



The inquiry follows revelations last year of a mass grave in Tuam, Co Galway

Irish public inquiry into mother-baby abuse - Archbishop Jackson of Dublin welcomes scope of investigation

Pressure is mounting on Northern Ireland to launch a public inquiry into decades of alleged abuse at so-called mother and baby homes after the Irish Republic announced a three-year probe into more than 14 institutions.

News Letter - The state inquiry is being set up after fresh revelations last year about a mass grave at a Catholic run home for unmarried mothers in Tuam, Co Galway, where 796 infants died between 1925 and 1961.

Judge Yvonne Murphy leads a team of three commissioners who will investigate what happened to more than 35,000 women and children – mostly placed in homes after being ostracised by their families – between 1922 to 1998.

The causes of deaths at the homes, burials, vaccine trials carried out on children, how residents ended up there, how they were treated and where they went afterwards will all form part of the mammoth inquiry.

Former residents will be able to give evidence in private. Others compelled to give evidence face imprisonment or hefty fines if they fail to bear witness or produce requested documents.

The human rights organisation Amnesty International is demanding a similar probe be set up in Northern Ireland, where it has identified 12 mother and baby homes or Magdalene Laundry-type institutions which operated over the last century.

“Women in Northern Ireland have told Amnesty they suffered arbitrary detention, forced labour, ill-treatment, and the removal and forced adoption of their babies – criminal acts in both domestic and international law,” said Patrick Corrigan of Amnesty International.

“Two years after first asking, victims in Northern Ireland still cannot get an answer from (First and Deputy First Ministers) Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness on whether there will be an inquiry here.”

While the Republic’s inquiry itself can not bring criminal charges, findings can be referred to the Garda and prosecutors for investigation. Catholic and Protestant-run homes are to be investigated.

Judge Murphy will be joined on the three-person commission by historian Professor Mary Daly and Dr William Duncan, a child protection legal expert.

The inquiry is expected to seek co-operation from authorities outside the state, including Northern Ireland, Britain and the US about the fate of former residents.

More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/republic-sets-up-inquiry-into-mother-baby-abuse-1-6513455>

The C of I Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson in a statement said -

‘I welcome today’s announcement of the Terms of Reference for an investigation into mother and baby homes and a range of related matters to be chaired by Ms Justice Yvonne Murphy. I note that three Protestant homes will be considered, one of which is Bethany Home. Bethany Home has been a matter of significant concern to a number of former residents, the Bethany Survivors Group, with whom I have met on several occasions. As I have said previously I have been conscious of the strength of their feeling that the State has not examined the Home in a similar way to other institutions, until now. For this reason, among others I welcome today’s news. The plight of those who have suffered and still suffer remains a pastoral concern to me.’

Dublin priest receives standing ovation after saying he is gay during Mass

A priest in Dublin received a standing ovation from his congregation as he came out as gay after his sermon where he called for same sex marriage equality in Ireland.

Father Martin Dolan has been a priest at the Church of St Nicholas of Myra in Francis Street in Dublin's city for 15 years.

On Saturday past Fr Dolan confided in his parishioners during Mass and also on the Sunday morning.

He called on his congregation to support same sex marriage in the upcoming Irish referendum at the end of May.

He said: "I'm gay myself."

The statement was met by applause and a standing ovation from his "proud" parishioners.

Speaking to the Irish Sun community youth worker Liz O'Connor said: "We are all very proud of Fr Martin. Because he has admitted that he is

gay he doesn't change the person that he was before it."

The priest is currently on a pre-planned holiday and will return to his parish soon.

A source within the Catholic Church told the Sun: "He had the break all planned before all this came out in case people think he is running to the hills.

"He was just doing his service, it was part of his homily, and that's it."

Ms O'Connor said the congregation would not like to see Dolan leave his parish.

www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jan/10/dublin-priest-gay-congregation-ovation

Irish Presbyterian figures stress little appetite for gay Presbyterian debate

Top Presbyterian figures have indicated there will likely be no appetite for rethinking the church's opposition to gay clergy in the decades ahead – or maybe at all.

New Letter - Following the decision to back the ordination of gay clergy by most presbyteries of the Church of Scotland, the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland said it has not considered the idea and nor is it likely to.



