



Image of the day - Derry Cathedral

March 8, 2021

Down Diocese to launch film on St Patrick



Saul Church

There are many myths and legends that surround Saint Patrick. Who really was this man? Why did he come to Ireland?

The Diocese of Down and Dromore is one of three sponsors of a short film “A heart for a Nation.” The film aims “to unpack the true story of a man who was simply sold out for Jesus and who carried God’s heart for the nation of Ireland”.

You are invited to view the film at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 17 March. to unpack the true story of a man who was simply sold out for Jesus and who carried God’s heart for the nation of Ireland.

The film is by Matthew Irvine, sponsored by The Diocese of Down and Dromore, EdenGate Travel and New Wine Ireland. Links at -

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[<https://youtu.be/bum5yjX3tAI>]

[[] <https://www.downanddromore.org/news/2021/03/a-heart-for-a-nation>]



Evangelical Alliance highlights concerns at reactions to Northern Ireland Protocol

The Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland in its weekly newsletter commented, “ We seem no closer to finding sustainable solutions around the Northern Ireland Protocol. This week the Agriculture Minister who is responsible for ports has been sued for ordering that work on all inspection facilities be halted without Executive approval.”

It continued, “These are complex and contested issues however we note with some concern comments in a [letter from the Loyalist Communities Council to the Prime Minister](#) objecting to churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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the Northern Ireland Protocol. The group states that opposition should be 'peaceful and democratic' but withdraws support for the Good Friday Agreement and specifically its 'institutions'. These institutions include a number of North-South bodies, the Northern Ireland Assembly and most worryingly, the PSNI."

"The letter also makes reference to the Protocol undermining the basis on which many loyalists agreed to the 1994 ceasefire. Taken together (and against a backdrop of recent deplorable threats to port staff, journalists and public representatives) this could be read as an implicit threat to the support of law and order." it stated.

The comment concluded, "There are clearly different and legitimate views about Brexit, the NI Protocol and the Good Friday Agreement. However we need clear and unequivocal support for the rule of law and a willingness to work together to maintain and further peace, reconciliation and prosperity for everyone who calls this place home."

Cardinal Grech to Irish bishops: 'A synodal process promises an ecclesial springtime'

Cardinal Mario Grech told Irish bishops that embarking on a "synodal process" could lead to an "ecclesial springtime."

In an address published on the Irish bishops' conference website on March 4, the Secretary General of Synod of Bishops said that it was "more than understandable" that the bishops might worry about whether embarking on a "synodal process" was "the right decision."



Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of Synod of Bishops.

He said: “But keep in mind the assurance given to us by the Holy Father: ‘it is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.’ A synodal process promises an ecclesial springtime -- a rebirth of an authentic Church.”

The Maltese cardinal gave the address -- entitled “Towards a Synodal Irish Church”

The Tablet, a British Catholic weekly, reported on March 1 that a committee of six Irish bishops had begun working on plans for a national synod and received advice from Grech.

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An Irish national synod would add to a growing number of similar initiatives.

Courtesy of Catholic News Agency . More at -

[[] <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/cardinal-grech-to-irish-bishops-a-synodal-process-promises-an-ecclesial-springtime-92568>]

Justin Welby blasts Nigerian Archbishop's 'unacceptable' remarks about homosexuality

Most Rev Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury has publicly condemned a series of homophobic remarks made by a Nigerian Archbishop.

In a 26th February statement, Most Rev Henry C Ndukuba referred to homosexuality as a "deadly virus" and likened it "to a Yeast that should be urgently and radically expunged and excised lest it affects the whole dough". He also said that "secular governments are adopting aggressive campaign for global homosexual culture".

Archbishop Justin roundly condemned the "unacceptable" remarks. "I completely disagree with and condemn this language," he said. "It dehumanises those human beings of whom the statement speaks."

Archbishop Justin noted that he had personally written to the archbishop to express his displeasure.



"I have written privately to His Grace The Archbishop to make clear that this language is incompatible with the agreed teaching of the Anglican Communion (expressed most clearly, albeit in unsuitable language for today, in paragraphs c and d of resolution I.10 of the Lambeth Conference 1998)," he said in a statement. "This resolution both restated a traditional view of Christian marriage and was clear in its condemnation of homophobic actions or words. It affirmed that "all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ."

Archbishop Justin concluded: "The Anglican Communion continues to seek to walk together amidst much difference and through many struggles. I urge all Christians to join me in continuing prayer for the people and churches of Nigeria

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as they face economic hardship, terrorist attacks, religious-based violence and insecurity.

