

Taoiseach accused of ignoring Christian persecution



A woman weeps during a memorial service for victims in Colombo, Sri Lanka, two days after a string of suicide bomb attacks on churches and luxury hotels across the island.



With Easter Sunday seeing hundreds more Christians slaughtered, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar stands accused of silence in the midst of mounting Christian persecution around the globe, Chai Brady writes in Irish Catholic. He asks, “Why the silence, Leo?” and his report continues -

Some 320 people were killed in Sri Lanka when suspected Islamists targeted churches and hotels on Easter Sunday.

Mr Varadkar, who is a prolific user of social media, never mentioned the attack on Twitter nor did he issue a statement condemning the attack.

In contrast, when a gunman attacked mosques in New Zealand in March Mr Varadkar issued a statement condemning the attack, phoned the Prime Minister of New Zealand to sympathise and expressed his solidarity with Ireland’s Muslim community.

“It’s frankly an outrage not just to our sense of identity as Christians, it’s actually an affront to the victims of the bombings in Sri Lanka,” according to Michael Kinsella, the National Director for Aid to the Church in Need Ireland.



President Higgins met with members of the Sri Lankan community living in Ireland to offer his sympathy and solidarity following the Easter Sunday bombings in Sri Lanka.

“The national trend that we’re witnessing is something that’s part of a global trend, where there is a total aversion to acknowledging, let alone respecting, the fact that Christians are the single most persecuted group on the planet,” Mr Kinsella told The Irish Catholic.

Out of the country’s 15 cabinet ministers only Justice Minister Charlie Flanagan posted a personal statements about the attacks. Mr Flanagan wrote: “Shocking & horrific attack targeting Christian Community in Sri Lanka. Thoughts & prayers with victims, survivors & loved ones of deceased.”

Both Simon Harris and Simon Coveney retweeted a statement made by the Department of Foreign Affairs. None of the other ministers mentioned the attack.

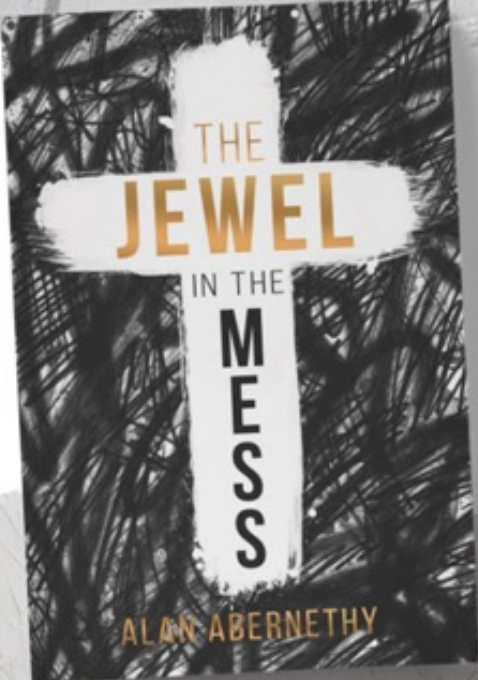
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Cabinet

In comparison eight members of cabinet condemned the Christchurch attacks on Twitter, which left 50 dead, sometimes in several posts.

Mr Varadkar described it as an “Islamaphobic terror attack” and said he spoke to New Zealand’s prime minister about “how we might work together to take on the root causes and enablers of such attacks”.

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Katherine Zappone and Heather Humphreys both gave their “thoughts and prayers” to the victims and other ministers made reference or retweeted related material. All except Mr Flanagan were silent on the attacks in Sri Lanka.

‘Appalling’

However, Foreign Affairs Minister Simon Coveney issued a statement from his department describing the attack as “appalling”.

The attacks are the latest wave of violence against Christians.

The UK Foreign Office estimates that some 215 million Christians face discrimination and violence because of their faith. Violence against Christians is rising dramatically, with an average of 250 killed every month – a doubling of last year’s figure.

