

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Signs of spring

Image of the day

Signs of spring - Cherry blossoms in Washington DC

People and places

Archbishop Dermot Farrell on the occasion of a Prayer Service for Peace in Ukraine

Extracts from a homily given by Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin preached yesterday in the Church of the Sacred Heart, Donnybrook

+ The lives of Ukrainian civilians count for nothing in the eyes of their aggressors. In this they are like the poor the world over, who are invisible to the rich, the comfortable, and the powerful. And in this, they are like Christ whose life was of no value to those who dispensed with him

+ Today, again, the world is confronted with violence and wanton destruction, and our ultimate silence reveals not only our shock, but also our confusion and profound bewilderment.

+ We make this solemn act of consecration of humanity, and especially of Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so that she, the Queen of Peace, may inspire us all to be instruments of peace for the world.

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“The barbaric killing of children, elderly people and of innocent, defenceless citizens brings immense suffering for millions of people to obtain vain political and national goals. The calculated, but reckless, armed aggression in Ukraine dwarfs in urgency the many other problems our world faces, some of which threaten the very life of this planet; on a scale not seen since the horrors of the Second World War, we have a war in the heart of Europe, begun by an unjust aggressor intent on the destruction of a sovereign country and its people.

“In the abstract, figures say little: “10 million Ukrainians displaced,” what does it mean? However, for the people of Ukraine – our sisters and brothers, this is no statistic; it is not a memory; this is their reality. The killed, the wounded, the displaced, are their parents, their children, their husbands or wives, neighbours, friends: people, ordinary people like you and me, who have had their lives, their homes, their land ripped apart. And more: it is not only the indiscriminate destruction of tens of thousands of lives, but also a horrifying and tragic living reality that will haunt them forever”.

Complete text at -

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2022/03/25/homily-of-archbishop-dermot-farrell-on-the-occasion-of-a-prayer-service-for-peace-in-ukraine-and-dedication-of-russia-and-ukraine-to-the-immaculate-heart-of-mary/>

No place for violence or the threat of violence in our society.’ - C of I Archbishop and Bishop of Connor

Bishop George Davison of Connor and Archbishop John McDowell of Armagh yesterday afternoon described an incident in north Belfast as ‘shameful,’ saying ‘there is no place for violence or the threat of violence in our society.’

All Ireland Primate Archbishop McDowell and Bishop Davison, Bishop of Connor, issued the following statement in relation to a hijacking and a security alert in the area -

“Our thoughts are firstly with the people most affected by this morning’s incident in north Belfast. It is particularly shameful that a peace-building event held in honour of the memory of John and Pat Hume, and a funeral service, have been disrupted in this way.

“Peace and stability in Northern Ireland are maintained and advanced through good relationships at all levels within Ireland and across these islands, and there is no place for violence or the threat of violence in our society.

“Violence has nothing to offer and can only push our society backwards.

“We would urge anyone who has any information that may be useful to a police investigation to contact the PSNI.’

See -

Bishop Andrew Forster to become President of the Irish Council of Churches

On March 31 the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, the Rt Revd Andrew Forster, will succeed the Very Revd Dr Ivan Patterson as President of the Irish Council of Churches (ICC).

The Council comprises representatives of more than a dozen Protestant, Reformed, Orthodox, Independent, and migrant-led Churches. Its President is part of the Church Leaders' Group in Ireland and co-chairs the Irish Inter-Church Meeting – Ireland's foremost ecumenical body.

Last October, Dr Patterson stood in line with the Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist Church leaders to welcome the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the Republic's Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney to a cross-community Service of Reflection and Hope in Armagh. That service, marking Northern Ireland's centenary, was a reminder of how warily one must tread whenever religion meets politics in Ireland.

Bishop Forster's two year-stint as President will coincide with the ICC's own centenary. "I don't expect fireworks," Bishop Forster said, as he looked ahead to the anniversary. "Our centenary's unlikely to cause too many ripples in the wider community, but it is a 'big deal' for the Churches – an opportunity for reflection, and for modest celebration.

