



***Canon Robert Marsden with his wife Betty and
Canon David Gillespie***

Church of Ireland cleric presented with France's highest decoration

A retired Church of Ireland cleric was awarded France's highest decoration this week for his role in World War II. On Tuesday (January 26) Irish

veteran Canon Robert William Marsden was named Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur by the French Ambassador to Ireland Jean–Pierre Thébault during a ceremony at the Residence de France.

Born in Dublin in 1924, Canon Marsden trained with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. He joined the infantry voluntarily and went on active service in Normandy in 1944. Robert landed in Mulberry Harbour as part of the 1st battalion, Hampshire Regiment and joined the 50th Northumbrian Division with which he took part in the liberation of Brussels.

The 1st Battalion was then sent on to Nijmegen in the Netherlands, on the road to the battle of Arnhem. Due to severe losses, the 50th Northumbrian Division was then sent to reinforce the 7th Armoured Division more famously known as the “Desert Rats”. He finished the war near the Kiel Canal in the German state of Schleswig–Holstein.

Upon his return, Canon Robert Marsden was ordained Church of Ireland Deacon for St James' Parish, Dublin, in 1950 and Priest in 1951. He served as Port Chaplain in the Missions to Seamen in Dublin Port between 1954 and 1958. He also served as Rector of Parishes in the

Clogher Diocese in Currin (Scotshouse), Drum, Clones and Killeevan. He was made Canon and Precentor of Clogher Cathedral. He retired in 1994 and now lives in Sandymount with his wife, Betty.

Presenting the award, the ambassador said he was being honoured for exceptional acts of courage. “He put his life at risk like tens of thousands of other Irish,” he said afterwards. Canon Marsden said he was very proud to have been honoured in this way.

The Legion of Honor is one of the world’s most widely recognised decorations. Established in 1802 the Order is the highest decoration in France and is awarded for excellent civil merit or military conduct.

Watch RTE News coverage of the ceremony at:
<http://www.rte.ie/news/player/2016/0126/20920731-irish-ww2-veteran-receives-frances-legion-of-honour/>

Minister’s announcement does not change religious education in Catholic schools

The Bishops Council for Education has questioned the status of the current *Rules for*
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National Schools saying it is unclear and highlighting that Minister's announcement concerning Rule 68 does not change the teaching of religious education in Catholic schools.

On Thursday, Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O'Sullivan, announced changes to the *Rules for National Schools* specifically the rescinding of Rule 68 for primary schools.

Speaking at the opening of the annual Irish Primary Principals' Network Conference at Citywest Convention Centre in Dublin to over 1,100 primary school principals, the Minister said, "Rule 68 was a symbol of our past, not our future. The language of the rule was archaic and I am glad it is gone."

She added that currently 30 minutes of each school day is allocated to religion.

“Is that enough, or is it too much. We want children to develop a strong ethical spirit but we also want them to learn many other things. We devote less than half of the time to PE than we do to Religion” Jan O’Sullivan stated.

In its statement, the Bishops Council for Education said that, “Undoubtedly, these rules need to be updated and a revised, consolidated text produced.”

However, the Council underlined that the two rules (68 and 69) which deal with religious education, should not be dealt with in isolation.

“The Catholic ethos of primary schools in Ireland is not based on the *Rules for National Schools*,” the bishops said.

They referred to a paper just published by the Department of Education and Skills which makes clear: “in all primary and post-primary schools, the school’s stated ethos (that is, the values and principles it promotes) is decided by the owners or patrons/trustees of the school and not by central government” (Department of Education and Skills, Advancing School

Autonomy in the Irish School System, December 2015, p.19).

Moderator visits Wycliffe Bible Translators

Wycliffe Bible Translators believe that the Bible is the best way for people to discover and understand who God is. Their vision is that by working with churches, organizations and individuals from across the world, all people will be able to access the Word of God in their own language.

Located in east Belfast, the Moderator had the opportunity to talk with those involved in Bible translation locally. He heard about their work and meeting the staff and volunteers, discovered first hand what it means to translate God's word into another language.

"I discovered that around 180 million people, speaking at least 1,800 languages, need a Bible in the language they understand best. Without this incredible work taking place those people will never be able to read the story of God's love for themselves.



“Wycliffe Bible Translators are vital in supporting the life and witness of the worldwide church, so to this end I would like to encourage congregations to support them in any way they can,” said Dr. McNie.

Along with other agencies involved in Bible distribution and Christian broadcasting, Wycliffe Bible Translators play a crucial role in supporting the life and witness of the worldwide church. Of the 6,887 languages in the world today, only 554 have a complete Bible.

As a result, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has identified Wycliffe Bible Translators as a Specialist Service Agency. This special relationship with PCI recognises the fact that the valuable service Wycliffe is doing is something that no one church or denomination can easily do.

John Hamilton, of Wycliffe Bible Translators in Belfast said, “We had an enjoyable and encouraging time with the Moderator. He already knew a lot about Bible translation, but also confessed that the visit had widened his perspective

“We told him how much Wycliffe values the partnership with PCI and that together we can work to alleviate the Bible poverty that still exists in the world. Our staff would be delighted to visit congregations to tell them more about Wycliffe’s work and to encourage them in their global mission.”

To find out more about the work of Wycliffe Bible Translators visit their website (www.wycliffe.org.uk/) or contact the Belfast office at 028 9073 5854

New Lent Course explores Pope Francis’s ‘The Joy of The Gospel’

This year's Lent Course from Church House Publishing takes its inspiration from Pope Francis's reflections on mission and evangelism *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Written by Dr Paula Gooder (Theologian in Residence at The Bible Society) The Joy of the Gospel is a six-part course for parishes and Lent groups. A short film has been produced and released this week to promote the study guide and is now available to watch online.

