



The statue of Christ outside St Paul's Church on the Falls Road has been reinstated after falling from the cross earlier this year.

Landmark west Belfast crucifixion statue reinstated

A statue of the crucified Christ which fell from its 20-foot cross in west Belfast has been reinstated, the Irish News reports. The 'Passion

of Christ' figure outside St Paul's Church on the Falls Road came down from the cross in February.

The Down and Connor diocese said at the time that an iron joint appeared to have "worn away" and vandalism was not to blame.

The landmark on the Falls Road, which has stood for decades under trees across from the Royal Victoria Hospital, was discovered damaged on the ground and was quickly taken away for assessment.

A diocesan spokesman said a decision would be taken whether the figure could be "repaired or replaced".

According to historical papers, the Passion of Christ statue could be seen by a German airman lit up in the night as bombs rained down on the city during the Blitz.

Before Easter it is normally draped in a purple cloth in keeping with Catholic tradition.

In recent days, the figure has been returned to the cross. However, it was unclear last night if it is the same statue or a replica. A blessing of the statue by Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor took place on Saturday night.

Church of Ireland bishops pressed over financial transparency

A senior clergyman has hit out at the Church of Ireland over its “indefensible” refusal to provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure on the church’s 12 bishops, the News Letter reports.

Canon Jonathan Barry made his scathing comments in relation to an ongoing campaign for greater transparency in how church funds are spent.

In the latest edition of the Church of Ireland Gazette (which is editorially independent of the church itself), Canon Barry describes a pre-Christmas trip by the bishops to the Portmarnock Hotel and golf complex near Dublin last year as a “jolly” – at a time when “clergy in the main hardly get time to breathe”.

Canon Barry, who is rector of Comber, said a number of questions on overall expenditure posed by the Gazette were “perfectly reasonable,” yet were not being answered by the bishops and the Representative Church Body (RCB).



Rector of Comber Canon Jonathan Barry is seeking greater clarity around expenditure on bishops

The current annual cost of the episcopate (two archbishops and 10 bishops) is €1.7 million (£1.45m).

Some clergy have now questioned why a more detailed breakdown of those costs is not made public, or why further details about the Portmarnock trip have not been provided, other than a statement from the church to says its purpose was to discuss issues “of mutual concern to the archbishops and bishops”.

Commenting on claims the church is “stonewalling” attempts to improve

transparency, Canon Barry said: “Parishes cannot go on being bled in terms of assessments by people who refuse to be transparent, refuse to give account and react obstructively when asked.”

Gazette editor Canon Ian Ellis said: “Canon Barry’s article drew on his considerable experience in the Church of Ireland over many years. His frankness, combined with his complete integrity, provided a reflection that was both refreshing and challenging.”

Canon Ellis added: “The Gazette’s investigation of bishops’ costs has centred on a series of questions that we sent to the Church authorities last July. The matter of the Portmarnock residential meeting in November was one more issue.

“However, it is very regrettable that the central Church has refused to answer the perfectly straightforward and appropriate questions that we have posed.”

A spokesman for the Col said: “The Representative Church Body, which approves episcopal costs on behalf of the Church, is content that it is entirely reasonable for the bishops to hold residential meetings at certain times at a central location and is satisfied with

the arrangements for the one held most recently at Portmarnock.

“Further details on governance arrangements and oversight of episcopal costs have been published in the statement to the Church of Ireland Gazette of 24/3/17.”

Church of Ireland statement on episcopal costs which was published in the Col Gazette in March this year

Total actual Episcopal costs for the year ended 31 December 2016 are €1.7m and represents the gross cost of the Episcopacy in the twelve Dioceses of the Church of Ireland. Episcopal costs are met by sharing costs between the RCB and the Diocese, with the RCB paying approx 46% and the Diocese paying approx 54% of costs in 2016.

These costs include the following: Stipend, pension, state insurance, travel & subsistence, Office & Secretarial, See House running costs, House of Bishops costs, Central administration costs, Regional Anglican meetings, Research.

Details of Episcopal costs are included annually in the RCB book of reports within the sections

“Allocation budget provided for the future year” and “Clergy Remuneration and Benefits”.

