

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Narnia in Belfast

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Narnia in Belfast

CS Lewis square in east Belfast where the author's grandfather was Rector of St Mark's Dundela

News reports

'You lifted my burden': Former Archbishop of York shares private moment of prayer with Queen



Former Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu has shared a private personal moment of prayer he had with Her Majesty the Queen back in 2018.

Speaking to the BBC's Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg programme, Dr Sentamu said the Queen comforted him with prayer during their meeting in which he asked for permission to step down as Archbishop of York.

"I went with a huge burden of matters that one day may be revealed.

"And I knelt down and I said: 'Your Majesty, please pray for me'. So I put my hands together and she put hers outside mine and we were silent for three minutes. And at the end she said, 'Amen'.

“When I got up, the burden had lifted.”

Dr Sentamu also recalled a thank you letter he received from the Queen following Prince Philip’s funeral.

“The Queen wrote me a most wonderful letter, four weeks after the burial of Prince Philip, thanking me for the flowers, the prayers, and then ended by saying: ‘When you are grieving, someone you deeply love, It isn't easy when you're having to do it in public.

“So my thought would be to the new King, and the whole royal family. They are grieving publicly.”

The former Archbishop of York and life peer told of his involvement in preparing the funeral service for the last 17 years after he became a member of the Privy Council in 2005.

The service had been constantly reviewed in consultation with the Sovereign – the Queen didn’t want a “long, boring” funeral service, he said.

"You're not going to find boredom, but you're going to be lifted to glory as you hear the service", he said.

Dr Sentamu said mourners could expect a traditional service rooted in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

“What you’re going to expect is the best of funeral services, the prayer book service, the words which were an inspiration to Shakespeare.

September 20, 2022

“You’re going to hear this wonderful English at its best. Also you’re going to hear angelic voices of the choir of the abbey plus the Chapels Royal ... voices that are singing to the glory of God.”



150th anniversary marked in Derriaghy

Christ Church, Derriaghy, celebrated its 150th anniversary on Sunday September 11. During the service of harvest thanksgiving, the spire after its restoration was rededicated by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison .

Parishioners remembered in prayer both Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Majesty King Charles III.



New Chaplain to the Guild of Lay Ministry in Cork, Cloyne and Ross

The Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the Right Reverend Dr Paul Colton, has appointed the Reverend Terry Mitchell, who is Diocesan Education and Further Training Officer, as the new Chaplain to the Guild of Lay Ministry in the Diocese.

The Guild of Lay Ministry in Cork, Cloyne and Ross, includes the role of warden of readers. as well as chaplain to other lay ministries in the Diocese, including Lay Local Ministers (both pastoral and liturgical).

The Rev. Terry Mitchell is based in Schull, County Cork, where he is also part-time priest-in-charge of Kilmoe Union

of Parishes. He succeeds Canon Paul Arbuthnot as Chaplain to the Guild of Lay Ministry in Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

Mothers' Union members urged to explore global identity at diocesan service



Archdeacon of Glendalough the Ven Neal O'Raw, Archbishop Michael Jackson, Diocesan Mothers' Union President Ada Lawson, Diocesan MU Chaplain Canon Leonard Ruddock and Rector of Arklow, Inch and Kilbride, Canon Arthur Barrett.

The bond of identity connects Mothers' Union members around the globe, Archbishop Michael Jackson observed at the Dublin and Glendalough Diocesan Festival Service (Thursday September 15). The Archbishop encouraged members in branches

throughout Dublin and Glendalough to reach out to their counterparts around the world by Zoom for inspiration and energy.

Representatives of Mothers' Union from around the dioceses attended the annual service in St Saviour's Church in Arklow. It was hosted by the Arklow, Inch and Kilbride branch who provided warm hospitality after the service, including a special cake.

The Rector, Canon Arthur Barrett welcomed the congregation. The service was led by the diocesan chaplain, Canon Leonard Ruddock.

In his sermon, the Archbishop said Mothers' Union had much to celebrate. The organisation was engaged with parishes and communities the length and breadth of Ireland and internationally, he said. He commended MU's work in addressing the trauma of gender based violence and abuse and enabling those who experience it to be heard, upheld, supported and comforted while raising awareness amongst the wider population.

