

McAleese slams Vatican for 'codology dressed up as theology'



Mary McAleese said Pope Francis should visit Newry in the wake of the sex abuse scandal in the area

Former Irish president Mary McAleese has urged the pope to visit Newry in the wake of a sex abuse scandal, as well as attacking the Catholic

church over its “codology dressed up as theology”.

Speaking at a press conference in Rome on Wednesday, Ms McAleese also lambasted the Vatican, saying she fears the church hierarchy has “reduced Christ to this rather unattractive politician who is just misogynistic and homophobic and anti-abortion”.

In her address, the Belfast-born lawyer said that if the pope comes to Ireland in August, he should add Newry to his itinerary due to the clerical child sex abuse allegations which led to Bishop John McAreavey standing down.

The bishop was severely criticised when it emerged last week that he was a concelebrant at a funeral mass with abuser Fr Malachy Finnegan in 2000, and then officiated at Finnegan’s funeral in 2002. Ms McAleese was speaking ahead of a conference to mark International Women’s Day.

The event has taken place at the Vatican in recent years, but moved venue this year after Cardinal Kevin Farrell blocked Ms McAleese from taking part, apparently due to her support for gay rights.

Commenting on the church's opposition to women priests, the former president said: "I've read everything written on the subject, all the stuff that was recommended to me by Cardinal Desmond Connell when I wrote and said to him 'tell me all the arguments in favour of excluding women,' and when I read them they were so stupid I realised very quickly that it was codology dressed up as theology."

In relation to Pope Francis, Ms McAleese said: "The hopes that I had for him and about him and about the church that he might help us to create, dwindled into disappointment. So, five years on, I'm disappointed in Francis. I keep living in hope."

The comments have sharply divided opinion among Catholics. One supporter on Twitter said: "The fierceness in Mary McAleese's voice as she denounces the paper-thin basis of 'theology' underpinning the refusal to ordain women as priests is remarkable."

However, one pro-life campaigner said: "Mary McAleese criticises the church for being anti-abortion. The same Mary McAleese who made interventions in previous abortion referenda from a strongly pro-life point of view. The new Mary

thinks the church should be refashioned to fit her new-found social liberalism.”

Apostolic Nuncio, Father Peter McVerry SJ, Church of Ireland Archbishop Richard Clarke to take part in Armagh reflections on Saint Patrick

The Armagh Parish Novena to Saint Patrick began yesterday, 8 March, in the parish churches of Saint Patrick’s Cathedral and Saint Malachy’s Church. The theme of this year’s novena is ‘Remembering Patrick: a man of Faith’. His Excellency, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland, will join the novena to celebrate the closing Mass in Saint Patrick’s Cathedral at 6.00pm on Friday 16 March.

Novena prayers will be offered at all Masses during the nine days. All Mass times for Saint Patrick’s Cathedral and Saint Malachy’s Church can be found on www.armaghparish.net. During the novena, a statue of Saint Patrick placed in the Cathedral sanctuary and people are invited to place a little pot of shamrock in front of the



statue in memory of those who have passed onto us the great gift of our faith.

Reflecting on the life of our National Patron, Archbishop Eamon Martin said, ‘Saint Patrick, himself a migrant, was called to serve and bring God to a people far from his home. I encourage the faithful at this time to pray for migrants, and all who struggle to live and integrate into new cultures, at home and abroad, arising from displacement and poverty.’

The Novena to Saint Patrick is part of a series of events taking place in the Archdiocese of

Armagh to mark the feast day of our National Patron.

On Saturday 10 March, the annual 'Celebrate Saint Patrick' concert will take place in the Saint Patrick's Cathedral. Led by composer John Anderson, the concert welcomes choirs from across Ireland for a unique evening of music and spoken word honouring Saint Patrick. Tickets can be purchased through the Markey Place Theatre.

