



## Spirited rugby fans tell world that 'Ballymore needs a priest'

It was a message that went around the world. Two young men from Westmeath knew there was just one way they could tell of their religious plight. All they needed was a sign, a camera and a packed-out stadium at the Rugby World Cup.

"Ballymore needs a priest."

Irish Independent - Niall McCormack and Stephen Rooney's short, simple message cut straight to a serious crisis deepening in faith communities throughout rural Ireland.

Priests are ageing, retiring, dying and there is no one to take up the mantle.

Communities say they are really struggling with the loss.

Today, no Mass will be said in Ballymore, Co Westmeath. Locals say it's the first time in recent history that they have faced a Godless Sunday in the parish.

Shop owner and publican Declan Rooney said: "Older people are devastated.

"We would have always had a Sunday Mass. You'd get up, put on your good clothes, go down to the church and you met people. Then afterwards, people would come up to the shop for the paper but the last couple of Sundays there has been no Mass and there is sort of an eerie feeling around the place."

Earlier this month, Ballymore's much-loved, full-time priest, Fr Philip Smith, retired.

More at -

<http://www.independent.ie/sport/rugby/world-cup/irish-news/spirited-rugby-fans-tell-world-that-ballymore-needs-a-priest-34118494.html>

## **Father Ted creator Graham Linehan hits out at Irish abortion laws**

The writer of the Father Ted comedy series has described the heartbreak of losing a child to a foetal abnormality, and called for abortion laws to be liberalised in Ireland.

Belfast Telegraph - Dublin-born Graham Linehan, whose sitcom was one of the most successful in Irish television history, claimed the restrictions on terminations were "insane" and that women were not safe in Ireland.

A prison sentence of up to 14 years could be imposed for an illegal abortion.

Linehan and his wife Helen Linehan discovered in 2004 that their 11-week-old foetus would not survive because the baby's skull had not properly formed.



***Helen and Graham Linehan***

Doctors said a termination, near their home in England, was the only option.

Mr Linehan said: "The abortion law as it stands is part of a chain that extends back into Ireland's past. We are still locked into this, chained to this thing.

"We won't be free of it until we break this final link."

Linehan has produced a short film calling for the abortion law in Ireland to be repealed.

The couple's foetus had a condition known as acrania, where the skull does not close over the

brain. The child would not have lived once it was born and doctors concluded that termination was the only option.

Mrs Linehan recalled her experience: "It was awful, tragic ... there was no question, that this baby could not survive."

She received counselling.

"I just cannot imagine what we would have done if we had been living here and to have gone through the situation.

"It feels like a bad dream, listening to the stories I have heard today."

There has been growing demand for the government to allow a referendum on legalising abortion, and last month thousands marched through Dublin to show their support for decriminalisation.

The death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012, after she was denied a medically recommended abortion following a miscarriage, highlighted the issue.

Linehan addressed an Amnesty International event in Belfast.

He said: "It is just insane to have to get on a plane, to organise your doctors, to have to book yourself in, to have no support in your own country."

He added that the couple moved back to the Republic some years later and had another child, but added that it was not safe for women in Ireland.

"It is terrifying, I brought her somewhere that it might not be entirely safe."

Linehan co-wrote the hit comedy Father Ted, which ran for three series in the 1990s, with Arthur Mathews.

<http://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/father-ted-creator-graham-linehan-hits-out-at-irish-abortion-laws-34121929.html>

Graham Linehan 'embarrassed' by Irish abortion law - Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/graham-linehan-embarrassed-by-irish-abortion-law-1.2397481>

## **Bishop urged to help mourners at Kerry funerals**

Kerry County Council looks set to urge the Bishop of Kerry to do more to facilitate mourners at funerals — on foot of a motion before today's monthly meeting at Kerry County Council.

Irish Examiner - Mourning in Kerry churches has been a vexed issue over the years, and guidelines under the former Bishop of Kerry, Dr Bill Murphy, sought to curb what was seen by some as the growth in more pagan practices — the overuse of inappropriate secular music, personal mementoes, and lengthy personal reflections within the church during funeral Masses.

However, practises vary between parishes. A booklet is being drawn up on funeral liturgy, but it does not have suggestions how to deal with those wishing to sympathise with the bereaved.



