



Pope Francis touches a painting depicting Virgin Mary at the end of his weekly general audience in St Peter's square

By video Pope tells Portuguese people his Fatima visit today is pilgrimage of 'peace and hope'

During the visit, the pope is to preside over the canonization ceremony of two of the young

seers, Blessed Francisco and Blessed Jacinta Marto.

In a video message to the people of Portugal, Pope Francis said he would visit Fatima as a pilgrim of peace and to entrust the world to Mary's immaculate heart.

"I come to you in the joy of sharing with you the Gospel of hope and peace," the Pope said in the message released by the Vatican May 10.

Pope Francis was to embark on a two-day visit to Fatima May 12-13 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Marian apparitions, which began May 13, 1917, when three shepherd children reported seeing the Virgin Mary.

During the visit, the pope was to preside over the canonization ceremony of two of the young seers, Blessed Francisco and Blessed Jacinta Marto.

In his message, the Pope thanked the Portuguese people and authorities for understanding his "decision to limit the visit to the moments and acts proper to a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Fatima" at "the feet of the Virgin Mother."

“I know that you wanted me to come to your houses and communities, your villages and cities,” he said. “Needless to say, I would have liked to accept, but it isn’t possible for me.”

At the site of the apparitions, the Pope said he intends to present Mary with a “bouquet of the most beautiful ‘flowers’ that Jesus entrusted to my care: that is, my brothers and sisters from all over the world who were redeemed by his blood.”

“I will give you all to Our Lady, asking her to whisper to each one of you: ‘My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God,’” the pope said.

Pope Francis said he was grateful to know that the people of Portugal are preparing to accompany him on the pilgrimage through prayer, which “makes our hearts grow and prepares us to receive God’s gifts.”

“Prayer illuminates one’s eyes to know how to see others as God sees them, to love them as he loves them,” the pope said.

Pope Francis’s prayer at the site of the Fatima apparitions

The Catholic News Service has produced an English translation of the prayer Pope Francis has written and will recite at the Little Chapel of the Apparitions in Fatima today May 12. Pope Francis: Hail Queen, Blessed Virgin of Fatima, lady of the Immaculate Heart, refuge and path that leads to God! Pilgrim of the Light that radiates from your hands, I give thanks to God the Father who, at all times and...

Labour's draft manifesto promises to legalise abortion in Northern Ireland

A Labour government would legalise abortion in Northern Ireland, according to a leaked draft of the party's manifesto.

The document states that Labour would “continue to ensure a woman’s right to choose a safe, legal abortion – and we will legislate to extend that right to women in Northern Ireland.”

The 1967 Abortion Act, which legalised the practice in Britain, never applied to Northern Ireland, which only permits the practice when a



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woman's life is at risk, or there is a permanent or serious risk to her mental or physical health.

The matter is devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly in Stormont, however with the future of the power-sharing deal currently uncertain, there is a chance Westminster could reassume direct rule.

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direct rule, or whether it would impose it on a sitting Northern Ireland Assembly.

Previous attempts by Westminster politicians to force abortion on Northern Ireland have ended in failure, with a 2008 proposal blocked by then Leader of the House of Commons Harriet Harman over fears it could lead to the House of Lords challenging the existing UK law.

According to the BBC, there were 16 abortions in Northern Ireland in 2014/15, compared to 184,571 in England and Wales.

The Labour Party traditionally does not run candidates in Northern Ireland.

Ulster rugby legend Ruan wants you to get on your bike for Tearfund

Ulster and South African rugby star, Ruan Pienaar – well known for his Christian faith – will soon be leaving these shores for a new life in France.

Ruan has made no secret of the fact that he had no desire to leave. Nor has he ever made any secret of his Christian faith. And there will be another proclamation of this before he departs.

He is asking cyclists to join him in Tearfund's Cycle for Freedom on Wednesday, June 14. It's a cycle along the North Coast, the aim being to help protect up to 2,500 at-risk children across the globe.

This is not for the faint-hearted or weak-limbed; it is a 90km test of strength and stamina. In addition, you must be able to raise sponsorship of at least £1,000.

