

# Church News Ireland



**Image of the day – A first for the King**

## Image of the day

### A first for the King

**King Charles became the first British monarch to attend a Catholic funeral in centuries as he attended a requiem mass for the Duchess of Kent.**

Pope Leo XIV also paid a personal tribute to the Duchess, Katharine Worsley, praising her “legacy of Christian goodness” in a message delivered during her funeral.

The pontiff highlighted her “dedication to official duties” as the King, Prince and Princess of Wales and other senior royals gathered with her immediate family and friends for her requiem mass, a Catholic funeral.







The duchess was known for consoling losing Wimbledon finalists, notably a tearful Jana Novotna in 1993, and presented trophies at the championships for many years. She was also known for converting to Catholicism in 1994, becoming the first British royal to do so since King Charles II, who turned to the faith on his deathbed in 1685.

Charles is Supreme Governor of the Protestant Church of England, with his attendance at a Catholic service described by Catherine Pepinster, former editor of the Catholic weekly review *The Tablet*, as “of great historical significance” and “a huge step forward in ecumenical relations” in the *Sunday Times*.

Missing was the Queen, who pulled out of attending as she is recovering from acute sinusitis, but remains hopeful of being able to attend the royal elements of US President Donald Trump's state visit to the UK which begins today.



The pontiff's message was read by Archbishop Miguel Maury Buendia, the apostolic nuncio or diplomatic representative in the UK of the Holy See, the government of the Roman Catholic Church.

He said: “I was saddened to learn of the death of Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent, and I send heartfelt condolences, together with the assurance of my prayerful closeness, to Your Majesty, the members of the royal family, and especially to her husband, the Duke of Kent, and their children and grandchildren at this time of sorrow.

“Entrusting her noble soul to the mercy of our Heavenly Father, I readily associate myself with all those offering thanksgiving to Almighty God for the duchess's legacy of Christian goodness, seen in her many years of dedication to official duties, patronage of charities, and devoted care for vulnerable people in society.”





The Duchess preferred to be known as Mrs Kent and retreated from royal life to spend more than a decade secretly teaching music in a state primary school in Hull. Among those at her funeral were former Formula One world champion Sir Jackie Stewart and actresses Rula



Lenska and Dame Maureen Lipman.

Katharine, the wife of the late Queen's cousin the Duke of Kent, died peacefully at home, surrounded by her family, on the evening of September 4, aged 92.

## News

### Your chance to help shape the future of Belfast City Airport

**Belfast City Airport have launched their Draft Master Plan 2040, with ambitious plans to grow passenger numbers to 7 million by 2040. The airport estimate that these proposals could create more than 1,100 jobs and generate over £1.7bn annually for Northern Ireland.**

The Master Plan underlines real commitment to Northern Ireland's future, building stronger links with the rest of the UK, opening up job opportunities and attracting major private investment right into East Belfast.

At the heart of these proposals are improvements to connectivity to and from the airport, through better road access, the potential for a dedicated rail link and other forms of sustainable transport.

A public consultation has now opened to give residents and stakeholders the chance to shape the future of the airport.

<https://www.belfastcityairport.com/vision/have-your-say>



📍 A consultation drop-in event will also take place at Templemore Baths on 9 October, where people can view the plans and leave feedback in person.

## CookSmart Programme launched at St. Paul's Belfast

**The good folk at St. Paul's and St Barnabas, Belfast, were delighted to launch their Pathways to Health – CookSmart Programme ✨**

The programme gives families and individuals the chance to learn practical cooking skills, explore healthy and affordable recipes, and enjoy preparing food together in an energy efficient and low cost way. It was a fantastic first session filled with great energy, teamwork, and tasty dishes!



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Guests have thanked everyone at St Paul's Parish for the warm welcome — they are looking forward to the weeks ahead.

## **Inter-church outreach as 300,000 visit biggest National Ploughing Championships in the world**

**This year's National Ploughing Championships, located in the Diocese of Meath, took place in Screggan, Tullamore, County Offaly. The event is the biggest National Ploughing Championships in the world, with an average of 300,000 visitors.**



Bishop Tom Deenihan, Bishop of Meath, who attended the 'Ploughing', together with Bishop Pat Storey, the Church of Ireland Bishop of Meath and Kildare, blessed the special event as it welcomed tens of thousands of visitors from



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across the island of Ireland and from abroad.

Commenting on this year's major agricultural gathering, Bishop Deenihan said, "Especially during this Season of Creation, I extend my congratulations to all who have organised this event. The Ploughing not only

showcases the best of Irish farming and the invaluable contribution the agricultural sector makes to the fabric of our rural communities, it contributes greatly to the local and national economies while providing a meeting point where old friendships are renewed.

"It was wonderful to visit the 'Vocations Ireland' stand as it is a place of welcome, where those curious about religious life can hear real stories, ask questions, and explore the journey of vocation in a supportive environment. The duty of



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fostering vocations falls on the whole Christian community and I encourage all to pray for vocations to the priesthood and to religious life.”

