

**The essential daily  
brief on the Irish  
churches**



## **Crowds of around a million gather in Rome to witness historic canonisation in St Peter's Square**

**Pope Francis declared Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II as saints at a ceremony during Mass in Rome's St Peter's Square yesterday morning.**

He concelebrated the Mass along with 150 cardinals and 750 bishops. They included Ireland's Catholic primate Cardinal Sean Brady, the former Archbishop of Dublin Cardinal Desmond Connell, the Bishop of Limerick Brendan Leahy and the Bishop of Killaloe Kieran O'Reilly, who led 53 pilgrims from that diocese to Rome for the event.

Among the 19 heads of state and 25 heads of government present, as well as official delegations from 90 states, were the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester representing HM Queen Elizabeth and Taoiseach Enda Kenny.

Applause rippled through the huge million-plus-strong crowd crammed into St Peter's Square and along the length of the broad Via della Conciliazione to the Tiber, as the large screens flashed up images of Pope Francis and Pope emeritus Benedict XVI greeting each other and embrace.

It was one more historic moment in an historic day which involved four popes - the unprecedented sight of two living pontiffs overseeing the double canonisation of two of their predecessors, John XXIII and John Paul II.

And the special nature of this event inevitably drew a massive influx of faithful to Rome, and the streets were a sea of flags from every corner of the world - but one flag in particular was everywhere - the red and white of Poland, homeland of Pope John Paul II.

Many of them began queuing from early on Saturday; one group of men, dressed in cycling gear, had just arrived in the city, having cycled almost 700 miles from Krakow. "It was our pilgrimage. He was our Papa. He gave us freedom," said David Nowak, in a reference to the role that the Polish pontiff is credited with in hastening the collapse of communism.

The clouds over Vatican City may have threatened rain, but the mood was sunny among the estimated throng of over one million - believed to be even larger than the crowd who packed into the square on the night just over 13 months ago when Jorge Bergoglio was elected the 266th leader of the Catholic Church.

And the final part of this pilgrimage was slowest; it was after dawn before some of the 10,000 stewards and 5,000 police began to carefully siphon the faithful into the square; many had camped out overnight, in order to get in to the piazza which can hold 250,000 people.

The double canonisation been generally regarded as a clever move by the pope, as both men were enormously popular, if very different in terms of their approach to the papacy; John XXIII instituted Vatican II Council which brought sweeping reforms to the Catholic Church, while John Paul II was more conservative, but travelled widely during his 26-year reign and was seen by more Christians than any other pope.

And both men had their devotees in the massive crowd - many flags bore images of one or other pope, and at one stage as the sheer numbers of people brought everyone to a standstill, a good-humoured sing-off began.

"Viva Papa John!" called a group of lively young Italians who were immediately answered by another group singing out, "Papa John Paul". And everywhere there were chants of "Viva Papa Francisco".

The cheerfulness was in contrast to the solemn ceremony which unfolded just after 9am under the shadow of the Basilica. This was pope and circumstance at its height - the elevation to sainthood of the two pontiffs was concelebrated by 150 cardinals, 1,000 bishops, 6,000 priests and 24 heads of state - including Taoiseach Enda Kenny.

Silence fell over the Square as the formal part of the event took place, including the procession of papal relics - a piece of the skin of John XIII and a vial of blood from John Paul II. As Pope Francis announced that the two pontiffs had now reached sainthood, a wave of quiet emotion swept through the congregation - pilgrims wept and waved flags.

Overlooked by giant pictures of the two newest saints in his Church which hung on the front of the Basilica, Pope Francis delivered his homily, paying tribute to the pontiffs, hailing them as "two men of courage, they were priests, bishops, popes of the 20th century. They lived through tragic events of that century, but they were not overwhelmed by them. For them, God was more powerful, faith was more powerful," he said.

And the rumble of thunderous applause which rolled to the river after his homily ended was a message to the estimated tv audience of one billion tuned in to this historic celebration - the power of the Catholic Church is still a force to be reckoned with.

