



President Higgins to visit Pope today

President Michael D. Higgins will be received by His Holiness Pope Francis, in an official audience in the Papal Library at the Vatican today Monday 22 May.

The President will travel to Rome from Venice, where he will have attended the Biennale, the world's largest and oldest international art

exhibition. At the Biennale, the President will visit the Irish pavilion and meet with artist Jesse Jones and representatives from organisations involved in the exhibition, including Culture Ireland and the Arts Council.

In Rome, the President will have a private meeting with Pope Francis on the morning of Monday 22 May, at which the two leaders will discuss issues of regional and global importance. Following the meeting with the Pope, the President will have a meeting with Cardinal Parolin, the Secretary of State of the Vatican.

In the afternoon, the President will meet with Irish clergy and lay staff working at the Vatican, at a reception at the Irish College in Rome.

Pope Tawadros of Egypt visits Meath

The Coptic Orthodox Leader, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, visited the Diocese of Meath last week.

On behalf of Bishop Michael Smith, Bishop of Meath, Fathers William Coleman and Paul Crosbie were present when His Holiness blessed and dedicated a new Chapel at Saint George



Father William Coleman, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria and Father Paul Crosbie.

Abbey, a Coptic Orthodox community established a number of years ago in Billistown, near Delvin, Co Westmeath. Prior to today's liturgy, His Holiness received Fathers Coleman and Crosbie in audience, during which the persecution of Christians in the Middle East was discussed.

Having met with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin in Archbishop's House in Dublin, and with President Michael D Higgins in Áras an Úachtaráin, this is the first time that Pope Tawadros, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, has visited Ireland as

head of the Coptic Orthodox Church whose membership remains predominantly in Egypt.

Last month, Pope Francis visited Cairo at the invitation of Pope Tawadros and the grand imam of the mosque of al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed el-Tayeb, as well as Catholic Bishops and the Egyptian government. Coptic Christians currently represent 80% of Christians in the Middle East. Following a meeting between Pope Francis and Pope Tawadros in Egypt, a new common declaration was issued. The declaration emphasised the need for intensified prayers for all Christians who are persecuted and killed for their faith, especially in Egypt and the Middle East. The declaration from Pope Francis and Pope Tawadros also called for a deepening of their shared roots in faith through common prayer, a common translation of the Lord's Prayer and a common date for the celebration of Easter.

C of I cleric reignites Foster 'blonde' debate with 'explosives' comment

A Church of Ireland Minister has told a gathering of Unionists that he is glad that hydrogen

peroxide is dying hair blonde and not “going into creamery cans to make explosives,” - states a report in The Impartial Reporter.

The Revd Canon Mark Watson was partly referring to a remark made by Democratic Unionist leader Arlene Foster last week which sparked considerable debate and discussion.

Speaking to the Sunday Independent, Mrs. Foster used the word blonde to describe Sinn Féin's northern leader Michelle O'Neill during a word association game.

During the interview with journalist Niamh Horan, the former first minister was asked what word came to mind regarding Mrs. O'Neill. Mrs Foster said: “I am not going to be sexist because I can't...” but when pushed, she responded: “Blonde!”.

“Michelle is very attractive. She presents herself very well and she always is, you know, her appearance is always very 'the same',” she continued.

This morning (Saturday) an event to support the Ulster Unionist's Westminster candidate Tom Elliott took place at an Orange Hall in Enniskillen and was attended by a number of unionists, including Mrs. Foster.

Addressing those gathered in the hall and before the arrival of Mr. Elliott, Canon Watson, the rector of Trory and Killadeas, made reference to Ms. Foster's remark.

“Our friend the first minister mentioned the blondes,” he said.

“I am glad they are blondes because it means the hydrogen peroxide that's dying the hair isn't going into creamery cans to make explosives,” said Canon Watson, to laughter.

“I hope there are no Press about or I've just lost my job,” he added, followed by more laughter.

Canon Watson went on to "pray for victory" for Mr. Elliott as he bids to retain the Westminster seat he won two years ago.

Canon Becomes a Fryer for Christian Aid

Macosquin Rector, Canon Mike Roemmele, became a fryer for the morning when he took up position by the oven in the Minor Hall adjoining St Mary's Church, on Saturday morning last, for the parish's 'Big Breakfast' – which was



organised to raise funds as part of Christian Aid Week.

