



The essential brief on the Irish churches

C of I Bishop critical of church stance on sexuality issues

The Bishop of
Cork, Rt Rev
Paul Colton
was the guest
of honour at
the launch of
Cork LGBT Awareness week in Cork
Civic Offices on Monday



Senator Deirdre Clune and Bishop Paul Colton chat at the launch of Cork LGBT Awareness Week in Cork Civic Offices

Bishop Colton said - “ I am deeply conscious of how generously gracious and open your invitation to me, a Church leader, is in including me today as your Guest of Honour. Not gracious in the sense of courteous and kind, but more in the religious sense of grace – your invitation to me is undeserved; it is an unmerited favour.

It is gracious because, whatever about my personal views and solidarity as an individual to gay and lesbian people, it is undeniable that I am part of a religion, and indeed institution, that all too often, over the centuries, has caused deep hurt and tangible damage to gay and lesbian people.

As I said in my Christmas Sermon in St Fin Barre’s Cathedral in 2003: churches have been ‘complicit in injustice to gay and lesbian people and the resulting human suffering.’ That is why, then too, I felt compelled ‘humbly and

contritely to ask forgiveness' of gay and lesbian people, even though it is too late for far too many.

I realise that many gay and lesbian people have given up on institutional religion, or on religion

altogether: 'a plague on your

houses.' Others are trying to hang in there; as one gay couple in one of our parishes said to me recently 'we are just about clinging on to the church by our fingertips.' Hanging in there is hard, faced with what one gay person has described as the Church's 'relentless negativity towards me and others' who are gay. If you are hanging on to a cliff edge the last thing you need is some fellow believers stomping on those straining finger tips.

In terms of an awareness-raising week like this, it seems to me that it is very fundamental to underscore the diversity of humanity among LGBT people: some are religious: others are not. Some wrestle with the things of faith: others do not. Equally, although it does not always seem so to the outsider hearing official church pronouncements, there is diversity of outlook within churches on LGBT issues.

There are many Christians, including myself, who believe that God's justice, God's love and the inclusiveness of God, must bear fruit in unqualified equality for gay and lesbian people too. As a friend, a gay priest in the UK said only this weekend:

Being gay is not a choice, it is my being, who and what I am as a person before God and though it does not define all that I am it is inseparable from my sense of self and of course from my faith.

Strangely, something that gives me hope - paradoxically – is the fact that almost from the start, Christians have been arguing among themselves about something or other. First the argument was about circumcision. Since then



Cork City Hall at the start of Cork LGBT Awareness Week 2014

the Christian story has been one of prejudice, injustice, labelling as 'the other' and failing to show Christ's love, being overcome step by step: slaves, Jews, science, single mothers, children born outside marriage, people in interchurch marriages, victims of suicide, the downfall of apartheid, divorcees, women (first in decision-making in the Church and then in the ordained ministry); standing up to racism. Think in our own lifetime of how, arising from our sense of the love of Christ, our attitudes have changed in the Church to many of these people, issues and situations.

Awareness is the state or ability to perceive. If that is to happen we all need to be open to looking around – to seeing, hearing, listening and encountering, yes, but most especially, to take the risk of reaching out to understand, especially of reaching out to embrace people we think are different from us.

I want, therefore, to encourage especially those gay and lesbian people who are involved in church life, or who once were, to engage with the debates many churches are having at the current time. About an hour ago Shirley Temple Bar tweeted: 'Sharing LGBT stories is an important step on the road to equality.' I agree with that, and I ask you not to give up on religion and religious institutions.

It is essential that your voices and experiences are heard and listened to. More important, it is vital that you do not let people drive you away. The loving welcome and inclusion of you is not theirs to take away: that love, that inclusion, that welcome, that belonging are God's gift – God's grace – offered to you as much as to anyone else."

