Catholic Church."...

... Some religious leaders and Group members said they wanted to see the same level of commitment Facebook had

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shown in launching prayers to dealing with abuse targeted at their communities on the site. Khizer Subhani, who runs a Facebook Group for Muslims in the Bay Area which was given early access to the prayers feature, said he welcomed the company's focus but weighed it against his frustrations over Facebook's handling of hate speech around religious groups on the platform.

People and places

Feeling the heat in St Patrick's Cathedral



Heat in St Patrick's Cathedral is a rare experience. The cathedral reported that "While most of Ireland was basking in the glorious sun of the last week, this section of our tile floors is a

casualty of the warm weather. The heat caused them to expand and crack, creating a rift down the centre of the

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nave. In the coming days they will be carefully lifted and salvaged where possible. Broken tiles will be replaced with a stock that we keep for events like this. In the meantime, the floor will be made safe for visitors and worshippers to walk on.”



Keeping cool at Belfast Zoo - photo courtesy of Jason Kernahan

Leadership change in Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade

This week the Ulster Regiment of the Church Lads and Church Girl's Brigade announced that their Regimental Commander - Mr Melvyn Lockhart, is retiring from his post. Melvyn has just completed his second four year term as

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Regimental Commander and is being succeeded by Mr John Williams.

Melvyn has also been appointed as a Deputy Governor of the National Organisation CLCGB in recognition of all the work he has done within the Ulster Regiment.

The Brigade wish them both God's richest blessing - for Melvyn during his retirement and for John taking up his new position within the Ulster Regiment and continuing to extend the Kingdom of Christ amongst our boys and girls.

Mullaghduin Parish dedicates new car parking and lighting project

An extension to the car park with associated lighting and landscaping has been completed at Mullaghduin Parish Church, near Letterbreen in Clogher Diocese.

The project which was undertaken during Covid-19 restrictions required the acquisition of additional land from a neighbouring landowner and the re-location of an electricity pole. The main entrance gates were also widened and rebuilt.

At a special Service of Evening Prayer with Dedication of the Extension to Mullaghduin Car Park and new Lighting System, the Rector, Canon Geoff Bridle paid tribute to those who had planned and carried out the work including Project Manager, Stanley Moffatt and his team of Thomas Elliott and



The new widened entrance extension to the car park lighting and landscaping at Mullaghduin Church.

Geoffrey Lucy. A gift was presented to Stanley by Canon Bridle to mark his leadership of the team.

He said it was one thing to have a vision but another to make it a reality even though the project was not without its challenges.

Canon Bridle praised the craftsmanship and the work which was carried out in meticulous detail.

The People's Churchwarden, Mr Dessie Coalter, asked Canon Bridle to dedicate the facilities on behalf of the parishioners.



The hymns; “O God, our help in ages past,” “A thousand ages in thy sight,” “Take my life and let it be” and “Bind us together, Lord” were sung accompanied by organist, Elizabeth Hazlett. Canon Bridle was assisted in the service by Parish Reader, Mr. Robert Watterson.

Following the service, members of the congregation who included those who gave bequests, viewed the new facilities and enjoyed refreshments outdoors.

Minister for Rural and Community Development visits Church of the Ascension in Timoleague

On Monday, 26th July, Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Social Protection, Minister for Rural & Community Development and Minister for Justice, visited the historic Church of the Ascension in Timoleague as part of the Our Rural Future Development Policy.



The Minister has been visiting projects in Cork that have been funded by her department's Rural Regeneration and Development Fund to see what communities are doing in cooperation with local authorities supported by her department funding.

Rev Kingsley Sutton says:

I thank minister Heather Humphreys for taking time within her busy schedule to prioritise a visit to see inside the unique Church of the Ascension in Timoleague. Phase 1 of a substantial conservation project has now been completed and the conservation team is delighted with the immense

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interest that is being generated around this West Cork Hidden Gem.

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Books, broadcasts, resources, and Webinars

Gender, Inclusion, Power & Politics (GIPP) Analysis Toolkit launch event

Co-created by Christian Aid the launch will take place online on 5th August | 9.30am – 11 am BST

The Evidence and Collaboration for Inclusive Development (ECID) programme is hosting a launch event for a new toolkit to support the design and implementation of effective and relevant development and humanitarian programmes.

