



Don't push young people to the margins, urges Pope as 2017 begins

Pope Francis strolled through St Peter's Square on Saturday evening during the last frigid hours of 2016, exchanging New Year's Eve greetings with the faithful.

Francis made his way through the crowd to pray in front of the life-size Nativity scene following the traditional Vespers, also called evening prayer, inside St Peter's Basilica.

Along the way, he stopped to kiss children on the cheek and shake hands with well-wishers, occasionally accepting small gifts that he handed off to his body guards. People in the crowd held up their smartphones and tablets to snap pictures of the Pontiff.

During the evening prayers, the Pope [called on the faithful](#) to help young people find purpose in the world, noting the paradox of “a culture that idolises youth” and yet has made no place for the young.

“We have condemned our young people to have no place in society, because we have slowly pushed them to the margins of public life, forcing them to migrate or to beg for jobs that no longer exist or fail to promise them a future,” Francis said.

More than responsibility, the Pope said the world owed young people “a debt” because they have been deprived of “dignified and genuine work” that would allow them to take part in society,

instead condemning them “to knock on doors that for the most part remain closed”.



New Year brings a combination of the exciting and the predictable, Archbishop Jackson

In a New Year message the C of I Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev Dr Michael Jackson says, “A New Year brings with it a combination of the exciting and the predictable. Many people try to gather with friends and family to see in The New Year. Others connect by modern media with people special to them the world over in ways we might never have considered possible even in the recent past. Others remain hopeless and homeless. Journeying from one year to another is not, nor has it ever been, all about jollification. Nor indeed should it be so.

“We all have the opportunity to make resolutions as a New Year beckons us forward. These resolutions can be big or small but they should always be generous. They can be local or global but, again, they should always be generous. Those of us who are blessed and who have blessings should count our blessings as we share them. And it is in such generous sharing that we will, in turn be blessed, by The Other, The Stranger, The Refugee, The Neighbour in our midst – whoever, wherever, whenever.”

**Religious education transmits a
“holistic world view”**

Religious education is transmitting a holistic world view with very sound values that underpin a lot of the stuff that is valuable in our society, according to Seamus Mulconry, general secretary of the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA).

Mr Mulconry was responding to a proposal to take religion out of the core primary school curriculum. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has proposed that the 'core' curriculum should be a minimum of 60 per cent of each school day, dealing with maths, English and Irish. The other 40 per cent of the day, designated 'flexible time', would be for roll call, assembly, breaks, and discretionary curriculum time, including the school patron's religious programme.

Agreeing that there was a problem of curriculum overload in primary schools, Mr Mulconry said that abolishing religion was not the answer and consultations on the issue should not be "obsessed" with religious education.

"We don't think any consultation should be obsessed with religion," he told the Irish Times. "We think there should be an objective appraisal

of what the issues are and not simply a focus on one thing.”

From some of the commentary, said Mr Mulconry, it seemed that if you took religion from the curriculum you could basically turn out quantum mechanics experts in the next week. “We need to be realistic about what is going on here.” Religion was not indoctrination, but taught children about ethics and current social issues like homelessness and refugees, he said. “When there are discussions about ‘no room at the inn’ you can be fairly sure that people are learning about the real issues of homelessness.”

“Religious education is transmitting a holistic world view with very sound values that underpin a lot of the stuff that is valuable in our society. When people are thinking of cutting it down or dumping it they need to do some very, very serious thinking.”

According to the director of the Iona Institute think tank, the NCCA proposals show some hostility to denominational schools and appear to row back on a former agreement with the Department of Education and denominational schools made in the mid 1990s, which said

that religious education would remain part of the core curriculum.

