



Cardinal Nichols thanks Queen for safeguarding the Christian faith

Cardinal Nichols has written to the Queen thanking her for her “steadfast insistence on the great importance of our Christian faith” on the

occasion of her becoming the longest reigning monarch in British history.

In a message released yesterday, the cardinal said that the the Queen's vocation had been "unstinting" over the years. He wrote: "We express these sentiments with particular warmth and admiration as you celebrate the occasion of surpassing the length of reign of any other British Monarch.

"Along with Catholics across the world, and especially in the Commonwealth, we join our prayers of thanksgiving to those of other Christians for the many blessings of your reign."

The cardinal also noted that the Queen accepted the "burden of office" at a very young age. He said: "Your vocation as our Queen has been unstinting over these years. The burden of high office fell upon your shoulders at a young age, and yet through the many and varied circumstances of your reign, you have held integrity of service as a high standard and as an exemplar for other heads of state and leaders of nations. We give thanks too for the constant support that Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, has shown you in your time as our Queen; his role as Prince Consort being a source of strength and stay."

He continued: “We thank you too, for your steadfast insistence on the great importance of our Christian faith, given in both word and example, alongside your appreciation of the contribution made by other religions in our rich and diverse society today.

“Our hope is that, enriched by the presence of many beliefs and cultures, our country will always maintain respect for our Christian heritage and the sure foundations that it provides for a flourishing of true human fulfilment. The Gospel of Jesus, which we seek to serve, is a challenge to our society to think more deeply about the sanctity of life, the constant need for forgiveness and reconciliation, and the faithfulness required in love and the self-sacrifice which brings true satisfaction.”

He concluded: “Your Majesty, it is my privilege to assure you of our prayers for you, now and in the future and, most especially, on the day when you become our longest reigning Monarch. All the Catholic communities in England and Wales have been asked to offer special prayers for you and your family on this most special of days.

“May Almighty God bless Your Majesty, preserve you in health of mind and body, and grant you

every grace and blessing, now and in the years to come.”

C of I Archbishops call for prayer, engagement and collections in response to refugee crisis

As large scale conflict and economic destitution pushes thousands of people to travel perilously to find refuge, Archbishop Richard Clarke and Archbishop Michael Jackson call on members of the Church of Ireland to respond as an integral action of Christian faith and welcome.

Commenting on the text - ‘And you are to love the stranger, for you were once strangers’ Deuteronomy 10:19, The Archbishops state -

The Church’s response is three-fold. We invite parishes and individuals to participate in as many ways as they deem able. We recognise the local responses that many individuals and parishes have already undertaken and thank people for their compassion and action.

1. **Pray** for the people who are displaced and traumatised, that they receive peace, security and welcome. Pray for all those who have lost

loved ones in the conflict or through drowning in the Mediterranean. Pray for empathy and wisdom for the European governments as they make decisions on how to respond to the crisis.

2. Engage with political representatives in order to encourage governments to show courage and leadership in their responsibilities to refugees and to expand provision of refuge and resettlement to people who are fleeing. You can do this by writing to or seeking to meet with your local TD or MP. You could also join with one of the campaigns organised by charities and agencies working actively in these fields.

3. Hold a special or a retiring collection on Sunday 13th and Sunday 20th September to respond to the needs of refugees fleeing Syria and Iraq both at their own borders and at European borders. These funds can be sent through Bishops' Appeal and will be dispersed to agencies such as Christian Aid which is responding directly to the need of 12.2 million people in Syria and 4 million refugees in neighbouring Iraq and Lebanon as well as directing funds to NGOs responding to the need in EU countries.

See also Christian Aid appeal launch - report below

Newtownabbey churches respond to refugee crisis

As the refugee situation in Europe has worsened over the past number of days, “The Newtownabbey Times” reported that local church representatives have spoken out about the crisis. It states -

There has been a massive out-pouring of goodwill in the local community, and charity groups have witnessed an upsurge in donations.

The Rector of St Patrick’s Church of Ireland in Jordanstown, Rev Nigel Baylor has said that funds will be donated to the refugees through the Bishops’ Appeal.

“In the Church of Ireland we have the Bishops’ Appeal, which collects donations for catastrophes such as the current refugee crisis. This will be our immediate response to the situation. I have been to the central organiser for the Bishops’ Appeal to get more envelopes for the congregation to make donations. As a church we would encourage people to do what they can for the charity effort,” he said.