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“In the two years since his consecration, Bishop Andrew has built good working relationships and strong friendships with his Roman Catholic



counterparts, Dr Donal McKeown in the Diocese of Derry and Bishop Alan McGuckian in Raphoe. Relations between the Churches haven't always been so cordial, though.

“It's hard to imagine, nowadays,” Bishop Forster said, “but after the ICC's first meeting, as the ‘United Council of Christian Churches and Religious Communities’, in 1923, the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches remained effectively at arm's length for another 50 years. There were historical reasons, of course, but it wasn't very edifying.”

Things changed dramatically, in 1973, when representatives of the Irish Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church met at Ballymascanlon in Co Louth. It was the first official meeting between the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches in Ireland.

“Looking back,” Bishop Andrew said, “the ICC's participation in the Ballymascanlon Talks was visionary and, in the context of the early 70s, very necessary. I was only six years old when the talks took place, but The Troubles were in ‘full cry’; the carnage was almost unimaginable; the community

was bitterly divided; people were deeply polarised. Remarkably, just when things seemed darkest, the light of the Gospel shone through. The ICC leadership and the Roman Catholic hierarchy came together. They broke new ground – it must've felt like very stony ground – but they sowed seeds that led eventually to the Irish Inter-Church Meeting.”

Bishop Forster’s “personal ecumenical journey” began in the mid-90s, when he was appointed Chaplain at Queen’s University Belfast. “My time at Queen’s was a blessing. I was chaplain for seven years. I developed close working relationships – and personal relationships – with chaplains of other denominations. I came alive to the richness of Churches working together. I became friends with students of different faiths and none.”

The 20 years since Bishop Andrew left the Queen’s chaplaincy have seen seismic change in Ireland. The Republic’s economy has soared, although significant inequality remains. North of the border, where the economy has performed less well, Brexit and the Protocol row have resurrected old fears. Abortion has been legalised in the Republic (up to 12 weeks in pregnancy) and been decriminalised in Northern Ireland. Same sex marriage is permitted in both jurisdictions.

Across the island, church attendance has fallen dramatically, and the Churches’ influence has declined sharply, but Bishop Andrew rejected any suggestion that the Churches were becoming irrelevant. “Ministry is challenging, nowadays, but that’s been true in every generation. We live in an increasingly secular society, but we have new



Prince Charles saw CS Lewis Square during his recent visit to Belfast

opportunities. I've been hugely impressed by the way in which clergy and lay people of different denominations have responded to different crises: tackling poverty at home and abroad; 'stepping up' in response to the pandemic; addressing issues of identity and legacy; working to make Ireland more welcoming for newcomers. The Churches have provided positive and practical models of cooperation. They've made a real difference."

The spiritual ground may be shifting under his feet, but the ICC's next President is undaunted. "I'm excited. Co-chairing the Irish Inter-Church Meeting will be a big responsibility, but an enormous privilege, too. I'm looking forward to working with Churches right across the island. Churches working together in an increasingly fractured culture and society can speak to our common humanity. As long as we

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remain true to the Gospel, we won't go wrong, and we'll never be irrelevant.”

Report by Paul McFadden in the March 2022 edition of the Church of Ireland Gazette.

Further undermining of devolution by Secretary of State ‘regrettable, unhelpful and concerning’ - PCI

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has expressed its ‘deep regret’ and ‘grave concern’ at the continued undermining of devolution by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, as he signalled his intention this week, to give himself further powers to direct abortion services - powers which could now also impact education.

In a joint statement, Reverend Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and Reverend Daniel Kane, Convener of PCI’s Council for Public Affairs, said, “As a Church with a strong pro-life position, over the last number of years we have consistently put on record our total opposition to the imposition by Westminster of the most destructive liberal abortion legislation in these islands. These imposed laws have taken away the legal protection of future generations of unborn children.