Cork LGBT Awareness Week is organised to acknowledge and demonstrate that LGBT individuals are family members, community residents, constituents, citizens, visitors, service users and service providers. The purpose of the week is to advance Objective 86 of the Cork City Plan "The gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities will be enabled to fully participate in the social, cultural and economic life of Cork City. Cork LGBT Awareness Week is supported by Cork City Council, HSE South, Cork Education and Training Board, the Department of Social Protection, An Garda Síochána, Cork City Partnership, LINC, Gay Community Development, Cork Trans Support Group, Ballypheehane-Togher Community Development Project, and Sexual Health Centre.

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C of I Bishops hear gay Oxford don lament his prohibition in ministry

Diarmaid MacCulloch, professor of the history of the Church at Oxford University: fell away from the church after being prevented from progressing beyond the post of deacon

Changing Attitude [Ireland](#), a [Church of Ireland](#) group which promotes equality for LGBT people, has been invited to appear before the Church of Ireland [Select Committee](#) on Human Sexuality, as have a number of academics, General Synod was informed last week.

Irish Times - In its interim report the committee, set up in 2013, said it was likely to require more time than the two years agreed last year and would be seeking a further two years at General Synod in May 2015.

On Friday a public interview on 'Faith and Sexuality' with the openly gay academic Diarmaid MacCulloch, Professor of Church History at [Oxford University](#), took place at St Audeon's Church in Dublin. He also presented the 2009 BBC television series *A History of Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*.

Interviewed by RTÉ's [Bryan Dobson](#) he spoke of his misery on being ordained a deacon in the Church of [England](#) and being prevented from progressing further due to his sexuality. For some time he fell away from the church, he said.

The event, organised by Changing Attitude Ireland and the chaplaincy at [Trinity College](#), had an overflow attendance, including half of the Church of Ireland House of Bishops.

Abp Welby launches new guidance for tackling homophobic bullying



The Archbishop of Canterbury launched a report this week from the Education Division of the Church of England “Valuing All God’s Children: Guidance for Church of England Schools on Challenging Homophobic Bullying.”

ACNS - The guidance, which is being sent to all Church of England schools, provides 10 key recommendations which should be adopted by schools in combating homophobic bullying as well as sample policies for primary and secondary Church schools. Published by the Church Of England Archbishop’s Council Education Division, the guidance involved consultation and involvement with a number of Church of England schools with existing good practice.

Speaking at a Church of England Secondary School, at Trinity Lewisham, The Right Reverend Justin Welby said that the publication of the guidance fulfilled a pledge he made last July when addressing the Church of England’s General Synod.

“Less than a year ago I set out my concerns about the terrible impact of homophobic bullying on the lives of young people and I made a public commitment to support our schools in eradicating homophobic stereotyping and bullying.

“Since then an enormous amount of work has gone into producing this guidance so that commitment can be turned into action. I am extremely grateful to all those who have worked so hard to produce it and I particularly want to thank the schools and young people who have contributed.

“Church schools begin from the belief that every child is loved by God. This guidance aims to help schools express God’s love by ensuring that they offer

a safe and welcoming place for all God's children. This is a task we are called to share and I know it is one our schools take immensely seriously. I commend this guidance as a contribution to that work."

Rowan Williams highlights the role of inequality in provoking violence

In an inaugural parliamentary lecture on 9 May to launch Christian Aid Week, Dr Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, highlighted the role that inequality plays in provoking violence.

Ekklesia - Dr Williams, who is Chair of Christian Aid, told an invited audience at Westminster that redistributing power is crucial if violence, one of the key drivers of global poverty, is to be tackled successfully.

His speech reflected the theme of this year's Christian Aid Week (Sun May 11 to Sat May 17) which focuses on the organisation's work in countries beset by conflict.

Dr Williams' address added to a growing chorus of voices, including US President Barack Obama and French economist Thomas Piketty, who are increasingly concerned at the threat of growing inequality on social cohesion, prosperity and democracy.

Dr Williams argued that this threat must be countered not just by redistributing wealth, but by governments and financial institutions having the courage to redistribute power.

He said: 'Inequalities of power, in the form of radically unequal levels of access to decision-making, process of law, education and civic freedoms, are often described as forms of 'structural' violence. And this should help us see why inequalities in these areas are so often generators of other sorts of violence.

