



## **Pope Francis kisses the feet of South Sudan's leaders at close of ecumenical retreat**

An ecumenical spiritual retreat led by the Archbishop of Canterbury and Pope Francis at the Vatican

ended April 11 with Pope Francis kissing the feet of South Sudan's political leaders.



The unprecedented two day retreat was organized in an effort to support the country's fragile peace deal. The political leaders present at the retreat included South Sudan's President Salva Kiir Mayardit and opposition leader Vice President Riek Machar. The two are expected to form a national unity government under a fragile peace deal designed to end six years of civil war in the world's newest country.

Pope Francis shocked the church and political leaders present at the retreat in the Domus Sanctae Marthae, the official Vatican guest house which is also home to Pope Francis, when he broke off from his prepared remarks to make a personal plea to Sudan's political leaders.

"To the three of you who have signed the peace agreement, I ask you as a brother: stay in peace", Pope Francis said. "I am asking you with my heart. Let us go forward. There will





be many problems but they will not overcome us. Go ahead, go forward, and resolve the problems. You have begun a process. May it end well.

“There will be struggles and disagreements amongst you, but let this be within the community – inside the office, as it were – but in front of the people, hold hands, united; so as simple citizens you will become fathers of the nation.”

He said he was asking from his heart with his deepest sentiments, before walking towards the leaders and kneeling to kiss their feet; to the evident shock and surprise of those present.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, described the retreat as a “miracle”, saying that “until within 24 hours of it beginning we didn’t know it was going to happen. The

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atmosphere has been extraordinary and we just see the hand of God in it.”

The retreat was proposed by Archbishop Justin and approved by Pope Francis. It would have been unthinkable even a few years ago. “We have a gathering at the invitation of the Pope, in the Vatican, with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church”, Archbishop Justin said. “These are Churches that have been separated for half a millennium.

“We have the main political leaders from South Sudan, with the main spiritual leaders, gathering together. The political leaders have been at war for six years.

“And we have them all having arrived, the logistics have worked and they are engaging with each other as human beings and there is a profound sense of the Spirit of God at work.”

He added: “if you have seen so many attempts at peace, that you have given up hope that it will ever happen, that you are feeling sceptical and cynical about it, I understand exactly why. But I start with our Christian faith: that we believe in the God that raised Jesus Christ from the dead so all evil and darkness was finally overcome in the resurrection. And resurrection life overflows in ways we can’t predict; so that there is always hope.

And what we have seen in this last 24 hours is not a promise of change; but it is a reasonable hope of change.”

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# Thousands to march in honour of Holocaust 'hero' Jane Haining

Around 15,000 people will march through the streets of Budapest this weekend to commemorate a brave Scot who laid down her life to protect Jewish school girls.



**Jane Haining and "her" girls having fun on Lake Balaton in Hungary where summer holidays were spent in a rented villa.**

The annual March of the Living to mark Hungary's Holocaust Memorial Day is dedicated to Jane Haining, whose unwavering devotion to pupils in her care led to her death in Auschwitz. The farmer's daughter from Dunscore near Dumfries has been described as a "Scottish hero of which Scotland, Hungary and the world can be proud".



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The march by torchlight on Sunday evening is being led by Scottish Secretary David Mundell and Rev Aaron Stevens, minister of St Columba's Church of Scotland in Budapest, will take part with members of his congregation.

Accompanied by bagpipers, marchers will proceed along a street named in honour of Miss Haining towards the 'Shoes on the Danube' Holocaust memorial near the Hungarian Parliament.



Memorial stones and flowers will be placed at the iron shoes memorial and a short film will be screened at the end of the march.

Miss Haining was the matron at the Scottish Mission boarding school between 1932-1944 and many of the pupils, around 400, were Jews.

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She refused to return home after war broke out in 1939, despite advice from Church of Scotland officials, saying the girls in her care needed her in the "days of darkness".

In 1944, Miss Haining was arrested by the Gestapo on eight charges, including working among Jews in her care.

Former pupil Agnes Rostas, who witnessed the incident, revealed that her haunting last words to sobbing children were "Don't worry, I'll be back by lunch".