Canon Roemmele was ably assisted by the ladies of Camus-Juxta-Bann (Derry diocese), who lent a hand in the kitchen, and by parishioners – who began arriving at around 8.30 a.m. The event lasted until 11 a.m.

Diners made a minimum donation of £5 in return for a full Ulster fry – including pancakes – cooked by the Rector himself. The ‘Big Breakfast’ replaced the annual soup, bread and cheese lunch which was held in St Mary’s Church Hall during Christian Aid Week. Canon Roemmele said it offered an opportunity for fellowship and for generosity towards those who

are less fortunate than us. The event raised over 800 pounds.

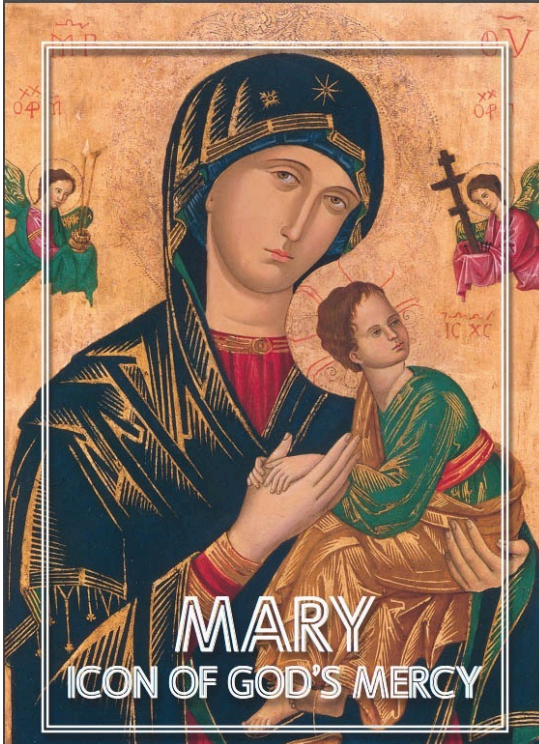
The breakfast was the highlight of Christian Aid Week in Macosquin, although, as usual, volunteers were out and about on the streets of the village throughout the previous week collecting money for the charity.

Canadian woman will make history at Clonard Novena

A leading lay missionary with the Redemptorist Order is one of the main preachers at this year's Clonard Novena, which takes place in Belfast next month. It will mark the first time that a female resident preacher with the Redemptorists will preach at the famous West Belfast novena.

Anne Walsh is from Canada, and is one of four resident preachers taking part in this year's novena, which runs from 14 to 22 June.

A native of St John's in Newfoundland, she worked as a teacher for a number of years. She then took leave of absence from her job to pursue a Master's in Religious Education in 1991, when she linked up with the Redemptorist Order.



Online novena book

Her work with the order has gone from strength to strength, and having been a member of the Redemptorist Youth Mission Team for three years, she has been part of several different mission preaching teams.

Ms Walsh is also a regular contributor to televised devotions in honour of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Canada, as well as being

executive assistant to the Archbishop of St John's, Newfoundland.

This year's Clonard Novena has the theme 'Home isn't a place, it's you and me', and is set to explore various aspects of family life and the idea of the Church as a home.

Other preachers at the novena include Fr Michael Kelleher, Fr Brendan Kelly and Fr Michael Brehl, the Superior General of the Redemptorists worldwide.

Speaking about the novena to the *Irish News* newspaper in Belfast, the Rector of Clonard Monastery Fr Noel Kehoe said that it became clear from the responses of a survey carried out in 2015 that the voice of women needed to be heard at the novena.

He added that "Anne is a long established Redemptorist lay missionary. She has worked extensively with the Redemptorists in Canada, Ireland and internationally, as well as with the Canadian Bishops' Conference."

Speaking about this year's novena, he said that upwards of 100,000 people are expected over the nine days and that four months of planning has already taken place.

“It’s about community. It’s about faith. It is about bringing all those things together and people feeling it is comfortable or it is okay to celebrate the faith. It can be difficult to do it in everyday life.”

