

Queen attends Songs of Praise marking 150 years of the Scripture Union



The Queen was the special guest for a special Songs of Praise episode marking a Christian charity's milestone.

The programme, aired on Sunday, commemorated the 150 years of the Scripture Union.

Wearing a fuchsia ensemble, the Queen joined a congregation of friends and supporters of the



Queen Elizabeth II (right) attending the Scripture Union's 150th anniversary service of celebration, at St Mary's Church in London, as a special guest for a Songs of Praise episode marking the Christian charity's milestone which was aired on Sunday.

organisation to mark its work encouraging children and young people to explore their faith. The pre-recorded event, hosted by singer Katherine Jenkins, featured readings by Baroness Floella Benjamin.

The Queen, who has a strong faith which she often reflects upon in her annual Christmas

address to the nation and Commonwealth, sat at the head of the congregation.

The Rev Tim Hastie-Smith, national director of the Scripture Union, said: "It was absolutely brilliant the Queen was able to join us, the fact that she found the time to be with us this afternoon, with a whole load of children and people celebrating God's love, is an incredible thrill."

Televised Mass for Catholic Schools Week 2018

On Sunday 4 February Bishop Fintan Monahan, Bishop of Killaloe, will be the chief celebrant at Mass for the conclusion of Catholic Schools Week 2018. This Mass will be broadcast by RTÉ on radio from the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul, Ennis.

As well as the local parish community of Ennis, the liturgy for this year's Mass for Catholic Schools Week will be enhanced by the participation of students, staff and parents from local schools.

Dublin has been chosen by Pope Francis to host the World Meeting of Families 2018. From 21–26



Catholic Schools Week 2018

Catholic Schools: Called to be a Family of Families

28 January – 4 February 2018

August 2018, families and others from all over the world will gather to celebrate their lives together, to share their experiences from different parts of the world, to reflect on the different challenges they face and to grow together in faith. This event presents a special opportunity for school families to celebrate not only the fact that parents are the primary educators of their children but also the vital role that Catholic schools play in assisting parents.

In partnership with World Meeting of Families 2018, the Catholic Schools Week Steering Committee has developed a one-year catechetical programme for Catholic primary and post-primary schools. The theme for this programme is ‘Catholic Schools: Called to be a Family of Families.’ The programme invites

Catholic schools to reflect on and celebrate the relationship that exists between home, school and parish through participation in four sub-themed catechetical moments.

Catholic Schools Week 2018 (Moment Two) is the high point of the catechetical programme for primary and postprimary schools. During Catholic Schools Week 2018 we invite each of our Catholic school families to participate in a week of celebration and reflection on the theme Catholic Schools: Families of Faith. To assist Catholic schools with their celebration and reflection, the Catholic Schools Week Steering Committee has made a series of resources available, each with its own unique daily theme.

Catholic Schools Week will take place from 28 January to 4 February. #CSW2018 resources are now available in the “Resources” section of catholicschools.ie.

4 Corners Festival programme revealed

This year’s 4 Corners Festival begins on Thursday February 1 with an event “20 Years on: A Conflict Frozen in Time?” supported by the Senator George J Mitchell Institute for Global



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Peace, Security and Justice at Queen's University Belfast.

The blurb for the event states - 20 years ago not only did political representatives of loyalist paramilitary groups take part in peace negotiations, but their buy-in helped boost the “YES” vote supporting the 1998 peace

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agreement. Here and now however, the loyalist community, is frequently portrayed rightly or wrongly as opposed to political “progress.” A panel discussion in the heart of “loyalist West Belfast” on the Shankill Road, with local politicians and community workers, as well as sketches by the Shankill’s own “Heel and Ankle” Theatre Group explores where that commitment to peacebuilding, civic regeneration and community reconciliation has “gone” in the past two decades and how it might be renewed.

The programme for the Festival is at - <http://4cornersfestival.com/festival-2018/>

Two-thirds of Catholic dioceses do not publish accounts online

Almost two thirds of the 26 Catholic dioceses in [Ireland](#) do not publish any of their financial details on their websites, a new survey has found, Patsy McGarry reports in The Irish Times.