Bishops are entitled to a stipend of 1.75 times the Minimum Approved Stipend with the Archbishop of Dublin entitled to a stipend of 2.25 and the Archbishop of Armagh entitled to 2.75.

Episcopal costs are budgeted annually by the RCB Finance Department and brought to the Stipends Committee, which is made up of 9 members (6 lay and 3 clergy). The Stipends Committee review the detailed budget, seek further analysis & clarification if required and make recommendations on cost adjustments as they see fit.

The Episcopal budget is then brought to the Executive Committee (a committee of 15 people including clergy and lay members) who review and approve the budget, which is submitted to the Allocations Committee, in October each year, together with all other requests for allocation for the next financial year.

The Allocations Committee is made up of five members (3 lay and 2 clergy), who review the detailed budgets and may seek further analysis, clarification and adjustments. The final budget for allocations are reviewed by the Executive Committee and approved by the RCB

(composition). Incorporated in the Episcopal budget are See House running costs, which include repairs, heating, maintenance & property insurance. Property maintenance and facilities are considered by the Property Committee, which is made up of 9 members (8 lay and 1 clergy), who make recommendations to the Executive Committee for approval, as necessary.

Other costs included in the Episcopal budget are approved by the Allocations Committee on an annual basis. The majority of Episcopal costs are paid monthly by the RCB Finance Department, with some costs being managed locally.

Fr Brendan Smyth victim says church's failure to change its ways 'disturbing'

A woman who was sexually abused by serial paedophile Fr [Brendan Smyth](#) in the [United States](#) has condemned the [Catholic Church](#) for its “disturbing” failure to change its ways, the Irish Times reports.

“It’s all nothing more than window dressing to me. They haven’t taken real action. Release the files, prosecute the predators, and compensate

the victims,” said Helen McGonigle, reacting to the latest Irish inquiry reports .

She was raped and sexually assaulted by Fr Smyth in the 1960s in [Rhode Island](#) in the US, in a school, a church basement and his car, when she was aged between six and nine-years-old. He also assaulted her mother after he was sent back to the Rhode Island parish following church-ordered treatment in hospital in [Ireland](#).

A review of four institutions by the Catholic Church’s National Board for Safeguarding Children carried out in 2015/16 was published on Wednesday.

It found that in regard to the De La Salle Brothers, the Norbertines and the [Nazareth](#) Sisters “their performance in the recent past does not demonstrate any real change from their historical behaviour in terms of ensuring good safeguarding practice or putting in place effective pastoral responses to complainants who have made allegations of abuse”.

Brendan Smyth, a member of the Norbertine Order, was jailed in 1994 for sexually abusing children.

“It’s disturbing,” said Ms McGonigle, “because you would think with all the attention that has

been brought upon clerical abuse and on the case of Fr Brendan Smyth specifically and also the Norbertine Order, that they would have taken steps to change their ways over time.

“I appreciate that the National Board for Safeguarding Children has found because it is indeed the case, this is the truth, that’s what’s happening.

“If the [Vatican](#), or the Norbertines, or the Catholic Church as a whole is not forced to change its ways then the practices and the patterns will continue.

“The Catholic Church has not even changed its canon that provides for secrecy, that’s still in place and that places victims under pontifical secrecy.

“They can do all the window-dressing they want and have all these reports come out which are just horrific and which state the truth for the historical record but we have to put the Vatican on notice that they’ve got to change, and it has to come right from the top.

“The window dressing of [Pope Benedict](#) and [Pope Francis](#) apologising to victims isn’t enough. There has to be action.”



Lisburn clergy carrying the cross for the annual walk of witness through the city last Easter

Lambeg rector boycotts cross-community ‘walk of witness’

A Church of Ireland minister in Co Antrim has refused to take part in an annual Easter procession because of theological differences with the Roman Catholic Church, the News Letter reports.

The cross-community carrying of the cross ‘Walk of Witness’ in Lisburn is a popular event on the Christian calendar, bringing together

representatives of main churches, as well as local missions, for the public act of worship on Good Friday. Despite the walk's widespread appeal, the new rector of Lambeg, Rev Eddie Coulter, has broken with parish tradition by refusing to take part due to "deeply held theological disagreements" with the teaching of the Catholic Church.