The so-called Islamic State claimed responsibility for the Sri Lanka attacks, but local militant Islamist group National

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Thowheed Jamath was initially accused. There are approximately 1.2 million Catholics in Sri Lanka representing around 6.1% of the total population.

‘Extremism and Terrorism are Enemies of all Humanity’ – Imam

Religious communities must stand united in solidarity and show extremists that they will never succeed in dividing them. So said Shayk Dr Umar Al-Qadri, Chair of the Irish Muslim Peace and Integration Council and Chief Imam of the Islamic Centre of Ireland in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, on Sunday last, April 28.

Dr Al-Qadri addressed the congregation before the Cathedral Eucharist, exactly one week to the day since the Easter Day terror attacks on churches and hotels in Sri Lanka which killed 250 people. He expressed solidarity with Christians in Ireland and worldwide. His address in the cathedral echoed a similar visit by Archbishop Michael Jackson to the Islamic Centre of Ireland last month when he addressed members of the Muslim community after Friday Prayers one week after the terror attacks at Mosques in Christchurch in New Zealand.

Dr Al-Qadri said that, as Muslims, they strongly condemned the cowardly attacks against peaceful worshippers and stood in solidarity with the victims of these attacks and their Christian brothers and sisters everywhere.

“An attack on any place of worship is an attack on all places of worship. An attack on any faith community is an attack on all faith communities,” he stated. “These attacks were not



only attacks on Christians but these attacks were attacks on all of us.”

He recalled the terrorist attacks on Mosques in New Zealand on March 15 which saw 50 people killed and spoke of the attack at a Californian Synagogue during the celebration of Passover on Saturday (April 27) in which one worshiper was killed. This came six months after an attack on a Synagogue in Pittsburgh in which 11 people were killed.

“The terrorists behind the Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka claimed to have acted in the name of Islam. How dare they claim to have acted in the name of Islam. These terrorists trampled upon the fundamental teachings of Islam. These terrorists are guilty of committing the biggest blasphemy,” Dr Al-Qadri said.

He continued: “The monsters behind the attacks on innocent human beings are not real Muslims. They do not represent Islam. In fact these monsters do not represent any faith or any community. They only represent extremism and

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terrorism. The same applies to those extremists that kill worshippers in the Mosque and in the Synagogue. They do not represent any faith nor any community. They only represent extremism and terrorism. These two evils are enemies of all humanity. Those behind the attacks are enemies of humanity.”

“We must stand united in solidarity and show that these extremists will never succeed in dividing us. We must also remember that the true essence of all religions is based on our common human values of dialogue, mercy and peace,” he stated.

Dr Al-Qadri said that the Muslims of Sri Lanka had responded to the attacks with a message to extremists who aimed to divide the faithful communities saying: ‘If you attack their Churches we will open our Mosques for them to pray’.

He added: “And this is my message also. To the terrorists that aim to divide us and spread hatred amongst our communities. Your evil efforts will only bring our faith communities together and the message of Peace and Unity will prevail.”

ACNA offended by invitation to Lambeth as a non-member observer

Under the headline “Archbishop of Canterbury invites ecumenical observers to the Lambeth Conference 2020”, the Anglican Communion News Service reports that the breakaway group, the Anglican Church in North America, is invited to Lambeth Conference, John Chilton writes in Episcopal Cafe.

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ACNS says ACNA is not invited as an ecumenical partner, but as a church not part of the Anglican Communion “recognized to different extents by some of the Communion’s provinces”.

The invitation managed to offend Foley because to accept the invitation and serve as an observer is to accept the reality that ACNA isn’t in the Anglican Communion.

[ACNS:](#)

In addition to leaders of Churches in Communion and ecumenical partners, representatives from Churches formed by people who left the Anglican Communion are also being invited to send observers. These churches – the Anglican Church of North America (ACNA), the Anglican Church of Brazil and the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa (REACH-SA) – are not formally part of the

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Anglican Communion but are recognised to different extents by some of the Communion's provinces.

