



Songs of Praise will reveal Princess Diana was stronger Christian than believed

The late Diana, Princess of Wales, had more of a Christian faith than was widely believed.

A Songs of Praise special next Sunday will make the claim as it explores the inspiration behind her charity work.

The BBC's flagship religious programme will include interviews from friends that will say she had "stronger faith than people give her credit for", according to The Sunday Telegraph.

August 21



Leading presenter Aled Jones will also recall being invited to sing for her personally in her Kensington Palace living room, while the congregation of All Saints Church, Northamptonshire - near her Althorp family home - sing favourite hymns.

Mike Whitlam, former director general of the British Red Cross who worked with Princess Diana on charity campaigns including her landmine trip to Bosnia, also makes contributions to the programme.

While he was asked to speak at many outlets to mark the princess' 20th anniversary since her

August 21



death, he said he agreed to appear on Songs of Praise because of its religious focus. He added that he believed that a form of religious conviction helped her to persevere with her charity work.

He said: "She wanted to put love where there was hatred, and make a huge difference to people's lives so that they could live a better life.

"When you talk to people about making the world a better place, there are not many people who think it's doable. She did."

Tracy Borman, joint chief curator of Historic Royal Palaces, in an interview said Princess Diana's compassion and charity work "of course absolutely reflects very Christian values too".

August 21

The programme is one of many documentaries about the princess or involving her sons.

The Channel 4 documentary *Diana: In Her Own Words*, divided opinion among commentators with reviews ranging from "trashy" to "heartbreaking".

The Songs of Praise special will focus closely on Diana's charity work, alongside hymns including *I Vow to Thee My Country*, which was played at her wedding and funeral.

Visitors shun entrance fee-charging cathedrals



There has been a significant fall in visitor numbers at three English cathedrals which charge people more than £12 to enter, according to a new Visit England report.

August 21

The number of guests to Westminster Abbey (pictured above, left) decreased by 27.8 per cent last year, compared to 2015. Admissions to St Paul's Cathedral fell by 5.6 per cent (pictured below), while a similar drop was also seen at Canterbury Cathedral in Kent (pictured above, right).



Overall, the number of visitors to 61 cathedrals, churches and other places of worship included in the Visitor Attraction Trends in England 2016 fell by eight per cent.

Eight entrance fee-charging sites saw an average drop in visitors of one per cent. The 53

August 21

free locations saw a smaller drop, of one per cent.

The figures contrasts an overall two per cent rise in visitors at 1,500 attractions featured in the report. These included galleries, museums, theme parks, farms and historic properties. The report concluded: "Aside from places of worship, all types of attraction increased their gross revenue in 2016.

"It is worth noting that places of worship were also the category with the highest increase in admission charges."

Adults buying their tickets on the door at Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral or Canterbury Cathedral will pay £22, £18 and £12.50, respectively.

In contrast, free cathedrals including Bath Abbey, Durham Cathedral (pictured next page below) and Ripon Cathedral reported significant increases in visitors.

A Church of England spokesman told the Daily Telegraph: "The primary purpose of all our 16,000 churches and cathedrals is as places of worship for all."

August 21



The number of overseas visitors to English places of worship fell by six per cent between 2015 and 2016, while revenue fell by one per cent.

US ministers to speak at special Presbyterian assembly

Two leading American preachers will give the keynote addresses at the Presbyterian Church's special assembly which is taking place in Coleraine this week.

The Reverend Randy Pope of the Perimeter Church, near Atlanta, will speak to an estimated 600 members of Presbyterian churches from

August 21



The Reverend Randy Pope

across Ireland on the subject of "How to Get Discipleship Back to the Local Church".

Also, the Reverend Dr Ray Ortlund Jnr of the Immanuel Church in Nashville, Tennessee, will speak on the theme of "Gospel Culture".

Local Presbyterians and several other experts will conduct seminars on the main theme of discipleship and the assembly will explore what it means to be a Christian in the 21st century.

The four-day event is being held at the Ulster University campus in Coleraine.

