



Mary McAleese criticised over 'incendiary' remarks on baptism

A leading theologian in the forefront of calling for liberal reforms in the Church has criticised what he has described

June 29 2018

as “incendiary” remarks by former president Mary McAleese. US-based Prof. Massimo Faggioli, an expert on Vatican II, said Mrs McAleese’s comments that infant baptism breaches human rights are unhelpful.

“Making incendiary remarks has usually the effect of delaying Church reform,” he told The Irish Catholic.

On the issue of infant baptism, Prof. Faggioli – who teaches theology at Villanova University – said “it is obviously a very complex historical-theological issue and I do not think that calling baptism a way to make infant conscripts is going to help us address the very important issue of childrens’ rights in the Church or human rights of Church members”.

On Mrs McAleese’s criticism of the World Meeting of Families due to be held in Dublin in August, Prof. Faggioli said he admires the “courage and passion of Mary McAleese.

“I know that she is admired for her fight for a new kind of relationship between the Church and LGBT persons. That is why I am surprised by the fact that she does not perceive that the World Meeting of Families taking place in Dublin will be important for this.

“I do not think that the former President of Ireland calling the World Meeting of Families taking place in Ireland ‘a political rally’ helps her cause. Also, because it is not just ‘her’ cause: it is an important cause and her voice could be spent in a more constructive way,” he said.

June 29 2018

Mrs McAleese said that by baptising children before they have reached the age of reason, the Church is creating “infant conscripts who are held to lifelong obligations of obedience.”

“You can’t impose, really, obligations on people who are only two weeks old and you can’t say to them at seven or eight or 14 or 19 ‘here is what you contracted, here is what you signed up to’ because the truth is they didn’t,” she said.

Churches to be hit by Belfast marathon’s Sunday move

Although churches are being consulted about the new-look Belfast marathon, scheduled to be held on a Sunday for the first time, there is little prospect of any major change to the plans, The News Letter reports.

That is the view of the chairman of the Belfast City Council committee which has just given a green light to altering the course of the race and moving it from a Bank Holiday Monday to the Sabbath – a move which one fellow councillor branded potentially “problematic”.

The decision was made by Belfast City Council’s City Growth and Regeneration Committee on Wednesday, and will come before the full city council on Monday for ratification.

Changing the race to a Sunday was recommended to organisers in a request from the Belfast Chamber of Trade



Runners taking part in the 2018 Belfast Marathon on the Hollywood Road

and Commerce, who said the first May Bank Holiday should be a significant trading day.

The race is expected to start at 9am, pitting runners and spectators against the tens of thousands of churchgoers in terms of access to the city's roads.

SDLP councillor Donal Lyons, the chairman of the regeneration committee, said the decision of the committee's members to approve the new-look marathon had been unanimous.

He said some church leaders have already been consulted, and organisers will "continue to work with them to avoid any

June 29 2018

negative impact”. However, he said of the route: “I don’t think it’s going to change radically.

“Really I think we’re down to the fine tuning.”

For example, this could involve deciding whether runners go down city-bound or country-bound lanes.

Former Belfast Lord Mayor Brian Kingston, a Methodist and keen runner who has been a past participant in the event, abstained on the vote. He said the aim of a new route was to help cut out “barren stretches” with few onlookers, and to reduce the height climbed. “The change of day will be more problematic,” he said.

“Clearly a marathon route has a wide geographic impact and we have called throughout this process for close consultation with churches in particular. That engagement should now increase in order to provide advice and to minimise the disruption which will occur.”

He too is a member of the committee, and abstained on the vote.

Instead of starting from City Hall, the new route will begin at Stormont in east Belfast and move around the city in a more-or-less clockwise fashion, ending at Ormeau Park as usual.

It is the first time there has been a major change to the route for 13 years. Though the city council must approve the details of the marathon, the actual event itself is run by a company called Belfast City Marathon Ltd.

Local historian identifies AE's grave in St Mark's Armagh

Portadown based historian Brian McKernan has recently discovered a very important grave at the top corner of St. Mark's graveyard. The grave is the last resting place of the family of **George William Russell** (1867-1935), a very distinguished poet, painter and writer, who originally came from Lurgan. The headstone lists his grandparents, parents, sister and aunt.



Local historians, including the redoubtable T.G.F. Paterson, director of Armagh County Museum, have long wondered where Russell's family had been buried given that the family moved to Dublin when Russell himself was aged eleven. The key to unlocking the mystery was when Brian discovered that Russell's grandfather had resided, towards the end of his life, at the Sheil's Almshouse at Tower Hill in Armagh. From there, a little further investigation, and help

June 29 2018

from administrator Caroline Nesbitt, revealed the Russells in nearby St. Mark's. Brian said, "I'm delighted to uncover the information that had for so long eluded even Paterson, but also to find that although they lived their lives out in Dublin, Russell's parents and sister returned to Armagh for burial. This adds real strength to our picture of Russell as a 'Northerner'.