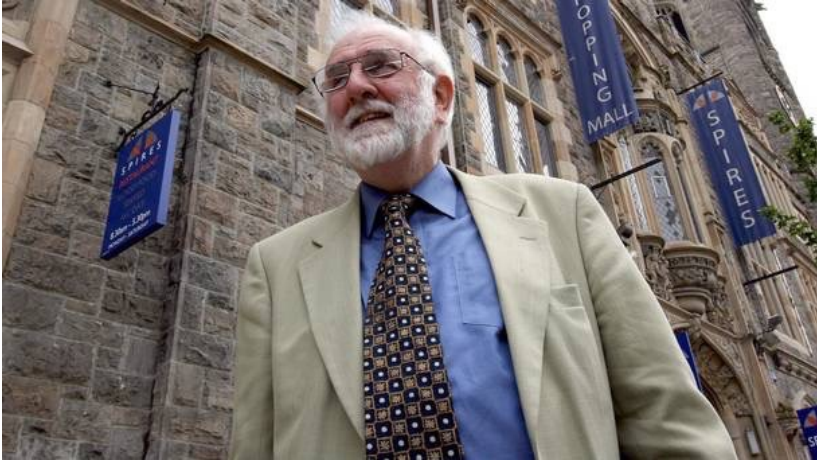
“It’s hard to read it any other way,” David Quinn told the Irish Times, “... if you combine it with the push for ERB and Ethics [a religious education syllabus which doesn’t focus on any one faith], for which there was no evidence of any real public demand, and now they want to see religious education dropped as a core part of the curriculum.”

Mr Quinn said that “It defeats the purpose really of having a faith-based school if they can’t have religious education as part of the core curriculum.”

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment consultations will run through the spring of 2017.

State papers : Former Moderator advised his children to leave Northern Ireland

A former leader of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland encouraged his children to move away from Northern Ireland because he believed



Former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, the Rev Dr John Dunlop, encouraged his children to leave Northern Ireland in the 1980s, newly released archives show

Britain will eventually pull out, according to just released state papers, the Belfast Telegraph reports.

Rev John Dunlop, a North Belfast minister known for his cross-community peace-building and who went on to become Moderator of the church, met an Irish government official at his home in December 1986.

Notes of the meeting, just released in the National Archives in Dublin, show Rev Dunlop "speculated that, in the longer term, the British

Government would decide for financial reasons to withdraw from Northern Ireland".

"The (Anglo-Irish) Agreement already pointed in this direction.

"He believed that in that eventuality a lot of unionists would move to Britain.

"Already quite a few unionists (including himself) were advising their children to seek employment not in Northern Ireland but in Britain."

State papers : Cardinal O Fiach less than enthusiastic about newly arrived Archbishop Eames

In a meeting between then-Cardinal Tomas O Fiach and an Irish government official in 1986, the Catholic Church leader let it be known he was less than enthusiastic about his new ecclesiastical neighbour, states a report in the Belfast Telegraph.

"Eames, whom he has known for years, has a poor ecumenical record and, at the personal level, is something of a 'cold fish'," the official reported being told by Cardinal O Fiach in a missive to the Taoiseach's office.

The Catholic leader indicated he would have preferred then Bishop of Derry and Raphoe James Mehaffey to take up his opposite number in Armagh.

Lord Eames was active in Ulster Unionist circles, said Cardinal O Fiach, but he remarked he would keep an "open mind" about him as he appeared constructive about the recently-signed Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Separately, then-Bishop Cathal Daly - who went on to become Catholic Archbishop of Armagh - also confided in an Irish official in February 1986 that he had his doubts about the new Anglican leader.

"From his time as Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Eames does not have a good record as an ecumenist and in private conversation his unionist views emerge quite clearly," Bishop Daly said, according to a note of the meeting.

The bishop hoped that Eames' responsibility for the Church of Ireland on both sides of the border "will cause him to offer more balanced views in future than his form to date would suggest".

"He is not certain, however, that Eames will emulate the ecumenical standards set by (Archbishop John) Armstrong in Armagh."

Bach, Stanford and Wood feature in Armagh organ recital

The January recital in the Theo Saunders Memorial Organ Recital Series will be given by David O'Shea in St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh on Sunday 15 January 2017 at 4.15pm. The programme will include music by Johann Sebastian Bach, Charles Villiers Stanford and Charles Wood.