By comparison, the reverse is true in the US, where almost two-thirds of the 177 dioceses there publish such details on their websites.

The Irish survey was carried out by We are Church Ireland, a lay Catholic lobby group,

which has called for greater transparency in diocesan finances.

A summary of the financial details of each diocese, and other relevant charities in each, are published on the Charities [Regulatory Authority](#) website.

However, the level of detail made available to parishioners on diocesan websites varies significantly.

The survey of the 26 Catholic dioceses on the island of Ireland found that 62 per cent presented no financial information on their websites at all.

Only five Irish dioceses publish audited accounts on their websites: Down & Connor in [Northern Ireland](#), Dublin, [Elphin](#), [Limerick](#), and Ossory.

A further five publish some financial details on their websites: [Clogher](#), Cork and Ross, Ferns, [Kildare](#) and Leighlin, and [Killala](#). None of the remaining 16 dioceses publish any financial details on their websites.

Further, only 58 per cent of the dioceses identified members of their finance committee on their websites.

The survey was carried out to compare against a recent poll by the US lay liberal Catholic group [Voice of the Faithful](#), which showed that 34 per cent of the 177 dioceses there did not include any financial information on their websites.

Commenting on the findings, [Colm Holmes](#) of We are Church Ireland said “congratulations to Ossory who top the table with their audited 2016 financial statements available on their website”.

“But it is disappointing to see [Armagh](#) in mid-table, though we found a note on their website saying the proper publication of financial statements... is a priority. Also disappointing is to see a large diocese like Meath at the bottom of the table.

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[Pope Francis](#), he said, “has put a strong emphasis on financial reporting and transparency”.

“Strangely enough, Canon Law does not require financial reporting by dioceses. But with all monies for the church raised by donations from all the people of God over many centuries, surely in the 21st century our dioceses should be publishing annual financial reports?”

In Ireland, the drive for financial reporting and transparency is being driven by the Charities Act (2009) and the UK Charities Acts 2008 and 2013 for Northern Ireland, which also apply to the dioceses as charities. There are also financial

statements in the Companies Office covering many dioceses, parishes and trusts.

“But in this day and age the website is the shop window for all organisations and that is where this information should be available in each diocese,” Mr Holmes said.

Cleric with key role in furthering of community relations to retire

The longest serving minister in Clogher Diocese, the Venerable Cecil Pringle (Archdeacon Emeritus), has announced his retirement to take effect from the end of February.

Apart from his curacy in East Belfast, he has spent his entire ministry in Clogher Diocese.

After a ministry with the Church of Ireland spanning over 50 years, the former Archdeacon of the diocese for 25 years will retire following his last service in the Drumkeeran Group of parishes in North Fermanagh where he has been Bishop’s Curate for the past 10 years.

“I have found my ministry very fulfilling. I would not have remained as long as I did if I had not had that fulfilment,” he commented.

During his extensive ministry, the Archdeacon Pringle has seen huge changes not only within church life but in society in general but he has embraced many of these changes in his work in parishes where he has served, always respectful of other people’s opinions.

Cecil Pringle was the third of five children of Joseph and Isabella Pringle, born outside Clones, Co Monaghan, in Clogher Diocese, as the Second World War was raging in Europe.

His father, Joseph died when he was only seven and his mother, Isabella brought up five of a family during a difficult time in rural Ireland.

“The lesson I learned from that is that we would not have survived if it had not been for the help and kindness of our neighbouring farmers, almost all of whom were Roman Catholic, and



which was freely given again and again,” he recalled.

Progressing in education, Cecil was attending Clones High School when in his teenage years, felt the calling to God and the late Archdeacon Victor Forster encouraged him to go forward for ordination training.

Following his degree and theological training at Trinity College, Dublin, he was ordained for the curacy of St. Donard's Parish, East Belfast, in 1966 where he served until 1969.

He was appointed rector of Cleenish Parish, near Bellanaleck in Clogher Diocese in 1969 and it was during his time there that he oversaw the grouping with Mullaghduon Parish, near Letterbreen, in 1978.

In 1980, he moved the short distance to the neighbouring parish of Rossorry where he remained for a further 28 years. During this time, he was appointed firstly, a Canon, in 1985 and then Archdeacon of Clogher in 1989, a position he held for 25 years.