Rev Trevor Gribben

Trevor Gribben said the Scottish vote will have caused “sorrow” and “regret” for many this side of the Irish Sea.

Adding to comments from a colleague earlier in the week, he said: “It’s not an issue that’s on the agenda for our church.

“Our church is very clear in its position. There is no move to change that position, or even to discuss changing it. We haven’t considered that at all.”

Asked if he would expect it to be on the agenda in 10 or 20 years’ time, or never, he replied: “I can’t foresee our church changing its position.”

When asked if he expects any change in his lifetime, Donald Watts, former clerk of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, thought it unlikely.

Figures this week revealed the breakdown of the Scottish vote, showing that 1,391 of its presbytery members backed the ordination of gay clergy, with 1,153 against.

A final decision on the matter will be made by the Scottish church in May.

More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/regional/presbyterian-figures-stress-little-appetite-for-gay-presbyterian-debate-1-6513912>

Irish imam highlights issue of extremists hijacking Muslim faith



Shaykh Muhammad Umar Al-Qadri (Pictured) told his congregation at Friday prayers that the prophet Muhammad would never have condoned Islamic extremists who killed people in his name.

Muslims must accept there is a problem with extremists hijacking their faith, one of Ireland's most prominent imams has said.

Irish Times - Shaykh Muhammad Umar Al-Qadri told his congregation at Friday prayers that the prophet Muhammad would never have condoned Islamic extremists who killed people in his name. He said the prophet himself had highlighted extremism when he was alive 1,400 years ago.

Shaykh Al-Qadri addressed a packed congregation at Friday prayers at the Al-Mustafa Islamic Educational and Cultural Centre in west Dublin.

He told them there was no point in blaming extremist terror on the United States or the Jews. Muslims themselves were the biggest victims of extremism.

He referenced the killing of 140 children in Pakistan recently by the Taliban and the indiscriminate shooting of civilians by Boko Haram in Nigeria as two incidents where Muslims were the victim.

One of the policemen shot dead in the raid on Charlie Hebdo was also a Muslim, he pointed out. “We as Muslims must admit and must accept that there is a problem of extremism among Muslims. We cannot deny it: IS (Islamic State), Boko Harem, Taliban, al-Qaeda. After accepting and acknowledging it, then we must put our heads together to do something about it.”

He condemned extremists as the “biggest blasphemers of all” and said they were anti-Islamic.

“He (Mohammed) condemned extremism in all forms,” Shaykh Al-Qadri said. “He said Islam is a religion of balance. He called extremists the worst of the worst people. He called them the dogs of hell.”

The iman recounted how, in his lifetime, Muhammad had been mocked, insulted and called a magician. He had to leave his home and seek refuge in Medina. While he was worshipping, he had camels intestines thrown on him.

“How did he deal with this? Did he take revenge on people?” Shaykh Al-Qadri asked. “No, he said he was sent by Allah as a mercy to everyone. “

More at -

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/irish-imam-highlights-issue-of-extremists-hijacking-muslim-faith-1.2060939>

Belfast muslim's praise for Islamic State's rule in Mosul

Leading Northern Ireland muslim Dr Raied Al-Wazzan of Belfast Islamic Centre has praised jihadist group Islamic State's rule in Iraq.

News Letter - IS, a radical Islamist group whose tactics include mass killings and abductions of minorities, overran the northern city of Mosul last June.



Dr Raied Al-Wazzan

Mosul is “the most peaceful city in the world”, Dr Al-Wazzan said yesterday. “These people are less evil than the Iraqi government.”

Western governments had created the conditions for for IS by “establishing a failed state in Iraq, run by militias”, he said.

“Islamic State came to protect a section of society that had been marginalised, and foreign policy had pushed part of society to reach this point,” he told BBC Radio Ulster’s Talkback.

While mainstream Islam “never supports radicalisation”, he said, it was “important to look at the facts”.

“Look at what’s happened in Mosul now – it was attacked for the last 11 years, people were murdered just because they had the wrong name and were persecuted for a long time,” he said.

“Since the Islamic State took over, it has become the most peaceful city in the world. Yes there are other things going wrong there... they are murdering people, I agree, but you can go from east to west of the city without fear.

“My family is living there at the moment and that’s what they are telling me.”

