



The final stained glass window panel at St. Mark's Church Parish of Ballymacash was dedicated by Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor, on Sunday February 26. Report in this issue.

Pope wants to make trip to South Sudan with Anglican leader

Pope Francis said on Sunday he wants to make a trip to South Sudan together with the head of the Anglican Church to bring attention to the suffering of people stricken by civil war and famine.

Francis made the disclosure in impromptu comments during a visit to Rome's Anglican church, the first to the parish by a pope, to mark the 200th anniversary of its opening.



Pope Francis at All Saints Anglican Church, Rome

"My aides and I are studying the possibility of a trip to South Sudan," the pope said in response to a question about Christian Churches in Africa.

He recalled that last October the Catholic, Episcopalian and Presbyterian bishops came to Rome to discuss the situation in their country and invited him to visit.

Francis said they told him "but don't come alone, come with Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury". Welby is spiritual head of the worldwide Anglican communion, which counts about 85 million members and is the world's third-largest Christian denomination.

"The situation is a bit ugly down there but we have to do it because the three of them (the local bishops from different churches) together want peace and they are working together for peace," Francis said.

Oil-producing South **Sudan**, which became independent in 2011, descended into civil war in December 2013 when a dispute between President Salva Kiir and his sacked deputy Riek Machar ended with fighting, often occurring along ethnic lines. Both sides have targeted civilians, human rights groups say. Kiir's government declared a famine in some parts of the country last week. South Sudan has been hit by the same east African drought that has pushed Somalia back to the brink of famine, six years after 260,000 people starved to death in 2011. Francis said the trip would likely last just one day, which Vatican sources have said would be for security reasons. Francis gave no indication when it could take place but sources have said it would be this year.

Pope: Catholics and Anglicans, brothers and sisters in Christ

Pope Francis on Sunday visited the Anglican Parish of All Saints in Rome. Speaking at the

Church the Pope said, "today, with gratitude to God, we recognize one another as we truly are: brothers and sisters in Christ, through our common baptism. As friends and pilgrims we wish to walk the path together, to follow our Lord Jesus Christ together."

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wish to thank you for your gracious invitation to celebrate this parish anniversary with you. More than two hundred years have passed since the first public Anglican liturgy was held in Rome for a group of English residents in this part of the city. A great deal has changed in Rome and in the world since then. In the course of these two centuries, much has also changed between Anglicans and Catholics, who in the past viewed each other with suspicion and hostility. Today, with gratitude to God, we recognize one another as we truly are: brothers and sisters in Christ, through our common baptism. As friends and pilgrims we wish to walk the path together, to follow our Lord Jesus Christ together.

You have invited me to bless the new icon of Christ the Saviour. Christ looks at us, and his gaze upon us is one of salvation, of love and compassion. It is the same merciful gaze which pierced the hearts of the Apostles, who left the



Anglican Church of All Saints in Rome

past behind and began a journey of new life, in order to follow and proclaim the Lord. In this sacred image, as Jesus looks upon us, he seems also to call out to us, to make an appeal to us: “Are you ready to leave everything from your past for me? Do you want to make my love known, my mercy?”

His gaze of divine mercy is the source of the whole Christian ministry. The Apostle Paul says this to us, through his words to the Corinthians which we have just heard. He writes: “Having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart” (2 Cor 4:1). Our ministry flows forth

from the mercy of God, which sustains our ministry and prevents it losing its vigour.

Saint Paul did not always have an easy relationship with the community at Corinth, as his letters show. There was also a painful visit to this community, with heated words exchanged in writing. But this passage shows Paul overcoming past differences. By living his ministry in the light of mercy received, he does not give up in the face of divisions, but devotes himself to reconciliation. When we, the community of baptized Christians, find ourselves confronted with disagreements and turn towards the merciful face of Christ to overcome it, it is reassuring to know that we are doing as Saint Paul did in one of the very first Christian communities.

