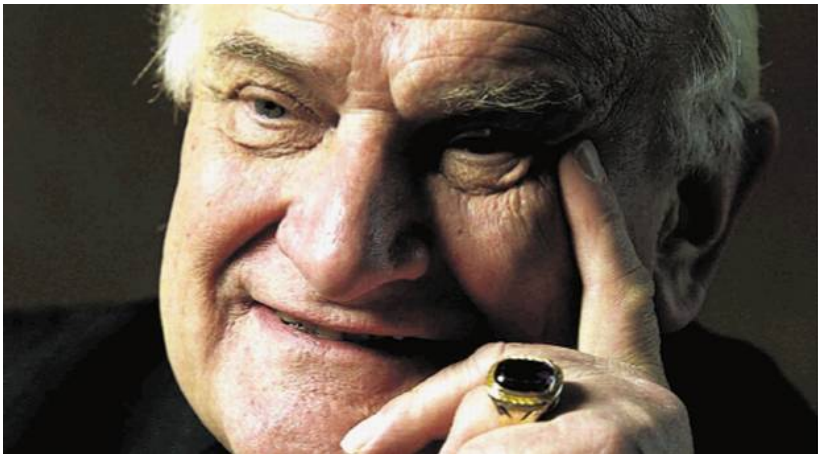

Lord Eames – As the dead and injured of Enniskillen were brought in, a nurse asked me: ‘Where is God in all of this?’



In this extract from his book, Lord Eames recounts how the 1987 IRA bombing led him to ponder a recurring question of the Troubles: Standing at the door of St Macartin’s Cathedral in Enniskillen that morning of Remembrance Day, 1987 the conversation could not have been more normal.

I am uncertain who noticed it first. No sudden sound reached us up at the cathedral but across the roofs of the houses smoke had suddenly reached up into the sky. A voice could be heard, “There’s been an explosion”.

‘The Poppy Day bomb’ had plunged Enniskillen into a nightmare and changed the lives of countless people forever. Instead of the normal pattern of Remembrance Day worship we found ourselves in the corridors and wards of the Erne Hospital among a shocked and bewildered community.

There was the frantic searching for loved ones missing after the explosion, the trollies containing the wounded and the dying, the hurried conversations and speculation, the staff rushing in from their Sunday off-duty at home as word spread of the emergency and the relatives arriving with their anxious questions.

For hours, clergy of all denominations moved from group to group; payers were offered, hands held, words of comfort spoken as the enormity of it all began to dawn.

My recollections of that day remain vivid. No course in pastoral theology could possibly have

prepared a person for the demands presented by those hours in the hospital.

Listening to the questions about those who had been standing beside them at the cenotaph, trying to relate members of the same family separated in corridors or wards, accompanying hospital staff when they requested support in breaking the news of a fatality to a loved one and simply being there in the midst of it all praying for strength to be somehow adequate to the demands whatever they might turn out to be.

This excerpt was carried in the News Letter - read more at :

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/opinion/lord-eames-as-the-dead-and-injured-of-enniskillen-were-brought-in-a-nurse-asked-me-where-is-god-in-all-of-this-1-8208099>

'Unfinished Search' by Lord Robin Eames, was published by Columba Press on October 19 2017, priced 17.99

CNI

Archbishop Martin of Dublin warns against polemics and nastiness in public debate



Pluralism and democracy no licence to silence diverse views - Diarmuid Martin

Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, has warned against “polemics” and “nastiness” in public debate. He also has said that pluralism and democracy were “never a licence to silence diverse views,” the Irish Times reports.

Politics and the creation of the just society was also “neither exclusively the role of the State. Caesar is not God,” he said.

Speaking in the context of an increasingly acrimonious debate on abortion, though he does not make explicit reference to it, he said: “Truth may not always prevail in our world. The truth, however, has no need for polemics or for nastiness”.

The truth has “no need of its spin-doctors” he added. It “possesses its own power to make us free. The polemics and spin- doctoring of one side should not be responded to with polemics and nastiness on the other.”

In a homily at Mass in the [University Church](#) on Dublin’s St Stephen’s Green he said that pluralism was “not the same as secularism, but in today’s [Ireland](#) we live our faith in a society where pluralism may at times involve respectful but robust confrontation with secularism. Pluralism and indeed democracy are never licence to silence diverse views,” he said.

He found it interesting “just how often people can become trapped in their own issues and nothing more. It happens in the Church, it happens in politics, it happens in the media, it happens in society. The Gospel message must stand free from ideologies,” he said.

The believing community must be one that is based on the two virtues of “actions that work for love and which persevere in hope,” he said.

The reality was that “God is slowly being eclipsed and men and women live their lives as if God does not exist. It is not so much an atmosphere of hostility towards faith, but an attitude of indifference or one which tolerates a presence for God in the private lives of individuals but not within the realities of our society.”

There was “a real distinction between faith and politics. To deny that gives rise to integralism, fundamentalism, and false utopias. This does not mean that religious faith has no relevance for the building up of society,” he said.