Fianna Fáil councillor Dan McCarthy has placed a motion on the council agenda asking Kerry County Council to ask Bishop Ray Browne to “allow time after funeral masses for people to sympathise with the bereaved families in the Church in parishes where this is not allowed.”

Mr McCarthy said he has become concerned at the pressure on the bereaved, particularly in churches where sympathisers are not allowed shake hands inside church buildings.

Mr McCarthy says he regularly observes “five and six people” surrounding a bereaved person outside the church; and “two to three hands” reached out at the one time. He says this puts pressure on the bereaved.

A spokesperson for the diocese of Kerry this weekend said the request would be studied.

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/bishop-urged-to-help-mourners-at-kerry-funerals-360065.html>

## **Popular priest had housing estate named after him**

Fr Jackie Finn was so popular in his parish that a housing development was named after him.



Irish News - The Co Armagh-born cleric made such an impression as parish priest of Louth over 20 years that Fr Finn Park was named in his honour after he retired.

His easy-going nature had made him a favourite wherever he went, always in demand for weddings, baptisms and funerals.

A great love of sport - he was a former Armagh county footballer and played club football in Co Louth as a priest - also ensured parishioners were never short of a conversation starter.

Born in 1922 at Tartaraghan in the parish of Loughgall, John (Jackie) Finn studied at St Patrick's College, Armagh and St Patrick's, Maynooth before being ordained in Armagh in 1947.

His first posting was to Nigeria, where he spent four years with the Kiltegan Fathers working as a teacher at St Patrick's College, Calabar.

He spent the rest of the 1950s as ecclesiastical inspector for the sprawling Armagh diocese, visiting primary schools across counties Armagh, Tyrone, Derry, Louth and Meath.

Fr Finn then began an 18-year stint as a curate in Dundalk, one of six priests in the parish at the time.

He became PP in Louth village in 1978.

Someone who accepted life as he encountered it, Fr Finn enjoyed reading and writing poetry, as well as fishing and shooting.

He died on September 12 at Moorhall Lodge, Ardee and was buried in Louth.

Fr Finn is survived by his sister Eileen, nephews and nieces.

## **Rome Synod observers call for empathy and support for struggling families**

Couples attending the Synod of Bishops called for empathy and support from the Church to families suffering in difficult circumstances.

Several lay couples and a missionary sister addressed the synod on October 15-16, highlighting various issues facing families in their countries and abroad.

Anthony and Catherine Witczak, the international ecclesial team of the Worldwide Marriage Encounter, stressed the need for better programmes for engaged and married couples in the Church. They also said couples should not be separated when taking part in parish ministry, “but rather let their sacrament shine by allowing them to work as a team.”

Anthony Witczak also called for a priestly formation that is geared to living a closer relationship with families in their parishes.

“If a Church is meant to be a family of families, then we should encourage our seminarians to be priests in love with their people, not merely priests in charge of a parish,” he said. “Our faith is based on relationship with God, but it is learned and lived out in relationship with others.”

The president of Parents Centres New Zealand, Sharron Cole, said that while the Church’s teaching on conjugal love and responsible parenthood in “*Humanae Vitae*” has “great beauty and depth,” couples who struggle with either low-income, mental health problems or other difficulties find it hard to abide by those tenets.

“As an ex-board member of Natural Family Planning, I know that this method of contraception permitted by ‘Humanae Vitae’ is an effective method for motivated couples,” she said.

“Every family has difficulties which might lead them for a period of time to use artificial contraception in the interests of responsible parenting. Marriage naturally leads to a desire for children, which is a biological imperative and a great grace of the sacrament. In my experience, very few couples suppress this desire, with its constraints tending to be the couple’s resources to cope, not selfishness.”

“Many laypeople believe the Church does not understand the realities of their lives. Laypeople are not trusted to make good decisions in conscience, and they often feel subjected to exacting rules which take no account of context or of stages of spiritual development,” she said. She also said that “too many in authority responded to clergy sexual abuse in a way which demonstrated that they lacked the expertise in sexuality and psychology to make good decisions, with the result they became complicit

in perpetuating enormous harm, harm done to laypeople.”

Cole called on the Church to listen “with deep empathy” to laypeople and to “re-examine its teaching on marriage and sexuality, and its understanding of responsible parenthood, in a dialogue of laity and bishops together.”

Moira McQueen, director of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute, noted that elderly people are seldom mentioned in the synod’s working document.

