



From Left: Sister Mary Mullin, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia and Sisters Anne Kelly & Bridget Lacey.

The Irish nuns fighting on the front line against Ebola

On the morning of March 25, three elderly Irish nuns listened to the news on a crackly radio as

they began their daily mission work in Lofa County in northern Liberia. The broadcast spoke of a mysterious disease that was spreading quickly and killing people within days of them falling ill.

Irish Independent - The disease was Ebola. Nine months on, the three Holy Rosary missionary sisters - Mary Mullin from Tuam, Co Galway, Bridget Lacey from Newport, Co Tipperary and Anne Kelly from Galway city - are still dealing with the epidemic that has officially killed 7,500. Sr Anne and Sr Mary are both in their early 70s while Sr Bridget is in her early 60s.

They have, between them, 120 years of missionary experience. They have survived bloody civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone and fled for their lives under heavy gunfire during the Biafran conflict in Nigeria in the late 1960s.

But nothing could have prepared them for Ebola.

Sr Mary, briefly at home at the Order's convent in Artane in Dublin, recalls: "Most people didn't take much notice of it. It was an unknown and people didn't know how to cope, didn't realise how quickly it spread."

In a telephone interview from Liberia Sr Bridget says: "We just gave up what we were doing and took on Ebola."

But the clash of cultures made providing help difficult.

"They were afraid the white man was bringing the disease, that they were part of the problem. In Guinea, we heard that one of the first Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) trucks was stoned."

Sr Mary says medical workers' treatment of bodies clashed with Liberian ritual burials.

"Liberians really say goodbye to the person, wash them and hug them. They feel that if they don't, the spirit of the person is not at rest and will come back.

"The locals saw white men in hazmat (hazardous materials) suits taking away sick people, many of whom never came back. And then the bodies were withheld from families as their burial ritual would put them in contact with dangerous body fluids. They grew increasingly agitated. While medical workers saw this as preventing the spread of more disease, many West African people believed it to be the cause," Sr Mary says.

The virus struck their part of Liberia in March and appeared to be in decline by June. Then the virus inexplicably raged again in August and became a full-blown epidemic in the autumn.

It has left Lofa County like a post-war zone. There are many orphans, families without a breadwinner and crops left unplanted.

The nuns are dealing with traumatised people, trapped by the inertia of grief and shock.

The Holy Rosary sisters began an awareness campaign to educate locals on prevention, and to eliminate myths. "In the beginning people were reluctant to go to the treatment centre in the town of Foya. They saw it as a death sentence, that they wouldn't come back, which, of course, was the case for many.

"We told people to go and get tested if they had a fever. Early testing was the key to people recovering and preventing the spread. Once people began to survive, and so then had immunity, that renewed hope. Now we have about 50 of the people spreading Ebola awareness information in 200 to 300 villages."

Rehabilitating survivors and finding extended families for orphans is now the major priority for the three nuns.

Sr Bridget remains cautious. "Until there's no trace of Ebola for 42 days, Liberia is not free of Ebola. And Liberia will not be totally free until there is no trace in neighbouring Guinea or Sierra Leone. It is all connected," she says.

The nuns have also lost close friends to Ebola.

An under-equipped hospital in Monrovia where they often stayed overnight before flying home, was overwhelmed by Ebola.

Sixteen members of staff died, everyone from the security guard to the social worker, including four St John of God priests who Sr Mary knew well.

She is raising money for the disease survivors and families of those who died from Ebola.

Sr Mary fights back tears: "They're the real Ebola heroes you know."

See www.mshr.org.

www.independent.ie/irish-news/the-irish-nuns-fighting-on-the-front-line-against-ebola-30880204.htm

Banbridge Academy's RE department strikes gold for quality



Banbridge Academy has become the first school in Northern Ireland to be awarded a gold award for its religious department by the National RE Quality Mark.

Bainbridge Leader - Banbridge Academy was rated gold in all five areas including Learners and Learning, Teachers and Teaching, Curriculum, Subject Leadership and Continuing Professional Development. The REQM award recognises outstanding learning in Religious Education and looks at all the five areas.

Principal Raymond Pollock said the award was a 'tremendous achievement for the school' which recognises outstanding practice in RE.

Mr Warren Brown, Head of Religious Studies at Banbridge Academy said, "Pupils and staff responded positively to the process and indeed the outcome.

"It has allowed us to celebrate the good practice in our department and for us all to recognise the value of the subject in supporting the aims and ethos of the school and in contributing to the spiritual and moral development of our pupils.

