



**C of I bishop,
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referendum in
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The Right Reverend Patrick Rooke, Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry issued the following statement on the forthcoming Referendum -

As the Referendum on the Eighth Amendment draws near, each of us with the right to vote should be thinking carefully and responsibly about the issues involved. These are complex and difficult.



The Referendum itself is about whether to repeal Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution, known as the Eighth Amendment. It gives equal rights to the mother and her unborn child; only permitting an abortion when the life of a pregnant woman is at risk. Should a

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'Yes' vote prevail, then the Oireachtas will be given the powers to decide on what legislation is necessary. The Church of Ireland has, for many years, argued that this is not a matter for the Constitution but for legislators.

The memory of what happened to Savita Halappavananar in Galway five-and-a-half years ago looms large in many people's minds in the West of Ireland. That a young woman lost her life unnecessarily is both tragic and shocking. Equally, the fact that so many women are forced to travel to England and Wales for terminations of pregnancies or acquire abortion pills on the internet, says little for a mature 21st century Ireland.

The dilemma, however, is that the Government seems set on linking a 'Yes' vote with its proposal to allow for unrestricted supervised abortion, albeit after medical consultation, in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. This is much less restrictive than we would have hoped and expected.

As things stand, this is a referendum in which there will be no winners. Either result will mean that the most defenceless in our society, vulnerable mothers and the unborn, will continue to suffer. May each of us vote according to our conscience, considering prayerfully the serious implications of the choice that is before us on Friday 25th May.

The Irish Times view on the abortion referendum: The shadow campaign

The Irish Times published this editorial viewpoint -

It is incumbent on all of us to talk with friends and family about what we are seeing online and whether it should be trusted

With less than three weeks to go to the referendum on repeal of the Eighth Amendment, concern has been expressed across the political spectrum about the potential impact of unregulated online advertising and of misleading information being disseminated via social media platforms.



Experience elsewhere suggests these digital campaigns are likely to increase in intensity as voting day approaches. Also that it will be impossible to gain a full picture of what is actually

happening online before the vote takes place. The nature of targeted digital advertising, particularly on platforms such as [Facebook](#), means certain messages will be restricted to specific demographic groups while remaining invisible to the rest of us. A small number of individuals and voluntary organisations are attempting to monitor this activity in [Ireland](#) during the referendum campaign. Realistically, though, the best they can hope to achieve is an anecdotal snapshot. Nevertheless, last week they reported an increase in the volume of ads funded by anonymous groups outside the country, particularly from anti-abortion groups in the US.

It may seem extraordinary that the State, which over the years has put in place a range of statutory regulations covering campaign funding, political advertising and balanced coverage in broadcast media, finds itself with no legislation governing political campaigning on the most powerful communications platforms in human history. But the reality is that, like most of the world's democracies, we have failed to adapt quickly enough to the technological revolution of the last decade and are now struggling to catch up.

The Bill published by [Fianna Fáil](#) TD [James Lawless](#) requiring internet companies to reveal the identity of those who fund campaigning ads online marks a modest attempt to engage with

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the issue. But it is just a beginning. Facebook, [Google](#) and others have argued for years that they are neutral platforms which should not be subject to the same regulation as traditional media companies. That argument now looks threadbare, as does their insistence that self-regulation is preferable to legislation. European countries in particular are finally moving to assert citizens' rights in areas such as data privacy. The logical next step is to extend established democratic safeguards into the digital sphere.

For the moment, in the absence of regulation, bad actors have the opportunity to send misleading or false messages to micro-targeted groups of voters with little or no fear of rebuttal. For a subject as emotive and potentially divisive as abortion, it is not unreasonable to fear such tactics could have a significant effect on the final result. It is incumbent on all of us to talk with friends and family about what we are seeing online and whether it should be trusted.

HTB host big leadership conference in Royal Albert Hall

Around 5000 Christians gathered in the Royal Albert Hall to hear speakers inspire leaders in all sectors.

The conference, running 7th and 8th May, was opened by the next Bishop of London, Dame Sarah Mullally and has people from all spheres, not just church leaders, and welcomed people from finance, education and business.

Pete Wynter, the curate at HTB's Leadership College in London told Premier News: "we're expecting people from all over the world actually, although primarily it's people from the uk...people from all denominations."

Pete explained the aim was: "trying to help inspire confidence and help people work out 'what does it look like for me to really take a lead and to influence in whatever it is that God has called me to lead in?'"

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He added that it was also: “trying to mobilise the church in this country and other nations that will be joining us to continue to step out, continue to tell people about Jesus, continue to raise our heads and speak with confidence about all that he’s doing in our day and all that he’s going to use us to do as well.”

Around 5000 people, including many volunteers, are expected to fill the Royal Albert Hall for talks by authors, pastors, a governor of a prison and a lawyer, as well as pastor of HTB Nicky Gumbel.

The conference has been going for a few years and Pete said: “I think people really get inspired in their own walk with Jesus as well”

He told the story of someone who came to the conference last year to see a particular speaker, having not been to church in a while and not being that interested in faith.