Bishop Deenihan continued, “For Ploughing 2025, I pray for good weather and that everyone enjoys the days ahead here in Screggan. I wish to thank President Michael D Higgins for his opening speech earlier, which was his last delivered at the Ploughing as Uachtarán na hÉireann. Characteristically, President Higgins spoke eloquently and was inspiring in his call for justice and peace for the people of the Holy Land. I offer President Higgins and his wife Sabina my prayerful good wishes for health and happiness in the years ahead.”

For more information  
on the National  
Ploughing  
Championships visit  
<https://www.npa.ie/>

## Education

### Year 8 Adventure begins at RBAI

**Our new Year 8  
pupils in Dill and  
Jones had an  
action-packed two  
days at Ganaway**

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**Activity Centre,  
tackling the zip  
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This was a fantastic way to build new friendships, confidence and team spirit as they start their RBAI journey.

Well done, boys—we're excited for the year ahead!  
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## Strabane Academy's fantastic day at the Minds Youth Wellbeing Event

**Our Year 12s had a fantastic day at the Minds Youth Wellbeing Event in the Melvin Sports Complex . Pupils enjoyed a wide range of activities including coach-led physical sessions, drumming workshops, therapies and much more.**

We've had brilliant feedback from the organisers and it was wonderful to hear how our pupils were such fantastic ambassadors for the school. We're very proud of each and every one of them!

## Limavady Grammar School student's amazing 100% in both of her GCSE History papers

**The History & Politics department would like to acknowledge and congratulate Maddison who**



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**scored an amazing 100% in both of her GCSE History papers.**

Very few students are able to accomplish this. Maddison is pictured with her teacher, Miss G Wright. We are so very proud of you, Maddison!

## Stranmillis University College open day

**Thinking about  
your future?**

Join us at our  
Open Day on  
Wednesday  
22nd October,  
1–6pm!

✓ Chat with  
lecturers and  
current students

✓ Explore our  
beautiful  
campus

✓ Discover the perfect course for you

A promotional poster for Stranmillis University College's Open Day 2025. The poster has a yellow background. At the top left is the Stranmillis crest, followed by the text 'STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE' and 'A College of Queen's University Belfast'. The website 'www.stran.ac.uk' is at the top right. Below this is a photograph of four students (three girls and one boy) looking at a brochure together. Overlaid on the photo are three colored boxes: 'Initial Teacher Education' (blue), 'Early Childhood Studies' (pink), and 'Physical Education & Sport' (green). At the bottom, the text 'Wednesday 22nd October 2025' and '1.00pm-6.00pm' is displayed above the large, bold text 'OPEN DAY 2025'.

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📍 Don't miss your chance to experience life at Stranmillis!

👉 Register now:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/H7RTTJ/>

## Cathedral Calls

### Artist in Residence at Limerick



**We're delighted to welcome Nici LeGear as the first-ever Artist in Residence at Saint Mary's Cathedral, Limerick! Running from mid-September to the end of October, Nici's residency is titled: "Echoes in Stone: Landscapes of Memory"**



She will create three original oil paintings inspired by the Cathedral's deep history, architecture, and role in the life of the community.

## Get Involved

As part of her work, Nici is collecting stories and memories from those connected to Saint Mary's to create a "Community Tapestry of Voices." No artistic experience needed — just bring your stories! Drop-in session dates coming soon.

The Dean of Limerick, the Very Rev'd Niall J. W. Sloane, says: "Art and beauty are so important to us — this is another way to engage art, people, and the Cathedral." This project is kindly supported by the Arts Council and Limerick City & County Council through the Limerick Arts Programme 2025.

 [info@nicilegear.com](mailto:info@nicilegear.com)

 [www.saintmaryscathedral.ie](http://www.saintmaryscathedral.ie)

## Newry Cathedral calling all singers

**Newry Cathedral is celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2029, and we're looking for a special voice to help us commemorate this historic occasion.**

We are commissioning a new song, "The Granite Star," a contemporary acoustic ballad that reflects on the cathedral's enduring role in the community. This isn't a traditional hymn; it's a modern, emotionally resonant piece that tells a story of faith, resilience, and hope.

We're looking for an artist with a warm, expressive voice to bring this song to life.

The finished recording will be a central part of our bicentenary celebrations.

Why it matters: As the first cathedral dedicated after Catholic Emancipation, Newry Cathedral is a powerful symbol of faith and identity. This is your chance to be a part of its legacy.

Interested? Email us at [office@newrycathedralparish.org](mailto:office@newrycathedralparish.org)

## Clergy and ministry

### Derry and Raphoe regional meetings for church officeholders begin



**The first in a series of regional meetings for church officeholders throughout Derry and Raphoe was held on Monday evening in**



## **Laghey, which belongs to the Donegal Group of Parishes.**

The gathering, in the local parish hall, was for churches in the south Donegal area and was the next stage in the ongoing consultation process which is part of the Diocesan Review announced at the 2023 Diocesan Synod.

This evening's meeting was chaired by Bishop Andrew, assisted by the two Archdeacons. More than 40 people – including parish secretaries, treasurers, churchwardens and clergy – defied dismal weather to share and discuss their views on the Diocese's future.

