



Image of the day

The Way to Calvary, by Domenichino, 1610

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Vatican ban on same-sex blessings leaves 'sour imprint', priest says

The Vatican statement last week sustaining a ban on same-sex blessings has drawn further criticism in Ireland, with Fr Gerry O'Connor of the Association of Catholic Priests saying it had left "a sour imprint".- Patsy McGarry writes in The Irish Times.

Dublin parish priest Fr Adrian Egan said that, regardless of what the Vatican said, "our gay brothers and sisters will always be welcome at Assumption Church" in Ballyfermot.

Meanwhile, the liberal We Are Church Ireland group described the Vatican statement as "an act of violence, spiritual abuse".

Fr O'Connor said: "The beauty of a blessing is that it recognises no barriers and no distances . . . There is no judgment nor harsh perception directed towards you." What the Vatican "had to say about people in loving same-sex unions, the attitude of the Vatican to blessings, leaves a sour imprint," he said.

In a tweet Fr Egan said: "Let me be absolutely clear . . . our gay brothers and sisters will always be welcome at Assumption Church . . . their presence is 'a blessing' to our community . . . and like the banner outside our church says, 'God's house, your home' . . . all are welcome in this place."

We Are Church Ireland described the Vatican statement as "both theologically flawed and outdated as well as



profoundly lacking pastorally. Many LGBTQ+ Catholic people experience it as an act of violence, spiritual abuse, an attack on their goodness and love. Many others are revulsed by its language.”

‘Dispiriting’

It was “unworthy” of a church and “dispiriting to see Pope Francis signing off on it”, it said. The group called on Irish priests and bishops to follow the example of bishops and priests in other countries who have repudiated the statement and pledged to continue blessing same-gender unions.

The Vatican statement “makes a mockery of any talk of synodality and inclusivity,” the group said.

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Archbishop Dermot Farrell of Dublin has said that, when it came to same-sex blessings, it was best “deal with those situations individually and pastorally”. In his first interview last January, following the announcement of his appointment as Archbishop, he told this newspaper the difficulty with same-sex blessings “is that they are very often misconstrued as marriage. Priests have given these blessings in the past.”

He recalled the experience of a colleague: “He used to have this ceremony of the blessing of rings – I said to him, ‘I don’t have a difficulty with blessing rings if you’re doing that here in the house but if you go out into the public domain, in a church, and bless rings as you see it.’ They turned up with 200 people and they saw it as a marriage. Sometimes people use that phraseology. You’re into confusion there. It can be misconstrued as ‘yes, the priest married us’.”

On the Church’s use of words such as “objectively disordered” and “a tendency towards evil” in describing homosexuality, he said this was “a technical description. People misconstrue that then because it is technical theological language.”

However, he agreed that in popular culture such language presented “a difficulty which can translate into sometimes violence against people where they find there is a huge prejudice against them.”

Courtesy The Irish Times, 22.01.2021

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Church of Scotland marks Holy Week with prayers and events

The Moderator of the General Assembly, the Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair has sent out an invitation to join him as he embarks on a journey with the words of John's Gospel throughout Holy Week 2021. The Moderator invites friends to read scripture and pray as he offers a thought for the journey and space for reflection and contemplation with music to help you prayerfully pause and ponder your own journey.

Beginning on Palm Sunday (28 March) and continuing until Easter Sunday, each morning at 8am on the Church of Scotland website and Facebook page there will be a Bible reading, contemplative music, prayer and a short reflection from Rev Dr Martin Fair and others from across the breadth of the church.

The morning reflections will also be able to be listened to on the phone by dialling 0333 340 9200 (calls will be charged at a local rate).

Hamilton-based theatre group Drama Kirk have also filmed a new version of their annual Passion Play, which will be available to watch on the Church of Scotland website.

Dr Fair said: 'We've been working our way towards Easter and I very much hope that these resources will enable people to finish the journey with a special Holy Week experience for us all to share in.'



Drama Kirk's production of 'With Arms Wide Open' by Peggy Barnell, which tells the Easter story from Luke's perspective as he hears first-hand accounts from those changed by Jesus, will be available online from 2pm on Saturday 3 April.

