



***Yes supporters gather in Dublin Castle square as the referendum on same-sex marriage was announced showing support of Irish voters.***

## **Referendum outcome - huge task facing church to get its message across to young people - Archbishop Diarmuid Martin**

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin has said he appreciates how the passing of the marriage referendum leaves gay and lesbian men and women feeling and he paid tribute to the

“immense effort” that went in to the referendum campaign.

Speaking to RTE News, the Archbishop said he appreciated the efforts particularly of the No side.

“It was a principled vote. People, I hope, will respect that,” he commented.

He said it was very clear that if the referendum was an affirmation of the views of young people that the Church has “a huge task in front of it” to find the language to be able to talk to and get its message across to young people, not just on this issue but in general.

“I think the Church needs to do a reality check, right across the board, to look at the things it is doing well and to look at the areas that we really have drifted away completely from young people.”

He also commented on the fact that most of those young people who voted Yes are the product of 12 years of catholic schooling.

“There is a big challenge there to see how do we get across the message of the Church. There are huge things going on in the Catholic Church in this country of which we can be immensely



proud,” he said and referred to the opening of St Francis’ Hospice in Blanchardstown which he had just blessed.

“But I do think we need a real reality check to sit down and say are we reaching out at all to young people and how far do you have robust discussion with young people in which you challenge them and they challenge me – we’re not doing that.”

He warned that the Church was becoming “a safe space for the like-minded rather than the Church which Pope Francis is talking about, which is reaching out.”

But the Primate of Ireland emphasised that this did not mean renouncing the Church’s teachings

on the fundamental values of marriage and the family.

“Nor does it mean that we dig into the trenches.”

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin said it was now time to focus on inequalities in Irish society such as poverty, access to education, employment and healthcare.

See also -

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/24/ireland-same-sex-marriage-dublin-archbishop-catholic-church-needs-reality-check>

## **Post-referendum statement by C of I bishops**

A statement issued following the vote in the Irish Republic -

“The archbishops and bishops of the Church of Ireland wish to affirm that the people of the Republic of Ireland, in deciding by referendum to alter the State’s legal definition of marriage, have of course acted fully within their rights.

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“The Church of Ireland, however, defines marriage as between a man and a woman, and the result of this referendum does not alter this.

“The church has often existed, in history, with different views from those adopted by the state, and has sought to live with both conviction and good relationships with the civil authorities and communities in which it is set. Marriage services taking place in a Church of Ireland church, or conducted by a minister of the Church of Ireland may – in compliance with church teaching, liturgy and canon law – continue to celebrate only marriage between a man and a woman.

“We would now sincerely urge a spirit of public generosity, both from those for whom the result of the referendum represents triumph, and from those for whom it signifies disaster.”

## **Presbyterian Church response to the marriage referendum**

Commenting on the result the Very Rev. Dr. Norman Hamilton, Convener of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland’s Council for Church in Society said, “We are deeply disappointed and saddened that the Constitution will no longer reflect the historic – and Christian – view of

marriage that it is exclusively between one man and one woman; the position the Presbyterian Church in Ireland upholds and maintains.

“The issue before voters was an intensely emotive one and to express the historic view of marriage during the referendum campaign often brought hostility and rejection. We hope that those who continue to uphold this view will not be marginalised or demeaned. We would also encourage all Christians to love their neighbours – as the Bible calls us to do – particularly those with whom we might disagree and if demeaned, to turn the other cheek, for Jesus’ sake.

“While the result is a significant change for Irish Society, as a Church we will continue to reach out to all people, whatever their situation, as all are equally welcome.

“Whilst reaffirming our understanding of marriage as exclusively between one man and one woman, we pray for wisdom for the Government and urge it to consult faith groups over the coming months as it formulates the necessary subsequent legislation.”

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## Waterford's 'café theology' attracts large numbers to discuss faith issues

A large crowd gave a standing ovation to the first 'Café Theology' event organised by the new Bishop of Waterford & Lismore to encourage people to discuss faith issues.