ACNS's report triggered this [ungracious press release from Foley Beach, Archbishop of ACNA](#) and chairman of Gafcon:

Yesterday I received a letter from Archbishop Justin just moments before the invitation was reported online. I read the online report first and was disappointed to see that the original "news" source had furthered a partisan, divisive, and false narrative by wrongly asserting that I left the Anglican Communion. I have never left the Anglican Communion, and have no intention of doing so.

I did transfer out of a revisionist body that had left the teaching of the Scriptures and the Anglican Communion and I became canonically resident in another province of the Anglican Communion. I have never left. For the Anglican Church in North America to be treated as mere "observers" is an insult to both our bishops, many of whom have made costly stands for the Gospel, and the majority of Anglicans around the world who have long stood with us as a province of the Anglican Communion.

Once I have had a chance to review this with our College of Bishops and the Primates Council of the Global Anglican Future Conference I will respond more fully.

Foley transferred out of The Episcopal Church and joined a church, ACNA, established in an overlapping geographic territory. That church has not applied for recognition as a province of the Anglican Communion. To become a province of the Communion requires application to and acceptance by the Anglican Consultative Council.

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1,600 members for Annual Conference of Presbyterian Women

Women from Presbyterian churches in County Donegal will be heading to Belfast next week (9 May) for the Annual Conference of Presbyterian Women (PW), a part of women's ministry within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI).

Around 1,600 women from the 465 PW Groups from all over Ireland are expected to come together to worship, hear from God's Word and to find out how PW's work has made a difference this year at home and overseas.

Presbyterian Women seeks to encourage women to become Christians, to live for Jesus and to actively reach out to others at home and further afield.

Looking forward to the event, which takes place at Assembly Buildings, Belfast, PCI's Women's Ministry and PW Development Officer, Pauline Kennedy, said that all women are welcome to attend the meeting on Thursday 9 May, which takes place from 2pm – 3.45pm and continues with an Evening Celebration from 7.30pm – 9pm. The events are free and there is no need to register.

“As we come together to worship and celebrate all that the Lord is doing throughout His church, we look forward to hearing what He has to say to us through His Word. This year our theme is ‘Restore’ and we will be focusing our hearts on Psalm 23, at the heart of which is the comforting and powerful assurance in verse 3 that ‘He Restores my soul,’” Pauline Kennedy explained.



“God is in the business of restoration. He sees the potential in each one of us to make us into the people He wants us to be. We know that it will not happen fully until Christ returns, but for us as followers of Jesus Christ, the process has begun as he restores our souls each and every day. It is an inspirational theme for this year and we are very excited about it.”

At both meetings, Helen Warnock, the Principal of Belfast Bible College will be speaking on this year’s theme. Helen was appointed at the end of 2016 having previously worked with the local church, Youth For Christ, and as the Director of Scripture Union Northern Ireland.

Speaking to the April edition of the *Presbyterian Herald*, Helen said “I am really looking forward to May and I hope that I say something that resonates and inspires, but equally to be encouraged by the women that attend. I think we will have a really good afternoon and evening because people will come expectant to meet God. So, in some ways, as long

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as I don't get in the way that will happen...I hope that there will be restoration in that space and in that time."

Talking about the keynote speaker, Pauline said that she is passionate about seeing people of all ages develop and grow in their faith and is particularly invested in seeing people uncover their potential as faith, life and work intersect.

"During the afternoon meeting, Helen will give her first talk on the theme 'Restore.' The evening meeting will take the form of a celebration as she gives her second talk and further unpacks God's Word. So please come expectantly joining with women from across Ireland to encounter Christ afresh and take His blessing and restoration hope back to your local churches and communities – to see lives restored," Pauline said.

The conference will also hear from outgoing President Lynda Stothers and how PW and women's ministry have contributed to the life, mission and ministry of the Church at home and overseas. This year's overseas special project, for example, raised £15,000 for International Justice Ministry (IMJ) and its work supporting child victims of cybersex trafficking. In April, Linda saw first-hand IMJ's work in Cambodia. The home mission special project supported Trinity House, PCI's residential care home in Garvagh, with a specific focus on dementia care.

