



The essential daily brief on the Irish churches

Derry's Sister Ethna embraces new role

In July, Sister Ethna McDermott, from Derry's Culmore Road, will take up a new role as the Provincial of the Good Shepherd Sisters in Ireland which will see her responsible for leading the order going forward.



Derry-born Sister Ethna McDermott, who will soon take up the post of Province Leader of Good Shepherd Nuns in Dublin

DERRY JOURNAL -

Most people, when thinking of that job title, might picture a woman in a habit.

They might think of an existence of quiet contemplation, and one which is cut off from the harsh realities of everyday life.

But Sister Ethna in her her life to date has been more exposed to harsh reality than the average person will ever be.

Working with street workers and prostitutes from Belfast to the Czech Republic, she has witnessed women treated like objects, sold on with little or no personal freedom.

In her role as a good shepherd nun, the Derry woman has never shied away from confronting situations where women have found themselves in this position.

During her recent spell working in the Czech Republic, she went into nightclubs, praying with and helping women who were the victims of human trafficking.

She prayed on the street with women who were placed in spotlight windows for men to look at.

Twenty nine years with the Good Shepherd order have taught Sr. Ethna the importance of working on the ground, where she and others spread their faith and help the people they encounter in the most practical ways possible.

A former teacher, the Culmore Road woman taught in a number of schools in Derry – including Thornhill College and Steelstown Primary School – before entering the Good Shepherd order as a novice in 1985.

“Three of my eight aunts were nuns, so I suppose you could say it did run in the family to an extent,” smiles the 53-year-old.

She says it’s hard to pick one moment in particular where she felt she had a calling, but a “live in” weekend at the Good Shepherd base in Cork in 1984, convinced her that this was the road she wanted to go down. MORE AT -

<http://www.derryjournal.com/news/local-news/derry-s-sister-ethna-embraces-new-role-1-6047689>

Belfast Cathedral Hosts Its First Ever Music Festival

St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast, will host its first ever Music Festival next month with a variety of concerts both instrumental and vocal.



The Dean of Belfast, Very Rev John Mann

This is an opportunity for the Cathedral to display the talents of its own musicians and to provide a platform for visiting performers.

The festival will open on 7 June with a concert by the Edinburgh University Music Society with a three-choirs concert featuring the choirs of St Anne's Cathedral, St George's Parish and St Peter's RC Cathedral on 14 June before the closing Festival Eucharist at 11am on 15 June.

Over the course of the week, Jonah-Man Jazz will be supported by the young singers from the Cathedral's ambitious Choir School Project, the girls' choir and the Cathedral Jazz band. There will be organ recitals, Choral Evensong, Sung Compline and Baroque Favourites featuring Belfast Baroque and others.

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Revd John Mann, will join professional violinist Katie Stevens in a performance of Bach's Double Violin Concerto accompanied by Master of the Choristers David Stevens on harpsichord.

David said: 'Many organisations use this Cathedral as a venue for concerts but St Anne's did not run any concerts of its own so there was no focal point for our music outside of our services.'

'The Music Festival, which we hope will become an annual event, will allow the Cathedral to share its music with people from far and wide and from all backgrounds.'

A full programme for the Music Festival will be available shortly.

Retirement of Cork synodman ends 100 year link

At the meeting of the Diocesan Council of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, Mr David Bird, from Cobh, Co. Cork in the Diocese of Cloyne, announced that he would not be standing for re-election to the Diocesan Synod or General Synod.

This will be the first time in more than 100 years that a member of the Bird family has not been a member of Diocesan Synod and General Synod.

The Bishop, Dr Paul Colton, paid tribute to Mr Bird and presented him with the first of the plaques (featuring the Diocesan Coat of Arms) recently commissioned by the



David Bird

Bishop to acknowledge long and committed voluntary service by lay people to the Diocese.

Bishop Colton said:

I checked this morning, and a member of the Bird family is recorded as having first attended a meeting of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland in 1910. David Bird himself has been on General Synod since 1964.

During his half-century on Diocesan Synod, Diocesan Council and General Synod, Mr Bird has also represented the Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross on the Standing Committee, on the Role of the Church Committee, as well as being for many years a member of his own local parish Select Vestry, a Diocesan Trustee and chairing the Diocesan Property Committee in recent years. He is currently a member of the Church of Ireland's Committee on Human Sexuality in the Context of Christian Belief.

