



## The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

### State visit to UK - Cardinal Brady congratulates President



*Queen Elizabeth II accompanies Irish President Michael D Higgins as he is shown Irish related items from the Royal Collection, in the Green Drawing Room, in Windsor Castle*

**Cardinal Seán Brady is Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland has congratulated the President and Mrs Higgins on the state visit this week.**

Cardinal Brady said - "I warmly welcome the very successful State visit of President Michael D Higgins, President of Ireland, to Britain during these days. The enthusiasm and the goodwill which are so evident and gratifying,

reflects the maturity, respect and mutual understanding which now characterise the relationship between our two islands.

“I rejoice wholeheartedly in the joy and happiness which the new situation has brought, especially to Irish people living in Britain. I am immensely grateful to all those who have worked strenuously and constantly and taken risks to bring about that change. The great fear now is that too many people will conclude that the Irish peace process is now done and dusted – and say, ‘let us move on’. My hope is that our two governments will remain focussed on the outstanding problems and continue to apply the same energy and determination to their resolution as heretofore.



*The Dean of Westminster, Very Reverend John Hall welcomed the President of Ireland and Mrs. Higgins to the Abbey during the recent state visit.*

“The historic events taking place in London are also the result of a long process of respectful dialogue and patience – I hope they bear the fruits of greater respect on all sides. I hope these positive relations will continue to deepen and improve and serve to promote a fuller healthy normalisation of conditions here in Northern Ireland.

“I invite the faithful of our islands to join with me in prayer for the strengthening of the bonds of friendship between our peoples.”

## **The Church of Mercy - Pope's first book in English**

**The first major authorised book by Pope Francis in the English language has just been published by DLT.**

“The Church of Mercy - a message of hope for all people” has a foreword by Cardinal Vincent Nichols.

“The Church's primary task is to bear witness to the mercy of God and to encourage generous reactions of solidarity in order to open a future of hope”

The focal point of Pope Francis' Church is mercy: in the dialogue between human fragility and God's mercy the Church has to welcome and help

everyone to find the 'good news' of Christian hope. As part of his revolutionary new vision for the Church, Francis calls on all believers to be 'full-time Christians' and not 'living-room Christians', and to struggle against the trappings of power, and the worship of money and careerism.

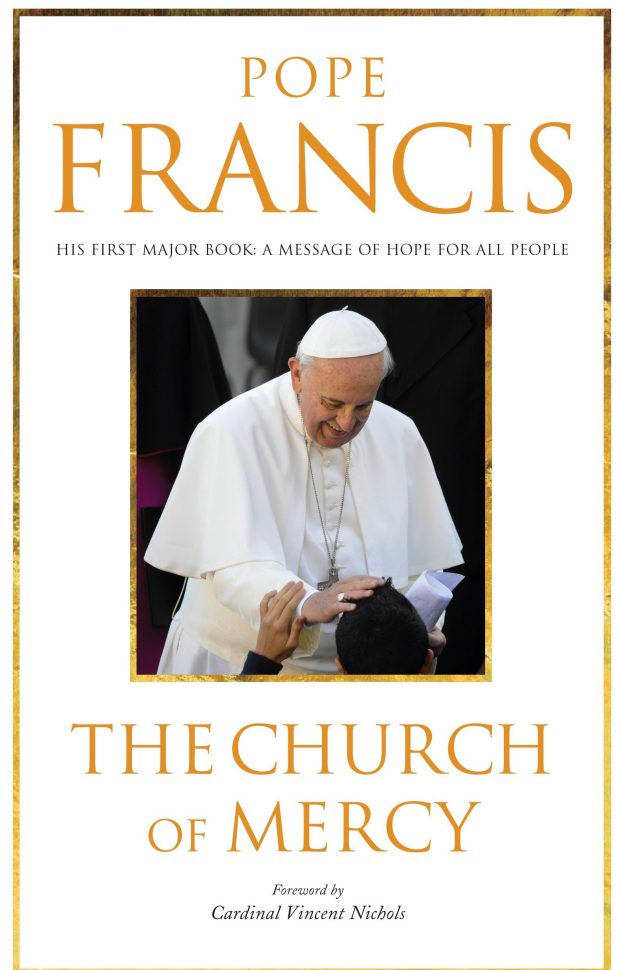
Francis has spoken and written widely on these themes during his first year as Pope, and his thoughts are here collected for the first time, edited and abridged with full Vatican approval.

The book is aimed at a broader readership, believers and non-believers, priests, religious, dedicated laypeople, and teachers.

10 chapters as follows: The Good News of Christ; A Poor Church for the Poor; Listening to the Spirit; Proclamation and Testimony; Full-time Christians; Shepherds with the 'odour of the sheep'; The Choice of the Last; Demolish the Idols; The Culture of Good; Mary, Mother of Evangelism.