<http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2014/04/27/homily-notes-of-most-rev-diarmuid-martin-archbishop-of-dublin-at-mass-to-celebrate-the-canonisations-of-john-xxiii-and-john-paul-ii/>

## Archbishop Martin praises role of new saints

**Saints are men and women who in their day to day ordinary lives try heroically to live the Christian life, Archbishop of Dublin [Diarmuid Martin](#) said yesterday.**



Dr Martin was speaking in the Pro Cathedral in Dublin at a Mass to mark the canonisation of St [John XXIII](#) and St [John Paul II](#).

“Saints are not men and women taken out of human history and human realities, but are witnesses as to how we should try to live. They are not perfect witnesses,” he said.

He recalled the election of both saints as Pope. “In 1958, when I was just 13 years old, my great fascination was with broadcasting. Ireland had at that time no television service. Telefís Éireann began in 1961....

“My family had, however, a large television aerial perched on our roof, capable of receiving far-from-perfect BBC television images from Belfast. In a storm it would have been capable of bringing down the entire chimney on which it was fixed!

“Much of my homework was done watching television and that’s what I was doing late one autumn evening in 1958 when BBC television interrupted its programming to bring the announcement of the new pope.

“When my parents returned home they asked me what my impressions were of the new Pope. I honestly had to say that I was slightly bewildered,” he said.

“After the severe and austere figure of Pope Pius XII, as we had known him through photographs and occasionally on filmed newsreels, this rather corpulent and jovial new Pope seemed to me anything but ‘Pope-like’.

“Pope John was in fact about to change what being ‘Pope-like’ meant. Pope John was to bring change to the Church and to change the impact of the Church on the world of his time.”

In 1978 he was in St Peter’s Square when the election of St John Paul II was announced. “Again, it was a surprise and very few could have imagined the extraordinary effect that this young Pope - he was only 58 years old at the time - was to have on the church and the world.

“He was the first Pope to journey to so many countries in all continents. At the same time it should be remembered that he rarely missed a Sunday visit to a Roman Parish. He was very much the Bishop of Rome. By 1978 times had changed.

“Instead of the unsteady black and white images of the election of Pope John, the world’s media was present in a massive way at the election of Pope John Paul II, as indeed they would be 27 years later on the occasion of his funeral.”

He was then “a very junior Vatican official. Within a short time I was beginning to have closer contact with that Pope who was to ordain me Bishop in 1999 and at whose wish I was to become Archbishop of Dublin ten years ago, yesterday (April 26th).”

Dr Martin also gave “thanks to God for the gifts which these two Popes brought to the Church and for their incessant dedication and prayer for the Church at times of rapid change in the Church and the world”.

## **Presbyterian Church Team of Twelve medics have arrived in Malawi**



**A team of 12 healthcare professionals arrived in Malawi last weekend.**

**Dr Moyna Bill** from Lowe Memorial Presbyterian Church, Belfast is leading the team, which has members from various PCI congregations.

This ‘Go-See-Do’ medical team, will enable participants to experience something of the challenges of mission and healthcare provision in an overseas context alongside

PCI Missionary Dr [Neil Kennedy](#).

The team are pictured waiting for their connecting flight from London to Malawi.

Follow the team on their Facebook page [IGNITE MALAWI 2014](#)

## **Much-missed C of I MLA was a Christian gentleman who had flair for acting**

**Rich tribute has been paid in the last week to a politician dubbed “the most popular MLA in Stormont” .**

News Letter - But as well as his public life, David McClarty, who died on April 18 aged 63, was also a family man, a Christian, a fine choir singer and a comedy actor.



Famed for his love of his native Coleraine, many of the key milestones in his life happened within the confines of his native neighbourhood of Killowen in the town.



As his widow Norma put it, he was Christened, confirmed, married and finally mourned in his lifelong place of worship – Killowen Parish Church.

Born in a semi-detached council house in The Heights on February 23, 1951, he was the seventh of Helen and Douglas McClarty's 11 children.

While Helen was occupied with her large brood, Douglas – a Dunkirk veteran – worked as a fitter for firms such as Monsanto.

David enrolled in Killowen Primary School and later Coleraine Boys' Secondary before transferring to Coleraine Inst, where he cultivated an interest in sports, going on to run for the Inst Harriers.

His choice of studies was an intriguing one – he left school with A-levels in English, Latin, and ancient Greek.

He then went to the Magee campus of the University of Ulster to study the classics, but left after around one year.

"He didn't like to be away," said widow Norma. "That's how much of a homebird he was!"

