



## Mothers Union support for 16 days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence



**Mo Reynolds (Women's Link, Longford), Mairead McGuinness (MEP), Canon David Catterall, Martlet Hunter (Social Policy Rep), Hazel Speares (Diocesan**

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**President), Diane Steward (Longford MU) and Mary Geelan (Faith and Policy Co-ordinator).**

A Londonderry woman's account of the domestic abuse she suffered has been described as "the most powerful and heart-rending" ever shared with members of **Derry and Raphoe Mothers' Union.**

Donna Maria Logue, who describes herself as "a survivor" of domestic abuse, was the guest speaker at a '16 Days Breakfast' in the White Horse Hotel near Eglinton on Saturday. The event was part of '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence' – an all-Ireland campaign supported Mothers' Union.



**Ms Logue (Above)** is the founder of the La Dolce Vita Project, a voluntary support service for women and men impacted by domestic abuse. She shared with MU members

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her harrowing personal experience of domestic abuse and outlined the range of services which her organisation provides for those suffering emotional and physical abuse.

Saturday's event was hosted by the outgoing President of Derry and Raphoe Mothers' Union, Mary Good, and organised by Jacqui Armstrong, the co-ordinator of MU's Faith and Policy Unit. Prayers were led by the Diocesan Chaplain, Rev Canon Harold Given, and among those present was the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Ken Good.

Mrs Armstrong told Saturday's gathering that the incidence of domestic abuse was increasing in our society and that no one should have to live in an abusive relationship.

Around 70 women attended the breakfast, at which they had a preview of the Mothers' Union's 'Souls of Our Shoes' exhibition which aims to raise awareness of domestic abuse. It consists of dozens of shoes and accompanying comments provided by women who have walked away from abuse.

The 'Souls of Our Shoes' exhibition can be seen in Saint Columb's Cathedral, Londonderry between 10am and 4pm from Monday 26th to Wednesday 28th November, and in Saint Eunan's Cathedral, Raphoe from 10am to 4pm on Thursday 29th and Friday 30th of November. The Raphoe exhibition will also open for an additional two hours from 6.00-8.00pm on Thursday 29th November.

On Saturday 24 November over 100 Mothers' Union members from **Down and Dromore** met for a Prayer Breakfast to highlight the campaign '16 days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence', which MU has championed worldwide in recent years.



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**June Butler, MU Diocesan President, pictured right with Louise Kennedy.**

Keynote speaker Louise Kennedy, the Regional Policy and Information Coordinator of the Women's Aid Federation, gave a presentation about the work of Women's Aid in Northern Ireland. It made for inspiring yet sobering listening.



Members were shocked to learn that, in 2017, the Federation reached out through specialist services and training/awareness programmes to 6385 women and 6784 children in Northern Ireland; across the 13 WA refuges, 717 women and 485 children were accommodated. Its Helpline received 26,457 calls last year.

Louise spoke at length about some of the Federation's programmes, such as those which aim to empower women and help them take their "Journey to Freedom"; and their work with children to ensure they did not feel they were to blame. She also spoke about the urgent need for welfare reform and for improved government funding for children's services.

The Diocesan Trustees had prepared a display of shoes to reflect evocative quotations from women who had been subjected to domestic violence. These were taken from the "Souls of our Shoes" movement which Mothers' Union

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members in Scotland initiated in 2017 and also was the subject of a display in Christchurch Cathedral in Dublin during The World Meeting of Families in August 2018.

The **Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh** MU prayer vigil took place in St John's Church in Longford and was led by Canon David Catterall. Women and men from around the diocese joined together to pray for eyes to recognise abuse where it exists, a heart to reach out in compassion, and the courage and resolve to make a difference.

Mairead McGuinness, Vice-President of the European Parliament, was present at the vigil and thanked the Mothers' Union for their contribution to breaking the silence of gender-based violence. Following the service, Mo Reynolds from Women's Link, Longford, gave a moving talk about how we can respond well to those who have experienced gender-based violence. It only takes one non-

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judgemental, supportive, patient person who will listen and believe to make all the difference.

## **Bangor Parish Church reaching out to the vulnerable**

Bangor Parish Church has launched a Compassion Ministry which aims to offer friendship and practical help to the most vulnerable in their town.

The project operates out of two rooms in the halls which have been turned into a drop-in space and an attractive pre-loved clothing boutique. Anyone looking for advice or company is welcome for tea, coffee and a chat, however a referral letter is required to benefit from the foodbank and clothing service. “We want to ensure that our service is working in partnership with the excellent social work already happening in the town,” explains Missions and Operations Coordinator, Matthew Gault.