Reverend Robert Bell, the Minister at Ballyclare Presbyterian Church, also encouraged local

people to do what they can to help with the refugee situation.

“As Christians we have a responsibility to do what we can to help. In this current time the words of Jesus have come to mind, ‘You were a stranger and you took me in.’ I think that we should follow this example. Amongst Christian people generally there is a real concern for refugees, and an awareness that a lot of the refugees from Syria are Christians. The Presbyterian Church will be working with agencies such as Christian Aid and Tear Fund to donate to the crisis. Prayers were said during our service last week for the refugee situation,” Mr Bell said.

Father John Forsythe of St Mary’s on the Hill Parish in Glengormley reiterated these sentiments, saying that the people of Newtownabbey and indeed further afield should be doing what they can to help the refugees.

“The Pope has asked for the people on the continent to open their doors to the refugees, and to accommodate these people. So far nations in Europe have been taking in people, but it will be a while before the refugees are here. When they do arrive in mass numbers I would

encourage people here to open their homes to them,” he said.

A meeting was due to take place in the hall at St Bernard’s Church last night (Thursday, September 10) at 7.30pm to discuss the best ways of helping the refugees.

“Is donating money the best way we can help them, or is it to send out blankets or to give them accommodation? All of these things will be discussed at the meeting. The Pope has asked us to take practical action, so we need to decide what the best way of doing this is. I would encourage everyone to do what they can to help, whether that is making donations or volunteering their time to help with the charity appeals,” Father Forsythe added.

Guide helps NI clergy support suicide families

A new handbook is being sent to ministers and priests to help them speak about suicide during religious services.

It offers support and advice for clergy faced with families suffering because of suicide.



A new handbook which gives advice on speaking about the issues of mental health and suicide during a religious service is being sent to clergy throughout Northern Ireland. The guidance has been developed by 'Flourish', a partnership group which includes clergy, suicide prevention charity Lighthouse Ireland, the Churches Community Work Alliance and the Public Health Agency. Pictured, left to right, are the Reverend Mervyn Ewing from the Methodist Church, Fr Brendan McManus and Jo Murphy from Lighthouse Ireland

The booklet, which was written by members of the churches alongside the Public Health Agency (PHA), will be sent to 1,400 members of the clergy.

Its circulation was timed to mark World Suicide Prevention Day on 10 September.

It includes advice on preparing a service, suggestions on bible readings and the choice of music.

Madeline Heaney, PHA, said: "It can often be difficult for clergy to know how best to address mental health issues and suicide within their congregation.

"We hope that this new resource will support and enable clergy to provide advice at such times."

Jo Murphy, Lighthouse Ireland, said: "Suicide is such a big concern in our communities. Churches play a pivotal role in supporting people who have been bereaved by suicide.

"This resource has been developed with the churches to encourage clergy to talk about mental health and encourage people to reach out and seek help."

Reverend Mervyn Ewing from the Methodist Church in Ireland said it was "a very reassuring resource for clergy".

"For many clergy, providing pastoral support to families affected by suicide can be very disconcerting and perplexing; this resource helps reassure clergy, allay fears and provides some very useful and practical advice," he said.

The Churches have long acknowledged that their clergy play a vital role in supporting those bereaved through suicide.

As far back as 2008, the leaders of the four largest Churches told the assembly health committee that when it came to the "major social problem" of suicide, "We are still dealing with the 'aftermath' long after the statutory services are gone".

"Likewise we are committed to reducing the risks by offering a listening ear and a safe place to discuss problems," they said.

Mr Ewing will be speaking later this month at a retreat at Lough Derg which hopes to "offer a sacred space for people who have been affected in any way by suicide".

In recent years Lough Derg has developed, among other things, a particular ministry to those affected by suicide.

Fr Cathal Deery, a Clogher priest who is part of the Lough Derg priest team, will be spiritual director of the 'Living with Suicide' day.

He hopes the day will offer support not only to people bereaved through suicide but also those who minister to the suicide bereaved or work in support services.

"It is estimated that every year around 800 die by suicide in the island of Ireland every year - a reality that casts a shadow on the lives of hundreds more; families, extended families, personal and professional networks, whole communities," says Fr Deery.

"During the pilgrimage season we encounter many pilgrims who share their witness to the heartache of living with suicide in their lives.

"We want to offer something to support those people who have been affected by suicide, either through personal loss or with suicidal ideation, or for those ministering to the suicide bereaved or working in support services."

Fr Deery says the day retreat was "not a conference in the secular sense of the word".