“From the Secretary of State’s announcement on Thursday, we note that following May’s Assembly Election, he now intends to ask Parliament for a blank cheque which would

confer ‘the power to do anything that a Northern Ireland Minister or department could do for the purpose of ensuring that the recommendations in paragraphs 85 and 86 of the CEDAW report are implemented.’ This relates not only to direct abortion services, but to other significant areas of life in Northern Ireland, including the education our children,” they said.

“We deeply regret the Secretary of State’s continued and unhelpful intention to take further powers from the Northern Ireland Assembly in relation to such sensitive issues in our society. Such a scenario would be unthinkable in the Scottish or Welsh devolved contexts.”

The ministers continued, “We reiterate our grave concern that this power grab by the Secretary of State devalues Northern Ireland’s purposely balanced system of negotiated government. It also gives him the freedom to interfere unilaterally, and at will, with many aspects of the devolved administration.”

“For example, the Secretary of State’s intervention could take away the right of schools to embrace a particular ethos with regard to the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education, and do so over the heads of school governors, teachers, parents and their locally elected representatives.”

In conclusion, Mr Gribben and Mr Kane said, “As our Moderator has previously stated, our power sharing arrangements are ‘precious’ - they are also fragile. So far the Secretary of State has imposed abortion, stated his desire to enact unacceptable legacy legislation and now his intention to direct what should be taught in classrooms.

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“It is our hope and prayer that Northern Ireland’s political parties will commit to working together proactively after the election to find a way forward for the common good. While we recognise that this will not be straightforward, the Secretary of State should commit to supporting and encouraging them in this endeavour, and not undermining it by his words and actions.”

Retired cleric celebrates 101st birthday

The Rev Canon Bob Wilkinson celebrated his 101st birthday on Thursday March 24th.

Born in Letterkenny, Bob was educated at Foyle College in Londonderry and then at Trinity College, Dublin. He was ordained in 1947, and was appointed to St Mark’s Parish, Armagh, as curate-assistant in 1949.

He remained in Armagh Diocese, serving as rector first in Mullavilly, then in Cookstown and finally in Ballymore, Tandragee. Canon Wilkinson retired to Portrush in 1987. There, he became an active member of the Holy Trinity Parish family.

On the morning of his birthday, the Rector of Killowen, Rev Donard Collins, visited Canon Wilkinson and brought with him birthday greetings from the Derry and Raphoe Diocesan family. "Canon Bob was in tiptop form", Rev Collins said, "and was really appreciative of his friends who kindly thought of him on his 101st birthday."

News reports



Madeleine Albright the Churchwoman remembered

Following Mrs Albright’s death the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church paid tribute to her -

“We mourn the loss of Madeleine Albright, committed Episcopalian and trailblazing ambassador. I am particularly thankful for her guiding belief that religious leaders have an essential role to play in foreign policy, and for her Anglican sensibility in navigating difference and diversity, which she expressed so well in her book, “Madame Secretary”. She wrote -

“Instead of seeking yet more data to defend what we already think, we need to learn what others think, and why they think it. Instead of conspiring with the like-minded, we need to spend more time learning from those we consider

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wrongheaded. Even while we challenge the premises of those with whom we disagree, we should take the time to re-examine the logic of our own thinking.”

The Presiding Bishop concluded with these words - “May she rest in peace and rise in glory.”

Kirk Petersen writing in “The Living Church” says -

For the second time in five months, America has lost an Episcopalian former Secretary of State born in 1937.

Madeleine K. Albright, the first female Secretary of State in American history, died March 23 at the age of 84 while surrounded by family and friends. She succumbed to cancer.

Her faith journey was far more complicated than most. She was born Marie Jana Korbelová on May 15, 1937, in Czechoslovakia, and her Jewish parents converted to Roman Catholicism after being driven into exile by Adolph Hitler. They hid her Jewish heritage from her and her siblings — she was surprised to learn of it in a newspaper article after she became Secretary of State.