He continues: “When people come in with a referral, someone will have a more structured conversation with them to hear their story and gauge their needs. We see if there’s any other help around the town we can refer them to, as well as inviting them into different things that are happening in the life of Bangor Parish.

“From there we take people into the clothing boutique if they’re referred for clothes and they can select items of clothing or take a food bag from Storehouse North Down. People have been asking us, Why do you do this?’, so

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we've had some great conversations and in some cases have been able to pray with people."

It's early days but Matthew says that the ministry has already had an impact. "We had a man come in who was living in one of the local hostels and who was going for a job interview. The only clothes he had were the clothes he was standing up in. He said to one of our volunteers, 'I have no hope of getting this job. Look at my clothes, I can't make a good impression like this and I can't afford good quality clothing.' He was really blessed by receiving some clothes from us, and actually he stayed at the drop-in with us for quite a long time, chatting through faith and where his life was going, and we were able to pray with him."

To most, Bangor is simply a middle-class town, but the church leadership was surprised to discover that the town centre has the highest anti-social behaviour rate out of roughly 900 council wards in the province. There are also huge issues around poverty and suicide.

"Initially we were quite shocked by that discovery, and then we had some people come to the church who were struggling with those issues and that began to stir something in us as a congregation," says Matthew.

"The Compassion Ministry came out of a time of reflection and prayer and relationship building as we got it off the ground. Although we have lots of ideas for the future, we're still on a learning curve and keen to grow partnerships with other agencies."

Rector, Revd Nigel Parker, sums up the vision: "We as a church are always looking for ways that we can share words

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of life and hope and also share Jesus with people. We want people to know that there's an oasis of mercy in the middle of Bangor and Bangor Parish Church is a place to come to if you need help whether spiritual, physical, emotional or social."

Bangor Parish Church Compassion Ministry is open in the halls on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1.30–4.00 pm.

2A Hamilton Road, Bangor,

BT204LE [www.bangorparishchurch.org.uk](http://www.bangorparishchurch.org.uk)

## **'They are treated like the lepers of Irish society' - priests' body criticises funeral 'snub' for abuse accused**

Priests who die while facing accusations of sexual abuse are being denied traditional Catholic funerals, it has been revealed - The Irish Independent reports.

The Association of Catholic Priests (ACP) has voiced concerns over the funeral arrangements for stepped-down members of the clergy.

Its spokesman called the practice - which applies even if the priest was not convicted of any offence - "terrible".

Fr Tim Hazelwood said: "We're concerned at funeral arrangements for stepped-down priests or those facing accusations, particularly for priests who have been accused of something but nothing has been proved.

"I personally know an elderly priest who's been facing an accusation, which he totally denies, dating back 40 years.





## Fr Tim Hazelwood: warned about 'terrible' practice

"In his case, he will be denied a proper Catholic funeral, and it's causing him and his family terrible distress.

"The situation differs from diocese to diocese, but in general priests in this situation are treated terribly.

"Even members of the Kinahan gang or convicted murderers can expect proper Catholic funerals, but that's not the case with some priests, who really are treated like the lepers of Irish society."

The National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland (NBSCCCI) has published a list of broad guidelines to Church authorities on how to discreetly conduct the funerals of clerics who had allegations made against them.

Some dioceses have adopted even more stringent policies, including rulings that funerals take place in a private chapel, that no death notice be published, that the deceased be referred to by his Christian name throughout, and not be buried in his clerical garb.

One set of diocesan guidelines obtained by the ACP suggests "consideration be given to have the funeral

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liturgies in a private chapel and/or a time other than the usual times".

## **Concerts Programme €250,000 for Killarney Church's Restoration Fund.**

The Concerts Programme at St Mary's (Church of Ireland) Killarney – the Church of the Sloes – has been running for more than 10 years and has grown substantially. This year some 50 concerts took place, raising about €250,000 for the Church's Restoration Fund. An analysis of the benefits to the wider community has recently been completed. It shows that 10x that amount is brought into the town. This year the Town benefitted from the Church's activity to the tune of a quarter of a million euros.

When the Killarney Chamber of Tourism and Commerce launched a report on the economic benefit of tourism to the town it occurred to our Rector that there must be some kind of economic benefit to the town of our concerts. Not only do our visiting choirs seek accommodation here in Killarney, but they also are on holiday and so want to take coach tours and make visits to our iconic landmark locations and venues. To discover what that benefit might be we liaised with our main Tour Operators and asked them to identify the costs of buying resources and support services in Killarney.