The Gender, Inclusion, Power and Politics (GIPP) Analysis Toolkit aims to embed gender equality, inclusion and power analysis into locally driven political economy analysis.

When used in programming, the GIPP can support the development of a detailed picture of the root causes of problems, the roles of different stakeholders, and the processes to achieve positive change.

The GIPP was created by Christian Aid and Social Development Direct as part of the Evidence and Collaboration for Inclusive Development (ECID) programme, funded by UK Aid.

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Register at -

[<https://evidenceforinclusion.org/gipp-launch>]

Speakers -

Mike Battcock, Education, Gender and Equality Department at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) leading on the Civil Society Department's work on faith, diaspora and governance.

Srilatha Batliwala, Senior Advisor, Knowledge Building with Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA), an international organization that works at the intersection of gender, sexuality and human rights [www.creaworld.org], and Senior Associate for Gender at Work, a global network of gender experts supporting organizations to build cultures of equality and inclusion. [www.genderatwork.org]

Mercy Okeke, Gender and Inclusion Programme Officer with Christian Aid Nigeria, supports partners with strategies to effectively engage and empower marginalised groups to participate in decision making processes.

New Methodist Church course starting October 2021

Do you have a heart for mission and evangelism?
“We’re running a new course designed to equip us for joining in with God’s mission in the 21st century”.

Who is it for?

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“This course is for all Methodists who want to learn and grow in being missional disciples today, in both the local and the global context. If you want to think imaginatively about mission we invite you to register below”.

<https://buff.ly/3rCD0JJ>

Find out more here: <https://buff.ly/3zEfwGV>

Pray, study, serve – and be shaped by Christ in Community

Apply now to join the Community of St Anselm for 2021/22
The Community of St. Anselm is a one-year experience of monastic life for people aged 20-35 based at Lambeth Palace, London. Experience a transformative year of shared life, prayer, study and service. See -

<https://www.stanselm.org.uk/integrated-membership>

CMS Oxford Pioneer open day Zoom session

Sign up for a Pioneer open day and discover how you can be equipped to make a difference in your community.

Next open day: 27 July 2021 (1-2.30pm)

“We’re excited at CMS Oxford that we have one additional open day session on Tuesday 27 July 2021, 1.00-2.30pm via zoom.

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Sadly, we still cannot offer you coffee and sandwiches but we can share our vision for pioneering and, most importantly, see where that connects with you.

Many of our students are already pioneering and doing a number of exciting things before they come to us. If you study with us, you join a kind of family, and many say it's like coming home. It's been a tough year for so many of us, and we deserve to feel supported and encouraged in all we are doing in pioneering. So why not come along, via zoom, and find out what we at CMS can offer.

We will send out information before the open day session, including directing you to some inspiring short video clips.

When you are on the zoom, there'll be the chance to chat, share stories and listen to others on their journeys. We use breakout rooms to enable people to have the opportunity to connect with others. We'll be there for you to ask any questions of members of the CMS Pioneer team.

Our awards, in Theology, Ministry and Mission, are accredited by Durham University. You can join us for a one year Certificate or PG Certificate; a two year Diploma or PG Diploma; or the full BA or MA. We also now offer the chance to study the MA wholly online and offer an exciting new route through the MA, which focuses on the African Christian Diaspora.

We have a lot of experience in training pioneers to use their gifts, especially 'the gift of not fitting in'!

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We train ordinands in the Church of England, and work through a partnership with Ripon College Cuddesdon. If you are on that journey you may like to explore this with us (even if you are not a designated pioneer, you can train with us).

Whatever you are doing right now, whatever you are exploring, please do make contact and see if you would find a good home for study with us.

Join us, and be a big or small part of what we are doing in the coming year.

Booking essential. If you think we might be your type of place, please email pioneer@churchmissionsociety.org

Charles Wood Festival 2021 programme is now available

The Charles Wood Festival 2021 programme is now available! Whether it's indoor, outdoor, in-person or digital, its all ready for you this August

[] <https://charleswoodsummerschool.org>

Pointers for prayer

Gospel Reading: Matthew 14.22-33

Immediately after feeding the crowd with the five loaves and two fish, Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.