Catholic schools must be ‘places of conviction’



Former British Ambassador to the Vatican, Francis Campbell, pictured with the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh, Richard Clarke and St Mary's University College students Emma Rodgers (Derry) and Jake Magill (Co. Down).

Catholic schools must be confident in their identity if they are to enrich the wider society, a Belfast conference has been told.

Irish Catholic - Francis Campbell, former British Ambassador to the Vatican, also warned that Catholic schools and institutions are in danger of losing their distinct identity unless they put more focus on their unique ethos.

In an address staunchly defending the values of Catholic education at St Mary's University College in Belfast, Mr Campbell insisted that a Catholic education "is not simply about numbers or the orthodoxy of course content, but about conviction.

"The constant integration of the ethos with the educational philosophy reminds all concerned of the broader goals of Catholic education. Retaining that integration requires constant attention," Mr Campbell said.

The Co. Down native and newly appointed head of St Mary's University College, Twickenham said achieving a balance between ethos and academics at all times is difficult, "especially with pressures from within a professional educational culture that rightly demands ever more inputs and data to be able to measure impact and value for money".

However, he insisted that a Catholic school or university "needs to be as attentive to its ethos and identity as it is to the essential professional metrics".

Otherwise, "it runs the risk of cutting itself off from its roots and hence its distinctive offer," he claimed.

Faith-based educational institutions, Mr Campbell argued, "enrich societies through offering a distinctive approach which complements other providers in the education space".

"But that distinctiveness needs those institutions to be confident about their identity otherwise they erode their uniqueness and diminish their patrimony," he said.

Mr Campbell's comments came after the principal of St Mary's, Belfast, expressed concern to *The Irish Catholic* that an education review by the North's Higher Education Minister Stephen Farry could pose a threat to the future of his college.

Prof. Peter Finn, also accused Minister Farry of being "on a mission" to shut the teacher training facility, which is the North's only Catholic higher education institution.

- See more at: <http://www.irishcatholic.ie/article/catholic-schools-must-be-%E2%80%98places-conviction%E2%80%99#sthash.uG6N0GXH.dpuf>

Landmark Protestant cathedral school scraps fees

St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School is third minority faith school to abandon "private" status

Irish Times - The 450-year-old [St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School](#) in Dublin has become the latest Church of Ireland school to scrap fees and join the free education scheme.

It is the third minority faith school to abandon “private” status in recent months as education cuts continue to bite.

Dating from 1547, the grammar school is located next to the Choir School – commonly regarded as Ireland’s oldest school having being founded in 1432 for the education of choirboys at St Patrick’s Cathedral.



Principal Sylvia Hick outside St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School, Dublin, which is to abandon fees.

Parents at the grammar school were told this week that it would be unable to survive financially if it didn't join the free scheme this September.

Principal [Sylvia Hick](#) said: “Since the recent economic downturn, it is clear to us that some families are turning down offers of a place in the school because they cannot afford it.

“Our transition into the free education scheme now offers diversity of choice to those parents.”

The secondary school will continue to operate on a voluntary basis under the patronage of the Church of Ireland. By entering the free scheme, however, it will be able to access Department of Education building grants and additional funding for salaries.

[Eleanor Petrie](#), parent spokeswoman for Protestant schools, said the move highlights a false economy behind the department's cuts in special supports to minority faith schools.

“Some of our schools are on a knife-edge now,” she said. If the pupil-teacher ratio “goes up one more point more of them will go into the free scheme, and that will end up costing the department more money”.

A traditional dispensation for Protestant schools which allowed them to retain lower pupil-teacher ratios than their Catholic counterparts was abolished by the previous government. It claimed legal advice from the attorney general prohibited such discrimination continuing.

Pupil-teacher ratios have since been increased to 23:1 in fee-paying secondary schools compared to 19:1 in the free education scheme.