Carefully filmed following coronavirus safety guidelines, the roles of Jesus and Luke are played by professional actors, and the play, which has never been performed in Scotland before, will be free to view via the Church of Scotland website.

Director Liz Blackman said: "We needed a script for this year that was quite different to anything we had performed in the past - something short, which could easily be adapted to social distancing, with a small number of people in each scene.

"I was delighted to find 'With Arms Wide Open'. The script has a fresh approach. We see Luke discover how Jesus

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changed people - and we hear his views on what many of Jesus' teachings meant. For us, this feels like a much more direct way of sharing the Gospel story. The main characters get to share their own story."

The week will culminate in a full online church service on Easter Sunday (4 April), which will be available on Easter Sunday from 9am again on the Church of Scotland website.

St Columba's Church of Scotland in London will release portraits and interviews with Christian chaplains on their website during Holy Week by the photographer Louise Haywood Scheiffer from her project 'Keeping the faith: London chaplains in the time of Covid'.



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They are also partnering with Rev Christopher Rowe of Colston Milton Parish Church in Glasgow, who is providing weekly reflections during Lent.

"Though some churches will be open by then, others will remain closed but either way, we want to celebrate Easter in a positive and meaningful way."

Archbishop welcomes school transfer to Irish medium

Archbishop Dermot Farrell has welcomed the conclusion of negotiations between the board of management of Scoil Chaitlín Maude in Tallaght, with An Foras Pátrúnachta and the diocesan education secretariat of the Archdiocese of Dublin, which has resulted in the transfer of its school patronage from the Archdiocese to An Foras Pátrúnachta.

Archbishop Farrell said, "This transfer marks a new chapter in Ireland's education system. Scoil Chaitlín Maude will provide education through the medium of Irish to Catholic children and to children of other faiths and none.

"During the school day provision will be made for the faith formation, religious education and sacramental preparation of Catholic children in accordance with the Grow in Love primary Catholic education programme. Other children will follow a moral and ethics programme. This is truly a multi-denominational school to cater for the needs of the Irish speaking community in Tallaght. This is a good model for the future to accommodate parents' requests."

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Archbishop Farrell continued, “I am willing to enter into further discussions with An Foras Pátrúnachta regarding other gaeilscoileanna. I wish to thank the education partners, the board of management and staff of Scoil Chaitlín Maude, Minister for Education, Norma Foley, and her officials, for progressing this new arrangement.”

Stoneyford’s gifts for those living in poverty



Stoneyford parishioners and rector, the Rev John Farr, who brought some feathered friends along for the photograph.

The Rev John Farr and parishioners of St John’s Parish, Stoneyford, have donated £1,300 to Christian Aid by

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buying virtual Charity Gifts for people living in extreme poverty.

Christian Aid's Charity Gifts help transform lives around the world. Popular gifts include training women to become tailors or giving beehives and fruit tree saplings to families to boost their household income.

With farmers making up many members of the rural parish, Stoneyford parishioners chose to support Christian Aid's agriculture programmes, buying virtual farm animals – chickens, turkeys and goats.

Chickens and turkeys provide eggs that can be eaten or sold for cash at the local market, while goats tolerate drought and provide milk, meat and manure.

Christian Aid organiser Norma Parker thanked her fellow parishioners for their support. "I was delighted that we managed to raise so much, especially as we're only a small congregation and church services are being live-streamed during the lockdown," Norma said.

Stoneyford parishioners who bought virtual gifts from Christian Aid to support those living in extreme poverty.

Christian Aid
Ireland Chief

churchnewsireland@gmail.org



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Executive Rosamond Bennett said: “The good people of Stoneyford Parish always show great love for their global neighbours. Climate change is causing a hunger crisis in many of the world’s poorest countries and the coronavirus pandemic is increasing extreme poverty. It is more important than ever that we help people during these times of crisis.”

For more information and to support the work of Christian Aid, please visit www.caid.ie/CharityGifts.



Easter GIGGLE BOXES make families smile

With face-to-face youth and children’s work suspended for now, Hollywood Parish is reaching out to children and families with an Easter edition of their GIGGLE BOX.

