

## Irish priest blasts Catholic Church for lack of training in exorcisms



### Dublin priest blasts Church for lack of training in exorcisms

Ireland's most prominent exorcist has accused the [church](#) of abandoning its flock by failing to train priests in the religious practice of demon hunting.

In a special [RTE](#) Would You Believe documentary about evil, Fr Pat Collins, who is

also a trained psychologist, claims he has experience in dealing with demonic spirits.

In the documentary, the cleric doesn't rule out human explanations of evil but believes it's naive to exclude the supernatural dimension.

He said he is appalled by the lack of training for exorcists in today's Church.

"The Church is rightfully admitting its sinfulness in child sex abuse, that we did not defend children. Now it has all the safeguarding measures and that's excellent," he said.

"But it appals me that we have no safeguarding from the evil spirits.

"I say that in the sense that we don't train anybody to deal with these cases. Priests – it's not that they don't care – but they don't know enough about it."

In the second edition of the two-part documentary, Fr Pat said it was the responsibility of the Irish bishops to put this training in place.

"The buck has to land on the bishop's desk. Who have you trained in your diocese?"

"I would say to bishops, 'Woe to you that neglect the spiritual care of the people'."

He said he is "deeply" bothered by the lack of priests with his training.

"How many bishops in accordance with Canon 1172 have trained anybody or appointed anybody in the diocese of Ireland to help our poor unfortunate people who are oppressed and sometimes possessed by these awful spirits," Fr Pat said.

"They have abandoned the sheep."

The Dublin priest said he believes there is a rising fascination with evil spirits in today's world. He added: "There is a morbid interest in evil spirits in society. It's interesting as people lose faith in God, they are increasing their interest in the devil and it's purely morbid. "I'd say to anyone who's got that morbid interest, 'If you had to deal with evil as someone have to do, it is horrible, it is pure darkness.'

"It is the essence of evil because it is totally opposed to God and totally opposed to love.'"

But in his work, Fr Collins said he is not afraid of evil spirits because of his deep faith.

He said: “I know who’s boss. When I say Jesus is Lord, I believe he has power and authority over all these things and the evil spirits, powerful as though be, are on a hiding to nothing when we who are acting in the name of Lord with the power of the Holy Spirit come against them.

“We have authority over them.

“I believe there is nothing to be afraid of but priests and lay people need training in how to go about this and how to distinguish between psychological problems and spiritual problems and how they interconnect at times as they often do.”

The Catholic Communications office said in a statement that the Catholic Church requires that each diocese should have a trained exorcist which is someone who knows how to distinguish the signs of demonic possession from those of mental or physical illness.

“Exorcisms are very rare and this office has not been made aware of any cases of ‘exorcism’ in Ireland in recent years” said the statement.

It added: “From time to time dioceses will get requests for help in this area. Dioceses would refer people to one or two priests with training and expertise in this area.

“In most cases it will emerge after several meetings that it may be a medical, psychiatric or psychological problem and they are then referred to medics with expertise in this area.”

- Evil - A Would You Believe? Special will be shown on Sunday, November 26th at 10.35pm

## **Lisburn parish celebrates its 175th anniversary**

Christ Church Parish, Lisburn, Diocese of Connor, celebrated its 175th anniversary with a parish dinner, an historical exhibition and special anniversary services.

On Friday 17 November 2017 people gathered in the hall for a celebration meal, enjoying the music provided by the Howe family, and the opportunity to view the ‘Memory Lane’ exhibition. Stories were shared by the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, Maureen Doran, Jacqueline McComb and hosts Tom Doran and Jim Fleming.

Bishop Alan launched a book recounting the life and witness of the parish. There were prayers for the 175th celebrations as well as the parish



**The Rev John Pickering, the Rev Julie Bell, the Rev Paul Dundas (rector of Christ Church), and the Bishop of Connor, the Rt Rev Alan Abernethy, launching the anniversary book.**

mission statement, which continues to shape witness in Christ Church.

The evening provided the opportunity to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Richard Yarr as parish organist, choir master and director of music. Mrs Barbara Watson, People's Churchwarden, spoke of Richard's ministry over

those 25 years and made a presentation to him on behalf of the parish.