"The award gives us confidence to continue with what we are doing well and the process has provided opportunity to evaluate our practice, to ensure our contribution to whole school issues like Literacy, ICT and Teaching and Learning continues."

Some of the pupils commented on the award.

One pupil said, "My favourite thing about RE is the fact that we as a class can learn in an unbiased environment, where everyone's opinion counts as equal.

“We learn about different beliefs a lot. This is very interesting because these beliefs can help us understand our environment.” Another pupil said, “I like the discussions and debates because it gives us the chance to talk about things we may not be able to talk about anywhere else.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed our educational visits such as to the Crumlin Road Gaol, and our trip to Poland. “RE focuses on topics that are relevant to issues today, it helps us to have an open mind and respect other people’s opinions,” another student said.

Protestant families finding it tough to pay school costs

The poor state of the economy has created huge financial difficulties for many Church of Ireland families who are increasingly unable to afford to send their children to schools with an Anglican ethos, the country's first woman bishop has warned.

Irish Independent - Bishop Pat Storey said the homelessness crisis was more visible in cities and major towns but warned that poverty remains an issue in rural settings,

as people find the "economic situation very difficult".



Bishop Storey

The Bishop of Kildare and Meath said the country's main religious minority is affected because many Protestant schools are private boarding schools catering for a widely scattered rural community.

Speaking to the Irish Independent, Bishop Storey said parents were finding the fees for these schools "harder and harder to come by", particularly in cases where a parent "has lost their job and their child is in the middle of their boarding school education and they just don't

know how they are going to afford the next four years."

Wilson's Hospital School is one such Church of Ireland diocesan boarding school in Kildare and Meath, which was founded in 1761.

The wife of Rev Earl Storey and mother of two adult children, who was ordained just over a year ago, is also patron of 18 national schools. She said there "is a huge concern about maintaining the Church of Ireland ethos" of these schools.

"I think it is important to look after your minorities, whoever they are; that is one of the signs of a healthy society - when minorities are well looked after," she said. The Church of Ireland accounts for between three and four percent of the population.

Explaining that Church of Ireland parents are "less and less inclined" to send their children to Protestant boarding schools due to the costs, she explained that these children would therefore be attending local national schools.

"I think we have to be broadminded enough to provide different provisions for different faiths and non-faiths so that people can step out of religious

education class or confirmation preparation if that is not for them."

The 54-year-old Belfast native, who served as a curate in Derry before her historic selection in September 2013 by the Church of Ireland's House of Bishops, said her role is "to pastor the pastors" because it can be a lonely job for those in ministry.

She has 25 clergy ministering in the diocese, including 18 full-time rectors, and seven are part-time non-stipendiary ministers who also have other jobs.

It was 23 years between the ordination of the first woman priest in the Church of Ireland and Bishop Pat Storey's appointment as a bishop last year.

Bishop Storey admits that there are still conservative elements in the Church of Ireland who wouldn't agree with women bishops or even the ordination of women. "It can be misogynistic but it is not always - sometimes it is genuinely a theological point of view."

"I would believe that 52pc of the population was unrepresented in ministry until relatively recently

and it is so important that women play a full part - not just as people that make the tea," she commented.

She believes that some of the New Irish have "a confidence about their faith which we have lost" and that they are "a great addition to our faith communities".

Canon Ian Ellis thankful for support for church-Order forum



A senior Anglican has expressed thanks for the support he has received for an idea to bring churches and loyal orders together.

News Letter - Canon Ian Ellis, the editor of the Church of Ireland Gazette, suggested the creation of an independent forum where all manner of matters could be discussed.

It has been met with expressions of interest from the Orange Order and Presbyterian Church, while the Methodists and Church of Ireland said they would each consider the proposal.

On Sunday, Canon Ellis said he wanted “publicly to express my thanks to the leading Presbyterians, Moderator Michael Barry and Dr Norman Hamilton, and to the leadership of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, for their support in the print and broadcast media over the weekend”.

He had suggested the forum could help members of loyal orders reconnect with the institutional churches, and could discuss issues such as ecumenicalism and parading.

He made the call when writing in the News Letter on New Year’s Day.

Such a group could also involve representatives of the Catholic Church, he added. He said: “As Dr Norman Hamilton has since said, issues such

as education and unemployment, as well as identity issues, are all part of the 'mix'. I think theological issues would also be important."