Miss Haining was eventually taken to the Auschwitz Birkenau extermination camp in Nazi occupied Poland where she died two months after arriving.

## **Dublin church crypt reconsecrated after theft of remains**

The crypt of St Michan's Church in Dublin was reconsecrated by Archbishop Michael Jackson on Thursday afternoon. The crypt was broken into in February and the head of the 800 year old mummy known as the Crusader was stolen along with another skull. They have since been recovered by Gardaí.

The Archbishop also dedicated a beautiful new community garden in the churchyard of St Michan's. A special green space has been turned over to the garden and raised beds will be kept by the parish, local schools and Church Street Community Garden.



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**President Michael D Higgins and Mrs Sabina Higgins with Archdeacon David Pierpoint and the Revd Ross Styles during their visit to St Michan's**

Thursday's activities came hot on the heels of a visit to St Michan's Church the previous day by President Michael D Higgins and Mrs Sabina Higgins. They were given a tour of the historic church and its crypts which are deeply embedded in the history of Dublin city.

Thursday's service began at the community garden. The endeavour is the brainchild of the Revd Ross Styles, Curate of the Christ Church Cathedral Group of Parishes, who has his roots in horticulture. He is continuing on the Smithfield





## **Archbishop Michael Jackson dedicates St Michan's community garden with Archdeacon David Pierpoint and the Revd Ross Styles**

Community Outreach which was begun by his predecessor, the Revd Abigail Sines.

“I thought that a community garden could bring us to the community and the community to us,” he commented “There is very little green space in this area and the churchyard of St Michan’s provides a beautiful green oasis.” He thanked Caoimhe Leppard, project coordinator at the Archbishop’s office and Allchurches Trust for their help in securing funding.

The Archbishop commended the project. “The wonderful thing is the way in which in the midst of such business and

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sophistication there is a reconnection with the earth here. To see a green space and to use it in this way is wonderful. It draws together a range of the Five Marks of Mission but particularly nurturing and care of the creation and it is in the middle of an area dealing with justice,” he said.

In reconsecrating the crypt, the Archbishop said prayers at the entrance and down in the crypt itself so that those who had lain there for many years could once again be at rest. He said that the combination of new earth and respect for the deceased was lovely to be able to do and as we enter Holy Week it was a living sign of our mortality and the resurrection. He thanked Archdeacon David Pierpoint for facilitating the occasion.

The service was attended by parishioners, representatives of the local community and the Gardaí, including those who led the investigation into the theft from the crypt.

## **Bishop of Disneyworld at Donegal confirmations**

You don't often hear the Kingdom of God and Disneyworld featuring in the same Service, but it happened in Letterkenny in County Donegal.

Conwal Parish Church in Letterkenny, and Glendermott Parish Church in Londonderry, each hosted Services of Confirmation and both churches were doubly blessed with twice the normal quota of bishops.



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**The Bishop of Central Florida, the Rt Rev Greg Brewer, preaching in Conwal Parish Church, Letterkenny.**

The Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, the Rt Rev Ken Good, was joined at both Services by a guest preacher from the United States of America, the Bishop of Central Florida, the Rt Rev Greg Brewer, who is in Ireland on sabbatical with his wife, Laura Lee. The couple are spending part of their time in Europe with Bishop Ken and his wife, Mary, and Bishop Good had invited his counterpart to address last Sunday's Confirmation Services.

Bishop Brewer helped confirm 11 boys and girls in Sunday morning's Service in Letterkenny and another 21 at the afternoon Service in Londonderry.

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In Letterkenny, Bishop Good introduced his distinguished visitor as “the Bishop of Disneyworld” – which is in the latter’s diocese – but Bishop Brewer told the confirmands that he was not the focus of the attention. “The focus of the attention is Jesus, first of all,” he said, “[and] what it is that Jesus is doing.

“We believe deeply, with all our hearts, when we do these very simple things like pouring water on the head of a child or laying hands on these people that God is doing something bigger – far better – than anything you could ever conceive or imagine. And it is what He is doing that is meant to be the focus of our attention.”