Widely recognised as offering wisdom and vision for all Christians in a culture that can be hostile to the Church, *Evangelii Gaudium* offers a positive and realistic approach to sharing faith in the modern world. Paula Gooder introduces its key themes to readers in all denominations and challenges them to consider its application in their own contexts.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, The Most Reverend Bernard Longley and the Bishop of Truro, The Right Reverend Tim Thornton, Co-chairs of the English Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee, both write in the preface of the study guide about the impact it will have on deepening relationships between Catholics and Anglicans.

In the film, Archbishop Bernard said:
"Paula's background, her scriptural expertise, the way in which she's presented this material; I think is going to enable groups to really get to the heart of what Pope Francis is setting out,

and I think we'll see some fruits from this, particularly in coming together with a joint understanding of the churches mission and enabling us to look for practical ways of reaching out with the truth of the Gospel, into the societies where we live and that we've been called to serve together."

Paula Gooder is an internationally known writer, speaker, educator and broadcaster. She is a member of ARCIC III and is closely involved with Anglican-Roman Catholic relations at the international level.

The study guide is available to purchase online as a book or ebook from Church House Publishing: <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/books/9780715147313/the-joy-of-the-gospel>

The film is available online at:

- Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/152706011>
- YouTube: <https://youtu.be/K9qq-Dw87kU>
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Free audio files accompanying each session are also available on:

- SoundCloud: <https://soundcloud.com/the-joy-of-the-gospel>
- iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-joy-of-the-gospel/id1077775647?mt=2>



Revd Matthew Hagan - Rector of Tynan, Aghavilly and Middletown, Very Revd Gregory Dunstan - Dean of Armagh and Revd David Somerville - Rector of St. Matthew's Richhill; following their installation as Clerical Vicars Choral in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh by the Dean last Sunday

GB Hetrosexual couple lose civil partnership court challenge

A heterosexual couple who want to enter into a civil partnership rather than marry have lost a challenge at the High Court.

Rebecca Steinfeld and Charles Keidan, who are both academics and live in Hammersmith, west London, argued that they are being discriminated against.

Dr Steinfeld (34) and Mr Keidan (39) who have been in a committed relationship since November 2010 and have an eight-month-old baby, want to secure legal recognition of that relationship through a civil partnership.

But the Civil Partnership Act 2004 stipulates that only same-sex couples are eligible.

The couple claimed the Government's position on civil partnerships is "incompatible with equality law".

Mrs Justice Andrews, sitting in London, dismissed their judicial review action on Friday, but gave them permission to take their case on

to the Court of Appeal because the case raised issues of "wider importance".

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Ireland railroaded into saving bust banks, report

News Letter

Ireland was railroaded into saving its bust banks from 2008-2010 as European chiefs put the then government under undue pressure to accept a multi-billion rescue loan and ordered all debts to be repaid, a major parliamentary inquiry has found.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/ireland-railroaded-into-saving-collapsed-banks-1-7184510>

NI farmers in crisis as incomes plummet 41 per cent

News Letter

Farmers across Northern Ireland are in the grip of a genuine crisis - with their incomes having plummeted 41 per cent last year, it is claimed.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/farmers-in-crisis-as-incomes-plummet-41pc-1-7187159>

Rule prioritising religion classes in primary schools abolish

Irish Times

"That curriculum will give every child a shared knowledge of the **religions** and beliefs held by people in **Ireland** and across the world. And it will imbue ...

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<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/rule-prioritising-religion-classes-in-primary-schools-abolished-1.2514202>

Bishops urged to embrace 'new wind' of Pope

The Irish Catholic

... they have been faithful to the magisterium of the **Church**, but when it comes to that pastoral new wind and voice that is so radically needed in **Ireland** ...

<http://www.irishcatholic.ie/article/bishops-urged-embrace-new-wind-pope>

[Christian Today](#)

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has backed a new scheme to reward churches for being environmentally friendly as part of a "tectonic shift" in Christian culture. Eco Church was launched by A Rocha UK, a Christian sustainability charity, and is a successor to Eco-Congregation. The scheme, launched by Archbishop Rowan at St Paul's Cathedral, aims to help churches tackle climate change through a points-based award system. (See [CofE Comms blog](#))

[Christian Today](#)

Report about a personal tweet, by a CofE headteacher in Blackburn Diocese, saying that evolution is not a fact, which led to the school website being taken down and her account being removed after being deluged with comments. A diocesan spokesman said all church schools follow the national curriculum "which includes adaptation of plants and animals and that adaption may lead to evolution."

Times

Review of *Spotlight*, the story of the Pulitzer prize-winning team of *Boston Globe* journalists who early in 2002 lifted the lid on a clerical abuse epidemic in the Boston archdiocese and the systemic cover-up on behalf of the Catholic Church that allowed it to flourish

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/arts/film/reviews/article4676804.ece>

Comment

Open Democracy: Religion continues to shape our world but most media fail to take it seriously. Public service broadcasters must confront this head-on, says the BBC's Head of Religion and Ethics, Aaqil Ahmed.

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourbeeb/aaqil-ahmed/bbc-must-lead-effort-against-religious-illiteracy>

Christian Today: Extreme far right party Britain First is corrupting the message of the cross, and we need to claim it back.