Dublin Living Worship 2015 course - Implementing Thanks and Praise

Church Music Dublin - an agency of the diocese of Dublin and Glendalough has issued details of 'Implementing Thanks and Praise', a course in its program Living Worship 2015

Living Worship is a course for church musicians, clergy and others involved in parish worship. First held in 2006, the course has explored the interface between music and other aspects of what we do in church Sunday by Sunday.

The focus this year is on A Service of the Word and All-age Worship; Morning Prayer; and the Eucharist. Material from *Thanks and Praise*, the forthcoming supplement to Church Hymnal, will be used at each session. Participants, including clergy, will gain a useful overview of *T&P* in advance of its publication in May.

The three sessions will be led in turn by Adrienne Galligan (shortly to become rector of Rathfarnham Parish), Gerald Field (Dean of Cashel Cathedral and Secretary of the Liturgical Advisory Committee) and Sandra Pragnell (Dean of Limerick Cathedral). They will be assisted by parish musicians, Jacqueline Mullen, David O'Shea and Derek Verso.

Aside from the content of the course, *Living Worship* is an enjoyable opportunity to meet other musicians. The coffee break is eagerly looked forward to! Sometimes, rector-and-musician teams are present. Obviously, this is a useful way to build shared vision. The course will be held from 10 am to 12.30pm on Saturdays 17th, 24th & 31st January in The Mageough Hall, Cowper Road, Rathmines (*beside Cowper Luas*)

Fee €10 per session, payable on the day. Please let CMD know in advance if you will be there. info@churchmusicdublin.org

New rector for Portlaoise

On Friday evening at 8pm in St Peter's church, Portlaoise, the Bishop of Cashel, Ferns and

Ossory will institute the Revd Brian O'Rourke, to the incumbency of the Portlaoise & Ballyfin union of parishes which encompasses the parishes of Maryborough, Dysert Enos and Ballyfin. Mr O'Rourke, who has been Rector of St Anne, Shandon, in Cork since 2000, was ordained in 1992 and served as Chaplain to East Glendalough School and in the parish of Newcastle in Co. Wicklow.

Summer Madness dates

Summer Madness will take place at Glenarm Castle from 3–7 July. Down and Dromore youth will be there in force. Catch the Bishop's BBQ on Saturday afternoon. Find out more about the festival on the Summer Madness website [here](http://www.summermadness.co.uk/):
<http://www.summermadness.co.uk/>

Sponsor a Chorister

St Patrick's cathedral, Dublin, has launched a 'Sponsor a Chorister' scheme to contribute to the cost of sending the cathedral choristers on tour which for most is the experienced of a lifetime. The next tour is scheduled for Edinburgh in July 2015. Cheques made payable to 'Saint Patrick's Cathedral' and marked 'Sponsor a Chorister' on

the reverse, may be sent to the Precentor at St Patrick's cathedral, St Patrick's Close, Dublin 8.

Methodist women's world assembly



The Thirteenth World Assembly of the the World Federation of Methodist and United Church Women will be held in Houston, Texas, USA from 29 August to 3 September 2016.

The theme for the 2016-21 quinquennium will be ***Chosen People: Called to Proclaim.*** The Assembly will be held from Monday, 29 August, 2016 - 10:00 to Saturday, 3 September, 2016 - 20:00 in Houston, Texas, USA

Email: maureeneyoung@live.co.uk Website
with Further Details:
<http://wfmucw.org/13th-world-assembly-2016>

Archbishop of Canterbury praises military fighting Ebola



The Archbishop of Canterbury has urged people not to let the Ebola crisis or war in areas such as South Sudan “slip from our minds” as he issued a new year message.

The Most Rev Justin Welby, who was diagnosed with pneumonia after being forced to pull out of

his Christmas Day sermon at Canterbury Cathedral service, issued the message from the National Memorial Arboretum.

He praised the “extraordinary dedication” of the British military in Sierra Leone, one of the three west African countries worst affected by the spread of the deadly Ebola virus.

And he also spoke of his “unspeakable gratitude” to servicemen and women after the end of the war in Afghanistan, with withdrawal completed in 2014.

He said: “The National Memorial Arboretum is a place of reflection, remembrance and prayer, dedicated to those who have served, suffered or sacrificed for this country. To those who are remembered here, we owe a debt of unspeakable gratitude.

“This new year is particularly significant, marking the end of one of the longest wars that our modern services have fought.

“There is a danger that the sacrifice and suffering of those caught up in war and disaster will slip from our minds.

