



Image of the day - Belfast Cathedral

2,100 candles in memory of those who died in the past year

March 25, 2021

TDs and Senators protest outside Leinster House calling for church services to be allowed to take place during Easter.

Members of the Oireachtas stood outside Leinster House, March 23, calling for churches to be allowed reopen for limited attendance during Easter week as religious people face their second year in a row unable to attend mass.

Members of the Dáil's rural independent group, as well as other Oireachtas members such as Fianna Fáil's Marc MacSharry and Aontú's Peadar Tóibín, stood holding plinths with slogans such as #LetUsGoToMass, #RightToWorship and #DontCancelEaster.

The TDs and Senators state that religious worship is vital for people's mental health, particularly those who have been greatly struggling over the past year and those who may have lost a loved one and been unable to properly say goodbye.

The religious community is being completely ignored by the government, they say, and while other countries have introduced measures to allow church services to continue in a safe way, Ireland has some of the strictest measures in the world.

The right to worship is a constitutional right, and restrictions are causing stress and hurt among Catholics; Aontú TD



Peadar Tóibín referenced a priest in Cavan who was last week fined €500 for allowing parishioners to enter the church while he said mass.

"Religious practice is a human right according to the UN Declaration of Human Rights," he said.

"It is an essential element in the lives of many many people in Ireland. Religious practice plays a significant roll in the well-being of many people in these dark times."

He continued, "Treating adults like children with illogical restrictions will result in people not adhering to restrictions at all. Its clear that in the last few weeks the Government is losing the people on restrictions.

"We are asking the government to allow people to safely attend services around Ireland this Easter".

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Independent Senator Sharon Keogan said "No-one is calling for '200 people packed into a small building'-- we're talking about limitations on the number of people allowed at mass, and strict measures in place to prevent people gathering outside before and/or after ceremonies.

"Easter is the high point of the Christian year, and for the government to tell thousands of church-going people of Ireland, "No, you can't celebrate it this year", I think would require very strong, evidence-based justification, which they simply don't have."

Those protesting claim the National Public Health Emergency Team have not properly detailed the risk of transmission in attending mass, and say the measures introduced when Ireland was in a lower level of restrictions had allowed people to worship safely.

Their calls echo that of Archbishop of Dublin Dermot Farrell, who last week called for more people to be allowed attend a funeral, calling the 10-person limit "harsh and unfair".

Dr Farrell argued that churches were able to operate safely when restrictions were last eased and up to 50 had been allowed to attend church services, with strict measures such as social distancing, hand sanitiser and different entrances being used to keep people safe.

People are "not going to accept a situation where they are being locked out of worship" until Ireland finally reaches low enough cases for things to reopen, Dr Farrell argued. As reported by The Irish Times.

Christian Aid appeal passes £100k mark as UK public gives thanks for vaccines

Christian Aid's latest appeal, which enables people to give thanks for their Covid-19 vaccine and help others in crisis across the world, has raised £130,000.

Many people in the UK are feeling a sense of relief as loved ones receive their vaccines and finally have some protection against coronavirus. Christian Aid's Give Thanks appeal, launched last month, allows people to act on that sense of thanksgiving and pass the blessing on, helping others in crisis who have little protection from the pandemic.

Funds from the appeal are helping vulnerable communities around the world access soap, water, food and vital health information as Covid-19 continues to destroy lives and livelihoods. Many communities around the world face an uncertain wait for a vaccine as questions remain around the cost, timing and extent of a global vaccination roll-out.

Christian Aid partners have so far directly helped over half a million people in 27 countries including distributing food packages to nearly 60,000 people struggling to feed their families after losing work during lockdown and the economic downturn.

Chine McDonald, Christian Aid's head of public engagement, said: "I am absolutely delighted when I hear of anyone getting the vaccine – whether I know them or not. Each person protected against this horrific virus symbolises us getting one step closer to the end of this nightmare.



“The appeal we’ve launched proves that other people feel the same and want to pass on that good fortune to others. The donations reflect not just people’s gratitude for their vaccine but offer a clear example of their desire to help those for whom the vaccine is still not available. It has really hit a chord with our supporters.

“We are also immensely grateful to the Church of England dioceses and local church groups who have set up their own fundraising pages to show their gratitude as they receive vaccines. It is wonderful to see how their generosity towards those in the communities around the world in which Christian Aid works has contributed to this £130,000 total. As increasing numbers of us get called for our vaccines, we’re hoping that more and more people will give thanks for their vaccines by giving to our appeal.”