Archbishop Jackson emphasised the importance of connections and partnerships across dioceses and provinces. "On every level, I suggest that we in Dublin and Glendalough need much more of this sort of connectivity. This type of stretching is good for us, painful though some of us may find it. It makes us all the stronger to know that our identity connects us compassionately and prayerfully with people beyond ourselves and people we do not know and may never in fact meet. I say this because there is the powerful bond of belonging we share through The Mothers'

Union. It is the bond of being children of God and inheritors of the Kingdom of God. This transcends advantage, race and class. This is our identity,” he stated.

He said both readings [1 Timothy 1: 12–17 and St Luke 15: 1–10] led to the heart of the Christian faith, speaking of repentance and restoration. Repentance was seen as a road to dignity and full belong and the restoration of humanity in a new and different identity, he explained. It pointed to new beginnings, new priorities and new possibilities. With this new gift of grace, the Archbishop encouraged Mothers’ Union members to construct a hierarchy of urgency.

“As disciples of Jesus Christ living in the world of today, in a secular Ireland where religion is under pressure and where religion puts itself under pressure, what are the matters of urgency that really count? ... If you feel lost, if you feel overwhelmed, ask your Branch Leader to set up a zoom call with fellow Mothers’ Union members in other parts of the world where survival and provision are themselves an urgency. If you feel inspired, take the energy that you get from this encounter into your local neighbourhood and re-ignite a spirit of generosity and service which gives a focus and an outlet for the goodness and the community spirit of Mothers’ Union members. Each Branch can do this. The whole Diocesan Mother’s Union can share and rejoice in it,” he said.

Speaking at the end of the service Diocesan Mothers’ Union President, Ada Lawson, encouraged members to open their minds to new experiences, particularly as everyone was

starting out again together after the pandemic. She asked members to keep communicating.

She reminded members of a number of upcoming events including the Worldwide MU President's visit in early November. D&G MU has organised a full programme for the 16 Days of Action Against Gender Based Violence starting on November 25 and she urged all members to get involved. Full details will be available shortly.

In the media

Live coverage of the Queen lying-in-state was compelling viewing - Gail Walker

I've found the live coverage of the Queen lying-in-state compelling viewing, from the wide range of people filing past to their spontaneous gestures as they do so.

Many looked like they had just stopped what they were doing and immediately joined the queue. Her Majesty's funeral tomorrow will bring more extraordinary scenes but for now I thought I'd share this piece I wrote on that remarkable procession of men, women and children making its way through Westminster Hall ... Gail Walker writes in the Belfast Telegraph

The queue to see the Queen lying in state proves just how much we want to be part of something more enduring than ourselves.

Momentous events such as the death of the Queen start with us avidly watching the royals and end with us watching ourselves.

While there have been many epic moments of ancient rites, rituals and pageantry, nothing has been more compelling, humbling and revealing than the livestream footage of vast multitudes of people filing past Her Majesty's coffin as she lies in state.

No commentary, no pundits, no editorialising. Just the faint sound of footsteps, the shuffling of mourners pushing wheelchairs, the clockwork tread of the changing of the guard, an occasional cough echoing through the vast expanse of Westminster Hall and into a kind of history too.

Its 1,000-year-old walls witnessed the trials of Charles I, Guy Fawkes and Sir Thomas Moore and now those ancient stones and timbers behold this tapestry of the human heart being woven in real-time in front of our own eyes. The picture emerging from those myriad, diverse threads — who we are, what matters to us, what we reach for to make sense of this world, the very fabric of us — is truly astounding.

It's as if people instantly stopped whatever they were doing when they heard the news the Queen was dead and joined the queue.

Women with shopping bags, crumpled looking office workers, tourists with backpacks, children in school uniform, Sikhs, clergymen in white collars, City types, men in formal suits with black ties, men in football shirts, nuns, women in

hijab dresses, couples in shorts and T-shirts. All ages, including the least likely, those in their 20s and 30s. Many on their own.

Here they come, seemingly without end, blinking, bewildered, unsure of themselves, but at some level aware that they are not only witnessing history but are an intimate part of it too. So many worlds collide at once: a much-loved monarch and her people, that intangible but potent contract of loyalty and service, she to her subjects and they to their late Queen.

This isn't just a file past. Each and every person stops to pay their last respects to Her Majesty. Undone by the moment, their spontaneous gestures are unselfconscious and deeply moving.

