



A singing robin has been causing quite a stir since he started 'tweeting' on his arrival in St. Mary's Cathedral, Killarney December 10th. Fr Dick Dowling listens for the singing robin after Mass in the cathedral.

On a wing and a prayer: robin nests in Killarney cathedral crib

Fr Dick Dowling says a robin that has taken up residence at St Mary's Cathedral in Killarney has



become a local star and people can't get enough of his performances.

Irish Independent - "The first time I heard him I thought it was music coming from the crib but he's become a real star over Christmas.

"If there's any noise or singing in the church it seems to attract him and he's chirping away. He gave a virtuoso performance at our midnight mass on Christmas Eve but like St Augustine

said, when you sing you pray twice, and he's encouraging the congregation to sing too," Fr Dowling said.

It is thought the robin made his way into the cathedral when the doors were open to bring in materials for the crib, where he has since made his home.

When parishioner Catherine Flynn realised he wasn't leaving the church, she began to leave food for him in the crib.

"He was like a little Christmas messenger for us. He was sent from above to make Christmas a little bit different in The Cathedral this year," Fr Dowling added.

Continental tour promised in cleric's Armagh organ recital

The monthly series of organ recitals in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh, will continue on Sunday 18 January 2015 at 4.15pm, when the recitalist will be the Cathedral's Assistant Organist, the Revd Dr Peter Thompson.

Peter's willingness to participate in this year's series was evident when he said, *"It is always a pleasure to play such a magnificent instrument, and to demonstrate its versatility in recital work."*

The versatility of the Cathedral organ will be shown through the range of music for the recital which Peter explained as follows, "I will open the programme with Lang's Tuba Tune, a work redolent of Handel, exploring one of the most magnificent and distinctive sounds in the organ's palate. This will be followed by music by Alec Rowley, and the Irish premiere of a suite of pieces by the Leeds-based composer, Tim Knight."

Peter continued, "From twentieth century England we will travel to Baroque Germany, and to the music of the greatest organist-composer, Johann Sebastian Bach. We will then move forward to twentieth century France with two pieces from another of the greatest composers for the instrument, Louis Vierne, whose ebullient Carillon de Westminster will bring the recital to a close."

The Very Revd Gregory Dunstan, Dean of Armagh, said, "Those of us who worship in the

Cathedral know Peter's skills as a sensitive accompanist of the choir and a confident leader of the congregation. He brings these skills together in voluntaries and recitals, infused with an obvious and infectious joy in playing. We look forward to another of Peter's characteristically exuberant programmes."

Irish and Scottish Kirks split on gay issue

Irish Presbyterianism has distanced itself considerably from a vote by the Church of Scotland which has moved the Scottish Kirk closer to the ordination of gay clergy.

News Letter - The Church of Scotland, in a radical decision of a majority of its 45 presbyteries, voted to allow congregations to appoint a minister who is in a same-sex partnership.

A final decision on the issue will be taken at the church's General Assembly in Edinburgh in May.

The Church of Scotland has historically been referred to as the "Mother Church" of Presbyterianism, but the Presbyterian Church in

Ireland is a subordinate body, totally separate from the Scottish Kirk.



***Rev Jim
Stothers***

The Rev Jim Stothers, deputy clerk of the Irish Presbyterian General Assembly, said the issues being discussed and voted on in Scotland are not on his church's agenda now or in the foreseeable future.

“Our view of marriage in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is that it is exclusively a partnership between a man and a woman,” said Mr Stothers. He declined, however, to comment on matters which, he said, were the sole business of the Church of Scotland.

Each year, moderators of the Irish and Scottish churches attend the Presbyterian General Assemblies in both Belfast and Edinburgh, and the relationship is cordial, but does not impinge on either church.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/regional/irish-and-scottish-kirks-split-on-gay-issue-1-6511576>

Poots' ban on gay men giving blood biased, says judge

Former health minister Edwin Poots' ban on gay men giving blood in Northern Ireland was infected by apparent bias, a High Court judge ruled on Thursday.

News Letter -Mr Justice Treacy also held there had been a "very troubling lack of candour" and attempt by the DUP MLA to conceal the fact he had taken a decision to maintain the lifetime prohibition.

He also backed claims by lawyers for a homosexual man that Assembly comments showed Mr Poots' stance was influenced by his Christian beliefs.

The verdict strengthens a previous finding in October 2013 that the ban is irrational.

At that time the judge had reached no conclusion on allegations that the decision was prejudiced by religious views.