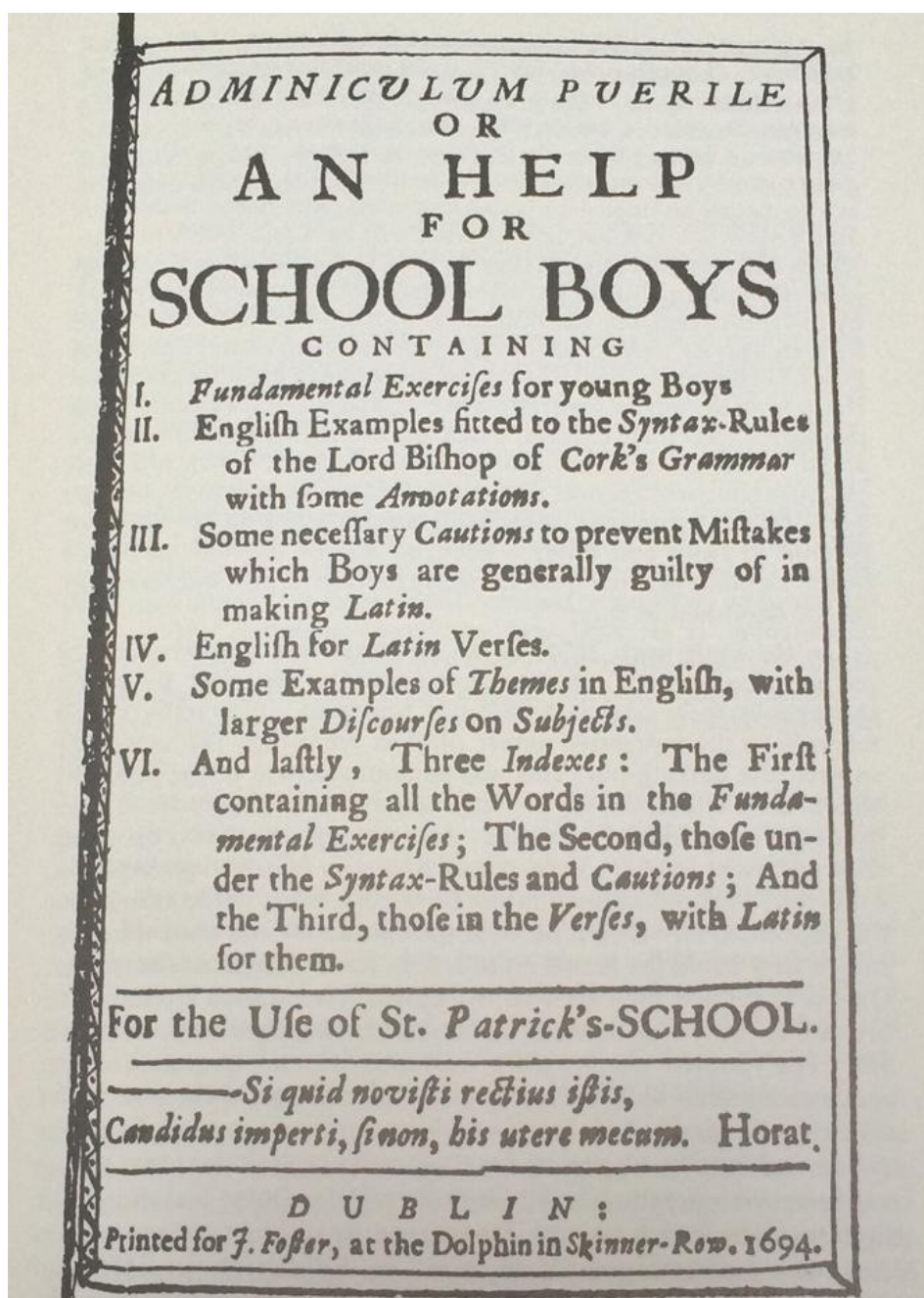
Protestant schools say they are disproportionately affected by these changes because they tend to offer a broader curriculum that caters for all abilities and educational backgrounds.

They also tend to attract lower enrolments, which means if the ratio goes up they either have to drop a subject from the curriculum or pay for the extra teacher through private funds.

Ms Petrie said: “What we said would happen has happened. Since PTRs [parent teacher ratios] started to rise our schools are coming under more pressure.” However, she welcomed the fact that St Patrick’s was at least being put on a sustainable financial footing.

Ms Hick described it “as a very positive step forward” for the school and said she was particularly pleased the department had recognised its strong musical tradition by allocating a specific teaching post for music and choral studies. The school – which had charged fees of €3,000 annually – has 122 pupils and there is capacity for roughly another 20.