A slight pause and a downward glance, a more formal bow, many bless themselves, making the sign of the Cross, women curtsy, an old soldier straightens a crooked back to give his Commander-in-Chief a last salute, others blow kisses or wave, a small boy stands and stares.

It is a moment so necessarily ephemeral that many glance back one last time before heading out into the September sunlight or the dark, dank 3am London night. Whatever the hour, they are dropped back into everyday lives remote from an Imperial State Crown on a scarlet and purple catafalque, from pomp and ceremony.

They have queued for long hours and none seem to have regretted doing so. They may have not quite understood the compulsion to be there, beyond that they just knew they had

to be there. Their pilgrimage isn't only in recognition of the Queen's personal qualities — duty, constancy, fidelity — it's because people want to be part of a greater whole, of something more important, more enduring than themselves. To not just be defined by our material needs and wants, for ultimately a lifestyle is not a life. In order for our lives to make sense they have to be woven into families, communities, friendships, all the way up to nations and kingdoms.

We need to know that we do not only live moment to moment but that our existence is underwritten by time itself. This is the hold of history; it makes sense of a seeming chaos. We survive because we have a way of doing things, a way of thinking, a way of understanding the world. These things pass down the generations.

A strange and notable element of the past week has been the re-emergence of the mention of God into public life. King Charles III promises to serve us “throughout the remaining time God grants me”. Solemn oaths are taken under the sight of God. A royal princess wears a silver cross, stark against mourning black. Millions of us in homes across the country watch services in cathedrals. Perhaps to their surprise, some are stirred in unexpected ways by music and words.

The Queen, a woman of deep faith, was not afraid to die. Such unwavering belief provokes profound thoughts: the idea there might be something beyond ourselves, the here and now.

Of course there is again the nasty background noise of mockery. The need for some people who speak so often of working class values and who abuse others in their name, to ridicule, belittle and taunt ordinary people who show respect, consideration, honour and courtesy as they see fit to people they feel have given of themselves, never ceases to astonish. There was abuse of Captain Tom as there is abuse of her who knighted him.

They sneer at weeping faces in the crowds, even though it's a truism that the death of a world figure, for all the state ceremonies and obsequies, can feel intensely personal, like a lightning rod to our own grief. In the faces of royal mourners are writ large our own losses and wounds.

Those who mock people who travel distances to lay petrol station Cellophane wrapped bunches of flowers and beady-eyed Paddington Bears by Palace gates deliberately miss the point: this is exactly the same instinct that prompts people to tie small bouquets to lampposts where accidents have happened, leave little battery-powered lights to flicker on a verge or a sea wall. A catharsis, both dropping their guard and standing guard, to cry, to be human.

It must be recognised too that many of those who dislike the monarchy have been respectful, offering sympathy or simply saying nothing at all. Bereavement halts hostilities, calls forth the old decencies.

In Northern Ireland, for all our bickering subsequently, the formal events passed with remarkable dignity and aplomb.

For now, though, the vigil continues and the people keep filing by, an age-old melding of time and space. In the south transept of Westminster Abbey where world leaders will join sons, a daughter and grandchildren for the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II on Monday is a memorial to poet Philip Larkin. In 1955, he wrote the poem *Church Going*, in which he ponders the pull of history and religion. Never being able to pass a church without stepping inside was, he said, “a hunger in ourselves to be more serious”. He concluded:

‘In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognised, and robed as destinies,
And that much never can be obsolete.’”