The subject of discipleship was the main theme of the inaugural address by this year's incoming

August 21

Moderator Reverend Dr Noble McNeely at his installation at the opening night of the general assembly in June.

He said yesterday: "The theme of our special assembly is a recognition of the increasing necessity for Christians to be equipped by the Church to be effective disciple-makers in their various spheres of life.

"Many of us in the Church recognise that perhaps we have concentrated too much on programmes and activities, and have not been as strong on providing the essentials to facilitate making mature decisions.

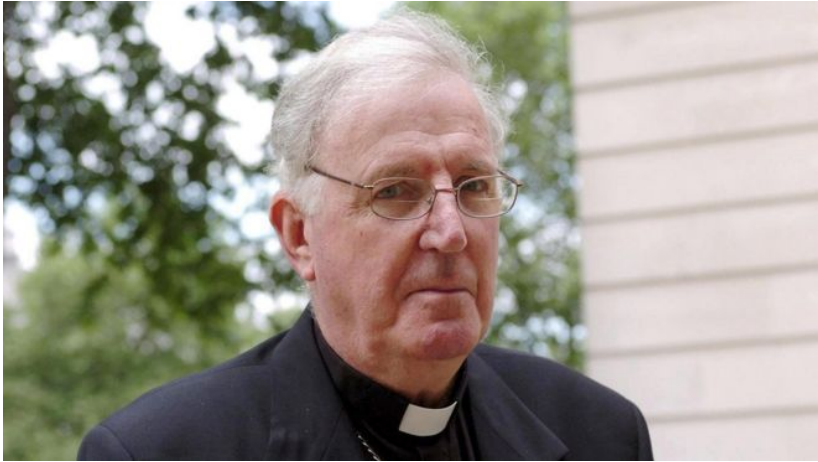
'The assembly will also help us to understand better how we can be involved in a 21st century reformation of Church and society."

This is the fifth special Presbyterian assembly since 1970, and others have been held at the Ulster University site in 1997, 2004 and 2010. Report courtesy Belfast Telegraph and Alf McCreary.

CNI

August 21

Former Archbishop of Westminster 'seriously ill'



Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, became Archbishop of Westminster in 2000

The former Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, is seriously ill in hospital.

The church said the 84-year-old's health had taken a "defining turn".

Cardinal Cormac became the tenth Archbishop of Westminster in March 2000, was made Cardinal in 2001 by Pope John Paul II, before retiring from his role as archbishop in 2009.

August 21

As archbishop, he was the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the current Archbishop of Westminster, has asked for prayers.

In a statement on the diocese of [Arundel and Brighton website](#), where Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor used to be bishop, Cardinal Nichols said "these loving prayers are a source of great strength and comfort as he calmly ponders on all that lies ahead".

Cormac Murphy-O'Connor was born on 24 August 1932 in Reading, Berkshire, as one of six children. Three of his five brothers became priests and another played rugby for Ireland.

He was ordained priest in Rome in October 1956.

During an appearance on Desert Island Discs, he admitted that during his time training for the priesthood at the English College in Rome, he learned how to make a good Martini cocktail.

He returned to the college as rector from 1971-77 and on leaving was appointed as Bishop of Arundel and Brighton before taking up his role at Westminster Cathedral.

August 21

Popular and courageous, Fr D'Arcy is shining example of faith in practice

Father Brian D'Arcy is one of my favourite **broadcasters** and a cleric whom I respect for his humanity, insight and courage, Alf McCreary writes in the Belfast Telegraph.

This week he conducted the Sunday morning **service** on Radio Ulster from St Gabriel's Retreat The Graan in Enniskillen, and it was a memorable programme.

He was joined live by his old friend Daniel O'Donnell who sang hymns, and this reminded me of the day when I stood on a windy Donegal hillside to report for this newspaper on the wedding service for Daniel and Majella, which was conducted by Fr D'Arcy.

The Sunday broadcast had an unusual format, in that it was virtually an autobiography by Fr D'Arcy who reflected on his long and rich career.

