



Image of the day
Irish church leaders'
United voice on St Patrick's Day

‘In Christ We Journey Together’ - Church Leaders’ St Patrick’s Day Message

The leaders of Ireland’s main churches have come together to issue a message on St Patrick’s Day that reflects on the 1921 centenaries and contains an invitation to wider civic society for further dialogue.

Entitled ‘In Christ We Journey Together’, the theme chosen by the Church Leaders Group (Ireland) for their shared reflection on the centenaries, they recognise that some may struggle with idea of a shared history of the centenaries. Together, however, they explore how the Christian faith and Christian social ethics can contribute to the healing of relationships and offer a hopeful vision for the future.

In their Joint Statement, which they also filmed as a video message at Saint Patrick’s Church of Ireland Cathedral in Armagh, the Church Leaders welcome the progress that has been made through the peace process in building relationships of mutual respect and trust across these islands. While acknowledging that there is much work still to do, they set out a vision for a society where different identities in a pluralist public square can be valued.

Reflecting together, the Church Leaders placed particular emphasis on the interconnectedness of the people of the UK and Ireland, saying ‘What is undeniable ... is the reality that we have to live in a shared space on these islands, and to make them a place of belonging and welcome for all’. They have chosen to issue their message on St Patrick’s

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Day to embrace the way this former slave, who embodied that interconnectedness, brought Christianity to Ireland some 1,500 years ago. In this context, a single century is but a brief moment in time, but the Church Leaders note that significant anniversaries can provide a valuable opportunity to reflect on our history and explore what can be learned for today.

The reflection is informed by principles of ethical remembering, ‘In our approach to the past we have a moral responsibility to acknowledge the corrosive impact of violence and words that can lead to violence’, the Church leaders said. They also recognise that there is a need to face difficult truths about failings in their churches’ own leadership in the work of peace and reconciliation. Regarding the role of the churches, they said, ‘We have often been captive churches; not captive to the Word of God, but to the idols of state and nation.’

The Church Leaders are sharing this message today as an invitation to dialogue. They have planned a series of engagements for this year which will include opportunities for conversation and reflection — as churches, as well as with political and civic leaders — and other events to mark the centenaries.

Church Leaders Statement in full

As disciples of Jesus Christ, sharing in the grace of his redemption, and in the Father’s unshakeable love for his creation, we have been reflecting together on the events of 1921 on this island. We wish to share some of our thoughts

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as we continue these conversations and as we journey together through the year.

Every generation of leaders, civil and political, is called to make choices about the structures that govern our life in community, now and in the future, in circumstances that will always be less than ideal. Significant anniversaries provide an opportunity to reflect on our trajectory, exploring what can be learned for today through a re-examination of the contrasting and intertwined narratives of conflict and compromise that surround these pivotal points in our history.

Some may struggle with the concept of a shared history when it comes to the centenary of the partition of Ireland, the establishment of Northern Ireland and the resulting reconfiguration of British-Irish relationships. What is undeniable, however, is the reality that we have to live in a shared space on these islands, and to make them a place of belonging and welcome for all. In our approach to the past we have a moral responsibility to acknowledge the corrosive impact of violence and words that can lead to violence, and a duty of care to those still living with the trauma of its aftermath.

There are insights from Christian social ethics that may offer a helpful perspective, alongside others, as we seek to navigate our contested past in a way that will contribute to healing of relationships in the present and a hopeful vision for the future. Christ's teaching, ministry and sacrifice were offered in the context of a society that was politically divided, wounded by conflict and injustice. His call to 'render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things of God' (Mark 12:17) conveyed the reassurance that beneath

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these societal fractures lay a deeper source of connection because all things belong to God.

Jesus lived out this message of hope by repeatedly and intentionally crossing social boundaries to affirm the dignity of those who had been marginalised or excluded by his own people and by society. In these encounters, as exemplified in the meeting with the Woman of Samaria (John 4:1-42), we see that Christ does not seek to minimise differences, but rather to establish connection through gracious listening, replacing exclusion and shame with the hope of new beginnings.

We have an opportunity, in marking these events from our past, to be intentional in creating the spaces for encounter with those who are different from us, and those who may feel marginalised in the narratives that have shaped our community identity. This will require us to face difficult truths about failings in our own leadership in the work of peace and reconciliation. As Christian churches we acknowledge and lament the times that we failed to bring to a fearful and divided society that message of the deeper connection that binds us, despite our different identities, as children of God, made in His image and likeness. We have often been captive churches; not captive to the Word of God, but to the idols of state and nation.