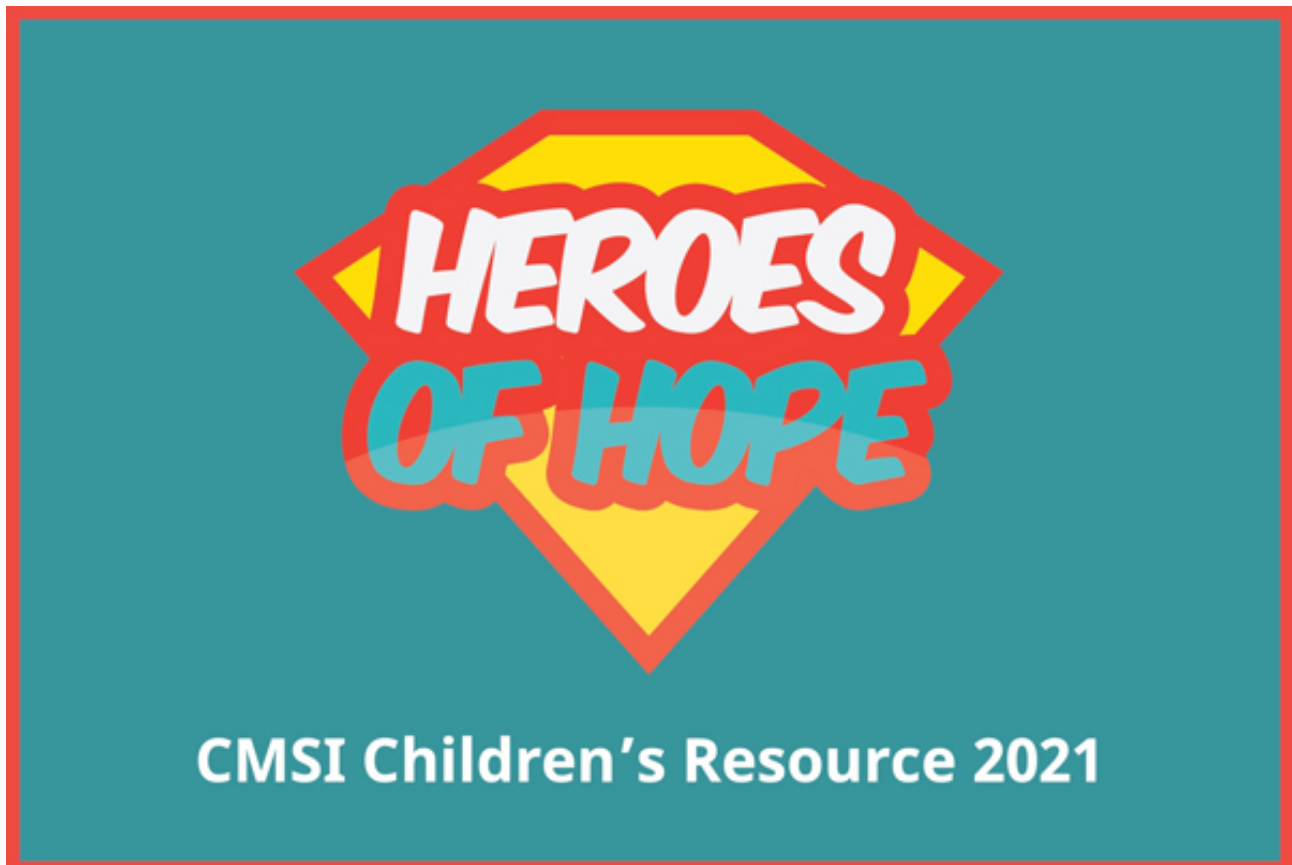
Launched earlier this year, GIGGLE stands for God is Good, Go Love Each Other. The response to the first distribution was incredibly positive and these great resources have been enjoyed by families outside the parish as well.

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The Easter edition GIGGLE BOX includes Bible–based activities and a great book about the Easter story called Are We Nearly There Yet? by Alison Brewis. There’s also a challenge to complete a task in order to receive a Fairtrade chocolate egg which also comes with a booklet telling the real story of Easter.