How does Saint Paul grapple with this task, where does he begin? With humility, which is not only a beautiful virtue, but a question of identity. Paul sees himself as a servant, proclaiming not himself but Christ Jesus the Lord (v. 5). And he carries out this service, this ministry according to the mercy shown him (v. 1): not on the basis of his ability, nor by relying on his own strength, but by trusting that God is watching over him and sustaining his weakness with mercy. Becoming humble means drawing

attention away from oneself, recognizing one's dependence on God as a beggar of mercy: this is the starting point so that God may work in us. A past president of the World Council of Churches described Christian evangelization as "a beggar telling another beggar where he can find bread". I believe Saint Paul would approve. He grasped the fact that he was "fed by mercy" and that his priority was to share his bread with others: the joy of being loved by the Lord, and of loving him.

This is our most precious good, our treasure, and it is in this context that Paul introduces one of his most famous images, one we can all apply to ourselves: "we have this treasure in earthen vessels" (v. 7). We are but earthen vessels, yet we keep within us the greatest treasure in the world. The Corinthians knew well that it was foolish to preserve something precious in earthen vessels, which were inexpensive but cracked easily. Keeping something valuable in them meant running the risk of losing it. Paul, a graced sinner, humbly recognized that he was fragile, just like an earthen vessel. But he experienced and knew that it was precisely there that human misery opens itself to God's merciful action; the Lord performs wonders. That is how the "extraordinary power" of God works (v. 7).

Trusting in this humble power, Paul serves the Gospel. Speaking of some of his adversaries in Corinth, he calls them “super apostles” (2 Cor 12:11), perhaps, and with a certain irony, because they had criticized him for his weaknesses even as they considered themselves observant, even perfect. Paul, on the other hand, teaches that only in realizing we are weak earthen vessels, sinners always in need of mercy, can the treasure of God be poured into us and through us upon others. Otherwise, we will merely be full of our treasures, which are corrupted and spoiled in seemingly beautiful vessels. If we recognize our weakness and ask for forgiveness, then the healing mercy of God will shine in us and will be visible to those outside; others will notice in some way, through us, the gentle beauty of Christ’s face.

At a certain point, perhaps in the most difficult moment with the community in Corinth, the Apostle Paul cancelled a visit he had planned to make there, also foregoing the offerings he would have received from them (2 Cor 1:15-24). Though tensions existed in their fellowship, these did not have the final word. The relationship was restored and Paul received the offering for the care of the Church in Jerusalem. The Christians in Corinth once again took up their work, together with the other communities

which Paul visited, to sustain those in need. This is a powerful sign of renewed communion. The work that your community is carrying out together with other English-speaking communities here in Rome can be viewed in this light. True, solid communion grows and is built up when people work together for those in need. Through a united witness to charity, the merciful face of Jesus is made visible in our city.

As Catholics and Anglicans, we are humbly grateful that, after centuries of mutual mistrust, we are now able to recognize that the fruitful grace of Christ is at work also in others. We thank the Lord that among Christians the desire has grown for greater closeness, which is manifested in our praying together and in our common witness to the Gospel, above all in our various forms of service. At times, progress on our journey towards full communion may seem slow and uncertain, but today we can be encouraged by our gathering. For the first time, a Bishop of Rome is visiting your community. It is a grace and also a responsibility: the responsibility of strengthening our ties, to the praise of Christ, in service of the Gospel and of this city.

Let us encourage one another to become ever more faithful disciples of Jesus, always

more liberated from our respective prejudices from the past and ever more desirous to pray for and with others. A good sign of this desire is the “twinning” taking place today between your parish of All Saints and All Saints Catholic parish. May the saints of every Christian confession, fully united in the Jerusalem above, open for us here below the way to all the possible paths of a fraternal and shared Christian journey. Where we are united in the name of Jesus, he is there (cf. Mt 18:20), and turning his merciful gaze towards us, he calls us to devote ourselves fully in the cause of unity and love. May the face of God shine upon you, your families and this entire community!

Donegal Church reopens after lightning strike

There was plenty of rain but thankfully no lightning as parishioners arrived at Donegal Parish Church on Sunday morning for a Reopening and Rededication Service following the church’s Christmas Day lightning strike. The church, in Donegal Town, was closed for two months to allow repairs to be carried out, with services being held in the nearby parish hall.

