



# Image of the day - St Patrick's Kilkenny

## Celebrating Patrick in a pandemic



**Because of Covid restrictions, the Diocese of Down and Dromore moved its annual St Patrick's Day celebrations online with a virtual Prayer Pilgrimage and a live-streamed service from Down Cathedral.**

Children and families were able to celebrate at home or locally with a specially commissioned '[Muddy Prayer Trail](#)' based on words from St Patrick's Breastplate.

Our celebrations normally gather visitors from across the world and begin with a service at Saul, the site of Patrick's first church. Instead, the Bishop David and the Dean Henry Hull celebrated a simple service of Holy Communion before walking prayerfully from Saul to the Cathedral.

Meanwhile, pilgrims at home were invited to take a virtual prayer pilgrimage with Glynis Matchett with a short film premiered on social media. The pilgrimage is inspired by Patrick's journey from slave to missionary and reflects on his faith and passion for the gospel. [Find out more and take the pilgrimage here.](#)

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Unable to gather for in-person worship, at noon Dean Henry Hull welcomed viewers to a live broadcast from Down Cathedral. Bishop David led the service and guest speakers Patrick Regan OBE (above right) and singer-songwriter Andy Flannagan (above left) joined us by video.

Conscious that the past year has seen many thousands of people face traumatic situations and significant mental health issues, the diocese had chosen the theme 'When Faith Gets Shaken'. Patrick Regan is the author of a book by the same name and founder and CEO of mental health charity [Kintsugi Hope](#).

Drawing on their own experiences, Patrick and Andy encouraged us to be honest with God in lament and to trust that he brings beauty from our brokenness. Andy sang two pieces – *Fragile* and a song of complaint based on Psalm 142.

We're grateful to soloist Ruth Thompson who sang two songs – *What Grace is Mine* and *Christ Be Beside Me* – and to the Cathedral organist, Michael McCracken.

Following the service, several local clergy gathered at St Patrick's grave for a socially distanced wreath laying. Keeping with the focus on mental wellbeing, the wreath was laid by Mr Jackie Breen, a Senior Mental Health Nurse based at Finneston House in Downpatrick.

*Report by Annette McGrath, Down & Dromore*

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## **Dr Jessie Rogers appointed first woman and lay Dean of Faculty of Theology at Pontifical University Maynooth**



**On the feast day of its patron saint, the President of Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, Rev Prof Michael Mullaney, announced on Wednesday the appointment of Dr Jessie Rogers as the first woman and lay Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Pontifical University Maynooth.**

Dr Rogers, originally South African, undertook her graduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch and came to Ireland in 2007 to teach in Mary Immaculate College before joining the Faculty of Theology at Saint Patrick's College in 2014. As a Scripture scholar specialising in the Old Testament, her academic work focuses on biblical wisdom literature. In recent years it has broadened to include spirituality and a focus on the theology of childhood. Dr Rogers is a member of the Irish Biblical Association, the

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South African Society for Near Eastern Studies, the European Society for Catholic Theology, and the Godly Play International College of Trainers. Dr Rogers brings international and ecumenical experience to her new role.

The Pontifical University Maynooth, provides academic awards in Theology, Philosophy, Pastoral Care, Chaplaincy and Catholic Education. Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, houses both the Pontifical University and the National Seminary. There are 765 undergraduate and postgraduate studying at the Pontifical University.

## **C of I Standing Committee News**

The Standing Committee of the General Synod met in online format on Tuesday, 9th March 2021.

Ms Hazel Corrigan opened the meeting of the Standing Committee in prayer.

The Honorary Secretaries confirmed that the 2021 meeting of the **General Synod** will take place online, from Thursday, 30th September, to Saturday, 2nd October. The final dates for the submission of bills will be 19th August (to be printed with the agenda) or 23rd September (for late bills); the final date for the submission of motions will be 2nd September. The Standing Committee approved its report to General Synod 2021 and the reports of boards, committees, and working groups which report to Standing Committee, as appendices to the report.

The recommendations of the **Priorities Fund Committee** were approved. Over the course of 2020, a total of 54

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applications were received, requesting grants amounting to €991,649. The committee recommended 36 grants, totalling €472,540. Compared to 2019, the number of applications had decreased, as anticipated. The diocesan targets for contributions to the Priorities Fund were reduced to 50% of previous target levels for 2020, and will be at 75% for 2021, to take account of the pressures arising from Covid-19.