In 1959 she married newspaper scion Joseph Medill Patterson Albright, and converted to his Episcopal faith. He survives her, although they were divorced in 1982, and she did not remarry. They had three daughters, twins Alice and Anne, and later Katherine, all of whom survive her.

She was known for her sense of humor and her concise, evocative statements. Her Twitter account included a tweet,

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retweeted 31,000 times, reading “I was raised Catholic, became Episcopalian & found out later my family was Jewish. I stand ready to register as Muslim in #solidarity.”

Albright was born 40 days after Colin Powell, a cradle Episcopalian from the South Bronx, who succeeded her as Secretary of State and was the first Black person to hold the job. Powell died from COVID on October 18, 2021, and Albright eulogized him in a service at Washington National Cathedral on November 5. She did not refer to their common faith, but spoke instead of their close friendship across party lines.

“On policy, the general and I didn’t always reach the same conclusions,” she said wryly. “Within the State Department, he was far more popular than his predecessor.”

Albright served as the 64th Secretary of State for President Bill Clinton from 1997 to 2001, after serving in Clinton’s first term as the 20th U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.

Ukraine: Lutheran bishops from Ukraine and Russia join prayer for peace

God is “with the victims of this war. He is with the suffering people. He is there in the hell of war.”

Two bishops from Lutheran churches in Ukraine and Russia joined an ecumenical prayer for peace in Berlin Cathedral, Germany on 18 March.

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Dietrich Brauer, Archbishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Russia, said that this “Lent season has brought us a whole new, terrifying, bitter trial. We are shocked by the experience of what it means to stand powerless and helpless before evil. On 24 February, we awoke to a new reality full of darkness and fear.”

He had strong words to describe the ongoing war: “We see war, tears, and death. Crying children, fleeing people, destroyed houses and corpses lying around. It is a power that we alone can hardly resist, leaving us speechless. But we are not alone. We have each other. We can pray together, ask for peace, name things as they are, bear witness to the truth and open the eyes of others.”

Bishop Pavlo Shvarts of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine said God was present and with those who suffer: “We have the God who is neither distant nor indifferent. He is there. He is with the victims of this war. He is with the suffering people. He is there in the hell of war. He weeps with them. He walks with them through the valley of death.”

Bishop Shvarts added “Christ is here on the cross in our midst to assure and reassure us that death does not have the last word. That fear does not mute us forever. He promises us life that triumphs over all powers of evil. He leads us to the fresh waters of deliverance and his peace.”

Shvarts’s office is in Kharkiv, a city in eastern Ukraine whose population suffers from massive bombardment by Russian troops. He thanked all those working to end this war, supporting the people of Ukraine now and welcoming

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them with open arms. “We are called to a just peace - where the victims are heard, and the perpetrators named. Only in this way can there be true reconciliation. We place our hope in God and ask Him to let us be peacemakers and eventually reconcile. We pray that we can be Christians not only with words but also with deeds.”

“The prayer for a just peace in one church, with the participation of bishops from Lutheran churches in Russia and Ukraine, is a powerful and courageous testimony. It is much needed in this difficult time when innocent people are being killed, and several million must flee their homes in search of a safe place to live,” said Rev. Dr Ireneusz Lukas, LWF Regional Secretary for Europe.

Anglicans take on global ‘plastic pandemic’ at the UN

Anglican representatives to the United Nations are celebrating the passing of a major international agreement on plastic pollution.

Anglican representatives to the United Nations are celebrating the passing of a major international agreement on plastic pollution, a breakthrough influenced in part by the voices and experiences they were able to share from faith communities.

At the start of March, the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA), the world’s overarching decision-making body on environmental issues, reached an historic resolution to tackle what they called the “epidemic” of single-



Dr Rachel Mash and Nicholas Pande beside the #TurnOffThePlasticTap sculpture

use plastics. The resolution, proposed by Rwanda and Peru and reached at UNEA5 in Nairobi, commits signatories to reaching a legally-binding agreement on plastics by 2024.

Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UN Environment Programme, said it was “the most significant environmental multilateral deal since the Paris accord”.

As an accredited observer at the UNEA, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) was able to play an important role to play in the negotiations, lobbying ministers and representatives from some of the 173 member nations on behalf of Anglicans.

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The ACC drafted and co-signed a letter from global faith communities to the Assembly, warning that the world is “facing a triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution” and calling on member states to recognise that plastic pollution is a “pervasive and escalating phenomenon” which requires urgent, co-ordinated global action.

More at -

[\[https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2022/03/anglicans-take-on-global-plastic-pandemic-at-the-un.aspx\]](https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2022/03/anglicans-take-on-global-plastic-pandemic-at-the-un.aspx)

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Webinar - Protestants and the Irish language

The Church of Ireland Centre at Dublin City University invites you to join them for a webinar exploring the engagement of Protestants with the Irish language on the island of Ireland starting at 7.30pm on Wednesday 30th March 2022. They plan for the webinar to run for between an hour and 75 minutes.

The two keynote speakers are Linda Ervine and Gary Hastings. Both have been invited to speak about their experiences of learning Irish language and culture as adults from the Protestant community in Belfast.

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There are four respondents who have been invited to comment briefly on the presentations – Danny Kennedy, Chair of the UUP; Trevor Ringland who is involved in local politics and cross–community sporting organisations in Northern Ireland; Ida Milne a historian and co–editor of Protestant and Irish; Deirdre Nuttall, author of Different and the Same.

There will be a small studio audience. It will be possible for webinar participants to post questions or comments in the chat box and some of these will be selected for the panel discussion that follows the inputs and responses.

Meeting details/How to join:

HBV Live is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Live Webinar

Time: Mar 30, 2022 19:30 London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82195385031?pwd=YjBxK2lBYnlUNmVnVldDd1JpZUIvUT09>

Meeting ID: 821 9538 5031

Passcode: 752946

This event will be filmed and available afterwards to view and share.

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Perspective

Russian Orthodox Church has blood on its hands by Cyril Hovorun

Moscow's Patriarch has twisted the Christian faith into the nationalist ideology beloved of Putin

The formula of the war in Ukraine is simple: war equals guns, plus ideas. The guns are provided by the Kremlin, but the ideas do not stem from Kremlin-affiliated think tanks. The Russian political leadership has borrowed them from the Russian Orthodox Church.

The leader of this church, Patriarch Kirill, is far more than just a religious leader. He is the architect of the Russian worldview which has been framing the conflict in Ukraine – my home country – since it began in 2014.

Kirill has been no stranger to controversy in his time as patriarch. First, he was accused of profiting from the privilege granted to the Church in the mid-1990s to import cigarettes duty-free, but it was never proven. In 2012, he was accused of wearing a Swiss Breguet watch worth over £20,000. According to material in the Soviet Archives, he was once an active officer of the KGB, though, if true, has also engaged in their removal from institutions he has headed. This supposed connection is significant for Ukrainians, who remember the persecutions of the Soviet Union.

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I have closely followed the Patriarch's work in Moscow and seen how the Orthodox Church's religious ideology was designed. The original intention was for it to be an instrument for the re-evangelisation of the Russian people after the period of militant atheism under Communist rule, filling the void of meaning left by the collapse of the ruling political creed.

However, this ideology has taken on a life of its own. In time, the Russian people have adopted a sort of cultural Christianity, which does not even require them to believe in God. Such Christianity has been manipulated by the Kremlin to create narratives that incite Russians to support the aggression as they look to the church for a national identity rather than faith.