"The mission of the church is the same in every culture and country: to demonstrate, through its actions and words, that God's offer of unconditional love to every human being through Jesus Christ calls us to holiness and hope."

Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York expressed his support for Archbishop Justin's response.

"I welcome and support Justin Welby's clear condemnation of the language used by Archbishop Ndukuba in his recent statement," he wrote. "I share his sorrow that LGBTI+ people across the world will feel less safe as a result."



St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh

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Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London tweeted:

"I support the Archbishop's comments and share [his] condemnation of the language used."

Rt Rev John Inge, Bishop of Worcester called Welby's statement "excellent and powerful".

"Very glad to see this," added Church of England clergyman Marcus Walker. "The Archbishop of Canterbury is speaking for most English Anglicans today."

Prayers in a pub: green light for £200k conversion of former Antrim bar into rural church

The prayers of a Christian group have been answered after they were granted permission for a very different kind of conversion - to turn a former east Antrim pub into a church, the Belfast Telegraph reports.

The Sheddings, located between Broughshane and Carnlough, has been purchased by the New Dawn Church, which met previously at Broughshane Community Centre. Planning permission for the conversion was approved at a planning committee meeting of Mid and East Antrim council.

The change of use will see an investment of £200,000 in the building, which will have a capacity to accommodate a congregation of 100 worshippers.

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Architect Gary Lamont, who is an elder of New Dawn Evangelical Fellowship, told the meeting that the church is currently 40 people strong, with approximately 70% from the Carnalbanagh area. It has been operating for eight years.

He told the meeting that "God has opened the door" to enable the church to restore the building and "give it back to the rural community for the spiritual well-being of people in the area".

Planning officer Gary McGuinness said that one objection to the application relates to noise and parking arrangements.

However, he reported that Transport NI is "content with the parking arrangements".

Mr Lamont noted plans for the installations of triple glazing.

Bannside TUV councillor Timothy Gaston said that the existing Sheddings pub building has become "run down" and an "eyesore on an important arterial route" since it closed.

Previously it had once been "a hive of activity" with farmers travelling miles to The Sheddings sheep sales.

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He went on to say that 35 car parking bays was "sufficient" for the church.

Mr Gaston added that the building was located on "an important tourist route" between the "east Antrim coast" and Ballymena, which he described as the "shopping capital of east Antrim".

Mr Lamont emphasised the church's intention to form good relations with its neighbours and would seek to talk to people if larger events such as a wedding or a funeral were to be held.

Alliance councillor Robert Logan noted that Mr Lamont had indicated that triple glazing was to be used and noise is "not a concern".

The application was subsequently approved.
Courtesy Belfast Telegraph

Media review

Exemption of NI teachers from fair employment law 'past sell-by date'

BBC News - Robbie Meredith writes - The exemption of teachers from fair employment legislation "has passed its sell-by date," MLAs have been told. That is according to Dr Matthew Milliken from Ulster University (UU) in evidence to Stormont's Education Committee.

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The recruitment of teachers is exempt from legislation outlawing religious discrimination in Northern Ireland.

The committee chairman, Alliance MLA Chris Lyttle, said he was "profoundly uncomfortable" with that.

[[] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-56273089>]

David Trimble: Tear up the Northern Ireland protocol to save the Belfast Agreement

Irish Times

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/david-trimble-tear-up-the-northern-ireland-protocol-to-save-the-belfast-agreement-1.4489873>]

Religious order feared 'we would all be wiped out' by Covid-19

Irish Times - Covid-19 has had its deadliest impact on older people, particularly those living in nursing homes. It is not a surprise then that members of the clergy have been badly affected in the pandemic, given their age profile and lives in congregated settings.

Four Jesuits, four Oblate fathers, four Augustinian priests, six nuns in the Holy Order Convent in Kildare and four nuns at an unnamed convent in the southwest are among those who have died.

The worst-impacted order appears to be the Spiritans, better known as the Holy Ghost Fathers, which has lost 18 priests

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in Ireland during the pandemic – seven during the first wave and 11 in the third.

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/religious-order-feared-we-would-all-be-wiped-out-by-covid-19-1.4501392>]

Sisters of Charity call for inquiry into adoptions following RTÉ programme

Irish Times - The Sisters of Charity organisation has said it is “deeply saddened” by disclosures in the RTÉ Investigates programme on illegal adoptions, broadcast on Wednesday night.