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/belfast-muslim-s-praise-for-islamic-state-s-rule-in-mosul-1-6513904>

Antisemitism in France: the exodus has begun

As gunmen attack a kosher supermarket in Paris, Jews there will pack their bags even faster

Daily Telegraph - The least surprising thing about today's turn of events in Paris is that Jews are the target. Because when it comes to home grown anti-Semitism, France leads the world.

A survey last year from the European Jewish Congress and Tel Aviv University found that France had more violent anti-semitic incidents in 2013 than any other country in the world. Jews were the target of 40 per cent of all racist crimes in France in 2013 – even though they comprise less than 1 per cent of the population. Attacks on Jews have risen sevenfold since the 1990s.

No wonder Jewish emigration from France is accelerating. From being the largest Jewish community in the EU at the start of this decade, with a population of around 500,000, it is expected by Jewish community leaders to have fallen to 400,000 within a few years. That figure is thought by some to be too optimistic. Anecdotally, every French Jew I know has either already left or is working out how to leave.

Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet refusenik who is now chair of the Jewish Agency Chairman, said last year that 2,254 French Jews moved to Israel during the first five months of 2014, against only 580 in all of 2013. That is a staggering 289 per cent increase, but in recent months the figure is thought to have increased exponentially.

The number expected to leave this year for Israel was estimated at over 10,000 – and that was before today's events. And that is just to Israel. Many are coming to Britain as part of the wider French exodus under President Hollande.

David Tibi, the then leader of Paris's main Jewish umbrella group, left last July. As he told the Jewish Chronicle: "There is an atmosphere of anti-Semitism in the streets. My daughter was attacked in the tramway, so was my son. The aggressors made anti-semitic comments and pushed them around. We no longer have a place in France."

The Jewish school shooting in Toulouse in 2012, in which four people were murdered at point blank range by a French-born jihadist trained in the Middle East; the growing support for Marine Le Pen's National Front; and the mass popularity

of anti-Semitic public figures such as comedian Dieudonné, are all part of the undercurrent of anti-Semitism that frames French life. And more recently synagogues have firebombed and Jewish areas attacked by mobs.

Almost of all these attacks have been carried out by Muslims.

More at -

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/11335980/Antisemitism-in-France-the-exodus-has-begun.html>

Islamist fundamentalists 'have higher degree of intolerance'

A study of Muslim immigrants in Europe has concluded that fundamentalism is far greater in this group than among Christians.

Church Times - The results of the study by Professor Ruud Koopmans, of the Free University, Amsterdam, appear in the January edition of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (Routledge, Taylor & Francis), in an article, "Religious Fundamentalism and Hostility

against Out-groups: A Comparison of Muslims and Christians in Western Europe".

Research was carried out among immigrants from Turkey and Morocco, who form the largest group of Muslim immigrants in Europe (though not in the UK). Koopmans makes a distinction between religiosity and fundamentalism: respondents (immigrant Muslims and native Christians) were tested against three propositions:

- Christians [Muslims] should return to the roots of Christianity [Islam];
- There is only one interpretation of the Bible [the Qur'an] and every Christian [Muslim] must stick to that;
- The rules of the Bible [the Qur'an] are more important to me than the laws of [survey country].

Among the sample, almost 60 per cent agreed that Muslims should return to the roots of Islam, 75 per cent thought that there was only one possible interpretation of the Qur'an, which is binding for every Muslim, and 65 per cent said that religious rules were more important to them than the laws of the country in which they lived. A

little less than half, 44 per cent, agreed with all three statements.

By contrast, the respective figures for Christians were: 21, 17, and 13 per cent; only eight per cent agreed with all three statements.

The article can be read online at:

www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369183X.2014.935307

Corrymeela Thomas Merton Retreat



The Croi

A weekend of contemplation and monastic prayer led by Brendan McAllister, a Corrymeela member.- 16th – 18th January 2015 at Corrymeela Ballycastle

The design of the retreat reflects some features of monastic life: chanting of the divine office, times of meditation and contemplation, readings from Merton and about Merton; periods of silence and also time for group discussion.

Beginning at tea time on Friday 16th, the retreat will conclude with lunch on Sunday 18th.

The cost for this weekend retreat is £100 Per Person Sharing/£120 Single Occupancy.