George Russell (often known as 'AE') was a brilliant painter with his own unique style and a celebrated poet and close friend of W.B. Yeats. He was a leading political and economic commentator and reformer throughout Ireland's revolutionary period, but unlike many of that generation, he remained a committed pacifist. He was recognised internationally for his expertise in rural economics including by leaders such as President Roosevelt in the US and Ghandi in India. The Russell family were Church of Ireland. His parents were married, and he himself was baptised in Shankill Parish Church in Lurgan.

Nano Nagle in the context of today's world

A 5-day programme of inspiration and reflection at the birthplace of Nano Nagle at Ballygriffin near Mallow, Co. Cork will be held next month as part of the tercentenary celebrations of the birth of the founder of the Presentation Sisters congregation in Cork in 1775. Topics from 12 - 16 July will include Evolutionary Awareness, Spirituality for Today, Nano's Legacy to the World, Women in Leadership, Prophetic Women from Scripture, and Faith in the 21st Century.

June 29 2018

An impressive line-up of experienced speakers will deliver talks and conduct reflection sessions with participants who will also



have personal contemplative time during some sessions.

US based Dominican, Sr. Sharon Zayac, will discuss *Evolutionary Awareness – an Emerging Worldview*. A writer and lecturer, she speaks on many ecological topics, but her passion is sharing the Universe Story and its implications for life and faith. Her book - *Earth Spirituality: In the Catholic and Dominican Traditions* - focuses on evolutionary consciousness as an emerging worldview.

Two West Cork-born Presentation Sisters, Sr. Mary T. O'Brien and Sr. Anne O'Leary, will reflect on the life and legacy of Nano Nagle, and how an education at home and in France formed her. This session is an invitation to become more '*at home with Nano*', and to understand the essence of a life of 'love poured out' for the sake of others and the whole community of life. These speakers are widely experienced in teaching and lecturing in universities in Ireland and the USA, and facilitating Scripture-based retreats and workshops.

Another Presentation Sister, Sr. Bernadette Flanagan, will speak on *Women and Leadership* (including Nano). She will



discuss the treasure trove of stories detailing women's leadership that transformed the communities they lived in, challenged the status quo, influenced the politics of their times and reformed their communities. Participants will reflect on how the witness of women spiritual leaders can continue to be a source of inspiration for one's own leadership.

Sr. Bernadette has led the development of MA and doctoral studies in spirituality in Ireland. She has consulted to a wide range of organisations in Ireland and overseas on dimensions of spiritual education, spiritual care and spiritual practice in such fields as healthcare, education, relational wellbeing, aging; addiction and leadership. Author of a number of books, she is the first Irish President of the global *Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality*.

Gráinne Doherty, through a mixture of input, reflection time and discussion will open up the often unknown or forgotten prophetic voice and presence of some women in Scripture and in the wider society and explore their enduring relevance for life today. Her topic will be *Prophetic Women from Scripture and Beyond* (incl. Nano). Gráinne lectured in theology in All Hallows College whilst working in pastoral leadership at both parish and diocesan level. Her recent book - *Joy of Love: A Family Perspective* – is a collection of spiritual reflections and prayers which situate the writings of Pope Francis in the reality of family experience today.

Another West Cork native, Fr. Diarmuid O Murchu - a Missionary of the Sacred Heart – will discuss *The Lantern of Faith in the 21st Century*. This day of dialogue and reflection will review the changing consciousness of our time and the big shifts involved in how we understand and appropriate our faith today. When we are confronted by evidence that the faith in which we were brought up no longer provides an adequate explanation for the nature, meaning and purpose of our lives, what choices do we have? This inspirational session will help find some answers.

Fr. Diarmuid – the author of several books - is a social psychologist who has worked as a couple's counsellor, in bereavement work, HIV/AIDS counselling, and with homeless people and refugees. As a workshop leader and group facilitator, he has worked in Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, India, and in several African countries, facilitating programmes on adult faith development.

Bookings

June 29 2018

Each session will run from 10am – 4.30pm with lunch provided. Advance booking is essential. Bookings will be accepted for individual days or for the full programme. Further information can be obtained by contacting 022-26411 or email secretary@nanonaglebithplace.ie, and on www.nanonaglebirthplace.ie

C of E Bishops encourage propagation of church-plants

Church planting should entail consultation and co-operation, but may still require “disruptive leadership”, the House of Bishops has said, the Church Times reports.

A [statement](#) setting out ten principles for church-planting, issued on Tuesday, advises that churches “grafted” into existing church communities should be “respectful of existing traditions and practices, and seek to value and preserve those as far as possible”, but states that existing churches cannot veto plans, and gives a reminder that the ultimate decision lies with the bishop.

“We welcome planting new churches as a way of sharing in the apostolic mission by bringing more people in England to faith in Christ and participation in the life of the Church,” it reads. “We will encourage it, and not seek to limit it, wherever the good practice in this statement is being followed.”