"Rather, it's an invite for people to come to a safe place - the sanctuary of St Patrick - where

they might find some sense of healing and peace in the midst of pain and struggle."

Knowing that "moving beyond coping is possible" is important for people affected by suicide: "On a day such as our 'Living with Suicide' day, we wish everyone to experience the gift of hope."

Meanwhile, the sort of practical advice contained in the Flourish handbook is also much needed.

"Clergy have a huge role to play in offering pastoral support during some of the most testing times in our lives," says Madeline Heaney from the Public Health Agency.

"It can often be difficult for clergy to know how best to address mental health issues and suicide within their congregation, and we hope that this new resource will support them at such times."

As Jo Murphy from suicide prevention charity Lighthouse Ireland says, "suicide is such a big concern in our communities".

"Churches play a pivotal role in supporting people who have been bereaved by suicide," she says.

"This resource has been developed with the churches to encourage clergy to talk about mental health - and encourage people to reach out and seek help."

:: More information on Flourish at www.wewillflourish.com

:: The Living with Suicide day retreat takes place at Lough Derg on Wednesday September 23 from 9.30am to 4pm. More information from www.loughderg.org or 00353 71 9861 518

:: If you or someone you know is in distress or despair, call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000. This is a confidential service, where trained counsellors will listen and help immediately on the phone and follow up with other support if necessary. The helpline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also access the Lifeline website at www.lifelinehelpline.info

Hungarian assignment for former Moderator and his wife

Very Rev. Dr. Ivan Patterson and his wife Maureen departed this week (Wednesday, 9th September) for a three-month assignment with the Reformed Church in Hungary.



Ivan will be teaching in the Practical Theology Department of the Károli Gáspár University in Budapest (one of the Hungarian Reformed Church's four theological colleges). Both he and Maureen will also be involved in pastoral ministry and leading Bible studies, in English, in local congregations.

At his commissioning service on Sunday evening (5th September) in High Street Presbyterian Church in Antrim, Ivan spoke of his enthusiasm for his new assignment, and asked people to pray that he and Maureen would make a useful

contribution to the church's theological education and pastoral ministry.

Ivan who served as Moderator from June 2011 to June 2012, along with his wife Maureen, have had long-standing connections with the Hungarian Reformed Church – both in Hungary and Romania, and have made numerous short visits to both countries. Newcastle Presbyterian Church, their former congregation, has been twinned for over 20 years with the congregation of Hodos in north-west Romania.

Maureen trained as a teacher. She has been involved in women's ministry in PCI for many years and held different positions on Boards (now Councils) and Committees of the Church including Convener of the Europe and Middle East Committee.

The Reformed Church in Hungary is the largest Protestant Church in Hungary. Today, it is made up of 1,249 congregations in 27 Presbyteries and four Church Districts and has a membership of over 1.6 million.

It has four theological training colleges one of which is the Károli Gáspár University in

Budapest, which in its Faculty of Divinity is dedicated to the training of Ministers of Religion and Teachers of Religious Education and to prepare them for minisry in the 21st century.

Armagh's contribution to European Heritage Open Day

History and heritage enthusiasts are being invited to Armagh City and the surrounding area this weekend to take advantage of Northern Ireland's European Heritage Open Days event and visit more than 30 historical properties free of charge.

Organised by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), European Heritage Open Days provide people with an opportunity to discover and enjoy the often hidden, curious and interesting architectural and historical treasures.

In Armagh and the surrounding area, free access has been arranged for 30 properties and events; giving visitors a unique opportunity to visit some of Armagh's most fascinating buildings.

Among those properties to visit across the weekend is the newly-refurbished Archbishop's Palace and Primate's Chapel which will be open

from 12noon to 5pm each day, with guided tours running at regular intervals.

Navan Centre & Fort is offering specially-condensed tours which take in the exhibition hall, a visit to the Iron Age dwelling and a guided tour of Navan Fort. The centre will also be open to visitors from 10am to 6.30pm.

Armagh Gaol is once again unlocking its doors for the weekend. The building, which opened in 1819 and closed in 1988, operated as a prison for over 150 years and is one of Northern Ireland's most historical buildings.

During European Heritage Open Days, guided tours will allow visitors to explore this notorious former prison and will include the history of the Gaol as well as recounting some of the stories which have emerged from its long history.

Tours of Armagh Gaol will take place each hour from 12pm to 4pm and last approximately 30 minutes. Tours are extremely popular and must be pre-booked at www.armaghgaoltours.com.