There were also presentations to Marie Anderson, Mildred Briggs and Robin Smythe for all their help in the gathering and shaping of the material and photographs for the book, while Iris Murphy and Beverley Ringland received flowers for all their dedication and time in planning the weekend.

The birthday cake was cut by Bishop Alan, Mrs Watson, and the rector, the Rev Paul Dundas. The evening finished with Anna Dundas singing 'Jesus loves me' and 'In Christ alone.'

Sunday worship was enriched with encouraging talks from Jill Hamilton and the Very Rev Sam Wright, Dean of Connor. Jill did a drama on the lost sheep and the sense of celebration when it was found. Sam spoke on the theme of 'Cradle, Cross and Crown' of God's mission. Thomas Coates, Emily Thompson, Beverley Ringland and Wesley Dickinson shared about their faith and being part of the church family.

The rector said: 'To see so many people attending as well as former curates, parishioners and people from the community partnerships we have, local and global, was such a blessing as

well. There was so much mingling and sharing. A real sense of belonging and fellowship within our parish and community.'

There was a surprise visit from an ice cream van on the Sunday morning, as well as goodie bags for the children. There was cake to help the celebrations at both Sunday services, with Mr Jim Anderson cutting the cake at the evening celebration.

The Mayor of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, Councillor Tim Morrow, brought greetings on the Sunday night and spoke encouragingly about the role of churches in the community.

'It was special to have our parish's children and youth organisations present at the morning service and to again acknowledge the role of these groups in the parish and community as well as those in leadership in our church, modelling faith in Jesus,' Paul said.

The exhibition in Memory Lane of the ministry of the parish through organisations and worship allowed people to reminisce, remember and get nostalgic, with many pictures and stories of faith and the church family. Rev Paul Dundas



expressed gratitude to Frank Higginson for taking so many photographs over the weekend.

He also thanked Richard Yarr and Julie Bell for their leadership and direction of the music groups and choirs, and everyone who worked so hard to prepare for the weekend.

‘As we have been blessed over 175 years, thank you for the generosity to the Thank Offering over the weekend for Stepping Stones, Action MS and Parish Ministry Development,’ Rev Paul Dundas said.

## **DCU Chaplain attends Pope Francis’ audience on refugees**

Following DCU’s accreditation as Ireland’s first ‘University of Sanctuary’, Church of Ireland Chaplain Philip McKinley recently attended an audience with Pope Francis in the Vatican, to explore the global responses of Universities to refugees and migrants.

The audience took place at the conclusion of a four-day conference in the Gregorian Pontifical University in Rome, with representatives from many sectors, education institutions and nationalities, exploring the responsibility and



## **Philip McKinley meets Pope Francis**

responses of Universities. In December 2016, DCU became a ‘University of Sanctuary’, in recognition of a range of initiatives demonstrating commitment to welcoming asylum seekers and refugees.

Addressing the audience the Pope highlighted the need, “to promote social responsibility, for the building of a more just and more humane world”. “Migration”, he said was, “a sign of the

times”. Pope Francis outlined three areas, which he said were, “within your competence” as Universities; “research, teaching, and social promotion”.

He said, “I think it would be timely to begin further — even long-term — studies into the remote causes of forced migration, with the aim of identifying practical solutions, because it is important first to ensure people the right not to be forced to emigrate. It is likewise important to take into account the reactions — negative in principle, at times even discriminatory and xenophobic — that the arrival of migrants is generating in countries of ancient Christian Tradition, in order to recommend programmes for educating consciences”.

He added, “Moreover, the migrants and refugees’ many contributions to the host society certainly deserve greater appreciation, as do those contributions that benefit their communities of origin”. Pope Francis encouraged Universities to, “set up programmes aimed at fostering the education of refugees, at various levels, both by offering correspondence courses for those living in reception camps and centres, and by allocating study grants that allow for their relocation. By taking advantage of the extensive international academic network,

universities can also facilitate the recognition of the qualifications and professional status of migrants and refugees, to their benefit and that of the societies that welcome them” He also added the need for Universities, “to educate their own students — some of whom will become political leaders, entrepreneurs and creators of culture — to understand the migratory phenomenon, in a perspective of justice, global co-responsibility and communion in cultural diversity”.

