



Archbishop Martin inspired by peace-loving people when he was growing up in Derry

The leader of the Catholic Church in Ireland has spoken of how he was inspired by peace-loving people when he was growing up in Derry.

In his New Year's message, Archbishop Eamon Martin said everyone can contribute towards peace in 2017.

“As a teenager growing up in Derry, I remember being inspired by the witness of the Peace People who brought many ordinary people onto the streets in a call for an end to the terrible violence at that time,” said Archbishop Martin.

“The mid-seventies saw some of the most shocking bombings and shootings of “the Troubles”. Terrible tit-for-tat sectarian murders were leaving more and more families bereaved and traumatised.

“It is hard to believe that it is now forty years since Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams were awarded the 1976 Nobel Peace Prize for their courageous stand against all violence.

“They touched my heart at the time, and the hearts and minds of so many ordinary women and men from every community who had enough of awful violence and who wanted to help build a better future based on dialogue, reconciliation, peace and cooperation.

“Some people said that the Peace People were naive, others, that they were being manipulated.

“For me, their message and actions were motivated by a strong belief in non-violence and

a conviction that peace begins from the ground up in the simple yet powerful actions of good people who want to break the downward cycle of death and destruction.”

Archbishop Martin said that over Christmas a man expressed to me his frustration about being unable to make a difference to the violence in the world.

“From Aleppo to Berlin, from Mosul to Cairo, we see such terrible things happening in every corner of the globe. “What are we to do, he asked?” I found it difficult to give an easy answer.

“I suggested that the first thing we all need to do is to look into our own hearts and minds. Because it is here that all violence, anger, and the desire for revenge and retaliation begin.

“Sadly, there is so much violence even in our own neighbourhoods and violence and aggression is often hidden in families behind the front doors of our own homes.

“I was shocked recently to learn of the extent of domestic violence that leads to phone calls every twenty minutes or so to police and support services.

“We can all contribute during 2017 to peace if we learn to model our lives more closely on the beautiful, yet challenging example of Jesus.

“Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Mother Teresa, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux assure us that little acts of love and kindness can melt even the most stubborn of vengeful hearts.

“Dr Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, the Peace People and many others since have shown that it is possible to mould the path of non-violence and non-retaliation into a powerful movement for change and reconciliation.”

Meanwhile, in his New Year’s message, the Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe Ken Good said that we live in a time when many people feel ‘anxious, disenfranchised, fearful or lost’.

“2016 has certainly been a memorable year on the global stage. Brexit and Trump have confounded the pollsters and wrong-footed the so-called experts,” he said.

“They have also polarised opinion, with few people being ambivalent about either.

“Oxford Dictionaries have chosen the compound word ‘post-truth’ as their international word of the year for 2016. ‘Post-truth’, they state, is the term which best captures the ethos, mood or pre-occupations of the past year.

“Disturbingly Oxford Dictionaries also say the prefix ‘post’ has, in this context, a meaning more like ‘belonging to a time in which the specified concept has become unimportant or irrelevant’. Truth – unimportant? Irrelevant?

“For Christians, truth is never unimportant or irrelevant. It is paramount.

“We live in an era when many people feel anxious, disenfranchised, fearful or lost. There is a longing for answers, as people are desperately in need of truth, urgently seeking peace in their lives.

“In John 14, Jesus says: ‘I am the way and the truth and the life’. Discovering the truth we need for a life built on solid foundations and finding the peace we yearn for can only come as we entrust ourselves completely to Christ. He is the source of truth who can transform our lives.”

STATE PAPERS: ‘Dancing Priest’ wanted to meet PM Thatcher

An Irish priest, who infamously interrupted the 2003 British grand prix and 2004 Olympics men’s marathon, asked the Government for assistance in arranging a meeting with Margaret Thatcher in 1983, the Irish Examiner reports.

Documents released under the 30-year rule show that Fr Neil Horan, known as “the Dancing Priest” had arrived late for a scheduled meeting between his group of Irish singers, musicians and dancers from Co Kerry and the British prime minister in London in September 1983.

In a letter to the Taoiseach, Garret FitzGerald, Fr Horan blamed himself for the late arrival of the majority of the group, adding that the event was “a real fiasco”. “We felt we left our country down,” the priest said.

As a result, he begged the Taoiseach to assist in rearranging another meeting with the British prime minister as he recognised that a second meeting with Ms Thatcher would be “a luxury”.



Fr Horan, who was based in London, said his intention was to show the Tory leader that the Irish were “an independent people with a separate culture”. Fr Horan said he had a speech to read to Ms Thatcher and regretted that the opportunity had been lost.

State records show the Taoiseach’s officials decided that Dr FitzGerald should not directly reply to the priest as the response was “somewhat negative”. A note from one civil servant observed: “It is quite likely that the Prime Minister has seen enough of them.”

Officials took the view that it would be quite inappropriate for the Government to make any official approach to try and secure the group another meeting with Ms Thatcher.

They did not rule out arranging a meeting of Fr Horan's group with Dr FitzGerald as they considered it might show the Taoiseach "in a very unfavourable light" given they were granted an audience with the British PM.

The Taoiseach's private secretary replied to Fr Horan that Dr FitzGerald was grateful for the offer to visit him but was unavailable to meet the priest due to busy work commitments.

Fr Horan, who was defrocked in 2005, attained notoriety following two high-profile incidents at major sports events which he used to promote his religious belief that the end of the world was near.

New church hall in Cashel & Ossory

On Sunday, 4th December 2016, Bishop Michael Burrowes dedicated the hall at Lacca church. The hall was given in memory of John and Sylvia Lalor of Knocknagad and the construction was carried out by parishioners and friends.