The Novena can be followed online at <https://www.clonard.com/web-cam>

New Willowfield Parish community facilities officially opened

The High Sherriff of Belfast, Alderman Tom Haire officially opened the new community facilities at Willowfield Parish.

He said that Willowfield is a district with which he had long been familiar.

“My uncle used to be a policeman and he served from just across the road at Willowfield Barracks,” he said.

Highlighting council funding in excess of half-a-million pounds for the Willowfield project, he stressed: “The City Council is delighted to have committed £560,000 to the refurbishment of these church halls through the Belfast Investment Fund.

“The BIF was established to support partnership projects across the city and is designed to support larger projects,” he explained.

“BIF has a number of key objectives such as the council playing a lead role in the development of the city, creating a can-do attitude among citizens to create a sense of pride in Belfast, encouraging investment from other sectors and contributing to the council’s vision under the city’s Belfast Agenda.

“With this refurbishment, it does that. The redevelopment of Willowfield Parish Church Halls, for the use of Willowfield youth, is the first project on site and delivered by the programme.

“The parish hall was in poor decorative order and as one who used to come here I can appreciate that. The football league meeting used to be (held) here on a monthly basis.

“Its mechanical and electrical services certainly needed to be replaced as they no

longer met the needs of the Willowfield community, or (met) Best Practice standards.

“This major refurbishment and extension was needed to equip the facility for its on-going and growing youth work. The newly developed facilities are also going to benefit the wider community, providing a space for parents and toddlers and for older people to make use of when the facility isn’t being used for youth work.”

He ended by saying: “I look forward to seeing these new facilities benefitting the local community for many years to come and to see many of you will come through these doors, not just today but for many years to come.”

Earlier The Rector of Willowfield Parish, the Venerable David McClay, had welcomed the sizeable crowd of invited guests, parishioners and well-wishers who had assembled at the front door leading to the new facilities to see the opening ceremony.

With that formality completed the members of they made their way through the automatic

glass doors to see for themselves what exactly lay inside. Most certainly, they were not disappointed.

Once through the door the first room they discovered was the Health Suite in which there will be structured health and fitness programmes for youngsters to pensioners and those in between.

In keeping with the ‘healthy body, healthy mind’ adage, the aim here is to boost both physical and mental well-being.

Next on the circuit of discovery was the original hall. This has been transformed into a sports hall capable of facilitating football, basketball, dodgeball and captain ball.

The stage may have gone, but only to enable the provision of so much more.

The former Centenary Hall has been transformed beyond recognition, too. As from now it will be known as The Hub, a fully appropriate name given that it lies right at the heart of the new set-up.

Its facilities include two large TV screens/ games consoles, table tennis and pool. And with it adjoining a large, impressively well-equipped and easily-kept-clean modern kitchen, The Hub really does promise to be a much-used nerve-centre.

At the front of the building, facing onto the Woodstock Road, The Glass Space is a striking space in which groups will be able to gather for a coffee.

As with The Glass Space, The Gallery is another of the areas designed with relaxation and informality in mind. Situated above what used to be the church hall's stage, it overlooks the sports hall below.

It boasts sofas plus another large TV screen.

Having had 45 minutes in which to familiarise themselves with all of these excellent new indoor facilities – enjoying light refreshments as they did so – the second and final part of the opening ceremony saw the focus of attention switch to the U-Turn Project.

Located outdoors, immediately behind the halls, this cleverly designed facility features three enclosed areas – a two-in-one football/basketball court, a fully-equipped young children's play area and, adjoining it, an open space complete with permanent, picnic-type tables and benches.

Trump nominates Callista Gingrich US ambassador to the Holy See

As he prepared to meet Pope Francis for the first time, President Donald Trump formally nominated Callista Gingrich, wife of former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, to be the new U.S. ambassador to the Holy See.

The White House announced the nomination late on Friday as Trump was beginning his first overseas trip, a trip that would include a meeting with Pope Francis on May 24 at the Vatican.

The nomination of Gingrich, 51, a former congressional aide, had been rumored for months. If confirmed by the Senate, she would succeed Ambassador Ken Hackett, who retired in January. She would be the third woman to serve as U.S. ambassador to the Holy See after



Lindy Boggs, who held the post in 1997-2001, and Mary Ann Glendon, who served in 2008-2009.