**Pope Francis** is the 266th and current Pope, the worldwide leader of the Catholic Church.

Darton, Longman & Todd 978 0 232 53124 4    **Price:** £9.99



## Anglican website for evangelism, church growth resources launched

**Anglicans interested in evangelism and church growth now have a new website where they can find the latest resources and examples of best practice.**

[Anglicanwitness.org](http://Anglicanwitness.org) is described as "a one stop shop resource hub for church growth, discipleship, youth and children ministry, and other forms of evangelism."



It was built by the core group of the *Anglican Witness: Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative*, who says the site "brings together Anglicans from across the world committed to strengthening evangelism within



*The new website was built by the core group of the Anglican Witness: Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative*

communities, seeing churches grow spiritually and numerically in capacity to engage the whole of God's creation with Christ's love, and seeing God's name glorified in every day life experience."

Core group convener Patrick Yu, Area Bishop of York Scarborough and Bishop Suffragan of Toronto, said today, "From [the initiative's] inception, members of the core group, appointed from every region of the Communion, have wrestled with how to animate and resource evangelism, which is the first mark and cutting edge of mission.

"On the one hand, we struggle to define the scope of our mandate. With the help of the Anglican Consultative Council and its standing committee, we identified some priorities: discipleship, reaching youth and children, sharing news that encourages and concerns that invite prayer, highlighting those not yet reached, and building a sound basis of resources on Evangelism and Church Growth from an Anglican perspective.

"On the other hand, we strive to find the most effective means to fulfill this mandate. To this end we began [Witness 6.7](#), a newsletter which can be accessed mainly on line, we began a Facebook community, [Anglican Witness](#), and we have a link in the [Anglican Communion Office website](#)."

The website is the latest in the Core Group's resources to assist people around the Anglican world. Bishop Yu stressed that having a separate website did not disconnect evangelism and church growth from the other

Marks of Mission. Rather it reflected the "Potentially vast amount of information and links that this mark alone will involve."

Director for Mission of the Anglican Communion Office said, "This is an exciting development and I would like to invite Anglicans and Episcopalians everywhere to recommend resources that exist out there for addition to this website, thereby keeping this tool up to date and relevant to all.

"No doubt there are many Anglicans/Episcopalians who have no access to internet but we also know that accessibility to internet and social media is growing even in remotest parts of the world."

Visit the new website at <http://www.anglicanwitness.org>

## **Armagh Summer school choir - Charles Wood Singers applicants deadline**

Application forms to become a member of the Charles Wood Singers are now available. The closing date for applications is 18 April 2014.

The **Charles Wood Festival of Music and Summer School** for singers, organists and choir directors will take place in all the main churches in Armagh, Northern Ireland, from 17<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> August 2014. Our rich and varied programme, which will be announced in due course, will feature lunchtime and evening concerts, services, and teaching and workshop sessions.

David Hill, Chief Conductor of the BBC Singers, will direct the Charles Wood Singers, the forty-strong festival choir, assisted by Philip Scriven and Judith Gannon. Internationally famous specialist voice coach, Paul Farrington, will conduct workshops and give individual tuition.

Further information is available in the Charles Wood Singers Leaflet at -

<http://www.charleswoodsummerschool.org/uploads/Charles%20Wood%20Singers%20Leaflet%202014.pdf>

## **David Cameron: Christians are the most persecuted faith group around the world**

The UK prime minister has said the British government should stand up against the persecution of Christians abroad. Speaking at an Easter reception in Downing Street, David Cameron said that: "It is the case that Christians are now the most persecuted religion around the world.

**We should stand up against persecution of Christians and other faith groups wherever and whenever we can.”**

[According to Bloomberg media](#), Mr Cameron said his “moments of greatest peace” come “perhaps every other Thursday morning” when he attends Eucharist at St. Mary Abbots, High St Kensington, which is attached to the school his children attend. “I find a little bit of peace and hopefully a bit of guidance.”

He also paid tribute to the work of churches, and said that after the death of his son Ivan in 2009 the local vicar Mark Abrey, was “the person who looked after me”. He said: “I can’t think of anyone who was more loving or thoughtful or kind.”

Earlier this week Fr van der Lugt, a 75-year-old Dutch Jesuit who has spent 50 years in Syria, was murdered in Homs by an unknown gunman.

## **Human trafficking brings shame to humanity, UN Special Rapporteur tells an ecumenical consultation**

**In an ecumenical consultation held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, called human trafficking a criminal activity, on rapid increase in the world.**



***Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, at an ecumenical consultation in Sri Lanka***

WCC - Ezeilo said that not a single country or entity has yet been able to stop this practice, and the magnitude of this problem is enormous.

Ezeilo said the “responsibility of faith-based organizations in addressing human trafficking, together with governments, UN agencies and civil society, is paramount”.

Ezeilo shared these views at the consultation, titled "Migration and Human Trafficking: Modern Slavery?", organized by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Christian Conference of Asia. The event, held from 4 to 8 April, was hosted by the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka.

The consultation gathered participants from Africa, Asia, the Arabian Gulf, Australia and Europe.

In her inaugural address, Ezeilo said that the increasing trend of "human trafficking is adding shame to humanity." In many parts of the world human trafficking is organized by criminal syndicates for organ transplantation and sexual exploitation of women and children, she noted.