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

CMSI children’s resource celebrates hope



Church Mission Society Ireland (CMSI) has recently launched 'Heroes Of Hope' – its children’s resource for 2021.

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CMSI's annual resource is produced for Sunday schools, churches and families across Ireland. It aims to help children and young people explore the biblical story of mission and explore life and faith in other parts of the world.

This year's resource introduces heroes of hope in the Bible and across the global Church, and challenges us all to share God's hope. The material – which is free to download from CMSI's website – includes video stories, activity worksheets and craft suggestions, all around the theme of hope.

A number of churches have already started using Heroes Of Hope as part of their online children's programmes, and the material has been well received.

"I'm a Sunday school teacher delivering the Heroes Of Hope project in Milltown Parish, Armagh Diocese. We launched this last Sunday with great success. The resources are fantastic!"

Sunday school leaders, parents and carers can access the Heroes Of Hope material by visiting the Children's Resource Page of CMSI's website and registering their group.

Choir of King's College, Cambridge

From their new album of Easter music, this is 'Were you there?' arranged by Richard Lloyd. It's out now to stream and download: <https://smarturl.it/Easter2021>

Sports Chaplaincy Ireland Induction Course

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In preparation for a return to sport following lockdown, Sports Chaplaincy Ireland is running an Induction Course and Training over three evenings in April – the 19th, 21st and 26th. These will take place via Zoom, at a cost of £35.

All training is hosted by the very experienced Sports Chaplaincy UK Leadership Training Team -Warren Evans (CEO), Matt Baker (Pastoral Director England), Mark Fleming (Pastoral Director Scotland), Martin and Heather Lewis (Pastoral Directors Wales) and Philip Mitchell (Sports Chaplaincy Coordinator in Ireland).

<https://events.eventzilla.net/e/online-induction-training-2138814312>

Holy Week and Easter 2021



All services will be either live-streamed or pre-recorded and can be found at these links:

Livestream:

<https://www.churchservices.tv/corkstfinbarre>

OR

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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<https://corkcathedral.webs.com>

Livestream and pre-recorded:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/SaintFinBarresCathedral>

Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday of Holy Week

The Way of the Cross with Saint Fin Barre: Gougane Barra to Cork

Pre-recorded - YouTube

From Monday in Holy Week this virtual journey of prayer, readings, music and reflection will begin at the source of the River Lee, at Gougane Barra, then along the Lee Valley to Cork, to the Cathedral

The pilgrimage will start in Kilmocomogue Union of Parishes, located on the border of Gougane Barra, and then will pass through Modiddy Union of Parishes and Carrigrohane Union of Parishes before arriving at the Cathedral. We invite you to join us this year virtually in the hope that next year we will be able to walk together 'on the ground'.

THE TRIDUUM

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday

Thursday 1st April 2021

Maundy Thursday (Livestream)

8.00p.m. Choral Eucharist, Address, Stripping of the Altars & the Watch

Preacher: Very Rev. Nigel Dunne (Dean of Cork)

Friday 2nd April 2021

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Good Friday (Livestream)

12 noon Solemn Proclamation of the Cross and Address
Preacher: Rev. Ted Ardis (Dean's Vicar)

Saturday 3rd April 2021

Holy Saturday (Pre-recorded - YouTube)

From 6.00p.m. Lighting of the Paschal Candle, Singing of the Exultet and Easter Fanfare

EASTER DAY

Sunday 4th April 2021

EASTER DAY (Livestream)

11.15a.m. Festival Choral Eucharist

Celebrant and Preacher: Rt. Revd Dr. Paul Colton

Media review

Peter Robinson: Unionists are more alienated than I have seen at any time in my 50 years in politics

Belfast News Letter

[[] <https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/opinion/columnists/peter-robinson-unionists-are-more-alienated-than-i-have-seen-at-any-time-in-my-50-years-in-politics-3179294>]

Covid-19: NI's vaccination programme success continues

BBC News

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[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56544297>]

Delight and relief as Catholic churches re-open ahead of Palm Sunday The Irish News