We find inspiration and encouragement in the progress that has been made through our peace process in building relationships of mutual respect and trust across these islands. These relationships are often tested, and will at times be found wanting, but our communities have also

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demonstrated great resilience, solidarity and compassion, evident most recently in the response to Covid-19.

There has been considerable progress too in addressing unjust structures that excluded people and unfairly limited their life chances. The power of institutions has diminished, leading to greater accountability for those in leadership. This helps create an environment where we can value our different identities in a pluralist public square, conscious of both our rights and responsibilities. Yet there is much work still to do. With so much of our lives now being lived in the digital space there can be a temptation to retreat into spaces where our definition of community is limited to those who agree with us. This leads to an increasingly fragmented society in which too many people fall through the cracks.

Churches, alongside other civic leaders, have a role to play in providing spaces outside political structures that give expression to our inter-connectedness and shared concern for the common good. It is our hope that shared reflection on our past will support and strengthen this engagement, inspiring us to renew our commitment to the work of building peace for the future. As the Apostle Paul said, “So then let us pursue the things that make for peace and the building up of one another” (Romans 14:19).

Rt Rev Dr David Bruce

Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

Most Rev John McDowell

Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of all Ireland

Rev Dr Thomas McKnight

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President of the Methodist Church in Ireland

Most Rev Eamon Martin

Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of all Ireland

Very Rev Dr Ivan Patterson

President of the Irish Council of Churches

Churches are “important partners” to achieve gender justice, Anglican Communion tells UN

The Anglican Communion delegation to the United Nations 65th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) say that churches are “important partners of governments and international organisations in reaching all sections of society, achieving gender justice, and addressing the Covid-19 pandemic.”

The statement was made in a written statement from the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations ahead of this month’s CSW65.

The statement sets out five recommendations for UN Member States, agencies, and civil society organisations, including urging them to “recognise the positive role of faith communities building gender just relationships, transforming social norms and achieving gender equality; consider them key stakeholders and partners in humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts as well as in combating the multi-faceted impacts of Covid-19.”

UNCSW65 will take place from 15 to 26 March and is being held mostly online because of Covid-19 travel restrictions.

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Anglican delegation to CSW64 and CSW65: Robyn Andréo-Boosey (The Anglican Church of Australia); Bridie Boyd (The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia); the Revd Bianca Daébs (Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil); Martine Dushime (The Anglican Church of Burundi); Clare Hendricks (The Episcopal Church); Bishop Sarah Mullally (The Church of England); Amal Sarah (The Church of Pakistan); and the Revd Navina Thompson (The Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East).

Last year's CSW64 was curtailed and postponed. [The delegation chosen to represent the Anglican Communion](#) last year have been retained as this year's delegation.

The CSW is an intergovernmental body established in 1946 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council to



promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Each year, the Commission focuses on a different theme, which then shapes the agenda of the intergovernmental body as well as the engagement of broader civil society organisations.

The theme for this year is “Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.” It will also review a previous CSW theme on women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development.

The Anglican Communion delegation are engaging with the meeting in a number of ways. A joint Anglican Communion and Mothers’ Union webinar, “*What’s Faith Got to do with it?*”, on Thursday 18 March, has been chosen as an [official UN parallel event](#), and several delegates are taking part in [other parallel events](#). As part of their communications plan, the delegation will be taking over the twitter account [@AnglicansEndGBV](#) over the two weeks they will share their experiences and thoughts from the meeting.

- [Click here](#) for more information about the Anglican Communion’s involvement in CSW65.

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- [Click here](#) for more details and registration information for the *What's Faith Got to do with it?* Webinar.

Pope's wind-whipped mantle drives Vatican tailors to consider Velcro

On his history-making trip to Iraq, Pope Francis often played second fiddle to the gyrations of his cape.

A gust of wind blew Pope Francis' mantle as he stood by Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi upon the pope's arrival at Baghdad's international airport

Countless pictures document the struggle: For decades, popes have suffered embarrassment and even frustration when their light, shoulder-length mantle, inspired by a sudden gust of wind, smacked them right in the face as they greeted world leaders or waved to crowds while cameras whirred.