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Going forwards, Christian Aid will support vaccination programmes in countries where it is operating by providing data on hard-to-reach populations to local health services and by challenging misleading information about the virus and vaccination as well as any stigma faced by those who contract Covid-19.

A donation page has been set up where people can leave messages of thanks for their vaccination and give to Christian Aid's Coronavirus Appeal.

[[] <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/give/ways-donate/give-thanks-your-coronavirus-vaccine>]

West Cork parish to mark one year of virtual worship with interview featuring Bishop Colton

A Church of Ireland union of parishes in West Cork is to mark the one year anniversary of virtual worship as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic with an interview featuring the Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, Bishop Paul Colton.

The rector of Fanlobbus, Reverend Cliff Jeffers, has invited Bishop Colton to do an online interview with him, reflecting on the past year.

Before the pandemic, 87% of parishes in Cork, Cloyne and Ross were not using technology to broadcast their Sunday Services online.

However, the proportion which are now online has increased from 13% to 64%.

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In other parishes, often where there is poor broadband or fewer parishioners with access to the internet, materials for Sunday worship are posted or hand-delivered by the clergy and teams of volunteers to households.



In Fanlobbus Union of parishes, which comprises Dunmanway, Drimoleague, Drinagh and Coolkelure, a number of parishioners take part each Sunday using their telephones.

When church buildings reopened for public worship in the summer the parish connected the building to the internet and the services from the church continued to be broadcast online.

"This is one example of the many responses of many types – traditional and using technology – called into action in Cork, Cloyne and Ross in response to the uncharted territory that is the coronavirus pandemic.

"The clergy, lay church workers and volunteers in this Diocese have all been working really hard in response to this crisis," commented Bishop Colton.

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"One year on, I wrote yesterday to everyone to thank them.

"As Bishop of the Diocese, I am hugely grateful for what everyone has been doing so faithfully and creatively," he continued.

Reverend Cliff Jeffers and the team involved in all of this in Fanlobbus Union of Parishes have opted for an interactive type of online broadcast to gather the people together.

"We have had 40 interviews in the last year from people from West Cork and all around the world who are connected to Dunmanway and West Cork to hear how Covid-19 is affecting them and what is happening in their lives.

"Each week, the online community are invited to send in photographs of what they are doing and are also given a specific theme to take or find photos to link in with the sermon," he explained.

Courtesy of Echolive.ie. Report by Amy Nolan.

Duke of Cambridge reappointed to key Church of Scotland role

The Queen has reappointed the Duke of Cambridge to a key role in the Church of Scotland, in a move that comes at a critical time for the Union.

The Duke was named Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland last year, but the role was abandoned due to the pandemic.

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The position involves being the sovereign's personal representative at the week-long event dealing with church policies and procedures.

The Duke was reinstated yesterday, Downing Street announced, and will travel to Scotland to attend this year's general assembly in May on behalf of his grandmother. It will take place at the General Assembly Hall in Edinburgh. The commission granted by the Queen is specific to Scotland so the Lord High Commissioner must be present to perform the role.

The Duke, known as the Earl of Strathearn in Scotland, will make the opening and closing addresses at the Assembly and will report to the Queen on the proceedings. .

He will also carry out a number of official functions as the Lord High Commissioner.

Previous royal incumbents have included the Princess Royal in 2017, the Earl of Wessex in 2014, and the Queen herself in 2002.

The Duke, 38, takes over the role from Richard Scott, the 10th Duke of Buccleuch and 12th Duke of Queensberry.

His appointment coincides with a renewed bid by Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister, to break up the Union in the wake of Brexit, with the Scottish Government publishing a draft Bill for a second vote on independence.

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In April, the Duke wrote to the Right Reverend Colin Sinclair, the outgoing moderator of the Assembly, praising the work of the Church of Scotland.

“It is heartening to see how the Church of Scotland, like so many other faith communities across the country, is re-inventing itself digitally to continue providing worship, support and guidance for your congregations,” he said.

