



Pope calls for Christian unity in Protestant heartland of Geneva

Not only God, but today's broken, divided world is begging for unity among Christians, Pope Francis said on an ecumenical pilgrimage to Geneva.

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“Our differences must not be excuses,” he said, because as Christ’s disciples, Christians can still pray together, evangelize and serve others.

On his 23rd apostolic journey abroad on June 21, the Pope spent several hours with Christian leaders at the headquarters of the World Council of Churches, a fellowship of 350 ecclesial communities, including many Orthodox churches. The Pope came to help celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of what is the largest and broadest ecumenical fellowship in the world.

Speaking to reporters aboard the papal plane from Rome, the Pope said, “This is a trip toward unity,” representing the “desire for unity.”

He was greeted on the tarmac by dignitaries and two children in traditional dress; two former members of the Swiss Guard stood by the red carpet in the corps’ full colourful uniform, which only happens on papal trips to Switzerland. Active guard members travelling with the Pope are always in plainclothes.

Accompanied by the leadership of the WCC, the Pope attended an ecumenical prayer service, marked by songs from the Protestant traditions and the Catholic Church’s theme song for the Jubilee of Mercy. There was a common witness of faith in reciting the Nicene Creed and representatives from the Catholic Church and other Christian communities alternated readings, including a prayer of repentance, which asked God’s forgiveness for their disunity and failure to serve God and all his children.

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In his speech, the Pope said, “Our lack of unity” is not only contrary to God’s will, it is “also a scandal to the world.”

“The Lord asks us for unity; our world, torn by all-too-many divisions that affect the most vulnerable, begs for unity.”

Pope Francis, the third Pope to visit the WCC, said he wanted to come as “a pilgrim in quest of unity and peace.” He thanked God for having found “brothers and sisters already making this same journey.”

The journey requires constant conversion, he said, and a renewed way of thinking that rejects worldliness and seeks to live “in the Spirit, with one’s mind bent on serving others and a heart growing in forgiveness.”

“Divisions between Christians have often arisen because at their root,” he said, “a worldly mindset has seeped in.”

“First self-concern took priority over concern for Christ,” he said, and from there, it was easy for the devil to move in, “separating us.”

Following Christ entails loss, he warned, because “it does not adequately protect the interests of individual communities, often closely linked to ethnic identity or split along party lines, whether ‘conservative’ or ‘progressive.’”

Christians must belong to the Lord above and before they identify with anything else, “right or left; to choose in the name of the Gospel, our brother and sister over ourselves,” he said.

See Special report on CNI today



Christian football commentator makes history at the World Cup

Football reporter and broadcaster Vicki Sparks has made history by becoming the first woman to commentate live on a World Cup match in the UK.

She joined former footballer Martin Keown in the commentary box for the BBC's coverage of Portugal v Morocco on Wednesday.

Campaign group Women in Football labelled her a "history maker".

Both the BBC and ITV have made a big effort to increase the number of women involved in their coverage of this year's World Cup.

Gabby Logan and Jacqui Oatley, who was the first female commentator on Match of the Day, have taken on presenting duties while former players Eniola Aluko and Alex Scott have been used as pundits.

Vicki Sparks regularly uses social media to share her faith.

Her Twitter biography reads: "Love God, sport and life!"

Bishops express deep gratitude for support given to Trócaire

At their Summer General Meeting, which took place last week in Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, bishops expressed their deep gratitude to parishioners, priests and religious across the country for their continued support for Trócaire, the overseas development agency of the Bishops' Conference.

Last year, €29.1m was donated to Trócaire by the Irish public. Bishops said, 'These donations enabled Trócaire to bring support and relief to 2.8 million people throughout the developing world. This expression of faith and solidarity continues to change the lives of some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world.'

Bishops remain 'deeply troubled' by the humanitarian crises facing people in various parts of the world. Bishops offered prayers for the people of South Sudan, the world's youngest country, which remains deeply scarred by conflict, saying 'The high levels of violence being perpetrated against women and children are particularly shocking and unacceptable. Over 4.2 million people have been displaced from their homes by conflict in the country, while over 1.1 million children under the age of five are acutely malnourished. Through Trócaire, the Catholic Church in

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Ireland is responding to their needs and we will continue to do so.'

Bishops also expressed deep concern regarding recent events in Gaza, saying 'People throughout the Holy Land deserve to live in peace and dignity. The people of Gaza seek a better life for themselves and their children but the conditions under which they live are unacceptable and unsustainable. Recent cuts to the budget of the UN agency responsible for the care of Palestinian refugees are not helpful and indeed will only make matters worse.'

Bishops said that the international community must find a way to ease the plight of the people of Gaza as a matter of urgency, and that they will continue to support efforts to ensure peace, justice and dignity for all people of the region.

For more information on the work of Trócaire, see www.trocaire.org.

Obit: Tributes to former Director of the Irish School of Ecumenics

Tributes have been paid to the Rev Dr Robin H S Boyd, former Irish Presbyterian missionary and former Director of the Irish School of Ecumenics, who died on 14 June.

Dr Boyd, born in 1924, was the son of Irish missionaries in India. He was brought up in Windsor Presbyterian Church in south Belfast and dedicated his long life of 94 years to ecumenical ministry across three continents.



Rev. Dr. Liz Hughes, Convener of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's Council for Global Mission said, "Dr Boyd was ordained to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 1951 for service in India, after completing theological studies in Edinburgh, Belfast and Basel.

"He served in India from 1951 to 1974, first at Surat becoming District Missionary there, directing evangelistic work in the city and surrounding villages. His tasks included helping the local pastor with the many problems of an urban congregation, acting as manager of the boys' high school, shepherding branches of the Student Christian Movement, establishing the beginnings of what was to develop into the immensely valuable Spiritual Life Centre, while all the time bearing his full share of the burdens of administration, committee work and care of property which were then endemic in missionary life.