Pope Francis was not spared during his appearances on his history-making visit to Iraq over the past week, as he was often whipped about the head and shoulders, fussing with and generally playing second fiddle to the gyrations of his cape.

Popes wear the pellegrina, an ivory-colored mantle named for the traditional attire of Christian pilgrims, over their cassocks. Bishops and cardinals wear a black pellegrina with purple or red lining for formal events. Because of the circular design and lightweight material of the pellegrina, which opens at the front, the wind easily sweeps beneath it,

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making the liturgical vestment the ecclesial equivalent of Marilyn Monroe's iconic white dress.

Papal tailors near the Vatican told Religion News Service that despite the frequency with which the pellegrina turns against its wearer, it remains — in Catholic terms — a relatively recent phenomenon that underlines ongoing developments in papal attire.

“Once the material used was much heavier, like wool. Now we try to make it as light as possible because they are already dressed underneath,” said Laura Mancinelli, who runs her father's famous Mancinelli shop for clergy attire a few steps from the Vatican.

“But obviously with the wind it flies all over the place,” she added.

Tailors have opted for lightweight and opaque fabrics for liturgical vestments because they are worn over regular clothes. Given the weight of the robes and the advanced age of popes and clergy in general, Mancinelli is hesitant to make adjustments to weight the mantle to hold its own against the wind.

“We are mostly concerned with how it falls, without any lines,” she said. “The effect risks being ruined if you put something underneath.”

Across the street from Mancinelli's shop, at the well-known liturgical vestment store Comandini, the “kite effect” of the papal mantle is also considered “inevitable.”

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The mantle is only attached to the cassock in two places, explained Dario Piccioni, an employee accustomed to selling garments to cardinals and bishops at the Vatican. “Since it’s short, you only need a little bit of wind and ... ,” Piccioni said, imitating the rogue mantle, his laugh detectable beneath the mask.

“But maybe we could put a pin or Velcro,” he added, stating that “the issue has never been raised before.”

In the end, he said, decisions about these matters are made by the higher-ups at the Vatican. The Second Vatican Council, which sought to reconcile the Catholic Church with the challenges of modernity, made significant changes to the sometimes over-the-top attire worn by popes and clergy.

Pope Paul VI had an instrumental role in redefining the fashion choices of the pontiffs, eliminating the long trains that popes and cardinals used to wear during processions, which traditionally extended up to 23 feet long. He was also the first pope to hold public audiences in St. Peter’s Square from the high — and terribly gusty — window of the apostolic palace.

Major task of re-roofing St. Macartin's Cathedral in Enniskillen

Renovations at St. Macartin's Cathedral in Enniskillen are to begin in April, as the historic landmark, now in its 400th year, faces the major task of re-roofing the cathedral, Jessica Campbell writes in The Impartial Report.

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Speaking of the task ahead, the Dean of St. Macartin's Cathedral, the Very Reverend Kenneth Hall, said: "Very soon scaffolding will be erected around our cathedral, commencing the major task of re-roofing our historic building dedicated to St. Macartin.

"The cathedral has stood the test of time for 400 years, and is a well-known landmark in Enniskillen town, as well as witness to the Christian faith handed on to us from generations past."

However, with the ongoing pandemic, the original fundraising plans for the £400,000 re-roofing project have been somewhat curtailed.

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Talking about the difficulty of fundraising during a pandemic, Dean Hall said: "We had a big concert planned – Declan Nerney was to play last year, but that had to be cancelled. It was rescheduled for this year, and had to be cancelled again.

"Had circumstances been different, we would have been able to hold many fundraising activities, such as concerts, coffee mornings, sales etc, but all of that is not now possible.

"So, instead, I came up with the idea of selling the slates for the roof," added Dean Hall.

"There are 10,000 slates on the roof, and if we ask people to provide [through parishioners' ticket sales] 20 slates, we could raise £100,000 in this venture alone and this will bring in about 25 per cent of the overall cost," he said.

Parishioners are invited to get a small book of 20 tickets for 20 slates, costing £10 apiece, to sell to friends, family, and anyone who would like to help support the cathedral in this way.

In this manner, with the generosity and support of parishioners, Dean Hall is hopeful that the slates' ticket sales could help raise a significant portion of the re-roofing costs.