In 2008, he was appointed Bishop's Curate of Drumkeeran, Muckross and Templecarne group of parishes where he remains until his retirement at the end of February.

During his ministry in Clogher Diocese, Archdeacon Pringle has worked with six bishops including the current Bishop, the Right Rev. John McDowell.

Apart from his pastoral and parish duties, Archdeacon Pringle served on numerous committees and boards within the diocese and

at wider Church of Ireland level, being a member of the Representative Church Body, serving on its Executive Committee.

He was also interested in progressing education and as well as teaching R.E. to pupils, served on the Board of Governors of Jones Memorial Primary School, Enniskillen and was Chairman of the Board of Management of Enniskillen High School for many years.

He also served as a church representative on the Western Education and Library Board and was Chairman of the Teaching Appointments Committee for a period of time.

It was during his ministry in Rossorry Parish that Archdeacon Pringle helped to progress community relations when he accepted an invitation from Father Brian D'Arcy at The Graan Monastery, to speak at the Novena of Hope in the mid 1990s. He has spoken at every Novena since.

“Having grown up when we were so dependent on the wider community I realised those people were very kind and helpful. However I could not have envisaged the next big step,” he said of the time he received Father Brian’s invitation.

Having spoken at the Novena of Hope to great acclamation, Archdeacon Pringle continued the relationship by inviting Father Brian to speak at a service in Rossorry Parish Church during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Looking back over such meritorious service, Archdeacon Pringle said the key to successful ministry is to let people know they are cared for and that clergy must be prepared to listen.

“I would underline the role of listening in pastoral ministry,” he said.

He and his wife, Hilary, who live near Letterbreen, have three children; Tanya; Mark and Claire and four grandchildren and he is looking forward to having more time with his family as well as pursuing his pastimes of regular walking, playing pool and enjoying holiday breaks.

But he leaves with having had a fulfilling life of service in the church.

“My length of service says it all,” he added.
Report courtesy The Impartial Reporter.

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Pope Francis on World Day of Migrants and Refugees: ‘Overcome fears’

Pope Francis celebrated World Day of Migrants and Refugees on Sunday with a Mass in St Peter’s Basilica, encouraging people to not be afraid of meeting people with different life experiences.

He said we should “overcome our fears so as to encounter the other, to welcome, to know, and to acknowledge” others.

In his message to mark the day, the pope stressed the need to create a welcoming environment for migrants and refugees stating that: “Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age.”

He proposed four action-oriented initiatives to respond to migrants: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate.

He said that all immigrants should be “empowered to achieve their potential as human

beings, in all the dimensions which constitute the humanity intended by the Creator”.

Pope Francis added that the Church is ready to take such steps but “political communities and civil societies” need to pitch in to for the initiative to become a reality.

The Catholic Church in England and Wales said the Office for Migration Policy will prioritise its work with the UK Government and other partners to create welcoming environments and provide well-resourced community sponsorship programmes in parishes.

Benefits of being the ‘gay church’ in village

Churches should hold gay weddings and open themselves to a new “market” of worshippers, a study has suggested, Olivia Rudgard reports in The Sunday Telegraph.

Academics at the Universities of Leeds and York say that holding such services can be “a positive brand for a place of worship”. Their study posited that churches could benefit from becoming known as “the gay church”.



Churches must “opt in” to conduct the weddings. Just 182 are thought to have done so since the law was changed in 2014. More than 40,000 places of worship allow heterosexual couples to marry.

The country’s 170 Unitarian churches have been boosted by bigger followings after gay couples who married there found their faith, the study found. Nearly half have now registered for same-

sex marriage, the largest proportion of any denomination in the UK. Rory Castle Jones, 30, married Rhys, also 30, at Gellionnen chapel in west Wales last August. “I had never heard of Unitarianism,” he said.

“But we wanted to get married and my husband wanted it to be in a chapel, because he’s originally from this area. He did want it to be in his family’s chapel, but they voted against it, which was not very nice for his family. But now it’s become quite a big part of our lives.” The couple said congregations had grown significantly since they began attending.