“This perhaps reflects what the elderly report: They are not seen as important; society tends to ignore them; they do not seem to matter,” she said.

McQueen said that while the elderly not only deserve proper medical care, they also deserve spiritual programmes that help them in the final states of life.

“Pope John Paul II urged people to ‘live life to its end,’ and we can help elderly people do that by looking after their physical and spiritual welfare, protecting them from hastened death, and giving

them reason to maintain their sense of purpose in life as long as possible,” she said.

Dr Anca-Maria Cernea, a Romanian and president of the Catholic Doctors Association of Bucharest, warned of a “cultural Marxism” that imposes gay rights, gender ideology and attempts to redefine family, sexual identity and human nature.

“This ideology calls itself progressive. But it is nothing else than the ancient serpent’s offer, for man to take control, to replace God, to arrange salvation here, in this world,” she said.

The Church, she added, is called to protect the faithful from these dangers through evangelisation and conversion.

“The Church’s mission is to save souls. Evil, in this world, comes from sin,” she said, “not from income disparity or climate change.”

Sister Carmen Sammut, a member of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa and president of the International Union of Superiors General, urged the Synod of Bishops to allow for

more collaboration between the laity and the hierarchy.

“If the image of Church is the people of God, then we, the laity, would be expected to bring our knowledge to the discernment processes of the Church, in view of decision-making, always in union with the Pope and our bishops,” she said.

She suggested that couples, as well as religious, can help in the formation of priests and ordained ministers.

“I really dream of a Church where each one is called to give his or her part for the construction of the whole,” she said.

## **English bishops urge greater UK response to refugee crisis**

Church of England bishops have called on the British government to more-than double the number of refugees it will resettle in the UK over the next five years

In a letter to Prime Minister David Cameron, some 84 C of E bishops have called on the government to increase the number of Syrian

refugees being resettled to this country from the previously announced 20,000 "to a minimum of 50,000" over the next five years.

The bishops have not received a response to their letter which was sent to the Prime Minister in early September and published at the weekend.

They describe the situation in Syria as "one of the largest refugee crises ever recorded" and say that "a moral crisis of this magnitude calls each and all of us to play our parts."

"We believe such is this country's great tradition of sanctuary and generosity of spirit that we could feasibly resettle at least 10,000 people a year for the next two years, rising to a minimum of 50,000 in total over the five year period you foresaw in your announcement," the bishops say in their letter. "Such a number would bring us into line with comparable commitments made by other countries. It would be a meaningful and substantial response to the scale of human suffering we see daily."

The bishops tell Mr Cameron that they will help the resettlement by encouraging their churches



to provide welcome, housing and foster care to refugees.

In their letter they also called for the creation of a National Welcome and Resettlement Board, similar to those established by the Government in response to past refugee crises in the 1950s and 1970s.

Such a board has now been established by civil society groups Citizens UK and Caritas. It has drawn together a wide group of people including the Bishop of Durham, the Rt Revd Paul Butler, who chairs the group. Other members include the Rt Revd Pat Lynch, of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, the Revd Lynn Green, general secretary of the Baptist Union, Rabbis Danny Rich and Laura Janner-Klausner, representing liberal and reform Judaism, Jehangir Malik, of the Islamic Relief charity, and members of the Syrian community within the UK.

“The Archbishop of York recently said that the current situation has rightly been described as a refugee crisis but it is also a time of opportunity for us as a country and for our wider continent,” Bishop Butler said. “The opportunity before us is to rise above narrow self-interest, however

defined, and to embrace the highest parts of our humanity.

## **Sudan and South Sudan ecumenical bodies hear of churches' role in regional peace**

Churches continue to play their role in peace building for South Sudan despite the dashed hopes of many in the world's newest nation, the moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) said at a regional meeting.

The moderator of the WCC's Central Committee Dr Agnes Abuom was speaking at the inaugural assemblies of the Ecumenical Network Sudan and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) in Nairobi, Kenya earlier this month.

The WCC moderator, a Kenyan Anglican, thanked God for the work of the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) and the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) in the fields of evangelism, education, health and advocacy for justice and peace over many years.

“During various ecumenical visits, the churches have been encouraged to find internal solutions to strengthen the council’s management and leadership,” said Abuom.

She said the churches in Sudan and South Sudan have provided leadership in dealing with the peace process in a South Sudan driven in recent years by internal conflict.

