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Banned "silenced" Irish priest defies Church to celebrate mass

One of Ireland's most prominent 'silenced' priests has announced he will defy Church authorities

when he turns 70 later this month by celebrating a public Mass in his local community center.

Fr. Tony Flannery, the outspoken founder of the Association of Catholic Priests, was banned from public ministry nearly five years ago by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) for his liberal views on women priests, homosexuality and contraception.

Since the start of his censureship the respected Redemptorist, from [Athenry, Co. Galway](#), has spoken of his heartache at being forced by Church leaders to turn down a number of invitations to lead Mass in public places - including an occasion last March when he reluctantly declined an offer to conduct a service to dozens of cancer sufferers.

He has since accepted there is little chance of the Vatican leaders ever relaxing their ban on him, meaning a return to the priesthood is highly unlikely. However, the defiant cleric, who turns 70 on January 18, has vowed to end his "five years in the wilderness" by celebrating Mass four

days after his milestone birthday in his local community center.

In [a statement on his website](#), he said: "I am now in my fifth year when I am forbidden by Church authorities to minister publicly. I have decided to honor my age, and my lifetime, by ignoring the Church censures and celebrating a public Mass.

"Since I would not be allowed to do so either in a [Catholic church](#) or other Catholic-controlled building, I have chosen, with the kind permission of the committee, to celebrate it in the local community hall in the village where I now live."

Outlining the reasons for his decision to celebrate Mass publicly, Fr. Flannery insisted his motivation wasn't solely on the grounds of defying Church leaders, nor would it be the start of an unofficial ministry. He explained: "For the last five years I have been in something of a 'limbo' state, neither fully in or fully out of the priesthood. I have known from an early stage that there was no possibility of a resolution of the dispute between myself and the Vatican. So this public Mass will be for me a way of acknowledging the forty years of my life, and the

work I did as a priest - a way of acknowledging who I am.

"Since my dispute with the Vatican went public I have received enormous support from people all over the country, and indeed internationally. Eucharist is essentially a thanksgiving and in this Mass I am giving thanks for the goodwill of many people.

"Since the beginning of my difference with the CDF, I have consistently held to one fundamental point. I don't have any problem with the Church exercising authority. Every institution needs an authority structure. But authority must be exercised in a way that is just, and that respects the dignity of the person.

"In my experience, and in the experience of many others whom I have come to know in these past years, Church authority is exercised in a way that is unjust and abusive. For that reason I hope that my action will highlight once again the urgent need for change in the way the Vatican deals with people who express opinions that are considered to be at odds with official Church

teaching."

Fr. Flannery's Mass will take place in Killimordaly Community Center, near Athenry at 2:30pm on Sunday, January 22 and will be followed by refreshments at a local pub. He added: "In celebrating this public Mass I am also saying something else that I regard as important. The Mass, the Eucharist, is not in the ownership of the CDF, or indeed of the Vatican. It belongs to the believing communities. That was where it began in the early Church, and where it finds its true meaning. My hope is, in this time of great change and upheaval in Church and society, that the believing communities begin, by whatever means possible, to regain ownership of the Eucharist."

Parish Resource Pack for World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2017

The Council for Immigrants of the Irish Bishops' Conference has released a parish resource pack to celebrate the World Day for Migrants and Refugees on Sunday 15 January 2017. The pack



"I ask everyone to help those who, for various reasons, are forced to live far from their homeland and are separated from their families."

