

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Church flowers

Image of the day

Church flowers - thanks to St Colman's, Dunmurry

News reports

Northern Catholic bishops appeal for community solidarity on the current economic crisis

The bishops issued a comprehensive statement on the Feast Day of Saint Vincent de Paul.

The bishops say, “We want to raise our voices in urgent concern about the challenges facing the most vulnerable in our society, as multiple economic pressures converge to create life threatening levels of deprivation and fear for individuals and businesses. For the poorest in our society, this is an emergency, not a crisis. We call on everyone, from public representatives to parishioners in our parishes, to come together in a spirit of solidarity and active concern for those who are in need among us at this time”.

The bishops continue, “Every day seems to bring news of dramatic and unplanned increases in the cost of basic essentials such as food, fuel and heating. More and more low and middle income families, older people and vital



businesses in our economy, are gripped with fear as they think about what lies ahead this autumn and winter. The recent Westminster budget has done little to lift this fear and the absence of an Executive at Stormont is unquestionably impeding the effort to respond to the depth and urgency of the situation. We therefore urge a combined effort from all those in Church, politics and society to help address this crisis now; to act justly, to promote the common good and to show solidarity with the many thousands of families who are enduring hardship and worry”.

The bishops stressed that “Politicians have a particular duty to ensure the basic needs of citizens are being met and to reassure those in need that serious, meaningful help is on its way. What has been offered to date, does not go far enough to meet that need. Indeed, the “fiscal plan” presented last week to the Westminster parliament represents an unjust distribution of resources which will benefit the richest but bring little comfort to those hardest hit and most at risk in these trying times. This highlights once

more the need for working devolved politics in Northern Ireland that can deliver for the real needs of people here, especially lowest income families and many small and medium businesses, key employers on this part of the island, on the brink of collapse. Despite political differences about the Protocol and a future border poll, the most urgent duty on our local MLAs, of all parties, is to prioritise concrete actions that will address the life or death situation many people and businesses face now, and in the months ahead”.

Turning to social issues, the bishops say “Of particular concern, is the fact that in Northern Ireland, one in four children are living in poverty – one of the highest levels of child poverty of any population in Europe. This is despite the fact that a Child Poverty Strategy has been promised for years now – most recently in the New Decade New Approach agreement – but has not yet been delivered, 25 years on since the Good Friday Agreement.

“Recent research from our Marriage Care Service, ACCORD, also points to the intensifying pressure the financial crisis is having on families, with 81% of those surveyed reporting that worries concerning money are a primary point of family and relationship pressure. It is known that many families here already have less than £100 per month in disposable income. We also know that, in comparison with other parts of these islands, more people here are reliant on social security, more people are in fuel poverty, more people are in absolute poverty and we have some of the highest levels of working poor. This means that the impacts of this emergency will be felt most acutely here’.

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The statement is issued in the names of Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All-Ireland and Apostolic Administrator of Dromore; Bishop Noel Treanor, Bishop of Down and Connor; Bishop Donal McKeown, Bishop of Derry; Bishop Larry Duffy, Bishop of Clogher; and, Bishop Michael Router Auxiliary Bishop of Armagh.

For the full text of the statement -

[<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/2022/09/27/statement-by-the-northern-catholic-bishops-on-the-current-economic-crisis-for-the-feast-of-saint-vincent-de-paul/>]

Lisburn Parish celebrates completion of Tower project

A Thanksgiving Service for the completion of the Tower Project in Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, was held on Sunday September 25, led by the rector, Archdeacon Paul Dundas.

The service began with the introit by the parish choir 'In this holy place we meet,' by RS Bambrick and conducted by the organist, Ross Morrow. This was followed by the saying of part of Psalm 103 with a congregational thanksgiving response. The congregation joined in the hymn 'To God be the glory.'

The update on the Tower Project was introduced by Mr Stevie Long on behalf of the Select Vestry as he outlined the four years of the project, thanked parishioners for their generosity in a project estimated now at £310,000, and the team who brought the project to completion, from Robert



Celebrating the completion of the Christ Church, Lisburn, Tower Project. Bishop George Davison is in the front row, flanked by Archdeacon Paul Dundas, left, and the Rev John Pickering.

Bleakney as the architect and S McConnell as the contractor. He then introduced a video of the project produced by Chris Dougherty.

The Dedication of the Tower took place on September 1 when the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev George Davison, along with the rector, architect, site manager and vestry members Stevie Long and Eric Thompson, climbed to the top of the scaffolding and conducted an act of worship. This was then shown as a video to all present.

The Bishop led the dedication in memory of parishioners and family whose names are recorded on a plaque in the church porch. The scripture readings were from 1 Kings 8:

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14-21, read by Thomas Ringland and 1 Peter 2: 4-10 read by Valerie Christy, members of the Select Vestry.

Visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Australia

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the senior bishop of the Anglican Communion of Churches and the spiritual leader of the world's 85 million Anglicans will visit Australia from 4-14 October 2022 accompanied by his

wife, Mrs Caroline Welby.