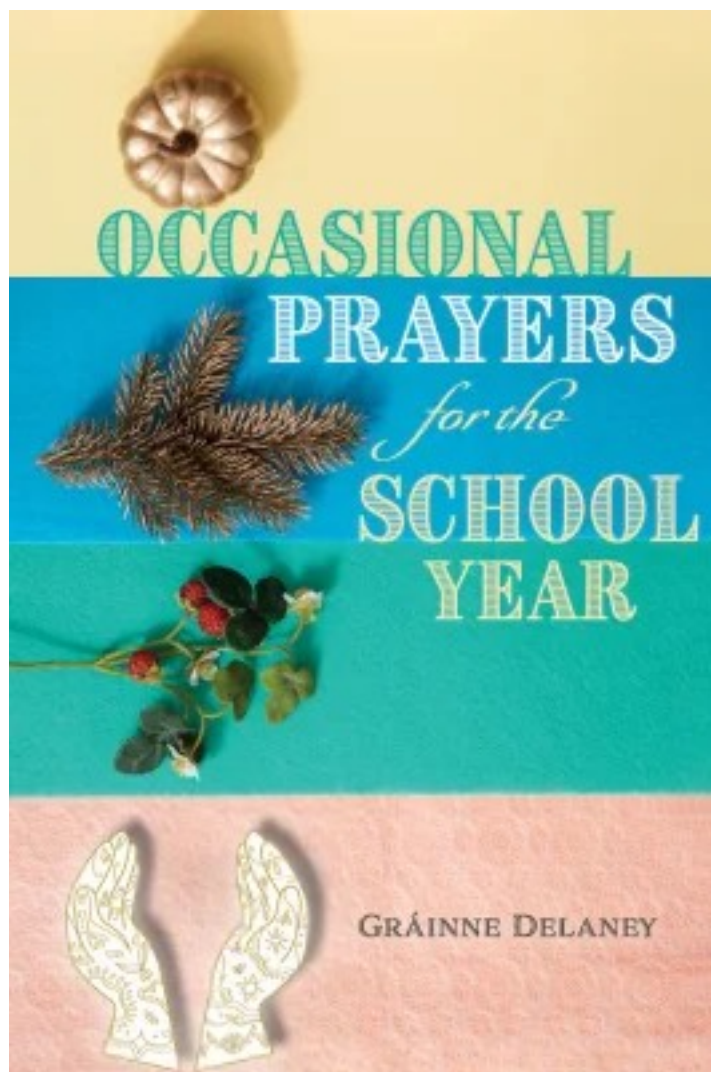
Belfast Telegraph, September 17, 2022

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Go-to book for busy school chaplains

'I need to find just the right prayer for this school ceremony-and quickly!'

The new school year is underway and with it, for the busy Chaplain of schools with a religious ethos, a plethora of liturgies, masses and services for the numerous events that punctuate and often define the academic year. Some are anticipated and planned for well in advance; however, many



teachers will recall the impromptu and unexpected school or class gathering that calls for a particular or specific reflection or prayer at short notice. Wouldn't it be helpful to have a single source of material for these diverse occasions when all eyes turn to the presider for a ceremony suitable for the moment?

So thought Gráinne Delaney, chaplain in a Jesuit school for over 20 years, where school

gatherings are common and always prefaced with prayer. She set about collating a selection of different prayers she has written over the years to suit certain moments in the school year, or a particular moment in time. Occasional Prayers for the School Year is the result: a "go to" for people who lead prayer, who provide calm and stillness for others but may have felt frantic in 'finding the right piece.'

An ideal resource for busy teachers, chaplains or anyone who often reaches for a prayer or service, but finds themselves grabbing material from many different sources, the author has also included a couple of poems from young people as an example of how they continue to inspire her.

Grainne Delaney received a Bachelor of Religious Science with History from Mater Dei Institute of Education. Her role as Chaplain in Crescent College Comprehensive SJ has fostered her interest in Faith Formation.

Occasional Prayers for the School Year by Gráinne Delaney is published in Ireland and the UK by Messenger Publications. Priced at €12.95/£11.95

Perspective

Breaking Point by Niall Lockhart

Earlier this summer I picked up a newly published novel by broadcaster and journalist Edel Coffey.

What caught my eye about this book was neither its genre (I am not a great fiction reader), nor its author (this is her debut work). What drew me to this book was quite simply its title: Breaking Point.

If words and phrases can capture a moment then ‘Breaking Point’ is surely a contender to describe the year we are living through in 2022.

Within our communities, an increasing number of individuals and families are at breaking point. In a recent interview with the The Irish News, Christians Against Poverty Northern Ireland Director, Alison Flanagan, spoke candidly about how many people ‘face destitution’ in the coming months as the price of food and fuel continues to soar.

Institutions and organisations are at breaking point. North and South stories in print media abound of post pandemic health care, social care, education, the justice system, businesses and charities, all being systemically stretched far beyond what they can sustain or cope with.

Add to this a global order that seems perilously close to breaking point and the picture is complete, a perfect storm of diverse and accumulating pressures, that shows no sign of being stilled.

