



C of I bishop's radio appeal to the main NI political parties to find a way forward

Bishop Harold Miller of Down & Dromore has made an appeal to the main political parties to find a way forward for Northern Ireland.

He was speaking yesterday on BBC Radio Ulster's Sunday Sequence during a short discussion with 2 other church leaders – former Presbyterian Moderator, Revd Frank Sellers and Fr Michael Canny from Derry Diocese.

Speaking about the current political impasse Bishop Harold said: “I want to say to those party leaders that they are actually entrusted with this, not just by the people but by God. They're there not just because of the people, but God has put them there and I want to plead with them to really take seriously the possibility of the two parties at the end of the spectrum actually finding a way forward for this Province. Whether that's possible or not remains to be seen.”

In a short segment, the church leaders also touched on the importance of family, the quality of our online public discourse, the challenges posed by social media, particularly for the young and our difficulties interacting with each other here in Northern Ireland.

Bishop Harold commented that, despite being a very generous, hospitable people good at interacting with other countries, “we desperately need to learn how to interact with each other across the divisions in our society.”

When asked what he was looking forward to in 2018, the bishop said: “One of the things I’m most excited by is the possibility of planting new churches into the most needy of areas. We’ve been doing this over the past 3 or 4 years and we’ve discovered that it can be extremely positive, very well received and actually quite quickly, really engage with people who thought the church was nothing to do with them.”

Listen again to Sunday Sequence 7 January.
(Begin 15 mins into the programme).

Diocese bans the ‘sign of peace’ amid Australian flu fears

A Catholic diocese in Northern [Ireland](#) has suspended the “sign of peace” handshake in its Masses due to the risk of infection from a strain of the flu first seen in [Australia](#), the Irish Times reports.

At least 170,000 cases were confirmed in Australia by the end of its winter in 2017, more than twice as many as in 2016. Health officials say they logged 72 flu-related deaths.



The Diocese of Down and Connor has also advised priests to disinfect their hands before they distribute Holy Communion.

The [H3N2 virus](#), which is also referred to as “Australian flu” or “Aussie flu”, has spread across Britain and Ireland in recent weeks.

A statement from the office of Bishop [Noel Treanor](#) said:

“Having received medical advice concerning the increasing risk and impact of Australian flu, the Diocese of Down and Connor has decided to reactivate . . . precautionary measures originally established by the diocese in response to the swine flu epidemic in 2009.

“All parishioners are reminded of good hygiene practice as recommended by the public health authority.

“Parishioners are encouraged to use disinfecting hand gels and handwash soaps to minimise risk of infection. If anyone exhibits flu-like symptoms, they should stay at home during this illness and advise their GP.

“The customary sign of peace handshake exchanged during Mass is suspended until the risk of infection is significantly reduced. Other provisions will be made for those who suffer from a coeliac condition, such as separate chalices.

“Provision should be made for all ministers to use alcohol gel or wash their hands in warm soapy water before Mass and after the distribution of Holy Communion to minimise risk of infection.”

The diocese’s statement also paid tribute to those working within the medical field, acknowledging that “hospitals across [Northern Ireland](#) are currently experiencing high numbers of patient admissions of those suffering from respiratory illnesses directly linked to the flu virus.

“These precautionary measures are temporary and will remain under review until the risk of infection is significantly reduced.”

Council order halts Straid Congregational Church demolition



The church was to be demolished on Saturday morning to make way for a new building

A temporary building preservation notice has been issued for a church that was to have been demolished on Saturday morning, BBC News reports.

Earlier, protesters blocked a demolition truck from going into the grounds of Straid Congregational Church in County Antrim..

It was to have been demolished to make way for a new church.

The church pastor, who supports the demolition, was at the scene with a small numbers of supporters.

They want the old church to be removed so that a new one can be built.

The police were also there and Main Street was blocked for several hours.

The preservation order, issued by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, lasts for six months

The Alliance Party's David Ford has criticised moves to demolish the church.

