



Taoiseach apologises for ‘hypocritical priest’ remarks

The Taoiseach has apologised for incendiary comments he made yesterday which branded priests as hypocrites.

Speaking in Dublin Castle yesterday, July 4, Leo Varadkar apologised for his remarks where on Tuesday he compared

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Micheál Martin to “one of those parish priests who preaches from the altar, telling us to avoid sin while secretly going behind the altar and engaging in any amount of sin himself”.

Speaking at a meeting with members of the government and representatives of almost 30 different churches and faith communities, the Taoiseach withdrew his statement and said he has a huge respect for the Catholic Church, for priests and their “sacrifice”.

The retraction comes after receiving he backlash from growing number of people who called for him to apologise.

Earlier yesterday Fr Tony Flannery, a founding member of the Association of Catholic Priests which represents over 1,000 clergymen, called on Mr Varadkar to withdraw his comments, branding them “unfair”.

Likewise, Senator Rónán Mullen challenged the Taoiseach on the remarks and said it was “not acceptable, at this moment in our history when clergy are fewer and older but continue to do good work, to make a mocking, stigmatising remark like that, whether for its own sake or in order to attack a political opponent”.

He added that if somebody made a similarly stigmatising throwaway remark about gay community leaders or spokespersons for the travelling community, they would be rightly criticised.

“So if he is mindful of this context, why would the Taoiseach invoke a trope, a stereotype of a hypocritical, sinning priest? At best, it is a decision to play to a very unpleasant gallery of anticlerical people. At worse, it might be the expression of some deep-seated hidden dislike on his part.

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“I hope the Taoiseach will reflect on his remarks and come back with something more generous,” he concluded.

Presbyterian concern at Westminster overriding devolution

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is urging Members of Parliament at Westminster not to bypass the devolved settlement in Northern Ireland by tabling amendments that would alter the abortion or marriage laws on the back of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Bill to be debated on Monday.

Speaking yesterday ahead of Monday’s debate, Rev Trevor Gribben, Clerk of the General Assembly and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, said that it was important to focus simply on the purpose of the legislation and that decisions on other matters affecting Northern Ireland should not be tacked on, but left for consideration by locally elected MLAs.

“It is important that everyone committed to the peace process continues to encourage those engaged in the inter-party talks to restore devolution. The progress that has been made since the beginning of the talks needs to be consolidated. As a result, the August deadline for an Assembly election should be extended by legislation, as it is important that the talks be given every opportunity to succeed.

“This is the aim and should be the sole focus of the Bill coming before Parliament on Monday. It is, therefore, very

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**Rev Trevor
Gribben, Clerk of
the General
Assembly**



unfortunate that some MPs could seek to use this parliamentary process to further their own agenda, for instance, seeking to change the abortion law or to introduce same sex marriage to Northern Ireland by the backdoor, through the amending of this Bill. This would bypass the

devolved settlement that was agreed over 20 years ago. Decisions of this nature affecting Northern Ireland should be made by locally elected MLAs.

“There are many pressing issues to be dealt with, not least those affecting our schools, hospitals, social care and welfare systems. These affect the lives of many of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our society, including the victims of our violent past. Political cherry-picking of issues by MPs, when talks to restore devolution are

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ongoing, would be unhelpful and run contrary to the spirit of devolution and the devolved settlement itself.”

Prayer service remembers ‘huge loss’ after farming tragedies

Hundreds of families and friends who have lost loved ones in “very traumatic circumstances” attended a prayer service in their memory over the weekend.

Over 300 people travelled from across the country to Embrace Farm’s (Farm Accident Support Network) Ecumenical Remembrance Service on Sunday June 30 in the Church of the Most Holy Rosary in Abbeylaxey.

The service is in its sixth year of commemoration for all of the lives lost and affected by farm accidents.

It was led by local clergy from the Church of Ireland and the Catholic Church. Canon Patrick Harvey, Fr Gerard Ahern, Msgr Kevin O’Neill, Rev. Ruth Gill and Fr Michael Kelly all attended.

“The health and safety authority publishes every year the amount of people who have been killed,” said Norma Rohan, who set up Embrace Farm with her husband Brian in 2014.

“Behind the numbers is a person, a family, a Dad, a son, a grandad and they’re important members in their families and they’re a huge loss to their families. They die in very traumatic circumstances which leaves a lasting impact on the families not just from an emotional point of view, but also a practical point of view.”

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She added that if the farmer is tragically killed in an accident, questions must be asked as to what will happen to the farm. She said: "Lots of decisions need to be made and some of those decisions can sometimes lead to further family breakdown.