The second Confirmation Service, in Londonderry, was a shared service between members of the Glendermott and Newbuildings Parishes in the city and the Moville and Donagh Group of Parishes in Inishowen.

Once again, Bishop Brewer spoke about the transformational power of God in Confirmation, and repeated the assurance he had given in Letterkenny earlier that the young confirmands would be transformed by their experience. “One thing I do know: you’ll never be the same, but – given the possibilities – why would you even want to be, when what is in front of you is freedom, joy and a new life in God?”

Sunday’s were the last Confirmation Services that Bishop Good will preside at in Conwal or Glendermott Parish Churches. He is due to retire as Bishop of Derry and Raphoe at the end of May. Bishop and Mrs Brewer will



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spend the next week or so with the Goods before continuing their sabbatical in England.



## **Campaign urges C of E to allow gay couples to marry in its buildings**

A new campaign has launched calling for equal marriage in the Church of England.

Equal, the Campaign for Equal Marriage in the Church of England, want same-gender couples to be able to get married in parishes across the country.

Rev Andrew Foreshew-Cain, one of the team members leading the campaign, told Premier the significance behind Friday's launch date.

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"Today is the fifth anniversary of the wedding of Canon Jeremy Pemberton to Laurence Cunnington - the first marriage of a Church of England priest to a same-sex partner.

"On their anniversary day, we thought we would launch the campaign, congratulate them on their happy marriage and to celebrate all the marriages that have been made possible since the change in the law."



The group says the "consciences of everyone should be protected" and "no member of the clergy should be forced to conduct a marriage they disagree with, but also no member of the clergy should be prevented from celebrating a marriage involving a same-gender couple".

However, the Coalition of Marriage, which supports traditional marriage and opposes its redefinition, thinks the campaign will have the opposite effect.

Colin Hart, the group's chairman told Premier news: "It will destroy the freedoms of everybody else.



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"The problem is this - although that's not what they intend, it will completely smash the 'quad lock' to smithereens.

"The reason for that is, the Church of England is the state Church and is particularly vulnerable to being sued under human rights."

'Quad-lock' safeguards give clergy an absolute right to refuse to conduct same-sex weddings.

The Campaign's logo could easily be mistaken for The Church of England's but the group is actually an independent group.

Rev Foreshow-Cain told Premier the logo was intended to look like the Church's.

"The campaign is by and for Church of England people. We are faithful members of the Church of England, campaigning within it for a change in its official stance.

"So it's to show that we are part of the Church of England as everybody is."

A spokesperson for the Church of England told Premier in a statement: "The Church of England seeks to be a place of welcome to people from all backgrounds, irrespective of sexuality or gender.

"The Church's position is that marriage is between one woman and one man. However, the Church of England is aware of the different and deeply held views about same sex marriage among its members.

"The Living in Love and Faith process is producing resources that will enable the Church to reflect on this position while listening to and gathering the stories and

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perspectives of many individuals who represent this wide range of views and lived experiences.”

## News briefs

**+++Kilmore team brings building back to life** - A team from Kilmore Parish Church (Down & Dromore) have been doing some DIY ahead of their Easter Mission to the communities of Kilmore and Crossgar.

They have been hard at work in the Old Post Office, Kilmore (right) cleaning and painting to get it ready to host a Pop-up Café. The parish has also ‘teased’ the



mission with a series of banners on the building which have aroused some interest.

The Old Post Office had been the centre of community life in Kilmore for many years. It was always more than just the local Post Office or village shop – somewhere you could be assured of help or support if you needed it. It was this well-established and recognised community focus that made it the natural choice as the central venue for the Easter Mission. The locals are delighted to see the doors open again.



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The Pop-up Café will be open between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm Monday to Friday and serving tea, real coffee from 'Drop Hopper', scones and jam. All free!

The Café will also host a children's story time at 10.30 am each day. Parents can join their children in hearing the Easter story told over five days with a different craft activity each time.

**+++Dunluce Parishioner receives BEM - Congratulations to Glenda Rodgers McCormick**



who has been presented with a British Empire Medal for services to the community in Bushmills. Glenda, organiser of the annual 'Bushmills Through the Wars' exhibition in Dunluce Parish Centre, received her BEM medal

from the Lord Lieutenant of County Antrim, Mrs Joan Christie CVO OBE, at an investiture at Hillsborough Castle. She is now looking forward to attending a Garden Party in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace on May 21.