Prior to departing from office Mr Poots launched an appeal against the finding against him. British Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt is also contesting the ruling.

With the appeal hearing due to get underway later this month, Mr Justice Treacy was asked to make a further determination on the claims of apparent bias. More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/poots-ban-on-gay-men-giving-blood-biased-says-judge-1-6510916>

West Cork C of I primary school pupil tops in global problem-solving challenge

A pupil at a West Cork primary school has come in the top 1% of 750,000 children worldwide who

took part in an online problem-solving challenge programme.

Irish Examiner - In all, 13 pupils at Saint Matthias' Church of Ireland National School in Ballydehob received certificates for their high placings in the worldwide Bebras Challenge, which introduces children to the basics of problem solving and computer science.



Saint Matthias' C of I National School pupils took part in worldwide challenge

One student came in what school principal, Ian Haseldine, said was the “first percentile” worldwide, while other pupils came in the top 26th percentile and others in the top 36th percentile.

The achievement comes after the school carried out fundraising to buy 14 iPads to be used by pupils in third to sixth class, with the school placing a special focus this school year on problem solving and numeracy.

Of Bebras, which originated in Australia and which is now played in more than 40 countries, Mr Haseldine said: “We just started it this school year. They have enjoyed it.”

He said the school had almost done away with school books this year and was instead focussing increasingly on the use of iPads to teach skills that could be applied in areas such as IT in the future, following a decision by the board of management to increase the focus on those elements of the curriculum.

There are just 26 students in the whole school at Saint Matthias’ and Mr Haseldine said he had just placed orders for another four iPads that can be used by other pupils.

According to the bebras.org website: “Bebras is an international initiative whose goal is to promote informatics (or computer science, or computing) and computational thinking,

especially among teachers and pupils of all ages, but also to the public at large by extent.”

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/irish-pupil-tops-in-global-problem-solving-challenge-305949.html>

Belfast Cathedral candles mark Paris atrocity



Twelve candles are today burning in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, in tribute to the 12 people killed in the attack in Paris.

There is a candle for each of the victims who died in the shooting at the office of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo. They surround a central candle representing unity with the victims.

Many people have come into the Cathedral to pray for those who died in this terrorist attack, and prayers specially written for the victims are also available.

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, said: "In St Anne's Cathedral people of all ages have come and gone today lighting candles and praying, remembering the dreadful murders yesterday in Paris. Our hearts go out to all who have been personally affected and we shall continue to pray for all who live under the threat of violence."

The candles will remain in St Anne's until Sunday.

Scots Church in Paris responds to the atrocity

Prayers will be said at the Scots Kirk in Paris this weekend for those murdered in the attacks in the city, their families, and others left injured and

frightened by the atrocity and the ongoing events.



Rev Jim Cowie, minister at the Scots Kirk in Paris, will lead the congregation in offering prayerful support for those affected and that peace and tolerance may prevail.

Rev Jim Cowie, minister at the Scots Kirk for the last four years, says while the French people have made it clear they will stand up to this provocation, there is an element of fear within the city. He will lead the congregation in offering prayerful support for those affected and that peace and tolerance may prevail.

Mr Cowie says he believes the challenge can be overcome greater cooperation between the faith communities in France, and a model for this already exists. "The need for continued and increased inter faith dialogue in France is essential if people of different faiths are to live in peaceful co-existence. The French youth movement "coexister" is a growing movement of young people of different faiths and none, exploring practically, what it means to live together harmoniously, and is an inspiration to those seeking to further such dialogue."

The Church of Scotland has offered its support to the following statement from the Edinburgh Interfaith Association:

"The senselessness of the acts of murder in Paris is shocking. That they were carried out supposedly in the name of God only increases that sense of futility and outrage. Words cannot express the horror of such acts, nor do justice to the sense in which this was an attack upon, and betrayal of, so much that we hold dear. Edinburgh Interfaith Association stands in solidarity alongside the people of Paris gathered in the Place de la Republique in their refusal to allow this violent act to have the final word.

Neither will we allow it to define our view of Islam. We assert that the future for our world, and for religions, will be found in respect for others, dialogue through freedom of expression, and collective action that seeks the wellbeing and flourishing of all."

Archbishop Oscar Romero was a martyr, declare Vatican theologians



A flag with an image of the late Archbishop Oscar Romero

Archbishop Oscar Romero was murdered "in hatred of the faith", a panel of theologians at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints has ruled.