Rev Coulter – who grew up in Lisburn but has served as a minister in Dublin, Ballymena, Knockbreda, Armagh and Upper Falls in Belfast – told the News Letter that he has "stood shoulder to shoulder" with Catholic neighbours during troubled times, but could not participate in joint worship. "I decided not to participate in this year's March of Witness in Lambeg on Good Friday morning because I have deeply held theological disagreements with Roman Catholic teaching about the cross, so do not feel able to share a common witness in this context," he said.

In a statement issued to the News Letter, he said: "In this 500th year of the anniversary of the Reformation and drawing on the 39 Articles of Religion, I feel that it is important to uphold the Gospel of grace alone through Christ alone, for the spiritual welfare and benefit of all people." Rev Coulter, who was installed as rector of

Lambeg in October 2016, went on to say: “I have, however, worked closely on social issues such as unemployment with Roman Catholic churches in the past, as rector of Upper Falls, and I’ve stood shoulder to shoulder with Catholic people during the Troubles and especially when as a rector near Portadown joining a rally to protest against loyalist violence towards Catholic families. I therefore am happy to stand with the Catholic Church and with Catholic people. Many are my friends and family.”

Immediately prior to joining Lambeg Parish, Rev Coulter had been senior pastor of Immanuel Church in Dublin and the superintendent of Irish Church Mission. The father of three is the son of a former chief talent scout for Manchester United.

One irate church member, who did not wish to be named, contacted the News Letter to say the minister had effectively “banned” the congregation from taking part in the walk, adding: “He told the church members they shouldn’t take part in it as the Catholic church was involved. He doesn’t approve of events with the Catholic church. “A lot of church members would go to the walk and the majority would be in favour of it.”

Rev Coulter rejected the claim, saying that while he “wasn’t encouraging” the walk, he made it clear to his congregation that they were “free to make up their own mind and follow their conscience”.



Suspended SDLP councillors Declan Boyle, Kate Mullan and Pat Convery

Pro-life group slams SDLP after council trio suspended

Pro-life campaigners have accused the SDLP of “a grotesque attack on free speech” after the

party disciplined three Belfast councillors, the News Letter reports.

Councillors Pat Convery (group leader), Kate Mullan (deputy leader), and Declan Boyle were suspended indefinitely after abstaining from a vote on a motion condemning harassment of women outside medical facilities, particularly ones providing abortions.

The party said its councillors had been instructed to support the motion, brought by Green and PUP members, during Monday's council meeting. Party leader Colum Eastwood has defended the party's decision and warned that any members who go against party policy will be disciplined.

The suspended councillors will now sit as independent members and will not represent the party, which now has just four representatives on Belfast City Council. The trio could not be reached for comment (Friday). However, Cllr Boyle was yesterday quoted in the Belfast Telegraph as saying he was "disappointed" at the party's decision to suspend him. He added: "I don't support the harassment or intimidation of anybody but I do believe in standing up for the rights of the unborn. I am proud to be pro-life

and I have absolutely no regrets about how I voted.”

But Mr Eastwood said Mr Boyle “should think very clearly” about his stance on the matter. He added: “The party has internal disciplinary procedures. “They are not finished yet and how people act in the coming days and weeks will obviously inform those procedures.”

Belfast SDLP Cllr Brian Heading yesterday told the News Letter he felt the party’s decision was “justified”.

But the decision has been condemned by Liam Gibson of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, who described it as “outrageous”. He said anti-abortion protesters outside the Marie Stopes reproductive healthcare centre in Belfast are “acting perfectly within the law as they seek to continue to uphold the right to life of unborn children”.

“They do not involve themselves in harassment, intimidation, acts of harassment or any other behaviour which could be construed as challenging the law,” he added. Defending the decision to suspend the three Belfast councillors, Mr Eastwood said: “The party’s position is clear. “We have been against the

harassment and intimidation of anyone since our foundation.”