On Wednesday 14 March, Father Peter McVerry SJ, founder of the Peter McVerry Trust and a native of Newry, will host 'An Evening with Saint Patrick' in the Market Place Theatre, where he will reflect on the *Confession* of Saint Patrick.

On the eve of Saint Patricks Day, 16 March, Archbishop Martin and Church of Ireland Archbishop Richard Clarke will host their annual Saint Patrick's Lecture, speaking on what Saint Patrick means to them. Afterwards, Sarah Clarke of UTV will host a discussion with the two Archbishops on how Saint Patrick's words still resonate in today's world. It is expected that Archbishop Bashir Warda, Archbishop of Erbil, in Iraq, will address the audience by video, to speak on the persecution of Christians in Iraq.

That evening, the two Archbishops of Armagh will welcome visitors for a torch-lit procession between the two Saint Patrick's Cathedrals. The procession will begin at the Church of Ireland cathedral with prayers led by Archbishop Richard Clarke, and will conclude with prayers led by Archbishop Eamon Martin. Refreshments will be offered afterwards in Synod Hall, which is beside Archbishop Martin's residence in Ara Coeli.

For more information on the Novena to Saint Patrick or attending any of the events, please visit www.armaghparish.net.

Special treats at Belfast Cathedral for Mothering Sunday

Services at Belfast Cathedral have been planned with mums in mind this Mothering Sunday, and families are warmly invited to bring their mothers to enjoy something special.

Spring will be in the air the 11am Sung Eucharist, when members of the Cathedral's Junior Girls' Choir will have daffodils for all the ladies in the congregation.



During this service, the choir will perform JS Bach's *Cantata Aus der Tiefe*, one of his earliest works. Master of the Choristers David Stevens says this piece is perfect for Lent, since it uses the text of Psalm 130 ('Out of the deep, O Lord, have I called unto thee') and the chorale *Herr Jesu Christ, du höchstes Gut*.

David describes the music as 'suitably penitential, with beautiful flowing choral lines, accompanied by soaring interjections from the oboe.' Music not to be missed, and a real treat for not only mothers, but daughters, sons, dads – in fact everyone!

At 3pm, Assistant Organist Dr Ed Jones will give a free organ recital featuring music specially selected for Mothering Sunday. Please stay on

for Choral Evensong which follows at 3.30pm, when there will be more daffodils for the ladies.

If you are thinking about bringing your mother into the city for a Mothering Sunday meal, visit St Anne's at 11am for Choral Eucharist before you dine, or afterwards at 3pm for the Organ Recital and Choral Evensong to make your outing all the more memorable.

Run Alpha NI - a day of inspiration



Run Alpha NI, a first national gathering for Alpha in five years, will take place in Orangefield Presbyterian Church on April 14, from 10am-4pm.

This will be a day of inspiration, stories and training for all stages of an Alpha journey. Alpha NI is inviting churches to bring their whole team.

There will be the opportunity to learn from leaders including Karl Martin (Central, Edinburgh), Paul Cowley MBE (Holy Trinity Brompton), John Dickinson (Carnmoney Church), Jonny Campbell (Alpha) and Ryan Griffith (Christian Fellowship Church/Worship Central).

Tickets are £5 per person. Further details as follows:

Web: www.alpha.org.uk/RANI

Facebook: www.facebook.com/events/2060249713992062

Eventbrite: www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/run-alpha-northern-ireland-tickets-39834625437

Bishops thank families, schools and parishes, for support of Trócaire

At the Spring General Meeting of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, which took place in Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, this week,

bishops expressed their deep gratitude to families, schools and parishes, all over Ireland, for their generosity towards last year's Lenten appeal which raised €8.5m for those in need.

The 2018 Trócaire annual lecture was held in Saint Patricks College, Maynooth, on Tuesday 6 March. The keynote speaker for the lecture was David Donoghue, the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations in New York, who spoke on the theme, 'Leaving no one behind: can the promise be fulfilled?'