Armagh's two cathedrals are also taking part in European Heritage Open Days. Saint Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral will have guided tours at 10.45am and 3.15pm on Saturday, plus

a children's tour at 12.30pm. The cathedral will also be open to the public on Sunday.

Divine Healing Ministries Youth Service

Divine Healing Ministries is holding a Youth Service on Monday, September 28th at 8pm in St Anne's Cathedral. All ages are invited to attend

Fergus McMorrow, Youth Development Officer DHM, said "Jonny Clarke, well known in youth circles, will be our speaker. Jonny is Ireland Director of Youth With a Mission. His theme on September 28th will be 'Jesus Still Heals Today'. Worship will be led by YWAM Rostrevor Band."

Clergy news and moves

Revd Joanne Megarrell has succeeded Canon Gareth Harron as Clanbrassil Area Dean ahead of his move to Holywood Parish in Down Diocese in November.

Joanne became rector of Moira Parish in 2012 having served there as curate for 9, years so she is very familiar with the deanery. Clanbrassil stretches from Aghalee to Portadown out to Ardmore on the edge of Lough Neagh and Knocknamuckley beyond Lurgan.

The Diocese of Elphin welcomes two priests from overseas who have come to Ireland as missionaries. Fr. Dusmanta Mahanayak is from the Diocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar in India and will serve as Curate at Sligo's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Fr. Lawrence Ebuk, a native of Calabar, Nigeria, is a member of the Missionary Society of St. Paul and has previously ministered in Texas and in Grenada. He will be a curate at the Parish of St. Peter and Paul, Athlone.

Welcoming the two priests, Bishop Kevin said "People may find it a little strange to begin with - and they may have to listen a bit more carefully, which is no harm. The challenge was the same for the people of Nigeria and India, when initially faced with the accents of priests from Sligo and Roscommon. We are blessed to have Fr. Dusmanta and Fr. Lawrence, who bring with them significant experience of priestly ministry. I greatly appreciate the generosity which has led

them to leave their homes and their families to come and minister among us. I hope that this in itself might inspire some new vocations among the young people of our own diocese".

Christian Aid launches refugee crisis appeal

Christian Aid yesterday launched an appeal to support partner agencies in Europe working to alleviate suffering in the present refugee crisis, and organisations in the Middle East providing emergency relief to those forced from their homes by the conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

In recognition that the crisis needs a political solution, it is also asking supporters to email Prime Minister David Cameron and Home Secretary Theresa May, pressing the Government to take a courageous stand at EU talks next week to ensure the UK plays a full part in a "permanent, balanced and mandatory EU relocation scheme". This must include the UK welcoming those seeking sanctuary in Europe.

In addition, the email urges the Government to do more both to ensure aid reaches people in besieged areas in Syria, and to achieve a

political settlement there to help bring the day closer when Syrians can return home safely.

Christian Aid is also supporting cathedrals and churches to hold vigils to pray for an end to the conflict and the hardship and suffering it has caused.

Christian Aid's Policy Director Christine Allen said yesterday: "Christian Aid was founded 70 years ago in response to the millions of people displaced after the Second World War. Today the world is witnessing a human crisis of similar proportions.

"The plight of those seeking sanctuary in Europe demands visionary leadership from European governments to face this crisis together. We call on the UK to join other countries in welcoming refugees within Europe with open arms. The Prime Minister and Home Secretary must act with courage to rise to this great challenge of our times."

On the situation in Syria and neighbouring countries, Christian Aid's Head of Middle East, Frances Guy, said: "Countries in the region are hosting an overwhelming number of refugees. Providing succour and support in Iraq and Lebanon is a massive challenge for our partners.

“It is the plight of those still trapped in besieged communities in Syria, however, which is the most worrying. In his latest report the UN Secretary-General expressed specific concern about over 422,000 people living in such places. Water and food have become tools of the conflict.

“Many of those with money and resources will have fled. It is the poorest that are enduring the worst of what is happening.

“A further major worry, both in Europe and the Middle East, is that winter is coming which means cold and illness for those without adequate protection.”

In Europe, Christian Aid’s partners in the Act Alliance, a global coalition of more than 130 churches and church-related organisations that work together in humanitarian assistance, are providing emergency relief in Greece, Serbia and Hungary.

In Greece, the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) is providing food and other essential supplies, improving conditions at reception centres and carrying out water, sanitation and hygiene activities on the islands of

Chios, Samos, and Kos which in August saw 300 refugees arrive each day.