David attended the Dublin Institute of Technology's Conservatory of Music, graduating with a BMus in Musicology, and the University of Cambridge, from which he graduated with an MMus in Choral Studies. He is currently undertaking research towards a PhD at Trinity College, Dublin.

As an organ recitalist, piano accompanist, choral conductor and continuo-player, David has given concerts throughout Ireland, the UK, Europe and the USA. Since 2011 he has been Organist and Director of Music at Sandford Parish Church and

St Philip's, Milltown in Dublin. He is Répétiteur and Assistant Conductor to the Culwick Choral Society, Dublin, and Musical Director of the Dublin Gay Men's Chorus.

The Dean of Armagh, the Very Revd Gregory Dunstan said, “Both at the keyboard and as a singer, David has a thorough grounding in music for the Church. The composers in his choice of programme reflects this interest. Since September 2016, he has been a lay vicar choral at St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. We look forward to welcoming him to Armagh.”

As with all the recitals in this series, admission is free. The retiring collection will go towards the cost of a new piano for the Cathedral Choir's rehearsal room.

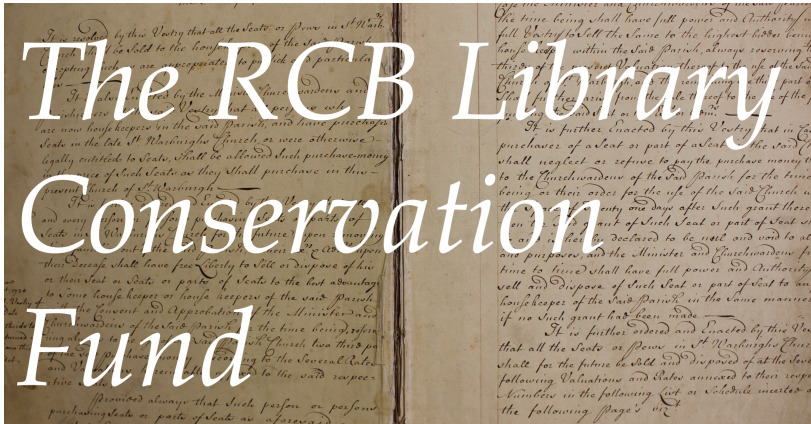
C of I archive January 2017 features The Library Conservation Fund

At the start of 2017 in the Church of Ireland RCB Library in Dublin – which serves both as the Church of Ireland's repository of records and its theological reference library – there is focus on

the Conservation Fund for its records. January's Archive of the Month (which is compiled by the Assistant Librarian Bryan Whelan) will tell of the story of one particular conservation project recently completed for the Library by the specialist craftsman Declan Browne of Liturgical Book Restorers. Declan is a well-known public face as he regularly appears in the television broadcast of the Angelus from his studio in Athlone, see: www.rte.ie/player/ie/show/the-angelus-30003636/10481455

The Library, which serves the whole Church, relies on the Church's central funding of the Church together with donations from individual dioceses and other supporters to resource its needs. Much of this funding is used to buy new books and other vital materials to facilitate and support the needs of students in ministerial training at the adjacent Theological Institute.

This leaves relatively little surplus available to devote to the highly-specialized, time-consuming and expensive process of conservation. Yet the Library is responsible for keeping safe and making available to an ever-increasing and inquisitive public a wide variety of unique and distinctive collections: thousands of



parish records, including registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials; diocesan and cathedral archives; the manuscripts of individuals and organizations associated with the Church of Ireland; architectural drawings, and rare books. Such items comprise multiple media including vellum, paper, leather, glue, or cloth and are vulnerable to changes in the environment, particularly light, temperature, and humidity. Before materials have been transferred from the local custodies where they were created to the permanent safe-keeping of the Library, they have, almost inevitably, suffered some wear and tear.