Derek McAuley, of the Unitarian church, said: “We have seen people join and become active in several local congregations as a direct result of our welcoming stance on same sex marriage.”

Gay couples are still prohibited from marrying in the Church of England, and many other religions have also declined to register as venues for same-sex wedding services.

New Rector for Conwal and Gartan invited to come dancing

If the Rev David and Rev Heather Houlton learned anything immediately after the former’s

Institution as Rector of the United Parishes of Conwal and Gartan on Friday evening, it was that their new surroundings, in the north west corner of Ireland, would be very different from their former home in Yorkshire, in the north of England.

The fact was spelled out to the couple in no uncertain terms not once but twice at a celebration in the parish hall after the service. Donegal people are every bit as proud as the people of Yorkshire, and their county's distinctiveness is worn as a badge of honour, almost; a tourism slogan used to promote the county to visitors in recent years boasted, "Donegal: it's different up here".

Having relocated last week, Rev David Houlton and his wife were introduced to their new parishioners at a Service in Conwal Parish Church in Letterkenny, which was led by the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Ken Good.

Bishop Good welcomed all those who had come to support the new arrivals. Among the congregation were parishioners from Rev Houlton's former parish, in Yorkshire, clergy from the Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches in Donegal, and representatives of civic society

in Letterkenny, including the town's Mayor, Jimmy Kavanagh.

The Preacher at the Service was the Rector of Tullyaughnish, Kilmacrennan, Killygarvan and Glenalla, Rev Canon Henry Gilmore, who shared a piece of information with the congregation – one which was especially pertinent given the prevalence of winter flu in the community: one of the greatest fears facing any rector was the loss of his or her voice. “I want to let you into a secret,” Canon Gilmore said. “Strange though it might seem, not everyone who knows the rector sees this situation as a case of total unmitigated disaster.”

It was the type of experience, he said, which brought home to any rector the importance of the human voice. “I am going to talk about ‘the voice of a rector’ tonight,” Canon Gilmore said, “but it’s not something that I’ve thought up. It is actually a rule or a canon in the Church of Ireland – it’s the eighth of the canons which has this title: ‘Speaking in a distinct and audible voice’. And I think it’s more than simply in church or conducting a service. I think that the whole work of a rector can be taken to involve a distinct and audible voice.”

Canon Gilmore decided to focus on the two words ‘distinct’ and ‘audible’, beginning with the second. A rector had to be audible, he said. That didn’t just mean speaking – it meant that they were communicating. That, the Preacher said, was one of the main functions of a rector’s work. Whether it was in church, or visiting the sick or bereaved, chairing a meeting or taking part in a meeting, whether it was in the community or giving a radio interview or writing an article to the press, communication was part of a rector’s duty. A rector had to be audible among his own people and among those who surrounded him.

Moving to the second theme, Canon Gilmore said: “The rector has a distinct voice. It’s distinct because it is – in his own humble way – his commission to teach the Christian faith.”

The Preacher drew the congregation’s attention to the second reading (Matt. 28, 16-20), in which Jesus addressed the doubts of some of the eleven disciples. Jesus told them that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him, and told the disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. “That’s where the distinctiveness of the rector’s voice comes from,” Canon Gilmore said, “that in some small way and in some very inadequate way he is carrying on the work of Christ. It doesn’t mean

he's infallible, in fact he alone knows how fallible he is. But it does mean that he will have a distinctive voice in the sense that the voice is that of God and of Christ."

Canon Gilmore urged the parishioners of Conwal and Gartan to support their new Rector with prayers and with constructive feedback. He told them that rectors and other Christian leaders were not called to "regurgitate" what was popular.

"The Rector will be selling you short if in his own way he doesn't give you the whole of the Gospel. Now he may have a particular interest, but he will do his best – in the circumstances in which God has placed him – to make the Gospel alive and make it relevant to your situation."

After the Service, the new Rector and his wife, their fellow clergy and the congregation repaired to the parish hall for refreshments and speeches. It was during these that new Rector was reminded just how different things are in Donegal. He was asked whether he could waltz or jive – neither of which he could do. "You've got two months to learn," he was informed, "because the Parish Dance is on the March 16"

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