It turns out that the average worth to Killarney of a concert in our church is €5,000. This is on top of the €500 the church gets in fees and donations. Therefore in 2018, with 50 concerts, the town has benefitted by more than

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€250,000 of additional income. (Over the past ten years, allowing for growth, that could be in excess of €2m.)

This has happened due to the quality of our product. When the Concerts Programme was first envisaged it was aimed at raising much needed money to keep the church going. Over the years, Tour Operators have come to know that our Church and Killarney are a very special place to send their visiting choirs and orchestras on tour from North America and Europe. The Church's acoustics are very highly regarded by performers; its beauty and its situation are unique selling points.

Our members volunteer their time and effort in stewarding the concerts. We work hard to make it a very special event for the visiting performers, putting in a lot of effort in the quality of venue and the events. This is paying off. We have become a sought-after venue and often receive more bookings that our volunteers can handle. In July this year we had 17 concerts, equivalent to one every other day of the month.

The Church is delighted to be able to support the community that supports it. The Rector of Killarney, Archdeacon Simon J Lumby said "we were both surprised and delighted when we saw the figures."

When asked about the importance of this to the Church, he said, "It's great that the Church is able to lift the economic wellbeing of the community; it's a part of our spiritual task of 'loving our neighbour'. We are especially delighted for our hotel sector and local tour operators who see the benefit of this uplift. The Town shows its support to us; we

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remember gratefully the superb community effort to restore the Church Railings”.

He added, “The effort to run these concerts demand a lot of our small congregation, so we are always looking to add volunteers to our Stewarding Rota; it takes three people to maintain the safety and comfort of visitors at a concert.”

The Church will welcome any offers of help in this regard so that they can accept more concert bookings in the coming years and continue to grow this worthwhile enterprise, not

just for the social benefit and leisure of locals and visitors alike, but also for the economic value it represents to our fabulous Town of Killarney.



## **Quilts for Advent exhibition in Larne**

The Parish Piecemakers of St Cedma's, Larne, will be hosting their Quilts for Advent exhibition for the third consecutive year on December 1 and 2.

The exhibition depicts the Christmas story as revealed in the nine lessons of the traditional carols service, telling the



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story of Christmas in a colourful and accessible way.

The quilts are all handcrafted by the Parish Piecemakers, a group of talented quilters who have been meeting together for the past 12 years. All proceeds from the exhibition will go to the Parish Hall Building Fund.

The exhibition will open on Saturday December 1 and Sunday December 2 from 2-4pm each day, with festive afternoon teas in the adjoining hall.

For further information, contact the parish office on 028 2827 4633.

## **Pope to choirs: ‘Help community sing, don’t replace its voice’**

“You have awoken the Vatican!”

With those joyful words, Pope Francis expressed his appreciation for the musical art shown by participants in the 3rd International Meeting of Choirs, during a Saturday audience in the Paul VI Hall.

“Your music and song are truly an instrument of evangelization to the extent that you bear witness to the depth of the Word of God, which touches people’s hearts, and to the extent that you assist in the celebration of the Sacraments, in particular the Holy Eucharist, allowing us to perceive the beauty of Paradise.”

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Some 7,000 musicians and singers participated in the Meeting of Choirs, a three-day event organized by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.

The Pope encouraged the choristers to continue giving voice to the emotions that lie at the heart of the Church community.

“Music and song can often make certain moments unique in a person’s life, because they become a precious memory that has marked their lives.”

Pope Francis warned choirs against the temptation of letting their talent outshine the Church community, discouraging the people in the pews from actively participating during Mass.

“You are the musical animators of the whole congregation. Don’t take its place, depriving the people of God of the chance to sing with you and bear witness to the Church’s communal prayer.”

The Holy Father commended the choral singers for studying ways to “promote prayer in liturgical celebrations.”

Pope Francis also invited them to give space to more popular forms of religious expression. “Feasts of patron saints, processions, dances, and the religious songs of our peoples are themselves a real heritage of religiosity that is worth appreciating and supporting, because they are nonetheless an action of the Holy Spirit at the heart of the Church.”

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Finally, Pope Francis said music should act as an instrument for promoting unity. He said music can help “make the Gospel efficacious in today’s world, through a beauty that still captivates and makes it possible to believe, entrusting ourselves to the love of the Father.”

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