

January 10, 2022

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Image of the day - Bristol Cathedral

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Bristol Cathedral

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People and places

Bishop calls on the faithful to reach out to many in 2022

The Bishop of Down and Dromore the Rt Rev David McClay has called on parishioners in his diocese to put their resources, time, talents and finance into reaching many for Christianity in 2022.

The bishop in a New year message, said they must faithfully, through prayer and action, pass on the faith to the next generation.

Appealing to parishioners, the bishop added: “Pray that our diocesan events and activities in 2022 will all be used by God to strengthen and grow His church and service to give God great glory. Pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit to bring about renewal to God’s church and the equipping of the church to make many more disciples for Christ.”

Installations and institutions

Canon Paul Arbuthnot, Incumbent of Cobh & Glanmire Union of Parishes was installed yesterday as Prebendary of Castleknock in Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

Yesterday Canon Patrick Bamber and Canon Hazel Hicks were installed as Archdeacons in a service at St John's, Sligo. Rev. Linda Frost, Rev. Andrew Ison and Rev.

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Christiaan
Snell were
installed as
Canons at the
service.

Canon Paul Arbuthnot



Thursday 20th
January –
Service of
Institution of
the Revd
Lindsey Farrell
as incumbent
of Christ
Church,
Maguiresbridge

and St. Michael's Derrybrusk in Maguiresbridge at 7.30pm
conducted by the Bishop of Clogher, the Right Revd Dr. Ian
Ellis.

Thursday 27th January – Service of Institution of the Revd
William Jeffrey, as incumbent of Lisbellaw with Coolbuck at
7.30pm conducted by the Bishop of Clogher, the Right Revd
Dr. Ian Ellis.

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Clergy family of mum who died in crash makes donation to charity close to her heart

The family of a woman who died following a road traffic collision in Co Antrim has made a generous donation to Ballymena foodbank in her memory, Amy Cochrane writes in the Belfast Telegraph

Aurelia Kelly (54) was the driver of a car which was involved in the collision with a lorry on the A26 on November 4.

She was the wife of Church of Ireland minister Reverend Trevor Kelly, curate of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion and supported a range of local charities, with the foodbank being particularly close to her heart.

In the summer of 2020, Mrs Kelly arranged a “Doorstep Drop Donation Appeal”, for people to leave donations for the foodbank in her garden during the pandemic.

That December, it became a Christmas Doorstep Appeal, with her garden transformed into a “vintage Christmas at home” with decorations.

Her family, including her husband Trevor, daughter Rebecca, son Andrew and daughter-in-law Laura, now want to ensure her kind-hearted legacy lives on and for Christmas 2021 continued her tradition of collecting for the local foodbank.

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They collected food at the family home in Ballymena and were also supported by bus manufacturer Wrightbus, where Andrew works in the accounts department. Their donation was made earlier this week to Ballymena foodbank.

Andrew said: “We wanted to ensure that mum's work continued, and we have been overwhelmed not only by the donations people have made, but also by so many kind words that people have said about mum.

“We're grateful to everybody who has donated, and I would also like to thank my colleagues at Wrightbus for their generous contributions.

“Christmas without mum was not the same, but by continuing with the collection for the foodbank we made sure we are still helping the people that she dedicated so much time to helping.”

Following Aurelia's death, many tributes were paid to her.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, was among those extending his condolences to Mrs Kelly's family at the time.

He said: “Aurelia was much loved by her family and by the parish families in the Connor diocese where she lived and served. She was a lady who made a wonderful contribution to the lives of those around her.”

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In a social media post, the grouped parishes of Craigs, Dunaghy and Killagan said: “As a parish, we are very saddened to learn of the tragic passing of Aurelia Kelly.

“Aurelia was a well-loved lady throughout our grouped parishes, she had a huge heart and spent many hours supporting various charities in many creative ways.”

Courtesy the Belfast Telegraph 08/01/2022

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts and books

New ‘cathedral’ of digital worshippers emerges from online broadcasts

Members of a new “cathedral” of online worshippers formed since the first lockdown played a key role in the Church of England’s 100th national online service broadcast this past weekend.

Prayers were read by people who joined a regular digital worshipping community that grew through YouTube and Facebook broadcasts of national online services.

