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A choral Christmas with Cappella Caeciliana at Hillsborough Castle

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Cappella Caeciliana – one of Northern Ireland’s most original choirs, will bring the magic of Christmas to Hillsborough Castle, with a specially created programme of festive readings, poetry and choral music that are sure to get you well and truly into the spirit of the season!

During the interval, guests can enjoy a festive drink in the castle’s grand and elegant State Rooms, with our expert Explainers on-hand to share the rich, inspiring and often surprising history of this working royal residence.

Cappella Caeciliana was founded on the feast of St Cecilia 1995 and has sung liturgies and concerts all over Northern Ireland as well as performing in Dublin, Galway, Scotland, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Austria and the USA.

The choir has made five CD recordings and have performed on many occasions for BBC Radio 3, Radio 4 and Radio Ulster and on BBC and ITV television. Cappella has performed with the Ulster Orchestra and with many renowned individual artists including Sir James MacMillan, Carlos Acosta, Eamonn Dougan, Stephen Layton, and The Priests, the latter being founder members of the choir.

Limited onsite parking is available. Parking for blue-badge holders can be arranged on request in advance.

Adult: £35. Concession: £32.50 (seniors and under 25s, students and Historic Royal Palaces Members). Tickets must be pre-booked in advance. Doors open at 19:15 for 19:45 start. All children must be over 12 years old and accompanied by a parent/guardian. Details of booking at -

<https://www.hrp.org.uk/hillsborough-castle/explore/a-choral-christmas-at-the-castle/#gs.UImBPYA>

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Gender based violence highlighted in Mothers' Union display in Derry and Raphoe

Derry and Raphoe Mothers' Union is presenting a display entitled 'Souls of our Shoes' in Saint Columb's Cathedral, Londonderry, from 25th to 28th November, and in Saint Eunan's Cathedral, Raphoe, on 29th and 30th November. This coincides with the annual international '16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence' campaign.

MU invite you to join them in faith and solidarity for all who suffer abuse of any kind within relationships. This thought-provoking and evocative exhibition is open to the public each day from 10am to 4pm (although the exhibition in Raphoe will also be open from 6–8pm on Thursday 29th November). The physical shoes in this exhibition are accompanied by comments from those who have walked away from and survived abuse. Other comments come from those who journey with them.

... with timely help, many can escape from their abusive situation, rebuild their confidence, and live in safety.



**The All-Ireland
President of
Mothers' Union,
Phyllis Grothier**

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Phyllis Grothier, All-Ireland President of Mothers' Union, says: "A particular focus of our work in Ireland is to raise awareness of the scourge of domestic abuse and its enormous effect on the lives of families both locally and globally. We recognize that one of the greatest difficulties around the issue of abuse is the lack of awareness of the impact it has on all who are affected – the abused, whether male or female, the children and the perpetrator. We recognize that domestic abuse is an issue for all sections of society, regardless of class or religion.

"Members of Mothers' Union offer practical and prayerful support to families. We reach into our communities through support for refuges and care centres throughout the country, and by vigils organized in every Church of Ireland diocese during the '16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence' in November/December each year. Ultimately, we would like to rid our society of domestic abuse. In the meantime, we know that with timely help, many can escape from their abusive situation, rebuild their confidence, and live in safety."

Parish coffee mornings raise over €15,500 for local charities

The All Saints Thursday coffee morning celebrated their second anniversary on All Saints Day, Thursday November 1.

What makes the coffee morning so special is the warm welcome extended to everyone without any strings attached.

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Rev Canon Alastair Graham with Marion and Arthur O'Toole, who prepare the cakes and other treats for the weekly coffee mornings at All Saints Church. They are holding a list of the charities that have benefited from the funds raised at the event in the last two years

All voluntary financial contributions are donated to local charities and €15,500 has been raised over the two years.

The delicious cakes and other delights for the palate are generously prepared by Arthur and Marion O'Toole and given as their gift each week.

The parish rector, Revd Canon Alastair Graham, said: "At the heart of the Christian community is hospitality and the coffee mornings are an excellent example of hospitality in action.