He talked about the early days when as a young priest he visited ballrooms to meet young

August 21



people, and earned the title the 'Showbusiness Priest'

On these visits he discovered that he had an important pastoral role, and on Sunday's programme he revealed that he had often found more of a pastoral role in the corner of a ballroom than in a church confessional.

Brian D'Arcy rubbed shoulders with all the top people in showbusiness and he became a close friend of the late Terry Wogan.

During his BBC Radio 2 broadcasts with Wogan he usually gave a deeply spiritual 'Thought for the Day' as well.

Fr D'Arcy has been a regular broadcaster with the BBC and has presented a good mainstream

August 21

music programme on Radio Ulster, just after the Sunday morning service.

In fact, he could well have made a full-time career as a broadcaster, because of his professionalism in front of a microphone.

He has also appeared frequently on RTE, and many people will remember his dramatic and courageous confrontation with Cardinal Daly on The Late, Late Show about the extensive clerical child abuse in the Catholic Church.

He said later on that he told Daly in private about some of the details of this scandal, and that the Cardinal was truly shocked. I'm sure that he really was shocked.

On Sunday's programme Fr D'Arcy said that he had undergone great heart-searching about whether or not to leave the Catholic Church, but he felt that he had to honour his vocation to God, and stay on. Many people are glad he did so, and as an independent-minded priest he constantly and openly criticised what he saw as the failings of his Church. At one point a higher authority in Rome wanted to take a tighter grip on his writings, but he resisted this, and his parishioners and his Order backed him to the hilt.

August 21

Brian is from the Enniskillen area and he was deeply affected by the Remembrance Day bomb at the cenotaph in 1987. He was greatly impressed by the Christian response of Senator Gordon Wilson, who lost his daughter in the bomb and who said afterwards that he "bore no ill-will" to her murderers.

That is still one of the noblest moments of our Troubles, and I was glad that Fr D'Arcy took time on his short Sunday broadcast to once again pay tribute to Gordon who was a hero, though he has been sadly and undeservedly left in the background while the busy world moves on.

Fr D'Arcy is a friendly and popular man, but behind the ebullient front I suspect that he is lonely - as indeed many priests are. Brian has obeyed the demanding Catholic requirement for priestly celibacy, but he has said more than once that he would like to have been married with a family. One hopes that his campaign to have this unnatural man-made vow lifted will someday bear fruit.

Brian D'Arcy is suffering from a taxing illness, and his Sunday programme ended with his favourite prayer from Thomas Merton for what he called "his time of uncertainty".

August 21

It sounded almost valedictory but I pray not, and with many thousands of others I hope that Brian will continue on his Godly and priestly path for a long time to come. He is a credit to himself, to his career, to his Church at its best, and above all to Christianity.

I salute him and thank him for the deeply spiritual messages from St Gabriel's last Sunday morning.

Poor taste as Paddy Power creates apparition of Virgin Mary holding Sam Maguire in Mayo

Paddy Power made a very cheeky venture to Mayo this week to provide the county's long suffering footballers with some divine inspiration ahead of their All-Ireland semi-final clash against the Kingdom, *writes* Ciara Phelan in the Irish Examiner

The bookie travelled to the holy shrine of Knock during the 138th anniversary of the Virgin Mary's appearance at the site to create an apparition of their very own.

A 70ft image of the Mother of Christ holding the Sam Maguire trophy was projected onto the

August 21



front of Knock Basilica, in a bid, so they say, to inspire Stephen Rochford's men to victory at the weekend.

Mayo have been the nearly men of Gaelic Football in the modern era losing an astonishing eight All-Ireland football finals since 1989 including three of the last five.

Of course the county's misfortune is not due to any shortcomings on the pitch but rather a curse that has been over the team since their last title way back in 1951.

According to legend, the Mayo team were travelling back to the west from Dublin along with the Sam Maguire and passed a funeral in the town of Foxford without stopping and paying their respects.

August 21

A priest put a curse on them that they would not win another All-Ireland until every member of that team had passed away.

Two members of their 1951 title winners remain alive today and they will have to break the curse if they are to finally end their barren run.

CNI

Help CNI grow

**Please commend
CNI daily news to your
friends**

www.churchnewsireland.org