[[] <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2021/03/27/news/delight-and-relief-as-catholic-churches-re-open-ahead-of-palm-sunday-2269593/>]

Batley school protests: The issue of depicting the Prophet Muhammad

BBC News

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-30813742>]

Sinn Fein's Axis Wins Again

Kevin Myers

[[] <https://kevinmyers.ie/2021/03/26/sinn-feins-axis-wins-again/>]

Jim Allister insists 'partisan' Joe Biden cannot be trusted by unionists following 'Brits' comment

Belfast Telegraph

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/jim-allister-insists-partisan-joe-biden-cannot-be-trusted-by-unionists-following-brits-comment-40244310.html>]

Brexit news: David Trimble warn Protocol is turning Northern Ireland into an 'EU colony'

Express

[[] <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1414704/brexit-news-northern-ireland-protocol-david-trimble-arlene-foster-boris-johnson-eu-news>]

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Loyalist anger growing over Irish sea border, but does that mean there is a potential threat to peace?

Belfast Telegraph

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/features/loyalist-anger-growing-over-irish-sea-border-but-does-that-mean-there-is-a-potential-threat-to-peace-40244338.html>]

Arlene Foster: I know people don't have this perception of me but I love a good laugh with my friends and I can't wait to do that again

Belfast News Letter

[<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/people/arlene-foster-i-know-people-dont-have-this-perception-of-me-but-i-love-a-good-laugh-with-my-friends-and-i-cant-wait-to-do-that-again-3180494>]

[]

Northern Ireland's antidepressant spend increase by £7m in 2020

BBC News

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56500489>]



Pointers for prayer

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Meditation

God whose word cannot be broken:
with Jerusalem we are stunned this Holy Week.
Like a city overcome with sudden devastation,
we are swept up in the confusion and desolation,
wondering what is happening.
Liturgy, Scripture, and song immerse us in the river that
flows to betrayal and the cross.
The gospel we have tried to make manageable has
overturned our tables of control.
The sufferings of Jesus that we try to avoid engulf us.
The fruitless fig tree withers

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before the majesty of one whose mission is relentless and uncompromised.

Help us with all of your church to watch and pray, to behold anew the unfolding scandal and the ragged good news of salvation.

Behold with mercy the agonies of the world where the suffering of Jesus is being completed, both then and now.

Let the Via Dolorosa for us be both acts of devotion and worship

and of compassion and justice,

so that Christ's abundant sufferings become the world's abundant consolations.

Speaking to the Soul

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind beggar was sitting beside the road.

When Jesus heard him, he stopped and ordered that the man be brought to him. As the man came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

“Lord,” he said, “I want to see!” And Jesus said, “All right, receive your sight! Your faith has healed you.” Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus, praising God. And all who saw it praised God, too.

Luke 18:35, Luke 18:40-43 NLT

Jesus knows that he is heading to Jerusalem where he will be killed. But even so, amazingly, he has time for people and when he hears a blind man call out he stops and gives

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him his full attention. From the very beginning of Jesus' ministry he had declared that he had come to bring sight to the blind, in fulfilment of Isaiah 61. But that didn't mean that he had come to impose his healing. He came to offer healing and that's what he does when he meets this blind beggar in Jericho.

Jesus never barges into our lives telling us what's best for us and imposing his will on us. He simply offers himself. On the face of it, it seems strange that Jesus would ask a blind man what he wanted him to do for him because it was so obvious. We know nothing of the circumstances of this man but we might well presume that his blindness was connected to his begging. He lived a life of complete vulnerability and so it was obvious that he needed to receive his sight. But even so Jesus respects him as an individual and lets him make the decision.

All of us need the loving touch of Jesus on our lives. We need his forgiveness, his peace, his love and his joy. We are all in desperate need of him, but even so he refuses to impose himself upon us. Today as Jesus knocks at the door of our lives he leaves it to us to make the decision whether we will open it or not.

QUESTION

Will you open the door to Jesus today?

PRAYER

Loving Lord Jesus, thank you that you offer me your life today. I welcome you and invite me to fill me with your Spirit. Amen.