- Pope Francis

Download the 2017 Parish Resource Pack from www.catholicbishops.ie

contains the following useful resources to be used on Sunday and throughout the year:

- Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 103 World Day of Migrants and Refugees
- *The Plight of Unaccompanied Refugees in Europe* – Nasir's Story
- European Union Unaccompanied Minors Statistics
- Prayers of the Faithful
- Suggested Homily Notes

- Parish actions remembering child migrants on the World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Parishes are at the centre of welcoming the stranger in our midst, particularly the vulnerable and those in need who are on the periphery of our communities. As Pope Francis stated in his message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2016: “Faced with the tragedy of tens of thousands refugees fleeing death on account of war and hunger and who are traveling toward a hope for life, the Gospel calls us to be ‘neighbours’ to the smallest and abandoned, (and) to give them a concrete hope,” He continued it is not enough just to say “courage, patience!” because hope “is combative, with the tenacity of those who go toward a safe destination. I make an appeal to the parishes, to religious communities, to monasteries, and sanctuaries of all Europe to express the concreteness of the Gospel, and to welcome a family of refugees.”

In this year’s message Pope Francis builds on this theme of welcome for migrants and refugees and focuses on ‘*Child Migrants, the Vulnerable and the Voiceless*’. Pope Francis says, “I feel

compelled to draw attention to the reality of child migrants, especially the ones who are alone. In doing so I ask everyone to take care of the young, who in a threefold way are defenceless: they are children, they are foreigners, and they have no means to protect themselves. I ask everyone to help those who, for various reasons, are forced to live far from their homeland and are separated from their families.”

Pope Francis goes on to say, “Childhood, given its fragile nature, has unique and inalienable needs. Above all else, there is the right to a healthy and secure family environment, where a child can grow under the guidance and example of a father and a mother; then there is the right and duty to receive adequate education, primarily in the family and also in the school, where children can grow as persons and agents of their own future and the future of their respective countries. Indeed, in many areas of the world, reading, writing and the most basic arithmetic is still the privilege of only a few. All children, furthermore, have the right to recreation; in a word, they have the right to be children.

“And yet among migrants, children constitute the most vulnerable group, because as they face the

life ahead of them, they are invisible and voiceless: their precarious situation deprives them of documentation, hiding them from the world's eyes; the absence of adults to accompany them prevents their voices from being raised and heard. In this way, migrant children easily end up at the lowest levels of human degradation, where illegality and violence destroy the future of too many innocents, while the network of child abuse is difficult to break up.”

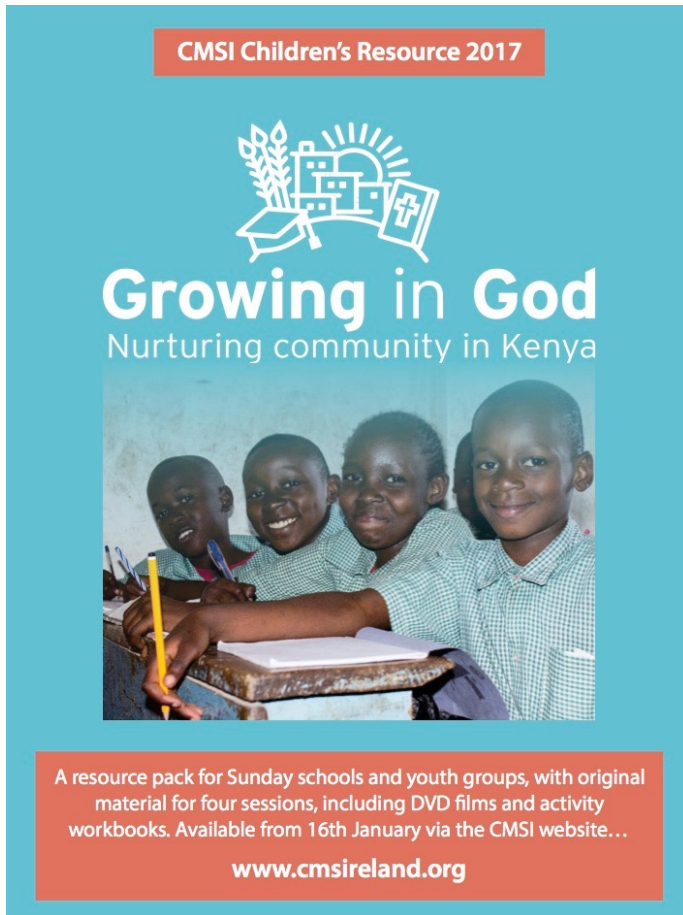
Pope Francis challenges us all “to work towards protection, integration and long-term solutions.”