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

Online Choir Presents ‘The Crucifixion’

Kevin O’Sullivan of Kiltiernan and the Lockdown Collaboration Choir with Big Red Box Media Ltd. have produced a full online performance of The Crucifixion which will be viewable at Kiltiernan Parish Church of Ireland’s YouTube from Palm Sunday. They are sharing several movements here in audio format. Kevin directs 70+ voices from across the country (and beyond) with Dr. David O’Shea on the organ of Sandford and soloists Rev. Jack Kinkead and Brian Hennessey.

These recordings are available for use during church services.

On Sunday March 28 (Palm Sunday) at 12 noon Church of Ireland Choirs Online under the Direction of Kevin O’Sullivan will present The Crucifixion by John Stainer.

Produced by Big Red Box Media Ltd, featuring Tenor Rev Jack Kinkead and Bass Brian Hennessey with Organist Dr

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Church of Ireland Parish Choirs Online

directed by

Kevin O'Sullivan

John Stainer's

The Crucifixion

produced by

Big Red Box Media Ltd.

Tenor

Rev. Jack Kinkead

Bass

Brian Hennessey

Organist

Dr. David O'Shea

from 12 Noon on

youtube.com/c/KilternanParishChurchofIreland

Sunday 28th March



with help from
Grouped Parishes of
Sandford & St Philip's

CHURCH MUSIC
DUBLIN

David O'Shea, this work was filmed and recorded virtually, and in Sandford Parish Church.

These recordings are available for use during church services.

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The Crucifixion may be viewed on Kiltiernan Parish's YouTube Channel:

[youtube.com/c/KiltiernanParishChurchofIreland]

Excerpts from The Crucifixion are available to listen to online or to download from the Church Music Dublin website. These may be used in church services as required. Please visit The Crucifixion by John Stainer | Church Music Dublin

[[] <https://www.churchmusicdublin.org/the-crucifixion-by-john-stainer/>]

‘Joy for the Soul’ – New Booklet

Ruth Gyves, Diocesan Lay Reader in Holy Trinity, Rathmines has just released her fourth booklet entitled Joy for the Soul.

“Do you want to know joy in your life? We're all struggling in these days of restrictions and can easily fall into anxiety, loneliness, fear and a feeling of hopelessness,” Ruth says. “These booklets are designed to focus our minds off ourselves and onto the truths in God's word which brings life, hope, peace, joy and much more.”

Ruth's latest booklet, Joy for the Soul, which contains reflections, verses, quotes and prayers, is designed to help you to find, and choose, joy. These booklets are 50c each (+P&P) and can be obtained by contacting Ruth at [ruth@bringhope.ie] or online at [www.bringhope.ie.]

They are ideal for your own use but also for passing on to others. Ruth's desire is for everyone to be encouraged and

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strengthened in their lives by reading the truths in God's word and connecting with God through prayer.

Ruth Gyves is a Lay Reader in the diocese of Dublin and Glendalough and Lay Assistant Pastor in Holy Trinity, Rathmines.

Daily Prayer: Common Worship Morning and Evening Prayer

The Church of England

[<https://cofe-daily-prayer.captivate.fm/>]

Media review



2,100 candles in memory of those who have died in the past year were arranged on the floor of St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast

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Covid-19: NI falls silent to remember deaths.

BBC News

People in Northern Ireland have been remembering those who died during the pandemic on the one-year anniversary of the first national lockdown.

It comes as the Department of Health recorded another two Covid-19-related deaths, bringing its total to 2,107.

A minute's silence was held across the UK as part of the national day of reflection.

Proceedings at the Northern Ireland Assembly paused for assembly members to observe the silence.

More at -

[\[https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56490227\]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56490227)

The EU healthcare option that ended with Brexit.

BBC News

An EU healthcare option, no longer available in the UK due to Brexit, was growing in popularity on both sides of the Irish border, figures have shown.

The Cross-Border Healthcare Directive (CBHD) allows EU patients to arrange health treatment in most other European countries and claim back some costs.

Reimbursement is considered for both private and state-funded treatments.

More than £50m was spent reimbursing CBHD patients on both sides of the Irish border over the past five years.

It was particularly popular among cataract patients in the Republic of Ireland, about 2,000 of whom travelled to Belfast on so-called "cataracts buses" to have eye surgery in private clinics in recent years.

More at -

[\[https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56002574\]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56002574)

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10,000 jobs in restaurants and shops wiped out in just one year

Belfast Telegraph

There are now 10,000 fewer jobs in businesses such as shops and restaurants around Northern Ireland compared to a year ago as the pandemic and lockdowns take the heaviest toll on the services sector.