Finally the Pope addressed the impact Universities can make in contributing positively to refugees and migrants. “The sphere of social promotion views the university as an institution that undertakes to bear the burdens of the society in which it operates, by exercising first and foremost its role of critical conscience with regard to the various forms of political, economic and cultural powers. “Universities can carry out their role as privileged actors even in the social sphere, such as, for example, by encouraging students to engage in volunteer assistance programmes for refugees, asylum seekers, and newly arrived migrants”, the Pope said.

The conference heard that there are currently over 65 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, half of whom are minors: Syria has

six million internally displaced people; Lebanon, with a population of 4.5 million, is hosting 1.5 million refugees from Syria and Iraq. Europe is currently hosting 17 percent of the world's refugees, the Americas 16 percent, Asia 11 percent, the Middle East 26 percent and Africa 30 percent.

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, an estimated 28,300 people a day are forced to leave their homes. In 2016, only 189,300 refugees were resettled. The November 1st–4th conference entitled, 'Refugees and Migrants in a Globalised World: Responsibilities and Responses of Universities', was hosted by the Gregorian University in Rome and organised by the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU), the Being the Blessing Foundation and the Centre for Interreligious Understanding.

## **Interested in becoming a Presbyterian Minister?**

For the first time the Presbyterian Church in Ireland is holding a 'Ministry Taster Day' on Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> December for anyone who wants to find out more about serving God and studying for the ministry.

The Church has 536 congregations across Ireland served by 326 ministers. While the Church doesn't have a shortage of ministers at the moment, as there is an excess of licensed assistant ministers compared to vacancies in congregations, it is asking ministers and other leaders to identify men and women to encourage them to explore whether God is calling them into this important vocation. The Ministry Taster Day is part of this initiative.

Union Theological College in Belfast is holding the event and is responsible for training the Church's ministers. College principal, Very Rev. Principal Stafford Carson, said that he is hopeful the initiative may lead suitably-gifted people to consider the possibility of ordained ministry.

“From seeking nomination as a candidate for the ordained ministry of the Church, to being eligible to be called by one of our congregations as their minister, takes six years and is open to both men and women on an equal basis,” Principal Carson explained.

“In holding this event we are very aware that the Lord leads us at different speeds and at different times in our lives. Some ministers believed that God was calling them into ministry from early in

their lives, for others, it was after many years of work or service in different fields.

“So whatever a person’s age, or stage in life, if they are interested in exploring the Lord’s will for their life, learning more about ministry training, or feel that the Lord may call them to serve Him in this way in the future, all would be welcome to come along from 10.30 on 2<sup>nd</sup> December to find out more.”

At the event students and past students will share their stories of how the Lord led them into ministry and their experience of study and service. Staff will share about the college and courses, and will be on hand to answer questions. Lunch is included.

## **Every pupil leaves Co Tyrone school, speeding up its closure**

A rural Catholic school is to shut down in the middle of the year - because every child has left.

St Matthew's PS, Garvaghey in Co Tyrone was struggling with low pupil numbers and finances. It was among the schools red-flagged as having sustainability issues in the Education Authority's strategic area plan.

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) was due to consult on options for its future.

Just two new P1 pupils started in September and one in 2016.

There are four Catholic primary schools in the Ballygawley area. About 10 years ago consideration was given to reducing the number of schools from four to one.

This would have been achieved through the closure of all four schools and re-location of pupils to a purpose-built school on a new site. At the time the plan received support from almost all parents.

It was not advanced, however, a key factor was the lack of money for building projects.

Within the current area planning programme, there are no plans to re-examine the four school amalgamation.

A case for change document from CCMS said there was a significant number of surplus places in schools in the area and proposal to shut St Matthew's "best addresses this issue".



CCMS noted that the strengths of the school included the outstanding quality of the pastoral care, the excellent leadership of the principal and "the purposeful engagement of the staff with the parents and the local community".

"While St Matthew's Primary School could be regarded as meeting the sustainability criteria and indicators relating to quality educational experience, strong leadership and

management, accessibility and strong links with the community, its enrolment is low and it is not in a sound financial position," CCMS said.

The preferred option, CCMS said, was that St Matthew's should close on August 31 2018 and the children transfer to a school of their parents' choice.

This, however, has been brought forward after every child transferred by November.

"In consideration of this development, the revised date to discontinue St Matthew's PS, Garvaghey is 31 January 2018," CCMS said.

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