The programme included interviews with 10 people who had been illegally adopted and who had believed until recently that their adoptive parents were their biological parents.

Some of them had been illegally adopted through the St Patrick’s Guild agency run by the Sisters of Charity.

[<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/sisters-of-charity-call-for-inquiry-into-adoptions-following-rté-programme-1.4501632>]

Archbishop pledges assistance to any inquiry into illegal adoptions

Irish Times - The Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin would assist any Government inquiry into adoption practices in this State, Archbishop Dermot Farrell has said.

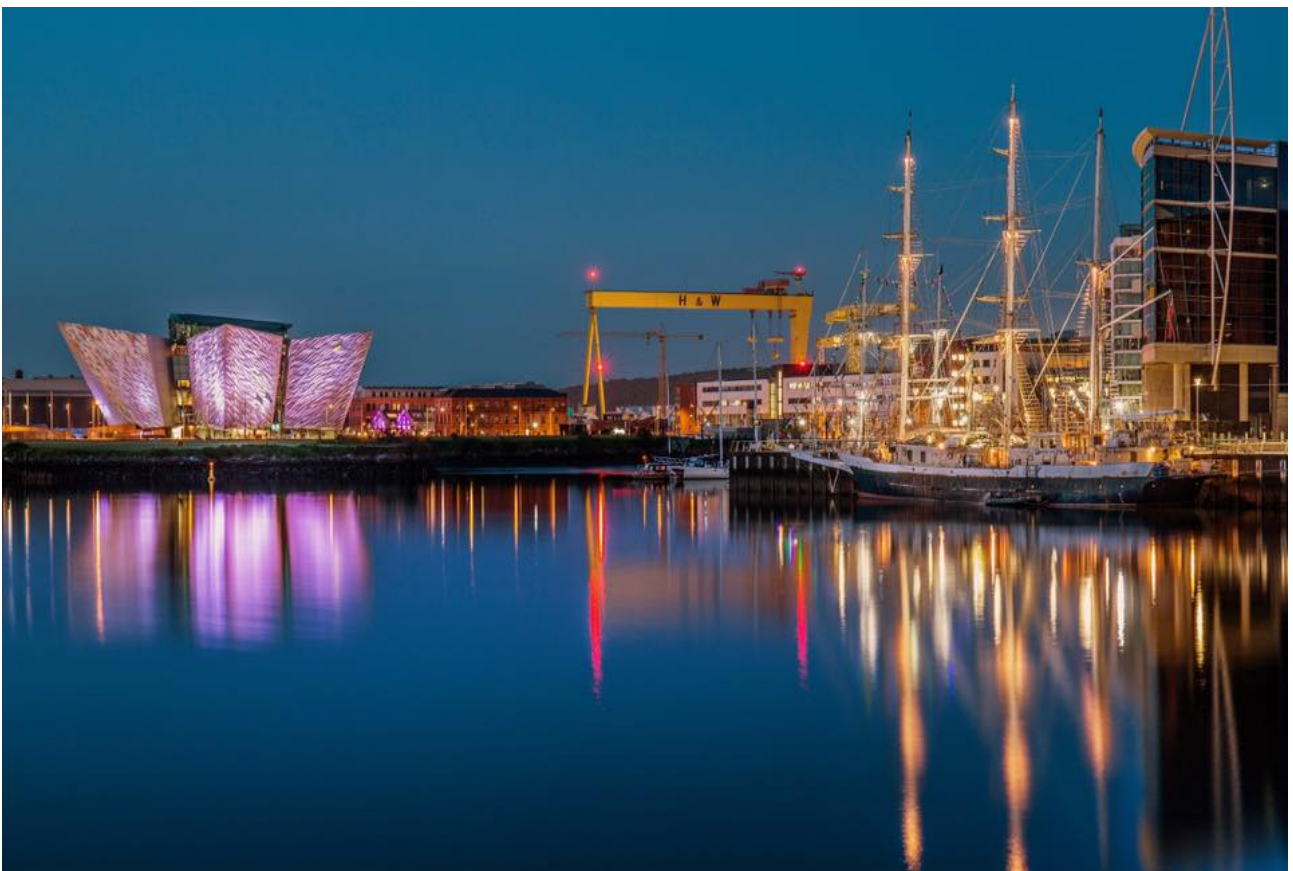
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“If a State inquiry is required into how adoptions were arranged, and this may well be the case, the diocesan archive would be available as a resource to it,” he said.