Dean Hall also added how much he values parishioners giving what they affordably can in their Free Will Offering, and also in the monthly Cathedral Roof Fund envelopes, with their kind charity greatly appreciated.

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The money for the new roof needs to be raised by the end of June; however, the re-roofing works are scheduled to begin in April and should be finished by November, Dean Hall told The Impartial Reporter.

“Then we’re going to paint it in January,” he said, adding: “We are going to stay open for all of it, except the repainting part. We are repainting the inside of [the roof] so we have to move out to the hall, but we will be open [during the work on the roof] as the scaffolding will not be on the driveway of the cathedral, it will be behind it.

“We hope to be back in before Easter next year.”

Noting that the cathedral is a very important feature in the middle of Enniskillen, Dean Hall added: “We really want the cathedral to be a community building in the town; it’s open to all. It’s open to everyone.”

As the cathedral is celebrating 400 years this year, Dean Hall had hoped to have a celebratory event, but at the moment this is also not possible due to the pandemic.

He said: “We had it all planned, if restrictions had been lifted, but we just can’t plan anything [because of the restrictions].

“We still, hopefully, will do that, but it all depends how things progress this year, but certainly you couldn’t really plan anything at the moment; you’re curtailed until restrictions are lifted,” Dean Hall told this newspaper.

Courtesy The Impartial Reporter



Priests cannot bless ‘sin’ of gay marriage, says Vatican

The Vatican has decreed that Catholic priests cannot bless same-sex unions, ruling that partnerships between gay men or lesbians are “not ordered to the Creator’s plan”.

The ruling was seen as an attempt to quash moves by liberal bishops in some parts of the world to sanction the blessing of gay civil unions.

God “does not and cannot bless sin”, the judgment said, in language far removed from the empathy shown by Pope Francis in 2013 when he asked “Who am I to judge?” in relation to gays in the Catholic Church.

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The ruling was issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, named by one commentator as the successor to the Roman Inquisition. Same-sex unions cannot “be considered licit” as they are not between a man and a woman, the Vatican department said. It added that Pope Francis had approved the declaration.

“It is not licit to impart a blessing on relationships, or partnerships, even stable, that involve sexual activity outside of marriage (ie outside the indissoluble union of a man and a woman open in itself to the transmission of life), as is the case of the unions between persons of the same sex,” it said.

Sir Elton John accused the Vatican of hypocrisy, saying it had profited by investing through a Malta-based company in *Rocketman*, his 2019 biopic, a fact that emerged in a Vatican inquiry into its own finances.

He wrote on Twitter: “How can the Vatican refuse to bless gay marriages because they ‘are sin’, yet happily make a profit from investing millions in *Rocketman* – which celebrates my finding happiness from my marriage to David? #hypocrisy.” The Vatican’s declaration is not a surprise – the Church still teaches that gay acts are “intrinsically disordered” and sinful.

Martin Pendergast, from the British organisation LGBT Catholics, said the timing of the announcement was interesting. “It may be to counter what is going on at the grass-roots level in places such as the UK, Austria, Germany and Switzerland,” he said. “Priests there are giving services of blessing and thanksgiving to gay unions. These

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things are quietly happening on the ground. So the Vatican's document is impotent – the horse has already bolted. I also wonder if this is an attempt to corral Pope Francis – there's not a lot of love lost between the CDF and the Pope's team.”

Robert Mickens, a Catholic commentator in Rome, said: “The Vatican has been harangued by conservatives to do something about this.”

The fact that priests in some countries are blessing gay unions “has alarmed and infuriated a lot of people in the Church”, he said.

Mothing Sunday flowers and blessings at gates of Cork churches

Churches find themselves in lockdown like everyone else, and they are closed for public worship, but there are still open hearts of kindness and generosity. The ministry of the Church continues and a host of



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ways have been found to keep in touch with parishioners and to reach out to local communities.

Two Cork churches – St Mary’s, Carrigaline, and St John’s, Monkstown – brought Mothering Sunday gifts of daffodils to the gates of the churches for passers-by to take away as a reminder of all this.

Carrigaline Union of parishes would, in normal times, give out posies of daffodils to every woman in the congregation at Services on Mothering Sunday. For the second year running the churches were closed and so bunches of flowers, picked locally by parishioners, were placed outside the gates of both St John’s church in Monkstown and St Mary’s church in Carrigaline. Colourful posters encouraged passers by to take some flowers, with the blessing of the parish, home with them on this special day.