Ruan and some of Northern Ireland's leading two-wheel enthusiasts want any who are keen, proficient and fit road-cyclists to join them on a ride which will be physically demanding as well as scenically spectacular.

Starting in Coleraine at the Causeway Coast Vineyard, the cyclists will head towards the Glens of Antrim via the coastal route, before returning via rural roads.

If you are over 18, a keen road cyclist and able to raise £1,000 in sponsorship, this is for you.

Don't miss this fantastic opportunity to meet Ruan, get on your road bike and contribute to the target figure of £90,000 for children at serious risk of trafficking, disease and disaster.

The 88–times–capped Springbok – a World Cup winner in 2007 – has enthralled and delighted rugby supporters in his adopted province since coming to these shores in 2010.

In seven outstanding seasons he has worn the Ulster shirt on 141 occasions and scored 877 points.

His personal accolades include PRO 12 Player of the Year. And underlining the fact that he gave his all for the entirety of his time here, 2016–17 saw him win PRO 12 Try of the Season award, coupled with inclusion in the PRO 12 Dream Team.

He has just completed an outstanding personal hat-trick by being named Ulster Rugby's Heineken Personality of the Year for the season now ending.

His departure, for Montpellier, is the result of a highly controversial decision by the Irish Rugby Football Union not to extend his Ulster contract.

That is a ruling which has been roundly and loudly criticised and condemned by all sections of the media as well as rugby followers from all four provinces of Ireland.

Community grant gives Connor Parish Hall a needed makeover

The Parish Hall of St Saviour's, Connor, has been given a new lease of life after being awarded funding from the NI Department for Communities.

Arlene Foster, then First Minister, and Paul Girvan (former Communities Minister) announced last October that funding of £500,000 would be made available under a scheme to support improvement works for community halls across Northern Ireland.

The funding aimed at enabling community organisations in urban and rural areas to undertake minor works and improvements to their premises.

Mrs Foster said community halls brought immeasurable benefits to local people. "These halls are used by many community and voluntary organisations to provide vital services and are a place for local people to come together and strengthen relationships.

Mr Girvan said: "A Community Hall is much more than bricks and mortar for those who use them. They provide a gathering place where people

can feel involved in their local community and supported in their lives.”

St Saviour’s, Connor, received a grant of £13,070 which has allowed the parish to paint the hall inside and out, replace the single glazed windows with double glazing throughout, and purchase and hang new curtains and stage curtains. The toilets have also been refurbished.

The rector, the Rev Ian Magowan, said: “It really is a tidy job. The double glazing is a great boost.”

The hall was hand built by parishioners in the 1970s, and the work carried out thanks to the grant means that it will be fit for purpose as a community hub for years to come.

Groups which use the hall on a regular basis include the ‘Women on Wednesday’ ladies group, the bowls club, a senior citizens group and the Young Farmers visited recently for their prize-giving.

Ian said: “It was not as if the hall was falling down but there was definitely work needed done. This will make is a much more comfortable environment for everyone who uses it, and the new windows, painted walls and curtains

certainly enhance the appearance of the whole place.”

Disadvantaged communities in Burundi given major boost by Mothers' Union

A Mothers' Union programme to reach the most disadvantaged communities in Burundi has produced startling results bucking the trend in one of the world's poorest countries.

The Mothers' Union Literacy and Financial Education Programme [LFEP], which has been jointly funded by Comic Relief, has helped over 14,000 men and women to read and write, as well as furnishing many with business skills and the confidence to advocate on issues such as Gender Based Violence and access to education for women and young girls.

The LFEP programme has been in operation for three years and in that time has identified and trained 360 local facilitators, resulting in 14,178 men and women receiving accreditation for literacy and numeracy skills, enabling them to setup up their own businesses and take on leadership roles in the community.



Nicola Lawrence, Head of Programmes at Mothers' Union, said; "Since the Literacy and Education Programme began it has exceeded its original target by over 30%, meaning more lives have been changed and families transformed than we thought possible. Despite the ongoing political unrest in Burundi, we are now considering ways to extend the LFEP throughout the country."

Nicola added, "Traditionally, women in Burundi have been marginalised and undervalued but more than three quarters of those enrolling onto LFEP have been women and girls. The inclusive approach we have taken has enabled many, including widows and the disabled, who have

been excluded from community based programmes in the past, to take part and even to hold leadership positions within the programme and wider community.”