"The truth is that poverty and a sense of powerlessness are regularly among the major drivers of violence; while violence in turn is a major driver of poverty. So what we must do is recognise the vicious circle here, and ask where and how we break it."

In his talk, Dr Williams highlighted the role women around the world play in peacebuilding while at the same time suffering disproportionate levels of violence.

One of the most powerful and troubling elements of trying to resolve conflict, he said, is "the prevalence of violence and discrimination against women in so many situations of conflict or deprivation or both, which robs half the human race of its freedom to nurture, educate and develop its own capacity and that of the next generation. More at -

<http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/20487>

Church watchdog reports on protection

Reviews of child protection measures in a number of church diocese across Ireland are being issued by the Catholic Church's watchdog.

UTV - The reports see the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland commend church dioceses for improving protection.

However the board also issued a warning that "progress appears slower" for religious congregations and missionary societies.

Teresa Devlin, chief executive of the board, said: "There has been a sea change in that all are now conscious of their obligations around reporting, (but) unfortunately in two cases we saw that priests continued in ministry even though admissions were made and in another order cases against deceased brothers, former brothers and lay teachers were not always notified to the Gardai."

The audit is the latest to follow a series of allegations of abuse within the church, this time focusing on the Archdiocese of Dublin, the Dioceses of Meath, Cloyne and Killaloe.

It also looks at the Presentation Brothers, the Patrician Brothers, Benedictine, Glenstal and the Missionary Societies of the Columban Missionaries and the Society of Divine Word.

It found that almost 6,000 people were Gardaí vetted in the Dublin archdiocese over the past year.

Over 400 allegations of child sexual abuse were made against 101 priests of the Dublin Archdiocese over the past 38 years, it said.

The review is one of eight which have been carried out in the Dublin region, including the Murphy report, an HSE audit and three Gardaí inspections.

It examined the files of 40 local priests or former priests about whom safeguarding concerns had arisen since that time and found that the Archdiocese acted to significantly restrict or terminate the ministries of 27 of those 40 priests.

Among the recommendations for improvement is that the diocese looks at increasing awareness of safe practice where online communications and social media are concerned.

See also extensive Irish Times report at -

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/child-protection-review-severely-critical-of-divine-word-1.1792376>

St Anne's Cathedral on BBC2 - The Arts Show

The Arts Show on BBC2 on May 15 will be calling into Belfast Cathedral as part of a programme highlighting the artistic and cultural life of the Cathedral Quarter.

TV cameras have captured some of St Anne's wonderful features including the marble floor, the mosaics by the Martin sisters and the stunning stained glass windows.

The Arts Show will be aired at 10.00 pm on May 15 and repeated on Monday May 19 at 11.00 pm.

Limerick pipe organfest

Next week is an important few days for organ music in Limerick.

Mark Duley is stopping by on his 20CC organ marathon (see www.pipeworksfestival.com) to give a lunchtime organ recital (1.15pm) in St Mary's Cathedral on Wednesday 21st May

That evening, at 8pm, St John's Cathedral celebrates the 150th anniversary of the opening recital on their fine Hill organ with a recital by renowned international recitalist David Briggs - please see poster for details.

The previous day, David Briggs will be giving a masterclass on improvisation, Tuesday 20th May, 2 to 5pm in St John's Cathedral. If you would like the opportunity to participate in, or observe, a master class on improvisation with internationally renowned organist, improviser and transcriber David Briggs?

this is your opportunity and its FREE thanks to Limerick City of Culture funding. Log onto www.lpof.ie for more information and to apply for a place. Places for participants are limited and the closing date for applications is today 14th May.

Limerick Pipe Organ Festival, founded to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Hill organ in St. John's Cathedral Limerick, is a City of Culture initiative of the Diocese of Limerick.