“The only adoption-related files not available – due to current legislation – are those relating to named individuals,” he said.

A further inquiry into the practice of illegal adoptions is seen as increasingly likely by members of the Government once the Cabinet considers an independent review into the matter next week.

[[] <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/archbishop-pledges-assistance-to-any-inquiry-into-illegal-adoptions-1.4501658>]



Belfast waterfront by night. Titanic and Goliath

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Calls for investigation into Ireland's 'criminal' adoption system

Belfast Telegraph - The demands come after an investigation by RTE showed religious orders were behind thousands of illegal adoptions over decades.

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/calls-for-investigation-into-irelands-criminal-adoption-system-40154174.html>]

Archives - Letter writer laments state of affairs in Diocese of Clogher



Belle Isle Castle in Co Fermanagh. Photo - Northern Ireland Tourist Board

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From the News Letter, March 5, 1872

Mr J G V Porter of Belle Isle, Lisbellaw in Co Fermanagh wrote to the News Letter (March 5, 1872) on the matter of whether or not a new bishop for the diocese of Clogher would be appointed.

Mr Porter warned that failure to do so would only leave the diocese in a “disorganised state”.

He wrote that after 12 months of discussions that the decision to appoint a new bishop or “whether ecclesiastical affairs will be allowed to continue in their present disorganised state” would depend on forthcoming Synod of Dublin.

The reason for the delay, according to Mr Porter, was a rule passed by the bishops during a meeting in the Shelbourne Hotel that “no new bishop should be made in Ireland without an endowment in hand of £1,000 a year”.

He added that had taken advice from “the best opinions” and was of the view that the law had been agreed during a private meeting and that the Church should not be bound by the agreement.

He wrote: “Neither our Canons nor Parliament has given our bishops any right to bind our Church by rules passed at their own private meetings.”

He concluded his letter: “I thus trust that I may be allowed to hope that my father, now 84 years of age, will live to see his

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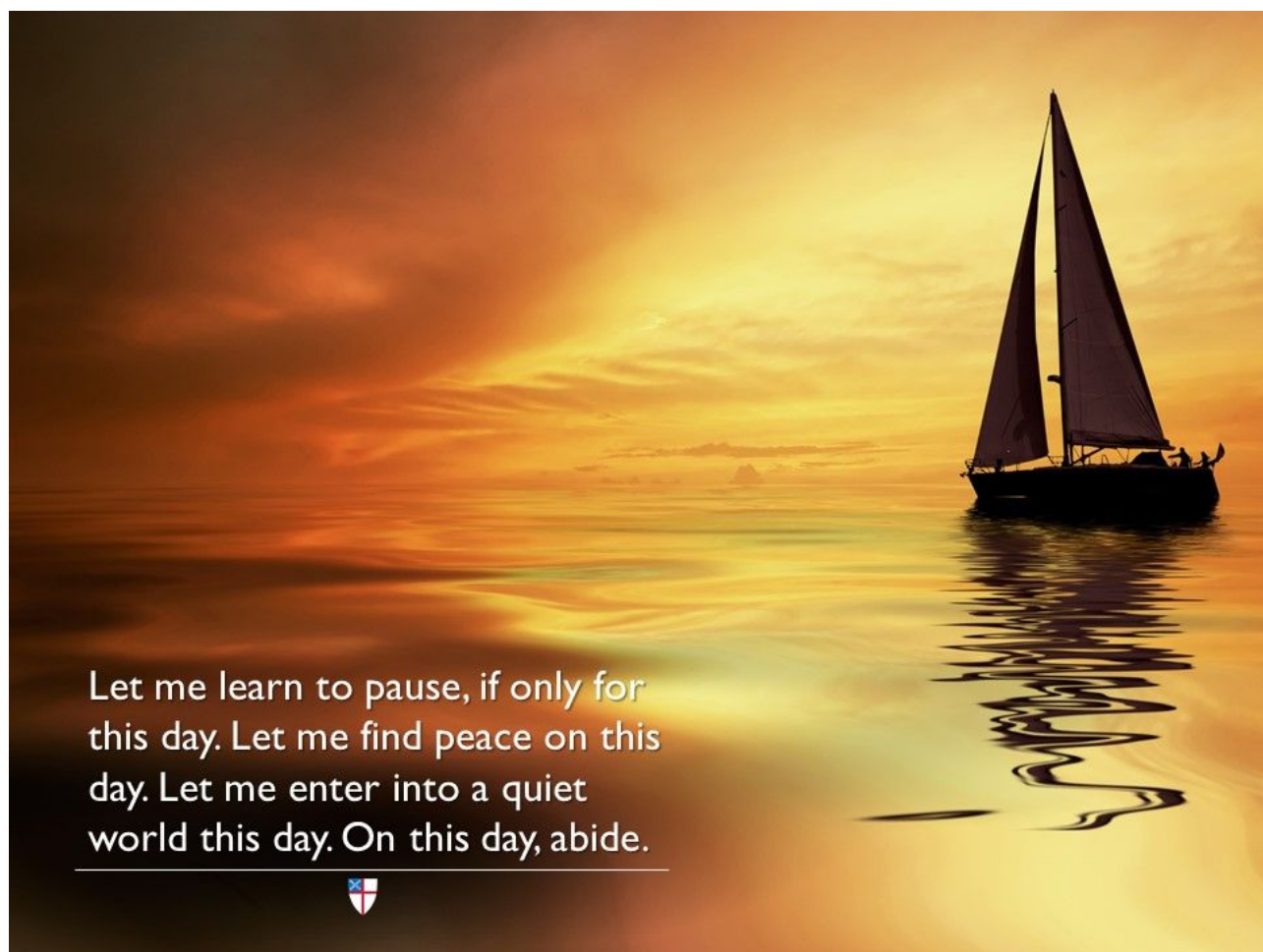
wish fulfilled and a bishop appointed for this diocese, and, next, that the best clergymen will be chosen.”