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“Good conversation and friendly company are much in evidence every Thursday and the midday prayers provide an opportunity for quiet discernment and thoughtful prayer.”

Revd Graham extended, on behalf of the Church of Ireland Parish, a warm welcome to everyone living in Mullingar and the surrounding areas to call in any Thursday and said the coffee mornings were becoming a very important ministry in the parish.

Charities that have benefited are:

St Vincent de Paul, €1,335.19; Good2Talk, €1,510.25; St Dominick's Meals on Wheels, €2,510.35; St Brigid's School, €2,383.15; TEAM, €3,372.22; North Westmeath Hospice, €2,459.87; Helium Art, €367.67; Col Orphan Society, €660.50; Mullingar Mental Health, €936.71.

Portadown parish digitises 100 years of parish magazines including key WW1 letters

Seagoe Parish is in the process of digitising the first 30 years of their parish magazine which first went into production 100 years ago.

The Portadown parish has a large and very important archive of letters from the front by Colonel Blacker and others, many of which appear in the pages of the magazine. Blacker was a distinguished soldier, initially commanding the 9th Battalion of the Royal Irish Fusiliers in France and Flanders from October 1915 to March 1917. For this he was awarded the DSO, mentioned in despatches three times,

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and was made an Officer of the Legion d'Honneur and awarded the Croix de Guerre (France). He was also a leading figure in the anti-Home Rule movement and in the Ulster Volunteer Force.

The parish archive, which contains bound copies of every edition of the magazine, attracted the interest of local historians who suggested the digitisation. At £10,000 it is an expensive undertaking but half of the cost will be met by the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of a history project to accompany the restoration of the church tower. This work is also underway and will cost almost £170,000.

In the January 1916 edition of the magazine a news section mentions, among other things, the large funeral of a 'youthful hero', Lance-Corporal Samuel Dillon of the 9th Battalion R.I.F. and the visits of Colonel Blacker to The Soldiers' Rest at Portadown Station.

On a lighter note it comments: "One effect of the war, noticeable in the Parish, is a great increase in the number of marriages. Khaki weddings are becoming quite common in the Parish Church." The digital copies will eventually be placed on a website where everyone will be able to access this historical treasure-trove.

Christmas Come and Sing with John Rutter

John Rutter, one of the world's best-loved and most successful composers, will lead a Christmas Come and Sing on Saturday 8 December from 2.30-5.00 pm in the

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magnificent surroundings of St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast.

Organised by the Charles Wood Festival of Music, this is Rutter's only such event in Northern Ireland in 2018 and promises to be a real treat for singers and choir members of all levels.

The poster features a blue and green geometric background with white snowflake borders at the top and bottom. On the left is the Charles Wood Festival of Music logo, which includes a stylized church icon and the text 'Charles Wood Festival of Music'. On the right, the text reads: 'THE CHARLES WOOD FESTIVAL OF MUSIC PRESENTS A CHRISTMAS COME AND SING WITH JOHN RUTTER'. Below this, it states 'The Composer's only appearance in Northern Ireland this year!'. The event details are: 'VENUE: ST ANNE'S CATHEDRAL, BELFAST', 'DATE: SATURDAY 8th DECEMBER', and 'TIME: 2.30-5PM PRICE: £20'. It also lists 'Including seasonal favourites: Star Carol, Jesus Child, Candlelight Carol and more' and 'With special guests: Cappella Caecilians'. A note says 'Copies of music will be provided'. At the bottom, there is contact information: 'Booking details at: www.charleswoodfestival.org', 'For enquiries or to book contact: Visit Belfast Welcome Centre, 9 Donegal Square North, Belfast BT1 5GB T: +44 (0) 28 9224 6629 E: info@visitbelfast.com W: www.visitbelfast.com', and opening hours for June-September, October, and May.

Rutter has often been invited to compose music for special occasions, most memorably for the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, which featured his wonderful anthem, This Is The Day, but it is perhaps for his Christmas music that he is best known to choirs and congregations.