Intended as a guide for dioceses, deaneries, and parishes, the statement envisages that church-planting will become “a normal part of a diocese’s approach to mission”, and advises that “thriving parishes are required to be open to sending people and resources . . . and also to receiving



St Luke's, Gas Street, in Birmingham was planted in February 2016

church plants within their parish boundaries, wherever this can benefit the Church's mission."

It states that, before a new plant is established, "sensitive and full consultation and joint work" should be undertaken with neighbouring churches. But it goes on: "This does not mean that existing churches have a veto over plans to plant new churches."

The statement observes that "despite the principles of consultation and support . . . sometimes successful planting requires the disruption of existing patterns of church, and requires disruptive leadership to bring it about."

It seeks to set church-planting in a historical context. "All our churches were once planted", it states: previous

June 29 2018

periods of “intensive planting” included Queen Anne’s Commission for Building 50 New Churches. While acknowledging that, in the past, it generally led to the formation of new parishes, it argues that this system has “always evolved”. The Bishops saw “no binary divide between traditional and new, as forms of church evolve”.

On Tuesday, the Bishop of Chelmsford, the Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell, said that church-planting “only feels like something new, because we forgot to remember it”. It was “a great movement of the Spirit, and a huge blessing to the nation we are called to serve”.

In recent years, the Church Commissioners have given millions in grants to dioceses that seek to expand church-planting ([News, 20 January 2017](#)). The Bishop of Islington, the Rt Revd Ric Thorpe, the lead bishop for church-planting, reports that dioceses have committed to planting more than 2400 churches “of all shapes and sizes” by 2030.

The statement says that more material on the theology and ecclesiology of church-planting is available from the Centre for Church Planting and Growth.

www.centreforchurchplanting.org

News briefs

+++Church Leaders Group meet with Garda and PSNI

The Church Leaders Group has met with the Police Service of Northern Ireland and An Garda Síochána to discuss



initiatives which seek to prevent and reduce crime against older and more vulnerable people in both jurisdictions. The meeting, at the Skainos Centre, in East Belfast, included briefings on the Scamwise NI partnership and An Garda Síochána's Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy. Pictured above are (left to right) Archbishop Eamon Martin, Catholic Church; Assistant Commissioner Barry O'Brien; the Revd Brian Anderson, Irish Council of Churches President; Archbishop Richard Clarke, Church of Ireland; Chief Superintendent Simon Walls, PSNI; the Rt Revd Charles McMullen, Presbyterian Moderator; and the Revd Billy Davison, Methodist President.

+++Poor Clares letters of Belfast Blitz

There are only a few days left to visit the Northern Ireland War Memorial museum in Belfast and read the Poor Clare Letters on the Belfast Blitz. They are being returned to Dublin on Friday 6th July, so make sure you call in and see these unique letters before it's too late.

+++Degree for former Dean

Former Dean of Belfast, the Rev John Mann, will be awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Ulster University at a ceremony in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast, on Wednesday July 4. He will be joined by a host of other names being honoured by the university, including Derry actress Bronagh Gallagher, superbike racing champion Jonathon Rea, and the Director General of the BBC, Tony Hall. The former Dean, who spent most of his ministry in Connor Diocese, will be recognised for his civic contributions. He was Dean of Belfast for six years before moving to Dorset last September.

+++ Limerick Cathedral broadcast

On Sunday, 15th July, at 11.45am, RTÉ Radio 1 Extra will broadcast a Service from St Mary's Cathedral, Limerick. The preacher will be the Dean of Limerick, the Very Revd Niall Sloane.

+++Salvation Army at Saddleworth Moor

“Our Emergency Response Vehicles have been supporting emergency services on [#SaddleworthMoor](#) since fires broke out on Monday. So far, we have handed out 1,000 drinks, 600 Mars Bars and used 40 loaves of bread to make into sandwiches to keep crews energised”.<http://bit.ly/2MrH9uo>

+++Changes on asylum seeker employment welcomed

June 29 2018

SVP has welcomed changes announced that will make it easier for [#AsylumSeekers](#) take up employment. Important recognition of basic [#humanright](#) of access to work and positive contribution asylum seekers can make to [#Irishsociety](#). Well done to all who worked to keep this on the agenda

+++Safeguarding Trust training days

Safeguarding Trust Diocesan Support Teams from Church of Ireland Dioceses in the Republic of Ireland have been invited to Train the Trainer days in Church House, Dublin, on 17th July, 16th August and 17th September from 10.30am to 3.30 pm. These days are being held to ensure that all members of the Diocesan Support Teams are up to date with the latest developments in child protection from a State level, to brief members on the changes that are being made to the Safeguarding Trust policy, and to review the new training modules that have been developed for staff, volunteers and panel members. It is hoped that these Train the Trainer days will equip the Diocesan Support Teams to continue to deliver quality training within their diocese and support and advice to parishes. Members of Diocesan Support Teams can book their place on one of the days by emailing cpotrainingri@rcbdub.org



June 29 2018

June 29 2018