Pointers for prayer

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

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

Hold in your hands, Lord
our families and friends
our neighbours
those whom we worry about
& 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



Today we pray for those with symptoms of cancer. A new study shows that almost half of those with a potential symptom didn't see a GP during the first wave of the pandemic, because they did not want to burden the NHS.

Today we pray for countries unable to access vaccines. The UN secretary general has criticised the unfair distribution of Covid vaccines, identifying that 130 countries have yet to receive a single dose.

Pray for the launches of new Church Army centres of mission in Rochdale, Gwent Valley, North Sutton and Ipswich; that these will launch as planned and new staff will find ways to engage with their communities when they are appointed.

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Pray for all teachers and parents involved with students or their children. We ask for stamina and creativity as they seek to educate in less than ideal circumstances.

It has been announced that on Ascension Day - 13 May 2021, Bishop Hosam Naoum will be installed as Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, bearing the title Archbishop. Please pray for Bishop Naoum, his family and the Diocese.

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

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

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

Almighty God,
you have created the heavens and the earth
and made us in your own image:
teach us to discern your hand in all your works
and your likeness in all your children;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,

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who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things,
now and for ever.

Almighty God,
whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness,
and was tempted as we are, yet without sin:
give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit;
and, as you know our weakness,
so may we know your power to save;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Speaking to the Soul

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and her sins are pardoned.
Isaiah 40:1-2 NLT

We all make mistakes but some have far greater impact than others. Many mistakes are of minor importance and are soon forgotten about. They leave no trace. But others can change the whole direction of life from that moment. The people of Jerusalem and Judah had made a long succession of disastrous decisions but now God tells them that it's all going to change because he will forgive them. Their sad days are gone.

When we make mistakes and especially when they have long term implications it is easy to imagine that that is the end. There is no hope. But God is always in the business of restoration. He is always looking for ways of bringing salvation and renewal. This is truly a message of comfort and one which our world desperately needs to hear. I have spent many, many hours of my life with people who have tried to persuade me that they were beyond God's help. Their lives had gone from bad to much, much worse and they couldn't imagine that there was a way back. I think particularly of prisoners that I have met who have been very happy to share their life story but had drawn the conclusion that they were beyond being helped.

I particularly love the word 'tenderly' in today's bible passage. When God comes to us in our failure he doesn't come stridently and critically, but with tenderness and love. The truth is that we can never deserve God's forgiveness. It's always a gift, and incredibly, miraculously the Bible tells us that he is willing to forgive us however badly messed up our lives might be. God simply looks for our willingness to own up to our sin, to accept his forgiveness and to change our way of life. They were comforting words for the people of Jerusalem long ago – and they still are.

QUESTION

What is your own experience of God's forgiveness?

PRAYER

Lord God I confess that I have made many mistakes and have often been a disappointment to you. I accept your gift

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of forgiveness and ask you to fill me with your Spirit as I seek to live my life in step with you. Amen.