Other schools to move to the free education scheme include [Newtown School](#) in Waterford, the only Quaker secondary school in the Republic; and



St Patrick's text book 1694

Protestant schools Wilson's Hospital School in Co Meath and [Kilkenny College](#).

Christ Church Cathedral Choir Walk for Barretstown Children's Charity

Christ Church Cathedral Choir is calling on the cathedral community, congregation and friends to get their walking boots on and join them in the Wicklow Mountains on Saturday May 24 to raise money for Barretstown.

They will be meeting at the Glendalough Visitors Centre at 1.00 pm on the day and then walk the spectacular Spinc and Glenealo Valley around Glendalough's Upper Lake. The 9km walk is expected to take approximately three and a half hours.

Anyone wishing to go along can make a donation of €20 per person. Anyone who isn't able to join the energetic choir members can still support their efforts for Barretstown and children suffering from cancer and serious blood disorders by donating at www.justgiving.com/CCCwalkforbarretstown

Glendalough can be reached by public transport from Dublin. The St Kevin's Bus departs Dawson Street (bus stop number BE100X) at 11.30 am arriving at 12.50 pm and the return bus leaves Glendalough at 5.40 pm.

The Walk for Barretstown is part of the continuing relationship between the Girls' Choir of Christ Church Cathedral and Barretstown. Dream Baby Dream featuring Joyce Murphy, the Girl Choristers, directed by Ian Keatley, and a



host of Irish musicians, is now available on iTunes. All proceeds go to Barretstown. Download it at iTunes – <https://itunes.apple.com/ie/album/dream-baby-dream-barretstown/id823557209>.

Irish clergy numbers fall by one sixth in six years

Numbers of active priests in Ireland have fallen by some 16 per cent in six years, according to the latest report of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church.

THE TABLET - The new figures show that there are 2,050 active clergy serving a Catholic population of 4,635,178 in Ireland, which averages out as one priest for every 2,261 Catholics.

In 2007, a report by the Council for Research and Development, a commission of the Irish Bishops' Conference, showed there were 2,464 active diocesan priests in 25 out of the 26 dioceses of Ireland.

Against the backdrop of the latest figures, the Association of Catholic Priests has chosen "Priestless Parishes: What Pope Francis Needs to be Told" as the theme of its annual general meeting in October. It will examine the present crisis in priest numbers as well as current strategies for maintaining access to the Eucharist.

Despite the decline, Fr Willie Purcell, the National Coordinator for Diocesan Vocations in Ireland, said there seems to be "a new awakening in vocation discernment and awareness at the moment". He said the number of students entering the seminary at Maynooth is increasing along with enquiries about the priesthood. In Fr Purcell's own diocese of Ossory, where the last ordination to the priesthood took place in 2001, there are currently four men discerning vocations to the priesthood and one man who will be ordained to the diaconate this summer.

Meanwhile, figures from the safeguarding office show that 164 allegations against secular priests and Religious were received for the period April 2013 to the end of March 2014, with most of the alleged incidents occurring between 1960 and 1990. The figure is down from last year's total of 242.

Institution on Derry's Walls

A large congregation witnessed the Institution of a new Rector in St Augustine's Church, known as 'the wee church on the walls'. Revd Malcolm Ferry was instituted to the Londonderry parish at a Service on

the evening of 14 May.

Malcolm, his wife Carol and family will not have far to move. Before taking up his new post Revd Malcolm was Rector of the Waterside parish of All Saints Clooney. During his time in this parish he oversaw the



Bishop Ken Good, Mayor Martin Reilly and Rev Malcolm Ferry.

major renovation project of the All Saints Parish Centre and the development of a significant range of outreach programmes into the local community.

A wide range of family, friends, parishioners and colleagues from across the community attended the Institution Service. It was also attended by Mayor Martin Reilly as well as two African bishops and Bishop John McDowell (Clogher diocese).

The preacher was Bishop John McDowell and the Service was conducted by Bishop Ken Good. After the Service a reception was held in the adjacent hall. This was an opportunity for a number of speeches to welcome Malcolm, his wife Carol and family to St Augustine's.

Prior to ordination Malcolm spent a number of years in business. His first parish as Rector was in Castlerock.

St Augustine's Church is situated on Londonderry's city walls, on Palace Street in the city centre. It is in the diocese of Derry and Raphoe.