Within the Russian Orthodox Church itself, this has taken on a more intense and dangerous form. A majority within the church either actively or passively support the war in Ukraine, perceiving it as "sacred" and a form of self-protection against the imagined imposition of "Western values". Russian propaganda presents these values as promoting sexual minorities, destroying families, and generally propagating "immorality". Such a perception might be seen as little different from, for example, that held by members of Isis in the Middle East, who have also justified killing by claiming to be protecting what they hold dear from Western assault.

Of particular interest to Vladimir Putin has been the role of the church in attempting to create and strengthen a brand of Russian nationalism that can command the loyalty of adherents from beyond the borders of today's Russian

Federation. The president's understanding of "Greater Russia" – which, to his mind, includes Ukraine – is built not just on history and ethnicity but on a shared church, too, no matter how warped the tenets of its original faith have become.

The reality is that the ideology invoked by Patriarch Kirill and his confederates is really a distortion of Orthodox Christianity, despite its claims to protect it, and should be condemned as heretical.

This in particular is the point of A Declaration on the "Russian World" (Russkii mir) Teaching recently signed by many Orthodox scholars, as well as theologians from other Christian traditions. In this document, theologians explicitly condemned the ideology of the church hierarchy as inconsistent with the broader Eastern Christian Orthodox tradition: "We reject the 'Russian world' heresy and the shameful actions of the Government of Russia in unleashing war against Ukraine which flows from this vile and indefensible teaching with the connivance of the Russian Orthodox Church, as profoundly un-Orthodox, un-Christian and against humanity."

One of the premises for such condemnation is the charge that the Russian Orthodox Church is guilty of "phyletism", which can be translated as "tribalism". This was rejected as a heretical doctrine by a council of the Orthodox Church in 1872, a decision which effectively declared that both the structure and the idea of the church must be kept separate from the sort of extreme nationalism we are seeing in Russia.

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The clash, therefore, is not between Russian “traditional values” and Western “godlessness”, as claimed by Patriarch Kirill – but between brutality and civilisation. It is a clash between totalitarian autocracy and democracy.

Ukraine is at the forefront of this clash. What the Ukrainians stand and spill their blood for are Western values. These values, which include solidarity, justice and accountability, are not only political, but also spiritual. They are all a genuine part of the Christian tradition, which both President Putin and Patriarch Kirill claim to protect, but in effect damage and destroy.

Dr Cyril Hovorun is a professor of ecclesiology at Sankt Ignatios College, Sweden

Courtesy The Daily Telegraph 25/03/2022

Poem for today

Pegasus by Patrick Kavanagh

My soul was an old horse
Offered for sale in twenty fairs.
I offered him to the Church—the buyers
Were little men who feared his unusual airs.
One said: ‘Let him remain unbid
In the wind and rain and hunger
Of sin and we will get him—
With the blinkers thrown in—for nothing.’

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Then the men of State looked at
What I'd brought for sale.
One minister, wondering if
Another horse-body would fit the tail
That he'd kept for sentiment-
The relic of his own soul-
Said, 'I will graze him in lieu of his labour.'
I lent him for a week or more
And he came back a hurdle of bones,
Starved, overworked, in despair.
I nursed him on the roadside grass
To shape him for another fair.

I lowered my price. I stood him where
The broken-winded, spavined stand
And crooked shopkeepers said that he
Might do a season on the land-
But not for high-paid work in towns.
He'd do a tinker, possibly.
I begged, 'O make some offer now,
A soul is a poor man's tragedy.
He'll draw your dungiest cart,' I said,
'Show you short cuts to Mass,
Teach weather lore, at night collect
Bad debts from poor men's grass.'
And they would not.

Where the
Tinkers quarrel I went down
With my horse, my soul.
I cried, 'Who will bid me half a crown?'
From their rowdy bargaining
Not one turned. 'Soul,' I prayed,

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'I have hawked you through the world
Of Church and State and meanest trade.
But this evening, halter off,
Never again will it go on.
On the south side of ditches
There is grazing of the sun.
No more haggling with the world....'

As I said these words he grew
Wings upon his back. Now I may ride him
Every land my imagination knew.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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