"After his first furlough he was appointed in 1961 to the staff of the Gujarat United School of Theology (GUST) in Ahmedabad. He threw himself into the task of ensuring that the churches in Gujarat would have a steady supply of dedicated and well-trained ministers to lead them.

"He was also instrumental in launching the excellent scheme for producing a series of standard theological

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textbooks in Gujarati. Subsidised by the World Council of Churches' Theological Education Fund, these books became a tremendous asset to the theological students and ministers of the Church in Gujarat, as did the new GUST library, which was a direct fruit of Robin Boyd's vision and enthusiasm," Dr Hughes said.

In 1974, Dr. Boyd moved to Australia to take up parish ministry in the Toorak United congregation. He returned to Ireland in 1980 when he took up the role of Director of the Irish School of Ecumenics. In 1987 he returned to Australia to minister in Melbourne, before retiring in 1994.

His wife, Frances died in 1998 and, after a brief visit to Scotland, he married Anne Booth-Clibborn (née Forrester) a former Church of Scotland social worker in Kenya. They were living in Edinburgh when he passed away.

Dr Boyd was also a talented writer with many publications to his name, the best known being 'An Indian Christian Theology'; 'India and the Latin Captivity of the Church' (Cambridge 1975); and 'Ireland: Christianity Discredited or Pilgrim's Progress?' (Geneva 1988).

"Dr. Boyd won the admiration and affection of a very large circle of people of many different nationalities and many different religious traditions," noted Dr. Hughes.

"Even in retirement and in recent months, he was still actively involved from afar in the Gujarat United School of Theology, offering wise counsel, encouragement and support to the ongoing work there.

"The minutes of the Overseas Board of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland for April 1975, note that 'Dr. Boyd had

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always been keenly aware of the debt which each generation of Christians owes to the generations which precede it.' He has certainly has left a great legacy, especially in Gujarat, which many Christians are benefitting from today, " concluded Dr. Hughes.

A service of thanksgiving for Dr Boyd's life will be held in St John's Church in Princes Street, Edinburgh, today Friday, 22 June.

Church in Wales wins contract to train British military chaplains

Chaplains serving the UK military personnel will continue to be trained by the Church in Wales, after the Anglican province won a contract to provide training for the next five years. Britain's Ministry of Defence awarded the contract to St Padarn's Institute, the Church in Wales' new training institute. The Church in Wales has been training British military chaplains since 2001, but has to re-bid every five years. It beat off stiff competition from some of the UK's top colleges and universities.

"To be chosen as the UK institution supplying high-level theological training for the MOD bolsters our post-graduate work, and keeps us at the forefront of an important area of Christian mission," St Padarn's Principal, Professor Jeremy Duff, said. "We are delighted that our MTh Chaplaincy Studies Course covering areas of military ethics, contemporary mission, reflective practice and the broader areas of faith, belief and spirituality, is recognised



Army Chaplain Andrew Latifa at the Church in Wales' St Padarn's Institute

as the best in the country and the first choice for the Ministry of Defence moving forward.

“Military Chaplains are agents of transformation to those parts of society and to those parts of the world that the traditional church struggles to reach. They can be found in some of the most dangerous parts providing spiritual support, pastoral care and moral guidance. They make a significant difference.”

Major Andrew Latifa has served alongside troops in Iraq and Afghanistan during more than 10 years as an Army chaplain. He says it is “a very privileged place to be.”

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He said: “I have seen soldiers with tattoos of Jesus on the cross, which probably didn’t mean much when they had it done, other than it being artistic. All of a sudden, when they are in combat, that tattoo becomes central to their lives – they see the significance of Jesus and prayer becomes important.

“I’ve seen lads with texts of scripture which they’d written out in thick pen on canvas adhesive and they would put it on their bags and would quite happily talk about how they would read those words and say a prayer for their partner at home and just think about what they were doing that day.

“When the busyness of everyday life is stripped away you are left with what really matters – life and death – and it is then that people see there has to be more to life and faith becomes important. In a place of conflict people start to entertain the thoughts that they wouldn’t dare to when there’s a World Cup on TV or the sun’s out and the family is going to the beach.

“Thoughts of God aren’t all that alien anymore because they understand that this world doesn’t have all the answers, that here are limits to what people can do and that there has got to be something better.”

News briefs

+++BBC Songs of Praise

The Rev. Kate Bottley is going back to school this week on SOP to learn all about the power of prayer. Sunday 24th

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June at 1:55pm on BBC Two and at <http://bbc.in/2tfxNKX> in the UK

+++Summary of discussions from the NI Fundraising Regulation Seminar

For both those who attended and those who were unable to attend the [Fundraising Regulation Seminar](#), below are some of the comments, questions and answers that arose from both the Roundtable discussions and the Q &A session for the panel of experts. The panel comprised Stephen Dunmore, (Chief Executive, Fundraising Regulator), Frances McCandless, (Chief Executive, Charity Commission for Northern Ireland) and Bob Harper, (Data Development Officer, NICVA).

<http://www.nicva.org/article/summary-of-discussions-from-the-fundraising-regulation-seminar-12062018>

+++Ecumenical masters and doctoral degrees in Switzerland

The Ecumenical Institute at Bossey is an “ecumenical laboratory,” offering master’s and doctoral degrees, as well as shorter study programmes. More here from a master’s graduate, TamarKorashvili

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre>

+++St Patrick’s seeks office manager

Hiring a new office manager to work in the administration of the Cathedral. Please share to anyone who might be interested! Details below [https://](https://www.stpatrickscathedral.ie/careers/)

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