The first national online service was broadcast from the crypt chapel at Lambeth Palace on Mothering Sunday 2020 as the nation went into lockdown. Since then a service has been broadcast every Sunday – with additional services broadcast over Easter, Advent and Christmas.



The broadcast on Sunday, marking the milestone of the 100th service, was led by the Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields Dr Sam Wells, with a sermon from the Rev. Isabelle Hamley, who oversees the Church of England's national online services.

More at -

[[] [https://
www.churchofengland.org/
media-and-news/press-
releases/new-cathedral-digital-
worshippers-emerges-online-
broadcasts](https://www.churchofengland.org/media-and-news/press-releases/new-cathedral-digital-worshippers-emerges-online-broadcasts)]



News Reports

More than 20% of priests and brothers have died in past three years

More than 21% of Ireland's entire population of parish priests and brothers — both serving and retired — have died in just three years, Neil Michael reports in the Irish Examiner.

The Association of Catholic Priests says that parishes are going to have to be amalgamated, churches closed, and fewer Masses held.

Fr John Collins, one of the ACP's directors, said: "The figures are shocking. It is very sad to see so many have died in such a short space of time.

"We are all aware of an ageing priest population, but it is only when you look at the figures that you realise what a high number it is.

He added that the number of those dying every year is "only going to keep rising".

The number of serving Diocesan priests was officially recorded by the Catholic Church as being around 2,067 in 2014.

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However, this was when the number of priests aged 75-84 was increasing steadily compared to previous years, as was the number of priests aged 65-74.

By the end of 2018, there were an estimated 1,800 working priests and around 720 retired priests, some of which were still helping out for holiday and sickness cover.

The list of most — but not all — clerical deaths in Ireland is contained each year in the Irish Catholic Directory, the official directory of the Irish Catholic Church published by Veritas Publications on behalf of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

According to those statistics, 174 nuns and 166 priests and brothers died in 2019.

A further 191 nuns died in 2020, and 223 priests and brothers also died.

Up to September 2021, another 131 nuns had died, as had 131 priests and brothers.

However, the figures from the directories are likely to be conservative, because not every religious order or diocese reports the death of its clergy to Veritas.

In addition, according to Rip.ie, at least another 76 nuns, at least another 36 priests, and five religious brothers died between October and January 4 this year.

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The Irish Examiner reported recently that the number of priests is set to decline dramatically over the coming months as pressures on parishes from the pandemic ease.

Courtesy The Irish Examiner 08/01/2022

Pope praises Sister for her 50 years of LGBTQ Catholic ministry.

Pope Francis has sent a new letter to Sr. Jeannine Gramick, SL, cofounder of New Ways Ministry and a longtime LGBTQ advocate, praising her for her 50 years of LGBTQ Catholic ministry.

The letter to Sister Jeannine, which praises her for "50 years of closeness, of compassion and of tenderness," follows two earlier letters to New Ways Ministry from the Pope, and



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marks a significant step in the Vatican's outreach to LGBTQ people.

Also: an extensive interview, on the occasion of the Pope's letter and her 50th anniversary, on the history of her LGBTQ ministry.

Link -

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/01/07/sister-jeanine-gramick-new-ways-ministry-242155>

Presbyterian Church posts guidance for pastoral care of people who struggle with gender identity

A biblical framework and guidance for pastoral care of people who struggle with gender identity was posted on its web site on Friday last by the Presbyterian Church.

It states - "This resource is for kirk sessions and anyone in a congregation who provides pastoral care to people who struggle with their gender identity and/or their families and others close to them. This includes ministers, deaconesses, pastoral workers, youth workers/leaders and elders who may be involved in providing one to one pastoral care. It also extends to the whole church family as they seek to be a caring fellowship. This resource is intended to help equip those who provide pastoral care rather than to be given to those in need of pastoral care."

It continues - "People who struggle with their gender identity can experience discomfort or even distress due to a sense of 'mismatch' between their gender identity and their

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biological sex (the term used for someone medically diagnosed with this sense of distress is ‘gender dysphoria’ – see the glossary for more detail). This is related to the term ‘transgender’ which refers to people who have adopted a gender identity which is not the same as their biological sex.”