When I was a law student at Queen's University in the early 1990s I remember studying a module on 'Law and Feminism' and being introduced to the concept of 'standpoint'. Standpoint theory emphasises the importance of identity and self-understanding in terms of how we view the world and how we treat others. 'Where we stand' matters in terms of how we process and respond to what is going on around us.

From the very beginning, the narrative of the Bible is a story that never appears to be far from breaking point. From rebellion in Eden, to the prospect of wipe-out in the wilderness, from exile in Babylon to the flight of the disciples in Gethsemane, time and again it feels that the plotline of scripture could break and any meaningful sense of story grind to a shuddering halt.

However, this is not what happens. What makes the difference and what makes a coherent plot line possible is that the God who stands at the centre of this near chaotic story is revealed to be kind.

God's kindness is seen as He creates future possibilities amidst the early disorder of the Genesis story (Genesis 24:12). God's kindness is present on the long and windy road to the Promised Land (Psalm 106:7). In kindness God announces an end to the exile (Isaiah 54:8). It is in kindness that the love of God appears in the birth, life, and death of a Saviour (Titus 3:4).

This is the "standpoint" from which Scripture wants us to process the world around us and to respond to it. 'God is kind' is a truth that calls through the fog of human experience and reaches out to us when otherwise we would struggle to believe that such a thing could be true.

But if, in faith, we hold to this truth, what will it look like as followers of this God to take our stand in relationship with individuals, placed in communities, located in a world, struggling to make any sense of all that is going on around?

On Sunday past, following the death of Her Majesty the Queen, in a personal epitaph to his grandmother, Prince William the Prince of Wales, expressed gratitude for her 'kindness'; a kindness he had experienced in the best of times and in the worst of times. There is power in kindness and sometimes that power is quite simply transformative.

On one occasion the missiologist Leslie Newbigin was asked to reflect upon a time when the gospel made an unexpected breakthrough in a cultural context where such breakthroughs were often elusive. Cataloguing the different things that had made an impact he wrote: 'It might have been a talk on the factory floor with a friend, a visit from a

Christian during an illness, the reading of a tract or Scripture, an act of kindness, a sermon, a prayer ...’

Spirit cultivated kindness (Galatians 5:22) is like the kindness of God Himself. It is undeserved, it is surprising, it reaches out across boundaries of culture, lifestyle, and creed. It is practical and not without cost. It is sometimes misunderstood. It is offered with no strings attached. It points to Jesus (Ephesians 2:7) and it can lead to Jesus (Romans 2:4).

What does it look like for followers of Jesus to take their stand in the society and in the times in which we live? For those seeking to live faithfully under the authority of Scripture this will mean many things, many things that will include a conscious choosing to clothe ourselves in kindness (Colossians 3:12). Could this be one of the simplest and yet most transformative gifts that we are called to share, with people, and in places, so close to their breaking points?

Niall Lockhart is minister of Ballyhenry Presbyterian Church

Poem for today

Daughter by Carol Ann Duffy

Your mother’s daughter, you set your face
to the road that ran by the river; behind you, the castle,
its mute ballroom, lowered flag.

Stoic, your profile a head on a coin,
you followed the hearse
through sorrow's landscape- a farmer, stood on a tractor,
lifting his tweed cap; a group of anglers
shouldering their rods.
And now the villagers, silently raising their mobile phones.
Then babies held aloft in the towns, to one day
be told they were there.

But you had your mother's eyes, as a horse ran free
in a field;
a pheasant flared from a hedge
like a thrown bouquet;
journeying on through a harvest of strange love.
How they craned to glimpse their lives again
in her death; reminded
of Time's relentless removals, their own bereavements,
as she passed.

The uplift of the high bridge over a dazzle of water;
a sense of ascending
into anointing light which dissolved into cloud.
Nine more slow grey miles to the Old Town; the last mile
a royal mile,
where they gathered ten-deep as your mother showed you
what she had meant.
Nightfall and downpour near London. Even the motorways
paused;
thousands of headlights in rain
as you shadowed her still; smatterings of applause
from verges and bridges.
Soon enough they would come to know this had long been

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the Age of Grief;

that History was ahead of them. The crown of ice melting
on the roof of the world.

Tonight, childhood's palace; the iPhone torches linking back
to medieval flame.

So you slowed and arrived with her, her only daughter,
and only her daughter.

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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