According to the latest labour market report for November to January, there were 770,900 employee roles here in December, with 9,070 jobs going since December 2019.

'NI needs a strategy in place to halt brain drain'

Belfast Telegraph

An independent think tank is calling on Stormont to urgently address the 'brain drain' that sees 17,500 Northern Ireland students heading to Britain — enough to fill an entire university.

Most of those departing don't return which leaves the local workforce struggling to attract high-paying jobs because it has too few people with degree-level qualifications, and too many with GCSEs or lower.

Still reeling from Boris Johnson's betrayal, DUP founding member says he's questioning the Union

News Letter

Sam McBride writes - A traditionalist founding member of the DUP has said that Boris Johnson's betrayal of unionism has shaken his constitutional allegiance to Britain. Writing at the time, Mr Thompson said that he believed Mr Johnson would keep his word but then quoted Northern Ireland's

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founding father, Lord Carson, about how he felt used as a pawn by London and then abandoned.

More at -

[[] <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/still-reeling-from-boris-johnsons-betrayal-dup-founding-member-says-hes-questioning-the-union-3176182?utm>]

Press comment - The EU's vaccine nationalism is more dangerous than it looks - William Hague

In an age of pandemics, Brussels' bid to disrupt global supply networks sets a disastrous precedent

Earlier this month, I was chatting to Jean-Claude Juncker ahead of a Zoom webinar, and soon found myself reflecting that the EU Commission might be in better shape if he was still in charge of it. It was a startling thought: having joined the British effort in 2014 to try to prevent Juncker from becoming Commission president, I never thought I would one day wish he was back. Yet the months since his departure, in which a new Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen has been wrestling with the EU vaccines scheme, have been among the most dismal in its existence. And the damage being done, to future trust, mutual reliance and the ability to respond to future pandemics in the long term, is adding up by the day.

Much has already been written about the long list of reasons why the EU went wrong. The Commission proved too slow to commit itself to likely suppliers, was averse to taking

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financial risks, and placed too much faith in a French vaccine that did not turn out well. Then it compounded these problems with an ill-advised attempt to restrict the flow of vaccines to Northern Ireland, swiftly rescinded, and has moved on to a wider threat to withhold vaccines or their components manufactured within the EU, to be debated at a summit this Thursday.

While the first instinct of many of us in Britain is to give help to our neighbours as soon as possible, many European countries have made it much harder to do so by repeatedly undermining the mainstay of Britain's vaccine effort, the Oxford/AstraZeneca product. It is difficult to assist when EU countries are sitting on millions of unused doses, paused their own use of a good vaccine without compelling reason and have cast doubt on a product their people need – President Macron being a particular offender. All of this makes co-operation between the UK and EU even more fraught, when relations are already tense.

In such a crisis, a lot of the focus is on the immediate consequences of any decision to restrict exports that EU leaders might make. Can they speed up their vaccination programmes? Might the UK's so far successful rollout suffer a delay as a result of their actions? Would we retaliate in some way – bearing in mind that crucial ingredients of the Pfizer vaccines made in Belgium come from Yorkshire? These are important questions, but they are all about the ability of countries to sprint forwards to fully restarting their social and economic life. Even so, the most serious damage of vaccine nationalism and the potential actions of the EU this week is not to the sprint; it is to our collective ability to run future marathons.

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Most scientists think that Covid-19 will be with us indefinitely, bringing the regular need for booster shots and the adaptation of vaccines to a mutating virus. In addition, the past year has shown us that we have to be far better prepared for more frequent and perhaps more deadly pandemics in the future. As long as we persist in cutting down rainforests to grow palm oil or graze cattle, and transport wild animals for slaughter and consumption, the likelihood of more zoonotic diseases jumping to humans is going to rise. The ability of humanity as a whole to devise, produce and distribute new vaccines, at rapid speed and great scale, looks likely to be crucial – and permanently so.

What does the human race need in order to run this marathon? How can we develop the resilience, staying power and versatility to withstand the unknown dangers to come? Of course, we need new, larger and specialist facilities, such as the Vaccine Innovation and Manufacturing Centre the UK has been constructing for some time near Oxford. It is now due to come on stream later this year and should be able to make up to 70 million vaccine doses every six months.