"So it's a good place for all of these families to come together to talk and to support each other on the different issues that they are facing both emotionally and practically."

Fr John Cummins was given special mention. He presided over the service in 2018 but was tragically killed earlier this year in a freak car accident.

The names of 145 farmers known to have died in farm accidents were read out to the audience which included grieving friends, neighbours and relatives.

At the event Brian and Norma Rohan expressed their great appreciation for the work done by the Board of Embrace Farm and for the assistance they received over the last year from volunteers and sponsors.

Methodist Church votes to move forward with plans to allow same sex marriage

The GB Methodist Conference has passed a motion saying they want same-sex marriage plans to be taken further.

The Conference voted 247 to 48 in favour of allowing, in theory, same-sex weddings to take place on their premises and to be conducted by Methodist ministers.

Resolution 10/8, the relevant vote that was carried, reads: "The Conference consents in principle to the marriage of

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same-sex couples on Methodist premises throughout the Connexion and by Methodist ministers, probationers or members in so far as the law of the relevant jurisdiction permits or requires and subject to compliance with such further requirements, if any, as that law imposes."

This is conditional of it also being voted through at the conference in July 2020.

Chair of the Methodist Evangelicals Together group, David Hull told Premier: "I'm very saddened by that decision. The conference will claim that this is a decision that is being put out as a consultation - and it's right that this is going to be discussed - but conference has signalled its intention that it wishes to move forward in this way and, as Methodists Evangelicals Together, we are very clear that the good news is for all...and we believe that as part of that good news God's plan for creation is either that we are married as one man and one woman for life or that we are single and celebrate just as Jesus was and both of those ways of living are absolutely good news and part of God's good news.

"To move away from that is to move away from the good news."

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Others were delighted at the news, with churches tweeting their support and one observer, author Jessica Ryn posting: "After watching the Methodist Conference live for two days, I was thrilled to just see history being made as the Methodist church in UK voted overwhelmingly in favour of same sex marriage within their church denomination.

C of I Commission calls for action on infected blood compensation

The Church and Society Commission of the Church of Ireland has written to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, to request an increase in welfare payments for people living in Northern Ireland who have been infected or otherwise affected by blood contamination.

This follows an [announcement](#) by the Prime Minister (on 30th April 2019) that the UK Government will increase the financial support for people infected and affected by the scandal who are living in England. The Prime Minister described blood contamination as ‘a tragedy that should never have happened and has caused unimaginable pain and hurt for victims and their families for decades.’ The increase for people supported by the [Northern Ireland Infected Blood Payment Scheme](#) will this year be minimal in comparison to those in the same situation who will benefit from the financial uplift.

In course of its letter, the Commission states: ‘As most of the events being covered by the inquiry relate to a period of direct rule, and this is an issue being dealt with at a national level, then we encourage you to take action. As a church

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body and remembering the number of times that Our Lord “had compassion” then, at the very least, the same compassion could be shown to those who have suffered from a tragedy that should never have happened.’

Primate pays tribute to Irish Church Music Association’s ministry

The Primate of All Ireland has paid tribute to the Irish Church Music Association’s “important ministry”, commending its members for ensuring that “sacred music of beauty and quality continues to be composed, taught, learned, shared and performed to the praise of God.”

In his homily for the opening Mass of the Irish Church Music Association’s Summer School, Archbishop Eamon Martin, who is himself an accomplished musician, addressed the ICMA membership in Maynooth.

He said they knew that the music chosen and the quality of singing and playing must be ‘prayer-ful’ and befitting of worship, capable of lifting people up from much of what is banal and shallow around us “so that we can touch the mystery of the presence of God”.

“You know that when music of beauty is chosen, which is inspired by our faith, and is offered to God from the very best of our efforts, God can work through it to inspire the souls of others, nourish their faith, and bring them closer to him.”

Speaking to the assembled musicians, he spoke of the importance and significance of silence.

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College Chapel, St Patrick's, Maynooth

“If music is carefully selected and beautifully offered, it can open up a space of silence which God can fill,” he said and added, “Silence is not empty.”

“Silence does indeed open us up to the presence of what might otherwise go unnoticed or hidden. It is in the silence in particular that God speaks. In the quiet we can find him whom our heart seeks.”

Dr Martin acknowledged that the difficulty for all nowadays is finding any opportunity for deep silence and listening.

“Even when we do shut out much of the external noise and clamour that tends to fill every second of life nowadays, we

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often find there is an interior din – our minds and hearts and passions racing, distracted, restless.”