“Each day brings its toll of bad news, of disasters inflicted on the innocent by war and disease.

“In 2014 we saw so much of that in the Middle East, in north-east Nigeria, with the persecution of Christians and other minorities. And in the week before Christmas itself, there was the horrendous massacre of children in Pakistan.

“There is so much suffering that at the new year it is tempting to look inwards in despair, but we are not a country that turns our back on the suffering and the weak and the helpless.

“In the week just before Christmas I was in Sierra Leone, very briefly. There I saw the result of British generosity, of aid poured in to support a country torn apart by Ebola, and the extraordinary dedication of British service personnel, working with charities, funded by our aid budget.

“I saw the profound heroism of local people dealing with something that none of us understand which makes lethal the basic instincts of touch and embrace for the sick and the dying. The week before that I was in the South Sudan, and saw again the open-handedness of the British people who have contributed to a

programme that has saved one and a half million sufferers, war battered from starvation.

“When we are at our best, living out the generosity of Jesus Christ, as that has formed itself in our national character, when we turn outwards and use our best resources to change this world in which we live, we see what a wonderful heritage we have, and the hope we can bring to the poorest and those with the greatest suffering on the face of our planet.

“So what do we hope for in 2015? My hope and prayer is that we are the kind of country that goes on looking outwards, that is full of a generous spirit. Because when we’re generous we find joy and others find comfort and hope. So may that joy and comfort be yours in this coming year.”

Vatican honours 26 Church workers killed in the past year

The Vatican Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples has paid tribute to 26 Church workers killed in 2014.

In its annual report, the Congregation also highlighted the sacrifice of pastoral workers who

died of Ebola contracted while caring for others and reminded Catholics that the fates of five kidnapped priests remain unknown.

Fides, the congregation's news agency, reported that 26 workers were killed in 2014, mostly during robbery attempts. The 26 consisted of 17 priests, one religious Brother, six religious women, a seminarian and one layman.

Even if most of the murders were committed during robberies, Fides said many of them were carried out with such "brutality and ferociousness" that they are signs of intolerance and "moral degradation" as well as "economic and cultural poverty".

But the agency also drew special attention to the four members Hospitallers of St John of God, the religious Sister and 13 lay workers who died at Catholic hospitals in Liberia and Sierra Leone after contracting Ebola.

Fr Jesus Etayo, prior general of the of the Hospitallers of St John of God, said the 18 "gave their lives for others like Christ".

The fates of five kidnapped priests belonging to religious orders remains unknown, Fides said.

The five consist of three Assumptionist priests from Congo kidnapped in North Kivu in October 2012, the Italian Jesuit Fr Paolo Dall'Oglio, who was kidnapped in Syria in 2013, and Indian Jesuit Fr Alexis Prem Kumar, director of Jesuit Refugee Service in Afghanistan, who was kidnapped in June in Herat.

For years, the Fides list focused only on priests and religious killed in the Church's mission territories, but it now focuses on "all pastoral workers who died violently". The agency said it does not refer to them as "martyrs", which is a formal recognition by the Church that the person was killed in hatred for the faith, but as "witnesses" to Christ.

Breaking the statistics down by continent, Fides said 14 pastoral workers (12 priests, one Brother and a seminarian) were killed in the Americas. Seven (two priests and five sisters) were killed in Africa. Two (a Jesuit priest in Syria and a woman religious in Malaysia) died in Asia. A priest and a lay collaborator were murdered in Papua New Guinea. Finally, in Europe, an Italian priest was beaten to death in his rectory.

The murders in the Americas included four priests and a seminarian in Mexico, two priests and a Salesian brother in Venezuela, two US priests, Fr Eric Freed in California and Fr Kenneth Walker in Arizona, and one priest each in Canada, Colombia, Nicaragua and Peru.