He is scheduled to meet Anglicans across the country who are involved in delivering diverse ministries and services.

His visit to Grafton Diocese is focused on flood recovery following the

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devastating floods in the region during February and March 2022. He will meet representatives of Lismore Parish, Anglicare North Coast and other organisations that are playing a part in disaster recovery in the region. The Archbishop has spoken extensively about climate change, and has been at the forefront of climate change initiatives.

The Archbishop will also give a public lecture entitled Building Peace in Robust Diversity at Emmanuel Anglican College on Thursday 13 October.

This will be the first visit of an Archbishop of Canterbury to Grafton Diocese since the visit of Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher in 1950. As such it will be an honour to host Archbishop and Mrs Welby to the Diocese.

C of E bishops to meet with groups on sexuality issues

On Friday 30 September two meetings are being held at Lambeth Palace. A number of groups have been invited to send two representatives to meet with two bishops (members of the LLF Next Steps Group) and Eeva John.

The Living in Love and Faith office has chosen not to publicise the meetings though they are not secret. I

In the morning, from 11.00 to 13.00, representatives of the General Synod Gender and Sexuality Group, Inclusive Church, OneBodyOneFaith, MOSAIC and Diverse Church will meet Bishops Jonathan Baker (Fulham) and Bev Mason (Warrington) and Eeva John.

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In the afternoon from 14.30 to 16.30, representatives from Changing Attitude England, Equal and the Ozanne Foundation will meet with Bishop Helen-Ann Hartley (Ripon), Bishop Sarah Mullally (London), also with Eeva John.

God is still calling and there are men of courage who are answering Him” – Bishop Cullinan

10 students begin studies for the priesthood for Irish dioceses

56 seminarians currently studying for the priesthood for dioceses

The Irish bishops have announced that ten seminarians have begun their 2022-2023 academic programme and priestly formation for Irish dioceses.

These new students are currently undertaking their Propaedeutic Programme in the Redemptoris Mater Seminary, Dundalk, Archdiocese of Armagh; Royal English College, Valladolid, Spain; and, Royal Scots College, Salamanca, Spain. This brings to 56 the total number studying for the priesthood for Irish dioceses. See below for the full list of seminaries and houses of study where seminarians are currently undertaking their formation.

The Propaedeutic Stage is a distinct stage that takes place in a recognised seminary, approved by the Holy See and the relevant Bishops' Conference – see explanation below. Upon completion of this programme, the seminarian, with

the nomination of his bishop, then applies to a seminary to continue his formation for an Irish diocese.

Commenting on this year's intake of seminarians, Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan, chair of the Bishops' Council for Vocations, said, "The men who have gone forward for training for priesthood in Maynooth are to be applauded. They are certainly going against the cultural norm, but they are so much needed.

"Amid the chaos of today, within and outside the Church, these men give hope to many. God is still calling, and there are men of courage who are answering Him. May all of us support them with our prayers and encouragement," Bishop Cullinan said.

Father Willie Purcell, National Diocesan Vocations Coordinator for the Bishops' Conference, said, "These men are counter-cultural and by entering the seminary they show the world that God never ceases to call men to priesthood. Every vocation is missionary and is lived out in witnessing to the unconditional love of God in our lives expressed in our service of those whom we are called to minister to. As the faithful in Ireland and around the world continue to journey together on the Synodal Pathway, the generosity of these men calls us to reflect on our own vocation story as we take our part in the renewal of the Church in our respective dioceses and parishes. I wish to especially thank all the vocations directors across the country for their work in accompanying those who are discerning a vocation to priesthood."

Dublin inter-faith forum marks UN International Day of Peace

“Unless we cultivate peace we risk drifting away from it,” Dublin’s Lord Mayor Caroline Conroy told a Dublin City Interfaith Forum gathering which marked the UN International Day of Peace last week.

The gathering took place in the Peace Park at Christchurch Place in Dublin and the Lord Mayor noted that: “Even the absence of war is not enough for a lasting peace.”

The Lord Mayor said that Dublin was becoming more multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious. She said this was a source of strength and vitality and faith communities were integral as they were at work in every community. “They are increasingly recognised as important partners in working for the common good at local level. Faith communities are committed to the values of hospitality, justice and mercy and peace-making. They are committed to working towards developing better understanding and relationships of deeper respect and acceptance of each other as human beings,” she commented.

But she said that the world was changing with deeper divisions and polarisation, a war on the borders of Europe, energy and health crises, climate change, economics and reckless politics all presenting challenges.

She urged people to recognise that there were shared values and differences but they must continue to be fully inclusive, to invite all to dialogue and discussion, and to



Members of Dublin City Interfaith Forum with Lord Mayor Caroline Conroy on International Day of Peace.

build on common ground. “Encounter, dialogue, and reflection are good ways to begin this effort to cultivate peace as a deeply rooted value, one that is reflected in our actions, in the education of our children, in our celebrations and stories, in our policies and commitments, and in our relationships near and far,” the Lord Mayor stated.