The Rector, Archdeacon David Huss, was waiting to welcome members of the Donegal, Killymard, Lough Eske and Laghey group of parishes as they arrived for the combined family service, in which local children performed most of the readings.

The church had to be completely rewired after the Christmas Day incident, during which electrical circuits and sockets were blown out.

The sound system also had to be replaced. Floodlights were smashed and bricks blasted from walls along the pathway up to the church door.

The damage was estimated at €20,000.

Archdeacon Huss told the congregation that they were thankful to God that there was no injury, no fire and no more destruction. "We're grateful also," he said, "that this morning, as we gather together, it's just an ordinary grey, rainy day; there's no thunderstorm, there's no lightning or anything like that. So, we can put up with a little bit of rain because we've seen much worse than that."

The service also marked the beginning of a week of prayer in the parishes, following the success of a similar initiative early last year.



Rabbi David Singer with DUP leader Arlene Foster at the Jewish plot in Belfast City Cemetery

Jewish graves reconsecrated after Belfast hate attack

The Jewish plot in Belfast City Cemetery has been reconsecrated after 13 graves were vandalised, the Belfast Telegraph reports.

A gang of youths smashed headstones in the west Belfast cemetery last August in what police described as a hate crime.

Some of the graves in the walled-off section date back to 1871.

Among those joining Rabbi David Singer at yesterday's ceremony was DUP leader Arlene Foster.

Rabbi Singer said: "It brings to memory those who used to live here, and those who are here now to celebrate two things.

"The rededication, and the second thing we're celebrating is the friendliness and the efforts that have been put in by Belfast City Council and by the Government to help us get to this particular stage after the vandalism."

Also present was Ulster Unionist Steve Aiken.

He said: "The Jewish community have a long and distinguished history in Northern Ireland and are part of the very fabric of our society.

"We should all be very proud of the role they have played and do all we can to ensure that they are able to live free from harassment from fascists and bigots."

Last week Northern Ireland's Jewish community issued a manifesto for the Assembly elections called the Ten Commitments.

It urged candidates to to fight all racism, including anti-Semitism.

Stained glass window panels dedicated in Ballymacash

The final stained glass window panels at St Mark's Church in the Parish of Ballymacash were dedicated by the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Bishop of Connor. on Sunday February 26. This completes the series of stunning high level window panels at the rear of the church which depict the winged lion, the symbol of St Mark's gospel, which was so beautifully and imaginatively designed by the notable Ulster artist David Esler of Leadlines. Window panels dedicated at the service were donated: In loving memory of both David and Peggy Duffin by their family Valerie, Joan and Frank. In loving memory of Adrian and Mary Roberts by their children Paul, Ralph and Kathy. And by the parishioners of St Mark's, Ballymacash.

Applications invited for organ scholarships

Applications are now invited for scholarships offered by the Connor and Down & Dromore Organ Scholarship Board.



Scholarships are tenable for three years, subject to a satisfactory assessment at the end of the first and second years. Tuition is given approximately fortnightly, free of charge, by one of the Board's panel of tutors, and a certificate is awarded on completion of the course.

The scholarships are intended to train musicians in the service of the Church, in the Anglican tradition, both at the organ and in leading a choir. Tuition in choral training is an integral part of the course.

No previous experience in playing the organ is necessary, but applicants should be proficient on the keyboard, approximately Grade Five

piano or equivalent. There are no upper or lower age limits. Candidates who have previously been unsuccessful are welcome to reapply.

The Board's tutors are Mr Michael McCracken (Down Cathedral), Dr Ian Mills (St Columb's Cathedral Londonderry) and Dr Joe McKee (St Columba's Knock). As far as possible, scholars are placed with a tutor near them. Lessons will be given in the cathedrals/churches as above, or in exceptional circumstances, and with the prior agreement of the Board, at another church designated by the Board.