Newry Rainbow Community Night of Sacred Music and Prayer

For the second year in a row Newry Rainbow Community in conjunction with Changing Attitude Ireland are hosting a night of Sacred Music and Scripture readings at St Catherine's Dominican Church in Newry,

tonight, Friday the 16th of May.

Newry Times - The night is organised to mark IDAHO day on the 17th (International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia) and the event also forms part of the first Northern Ireland Anti Homophobia and Transphobia Week.

Columba O'Hare, Newry Rainbow Community

commented, "It is really important for people in our community to feel welcome and have a sense of belonging to whatever religion or church they grew up with.

"We were all extremely moved by the warm welcome and special atmosphere at last years event in the beautiful Dominican Church and are extremely grateful to all at St Catherine's especially the Prior Fr Ralph, for helping make this happen again this year. Small gestures really do make a massive difference," he added.

The evening begins at 8.15pm on the 16th at the Dominican and will include songs and readings and a short reflection from Richard O'Leary, Chair, Changing Attitude Ireland followed by a cup of tea in the Dominican Hall. All are welcome.

IDAHOT service in Shandon

The annual Church Service in Saint Anne's Church, Shandon, Cork, to mark IDAHOT - International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia - will take place on Sunday, 18th May at 10.30 a.m.

The Service, at which the rector, the Reverend Brian O'Rourke, will preside, is the concluding event of Cork LGBT Awareness Week. Cork's LGBT Choir - Choral Con Fusion - will sing at the Service. All are invited and welcome to attend.

As part of the listening process in which the Church of Ireland is currently engaged, a member of the Parish, and recently elected member of the Cork,



Fr Stephen Tumilty, Damian McKevitt, Fr Joseph Ralph OP; Rory Rafferty, Fr Denis Murphy, Nuala Devenny, NRC and Canon Charles Kenny, former Vicar Choral, St Annes Cathedral

Cloyne and Ross Diocesan Synod, Stephen Spillane, will give an address.

Stephen Spillane is a parishioner of St Anne's, Shandon and is an LGBT activist. In recent days Junior Chamber International named him as 2014 recipient of the 'Most Outstanding Young Person' (TOYP) award.

Stephen says:

What makes this day and the events in Newry, Dublin, Waterford, Limerick, Belfast and Derry/Londonderry so important, is not that these Services happen, but that they keep happening. This is what gives me hope. The work of Changing Attitude Ireland and many individual LGBT Christians in Ireland constantly challenge and remind the wider Church of their responsibility to the LGBT Community.



London and Salisbury boost for women bishops plan

The Diocese of London - one of two Church of England regions not to pass a proposed women bishops law in 2012 - has voted in favour of the latest proposal.

Read more:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-27434744>

"Too few Anglican women involved in decision-making processes"

Not enough women are participating in decisions made by churches at all levels according to the Anglican Communion Office's Women's Desk Officer.

ACNS - In an interview in the latest [Anglican World](#) magazine the Revd Terrie Robinson said that women's ministry, both lay and ordained, is still not lifted up and blessed by the church in the way it could be.

"What impresses me about women in all parts of the Communion is

that they often go into places where others don't want to go," she said. "But sadly their work is often left at the fringes of Church life."

Mrs Robinson gave examples of women leaders across the Anglican Communion who run programmes for women who are destitute, in prison, or escaping domestic violence; and others who run successful businesses with women's economic empowerment as a core purpose.

"However, there still aren't enough women participating in our decision-making processes in the Communion from parish level right through to our international Instruments of Communion."

Mrs Robinson, who is also the ACO's International Networks' Co-ordinator, acknowledges that there has been progress but, she said, "More is needed".

Mrs Robinson remains hopeful: "The Anglican Communion is full of treasure and it just needs to be empowered, enabled, listened to and allowed to speak into the leadership of the Church."

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Terrie Robinson (right) with Uganda MU president Canon Edidah Mujinya

women's voices in equal measure.

"When it's predominately men around the table we must look for ways to ensure that their views, their concerns are represented."

"Yes there has been progress but more is needed," she explained.

around the Communion I am full of hope. The Anglican Communion is full of treasure and it just needs to be empowered, enabled, listened to and allowed to speak into the leadership of the Church."

The Revd Robinson tells Anglican World magazine that women's ministry is often "left at the fringes of Church life"