A grant of €500 from the **General Synod Royalties Fund** was approved, to be made to Mr Colum O’Riordan, Director of the Irish Architectural Archive, for expert editorial work on the text of Dr Michael O’Neill’s proposed illustrated history of church buildings.

The Standing Committee approved the establishment of a **Working Group concerning a co-ordinated response by the Church to historic institutional abuse**, to report to both Standing Committee and the Representative Body at least quarterly. The approval of the Representative Body was granted in its meeting later on the same day.

The Standing Committee considered a preliminary paper from the **House of Bishops on marriages outside church buildings** and supported a resolution to bring revised Marriage Regulations for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland back to Standing Committee for consideration, following further discussion by the House of Bishops.

#### Appointments

The Standing Committee approved the nomination of the Revd Colin Darling for nomination to **Christian Aid** for consideration for appointment as a Church of Ireland voluntary director of Christian Aid.

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The co-opting of Ms Jane Burns to the **Church and Society Commission** was approved. The Standing Committee nominated the following members of the **Secondary Education Committee (Republic of Ireland)** to attend its AGM, with re-nomination (if appropriate) to take place in March 2022: Mr Wilfred Baker; Ms Hazel Corrigan; Mr Roy Crowe; Ms Elizabeth Hassell; the Revd Robert Jones; the Revd Ken Rue; Ms Joyce Ryder; and Ms Kara Turner.

The Revd Dr Stanley Gamble was appointed as the Church of Ireland observer on the **Methodist Church's Faith and Order Committee**.

The following persons were appointed to attend at a virtual meeting of the **Four Nations** on 26th May 2021, comprising representatives



from the four Anglican Churches in the UK and Ireland: the Archbishop of Dublin; the Bishop of Cashel; the Dean of Limerick; the Revd Canon Katharine Poulton; Ms Kate Turner; and Mr Glenn

Moore.

The Standing Committee agreed that Church of Ireland **representatives appointed in 2020 to annual meetings of other Churches** should, if invitations are received, attend those meetings in 2021, and authorised the Honorary Secretaries to find replacement representatives if necessary. The appointed representatives are as follows:

- **General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church** in Ireland (1st–5th June in Belfast) – the Revd Alison Calvin and Ms Rhonda Willoughby;
- **Conference of the Methodist Church in Ireland** (10th–14th June, in Lisburn) – Mr Ken Gibson and the Revd Canon Katharine Poulton;
- **Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church** in Great Britain and Ireland (9th–13th July in Swanwick, Derbyshire) – the Rev Dr William Olhausen (additionally, the Rt Revd Michael Burrows to attend part of the Provincial Synod); and
- the Very Revd John Bond to attend **Society of Friends' Ireland Yearly Meeting** and Ms Gina Copty to attend as alternate.

The following **Churches which were invited to send representatives to attend General Synod 2020** will be again be invited in the same manner to General Synod 2021: Presbyterian Church in Ireland; Methodist Church in Ireland; Roman Catholic Church; Irish Council of Churches; Moravian Church of Great Britain and Ireland; Church in Wales; Rock of Ages Cherubim and Seraphim; Salvation Army; and Romanian Orthodox Church in Ireland.

The meeting closed with the Grace.



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## **Books, broadcasts, resources and webinars**

### **New Irish Arts - St Patrick's themed concert recording online**

St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, hosted a St Patrick's themed concert which was live streamed on Saturday March 13.

The concert, presented by New Irish Arts, featured music and stories to celebrate Ireland's patron saint, with the New Irish Choir & Orchestra, directed by Jonathan Rea.

The concert, which is suitable for the whole family, also features additional additional outdoor filming.

The concert is available to watch until Monday March 22.

Link -

[[] <https://www.newirisharts.com/events/2021/3/1/patrick-music-and-stories-celebrating-irelands-patron-saint> ]

### **The Life Worth Living-The Most Rev. Pat Storey**

The Most Rev. Pat Storey, Bishop of Meath and Kildare, will be interviewed on 10Plus Radio – The Life Worth Living – on Friday 19th March 2021 at 8pm.

Bishop Storey was the first woman to be consecrated as a Bishop in the Church of Ireland and indeed the first female to be appointed to the role anywhere by the Anglican Church in Ireland or the British Isles.

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She will be interviewed on the next edition of Transformations with Joe Boyd, which premieres on Friday and is repeats on the Sunday, Monday and Tuesday evenings that follow at the same time.