Furthermore, we need the drugs companies to site production in many parts of the world – as envisaged in AstraZeneca's partnerships with Australia, Japan, Brazil and Thailand. We need a whole global ecosystem of research and production, able to draw on the skills of all nations, and able to use the best suppliers in the world for the countless components of any modern vaccine – the many chemicals or live ingredients, the plastic bags for mixing them, the vials for storing them, the stoppers for sealing them and so on.

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What would be hugely wasteful and less effective would be for each nation to think that it had to do all of this on its own territory. Even for Britain, with a world-leading position in this industry, it would be expensive and less efficient to have to control every single aspect of all likely vaccines on our own shores. Experts at the US-based Center for Global Development have said four or five countries could produce at the scale to keep costs down, but if many countries build small operations “we get to a point where everybody will end up paying a higher price”.

The disadvantages of vaccine production being fragmented around the world go far beyond the higher cost. Smaller and poorer nations would be permanently at greater risk. Dealing with new viruses would become even more of a geographic lottery than today. Scientific expertise would be more thinly spread. A nationalistic response to future pandemics would be hard-wired into the system. And once it has been concluded that neighbours and friends cannot be relied upon, even to honour contracts solemnly signed, this problem will not be restricted to vaccines. Any other product deemed necessary for a nation’s health security will need to be sourced and produced within its own borders, including medical devices and protective equipment.

The price of vaccine nationalism is therefore very high, and we could be paying it for decades. The British Government is right to seek to defuse the escalating row with Brussels, and to err on the side of generosity if compromises can be made over supplies so far unallocated. It should extend the offer of cooperation with the superb facilities we are creating to many nations around the world, provided their reciprocal commitment is guaranteed. But across the Channel this

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week, EU leaders should draw back from compounding a series of errors with an even bigger one.

William Hague in the Daily Telegraph 21.03.2018



Pointers for prayer

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
Grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross,
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:
Create and make in us new and contrite hearts
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,

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perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God of wilderness and water,
your Son was baptized and tempted as we are.
Guide us through this season,
that we may not avoid struggle,
but open ourselves to blessing,
through the cleansing depths of repentance
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit. Amen.

Artist of souls,
you sculpted a people for yourself
out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and
simplicity,
that the discipline of these forty days
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy
friendship,
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

As Jesus, in the days before his passion,
offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears,
we pray for those who suffer, those who are in need,
and those who seek reconciliation...

God of compassion,
you know our faults and yet you promised to forgive.
Keep us in your presence and give us your wisdom.
Open our hearts to gladness,
call dry bones to dance,
and restore to us the joy of your salvation. Amen.

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God of suffering and glory,
in Jesus Christ you reveal the way of life
through the path of obedience.
Inscribe your law in our hearts,
that in life we may not stray from you,
but may be your people. Amen.

Speaking to the Soul

Then Jesus called for the children and said to the disciples, “Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn’t receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.”

Luke 18:16-17 NLT

Jesus continually surprised people but his reaction to children would have been particularly astonishing to his hearers. Children had no status in law and at best they were regarded as potential adults who needed to be seen but certainly not heard. The disciples were keen to protect Jesus their rabbi from the children so that he could get on with the serious business of instructing the adults. But, as so often was the case, Jesus turned their thinking upside down. Not only did Jesus welcome the children but he said that they provided the role model for his disciples to follow.

What was Jesus getting at? He clearly wasn’t encouraging his followers to be childish. What he was affirming was that he wanted them to come to him with a spirit of openness

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and simplicity. The beauty of children is that they haven't lived long enough to make life complicated. He wanted his followers to come to him with simple trust. And I feel sure that he was also wanting to encourage in them a spirit of adventure. I love seeing the delight in children's eyes when they are experiencing something new. The Christian life is a daily adventure in which God is constantly inviting us to face new challenges and opportunities. Only a childlike attitude will do.

Jesus' words couldn't have been stronger. Not only were children to be the role model for every Christian disciple, but Jesus declared that if anyone refused to come like a child they would be denied entry into the Kingdom of God. That's a very blunt message but he wants them to know that an arrogant person will never be welcomed by God. It is only as we humble ourselves like children and come to God with empty hands that he is able to bless us.

QUESTION

What do you most need to learn from the example of children?

PRAYER

Help us, Lord, to become more and more childlike as we trust ourselves to you, our loving Heavenly Father. Amen.



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