The WCC reaffirmed its commitment as a partner to accompany both the SCC and the SSCC, said the moderator.

Abuom observed, “Apart from South Africa where global, regional and national churches coalesced to fight against apartheid, Sudan and South Sudan have received the highest moral and material support.

“Although people’s hopes seem dashed and return from exile has not been fully realized, the churches have, and continue, to play their role of peace building, healing and reconciliation.”

The WCC moderator cited the SSCC’s consistently pushing for a stop to the “senseless war”.

“We are encouraged and inspired that the church in South Sudan and Sudan looks to the future committed to continue journeying together towards justice, peace and integrity of creation, healing and reconciliation.”

“The churches in the Council are encouraged to stay united and move together in order to tackle both cultures of privilege and indifference on the one hand, and the culture of hopelessness and suicide on the other,” said Abuom.

More at -

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2015/10/sudan-and-south-sudan-ecumenical-bodies-hear-of-churches-role-in-regional-peace.aspx>

## Media digest

### **Guard/Mail/Ind/Tel/ITV/Sky News/Metro**

Further coverage [of letter from 84 bishops](#) sent to the Prime Minister asking for the country to welcome 50,000 refugees by 2020, not the 20,000 currently agreed. The *Guardian's* website carries a "video letter" featuring the Bishop of Manchester David Walker. In it, Bishop David says the migrant crisis is a moral not political matter. The *Telegraph* and *Guardian* report remarks by a Cabinet minister who has dismissed the Church of England call for the UK to take in more refugees,

suggesting bishops are naturally politically opposed to a Conservative government. In the *Mail*, Bishop David is criticised for not taking refugees into his own six bedroomed home.

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/video/2015/oct/19/bishop-european-migrant-crisis-moral-matter-david-cameron-letter-video>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11939274/Conservatives-criticise-bishops-for-attack-on-Syrian-refugee-policy.html>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3278492/Church-England-bishop-preaches-allowing-Syrian-refugees-Britain-won-t-six-bedroom-house.html>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/refugee-crisis-governments-inadequate-response-attacked-by-church-of-england-a6699166.html>

<http://www.itv.com/news/granada/update/2015-10-18/bishop-of-manchester-urges-more-help-for-refugees/>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/18/bishops-naturally-leftwing-take-more-refugees-stephen-crabb>

<http://news.sky.com/story/1571644/bishops-criticism-of-refugee-response-rejected>

<http://metro.co.uk/2015/10/18/cofe-bishops-accuse-government-of-increasingly-inadequate-response-to-migrant-crisis-5446461/>

## **Times**

The Archbishop of Aleppo has called on European countries to stop luring Syrians away from their home country and instead focus on finding a solution to the civil war. Speaking on *Radio 4's Sunday programme*, Archbishop Jean-Clément Jeanbart asks that everybody should "stop feeding and encouraging radicalism and

fundamentalism" and concentrate on finding "a political solution where compromise may be done."

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/middleeast/article4589712.ece>

## **Ind**

Reports the CofE's response to proposals to extend Sunday trading hours. Chancellor George Osborne unveiled the proposal to give council's the power to relax Sunday trading hours to supermarkets and big retailers in his last Budget, a move opposed by the Church.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/church-hits-out-at-longer-sunday-trading-hours-as-conservative-mps-threaten-to-rebel-against-a6698621.html>

## **BBC**

Reports that the Prime Minister will today announce the extension of current counter-extremist powers to allow parents to ask for their children's passports to be confiscated if they fear they are at risk of radicalisation. Mr Cameron is also expected to say that anyone convicted of extremist activity will be automatically barred from working with children and vulnerable people.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34568574>

## **Tel**

Reports that 14 cleaners at the Foreign Office claim they have been disciplined after pointing out they make a fifth of the living wage in a letter to Philip Hammond. Three have been made redundant and 11 have had disciplinary action initiated against them. The redundancies were initially launched as the Foreign Office is moving from Old Admiralty Building to smaller premises at King Charles

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Street. Revd Rosemia Brown of Citizens UK and St James' Church, Hackney is quoted.

[http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11936577/  
Foreign-Office-faces-living-wage-row-after-cleaners-  
claim-they-are-dismissed-over-pay-complaint.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11936577/Foreign-Office-faces-living-wage-row-after-cleaners-claim-they-are-dismissed-over-pay-complaint.html)