"I understand the church has been considered for listing and in that context, to start the demolition process late on Friday night gives the impression that work is being done to get round a possible listing order," he said.

"While this might be strictly legal, it has created concern among many residents of Straid Village

and calls into question the way church authorities have behaved."

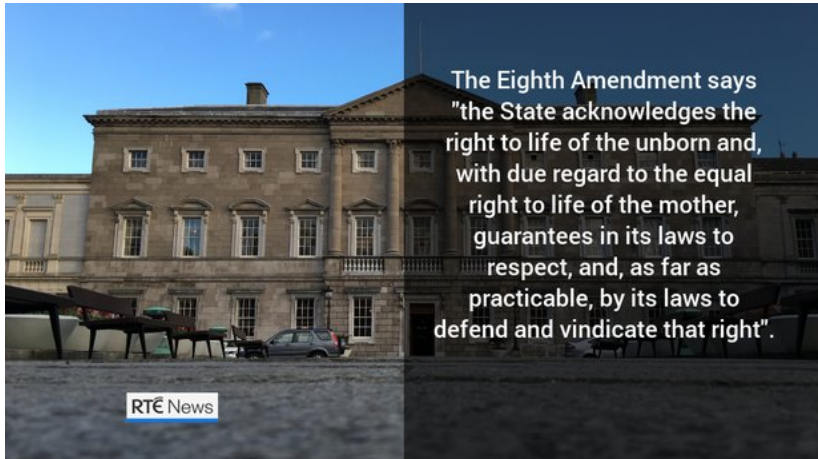
Archbishop Martin urges Catholics to speak out on repeal of Eighth Amendment



The leader of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Archbishop Éamon Martin, has urged believers to respectfully lobby their public representatives not to proceed with the proposed relaxation of the Republic's abortion laws, RTE reports.

In a pastoral message for the New Year, Dr Martin reiterated church teaching that ending an unborn child's life is "always evil and can never be justified".

On 20 December, the [Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment launched its final report](#), recommending the repeal of Article 40.3.3.



The Primate of all Ireland warned that the recent Oireachtas Committee proposals - including the legalisation of abortion without restriction up to 12 weeks' gestation - would lead to "a very liberal abortion regime".

He urged Catholics to resist what he called "strong pressures to remain silent" and not to be afraid to give witness to every person's equal right to life from conception until natural death.

"Speak to your families, your children and grandchildren, friends and colleagues about cherishing the precious gift of life at all times

from conception to natural death," said Dr Martin.

"Speak the truth about life, and speak it with love. Despite the strong pressures to remain silent, do not be afraid to witness to the equality of all life in private conversations and public discussions in the coming months.

"As citizens committed to the common good, you have a democratic right to make your views known, respectfully, to our public representatives," said Dr Martin.

Historic issues of the C of I Gazette on-line

In the run-up to the celebrations to mark 150 years since Disestablishment, in 2019, the RCB Library is making available more editions of the Church's weekly newspaper, the Church of Ireland Gazette, as a freely-searchable resource online.

The Library holds the only complete hard-copy run of this newspaper published weekly since 1856, and through incremental digitization has begun to share its rich content with a wider audience. Now all editions for the 70-year period between March 1856, when the paper first

appeared, up to and including the end of the Revolutionary period in December 1923 are shared for all.

Furthermore, beginning this month, the historian Dr Miriam Moffitt will present a new series of online exhibits entitled: 'The News Behind the News', to appear periodically during 2018 showcasing particular stories of interest. 'The News Behind the News' will demonstrate the remarkable detail to be uncovered in the pages of the Gazette, and its value for historical research. The series will go behind the regular editorials, feature articles, advertisements, and other regular columns, and take readers on a journey of discovery to some of the hidden human-interest stories. These stories will then be further fleshed out and illustrated by Dr Moffitt with other source material available in the Library.