<http://www.corrymeela.org/events/the-thomas-merton-retreat/>

Blessed are the Brave - A Retreat for LGBT affirming faith leaders

A Retreat for LGBT affirming faith leaders. The cost for this weekend is £100 per person sharing and £120 single occupancy. 6th - 8th February 2015 at Corrymeela Ballycastle

<http://www.corrymeela.org/events/blessed-are-the-brave/>

Clerical institutions

On Friday evening at 7.30pm the Bishop of Cashel, Ferns & Ossory will introduce the Revd Margaret Sykes as part time priest-in-charge of

New Ross and Fethard and the service will also mark her new role as Diocesan President of the Mothers' Union.

Later in the same evening, at 8pm, the Archbishop of Dublin will institute the Revd Adrienne Galligan to the incumbency of **Rathfarnham** in succession to the Revd Ted Woods who has retired. Ms Galligan, who is the Dublin & Glendalough Director of Ordinands, has been Rector of Crumlin & Chapelizod since 2008.

US bishop facing manslaughter charge in custody

In a spectacular fall from grace, Maryland's second-highest ranking Episcopal leader and the first female bishop in her diocese was charged with drunken driving and manslaughter after fatally striking a cyclist in late December.

Heather Cook, 58, turned herself in to authorities Friday, according to her attorney, David Irwin. Online court records show Cook's bail was set at \$2.5 million. It was unclear late Friday whether she had posted bail. A trial is scheduled for Feb. 6.

The charges came less than a week after the national Episcopal Church opened an investigation into Cook, whose ties to the church span generations.

On Dec. 27, Cook struck and killed Tom Palermo, 41, while he was riding his bicycle. According to prosecutors, Cook left the scene for 30 minutes before returning, and registered a blood-alcohol content of .22 percent after the wreck. Palermo died of a head injury at a nearby hospital later that day.

Less than four months earlier, Cook was ordained as the diocese of Maryland's first female bishop. She attended an Episcopal girls school and had served as a boarding school chaplain, an assistant at a parish in New York and a member of two diocesan staffs. Her father, also a priest, raised his family in the historic Old St. Paul's Episcopal Church rectory in downtown Baltimore. According to Cook's autobiographical statement, when she was ordained as a deacon, her father removed "the stole from around his own neck and placed it over mine."

Cook's father, like her, had a history of alcohol abuse. In 1977, the Rev. Halsey Cook told the Old St. Paul's congregation in a sermon that he

was an alcoholic suffering a relapse and seeking treatment, calling alcoholism "a rampant epidemic in our society" and a "fatal disease, not only of the body but of the mind and spirit," according to an article that year in The Baltimore Sun.

Heather Cook, too, has had repeated problems with alcohol. In 2010, Cook was charged with drunken driving on Maryland's Eastern Shore after registering a blood alcohol content of .27 percent. Police found wine, liquor and marijuana in her car. The drug charges were dropped after Cook pleaded guilty to the drunken driving offense, and she received probation. Diocese of Maryland spokeswoman Sharon Tillman said those charges were disclosed to search committee members during a vetting process as the diocese searched for a new bishop. However, the information was not shared with those people - clergy and lay church members - who voted among four finalists.

Charlie Hebdo attack 'sowed death', says Pope as he prays for perpetrators of shooting

Pope Francis has condemned the terrorist attack at the Paris offices of the satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, and during Mass prayed for the 12 people who died in the shooting.

Four of the magazine's well-known cartoonists, including its editor-in-chief, were among those killed, as well as two police officers, when masked gunmen opened fire.

The Pope said the horrific attack “sowed death”, “deeply disturbing all peace-loving people, far beyond the borders of France.”

“Whatever may be the motivation, homicidal violence is abominable. It is never justifiable. The life and dignity of all are to be guaranteed and protected with decision. Every incitement to hatred should be refuted. Respect must be cultivated,” he said.

He also sent a telegram to the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, promising his prayers for the bereaved “and the sadness of all the French”.

At Mass at the Domus Sancta Marthae, where he lives, Pope Francis prayed not only for the

victims of the attack, but added: "We pray also for the perpetrators of such cruelty, that the Lord might change their heart."

Earlier the Vatican said in a statement that the shootings, in which seven people were also injured, were a "double act of violence, abominable because it is both an attack against people as well as against freedom of the press".