Media digest

Mail on Sun/Tel/Sun/Eve standard

Various articles on comments by Andrew Lloyd Webber, the composer, who said churches across the country should be fitted with Wi-Fi in a bid to make them a more integral part of the community. Lord Lloyd Webber, who sits as a Conservative member in the House of Lords, indicated that discussions over installing internet for the general public at churches have already taken place with the Government. He said: "I want to get every church in the country on Wi-Fi. "Once you do that, the church becomes the centre of the community again.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2895609/Jesus-Christ-Superfast-Andrew-Lloyd-Webber-calls-wi-fi-church-tells-love-Cats-star-Nicole-Scherzinger.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11324246/Every-church-should-have-Wi-Fi-says-Andrew-Lloyd-Webber.html>

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/6236080/Andrew-Lloyd-Webber-says-wifi-should-be-installed-in-all-churches.html>

<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/we-need-wifi-in-every-church-in-the-country-says-andrew-lloydwebber-9956439.html>

Mail

Report on proposals to amend Canon law to allow clergy to bury those who have taken their own life. It says the Church of England's General Synod meets next month to discuss the proposals. The article states that under the current Church law, clergy are supposed to use a modified funeral service for people who have taken their own lives to reflect the Church's concerns about suicide. The article says no alternative service has been approved by Synod, despite several reports into the issue over the past 50 years, and claims the vast majority of the Synod is expected to support the proposed reforms.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2895832/Church-England-legalise-suicide-historic-U-turn-funerals-regard-taking-life-sin.html#ixzz3Nv973rSG>

Mail

Report on a new financial radio station set up by Gavin Oldham, who is a member of the General Synod, a former Church Commissioner, and also founder of online stockbroker The Share Centre. He says his new money-focused radio station Share Radio is aiming for 100,000 listeners within its first year. It states the Choir of York Minster opens live broadcasting each day and every Sunday the Faith and Finance programme invites a religious expert in finance to help give a multi-faith perspective on money.

<http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/smallbusiness/article-2895660/Gavin-s-going-big-share-radio-audience.html#ixzz3NvQnm5oI>

Express/Times/Mail

Reports that David Cameron's daughter Nancy is set to be offered a place at the Grey Coat Hospital, a Church of England comprehensive academy for girls in Westminster, close to Downing Street. It says it would make Mr Cameron the first Tory prime minister to send his child to state education while in office. The Church of England girls' comprehensive is heavily oversubscribed: more than 1,000 applied last year for just 151 places. A total of 116 are reserved for girls from practising church families.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/550209/PM-state-school-daughter>

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/education/article4313988.ece>

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2896042/Cameron-Tory-PM-send-child-state-comprehensive-Nancy-gets-place-subscribed-Grey-Coat-school.html?ITO=1490&ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490

Times

Article on how the Queen joined prayers for a British nurse infected with ebola, as doctors said that it was impossible to predict the outcome of the patient's fight with the deadly virus. It states Pauline Cafferkey, 39, remains in a critical condition at the Royal Free Hospital in north London as her illness enters a crucial phase. Prayers for Ms Cafferkey were said at St Mary Magdalene church on the Sandringham estate, during a service attended by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article4314046.ece>

Guard/Express/Tel

Reports that the future of a war memorial created with the support of Sir Winston Churchill to remember the air crew who died in the Battle of Britain is uncertain after the Ministry of Defence (MoD) decided its £50,000-a-year running cost was not "the most appropriate" way of spending its budget. They state an [e-petition](#) launched against the MoD's proposal to "relinquish ownership" of St George's Chapel of Remembrance on the site of the former RAF station at Biggin Hill in Kent has passed 10,000 signatories. More than 25,000 visitors are expected to visit the chapel this year, the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/jan/04/battle-of-britain-memorial-chapel-under-threat-kent>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/550166/Battle-Britain-memorial-could-close-Government-axes-funding>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/defence/11324206/Battle-of-Britain-chapel-to-the-few-threatened-with-closure.html>

BBC

Report that a stained glass window design commemorating Winston Churchill has been revealed. It will be installed at St Martin's Church in Bladon, Oxfordshire, where the wartime prime minister is buried. The window includes imagery of a Spitfire, a gas mask and a cat. Robert Courts, chair of the Parochial Church Council, described it as a "rich mixture of the Bulldog Churchill... and equally Churchill the man".

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-30672615>

FT

Columnist says that the Church of England is the winner of the paper's "Fallen Angel" award for using too much jargon in a [paper](#) on training bishops. It describes a sentence as being "obliterated by a dozen dreary management clichés".

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8438a3ee-926a-11e4-b213-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3NvPblGO6>

Tel

Letter from Roman Catholic MPs arguing Roman Catholic bishops should not be appointed into the House of Lords. They state the Catholic Church instead challenges its laity to enter the public sphere and to work through a variety of political parties and structures to see Christ's teaching reflected in public life. As Catholic politicians, we believe that is the right way to go.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/letters/11322275/Letters-We-must-not-allow-the-Nationalists-to-dictate-Scotlands-future.html>