Irish Catholic - Based on the 'Theology on Tap' programme popular in the US, Bishop Phonsie Cullinan, who stressed the need to reach out to those "who have turned away from the practice of the faith" at his episcopal ordination in April, launched Café Theology in the tapestry room of the Granville Hotel in Waterford last week.

The guest speaker was John Waters, who discussed the topic of 'God and the Constitution', and received a standing ovation from the about 140 people present. This was followed by a lively question and answer session chaired by Sr Antoinette Dilworth.

Bishop Cullinan told *The Irish Catholic* that he ran a similar programme as a priest in Limerick diocese to "get out into places where ordinary



people may meet. To reach out to people who would not come to a church or a parish hall.

“It is a way of encouraging people to start thinking for themselves,” he said. “After the talk you see people huddle in groups and keeping the discussion going. It is a starter for people to go away with clearer thoughts and deeper questions. People who went in a little doubtful, hear things that give them food for thought and to think outside the box.”

The next Café Theology event takes place on June 10 in the Tapestry Room of the Granville Hotel, Waterford from 7.30-9pm. The guest speaker is Dawn Eden, a former rock-musician journalist from the US and former editor at the New York Daily News, who became famous for



her outspoken defence of chastity and purity after a dramatic conversion to Catholicism. She will speak on the topic: 'Is sex love? Why chastity is key'.

- See more at: <http://irishcatholic.ie/article/waterford-%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98caf%C3%A9-theology-%E2%80%99-attracts-large-numbers-discuss-faith-issues#sthash.dBjbTnHO.dpuf>

## **Down and Dromore youth Christian character course**

Seventeen young leaders in their 20s and 30s have completed a 14 month long 'Character' course developed by the Down and Dromore Youth and Children's Department (DDYC).

The course grew out of a vision to support those young adults who have left youth ministry but not yet found a place of discipleship in their local church.

Working in partnership with The Hub in Belfast, DDYC initiated the 'Foundations' project that regularly meets with up to 100 young adults to look at Christian disciplines. The character course was an extension of this and began in January 2014.



Participants attended 7 residential overnights where they studied and discussed how to develop Christian character in an age of image. They worked through a series of readings for each residential and used them as a basis to challenge their growth as disciples. The programme also involved worship, teaching, reflection, prayer and a significant amount of laughter and fellowship. In between these meetings each person was supported on a monthly basis by a mentor assigned to them. These combined elements of teaching, prayer, fellowship, mentoring and commitment have involved a significant investment into a

younger adult generation but one that is bearing fruit.

“This is an age-group that can help us lead in areas such as youth and children’s ministry, music, technology and community engagement, yet sadly, it is the most under-represented in church. However, given teaching, encouragement and opportunity they offer the resourcefulness, energy and vision that many churches badly need,” says Diocesan Development Officer, Andrew Brannigan.

At the final residential gathering the group spent some time reflecting on the past 14 months and sharing the significance that the Character course has played in their faith.

The course finished on 20 May with a meal for both participants and their mentors in Church House, Belfast (below). Bishop Ken and Helen Clarke, who are patrons of Foundations, encouraged and challenged the group in continuing to develop Christian character.

Hopefully these leaders will be involved in the development of a new course to begin in January 2016.

## **Family relieved as Irish priest released from captivity in Nigeria**

The family of an Irish priest kidnapped in Nigeria have said that they are delighted he has been released unharmed.

Mayo-born priest, Fr Billy Sheridan SMA, who was working with the Society of African Missions in Tungan Gero in the Kontagora area in the north-west of the country, was abducted on Tuesday 12 May last and held hostage up until his release on Friday 15 May.

Speaking to Midwest Radio in Mayo, Fr Billy's sister Ann said she and her family were "delighted to have him back as our brother".

It is not yet known who is responsible for the priest's kidnapping or whether a ransom was demanded in return for his release.