The pair had met in church and in Sunday School, and began going out when he was 16 and she was 14.

It was the start of an unbroken lifetime romance. By 1972 they were engaged, and they wed the following year. More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/much-missed-mia-was-a-christian-gentleman-who-had-flair-for-acting-1-6023030>

## **C of E split fear as African bishops speak out over clergy flouting a ban on same-sex weddings**



The Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby was last night facing mounting pressure to crack down on cler

gy who marry their gay partners – as the threat of a split in the Anglican Church grew.

Mail Online - A powerful group of conservative African Archbishops said they were 'deeply troubled' by liberal Western attitudes towards homosexuality and that Church of England clerics were flouting a ban on same-sex weddings.



The Archbishops said it was 'very concerning' that the ban was being 'openly disregarded' and added: 'We look to the Church of England to give clear leadership as moral confusion about the status of marriage [in England] deepens.'

Their intervention follows the civil wedding this month of Canon Jeremy Pemberton, a hospital chaplain, and his partner Laurence Cunnington under new laws pushed through by David Cameron.

Mr Pemberton, from Southwell, Nottinghamshire, is facing disciplinary action from the Bishop of Lincoln Christopher Lowson for disobeying the House of

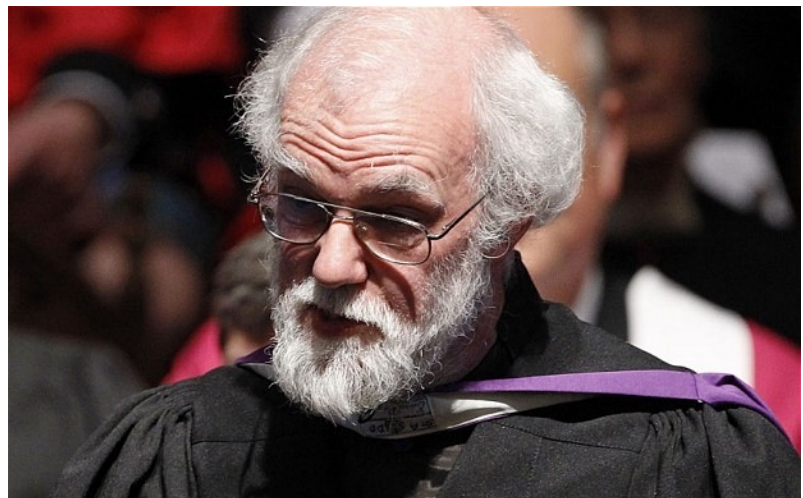
Bishops' ruling that gay clergy should not marry because marriage should only be between a man and a women.

But Church of England conservatives believe the bishop will drag his feet because of fears of a liberal backlash – opening the floodgates to more gay clergy weddings.

Text of Gafcon statement at -

<http://gafcon.org/news/communique-from-the-gafcon-primates-council>

**Former Archbishop of Canterbury says Britain is no longer a nation of believers - Telegraph poll reveals Christians are reluctant to express their faith**



**Britain is now a “post-Christian” country, the former archbishop of Canterbury has declared, as research suggests that the majority of Anglicans and Roman Catholics now feel afraid to express their beliefs.**

In an interview with The Telegraph, Lord Williams of Oystermouth says Britain is no longer “a nation of believers” and that a further decline in the sway of the Church is likely in the years ahead.

While the country is not populated exclusively by atheists, the former archbishop warns that the era of regular and widespread worship is over.

His stark assessment comes after David Cameron ignited a national debate over the place of religion in British public life. The Prime Minister urged Christians to be “more evangelical” about their faith and claimed that Britain should be a more confidently Christian country.

His remarks, in the run-up to Easter, provoked a furious response from atheist and secular groups, and prompted a succession of senior politicians



to give their views, culminating in Nick Clegg, the Liberal Democrat leader, calling for the disestablishment of the Church of England.

However, an exclusive poll for The Sunday Telegraph today discloses substantial support for the Prime Minister's view.

Findings from the ICM survey of 2,000 people conducted last week included:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10790495/Former-archbishop-of-Canterbury-We-are-a-post-Christian-nation.html>

## **UK's only deaf church to close**

**After nearly 140 years of services in sign language, the UK's only purpose-built church for deaf people is up for sale.**

Read more:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-ouch-27130455>

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