The introductory statement concludes, “This guidance is produced with significant input from expert practitioners in the areas of pastoral care, psychology and education. It should be noted that legislation and medical approaches are subject to changes and the guidance is as accurate as possible as of June 2021.”

Link to complete statement -

[[] <https://www.presbyterianireland.org/Resources/Pastoral-Care/A-biblical-framework-and-guidance-for-pastoral-ca.aspx>]

Rathgar Presbyterians object to church threats to dismiss minister in same-sex row

Presbyterians in Rathgar, Dublin, have expressed dismay at threats by the Presbyterian Church to dismiss Sandymount minister Rev Dr Katherine Meyer and to discipline the Sandymount church council for allowing a gay man to become a council member, Patsy McGarry writes in the Irish Times

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Rev Meyer and the Christ Church Sandymount council have been ordered to recant following the appointment of Steven Smyrl, who is in a same-sex marriage, to the council.

A commission of the church's Dublin and Munster Presbytery gave Rev Meyer and the council until December 20th last to back down or face disciplinary proceedings on January 18th.

The minister and the council have refused to back down.

At an emergency general meeting on Tuesday last, Presbyterian members at Christ Church Rathgar passed resolutions expressing "our distress and dismay over the situation within the Dublin and Munster Presbytery regarding our sister congregation in Sandymount".

They said "we stand with their minister, the Rev Dr Katherine Meyer, the Sandymount church council and the Sandymount congregation in the belief that they have been treated unfairly in this process", and "respectfully request [the] presbytery to review its position and to reconsider the implications of their actions".

'Greatly troubled'

The Irish Times understands that in its response to the Dublin and Munster Presbytery on December 20th last, the Sandymount church council robustly defended its decision to admit Mr Smyrl as a member and said it was "astonished and greatly troubled" at the treatment of Rev Meyer.

It also responded to an assertion by the Dublin and Munster Presbytery that Rev Meyer and the Sandymount church

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council “supported” and “endorsed” a homosexual relationship between two of its members that “[the presbytery had] characterised as ‘sexually immoral’” through a reference to scripture.

“We believe this conclusion to be completely unsubstantiated and therefore unjustified,” the council said. The conclusion belonged “only to the realm of conjecture” and was therefore “without foundation”.

For its part the church council had “no evidence of any ‘sexually immoral’ behaviour” in the case and pointed out that “under the terms of the Irish Constitution any enquiry or challenge regarding the nature of any couple’s relationship would amount to a breach of their right to privacy in family life and is therefore unlawful”.

As members of the church council, “in common with the ordinary folk in the pews, we have a responsibility to bring our own informed consciences and pastoral insights to our understanding of scripture and its outworking in our daily lives, and we cannot accept that the message of Christ our Saviour provides a mandate to marginalise and exclude”, they said.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland “has been left trailing in the wake of ordinary members who feel they can no longer countenance teachings which exclude and marginalise”, they said.

Courtesy The Irish Times 06/01/2022

Perspective

Epiphany - Jesus is Star guiding people to joy by Pope Francis

Just as the Magi were guided by a shining star, Christians can rest assured that the light of Christ will guide them to a happy and meaningful life, Pope Francis said on the feast of the Epiphany.

“The Magi teach us that we need to set out anew each day, in life as in faith, for faith is not a suit of armor that encases us; instead, it is a fascinating journey, a constant and restless movement, ever in search of God,” the pope said.

Pope Francis celebrated the feast day Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica Jan. 6.

In accordance with an ancient tradition, after the proclamation of the Gospel, a deacon chanted the announcement of the date of Easter 2022 (April 17) and the dates of other feasts on the church calendar that are calculated according to the date of Easter.

After celebrating Mass, the pope led the recitation of the Angelus prayer with visitors in St. Peter’s Square.

In his Angelus address, the pope said that in prostrating and worshipping baby Jesus, the humble Magi showed that their true wealth did not lie in fame or success, but in “their awareness of their need of salvation.”

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Like the Magi, Christians must also follow their example of humility, otherwise, “if we always remain at the center of everything with our ideas, and if we presume to have something to boast of before God, we will never fully encounter him, we will never end up worshipping him.”

“If our pretensions, vanity, stubbornness, competitiveness do not fall by the wayside, we may well end up worshipping someone or something in life, but it will not be the Lord,” the pope said.