The evaluation team from Mothers’ Union were able to tell the story of Minani Gilberte, a 32 year old mother of five. They said, “Using a small loan Gilberte was able to start a business of selling bananas and banana juice, which is now thriving. Before Gilberte entered this programme, she was mistreated by her husband but having seen that the business was evolving Gilberte joined forces with her husband and now they work together.”

The LFEP has also helped women to grow in confidence. One woman, Goretti, from Gitega in central Burundi, said, “I used to be shy and thought that I was not meant to speak in public. I was always looking for a man to share my ideas on my behalf. But since I joined the programme and realised that I can speak for myself, not only can I express my ideas, but I have been elected leader and I speak on behalf of others.”

Women have been encouraged to use their new found literacy skills to participate in campaigns, such as 16 Days of Activism, to end Gender Based Violence and increase access to education, which is hampering development as

only 8% of women in rural areas[2] are shown to have access to education. The change in gender attitudes brought about through LFEP, as well as subsequent campaigns against early marriage and gender discrimination in schooling, help to ensure that more girls in future will have an opportunity for education alongside their male counterparts.

The MU Literacy project has been generously supported by the Church of Ireland's Bishops' Appeal as well as by members and branches in Ireland.

News briefs

+++ Service of Wholeness and Healing - 14

May 2017 7.00 pm - 8.30. [St Eunan's Cathedral, Raphoe](#), The Diamond, Raphoe, County Donegal, Ireland

+++ Music in May at Christ Church, Lisburn -

Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, is hosting two lunchtime concerts during May. These take place on May 16 and May 23. Full details in the poster below. Concerts start at 1.15pm and everyone is very welcome. May 16 @ 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

+++ Una Voice in concert in Antrim - All

Saints' Parish Church, Antrim, hosts Una Voce

and the Lisburn Camerata in concert with guest Brian McCrossan, baritone, on Friday May 19. Admission 8.00 includes refreshment.

+++ Kilbride recital series - St Bride's Church of Ireland, Kilbride Road, Doagh, presents a series of recitals on Sunday May 21 from 3pm-4.30pm. Featuring performances of a mix of classical and popular literature by Beth Aiken, Organ and Piano (Director of Music and Organist, St Bride's) and by current scholars in the Down & Dromore and Connor Organ Scholarship Scheme. Admission is free with a retiring collection for the development of the music programme for the church's 150th anniversary (June 2018). For further information, please contact kilbridemusic@gmail.com St Bride's Parish Church, Kilbride Road Doagh, [Google Map](#)

+++ Dromore Canon installed -The Rev Bryan Martin has been installed as the new Canon of Dromara. The Service of Installation took place at The Cathedral of Christ the Redeemer, Dromore, on Monday night. Prior to the Installation the Rev Philip Thompson had preached a sermon based on the words found in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah, verses 6–15. The Rev Thompson, who said he regarded it as being

“a privilege and an honour to have been invited to speak in this beautiful Cathedral on such an occasion,” is Minister of Waringstown Presbyterian Church.

Music in May 2017

at Christ Church, Lisburn



Tuesday 16th May at 1.15pm
Friends School Musical Showcase
with Philip Elliott (organist)

Tuesday 23rd May at 1.15pm
The award-winning choir of
Pond Park Primary School
Laura Kerr (conductor) &
Geoffrey Cherry (piano)

EACH CONCERT LASTS APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES

Admission FREE - Retiring Donations Appreciated
Lunches are available in the Parish Halls before each concert.
To book lunch, please contact the Parish Office on 028 9267 3271.
Limited Car Parking Available

Today in Christian History, May 12

May 12, 1792: Father of Modern Missions William Carey publishes his highly influential (though deplorably titled) book on the importance of evangelism, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens in which the Religious State of the Different Nations of the World, the Success of Former Undertakings, and the practicability of Further Undertakings, are Considered.*

May 12, 1861: Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic," published in the *Atlantic Monthly* three months earlier, is first performed at Fort Warren, Massachusetts, during a flag-raising ceremony for new Union recruits.

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