Books, broadcasts, resources and webinars

US Tribute to John Hume in America today

The Irish Embassy in Washington DC, wish to mark the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Friends of Ireland Caucus in Washington DC. It is also the first St Patricks Day since the death of the great John Hume, Nobel Laureate, politician, architect of the Peace Process in Northern Ireland.

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The Irish Embassy wish to invite you to join @humefoundation and friends in remembering and celebrating John Hume on today 17 March 2021 at 7.30pm (GMT) (3.30 EST). The John and Pat Hume Foundation is delighted and honoured to partner with the Embassy of Ireland USA and Congressional Friends of Ireland Caucus on this special event.

Please note that the start time is 7.30pm GMT as clocks in USA went forward on Sunday 14 March 2021, so there is currently only a 4 hour time difference.

<https://www.rememberingjohnhume.com/>

Poetry: Holy Week Voices from the Holy Land

Holy Week Voices from the Holy Land is a unique spiritual resource with 15 contributors from the Holy Land drawn from across the main Christian denominations, compiled with a series of poems and reflections written by Fr Richard Nesbitt. Fr Richard is parish priest at Our Land of Fatima's in White City, west London, and wrote the poems during Holy Week in the first lockdown in 2020.

In an imaginative way the poems walk in the footsteps of Jesus from the raising of Lazarus, through Holy Week right up to the appearance of the Risen Christ to the disciples on the road to Emmaus to create a unique reflection on the ways in which Christ's living presence has been experienced in these two times of extreme crisis two millennia apart. There are forewords written by Cardinal Vincent Nichols and Archbishop Justin Welby.

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The book is available to purchase for £7.99 in paperback online: www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/shop/lenten-book

The book is also available as an e-book at the same price, £7.99, using Issuu. You can browse the first chapter of the book before you buy here: https://issuu.com/fhloffice/docs/hwv_digitalbook_cmyk?fr=sMjY0ZDI3MDk0MTU

What's faith got to do with it? – Mothers' Union and Anglican Communion ask the UN CSW

The United Nations has chosen a joint Anglican Communion and Mothers' Union webinar, "*What's faith got to do with it*", as an official parallel event for the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65). The webinar will highlight the positive work being done by women in Christian communities around the world to achieve gender justice and to prevent and end gender-based violence.

It will showcase the ways in which Christian gender justice advocates are engaging at community and structural levels, and within Church institutions. Panellists from three different continents will share their work and its impact and explore the theologies that underpin the response to gender justice.

This year's session of the Commission on the Status of Women will take place mostly online, allowing members of the public to register for parallel events who would otherwise not be able to attend.

The Project Director for Gender Justice at the Anglican Communion, Mandy Marshall, said: "as an Anglican delegation we have forged relationships over the last year in

What's Faith Got to do with it?

Panelists from four different continents will share their work and its impact and explore the theologies that underpin the response to gender justice.

Thursday, 18 March 2021
11:30- 13:00 EDT
NGO CSW Platform
Register at: bit.ly/anglicancsw

 Sarah Mullally Bishop of London UK	 Robyn Boosey Co-founder of IC Change Australia	 Clare Hendricks Student & Indigenous Activist USA	 Reverend Bianca Daëbs Coordinator Interdisciplinary Group of Gender & Education Brazil	 Barbara Mugisha Provincial Mothers' Union Family Life Coordinator Uganda
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Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

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the preparations for the event and are thrilled to be able to share our work via an online webinar. It is so important that the Anglican Communion is represented at the Commission on the Status of Women to highlight the amazing work that is being done around the communion on bringing about gender justice and ending gender based violence.

“Of course, there is still a lot of work to do as a Communion. With the World Health Organisation (WHO) stating on International Women's Day that one in three women will experience physical and / or sexual violence, the need to focus and address on gender justice and gender-based violence is more critical than ever.”

The Chief Executive of the Mothers' Union, Bev Jullien, said: “Mothers' Union is delighted to be partnering with the Anglican Communion Office on the parallel event, *'what's faith got to do with it?'*, with Barbara Mugisha, our Provincial

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Development Coordinator for Uganda joining the panel, under the chairmanship of fellow MU member, the Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally.