The decision, reported by the Italian bishops' newspaper **Avvenire**, is a huge step on the Salvadoran archbishop's path to canonisation, a process that began at the diocesan stage in 1994, 14 years after his murder on March 24, 1980. It has been with Rome since 1997, promoted by the postulator Mgr Vincenzo Paglia.

Archbishop Romero was assassinated while serving Mass in El Salvador in 1980 by Right-wing death squads. His murder came a day after he had said in a homily that soldiers should obey God's commands and put down their guns.

Archbishop Romero's Cause was opened at the Vatican two decades ago but was delayed for years as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith studied his writings, amid debate over whether he had been killed for his faith or for political reasons. In 2013 Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family and official promoter of Archbishop Romero's Cause, said the process had been "unblocked".

Last year Robert Mickens of Global Pulse said that Archbishop Romero will **"almost certainly" be beatified in 2015**, and that Francis may skip

the beatification and canonise him in San Salvador.

In May 2014 Pope Francis assured the bishops of El Salvador that the Cause of the murdered archbishop was proceeding.

Media digest

Bishop of St Albans calls for holistic approach to combat deprivation

The Bishop of St Albans, Alan Smith, has called for a long term "holistic" approach to combating deprivation and promoting social mobility.

He was speaking in a debate in the House of Lords on the case for early years intervention in breaking the cycle of deprivation and promoting social mobility.

<http://churchinparliament.org/2015/01/08/early-years-intervention-speech-by-bishop-of-st-albans/>

BBC

Report that details of interim arrangement for oversight of Anglican churches in the Channel Islands has been released. It states that the Diocese of Canterbury has taken responsibility for finance, ministry and training and

safeguarding, while the Winchester diocese will keep legal responsibility for administrative affairs, for example issuing licenses for new clergy. Appointments will be overseen by the Bishop of Dover, Trevor Wilmott, who is the archbishop's representative.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-jersey-30726781>

Mail/Ind/Tel

Further articles on the Charlie Hebdo killings and defending freedom of speech as cartoonist around the world speak out, while a catholic group criticizes the magazines cartoons. France observes silence in memory of those who died.

[http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2902756/Fanatics-fear-cartoonists-NEVER-silenced-Mac-Mail-reveals-stance-Paris-massacre-says-stand-defend-freedom-speech.html?](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2902756/Fanatics-fear-cartoonists-NEVER-silenced-Mac-Mail-reveals-stance-Paris-massacre-says-stand-defend-freedom-speech.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490)

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/charlie-hebdo-journalists-provoked-their-own-slaughter-with-disgusting-record-says-american-catholic-group-9965225.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11332607/France-falls-silent-in-honour-of-those-killed-in-Paris-attacks.html>

Times/Guard/Ind/Eve Standard

Times columnist calls for Islam to turn its back on terrorist radicals and rediscover its true roots,

while other papers say killings have nothing to do with the Muslim faith.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article4318097.ece>

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/08/france-bloody-intolerant-history-bloodshed-muslims>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/charlie-hebdo-how-exactly-would-we-like-muslims-to-condemn-these-attacks-9966176.html>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/charlie-hebdo-try-explaining-to-your-children-what-happened-9966071.html>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/07/charlie-hebdo-islam-prophet-muhammad>

<http://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/london-life/frances-cassandra-why-michel-houellebecq-predicts-an-islamist-france-in-2022-9964796.html>

Tel

Jemima Thackray, a Chaplain in Winchester city centre, writes about joining Twitter and having to defend her faith against online abuse.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11332566/Twitter-is-a-difficult-place-for-a-religious-bitch-like-me.html>

Tel

Report that a 16th-century painting worth up to £150,000 will not be sold abroad by Hexham Abbey after a judge ruled it should be saved for the nation, with the possibility of loaning it to a

museum or gallery to be "fully and properly explored". *The Descent of Christ from the Cross* by Flemish artist Pieter Coecke Van Aelst, had recently been returned from longterm loan at a local gallery and the Abbey had stated that high insurance costs would "divert funds from mission and ministry".

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11332326/New-home-needed-for-150000-painting-church-cannot-sell.html>

Mirror

Column on the selection process at Greys Hospital Church of England School in London which it states has adjusted its admission rules so that 88 places will be awarded to children of parents who have a record of attending Anglican mass weekly for at least the past five years. It says this is still not a criteria that struggling single parents might easily meet.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/you-cant-faith-state-schools-4941699>

Times

Opinion article calls for changes in law to stop bogus weddings.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/thunderer/article4318018.ece>