He got inspired by the talks, was prayed for and “something came alive in them”, Pete said: “their journey this year – they’re in the world of education - has really taken off and a sense of real faith in Jesus that’s dynamically impacting their everyday life,

“They’re going back to church, their whole family are now to church...they feel very inspired about the work that they’re doing in the education sector.”

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Speaking of how the UK needs Christian in leadership, he added: “We have to encourage one another – we’re trying to build the body and bring strength to the body in all its forms,

“We want to be encouraging the church to step up, to stand firm, to take hold of every opportunity and to influence and lead other people. I think we see that happening all through the bible as God called men and women to influence in their day.”

Speaking about the need to spread the gospel, Pete said: “There’s a significant need to reach the emerging generation, there are many young people in the UK who have act never heard the stories of Jesus.”

Lifford church may install cameras to thwart antisocial behaviour



A Donegal parish is considering installing CCTV cameras at a church in Lifford because of an increase in antisocial behaviour in the church grounds.

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The Dean of Raphoe, Very Reverend Arthur Barrett, says they have had a problem recently of young people congregating in and around the back of St Lugadius' Church, with reports of a certain amount of anti-social behaviour taking place, including young people congregating and drinking.

Dean Barrett told the Nine 'til Noon Show on Highland Radio that he had been in touch with gardaí to highlight his concern and to discuss what could be done. "We had a very serious attack on the church in 2012," he told the station, "when the church was broken into, vandalised on the inside and an attempt was made to set it on fire. Obviously, we want to avoid anything as serious as that ever happening again."

The Dean said the church was now having to consider the possibility of installing CCTV in the grounds of St Lugadius' Church. "It is quite accessible and we want it to be so for people who come to visit graves in the historic graveyard that is attached there, but obviously there is a problem in that access can be for all – including, sometimes, for those who use it for the wrong reasons.

"CCTV is certainly something that we have discussed," Dean Barrett told the programme, "and I guess that is a route we are quite possibly going to have to look at. It's unfortunate that we have to do that – cameras on the outside of historic buildings aren't particularly beautiful, they don't enhance the building in any way – but unfortunately it could be a route we are going to have to take."

The General Synod's website is now live

The General Synod's website is now live.

You will be able to access all information related to Synod there including the Book of Reports.

There is a short welcome video by The Most Reverend Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh also.

Reports and information, including a summary of business done that day, will be posted on the General Synod website daily on a rolling basis during Synod – May 10th – 12th 2018.



Concert in aid of the Homeless

On
Saturday 19th May 2018
in
St. George/St. Thomas Church
Cathal Brugha Street
at 7.45 pm
Featuring
St George's Brass Band
and The Gardiner Street Junior Gospel Choir

Admission Adults €10 OAPs and Children €5
ALL PROCEEDS TO PETER McVERRY TRUST

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A new *Daily Worship* app will be launched during the first day of Synod (4-6 p.m.)

The results of the Central Communications Board's Communications Competition 2018 (for print media) will be announced during the morning session on Saturday 12th.

<https://synod.ireland.anglican.org/2018>

Pope's Swiss Guards show off new 3D printed plastic helmets

The Swiss Guards have unveiled the new 3D printed plastic helmets that will eventually replace their current ones made of metal in an effort to make the guard members more comfortable while providing protection for the pontiff.

The new helmets were presented to the public during a press event in Rome on Friday, ahead of the guards' annual swearing-in ceremony on Sunday.

[According to Crux](#), the PVC helmets will bear the coat of arms of Pope Julius II, who established the Swiss Guards in 1506.

The new headgear, however, will not be a part of the guards' outfits until 2019. Swiss Guard spokesman Sgt. Urs Breitenmoser said that the guards are still trying to find sponsors to pay for the helmets, which cost about €880 (US\$957) a piece.

The idea for 3D printing the helmets was introduced by layman Peter Portmann, who was described as a "friend of the Swiss Guards" at the Friday event.

Portmann had reportedly started an informal crowdfunding campaign to raise money for the helmets, which cost roughly half the price of the old ones.

The PVC helmets will weigh far less than those made of metal, but they will not protect guard members against serious threats as the



Blacksmith Johann Schmidberger works on a suit of armour for the Vatican's Swiss Guards at his workshop in Molln, Austria.

headgear is purely ceremonial. It will [reportedly be resistant to UV rays](#) to protect the guards from extreme heat.

[Religion News Service](#) said that 32 new recruits joined the ranks of the guards on May 6, which marks the day when 147 guardsmen died protecting Pope Clement VII during the Sack of Rome in 1527. In order to qualify as a Swiss Guard, the applicant has to be male, Catholic, single, between the ages of 19 and 30, at least 5'8" and a Swiss citizen.

All the guards serving at the Vatican have received basic Swiss military training, and are skilled in unarmed combat and small arms.

Commander Christoph Graf acknowledged that not all of members attend Mass regularly, so a part of his mission involves evangelizing new recruits.

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"If we only accepted guards who go to Mass every Sunday, who receive the sacraments regularly, the army wouldn't exist anymore," he said, [according to Crux](#).

"We need to give the young men the possibility of growing in their faith. I believe that with the closeness to the Holy Father, those who have an open heart are able to discover the faith. It's part of our job, as officials, to be witness, not to be afraid to talk about our faith, something that is no longer done in Switzerland," he added.