Catherine Fox on her visit to the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, with her husband, Dean Peter Wilcox (left), and Canon Patrick Comerford and the Revd Dr Maurice Elliott

The bishop, his wife and the cassock-ripper

The new Bishop of Sheffield is a popular evangelical who has been widely praised for his

work in the Church – but he also has a less conventional side, proofreading his wife’s racy novels, By *Olivia Rudgard, Religious Affairs Correspondent*, *The Daily Telegraph*.

The Very Rev Dr Pete Wilcox, 55, currently dean of Liverpool, will take on the role this summer. However, Dr Wilcox’s wife Catherine has a rather less conventional career – writing novels which, he admits can “come as something of a shock” to other Christians.

Writing under the name Catherine Fox, she has written a Christian spoof of *Fifty Shades of Grey*



Left - Dean Pete Wilcox, the new Bishop of Sheffield, with Canon Patrick Comerford at a recent ordination in Saint Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast

called *Fifty Shades of Purple* and has had her books described as “cassock-rippers”.

She is a lecturer in creative writing at Manchester Metropolitan University and has written a series of books based in the fictional diocese of Lindchester. Her characters debate the same issues that the Church has been tackling in real life, such as gay priests and the ordination of women. But they also swear copiously and engage in explicit trysts.

The newly appointed bishop said it was an “enormous privilege” to be his wife’s first reader. He added: “She writes about the Christian Gospel and its impact on individual lives but she doesn’t make everything neat and tidy because life just isn’t that way.”

See also-

<http://www.patrickcomerford.com/2017/04/dean-pete-wilcox-of-liverpool-former.html>

News briefs & Upcoming events

+++ Lurgan rector appointed - The Reverend Canon Mark Harvey, Incumbent of the Parish of Ballybeen, has been appointed as Incumbent of the Parish of Shankill, Lurgan. Date of institution to be announced.

+++ Limerick recital for Holy Week - On Wednesday in St Mary's cathedral, Limerick, there will be a special lunchtime recital for Holy Week by three teachers from the Limerick School of Music: soprano Emma English, accompanied by instrumentalists Michael Dooley and Peter Barley.

+++ Service of Tenebrae St Werburgh's, Dublin - Wednesday at 7:30pm in St Werburgh's church, Dublin, Dr Gerard Downey will direct the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral Group of Parishes in a service of Tenebrae featuring extracts from Tomás Luis de Victoria's Lamentations of Jeremiah and Gregorio Allegri's Miserere Mei. This service by candlelight shall be conducted by the Archdeacon of Dublin, the Ven David Pierpoint.

+++ Organ recital St Patrick's cathedral, Dublin - Thursday evening at 7pm there will be a recital by the assistant organist, David Leigh.

+++ Good Friday Walks of witness in Dublin and Derry - On Good Friday the Archbishops of Dublin, Dr Jackson and Dr Martin, will 'Follow the Cross' from Christ Church cathedral to St Mary's Pro-Cathedral. The walk begins at 7.15pm. In Derry, the Bishop of Derry & Raphoe

will take part in a 'Walk of the Cross' as part of the four city churches together programme.

+++ Faure requiem in Waterford - The choir of Christ Church cathedral, Waterford, directed by Eric Sweeny, will perform Fauré's Requiem at 8pm on Good Friday with soloists: Eoin Power (baritone) and Laura Delahunty (soprano).

Today in Church History

April 10, 428: Nestorius is consecrated bishop of Constantinople. Almost immediately, Nestorius began attacking the term "Theotokos" (God-bearer) to describe the Virgin Mary. "It is impossible that God should be born of a woman," he said, suggesting Christotokos (Christ-bearer) instead. He did not deny Jesus' nature as God but simply felt that the term challenged the reality of Christ's human nature. Though the church denounced Nestorius as a heretic, modern theologians think the label may have been too harsh.

April 10, 1829: English evangelist William Booth, founder and first general of the Salvation Army, is born in Nottingham. In 1865, Booth and his wife, Catherine, set out to reach the desperate poor and unchurched by conducting open-air meetings with lively music; preaching in theaters,

bars, and jails; and creating large-scale plans to relieve poverty. His organization launched what became one of the most successful religious revivals in the modern era).

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