Indeed, Rutter was only 18 when he composed what would become one of his signature pieces, the infectious *Shepherd's Pipe Carol*. Little did he know at the time, but this was just the first in a series of classic carol settings he was destined to compose and arrange, and works such as *Nativity Carol*, *Star Carol*, *Candlelight*

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Carol and The Very Best Time Of Year, have ensured that Rutter's name is now virtually synonymous with Christmas time.

Booking is essential as places are limited. Copies of music will be supplied on loan and may be purchased.

Tickets, which cost just £20, are available from the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre, 9 Donegall Square North, Belfast, BT1 5GB; Telephone 02890246609; Email info@visitbelfast.com; Website www.visitbelfast.com; and via www.charleswoodsummerschool.org

Diocese of London gears up for church-planting drive

Nineteen London Anglican churches have been named as 'resource churches' aimed at become centres for growth and church-planting.

The move is part of the Diocese of London's strategy aimed at revitalising parish churches and starting new worshipping communities.

The churches that have been selected will receive a 'planting curate', a three-year posting that will see them trained in the resource church before planting another.

These curates will be prepared to start new worshipping communities or help revitalise parish churches around the

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**The
Diocese of
London is
driving a
church-
planting
strategy.**



diocese, as well as being fully trained to incumbent

status and deployable throughout the Church of England.

Among the churches are All Souls, Langham Place and St Martin-in-the-Fields. Holy Trinity Brompton and St Helen's Bishopsgate are classed as National Resource Churches.

A grant awarded to London from the Strategic Development Fund will finance 15 of these posts. In addition, the Diocese of London will assign curates from their existing diocesan allocation as planting curates in these resource churches over the next six years.

The Bishop of Islington, Ric Thorpe, is working to expand the scheme over the next few years, including in partnership with other dioceses.

He said: 'I am so excited to see churches in London that feel called to give away leaders, people and resources to bless and grow the wider Church. These resource churches will join in with our strategy to grow and plant churches in new

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places, in new ways, to reach new people. I look forward to seeing this first stage implemented as we support churches across the diocese to multiply disciples and congregations.'

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, said: 'London is a wonderfully diverse diocese, growing in both depth and breadth of ministry. I've been encouraged to witness how churches of all traditions and sizes are exploring different ways to reach out to their communities. London resource churches will play a key role in continuing to revitalise, expand and support mission and ministry in parishes across the capital.'

Helping the poor is not a fad but a duty, says Pope

As the rich get richer, the increasing misery and cries of the poor are ignored every day, Pope Francis has said.

“We Christians cannot stand with arms folded in indifference” or thrown up in the air in helpless resignation, the pope said in his homily on November 18, the World Day of the Poor.

“As believers, we must stretch out our hands as Jesus does with us,” freely and lovingly offering help to the poor and all those in need, the pope said at the Mass in St Peter’s Basilica. About 6,000 poor people attended the Mass as special guests; they were joined by volunteers and others who assist disadvantaged communities.

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After the Mass and Angelus, the Pope joined some 1,500 poor people in the Vatican's audience hall for a multi-course lunch. Many parishes, schools and volunteer groups across Rome also offered a number of services and meals for the poor that day.

God always hears the cries of those in need, the Pope said in his homily at the Mass, but what about "us? Do we have eyes to see, ears to hear, hands outstretched to offer help?"

Pope Francis urged everyone to pray for the grace to hear the cries of all the poor: "the stifled cry of the unborn, of starving children, of young people more used to the explosion of bombs than happy shouts of the playground."

May people hear the cry of the abandoned elderly, those who lack any support, refugees and "entire peoples deprived even of the great natural resources at their disposal," he said.

Referring to the Gospel story of the poor man begging for scraps, Pope Francis many people today are just like Lazarus and "weep while the wealthy few feast on what, in justice, belongs to all. Injustice is the perverse root of poverty."

Every day, he said, the cry of the poor becomes louder, but it is increasingly ignored. Their cries are "drowned out by the din of the rich few, who grow ever fewer and more rich," he said.