In his talk Mr Donoghue reflected on the Sustainable Development Goals of 2015 which marked an historic agreement by 196 countries to end poverty and put the world on a path to sustainable development. He also analysed the changing global context and whether the commitment to 'leave no one behind' can be achieved.

This year's Trócaire Lenten campaign highlights the story of Kumba, a seven-year-old girl from Sierra Leone who six months ago narrowly survived a mudslide. Over 1,000 people in her community lost their lives in the space of just four minutes when the mudslide hit after heavy rains. Kumba and her family escaped unharmed but their home was destroyed, along with all their belongings.

Trócaire's campaign focuses on the growing number of people being affected by humanitarian crises around the world. From those displaced by violence to families facing threats from climate change and natural disasters, Trócaire's work is increasingly focused on supporting people who have been forced from their homes.

Bishops expressed their deep gratitude to families, schools and parishes, all over Ireland, for their generosity towards last year's Lenten appeal which raised €8.5m, an increase of €1.1m on 2016. The money raised each Lent allows Trócaire to support over two million people in the developing world and bishops asked people to give generously again to this year's Trócaire Lenten campaign.

For more information on supporting this year's Trócaire Lenten campaign, please see www.trocaire.org.

Centurion is shoeless in Enniskillen

A member of The Bible Comes To Life exhibition team, Leo Deacon, who arrived in Enniskillen from England for the opening day of the event on Thursday, discovered shortly before he was due

to give a presentation to schoolchildren on the life of a Roman centurion, that he had no sandals to wear.

The Chairman of the organising committee, Dean Kenneth Hall from St Macartin's Cathedral, Enniskillen, quickly accompanied Leo to Sloan's shoe shop in Enniskillen where he was fitted out with a pair of size 11 sandals which he has been wearing for the exhibition.

"They are super comfortable and I now hope to wear them on my next trip to Israel," he said.

Belfast Cathedral hosts Wedding Fair

If you are planning a wedding this year, come along to The Belfast Cathedral Wedding Fair which takes place in St Anne's on Saturday March 10.

Hosted by Frock Fairs NI, this special event will showcase inspirational wedding exhibitors offering handmade, bespoke, and even vintage, wedding services for creative couples. With everything from vintage wedding dresses to bespoke jewellery, inspirational photography to gourmet marshmallow, and stylish wedding cars

and chic décor, it is the perfect event to find the ideal people to help make your wedding day dreams a reality!

The Belfast Cathedral Wedding Fair takes place in the Cathedral Nave. It will focus on inspirational wedding suppliers who specialise in unique, alternative and fashion forward products and services for creative couples, whether that be contemporary, classic or way out. Whatever your dream wedding, The Belfast Cathedral Wedding Fair will have the wedding suppliers to make that dream come true.

The Fair will take place from 12pm–5pm on Saturday March 10. Admission is £5.

Saudi prince makes religious freedom commitment in meeting with Archbishop Welby

The Archbishop of Canterbury has met Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince on the second day of his visit to the UK.

Justin Welby saw Mohammed bin Salman at Lambeth Palace in London as concern over



Saudi Arabia's role in the war in Yemen continued to cause controversy.

Amnesty International UK's director Kate Allen said: "We hope Justin Welby used the meeting as an opportunity to personally communicate the Church's concerns over the thousands of Yemeni civilians killed and injured in reckless and indiscriminate Saudi-led coalition air strikes.

"We also hope the Archbishop was able to express concern over the ongoing jailing of peaceful critics of the Saudi government, including the prisoner of conscience Raif Badawi."

The meeting with the Archbishop came after Prime Minister Theresa May and the Crown Prince used Downing Street talks to lay out

plans for a £65 billion trade and investment package.

The Prime Minister also raised the situation in Yemen with the Saudi royal.

The Crown Prince is holding further talks with the PM at Chequers on Thursday, including a private dinner with Mrs May at her official country residence.

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