Chairperson of Dublin City Interfaith Forum, Archbishop Michael Jackson, noted that the event to mark the UN International Day of Peace was taking place in the Peace Park which lay in the heart of the old city of Dublin. Looking out to the crossroads beyond the railings he said that the

city stood at a crossroads which was represented by the event's theme: 'End Racism – Build Peace'.

“Racism is a very targeted expression of an instinct and an activity which diminishes the things that someone, whom we think of as other, holds dear and which make their identity. Courage, protection, perspective and compassion are the values and virtues needed to combat and eradicate racism in Irish society,” he stated. “The contributions of people from many World Faiths to today's event and the contribution of the Lord Mayor point us to shared humanity and values of generosity as together being a roadmap for peace as the antidote to racism.”

The attendance at the event was drawn from the faiths represented by DCIF and a number of other contributions were made. Among those present were: – Myozan Kodo – Zen Buddhism Ireland; Ms Hilary Abrahamson – Dublin Jewish Progressive Congregation; Dr Mudafar Al Tawash – Islamic Foundation of Ireland; Mr Shaheen Ahmed – Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland; Swami Purnananda Puri – Eire Vedanta Society; Dr Hemant Kumar – Vedic Hindu Cultural Centre of Ireland; Mr Patrick Dawson – Baha'i Community; Dr Jasbir Singh Puri – Sikh Community & Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar; Ps Dare Adetuberu – Redeemed Christian Church of God; and Mr Sudansh Verma – Vedic Hindu Cultural Centre of Ireland.

CNI

In the media

Wright makes emotional return to Green Pastures

Controversial pastor Jeff Wright appears to have made a comeback at the Green Pastures 'megachurch' in Ballymena, Andrew Madden writes in the Belfast Telegraph

The church founder resigned as a director of Green Pastures, the People's Church — the full name of the company behind the institution — in May.

It followed behind-the-scenes discord which led to the resignation of eight members of the group's executive team in April.

Mr Wright briefly returned to the church in July for the funeral of his father, Sir William Wright, the co-founder of Wrightbus.

Green Pastures had close ties to the company, with Jeff Wright formerly a director of the firm.

He appeared to make a comeback last weekend, leading the church's Sunday service.

While he did not directly comment on his return, he delivered a sermon entitled 'When it Doesn't Make Sense',

and appeared to become emotional on a number of occasions.

He is still listed as a former director of the church.

Amid the furore earlier this year, the Charity Commission opened an investigation into governance concerns at Green Pastures. A review of complaints against Mr Wright was also launched.

In an email to church members at the time, the Green Pastures board said the review related to “alleged behaviours by pastor Jeff Wright which have purportedly had a detrimental and significant impact on the mental and spiritual wellbeing of those staff”.

“This review is being carried out by Trusted HR Limited, who are an independent firm with expertise in this area and who have no connection either to the church or the board. The board await the outcome of this review,” the board added.

“At this stage the board do not believe that the complaints give rise to moral or financial failures on the part of Pastor Jeff Wright. Rather, we understand that they mostly centre around issues relating to [his] style of leadership.

“The board has communicated with the Charity Commission in respect of the complaints received and the process that has been instigated. The Charity Commission has advised that the board has acted in accordance with the principles of good governance and has endorsed the actions taken to date.”

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Green Pastures accounts for the year to August 31, 2021, showed an increase in funds to £22.6m — up 2% on 12 months before. But the amount owed to creditors at the time also rose — from £336,048 to £524,008.

Much of this money (£248,000) related to the construction of the Gateway project, a site in Ballymena featuring the church's building which was to also include residential space, a supermarket and amenities.

Some £93,000 in building costs were due after one year.

Green Pastures' main bank accounts had funds of £48,258, up from £20,560 the previous year.

The church was formed in 2007 and situated on a site next to the Wrightbus factory.

Five years later, it bought and later moved to land on the outskirts of Ballymena. The 97-acre plot, which was once valued at £75m, was sold to Green Pastures for a reported £4m.

After Wrightbus went into administration in 2019, it emerged the business had given the church £15m over six years.

Courtesy the Belfast Telegraph. September 28

Mother and baby home survivors' stories published: 'I was told I was going'

BBC News

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-63038627>]

NI students report unwanted sexual experiences

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BBC News

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-63051676>]

Teachers in Northern Ireland on strike warned of contract breaches

BBC News

[<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-63051525>]

Poem for today

September Tomatoes by Karina Borowicz

The whiskey stink of rot has settled
in the garden, and a burst of fruit flies rises
when I touch the dying tomato plants.

Still, the claws of tiny yellow blossoms
flail in the air as I pull the vines up by the roots
and toss them in the compost.

It feels cruel. Something in me isn't ready
to let go of summer so easily. To destroy
what I've carefully cultivated all these months.
Those pale flowers might still have time to fruit.

My great-grandmother sang with the girls of her village
as they pulled the flax. Songs so old
and so tied to the season that the very sound
seemed to turn the weather.

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Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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