The Pope reflected on St Matthew's account of what Jesus did after he fed thousands with just five loaves and two fish.



The passage (Mt 14: 22-32) explains that instead of gloating or basking in the glory of successfully feeding so many people, Jesus goes up to the mountain to pray.

“He teaches us the courage to leave, to leave behind the success that swells the heart and the tranquillity that deadens the soul,” the Pope said.

But then Jesus goes back down the mountain to the people who still need him, he said.

“This is the road Jesus tells us to take — to go up to God and to come down to our brothers and sisters,” to tear oneself away from a life of ease and comfort and leave behind fleeting pleasures, glories and superfluous possessions, the Pope said.

Jesus sets people free from the things that do not matter so they will be able to embrace the true treasures in life: God and one’s neighbour, he added.

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The other event in the passage according to St Matthew, the pope said, is how the storm and the winds died down after Jesus got into the boat carrying his frightened disciples.

The secret to navigating life and its momentary storms, the pope said, “is to invite Jesus on board. The rudder of life must be surrendered to him” because it is he who gives life, hope, healing and freedom from fear.

The third thing Jesus does is stretch out his hand to Peter, who, in his fear and doubt, is sinking in the water.

Everyone wants true life and needs the hand of the Lord to save them from evil, the pope said.

“This is the beginning of faith – to cast off the pride that makes us feel self-sufficient and to realise that we are in need of salvation,” he said. “Faith grows in this climate” of being not on a pedestal aloof from the world but with those crying for help.

“This is why it is important for all of us to live our faith in contact with those in need,” the pope said. “This is not a sociological option or a pontifical fad. It is a theological requirement” to acknowledge one’s own spiritual poverty and that everyone, especially the poor, is pleading for salvation.

“Rouse us, Lord, from our idle calm, from the quiet lull of our safe harbours. Set us free from the moorings of self-absorption that weigh life down; free us from constantly seeking success. Teach us to know how to ‘leave’ in order to

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set out on the road you have shown us: to God and our neighbour,” he said.

The Pope established the World Day of the Poor to encourage the whole church to reach out to those in need and let the poor know their cries have not gone unheard, the pope said in his message this year.

UN groups estimate there are some 700 million people in the world who are unable to meet their basic needs and that 10 per cent of the world’s population lives in extreme poverty.

News briefs

Church responses to destitution among people seeking asylum

EMBRACE NI are hosting this conference focused on current efforts in Belfast to address destitution and practical ways that churches can make a difference. It is geared towards people who want to help the situation actively as well as those who are already involved. It would also be helpful for people in other Christian organisations who may come in contact with people who are destitute within the asylum system.

The Duncairn (174 Trust), Belfast
Thursday 22nd November
9.30am to 2pm (Lunch Provided)

The Conference is free but all participants must RSVP to be registered. Please send an email to info@embraceni.org

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Fundraising after GDPR

Evangelical Alliance (NI) and MAP invite you to a workshop to look at GDPR compliance and how data can be used, particularly in fundraising.

This workshop will help you to:

- Check you have done everything you need for GDPR
- Have plans in place to stay compliant
- Use that work to inform a new look at fundraising strategy in order to deliver more impact.

Belfast Bible College

Glenburn House, Glenburn Rd S, Dunmurry, Belfast BT17 9JP

Wednesday 12th December

10am - 4pm

Tickets cost £20 for EA/MAP members and £35 for non-members

Refreshments will be provided but you are asked to bring your own lunch.

To book just click [here](#)

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/fundraising-after-gdpr-tickets-52518972661?aff=ebdssbdestsearch&mc_cid=10ce32ac63&mc_eid=b530a87c33

St Mary's Pro-Cathedral Girls' Choir annual performance of Messiah

At the Pro-Cathedral on Tuesday, December 18th at 8pm.

Soprano: Hannah Gries; Alto: Alison Browner; Tenor: Conor Prendiville; Bass: Benjamin Russell; The Palestrina Choir; St Mary's Pro-Cathedral Girls' Choir; Dublin Bach Singers; Marlborough Baroque; Conductor: Blanaid Murphy

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