Bishop Philip Huggins, chair of the Migrant and Refugee Working Group of the Anglican Church of Australia, stressed the urgency of addressing the issue of human trafficking.

"Human trafficking is a humanitarian crisis causing immense suffering. Addressing this issue effectively requires unprecedented cooperation between religious leaders, their organizations, along with UN agencies and governments," said Bishop Huggins.

Dr Chibuzo Raphael Opoko, bishop of the Methodist Church in Nigeria and member of the WCC's Executive and Central Committees, spoke about the situation of child trafficking in Nigeria. He said that, in Nigeria, cases have been reported from hospitals, orphanages and clinics where teenage and single mothers were often forced into illegal bonding agreements.

More at -

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2014/04/human-trafficking-brings-shame-to-humanity,-un-special-rapporteur-tells-an-ecumenical-consultation.aspx>

## **Anglican, Roman Catholic theologians host informal dialogue in England**

**A group of 16 prominent Anglican and Catholic theologians met for five days last week in Canterbury, England, to continue a set of informal dialogues between the two churches.**

Although not officially sanctioned by either denomination, the gathering, known as the "Malines Conversations Group," has support from both the



Vatican's Pontifical Council for Christian Unity and Anglican officials in London.

At one point last week, the 16 were received together at the Anglican church's London headquarters at Lambeth Palace where they met with both Justin Welby, the



*The dialogue was held in Canterbury*

Archbishop of

Canterbury and head of the Anglican Communion, and Vincent Nichols, the cardinal archbishop of the Catholic archdiocese of Westminster.

Nichols and Welby told the group, which had been meeting on the theme "Memory, Identity, and Difference," they are serving as a "laboratory" for efforts of dialogue between the two churches, according to a release from the group about the meeting.

Welby, the group said in the release, focused his remarks on "the importance of pilgrimage in our ecumenical relations."

Read the full article at <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/anglican-catholic-theologians-host-informal-dialogue-england>

## **Celebrate Easter in style with Champagne communion**

**A vicar in Durham has begun a new tradition in her church; champagne at Eucharist on Easter Sunday.**

Miranda Threllfall-Holmes believes that we need to inject celebration into our gatherings, which she argues is at the heart of the Easter story.

"I first started thinking about the idea when I was working as the university chaplain in Durham," she explains.



"I had a student come to me and say how everyone loves Christmas – with all the lights, window displays and festivities – and it's a big exciting thing in a way that Easter just isn't.

"There isn't that same sense of cultural excitement; it's just chocolate eggs for a lot of people. At Christmas shops will have displays that at least include things that remind people of the basic nativity story, but at Easter there's nothing like that.

"So I began to think – how can we make Easter more exciting? I don't want to sound trivial, but how can we make a link between Easter and the things that our culture thinks of

as celebratory? While Christmas has taken on a wider cultural significance, Easter has remained a 'churchy' festival, and the things that we do in church on Easter Sunday are pretty much the same that we usually do. How can we make it more culturally interesting?"



It was out of discussions such as these that Miranda began exploring some new ideas. She wrote an article for the Church Times a few years ago in which she suggested that churches begin celebrating the festival with champagne during communion, and the idea has taken off.

"I've heard of loads of churches doing it. At my church we usually have baptisms on Easter Sunday so there are lots of people there who wouldn't normally come, and the look on their faces when you pop the cork on a bottle of champagne in the middle of the service! You get lots more people coming forward for communion than would otherwise," she laughs.

"It's totally in keeping with the Canon law – champagne is wine. And it's fantastic to have something so celebratory at the heart of the Eucharist.

Champagne is the cultural shorthand for celebration in our society, so it's great to make this particular communion special."

In the past, Miranda has also organised celebratory services before the beginning of Lent. "It made this brilliant contrast between the fast and the feast," she says. "If we just focus on Lent, we miss out on that."

She is also passionate about bringing fun and joy back into the Church; believing that they are integral to an active and living faith and speak of God's boundless love.

"Champagne reminds us of weddings and celebration. In the Gospels, so many of the parables and so much of the imagery is about the ridiculous and extravagant nature of God's love," she explains.

"For example when the woman pours a precious bottle of perfume over Jesus' feet, and the disciples all chime in with 'what a waste of money'. Having that extravagance at the heart of communion on Easter day might make some people a bit funny, but God's love is over the top, and that's what Easter's about.

"When you think about what is really going on: God incarnate, dying and rising to life, it's totally extravagant in terms of what he's prepared to do for us! The pomposity of the church can drive me mad, and there's something about saying let's just get a bottle out and celebrate."

Her suggestion is that we as Christians learn to just enjoy ourselves and "not take ourselves too seriously".

"We take the Easter story seriously, but when Jesus says we should be like children I think he means we should be playing a lot more rather than working all the time; playing and celebrating with the joy of simply being alive that children have," she says.

"It's often hard to remember, with pressure to keep the church going with funding and members and things, but I do wonder if we just enjoyed God and ourselves more, would we be more attractive?"

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