It is also not clear if the group that kidnapped Fr Sheridan are connected to militant group Boko Haram.

Fr Billy regularly returns to Mayo visiting his sister Ann in Westport, sister Breda in Castlebar and his brother James in his native Newport.

He was home for a time in July last year.



***Mayo-born priest, Fr Billy Sheridan SMA***

Three years ago it was Fr Billy who was tasked with relaying the horrific news to the family of Westport man Robert Gray, following Mr Gray's fatal shooting in Nigeria.

Fr Billy travelled home to Mayo for the funeral and gave the homily at Mr Gray's funeral Mass.

At the time, Fr Billy said it was one of the hardest things he ever had to do in his priesthood and he had wished so hard that the news of Robert's death by shooting was untrue.

“We all live in the shadow of death every day and, living like this, we kind of get used to it and forget how near death is to each one of us. Suddenly it hits us over the head and leaves us reeling like a punch-drunk boxer. We find

ourselves powerless, speechless, helpless and hurting.”

Last year he also celebrated mass on Caher Island to celebrate the annual pilgrimage there.

## **Celebrations in Drumcondra as extended National School is opened**

“Show generosity to help others become the best that they can be” – that was the message from the Archbishop of Armagh to the children of Drumcondra National School. Archbishop Richard Clarke joined the children and teachers in Drumcondra on the afternoon of May 22 to celebrate the reopening of their school after its refurbishment and extension.

The school has been transformed. Less than a year ago the building had sloping floors, classrooms without soundproofing, an office in a converted broom cupboard and resource teaching had to take place in the porch. Now, while the original building retains its character, the interior is bright and modern and the school has been extended to provide state of the art facilities for the 59 pupils.



***The children of Drumcondra NS singing their school hymn.***

The official opening was celebrated with a Service of Thanksgiving in the Church of St John the Baptist, Drumcondra which was celebrated by the rector, Canon Roy Byrne with Canon Aisling Shine. Also in attendance were Archbishop Michael Jackson, Bishop Roy Warke, Dean Dermot Dunne, the Revd Willie

## Black and representatives of Drumcondra Roman Catholic Parish.

Archbishop Clarke spoke about the de Coubertin Medal which is presented to those who demonstrate the true spirit of sportsmanship in the Olympic Games. He explained that often people who had been presented with this medal had sacrificed their own chance of winning a gold medal in order to ensure that others were able to compete to the best of their ability.

He said that for the pupils and teachers of Drumcondra National School, this meant that they should not only think of themselves but see how they could help others to be as good a person as God wants them to be.

“The de Coubertin Medal is about the very deep Christian notion of generosity. It’s not just about me but about how I can help others to do the best that they can do, to be the best person that they can be. It is the greatest Olympic medal of all,” the Archbishop stated.

During the service the children sang their school hymn ‘For the beauty of the earth’. They also sang ‘Jubilate everybody’ accompanied by sixth class pupil, Sarah O’Hora on the organ. The senior class brought forward historic items symbolising life in the old Drumcondra School



together with modern items representing the present and future.

After the service, Principal Beryl Healy said that the new school began as a dream 10 years ago. The need became more pressing with the appointment of a third teacher at the school. She thanked everyone who supported the project and helped bring it to fruition. She reserved special praise for the staff, board of management, the parents and pupils.

Canon Byrne led tributes to the Principal for her dedication to the development of Drumcondra School so that it could meet the challenges of education into the future.

Following the service the children processed back to their school singing 'The School Around the Corner' and other songs. Archbishop Clarke unveiled a special plaque, cut the ribbon on the new building and blessed it.

## **Faith Group welcomes Yes vote**

Faith in Marriage Equality (FiME) has welcomed the Yes vote for the referendum ON same sex civil marriage.

Dr Richard O'Leary of Faith in Marriage Equality (FiME) said “As people of faith we are delighted that so many other people of faith have voted Yes to embrace their gay and lesbian fellow citizens. We would like to thank those prominent lay people of faith, the individual priests and nuns, and the two Church of Ireland bishops who declared publicly for Yes and so encouraged others to do likewise”.