“Embedded in their communities around the world, faith actors are uniquely well positioned to challenge damaging social norms and enable transformative action”, Bev Julian said. “Barbara’s story shares how, in partnership with the church and key community stakeholders, MU was able, through a series of radio broadcasts and managed follow up in 2020, to create high levels of awareness of domestic abuse during the pandemic, to support survivors and to educate both men and women to change behaviour.”

The webinar will take place on Thursday 18 March at 11.30 am EST (3.30 pm GMT).

- Further information about the webinar is available [here](#). Prior registration is essential and can be done [here](#).

Media review

Aontú accuses Sinn Fein of trying to ‘ramp up Northern Ireland abortions

Belfast News Letter

<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/health/aontu-accuses-sinn-fein-of-trying-to-ramp-up-northern-ireland-abortion-3165591>

It's no longer just staunch Unionists who believe that Brussels is treating Northern Ireland badly.

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Daily Telegraph

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/03/12/no-longer-just-staunch-unionists-believe-brussels-treating-northern/>

There is not enough evidence to justify a border poll at this time, NIO tells QUB academic

Belfast News Letter

Brandon Lewis' department, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO), has outlined its thinking in a letter to a Queen's University academic.

<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/there-is-not-enough-evidence-to-justify-a-border-poll-at-this-time-nio-tells-qub-academic-3165659?>

Campaigner's delight as first Catholic primary school wins integrated status.

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Belfast Telegraph

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/campaigners-delight-as-first-catholic-primary-school-wins-integrated-status-40179259.html>

Micheal Martin pushes back against US calls for Irish unity referendum

Belfast Telegraph

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/micheal-martin-pushes-back-against-us-calls-for-irish-unity-referendum-40201893.html>

Abortion: Assembly backs change in NI abortion law.

BBC News

A bill which seeks to amend the law in Northern Ireland to prevent abortions in cases of non-fatal disabilities, including Down's Syndrome, has been backed by a majority of MLAs.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56404024>

Pointers for prayer

Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.



Almighty Father,
whose Son was revealed in majesty
before he suffered death upon the cross:
give us grace to perceive his glory,
that we may be strengthened to suffer with him
and be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Hold in your hands, Lord
our families & friends
our neighbours
those whom we worry about
and those who worry for us.
And in these same hands
hold every family,
especially those for whom today
has brought new burdens and fresh sorrows

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We remember with thanks the numerous Mothers' Union members who, over the years, have used their God-given gifts to change the world. We pray that, in our day, we'll also be willing to use our gifts to help transform lives and communities

We pray today for the church across the world, especially in places where they are experiencing hardship and persecution. We stand together with our sisters and brothers and pray for God to bring relief from their circumstances.

Holy God,
you know the disorder of our sinful lives:
set straight our crooked hearts,
and bend our wills to love your goodness
and your glory
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God,
you have created the heavens and the earth
and made us in your own image:
teach us to discern your hand in all your works
and your likeness in all your children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all
things,
now and for ever.

Speaking to the Soul

Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God. Luke 12:21 NLT



I love the fact that most of Jesus' stories are told in very few words. Our verse today is the punch line to a very brief story that he told about a rich farmer who had had such a successful harvest that he realised that he needed to build more barns. He said to himself that he could now settle back and enjoy life. He could eat, drink and be merry. Jesus calls the man a fool, because he hadn't taken into consideration the fact that his life might come to an end that very night.

I don't believe for a moment that Jesus wants us drag our way through life with long faces with the morbid realisation that any day might be our last. Far from it! He wants us to live our lives fully every day and to enjoy the wonders of his creation and the miracle of being alive. But he wants us to do so in the light of eternity. He wants us to invest in the things that last, and nothing is more enduring than our relationship with God. There is nothing wrong with making

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money but there is something hideously wrong with thinking about it to the exclusion of everything else.

Our society encourages us continually to think about our money, our possessions, our holidays, our pensions and our health. All of those things are good but as we look at the adverts and listen to the voices around us, we need to remind ourselves that God calls us to live with the much bigger perspective of eternity. Every day we need to remind ourselves of the importance of living close to our eternal God and of sharing his love, joy and peace with those around us.

QUESTION

Do you consciously live and make your decisions in the light of eternity?

PRAYER

Thank you Lord for the wonderful gift of today. Help me to recognize how precious it is and to ensure that you are at the centre of all of my decisions. Amen.



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