Sunday 6th July 10:50am - Glenstal Abbey – Improvisation Concert –
Cyprian Love and Columba Mc Cann - Free

Wednesday 16th July 1.15pm - St. Mary's Cathedral - Peter Barley plays
Buxtehude, Hassler, Tunder, Weir, Mathias - Free

Sunday 20th July 10:50am - Glenstal Abbey –Improvisation Concert –
Cyprian Love and Columba Mc Cann - Free

Sunday 3rd August 10:50am - Glenstal Abbey –Improvisation Concert –
Cyprian Love and Columba Mc Cann - Free

Wednesday August 6th 1:15pm - St. Mary's Cathedral – Stuart Nicholson
– (Organist and Master of the Choristers, St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin) -
Free

Sunday 17th August 10:50am - Glenstal Abbey – Douglas Hollick plays
Böhm, Buxtehude, Couperin, Sweelinck and JS Bach - Free

Wednesday 10th September 1:10pm - Mary Immaculate College Chapel -
Paul Collins - Free

Sunday 12th October 4pm - Mount St. Alphonsus - Paul Collins - Free

Saturday 25th October 4pm - St. Michael's Pery Square – Irina Dernova –
Free

Thursday 30th October 7.30pm - Christ Church - Nigel Bridge

Sunday 9th November 5pm - St John's Cathedral – closing concert of the
festival - Bernadette Kiely – Free

Invitation to Uganda Day, 3 June – Marking the 50th Anniversary of the Canonisation of the Uganda Martyrs



The Uganda

Association of Northern Ireland, through the secretary Fr Charles Lwanga Kaweesi, welcomes all friends of Uganda and Africa to Uganda Day Celebrations on 3 June, starting at 4 pm at St Mary's University College in Belfast. This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Canonisation of the Uganda Martyrs.

Fr Charles said, "Our aim is to share faith and joy with our brothers and sisters here in Northern Ireland through celebrations and food, which are strong values in African Culture. This day means a lot for us as a community here; that despite the dark days of our country we have continued to journey together as one family, despite the different beliefs."

Bishop of Down and Connor, Noel Treanor, will lead mass at 4 pm. Leaders from other Christian denominations will be present. Mass will be followed by a time for music and dancing before a keynote address by [Laura Coulter, the Irish Churches Peace Project's Good Relations Officer for Greater Belfast](#), on "**Faith: A Call to Love.**" There will also be a time for sharing traditional food.

Fr Charles has provided the following information about the Uganda Martyrs:

The martyrs of Uganda are venerated as proto-martyrs of Black Africa. The cruelty against Christians by Mwanga king of Buganda stretched from 1885 to 1888 when he himself died. The first to be killed was the Anglican Bishop, James Hannington and when the leader of the catholic converts, a page in the palace, Joseph Mukasa openly accused the King for murdering the Bishop, it sparked off the persecution of all the converts to Christianity and Mukasa was beheaded on November 1885. Then followed several killings and 22 Catholics were killed and 24 protestants. The Catholic martyrs were

beatified in 1920 and Canonised in 1964 by Pope Paul VI, who five years later became the first Pope to visit the then Black continent as it was known.

“A well that has many sources never runs dry, and when we are gone, others will come after us.” (Bruno Serunkuma).

WCC calls for Sudan’s leaders to honour their promises for peace

As the situation in South Sudan remains volatile, the [#WCC](#) general secretary calls on the leaders on both sides of the conflict, who signed an agreement last Saturday in the presence of several church leaders, to fulfil their promise.



School children in the Ajuong Thok Refugee Camp, South Sudan.

“The agreement calls for an immediate cessation of conflict and formation of a transitional government, and is a rare opportunity for peace which must not be wasted,” he said.

Faith leaders were named in the agreement among key stakeholders in the peace process, in negotiation toward a transitional government, national unity and in the process of healing and reconciliation. Among those named, with full participatory status in the peace talks, are Bishop Enock Tombe Stephen, Bishop Isaiah Dau, Rev. Peter Tibi, Isaac Kenyi and Dr Nigussu Legesse, the WCC’s programme executive for advocacy for Africa.

Read more: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/churches-urge-south-sudanese-leaders-to-implement-peace-agreement>