10Plus Radio – The Life Worth Living - can be heard every Friday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday evening from 6pm to 1130pm. UK time

Click on <http://c6.radioboss.fm:8157/>

Stream

<https://c6.radioboss.fm:18157/stream> to listen.

## **CMSI Quiz evening**

Join with CMSI Staff and other supporters for an evening of fun, chat and not-very-competitive quizzing to celebrate the joy and hope of a new season.

[ <https://www.cmsireland.org/events> ]

## **WCC to observe Week of Prayer on COVID-19 pandemic 2-27 March**

The World Council of Churches will observe a week of prayer from 22-27 March, one year into COVID-19 pandemic.

The week will invite a time of prayer and reflection on both the lament and the hope expressed and experienced across the world during what has been a year of unprecedented suffering, but also one when churches have worked together in ever new ways to adapt, respond and accompany communities through mental, physical, economical, spiritual, and environmental crises.

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The week of prayer is convened with WCC member churches and ecumenical partners, and will share prayers and spiritual resources produced in response to the pandemic.

A global online prayer service with participation from the eight WCC regions will be convened during the week, and a collection of resources will be made available on the WCC website by 18 March 2021, in English, French, German and Spanish.

See WCC resources on COVID-19: [www.oikoumene.org/resources/covid-19-resources](http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/covid-19-resources)

## **New Bible Timeline course with Mauro Iannicelli**

Catholic speaker Mauro Iannicelli, will be running another Bible Timeline Course online with live talks, starting Wednesday 7 April at 7pm. The course consists of eight evening sessions.

The FREE OF CHARGE course uses the Bible Timeline Chart and teaching methodology developed by Jeff Cavins. The Bible Timeline Chart divides the whole Bible into '12 periods' which act like chapters in Salvation History, helping those attending the course to grasp the key stages and the big picture of the Bible.

This course is run by Mauro's Catholic evangelisation 'Come & See' ministry.

Angela who took the Bible Timeline course last year told ICN: "The prospect of studying all 72 books Bible is a

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daunting one. To be honest I never really tried before. There's so much to take in. But this course helps you stand back and see the Big Picture. It's amazing. I recommend it to everyone."

For information and registration see: [www.comeandsee.org](http://www.comeandsee.org)

## Media review

### Mary McAleese dismayed at Vatican ban on same-sex blessings

Irish Times

Former president Mary McAleese has described the Vatican document banning same-sex blessings, published on Monday, as “withering”.

Ms McAleese criticised Pope Francis, who approved it, as a would-be “populist Pope” who behind his desk “toes the old hard line”.

[<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/mary-mcaleese-dismayed-at-vatican-ban-on-same-sex-blessings-1.4513913>]

### Brent geese and the Mourne



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## **Covid-19 disruptions killed 228,000 children in South Asia, says UN report**

BBC News

The disruption in healthcare services caused by Covid-19 may have led to an estimated 239,000 maternal and child deaths in South Asia, according to a new UN report.

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-56425115> ]

## **Unionist parties slam Sinn Fein 'veto' of NI centenary stone proposal**

Belfast Telegraph

The DUP, UUP and TUV said the Assembly Commission has refused a request to install a centenary stone at Stormont.

[<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/the-centenary/unionist-parties-slam-sinn-fein-veto-of-ni-centenary-stone-proposal-40210447.html?utm>]

## **The tale of two Sinn Féins**

Irish Examiner

On Monday night, Sinn Féin MLAs in the north spoke passionately against a DUP bill that seeks to amend the law in Northern Ireland to prevent abortions in cases of non-fatal disabilities, including Down Syndrome, and then not-so-passionately abstained on the vote, Aoife Moore writes

[ <https://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/commentanalysis/arid-40245716.html> ]

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## **Allegation of partisan policing in NI**

Belfast News Letter

Jamie Bryson: Police grill loyalists days after alleged social distancing breach, but Sinn Fein not for six months.

[<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/opinion/columnists/jamie-bryson-police-grill-loyalists-days-after-alleged-social-distancing-breach-but-sinn-fein-not-for-six-months-3167224>]

## **Stormont-funded report warns about big business unduly influencing energy policy**

Belfast News Letter

Six years after the RHI scheme began to implode, a Stormont-funded report into how civil servants and ministers handle energy has conveyed concern that commercial interests could be unduly influencing policy.