It can be easy to forget the work that goes on in the background of small record repositories such as the RCB Library to ensure that the

manuscripts and records that are held for the Church of Ireland community and the wider world will still exist in generations to come. As a small record repository, specialist expertise is sometimes required to stabilize and conserve damaged records.

Illustrated with photographs, the online presentation takes viewers through the process of repairing and conserving one particular volume – a vestry minute book covering the period 1710 to 1806 – showing the painstaking steps undertaken by a specialist team to bring such a unique record back to its former glory.

Conservation of the featured item in the Archive of the Month presentation cost the Library €1,600.

With public support, the Library will be able to undertake other projects and thus ensure future public access to these materials, and donations are invited via a secure online payment link here: <https://store.ireland.anglican.org/donations/donate?appeal=general&subappeal=RCB+Library+Conservation+Fund>

You can view the Archive of the Month at: www.ireland.anglican.org/library/archive

Pentecostal church looks to white Britons to boost congregations

The UK's biggest and fastest growing Pentecostal church is embarking on an ambitious expansion programme in 2017, in part aimed at attracting white Britons to join its black majority congregations, The Guardian reports.

The [Redeemed Christian Church of God](#) (RCCG), which already has almost 800 places of worship in the UK, plans to open another 100 next year, according to one of its leading pastors.

"We might not hit 100 but if we hit half that it will still be significant," Agu Irukwu told the Guardian. "We're a bit more intentional now about planting churches in communities other than the traditional places you would expect to find us."

He added: "Some people call what we're doing 'reverse mission'. I don't use that term, but there's a bit of truth in it. We're working to bring the good news back to this country which in some ways has lost it."

The RCCG, founded in [Nigeria](#) in 1952, is established in more than 100 countries. It has

grown from a handful of church communities in the UK 25 years ago to 779 at the end of 2016, with a presence in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as England.

According to Peter Brierley, a former director of Christian Research and [publisher of UK Church Statistics 2005-15](#), in the UK it now dwarfs longer-established Pentecostal churches such as the [Assemblies of God](#) and [Elim](#).

More at -

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/30/pentecostal-church-looks-to-white-britons-to-boost-congregations>

Almost four million pilgrims visited the Vatican in 2016

More than 3.9 million pilgrims visited and attended papal events, liturgies or prayer services during the Holy Year of Mercy in 2016, the Vatican has announced.

The Prefecture of the Papal Household, the Vatican office that coordinates the audiences and distributes the free tickets to papal audiences and liturgies, said a total of 3,952,140 people attended a papal event at the Vatican.

Although the total was slightly higher from the 3.2 million visitors received by Pope Francis in 2015, for a jubilee year it still fell short of the 5.9 million pilgrims who visited in 2014.

Terrorists attacks in Europe throughout the year are also thought to have discouraged visitors from travelling during what are typically busy tourist seasons in Italy.

During 2016, 762,000 people attended the Pope's 43 weekly general audiences while 446,000 attended the 11 jubilee audiences held one Saturday a month.

More than 169,000 people took part in special group audiences. More than 924,000 people participated in papal liturgies in St Peter's Basilica or St Peter's Square; and more than 1.6 million people joined the Pope for the Angelus or the Regina Caeli prayer on Sundays and major feast days in St Peter's Square.

The statistics released by the Vatican stand in contrast to the numbers published on the Jubilee of Mercy website, which states that more than 21 million participated in the Holy Year of Mercy. The number includes pilgrim groups and individuals

who crossed through the Holy Door that are not included in the Vatican's statistics.

The papal event statistics do not include papal events in the city of Rome or international visits made by Pope Francis. They also are based on the number of ticket requests and estimates of crowd size.

News briefs

+++ Installation of canons - The Revd Gareth Harron, Rector of Holywood Parish and Revd Mark Niblock, Dean's Vicar at St Anne's Cathedral, will be installed as Canons of the Cathedral at 3.30 pm on 8 January 2017.