The service was attended by members of the two churches in Offerlane Parish, Annatrim and



Lacca, and after the dedication the bishop talked with parishoners about their vision for Offerlane Parish in 2026.

The parish has enjoyed growth both in numbers of those belonging to the churches and in Sunday attendances and believes the hall will assist them in fulfilling their part of God's mission in a small corner of Co Laois.

Installation of Lay Canons at Belfast Cathedral

Mrs Myrtle Kerr and Mr Robert Kay will be installed as Lay Canons in St Anne's Cathedral on 15th January at 3.30 p.m.

Dean John Mann said he has known both Mrs Kerr and Mr Kay for many years, describing them as 'two wonderful people.'

"On arriving at Queen's as a raw undergraduate in 1973, the Church of Ireland Student Centre became my home, and Cecil and Myrtle Kerr were there together, leading that student community and planning the new venture in Rostrevor. It was so inspirational," he said.

"Robert Kay has been integral and vital to the Diocese of Connor and the RCB for a long time. We have been at many a meeting together, and he and his wife were with us on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which was an amazing experience. These two appointments acknowledge two wonderful people and give me great joy."

This is a historic move as the appointment of Lay Canons to Church of Ireland Cathedrals only became possible in 2010, and these are the first such appointments made at St Anne's. Mrs Kerr and Mr Kay were nominated by the Dean and Chapter and appointed by the Bishops of Connor

and Down & Dromore. They will be installed in the Cathedral on a date to be announced.

Mrs Kerr and her late husband Cecil moved from the chaplaincy in Queen's University, Belfast, to establish the Christian Renewal Centre in Rostrevor in 1974.

The Bishop of Down and Dromore, the Rt Rev Harold Miller, said Mrs Kerr was 'quite simply, a saint of God.'

Welcoming her appointment, Bishop Miller said: "She is an example to all of us of what it means to follow Jesus Christ and to carry in her very being the message of reconciliation."

He commented that she and Cecil had 'exercised a ministry more powerful than any prelate in the difficult days of the Troubles in this part of Ireland.'

Cecil was the leader of the Christian Renewal Centre, but Myrtle was always beside him, the Bishop said. "She prayed, cared and provided a warm family atmosphere for all who visited the renewal centre, whatever their tradition or political views, and must often have wondered where their financial provision would come from.

“The years have given Myrtle a great experience of life, in the ups and downs, a settled and palpable love of the Lord, and a place bound to be recorded in God’s book of the saints of Co Down.”

Mr Robert Kay served faithfully as lay honorary secretary of the Diocese of Connor for more than 30 years. He also served on the Representative Church Body (RCB - the governing body of the Church of Ireland), the RCB Executive and was until very recently chair of the plans committee of the RCB.

The Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, said: “He offered his professional expertise as his service and it was indeed his ministry and example for us all. This was all done with humility and humour.

“I am delighted his ministry is recognised in this way as a Lay Canon of St Anne’s Cathedral.”

Pope urges bishops to maintain 'zero tolerance' on child abuse

Pope Francis has exhorted Catholic bishops worldwide to do what is needed to ensure



children are protected from sexual abuse by clergy.

The Vatican on Monday released the text of a letter Francis sent to bishops on December 28 about injustices to children, focusing on slave labour, malnutrition, lack of education and sexual exploitation - including abuse by priests.

In the letter, Francis decried "the sufferings, the experiences and pain of minors who were abused sexually by priests".

He wrote: "It is a sin that shames us. Persons responsible for the protection of those children destroyed their dignity."

The church's reputation has been stained in several countries during the last few decades as people have come forward to report that parish priests or other Catholic clergy raped or molested them as minors.

The allegations showed that local bishops sometimes knew about and covered up child sex abuse involving problem priests and triggered multimillion-pound legal actions, as well as several criminal prosecutions.

Expressing the church's regret, and begging forgiveness, the Pope denounced the "sin of what happened, the sin of failing to help, the sin of covering up and denial, the sin of the abuse of power".

Francis also asked bishops for "complete commitment to ensuring that these atrocities will no longer take place in our midst".

He added: "Let us find the courage needed to take all necessary measures and to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated.

"In this area, let us adhere, clearly and faithfully, to 'zero tolerance'."

The pontiff himself has received mixed reviews on how the Vatican handles sex abuse.

Francis has laid out procedures to oust bishops for negligence, if they mishandle investigations into alleged abuse.

But he dismayed advocates for abuse survivors by appointing a Chilean bishop accused of covering up for a notorious paedophile.

The Vatican also took no immediate action after deaf students from Italy, in a 2014 letter to the Pope, said a priest sexually abused them for years in Italy and now works at a school in Francis's native Argentina. The priest was arrested last year and charged with raping deaf students at a school in Argentina.

Tribute: Rev David Neilands

Finaghy Methodist church was filled to overflowing on 29th December to give thanks for the life of the Rev David Neilands – a fine Christian and Methodist, loving family man and friend and mentor to countless hundreds of young people, through Methodist College, the Youth Department and the churches in which he and his wife Lynda served. Beautiful, moving

tributes were paid by his sons Patrick and Christopher – one particularly poignant recollection being when someone said to one of the sons in his teenage years, ‘You are just like your father’, the comment was not initially received with any great enthusiasm, but was later claimed as a badge of honour. Their father, they felt, was best summed up by the words of Micah 6: 8:

*He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God*

As well as the family tributes, the President , the Rev Bill Mullally, brought the condolences of the Connexion and the Rev Ken Lindsay, a nearly life-long friend, gave the address. The service was led by the minister, the Rev Colin Gracie, and the Methodist College Choir sang the Celtic and Aaronic blessings. It was a very moving service and a fine tribute to a much loved pastor of the Methodist Church.