In Hungary, Hungarian Interchurch Aid is providing refugees on the border with essential supplies and in Serbia, Philanthropy, the charitable foundation of the Serbian Orthodox Church, is providing food, hygiene and baby kits, shelter and sanitary containers, plus winterisation supplies (firewood, clothes and boots), and psychosocial support.

Christian Aid has funded organisations working in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon with refugees and the displaced for several years providing communities with food, bedding, hygiene kits and health services. In Lebanon and Iraq our partners are also working to provide psychosocial support to children and women in need.

Media digest

Belfast Telegraph

Belfast Cathedral marks Queen's service

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/uk/queen-all-smiles-as-bells-ring-out-to-mark-historic-day-31515607.html>

News Letter

‘Shadowy figures’ would see collapse as an opportunity: Harold Good

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/shadowy-figures-would-see-collapse-as-an-opportunity-harold-good-1-6949383>

Irish Independent

Bobby Storey spent almost 20 years in prison, but could influence how SF governs the Republic

<http://www.independent.ie/opinion/comment/profile-bobby-storey-spent-almost-20-years-in-prison-but-could-influence-how-sf-governs-the-republic-31515654.html>

Irish Mirror

Refugees in Ireland: Locals say they weren't informed about reception centre in their Kildare town

[http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/refugees-ireland-locals-say-werent-6403034#rlabs=1%20rt\\$category%20p\\$6](http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/refugees-ireland-locals-say-werent-6403034#rlabs=1%20rt$category%20p$6)

Only eight convictions from 325 Church abuse claims dating back to 1941 in Ireland

<http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/only-eight-convictions-325-church-6413882>

Irish Times

An Irishman's Diary about the rise and fall of St Werburgh's

<http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/an-irishman-s-diary-about-the-rise-and-fall-of-st-werburgh-s-1.2344692>

Times/Guard/Tel/Ind/Exp/BBC

Reports on Her Majesty the Queen becoming Britain's longest reigning monarch during a day of events in Scotland.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/royalfamily/article4552611.ece>

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/09/the-guardian-view-on-the-queens-milestone-look-beyond-a-record-breaking-reign>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/queen-elizabeth-ii/11854553/Queen-Elizabeth-II-becomes-longest-reigning-monarch-on-a-day-of-characteristic-modesty.html>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/queen-elizabeth-ii-becomes-longest-reigning-monarch-in-britain-after-63-years-on-the-throne-10493496.html>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/603985/The-Queen-celebrates-longest-reign-Edinburgh>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34200410>

Eve Stand

Archbishop of Canterbury writes on tomorrow's assisted dying bill being debated in the Commons saying that MPs must not take risks with the lives of vulnerable people (*see above*).

<http://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/justin-welby-mps-must-not-take-risks-with-the-lives-of-vulnerable-people-a2943591.html>

Mirror/Tel

Report that hospices could close if MPs back assisted dying, according to comments by Canon Peter Holliday, deputy chairman of Hospice UK (*see podcast above*).

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/hospices-could-close-assisted-dying-6413497>
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/assisted-dying/11854737/Assisted-dying-could-threaten-hospices.html>

Mirror

Labour MP Rob Marris, whose bill on assisted dying is debated in the Commons tomorrow, writes on why he wishes to give the terminally ill the right to die.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/want-give-terminally-ill-right-6413691>

Mirror

To mark World Suicide Prevention Day, the paper prints an open letter written by Joy Heal, whose son Jonathan killed himself days after his 20th birthday. Joy hopes that other people in Jonathan's position will seek help

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/you-tried-very-hard-save-6412149>

Exp/Guard

Reports on the funeral of a chauffeur, who died in the Shoreham air crash, at St Margaret's church, Rottingdean. Maurice Abrahams drove many brides to the same church during his career.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/604086/Shoreham-air-crash-chauffeur-funeral-Maurice-Abrahams>

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/sep/09/chauffeur-funeral-shoreham-air-disaster>

Tel/Ind

Reports on student Jessy McCabe who has forced the Edexcel examination board to include female composers in its A-level music syllabus. Jessy, a pupil at Twyford CofE High School in London, raised a petition with 3000 signatures on it as part of her campaign.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/11855164/A-level-music-student-forces-exam-board-to-include-women-on-syllabus.html>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/exam-board-forced-to-include-female-composers-on-alevel-music-syllabus-by-teenagers-campaign-10493285.html>

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