He wondered whether in this “screen culture”, with all the social media that gate-crashes people’s every moment, “are we are uncomfortable with silence and losing our capacity to sit still, to be at peace?”

Without silence, “We are sadly therefore missing out on so many opportunities to notice the ‘still small voice’ of God, gently whispering in our hearts.”

The Archbishop acknowledged that it might seem strange for him to be talking so much about silence at the golden jubilee of the Irish Church Music Association!

“Here you are, learning new and beautiful music to enhance our liturgies for the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful, and I’m rattling on about silence!”

But, he continued, good musicians know all about the “sound of silence” and how it can be used to add colour and beauty: the pauses that create expectation, how a note lingering in the heights of a church building can evoke the sacred and draw listeners into contemplation.

“Was it Mozart who said something about music not being so much in the notes, as in the spaces in between? In many ways good sacred music creates sacred interior spaces for silence, reflection and of course, prayer and meditation.”

Recalling the Second Vatican Council’s decree on the liturgy, Archbishop Martin said it recognised the importance of observing “a reverent silence” at what it called “the proper times” in the liturgy.

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“It went so far as to state that this was to help ‘promote active participation’. In other words, a congregation might participate in the silence as much as in the prayers, readings and spoken responses of the Mass.”

The Primate concluded by congratulating the ICMA on its 50th anniversary.

The association was founded in November 1969 to support the work of musicians working in the field of liturgical music in Ireland.

Through training, publication and dissemination of information, the ICMA strives to improve standards and encourage musicians in their service of God and the community.

Over 100 singers and musicians from around the country are attending the 50th Annual Irish Church Music Association’s summer school in Maynooth between Wednesday 3 July and Friday 5 July on the theme ‘Rejoice and Sing’.

This year the summer school was preceded by a two-day jubilee conference, which was held in partnership with the National Centre for Liturgy.

The conference reflected on how music in the liturgy has changed over the past 50 years, and how it has evolved in practice within parishes throughout the country since Vatican II.

Speaking as the jubilee conference opened, chairperson of the ICMA, Fr Turlough Baxter, said, “2019 is a particularly exciting time for the Irish Church Music Association marking 50 years of our annual summer school. Our success to date

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is drawn from the association being a family of people involved in music throughout the country – women and men who are deeply dedicated to the enrichment of parish liturgies. All of us in the association draw strength from coming together and by sharing our skills and faith.”

He added, “This year we celebrate 50 years of building this family. Our opening two-day conference is an opportunity to revisit why we use music in our liturgies, how we can move forward in a changing Church in Ireland, and how music unites a community and keeps worship alive.”

The guest director of this year’s summer school is Fr Michael Joncas, liturgical theologian and composer of contemporary Catholic music, best known for his hymn, ‘On Eagle’s Wings’.

Several key Irish composers will present workshops during this year’s summer school including Ephrem Feeley, Bernard Sexton, Orla Barry, Ciaran Coll, Sr Marie Dunne CHF and Dr John O’Keeffe.

A new publication will be launched to commemorate 50 years of the ICMA and to honour influential members of the association over this time span.

The ICMA is supported by the Irish Bishops’ Conference and is based in the National Centre for Liturgy, St Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.

It has a membership of approximately 250 people, made up of people from choirs around the country and those interested in church music.

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See www.irishchurchmusicassociation.com for information on membership of the association and for a complete timetable for this year's summer school.

July 05 - Today in Christian history

July 5, 1439: Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholics sign the Decree of Union at the Council of Florence, creating an official union between the two churches. Popular sentiment in Constantinople opposed the decree, and when the Turks captured the city, the union ceased. However, the council's definition of doctrine and its principles of church union (unity of faith, diversity of rite) have proved useful in subsequent church talks.

July 5, 1962: H. Richard Niebuhr, theologian, Yale professor, and author of *Christ and Culture* (1951), dies at age 67.

July 04 - News briefs

+++ C of I video on the first Mark of Mission - A two-minute video from the Church of Ireland Council for Mission shows how two parishes – in Belfast and Co. Sligo – are living out the first Mark of Mission by proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

As part of the Council's *Radiant Faith* initiative, this is the first in a series of videos to be produced over the next few years on the Anglican Communion's **Five Marks of Mission**:

1. **Tell** – to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. **Teach** – to teach, baptise and nurture new believers

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3. **Tend** – to respond to human need by loving service

4. **Transform** – to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

5. **Treasure** – to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth



The video features interviews with the Revd Trevor Johnston (Rector of [All Saints', University Street](#) - photo above), and the Ven Isaac Hanna, Malcolm Young and Alan Williamson (who serve at [St Columba's Church](#),

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Drumcliffe). The video has been produced by Jonny Somerville.