The Board is usually able to award six scholarships annually, dividing them between the two dioceses. An application form can be [downloaded here](#). Applications for scholarships should be received at the Rectory, 9 Sandelwood Avenue, Coleraine, BT52 1JW by Friday March 31. Auditions will be held on Saturday May 13 at Kilbride Parish Church. Each applicant's rector will be asked for a reference on their suitability for the scheme.

Scripture Union Ireland to launch their first ever film series

Scripture Union Ireland will launch their first ever film series on March 14. 'NUA' is a series of films

which will help and equip young people to take an honest look at the questions they have about Jesus, the Bible and what it means to be a Christian in the world today.

The unique and engaging faith based series is a high quality resource which has been written, reviewed and edited by more than 30 trusted critics including a small inter church theological group, chaplains, clergy, youth and pastoral workers, parents and a focus group of young adults.

The content is the result of many years of engaging with young people, listening to their questions and doubts and helping them explore the essence of the Christian faith and spirituality.

It is a fresh perspective, a different conversation – created in Ireland and hosted by Irishman, Jonny Somerville. It was filmed by one of the best creative video agencies in Dublin and directed by a renowned Irish director. The team combined their unique creative abilities to invest in young people's journey of faith.

The series is aimed at anyone interested in learning more and asking tough questions about the Christian faith but Scripture Union believes it will connect particularly well with young adults.

NUA consists of eight short films which are designed to be viewed over a series of weeks in a school, university, parish or youth context. It has been created to work as a viable supplement for Religious Education Programmes. The materials meet curriculum protocol, adding depth and engagement to RE lessons. NUA is also suitable for groups of friends meeting in a more informal setting.

Scripture Union has produced accompanying materials, such as the NUA Guide for facilitators, the NUA Journal for participants and short training videos to enrich the NUA experience.

You can view the trailer and see the series content outline on the NUA website:

www.nuafilmseries.ie.

News briefs & Upcoming events

+++ 2017 Gospel Rising Music Festival tickets

now on sale - Early Bird Weekender tickets are now on sale for the 2017 Gospel Rising Music Festival which will begin on May 12 Seasoned attendee? Delighted to see you back for more! You know the score; check out the workshops and get booking as quickly as you can. Tell your choir buddies, tell your friends! Never been to Gospel Rising? See <http://gospelrising.com/>

+++ Derry Catholic diocese Vocations

information - If you are interested in finding out more then come to our Vocations Information Day. This is an opportunity for you to take some time to enquire about and discuss your vocation call. The venue is Ardstraw House, 21a Buncrana Road, Derry On Saturday 18 March 2017, 11am – 4pm. Contact the Vocations Director for the Diocese, Fr Paul Farren, on 028 71264087

+++ New intake on C of I theological

foundations course -Thirty-seven students attended the Church of Ireland Theological Institute at the weekend as a two-year training course began. Nineteen men and women from seven dioceses have embarked on the one-year Foundation Course programme, whilst eighteen started the fifth cycle of Reader training lasting two years. The weekend entitled 'Fit for the Purpose' took as its theme a biblical and personal exploration of various matters to do with vocation. The main facilitators were Canon Christina Baxter, former Principal of St John's College Nottingham, the Rev Jenny Corcoran, Senior Distance Learning Tutor at St John's, and Rev Canon Dr Maurice Elliott, Director of CITI.

+++ Cathedral Assistants sought - Christ Church, Dublin is seeking to appoint seasonal

staff to work as Cathedral Assistants with our permanent staff for over the busy summer season. Duties will include conducting tours, welcoming visitors and working at our gift shop. Application closing date: Wednesday 1st March 2017. A detailed job description and job application form are available from our website <http://christchurchcathedral.ie/about/work-us/>

+++ Pioneer Lenten challenge - Many people abstain from alcohol and take the Short-Term Pledge for the duration of Lent. You can make your Lenten pledge by visiting www.pioneerassociation.ie and joining online or by contacting your local Pioneer Members through your Parish Office. Take this opportunity to help someone you know/love with an alcohol or drug problem by offering up your Lenten sacrifice as a prayer for their freedom and well-being. Go for it and make a difference to someone's life!

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