This year's home and overseas special projects will be unveiled at the conference as Presbyterian Women looks forward to welcoming Karen Craig, a member of Kilfennan Presbyterian Church in Londonderry, as their incoming president for 2019/20.

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Today in Christian history

April 30, 304: The last and most punishing anti-Christian edict during Roman Emperor Diocletian's reign is published. The ensuing carnage was so horrific that it was said even the coliseum lions got tired. The man behind the edict, Augustus Galerius, finally issued an edict of toleration on April 30, 311—just Days before dying of a disease known as "being eaten with worms".

April 30, 418: Roman Emperor Honorius (395-423) issues a decree against Pelagianism, a heresy teaching that man can take the initial and fundamental steps towards salvation by his own efforts, apart from divine grace.

April 30, 1562: Two ships carrying 150 Huguenot (French Protestant) immigrants arrive off the coast of northeast Florida. The settlers established a colony at Parris Island, South Carolina, but abandoned it two years later due to a lack of supplies.

April 30, 1822: Hannibal Goodwin, rector of the Episcopal House of Prayer in Newark, New Jersey, is born in Taughannock, New York. Though his main passion was making the Bible "come to life" for the children in his church, he dreamed up 24 inventions during his life and received 15 patents. Today we remember him primarily as the father of celluloid film for photography.

News briefs

+++Walk and talk invite - The Grouped Parishes of St Colmanell's and Portglenone and Drummahaire, Duneane and Ballyscullion invite ladies to take part in Fit for ME Fit for



LIFE 2. This series of walks will be co-ordinated by Amanda McCallion and Sarah Simpson and will take place on Wednesdays 15th, 22th and 29th May. The walks get underway each evening at 7pm, and will be followed by a guest speaker and healthy refreshments at 8pm. Details are at -

<https://connor.anglican.org/2019/04/29/ladies-invited-to-walk-and-talk/?>

+++Director of Ordinands retires - The Rev Canon Will Murphy is to retire as Connor Diocesan Director of Ordinands, a post he has held for the past 27 years.

+++Centenary of St Bartholomew's Parish, Stranmillis - will be celebrating 100 years of worship and witness with a series of events over the weekend of May 10-12.

+++Vacancy for Incumbent of Derriaghy Parish - The Diocese of Connor is seeking to appoint an Incumbent for

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the Parish of Derriaghy, located two miles outside Lisburn. Details on diocesan web site.

+++StreetReach Development Officer - required by Summer Madness & YMCA. Purpose: To provide effective leadership, management, administration and development of the StreetReach project in conjunction with Summer Madness in Larne/Carrickfergus area in July, 2020 and promote youth leadership and participation at a national level.

The project is a collaboration between YMCA and Summer Madness and will initially run till August 2020 (with possibility of an extension)

The person will be:

Responsible to: YMCA Ireland's Deputy National Secretary through Summer Madness Director

Responsible for: An admin person and an intern

Salary scale: YMCA Scale G point 6 £25,028 p.a. Plus 5% employer's pension contribution. (Funded by the Education Authority (EA))

Hours: 35 hours per week. Split between SM Office and Carrick YMCA.

Length of contract: Until end of August, 2020 with possibility of extension.

Visit www.ymca-ireland.net/jobs for further details or email

Please complete and return your application form by email to noelle@ymca-ireland.net to arrive no later than 12noon on Thursday 9th May. Notification will be given that your

churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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application form has been received and interviews will be held on 15th May.

Prayer points

+++From the end of June, Lesley Burton from St Mark's, Dundela will be on a three-week STEP in Nepal with SD Church and Patan Hospital. Pray for Lesley as she uses her physiotherapy skills to support those working with CSMI partners to help vulnerable children.

+++Pray for Rebecca Finlay, community outreach worker at West Kirk Presbyterian Church, Belfast, & for deepening relationships with women in the community who are not yet Christians & opportunities to talk about Jesus with them in daily life.

+++Food for thought - "When we Christians behave badly, or fail to behave well, we are making Christianity unbelievable to the outside world." CS Lewis

+ Please share CNI with your friends
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