[<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/stormont-funded-report-warns-about-big-business-unduly-influencing-energy-policy-3168041?>]

## **Robin Swann can rest assured**

Irish News

Jake O'Kane: Robin Swann can rest assured that when the story of this pandemic is written, he will be remembered as someone whose hard work and determination not only made a difference, but saved lives

[ [www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/2021/03/06/news/jake-o-kane-robin-swann-s-hard-work-and-determination-have-certainly-made-a-difference-in-the-pandemic-2244149](http://www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/2021/03/06/news/jake-o-kane-robin-swann-s-hard-work-and-determination-have-certainly-made-a-difference-in-the-pandemic-2244149) ]

## **Opinion - Saint Patrick's Day 2021 the strangest of times - Archbishop Dermot Farrell**



**On St Patrick's Day the Archbishop of Dublin delivered a homily in Saint Patrick's Church, Ringsend.**

### **Summary**

- **The restriction on attendance at funerals to 10 people is harsh and unfair.**
- **The planned exit from the current severe restrictions is being watched by many citizens who expect their religious practice to be respected by the public authorities, and not be subordinated to commercial interests. This is a matter of health and wellbeing for many ... While a balance must be**

**struck, easing restrictions on worship has a better founded statutory claim than other activities which may be pressed by powerful commercial interests.**

- **From the perspective of the State, the right to public worship is protected by the *Constitution of Ireland* (Article 44). However, the number who are allowed to worship cannot be randomly determined as if were some mathematical formula. This is about people: the protection of people's health, *and* the fostering of people's wellbeing.**
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- **As a matter of human dignity and fairness ... I call on the public authorities to give assurance that the legitimate desire of people to gather responsibly and within reasonable guidelines to exercise their constitutional right to worship will be prioritised in the easing of restrictions.**

## Homily

**We celebrate the Feast Day of our patron saint in the strangest of times.** We are very familiar with the story of Saint Patrick, his capture and coming to Ireland as a slave. As we read his confession we get an insight into a man who was strong, and courageous. His life drew sense from Christ. Patrick knew first-hand the consolation, hope, and strength that come from Christ.

**Patrick also knew what it was to have one's life turned upside down:** from a life of privilege to the life of a slave, from the familiar to the strange, from security to dependence on strangers. In all this Patrick's deep trust in Christ kept



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him going, as one can hear in the deep faith and closeness to Christ in the words of Patrick's *Breastplate* where he invites Christ to surround him with shield of protection: "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left."

**For Patrick "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of realities that are unseen" (Heb 11:1).**

His faith was a relationship with Christ. It was not a theological mystery to be solved, but with his life rooted in prayer, it was walking in the darkness. The surrounding culture certainly did not share his faith, but he had the courage to make it known. For Patrick faith was not a statement that God existed, but it was a relationship that involved bearing witness to God in a difficult environment. For us today, the challenge is similar: to bring the gospel, the good news that is Jesus Christ, to a parish, to a culture, to a people that may not know him or, knowing him, find it difficult to live their lives in his light. That takes courage and conviction.

**This past year has been a tumultuous one for people of faith with all churches closed over many months for public worship.** Our own Church, and other faith communities have been vocal and clear in emphasising the civic and moral duty to promote the common good by observing public health guidelines. Every reasonable and responsible person knows that keeping a safe distance from others is vital to the control of the virus. Whenever public worship was permitted, our parishes have been diligent in operating within guidelines, with great commitment by staff

and volunteers to stewarding, sanitising and managing attendance.

**Parishes have developed innovative ways to support communities** and the most vulnerable through streaming of services, using social media groups, and by telephone contact with the isolated and vulnerable. For many people, being denied the opportunity to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion has been difficult: it has affected how they are nourished and sustained by their faith. Let us not underestimate the consequences of this in people's lives.

**Our faith makes a difference.** Our faith and its practice – both private and communal – makes a difference. This, after all, is what all Churches *and* all religions proclaim. For the Christian, Christ makes a difference. This is what Patrick came to proclaim: “*Chríost liom, Chríost romham*— Christ be with me, Christ before me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left.” Patrick's prayer was not only “Christ within me,” but also “Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me, Christ in the eye of everyone who sees me.” *Every* living faith has both an essential interior dimension and an essential communal dimension. We need both. For people of faith, the effects of the pandemic are most keenly felt at the communal level; we now have to ask if there are not better ways of managing this essential dimension of our lives together.