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**+++Presbyterian Easter Dawn Services** - In a tradition that spans many years, Presbyterians will gather together in a variety of venues in some of Ireland's iconic settings to celebrate Easter at first light. Find out where this year's Dawn Services are taking place - all are welcome. <http://www.presbyterianireland.org/News/2019-News-Archive/April-2019/Dawn-services-this-Easter.aspx>

**+++Interested in teaching abroad?** - The invitation states - Come join our community! We've got openings for primary and secondary teachers and we'd love to have you work with us. Follow the link to our website to find all of our latest job openings! <https://www.kisc.edu.np/vacancies>

**+++Brunei's laws barbaric** -The Archbishop of Wales condemns as barbaric the laws recently enacted in Brunei, as the result of which those who are in same-sex relationships and those who renounce Islam face severe penalties. The Archbishop, John Davies, said, "The step taken with the introduction of these barbaric new laws is one which is morally repugnant. It takes no account of well-founded understandings of human sexuality and nature and it contravenes our basic human right to worship freely. I hope that the regime in Brunei, the Sultan in particular, will respond personally to the outcry which has arisen by thinking again."

**+++Food for thought** - No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. CS Lewis

## **Today in Christian history**

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**April 13, 655 (traditional date):** Martin, pope from 649 to 655, dies in banishment. History remembers him as the last pope venerated as a martyr.

**April 13, 1534:** Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England, refuses to take the oath to the English succession. One year later, Henry VIII indicted him for treason and had him beheaded.

**April 13, 1598:** France's Henry IV signs the Edict of Nantes, granting extensive political rights to the Huguenots (a Protestant group he once belonged to). The Huguenots retained the right to practice their religion until Louis XIV revoked the edict in 1685.

**April 13, 1742:** Handel's famous oratorio Messiah premieres in Dublin's Fishamble Street Musick Hall and is met with critical praise.

**April 13, 1829:** In the Emancipation Act, the English Parliament grants freedom of religion to Roman Catholics. Within three weeks, the first Catholic was elected to Parliament.

**April 13, 1986:** Pope John Paul II visits a Jewish synagogue in Rome, marking the first such visit by a pope in recorded history.

## **News Links**

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Advocates for LGBT rights have urged the **Church** to make a public stand against the criminalisation of homosexuality during a meeting with the ...

### **Press ombudsman rejects ex-priest's complaints**

Irish Examiner

The report went on to state that the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic **Church** in **Ireland** (NBSCCCI) had called on Amazon to ...

### **Grand auction in aid of St Mary's Church of Ireland**

Westmeath Independent

The hammer will go down on hundreds of auction lots at Athlone Institute of Technology on Saturday April 13, as part of a fundraising programme for ...

### **New £8m hotel among major Belfast projects granted planning approval**

The Irish News

The plans will see the **church** transformed into a restaurant, bar and ... hotel and dining experience for the city and for Northern **Ireland**," he said.

### **Sexual revolution of 1960s led to Church abuse crisis, ex-pope says**

KFGO News

Abuse scandals in **Ireland**, Chile, Australia, France, the United States, Poland, Germany and elsewhere have since led the **Church** to pay out billions ...

<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/pope-emeritus-benedict-speaks-up-on-the-current-sex-abuse-crisis>

### **Irish Chaplaincy Blog: The Best Medicine**

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Independent Catholic News

When coming away from my regular visit to one of our **Irish** Chaplaincy ... and her sister moved over from **Ireland** to stay in the one-bedroom flat as a ... I imagine, sadly, that there are many people who might consider laughter to be incompatible with **church** or ... 2019 Independent Catholic **News** | Policies.

**Deputy sheriff's son arrested over fires at black churches in Louisiana**

Irish Examiner

Deputy sheriff's son arrested over fires at black **churches** in Louisiana ... At a **news** conference, Mr Guidroz disputed reports that Matthews's father ...

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