



Belfast City Council to consider installing 'Homeless Jesus'

Belfast City Council is to consider a request to install a statue of a "Homeless Jesus" on a bench outside City Hall.

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Members of BCC's People and Communities Committee will this evening discuss the request for support with the bronze sculpture's installation.

The purpose of the "Homeless Jesus" statue is to raise awareness of homelessness within Belfast.

It was designed by Timothy Schmalz and depicts Jesus as a homeless man sleeping on a bench. At closer inspection, the figure can be identified as Jesus by the marks on his feet.

The "Homeless Jesus" has been in existence worldwide since 2013 and can be seen in Madrid, Singapore, Dublin, and Glasgow, among other locations.

One "Homeless Jesus" currently lies outside Centenary House on Victoria Street, which is run by the Salvation Army.

In several cities, the statues have been funded by anonymous benefactors, local churches, homeless shelters and charities.

There are currently plans in the works for a procession from Centenary House to the Morning Star Hostel on **the Falls Road**, which is run by the Legion of Mary association, to install a further "Homeless Jesus" statue.

A date for this event has yet to be organised.

BCC's support is being sought for a procession from the Morning Star Hostel to City Hall in November during an annual event to highlight homelessness.

It is envisaged the procession will end with the sculpture being placed on a bench **outside City Hall**.

The procession would involve representatives from the four main churches as well as the Salvation Army.

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The People and Communities Committee will tomorrow evening be asked to grant approval council officers to engage with the organisers and explore options in principle, with a further report to be brought back for consideration.

The “Homeless Jesus” has not always be welcomed to cities across the UK.

In 2016, an application to place the life-size bronze cast in front of a Methodist Hall in London was rejected on the grounds it “would fail to maintain or improve (preserve or enhance) the character or appearance of the Westminster Abbey and Parliament Square conservation area”.

Memorial remembering visit of Pope Saint John Paul II unveiled in Limerick

More than 200 people gathered at Bishops’ Quay in Limerick on Monday 30 April for the unveiling of a memorial marking the visit of Pope Saint John Paul II to Limerick City. The memorial, featuring a likeness to Pope Saint John Paul II, was unveiled by Papal Nuncio to Ireland, His Excellency Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo; Bishop Brendan Leahy, Bishop of Limerick; and Mayor of Limerick City and County, Cllr Stephen Keary.

The idea for the memorial, which stands on the quay overlooking the river Shannon, was conceived during the 2014 City of Culture year and the plaque was designed by Limerick artist and sculpture Cliodna Cussen. It is a reminder of the historic event 39 years ago when the first Pope ever to visit Ireland arrived in Limerick to say his final Mass before leaving Ireland. It also recalls Pope Saint John Paul II’s dedication as a ‘Freeman of Limerick’ by then Mayor, the late Bobby Byrne.

The memorial quotes from Pope Saint John Paul II’s homily at the Mass in Limerick, ‘Every lay Christian is an extraordinary work of God’s grace. There is no such thing as an ordinary lay person’. More than 400,000 people gathered for the Papal Mass, which was held at the Limerick Racecourse at Greenmount.

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Speaking at the ceremony, Bishop Leahy said, “I think Pope Saint John Paul II would be pleased that we are launching this memorial in the year when Ireland will be hosting the World Meeting of Families and when one of his successors, Pope



Francis will be visiting Ireland. He said that “the future of the Church and the future of humanity depend in great part on parents and on the family life that they build in their homes”. My wish is that all who visit this memorial will draw inspiration from the figure of this great Pope and his words.’

He continued, ‘I’m sure Pope Saint John Paul II is looking today with a particular fondness and tenderness on this Treaty City which he visited in October 1979. His heart is beating in a special way as he knows how many remember him with great affection in Limerick City and County. Since coming to Limerick five years ago, many have share with me anecdotes and fond memories linked to the day they made it Greenpark Racecourse to see the Pope; it was one of the great moment of their lives, one they will never forget.’ ‘He was conferred with the freedom of the city by the then mayor, the late Bobby Byrne, on October 1st, 1979 and, as the late Mayor put it, John Paul II’s visit is “part of the treasured history of the City”.’

Mayor Stephen Keary said, ‘In his opening comments in his homily, the Pope uttered special words in our native tongue “*A phobail dhílis na Mumhan*” – special people of Munster. He was regularly praised for having an innate ability to connect and in that moment, he connected with everyone from the Munster region.

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‘It’s only right that we would celebrate his visit. There was never anything like it before and will never be anything like again in this city most likely. The fact that we are doing the unveiling this year is timely given that we have the second ever visit to Ireland of a Pope in August. Regrettably, he’s not coming to Limerick but I suspect that a very large number of Limerick people will go to see him.

He added, ‘Another reason for us to have this memorial is the very positive impact that Polish people have made on Limerick. There are an estimated 10,000 Polish people living here and it is, in a way, a dedication to them also that we would have a memorial to mark the visit here of their most famous ever countryman.’

For more information, please see www.limerickdiocese.org.

C of I parishes raise almost 85,000 pounds for hospice care

Hospice care in Northern Ireland and Co Louth has benefitted from the generosity of Church of Ireland parishes in both Armagh and Down and Dromore.

Since 2014 the Diocese of Armagh has observed an Annual Hospice Sunday and in 2017, raised almost £11,300. Parishes in the Diocese of Down and Dromore also gave generously to the appeal, raising almost £12,000. The money raised to date has totalled almost £85,000.