The first story reveals the content of a series of articles published 100 years ago in early 1918 editions of the Gazette where members of both laity and clergy provided insights into what they thought of each other. The series began with two columns entitled 'If I were a clergyman', published on 18 and 25 January 1918, with a third following on 8 February 1918. Most laypeople were united on one opinion: they

expected their clergyman (and he was, of course, a man at this time) to have a good grasp of scripture and doctrine and promised that, if they were in his place, they would equip themselves with the necessary training and knowledge. However, this is probably the only lay opinion of clerical life on which there was consensus and differing suggestions were made regarding the Church's association with wealth, home visiting, the income of the clergy, and the Church's connection with the laity. Some lay correspondents claimed they understood the difficulties associated with clerical life: one writer went so far as to exclaim that it must be 'so difficult to combine the spirit of the dove and the spirit of the serpent at one time'.

The free-to-view finding aid to all editions of the Gazette between 1856 and 1923 is available here: <https://esearch.informa.ie>

The current Church of Ireland Gazette and all editions from 2005 may be viewed via an online subscription on the Gazette website, see: <https://gazette.ireland.anglican.org>

Sister Francis, the Irish nun who left a €10m fortune in her will

An Irish nun has left more than €10m in her will.

www.churchnewsireland.org

NEWS January 8



The Sunday Independent reports that Veronica Kidney, also known as Sister Francis in her order, the Franciscan Missionary Sisters, of St Joseph's, East Street, Littlehampton, England, died suddenly at her convent on September 30, 2016.

Dublin-born Sister Francis, who was one of a family of seven and known as 'Lal,' was a member of the Kidney family which has been prominent in the hotel and catering business in Ireland for a number of decades.

A previous generation of the family, Robert A Kidney ,of Marlborough Road, Dublin; Naomi Kidney, of Shrewsbury Road, Dublin; and George Kidney, of Dundalk, were among the main shareholders in the Jurys Hotel Group, which

owned interests in the famous Jurys Hotel and the North Star Hotel in Amiens Street, Dublin, through their company, Lee Hotels.

Jurys, founded in the 1881 when hotelier William Jury opened a hotel in College Green, Dublin, was an iconic hotel brand in Ireland for more than a century. The original hotel closed in the 1970s when the company, largely owned by the Kidney and Beatty families, took over what was then known as the Intercontinental Hotel in Ballsbridge, and renamed it Jurys.

According to documents lodged in the Probate Office in Dublin last week, Veronica Kidney left estate valued at €10,187,524. The Franciscan order has a convent and a 25-bed nursing home in Littlehampton, near the famous spa town of Bognor Regis.

A memorial service for Sister Francis's life was held in Haddington Road Church, Dublin in October, 2016.

Four C of E parish clergy feature in new BBC TV series

Four clergy from the Diocese of Hereford will show the struggles and joys of being a 21st century in 'A Vicar's Life' starting this Friday.



Nicholas Lowton, Ruth Hulse, Matthew Stafford and Matthew Cashmore are taking part in a new series for BBC2 which goes behind the scenes in the lives of rural vicars in the Herefordshire countryside.

It will follow the ordained group through the ups and downs of parish life as they plan weddings, support congregation members through times of crisis and play a part in their community life.

But it will also address the problems many vicars face in the 21st century where rural churches, especially, are facing declining numbers at services and having to take on more than one parish.

It will show the crucial role that churches play in local life, particularly when they're not located not in wealthy cities, when people struggle with homelessness and cuts to public services.

In a BBC statement, the broadcaster say the show explores: "how the vicar's message of Christianity fits into an ever-changing 21st century" and will include "a heavy dose of humour, charity, and inspiring local leadership."

Rev Matthew Stafford told the Shropshire Star: "“I really wanted to do the series for three reasons. Firstly, to raise the profile of Much Wenlock because it's a beautiful part of the world, but under sells itself. Secondly, I want to people to see that vicars are also human beings who experience the same trials and tribulations as everyone else regardless of faith, even though having faith helps."

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