Click here to download the [World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2017 Parish Resource Pack](#) for 2017.

Click [here](#) to download the text of the Pope's message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Launches of Growing in God: CMSI Children's Resource 2017

On January 16 CMSI will launch its Children's Resource for 2017. **Growing in God** considers what it means to grow as part of God's family and



explores the importance of community work in global mission. There's a particular focus on the work of the *Urban Development Programme* of All Saints' Cathedral in Nairobi, Kenya.

As with previous years, the pack includes original material for four age groups, across four

sessions, with DVD films, workbooks and a range of suggestions for crafts and other activities.

The pack will be launched at a special event in CMSI's Belfast office next Monday at 7.30 pm, but the resource will also be presented as part of CMSI's series of *Impact* roadshow events in the coming weeks.

For further details of the Growing in God resource, the Impact events or to order your resource packs online, visit the CMSI website: **www.cmsireland.org**.

This includes an event in Kill O' The Grange Parish halls on Monday January 23 at 8.00 pm.

Three events will be held in Connor Diocese:•
Sunday January 22, 3pm; St Patrick's
Halls, Ballymena

Tuesday January 24, 7:30pm; St Patrick's Halls,
Coleraine

Monday February 27, 7:30pm; CMSI Offices,
Dargan Road, Belfast

Two gatherings in Down and Dromore: Thu 26th
Jan, 7:30pm; Holy Trinity Halls, Banbridge and

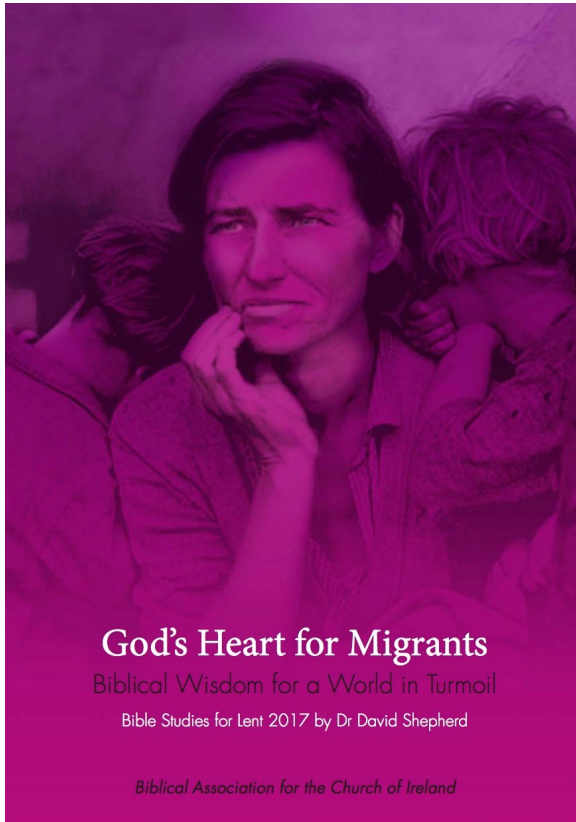
Tue 31st Jan, 7:30pm; Bangor Abbey Parish
Halls

God's Heart for Migrants – C of I 2017 Lent Bible Study

God's Heart for Migrants – Biblical Wisdom for a World in Turmoil, the Biblical Association for the Church of Ireland's seventh Bible Study resource, will be launched on January 24 by the Archbishop of Dublin. The study has been produced for BACI by Dr David Shepherd of TCD (and formerly of Belfast Bible College) and involves five Bible studies focusing on migration.

Issues associated with immigration and refugees are hardly out of the headlines at the moment.

“While these problems are complex and Christians need to look in a variety of directions for answers, one crucial source of wisdom for a world in the turmoil of migration is the Scriptures, and especially that part of the Scriptures in which some of us spend less time: the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible,” the introduction to the study states.