Earlier, in his homily at Mass, the pope reflected on the journey of the Magi to Bethlehem. Although “they had excellent reasons not to depart,” having already attained knowledge and wealth, the three men “let themselves be unsettled” by the question of where the Messiah would be born.

“They did not allow their hearts to retreat into the caves of gloom and apathy; they longed to see the light,” the pope said. “They were not content to trudge through life, but yearned for new and greater horizons. Their eyes were not fixed here below; they were windows open to the heavens.”

The “spirit of healthy restlessness” that led them on their journey, he explained, was “born of a desire” to seek something greater than themselves or what they possessed.

Christians also must live their journey of faith like the Magi, which “demands a deep desire and inner zeal,” and they must ask themselves whether their faith has remained stagnant in a “conventional, external and formal religiosity

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that no longer warms our hearts and changes our lives,” he said.

“Do our words and our liturgies ignite in people’s hearts a desire to move toward God or are they a ‘dead language’ that speaks only of itself and to itself?” he asked. “It is sad when a community of believers loses its desire and is content with ‘maintenance’ rather than allowing itself to be startled by Jesus and by the explosive and unsettling joy of the Gospel.”

Departing from his prepared remarks, the pope said it was also sad when a priest or bishop closes the door to a desire for God and instead falls into “clerical functionalism.”

The current crisis of faith in life and in society, he added, is “related to a kind of slumbering of the spirit, to the habit of being content to live from day to day, without ever asking what God really wants from us.”

And, he said, Christians must allow themselves to be “unsettled by the questions of our children, and by the doubts, hopes and desires of the men and women of our time.”

Their journey, he said, also mirrors the upcoming Synod of Bishops on synodality, which is a time of listening “so that the Spirit can suggest to us new ways and paths to bring the Gospel to the hearts of those who are distant, indifferent or without hope, yet continue to seek what the Magi found: ‘a great joy.’”

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The Magi's journey ends with the adoration of baby Jesus, Pope Francis noted.

“Indeed, our hearts grow sickly whenever our desires coincide merely with our needs,” the pope said.

“God, on the other hand, elevates our desires; he purifies them and heals them of selfishness, opening them to love for him and for our brothers and sisters. This is why we should not neglect adoration: let us spend time before the Eucharist and allow ourselves to be transformed by Jesus,” he said.

Poem for today

A Christmas Childhood by Patrick Kavanagh

One side of the potato-pits was white with frost –
How wonderful that was, how wonderful!
And when we put our ears to the paling-post
The music that came out was magical.

The light between the ricks of hay and straw
Was a hole in Heaven's gable. An apple tree
With its December-glinting fruit we saw –
O you, Eve, were the world that tempted me

To eat the knowledge that grew in clay
And death the germ within it! Now and then
I can remember something of the gay

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Garden that was childhood's. Again

The tracks of cattle to a drinking-place,
A green stone lying sideways in a ditch,
Or any common sight, the transfigured face
Of a beauty that the world did not touch.

My father played the melodion
Outside at our gate;
There were stars in the morning east
And they danced to his music.

Across the wild bogs his melodion called
To Lennons and Callans.
As I pulled on my trousers in a hurry
I knew some strange thing had happened.

Outside in the cow-house my mother
Made the music of milking;
The light of her stable-lamp was a star
And the frost of Bethlehem made it twinkle.

A water-hen screeched in the bog,
Mass-going feet
Crunched the wafer-ice on the pot-holes,
Somebody wistfully twisted the bellows wheel.

My child poet picked out the letters
On the grey stone,
In silver the wonder of a Christmas townland,
The winking glitter of a frosty dawn.

Cassiopeia was over

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Cassidy's hanging hill,
I looked and three whin bushes rode across
The horizon — the Three Wise Kings.

And old man passing said:
'Can't he make it talk —
The melodion.' I hid in the doorway
And tightened the belt of my box-pleated coat.

I nicked six nicks on the door-post
With my penknife's big blade —
There was a little one for cutting tobacco.
And I was six Christmases of age.

My father played the melodion,
My mother milked the cows,
And I had a prayer like a white rose pinned
On the Virgin Mary's blouse.

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