Faith in Marriage Equality would also like to again reassure those people of faith who voted No that this vote for Yes will not impact negatively on their lives and we hope that they will eventually be reconciled to this positive social change.

Dr Richard O'Leary remarked “I am not claiming that our eve of poll Faith for Yes event in Dublin, a Yesvena, swung it, but I do believe that this vote represents an outpouring of love and generosity by the people of Ireland”.

Dr Richard O'Leary added “We hope that the Catholic Bishops and Protestant church leaders in Northern Ireland will notice how so many ordinary people of faith in the Republic of Ireland have voted Yes and that they too might be encouraged to support the extension of civil

marriage equality to same sex couples in Northern Ireland”

Faith in Marriage Equality (FiME) is supported by a range of faith organisations including the Catholic groups 'We are Church Ireland' and 'Gay Catholic Voice Ireland' and the Church of Ireland group 'Changing Attitude Ireland'.

## **Church of England to consider 'transgender baptism' service**

A "transgender baptism" service is to be considered by the Church of England for the first time.

Ruth Gledhill in Christian Today - The idea is to bless into God's family the new identities of Christians who have undergone gender transition.

The proposal was welcomed by the Church's most senior trans priest. Rev Rachel Mann, Rector of St Nicholas Burnage and a minor canon at Manchester Cathedral, told Christian Today: "Trans people feel powerfully called to be recognised in their 'chosen' name. An opportunity to be publicly introduced to God is

therefore significant. I think this is what the proposed liturgy aims to do. It will be symbolically powerful. The extent to which it is [a form of] baptism will be debated by General Synod of course, but this liturgy is a welcome move to affirm Trans people."

There is no guarantee the proposal will succeed. It is in the form of a diocesan motion to the General Synod and needs to wait its turn to get debated on the floor. But it is certain to generate contention in a Church still struggling with its position on sexuality.

Rev Chris Newlands, vicar of Lancaster Priory, called for the change after he was approached by a young transgender person born a girl but transitioned to a boy seeking to be "re-baptised", *the Guardian* reports today. The vicar had at first thought the rule of one baptism sufficed, but changed his mind after discussing issues of identity with the young man.

He created a new service to affirm the original baptismal vows of the individual who was "introduced" to God with his new name and identity.

The motion, passed by Blackburn Diocese last month, states: "That this Synod, recognising the  
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need for transgender people to be welcomed and affirmed in their parish church, call on the House of Bishops to consider whether some nationally commended liturgical materials might be prepared to mark a person's gender transition."

## Media digest

### **Same-sex marriage: Northern Ireland 'last bastion of discrimination' says Amnesty**

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/same-sex-marriage-northern-ireland-last-bastion-of-discrimination-says-amnesty-1.2223988>

### **Irish gay marriage referendum: Pressure to build on Northern Ireland's politicians to allow vote on gay marriage**

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/irish-gay-marriage-referendum-pressure-to-build-on-northern-irelands-politicians-to-allow-vote-on-gay-marriage-31247405.html>

### **Gay parish priest thanks congregation for accepting him**

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/gay-parish-priest-thanks-congregation-for-accepting-him-1.2223891>

**Gay marriage contributes to 'the greatest evil' in our country says former head of English Catholic Church - Home News - UK - The Independent**

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/gay-marriage-contributes-to-the-greatest-evil-in-our-country-says-former-head-of-english-catholic-church-10271632.html>

**Civilians in South Sudan without relief as aid-workers stuck in camps**

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2015/22-may/news/world/civilians-in-south-sudan-without-relief-as-aid-workers-stuck-in-camps>

**Lord Mountbatten murder: secret letters reveal IRA killers may have been offered immunity - Telegraph**

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/11626428/lord-mountbatten-murder-letters-ira-killers-immunity.html>