And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking towards them on the lake. But when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.' Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came towards Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

That the power of Christ may uphold us in peril and in our weakness, we pray in his name.

¶The Church of Christ

Lord, your Church finds itself in the midst of a tempest, as did that boat on the Sea of Galilee. The pounding waves that we hear are in part attempts by the world to understand and live harmoniously with the Church, and in part attempts at submerging the Church once and for all by those who have lost patience with what seems like hypocrisy and

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intransigence. The Church itself, for its part, causes turbulence in its dealings with the world in which we all live and move and have our being by seeming to seek only to condemn. Oh God, we ask you to help us raise our gaze once more heavenwards.

Lord, we beseech you to still first the waves and then our souls: in your mercy, hear our prayer

¶Creation, human society, the Sovereign and those in authority

Lord, when we see conflict between nations on every side, we feel powerless to help and fear to intervene lest we only exacerbate the situation. If there is a way to build understanding and to reduce fear, please show us how we might help to do this. Calm the storms, we pray, that trouble the world and deliver us from fear so that we may see love and faithfulness coming together, and justice and mercy embracing. Then may the world live in peace with each other, based on your love, truth and light.

Lord, we beseech you to still first the waves and then our souls: in your mercy, hear our prayer

¶The local community

Lord, give us the wisdom to know that so many of our difficulties are beyond our abilities to resolve unaided. In

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the storms of life, bid us come to you so that we, who are aware of our weakness, may be made strong in you. Give our community the confidence to believe that you will guide the future as you have the past. When we set out in faith to join you in the storms of life, let us not hesitate, lest we begin to sink, and need a miracle to survive.

Lord, we beseech you to still first the waves and then our souls: in your mercy, hear our prayer

¶Those who suffer

Lord, buoy up all those who feel themselves sinking beneath the waves of pain and sorrow. When we are in danger of being overwhelmed, increase our faith, and through every storm of life help us to keep our gaze fixed on you. If we should falter, or look down at the perils below us, we ask you to stretch out your hand to raise us up once more. So may we learn to hold fast to you, through good or ill, until we have passed through the valley of the shadows.

Lord, we beseech you to still first the waves and then our souls: in your mercy, hear our prayer

¶The communion of saints

Lord, we bring before you all those who have travelled over the tempestuous sea of this mortal life to reach the heavenly

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harbour of peace and felicity. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord, we beseech you to still first the waves and then our souls: in your mercy, hear our prayer

Speaking to the Soul

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

Philippians 2:1-2 NLT

One of the biggest problems with unity is that it looks so easy. If you listen to a fine orchestra playing harmoniously or a watch Premier Football team playing with skill and precision, it all looks so very straightforward. Surely anyone could do it! But I then recall the hours that I spent in our school orchestra and those regular Saturday afternoons when I played football, and I can assure you that unity is the result of incredibly hard work. Paul was equally clear about this. He knew that the Philippian Christians had received the gift of unity in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. But they still needed to work incredibly hard to ensure that their lives reflected the unity that Jesus had achieved for them.

In these verses the apostle Paul pleads for unity. He tells the Philippian church that if they have been touched by

Christ's love in any way or experienced the fellowship of the Spirit, then it was their responsibility to do everything possible to build up the unity of the church. In the course of normal life it is often extremely difficult. Agreeing wholeheartedly with one another might be easy if we were the same age and had similar backgrounds, but churches are never like that. And they never should be! Agreeing together is the product of lashings of love, grace and patience but is never easy. Working together with one mind and purpose is so important for every fellowship and I have seen that happen time and again. However, it only occurs when there is an atmosphere of encouragement and forgiveness. Our task is not to dream of a distant vision of harmony but to think through our words and actions to ensure that we are only ever contributing to the unity of the church right now.

QUESTION

What are you able to do to build unity amongst the Christians you know?

PRAYER

Dear Father, thank you that you are the source of all unity. Help me to work hard to preserve and strengthen the unity that you give us by your Spirit. Amen