Church of Ireland Council for Mission

Please [click here](#) to view the Council for Mission objectives as established by General Synod in 2004.

Please [click here](#) for Council for Mission committee news. More information is also available on the Council's [facebook](#) site.

+++ Limerick Mission project in Lebanon - A recent meeting of Limerick ,Killaloe& Ardfert Diocesan Council For Mission was focussed on a Tearfund Project for Mission Sunday 24th November 2019. A Tearfund presentation was made by Ms Emma Lynch. Having given the meeting a brief history of Tearfund Ireland, and the range of projects which they are supporting, Emma described in some detail our joint Mission Sunday project for 2019. The population of Lebanon is similar to Ireland, yet 25% of them are classified as refugees, mostly due to the civil war in neighbouring Syria. In the Bekaa valley alone 70 % of the Syrian refugee children aged between 6 & 14 are not in school, largely due to the lack of facilities and pressure of numbers. An initiative was taken by the local Christian Churches to try to rectify this problem, and with the aid of Tearfund , have established a number of schools in the Bekaa Valley using very limited resources. Emma went on to describe the design, objectives and goals of the project which will be our Mission Project for this year, including the methods of monitoring progress and a budget summary.

+++ Vote for your favourite hymn - Hymns mean so much to so many people and if you have a favourite, BBC's Songs of Praise would like to know. Choose your all time number

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one from the 100 hymns and worship songs featured on Songs of Praise over the last five years. The first one on the list, 'Abide with Me' is a recording of St. Macartin's Cathedral Choir, Enniskillen. The UK's favourite top 10 hymns - and the winner - will be revealed in a special episode later this year.

The vote is open until midnight 30 June 2019. Just click on the link below to vote;

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3DnJQz7zsF1JrB3rZ8yQ86w/vote-for-your-favourite-hymn>



+++ Honorary degree for former Moderator of Church of Scotland - Very Rev Susan Brown has been awarded with an honorary doctorate by the University of the Highlands and Islands as part of their annual graduation ceremony. The honorary awards recognise those who have made outstanding achievements in their field; for the contribution they have made to the life of the Highlands and Islands or

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society at large; or for their service to the university. The former Moderator was chosen for her contribution to the Church and to the communities of the Highlands and Islands.

+++ Food for thought - Running water never disappointed. Crossing water always furthered something. Stepping stones were stations of the soul. Seamus Heaney

July 05 News Links

[Bishop hits out at Varadkar's 'very hurtful' Dáil comments about priests sinning behind the altar](#)
[thejournal.ie](#)

He said it was “ironic” that a **church** state dialogue was being held today in Dublin Castle with representatives from different religions from across the ...

['Priests have feelings as well as votes', says ACP after Varadkar's 'sinning priest' comment](#)

Irish Times

Speaking to The Irish Times he wondered if Mr Varadkar would have said such a thing about a **Church of Ireland** minister. The bishop of Waterford and ...

[Details of proposed church-state covenant expected at dialogue meeting](#) - Irish Times

[A priesthood of all believers?](#)

The Irish News

Ireland's Catholic bishops have been too slow to address the problems of a ... and left many unanswered questions for those who still go to **Church**. that Catholic parents and grandparents have no access to reliable **news** media, ...

[Ireland can manage with the church but can it do without myths?](#)

Irish Times

In an era of fake **news** and state-sponsored disinformation campaigns, and when the very notion of truth is attacked by fascist and authoritarian forces, ...

[Senator pays tribute to The Very Reverend Dean Philip Knowles of Kildare](#)

Leinster Leader

Independent Senator Victor Boyhan has paid tribute to the late **Church of Ireland** Rev Dean Philip Knowles, who was in charge of several parishes in ...

[False Church stories show it's time to say 'enough already'](#)

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The Irish Catholic

The sub-text was, of course, clear: the Catholic **Church** preaches stringent rules ... The truth is that **Ireland** is now awash with a type of agenda-driven ...

Restoring, converting historic Dublin **church** wins Collen Construction man top **Ireland** award

GCR

A project to build a seven-story steel-and-glass office complex around – and into – an historic Dublin **church**, while completely enveloping the old ...

Death by doughnuts not to blame for Catholics hitting early graves

Irish Examiner

The percentage of **Church of Ireland** farmers with farms of 200 acres or more barely changed in those years and was still five times greater than the ...

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