God's Heart for Migrants

Biblical Wisdom for a World in Turmoil

Bible Studies for Lent 2017 by Dr David Shepherd

Biblical Association for the Church of Ireland

The five Bible Studies are designed to aid reflection on the lessons offered today by the migration experiences of the Jewish people: from Abram on – to Canaan, Egypt and back, through the Exodus experience and the giving of the Law, to Ruth the Moabite and the challenges that faced her, and on again through the Babylonian exile to consider the perceived status of “pilgrims

and sojourners here on earth” common to Jews and Gentiles alike in the early Church.

The study booklet will be formally launched by Archbishop Michael Jackson at 12.45 pm on Tuesday January 24 at Church House, Rathmines, and copies of the studies will be available to buy on the day.

Copies will be available from Christ Church Cathedral and St Patrick’s Cathedrals in Dublin and further stockists may be advised by BACI hon treasurer and distribution manager, Barbara Bergin (berginba@gmail.com). The copies will cost €2.50, with a 10% reduction offered to who buy and take delivery of their copies at Church House on January 24. This will also avoid postage costs. Copies will also be available to download for free from the BACI website <www.bibliahibernica.wordpress.com>

Church Must Have ‘Central Role’ In PM’s ‘Shared Society’, Says EA

The Church must play a “central role” in creating Theresa May’s “shared society”, the Evangelical Alliance has said.



The Prime Minister gave a speech on Monday laying out her vision to tackle injustice and create opportunity for everyone. Speaking at The Charity Commission's annual lecture in London, May gave her most significant policy announcement in months, vowing to improve mental health care.

Danny Webster, spokesman for the Evangelical Alliance (EA), warned churches must not be forced to sign up to values that go against their beliefs in order to work with authorities.

The Church must be “freed to play its part in achieving the shared society envisaged by the

prime minister”, the EA’s statement insisted, calling for more recognition of the role of faith groups.

Webster told Christian Today: “A shared society has to be a plural society which respects and supports different belief systems rather than trying to enforce an artificial agreement which undermines the beliefs that prompt so much of Christian social engagement.”

The EA also criticised David Cameron’s ‘Big Society’ notion for playing “second fiddle to the social and economic agendas of liberalism”. It called for a focus on relationships and said “the Church has a key role to play in fostering and supporting those relationships”.

Restoring Church of the Nativity is like ‘touching heaven’, say workers

The Italian firm restoring one of Christianity’s holiest sites — the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem — says it’s more than half-way finished with the €14 million-project, which

has already uncovered a Crusades-era mosaic angel hidden under plaster.

Piacenti SpA, a family-run conservation firm from the Tuscan town of Prato, won the contract to restore the biblical place of Jesus's birth and began work in 2013 alongside Palestinian workers.

The overhaul became necessary after Unesco listed the site as endangered, with its leaky roof, rotting wood beams and centuries of built-up candle wax that blackened the brilliant mosaics ringing the interior.

Piacenti CEO Giammarco Piacenti said Monday the work is among the most satisfying of the restorers' careers because they are "touching heaven with their fingers."

The high point so far has been the discovery between two windows of a mosaic angel that had been covered over with plaster following an earthquake in the 1830s. The angel — the seventh in a sequence of angels walking toward the site of the Nativity — emerged after restorers using thermographic cameras noticed a change in the plaster colour.

“We started to search and then the first tiles of the mosaic appeared, soon a wave of euphoria raced through all the restorers,” Piacenti said. “This was a beautiful discovery.”

The Church of the Nativity was first built by St Helena in the 4th century over the grotto where the Virgin Mary is said to have given birth to Jesus. Rebuilt in the 6th century, it is a major pilgrimage site bringing sorely needed tourism funds to the West Bank town.

The Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian churches share ownership of the church, and run it according to a 19th-century agreement that assigns responsibilities for upkeep that are jealously guarded by each denomination.