Gingrich is president of Gingrich Productions, which produces documentaries as well as other materials related to her husband, Republican Newt Gingrich, who served from 1995 until 1999 as the 50th Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 2010, the company released the film “Nine Days That Changed the World” about Pope John Paul II’s nine-day pilgrimage to Poland in 1979 and how it played a part in the fall of communism in Europe. Callista Gingrich graduated from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa,

in 1988, majoring in music, a passion that has remained with her throughout life. She is a longtime member of the choir at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

Some like John Schlageter, executive director of the Bethlehem University Foundation in Washington, hailed the choice.

“It might make me biased, but I think that her years of singing in the choir at the national shrine has given her a backstage pass to some of the most important events in the life in the church in the United States, including two papal visits,” said Schlageter, who is a friend of the couple. The Gingriches are patrons of Bethlehem University, the first Catholic university in the Holy Land founded by the Vatican and the De La Salle Christian Brothers, he said.

Schlageter said Callista Gingrich’s time producing the documentary about Pope John Paul helped her create professional relationships and friendships in the U.S. and Rome that will serve her well should she be confirmed to the post.

“She also loves the church and the United States,” he told Catholic News Service May 15. “I think she’s a wonderful choice.”

Others criticized the choice online because she admitted to having an affair for years with Newt Gingrich while he was married to his second wife. After his 1999 divorce, the two married the following year and he became a Catholic in 2009, saying Callista, a lifelong Catholic, was instrumental in making that choice

Today in Christian History, May 21

May 21, 1382: The "Earthquake Synod" in London (so named because a temblor interrupted the proceedings), led by Archbishop Courtenay, condemns as heretical 24 theses from the writings of John Wycliffe. Wycliffe later claimed that God sent the earthquake "because the friars had put heresy upon Christ. The earth trembled as it did when Christ was damned to bodily death".

May 21, 1471: Painter, engraver, and woodcut designer Albrecht Durer is born in Nuremberg, Germany. Durer, one of the greatest artists of his Day , almost certainly converted to Protestantism in the 1520s.

May 21, 1527: Anabaptist minister Michael Sattler, a former Benedictine monk who left the

monastery and married after reading Paul's letters, is tortured and killed in Rottenburg, Germany. His wife was drowned eight days later.

May 21, 1536: The General Assembly of Geneva officially adopts the Reformation and separates from the Roman Catholic diocese. John Calvin, who became forever associated with the Swiss city, arrives two months later.

May 21, 1738: Charles Wesley, who would cofound Methodism with his brother, converts to Christianity while sick with pleurisy. "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise and believe, and thou shalt be healed of thy infirmities," a mysterious voice told him in his sickbed. "I believe, I believe," he replied. One year later on this date, he wrote "O for a Thousand Tongues" to commemorate the event.

May 21, 1780: English Quaker and social reformer Elizabeth Fry is born in Norwich, England. Though involved in reforms from education to poverty, her greatest burden was to improve prison life.

May 21, 1832: Hudson Taylor, English missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Mission, is born in Barnsley, Yorkshire.

May 21, 1864: Missionary-priest Joseph de Veuster (better known as Father Damien) is ordained a priest in Honolulu. In 1873, at his own request, he was sent to a settlement of lepers on the island of Molokai, where he later contracted the disease and died.

Today in Christian History, May 22

May 22, 337: Constantine, the first Christian emperor of Rome, dies. Though known for calling the Council of Nicea (which condemned the Arian heresy) and for beginning the process of Christianizing the empire, he waited until just before his death before he finally accepted baptism into the church.

May 22, 452: Leo, bishop of Rome, sends three angry letters to protest the Council of Chalcedon's recent elevation of Constantinople to the preeminent see in Christendom. The two cities had been placed on equal footing by a 381 ecumenical council in Constantinople, but Chalcedon tipped the scale, saying that since

the imperial capital had moved to "New Rome" (Constantinople), that city deserved the benefits Rome once enjoyed. This event was one of many leading up to the East-West schism of 1054.

May 22, 1789: The first American Presbyterian General Assembly convenes in Philadelphia.

May 22, 1883: Billy Sunday, who would become the greatest American tent revivalist after a career in professional baseball, has his first at bat playing for the Chicago White Stockings. He struck out his first 14 attempts.