**Faith and the communal celebration of faith make a difference to people.** Prayer and communal worship are not just an optional pastime. The spiritual and the human go hand in hand. Our spirituality, how it is lived, and how it is publicly expressed bring significant benefits to people –

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and to all people of faith – irrespective of age or income, irrespective of where or with whom we live. Christ came that we “may have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10). And people came to Him – on their own – like Nicodemus in last Sunday’s gospel, and in crowds; and they came to him for healing and comfort, for support and inspiration.

Is this not what Church is? The community where Christ is alive – where His healing touch is felt, His word of comfort and consolation are heard, where people are supported, where the Word of God inspires. Patrick knew this, “*I bind to myself to-day, the power of the Incarnation of Christ, and of his Baptism, the power of the Crucifixion and of his Burial, the power of the Resurrection, and of his Ascension...*” We know it.

**The planned exit from the current severe restrictions is being watched by many citizens** who expect their religious practice to be respected by the public authorities, and not be subordinated to commercial interests. This is a matter of health and wellbeing for many. Health, as we discover again and again, is not just a matter of avoiding disease, it is a matter of how we are in ourselves, it involves our emotions and our mental health.

**It is clear that restrictions on social interaction are designed to limit the risk of virus transmission.** NPHECT guidelines have made it clear that it is the volume of interactions, as much as their type, which matters for public safety. There are choices to be made between different types of social interaction as restrictions are unwound.

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**From the perspective of the State, the right to public worship is protected by the *Constitution of Ireland* (Article 44).**

**However, the number who are allowed to worship cannot be randomly determined as if were some mathematical formula.** This is about people: the protection of people's health, *and* the fostering of people's wellbeing. While a balance must be struck, easing restrictions on worship has a better founded statutory claim than other activities which may be pressed by powerful commercial interests. Worship has a clear human priority over other activities that do not possess that priority of themselves.

**In particular, the restriction on attendance at funerals to 10 people is harsh and unfair.** Close family members are frequently denied the right to be present in Church at the funeral of their loved ones: at times, people who have been with the deceased for years. This is tolerable only in the most extreme circumstances, and for the shortest possible period.

**As a matter of human dignity and fairness — but even more so as matter of wellbeing and the restoration of normality, I call on the public authorities to give assurance that the legitimate desire of people to gather responsibly and within reasonable guidelines to exercise their constitutional right to worship will be prioritised in the easing of restrictions.**

We come together in faith and offer our prayer for the healing of the many sick people, remembering the victims of this past year, and asking that their families and friends

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might find consolation and comfort. We pray for all who are called to carry the burden of the pandemic – especially people who work in the health services to guarantee the smooth functioning of society, and for all who support them. Today we pray that we might be caught by Saint Patrick's belief in the power of prayer, the convictions of his faith, and in the closeness of God, as well as the support and prayers of our sisters and brothers. As we turn towards God for protection, as Saint Patrick did, may the Lord bring us inner freedom, a dedication to the call of God, and a deep trust in the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

Saint Patrick, Apostle of Ireland, pray for us. *Pádraig Aspal, guí orainn. Beannachtaí na Féile oraibh go léir.*



## 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

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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

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.

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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

**Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbours and say, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.'**

Luke 15:8-10 NLT

It seems to me that almost everyone has got a moving story to tell of the time when they lost something very precious. For me it is normally my keys, glasses or mobile phone and, most of the time, the search concludes successfully within a few anxious minutes. I have never lost my wedding ring but I



have heard many heart rending stories of people who have. The woman in this story has lost one of the ten silver coins that formed part of her headdress and which would have been given to her when she got married. There was no point in telling her that she had still got nine! The coin was of massive sentimental value and losing it caused her great distress.

The pain of losing something as precious as the silver coin is massive. It's gut wrenching and it dominates life. We struggle to settle to anything else. But then the moment of discovery comes and the joy is overwhelming. It would be unthinkable to keep the joy to ourselves. Everyone needs to know about it! And Jesus says that's exactly how it is in heaven when a sinner repents. When even one person turns to God in repentance heaven has a party!



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Joy is a big theme in the Bible and it is God's response to everything coming together. Everything in its right place. Sin is the opposite. Sin always spoils, tarnishes and destroys and leads to certain misery. But when we live in step with God the outcome is joy because he sees everything coming together in the way that he wants. God's supreme desire for us today is for us to share in his joy and we will do precisely that as we let his Spirit fill us and direct us.

## QUESTION

What brings you most joy in life and in what way do you think that God shares in that joy?

## PRAYER

Loving Father we thank you that you give us so much joy as we live in step with you day by day. Amen.