The churches have traditionally viewed each other with suspicion and have had fraught relations that prevented previous restoration efforts. But the Palestinian Authority eventually persuaded them to agree to the works after it became clear the church was falling into potentially disastrous ruin.

The restoration, which Piacenti estimated would cost €14 million, has progressed in phases as funding has come through from countries and individual donors, particularly from the Palestinian diaspora. He estimated another €5 million was still needed.

The first phase involved replacing the roof and windows. Now workers are redoing the electricity. With about 60 per cent of the work finished, the final phases include restoring columns and pavement. Works are expected to be finished by 2020, when Bethlehem is expected to be named the Arab world's capital of culture, he said.

News briefs

+++ Tallow Group of Parishes Song of Praise and Healing - “We are absolutely delighted to host Songs of Praise and Healing Service in thanksgiving for the recovery and return home of Gemma Willis. Sunday 15th January at 3pm in St. Michael's, Aghold. Proceeds of a retiring collection will go to support the Willis family's expenses in altering their home, and to the Spinal Unit at The Mater Hospital, and to the

National Rehabilitation Hospital.” Facebook notice

+++ Mental Health awareness training for Youth Workers - A morning of practical help and guidance for anyone working with young people. The session will be led by **‘Flourish!’** – A Churches’ Initiative on Suicide ‘promoting emotional wellbeing and supporting people bereaved by suicide’ and **‘Lighthouse’** offering support and help for people affected by suicide and bereaved families’ This event is free but please [click on Ticket link to register.](#)

When: Thursday 26th January 9.30am. Where: YouthLink, Farset Enterprise Park, 638 Springfield Rd, Belfast, BT12 7DY

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

De La Salle: Report criticises West Belfast’s school's 'culture of intimidation'

BBC News

Inspection report criticises pupil safeguarding arrangements and 'culture of intimidation' at a west Belfast school.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-38564083>

Irish woman cleared of killing husband setting up a new life as a church leader in Co Leitrim

Irish Mirror

Lesley Ann Gault revealed she will run a **church** alongside her second ... **News** of the couple's move was announced to churchgoers over the festive ...<http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/irish-woman-cleared-killing-husband-9587085>

Ireland's man of the century, TK Whitaker, dies aged 100

The Journal

The humble civil servant created the blueprint for modern Ireland with his economic policies.

<http://www.thejournal.ie/tk-whitaker-rip-3110790-Jan2017/>

Christian Today/Bromsgrove Advertiser

Reports that the Queen has appointed a priest who serves as a Canon at Worcester Cathedral as her newest chaplain. The Revd Georgina Byrne will be the youngest of 34 honorary chaplains to the Queen. She will preach occasionally in her new role at the Chapel Royal in St James' Palace, London, alongside her duties as Residentiary Canon at Worcester Cathedral.

Christian Today

Reports criticism by former Bishop of Rochester, Michael Nazir-Ali, of a Koran reading at an Epiphany service held on Friday at the Scottish Episcopal Church's Glasgow Cathedral. The congregation at St Mary's Cathedral heard the Koranic version of the news that Jesus was to be born to Mary, from the Koran's Sura 19, sung by Madinah Javed.

Christian Today

Further coverage that a British scientist believes he has come up with a far more accurate representation of what Jesus actually could have looked like. Richard Neave, a retired medical artist from the University of Manchester, first released the image in 2015 – but the depiction has recently returned to prominence online.

Letters

The miracle of the church that was open 24/7

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/09/miracle-of-the-church-that-was-open-24-7>

Obituary

Guardian: Jill Saward.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jan/09/jill-saward-obituary>

Comment

Christian Today

The Remarkable Impact of Oak Hill's Mike Ovey on a generation of evangelicals – by Lee Gatiss, Director of Church Society

Huffington Post

Remembering Jill Saward

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-kate-cook/remembering-jill-saward_b_14039274.html?1483952753&

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