The parish representatives were addressed by the three church leaders about the background to the review, and the





challenges and opportunities facing the Diocese. Archdeacon David Huss, who, as local Rector, ‘hosted’ the meeting, urged everyone present to be candid in sharing their views. “Don’t hold back,” he told them. “Say it as it is.”

Archdeacon Miller reminded the audience of the background to the review. Two years ago, the Diocesan leadership had been mandated to "prayerfully conduct a strategic review" of the diocese. Bishop Andrew had previously said that the review was about determining “how our church can continue to flourish in the difficult times that we live in, with all the challenges they bring for faith communities”.

After listening to the Bishop and the Archdeacons, the officeholders broke into small groups to discuss a series of questions prompted by the review, before feeding their views back to the meeting in a final plenary session.

There will be seven more regional meetings over the next month – two in the Diocese of Raphoe and five in the

Diocese of Derry – to gather the views of parish officers right across the Diocese before an interim report is presented to the Diocesan Synod.

## Resources

### Before You Finish Breakfast

**A brand-new resource created by @tearfund\_ireland and CIYD is now available!**

📖 This pack includes six assemblies featuring:

- Bible studies and faith-based content
- Social justice themes like immigration and climate change

✨ Designed for secondary schools, but also suitable for older primary pupils.

Get your copy through the Church of Ireland Church in Society Department website, or DM us [@ciyd\\_insta](#) for a physical copy.\_



## Perspective

### Ireland and UK to renew and expand Memorandum of Understanding on defence cooperation

**Britain and the Republic of Ireland are set to renew and expand their decade-old defence cooperation agreement, Mark Murphy writes.**

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was originally signed in 2015 and has served as a foundation for bilateral defence collaboration, particularly in military training, intelligence sharing and cyber defence.

The renewed version of the agreement is expected to be finalised by 2026, following a series of high-level meetings between both governments throughout 2025.

Speaking in the House of Lords, Minister of State for Defence Lord Coaker confirmed that discussions have intensified this year, with senior defence officials from both countries meeting in Ireland and the UK.

“We are seeking to establish a new memorandum of understanding between the UK and the Irish Government by next year,” Lord Coaker said.

The decision to refresh the MoU was first outlined in the UK-Ireland 2030 Joint Statement, released after a bilateral summit in Liverpool in March.



The statement emphasised a renewed commitment to cooperation “informed by our co-guarantorship of the Good Friday Agreement” and framed by the need to address a “challenging geopolitical and international security environment.”

While Ireland remains a militarily neutral state and is not a member of NATO, both governments have emphasised the mutual benefits of defence cooperation.

The MoU has facilitated joint training exercises, capability development and crisis management operations.

British officials also confirmed that it has continued to provide support for monitoring threats such as Russian naval activity near Irish waters, an area where Ireland lacks adequate surveillance capabilities.

In 2023 a British frigate and helicopter shadowed a Russian submarine near Cork Harbour, outside Ireland’s territorial waters.

Similar concerns have been raised regarding the Russian spy ship Yantar, which has reportedly loitered over undersea communication cables within Ireland’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

British forces have played a key role in tracking such threats.

Luke Pollard, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Defence, noted that the MoU “underscores the breadth of our bilateral

relationship with Ireland” and highlighted Britain’s commitment to defending critical undersea infrastructure for itself and its allies.

The renewal of the MoU has sparked debate in both countries, particularly regarding the nature of Ireland’s contributions.

Some British peers, including Baroness Hoey and Lord West of Spithead, have questioned whether Ireland benefits disproportionately from the arrangement without shouldering equivalent costs.

Independent Irish senator Gerard Craughwell echoed these concerns, describing the original 2015 agreement as one where Ireland had “little to bring to the table.”

However, he acknowledged that the agreement made strategic sense for both sides, especially given growing threats in the North Atlantic region.

“There is much that needs to be learnt, and I would expect that the MoU will be invaluable as Ireland ups its game in defence,” said Craughwell.

Lord Coaker responded by affirming Britain’s respect for Ireland’s neutrality while acknowledging that the global security landscape requires both nations to adapt.

“Ireland is also looking at establishing its own radar capability,” he said, noting that discussions are ongoing around maritime and cyber defence, as well as critical underwater infrastructure.

Britain and Ireland also plan to coordinate on broader strategic initiatives, such as the UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review and reforms in international justice and energy security.

Tánaiste and Minister for Defence Simon Harris recently announced a €16.5 million contract with Belgian firm Seyntex to deliver over 6,000 new body armour suits for Irish Defence Forces personnel.

Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee emphasised the strategic role of Northern Ireland, citing its geography and industrial capabilities as crucial to the renewed partnership.

Meanwhile, Baroness Smith of Newnham suggested aligning bilateral defence efforts within a broader UK-EU security framework.

The updated MoU, scheduled for finalisation in 2026, shows a stronger defence relationship between the UK and Ireland, one shaped by mutual interests and shared threats.

As Lord Coaker concluded, “That is something to be celebrated in Ireland and in the United Kingdom.”

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## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site



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## Church News Ireland

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# Church News Ireland

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**Link in Monday through Saturday from  
early morning**

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