These funds have been distributed to the following hospices:

- the Southern Area Hospice, Newry;
- the Northern Ireland Hospice, Belfast (which includes the Northern Ireland Children’s Hospice);
- the Foyle Hospice, Londonderry; and
- and North Louth Hospice.
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Depending on where the parish or parishes are located, the money raised by each parish throughout these dioceses has been given to its local hospice.

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Armagh
Diocese's
Annual
Hospice
Sunday Appeal
is co-ordinated
each year by
the Reverend
Matthew
Hagan, rector
of Tynan,
Aghavilly and
Middletown
Group of
Parishes.



Mr Hagan commented: “All hospices throughout Northern Ireland depend greatly on the support of the public when it comes to raising much needed funding for their hospice on an annual basis. I am extremely pleased at the magnificent amount of money that has been raised for hospice care in Northern Ireland and in Co. Louth through the generosity of the parishioners throughout the Diocese of Armagh and the Diocese of Down and Dromore.

“I encourage other dioceses in the Church of Ireland to set up a similar initiative to support the wonderful hospice care afforded to those people in our communities who need this high level of care. I can assure the many parishioners in the Dioceses of Armagh and Down and Dromore that their generosity will undoubtedly benefit the excellent level of patient care in local hospices. My sincere thanks to everyone who has made a donation.”

The Mission of the Laity is Pope's prayer intention for May

Pope Francis has released a new video accompanying his prayer intention for the month of May.



This month, Pope Francis invites the faithful to pray for the mission of the laity, saying, ‘Lay people are on the front line of the life of the Church.’ It has become the custom of Pope Francis to release a video message detailing his new prayer intention each month.

In his video message Pope Francis said, ‘Lay people are on the front line of the life of the Church. We need their testimony regarding the truth of the Gospel and their example of expressing their faith by practicing solidarity.’

‘Let us give thanks for the lay people who take risks, who are not afraid and who offer reasons for hope to the poorest, to the excluded, to the marginalized. Let us pray together this month that the lay faithful may fulfill their specific mission, the mission that they received in Baptism, putting their creativity at the service of the challenges of today’s world.’

The month of May is also a time when special prayer intentions are made to Mary, the Mother of God.

The Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network of the Apostleship of Prayer developed ‘The Pope Video’ initiative to assist in the worldwide dissemination of monthly intentions of the Holy Father in relation to churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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the challenges facing humanity. For more information, see www.popesprayer.net.

The Dock Chaplain takes a sort of year out

The Dock remains open for business as Chris Bennett and his wife Susan set off in their campervan for a year-long adventure.



The couple are fulfilling an ambition to travel but they also hope that it will be a year to listen to God and renew their faith and joy. They describe it as a cross between a sabbatical, a career break and a holiday.

And what of the Dock Café and the Titanic community that they've left behind? Chris says:

We've spent the last few months trying to lay the foundations for things we love and care about to keep thriving while we're away. So, both The Dock and The Wee Tram will blossom and flourish in our absence, giving the fantastic people in each the chance to do their stuff!

So it's business as usual in Titanic Quarter with the hugely popular Honesty Box Café run by Michael, the prayer garden, and a great community of volunteers, regulars and tourists. About 400 people a day stream through The Dock and at the time of writing its TripAdvisor rating is # 2 of 1150 places to eat in Belfast.

Bishop Harold was at Chris and Susan's farewell party in The Dock. He said:

“Chris Bennett is a one-off! He has a very particular set of gifts, and I can't think of anyone else who would have been able to set churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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up the Dock in the Titanic Quarter in the way that he did.

“Chris was totally engaged and consumed with the vision for building community in the Titanic Quarter and creating a place where people would gather from all parts of Belfast and indeed all parts of the world. His vision was for a place of warmth, welcome and hospitality and also a sense of God’s presence. All of that has been achieved in quite a remarkable way and that is Chris and Susan’s legacy as they set off on their travels.

“We hope and trust that The Dock will go from strength to strength and that Chris and Susan will be blessed in their time of rest after achieving such remarkable success in Titanic.”

Archbishop of Canterbury turns to Stormzy song to soothe Royal wedding nerves

The Archbishop of Canterbury is taking inspiration from a Stormzy song as he nervously prepares for Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's wedding.

The Most Rev Justin Welby will officiate the highly anticipated ceremony on May 19, but even the Church of England's most senior cleric is not safe from the nerves of the big day.

Speaking on BBC Coventry & Warwickshire he told of how he is preparing for the ceremony.



Archbishop Welby said: "I'm always nervous at weddings because it is such an important day for the couple - whoever they are."

"I've made a couple of cack-handed mistakes over the last couple of weddings I've been involved in and I'm thinking this is probably not a good moment to make it a hat-trick."

He has previously admitted to fearing he might drop the ring during the service

When asked by presenter Lorna Bailey how he's preparing himself, the Archbishop said a line from grime artist Stormzy's song, *Blinded By Your Grace*, was helping him in the run up to the nuptials.

Mr Welby explained: "There's a line in that - 'I stay prayed up and get the job done' - I think that sort of sums it up."

The Archbishop, who is the second most senior figure in the church after the Queen, who is supreme governor of the Church of England, has already had an instrumental role in preparing Ms Markle for the wedding.

In March he officiated as she was baptised and confirmed into the church in a secret ceremony, describing it as "beautiful" and "very special".

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