Luther's example is still driving our faith, Moderator

The Reverend Noble McNeely, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland contributed yesterday to a series in the Belfast Telegraph on the Reformation. Dr Neely wrote ‘ “The quincentenary of the Reformation is catching the imagination of the well-informed, but for most people it means very little. It does, though, I



Rev Dr Noble McNeely

believe, offer an opportunity for reformed churches to promote their message and convey the important tenets of the faith.

“The spark which ignited the Reformation was Luther experiencing a lightning bolt of inspiration. He realised that personal salvation is a gift which God gives us; Christ's righteousness is given to us when we have faith in Him: "The righteous shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17).

“The memorable expression of his momentous discovery is found in The Heidelberg Disputation when he wrote: "The law says, 'Do this,' and it is never done. Grace says, 'Believe in this,' and everything is already done." Luther recognised

that spending hours in the confessional and trying to achieve approval from God through good works was futile. The gospel of the scriptures was that Jesus Christ died and rose again, taking God's wrath upon himself and setting us free. The gospel announces through Christ's death and resurrection, we are justified by grace through faith, not by what we do, or even by who we are, but by what Christ has done and who He is.

“It is to this Reformation tenet that the Presbyterian Church witnesses in the 21st century. It is this conviction that continues to motivate and inspire the Church to faithful missional service and is central to all the work of the General Assembly and local congregations.

“The Presbyterian Church may have become more diverse in its congregational life but Luther's reformation principles of faith alone through Christ alone continues to hold it together in unity.

“The other momentous influence of the Reformation was the emphasis on the scriptures. Sola Scriptura, 'Scripture alone', was one of the key mantras of the Reformation. The medieval Church held the position that truth and practise of the faith were contained in the written books

of The Bible and in unwritten traditions. Luther and the subsequent reformers went back to The Bible and emphasised that scripture alone is our supreme authority. ...”

For remainder of this article see -

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/luthers-example-is-still-driving-our-faith-36250581.html>

North Belfast Catholic church shuts over safety concerns

A Catholic church in north Belfast has been shut "with immediate effect" to "ensure the safety and welfare of all parishioners", the Irish News reports.

Members of the congregation arriving for Sunday Mass at the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour at Deanby Gardens on Sunday were instead met with closed doors.

The parishioners were asked to gather in the nearby Our Lady's Girls Primary School where Mass did take place.

During the service, Fr Darach Mac Giolla Cathain, Parish Priest of Sacred Heart Parish,

said the much loved church had been closed with "immediate effect".

The sudden move comes just weeks after the Irish News reported that the church may close as its parish was struggling to pay for repairs.

One of two churches in the Sacred Heart parish in the north of the city, the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour at Deanby Gardens was built in 1959 as a 'chapel of ease' less than a mile from Sacred Heart Church to meet the growing needs of the congregation.

However, in recent years, the condition of the building has deteriorated and a surveyor was called in last year to assess the problems.

It was revealed that the bill for saving the building over 10 years would be around £720,000, but the parish is already in debt to the tune of £1.36 million.

The closure of Catholic churches is a rare event. Just three have closed their doors in Belfast in recent decades - the Church of the Resurrection on Cavehill Road, St Joseph's Church, Sailortown and Holy Rosary Church on the Ormeau Road.

Speaking yesterday, Fr Mac Giolla Cathain told those gathered for Mass that due to "inclement weather giving rise to water ingress and on the basis of a recently completed electrical installation report" the condition of the church had "deteriorated even further necessitating an urgent and specific health and safety risk assessment".

He said an assessment carried out on Wednesday revealed that "due to the condition of electrics, ingress of rainwater and the deteriorated condition of the church building" decisive action was required and it was recommended that "with immediate effect the building cease being used".

The parish priest added that to "ensure the safety and welfare of all parishioners and in direct response to this risk assessment", Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Church is to close "with immediate effect".

Fr Mac Giolla Cathain said Masses would take place at Sacred Heart Church.

"In consultation with the Parish Finance Committee and the wider parish community, the parish will continue to assess the implications of the condition survey and will bring forward plans

to explore the provision of Masses for the parish within the local parish pastoral community".

New Director of Irish Church Missions

The Revd David Martin has been appointed Director of Irish Church Missions (ICM). David has been curate in Hillsborough since September 2015 and will take up his new role in 2018.

He is no stranger to ICM having already served in Immanuel Church Dublin between 2004 and 2013.

Announcing the appointment, ICM said:

“After some considerable time and prayer, David comes to the organisation at an exciting period, as ICM continues to prioritise evangelism, training and church planting across the island of Ireland...

David “...fully appreciates that many new challenges lie ahead of him especially as he takes up this new role and he deeply values your prayers for him and his family as they plan to return to Dublin in 2018.”

ICM is a recognized mission agency within the Church of Ireland and the worldwide Anglican Communion, with offices in Belfast and Dublin.

Reformation Service from St Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork on RTE

A multi-denominational Service from St Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork, to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation will be broadcast on Sunday, 29th October (between 11am and 12 noon on RTÉ 1 and between 11.45am and 12.45pm on RTÉ Radio 1 Extra / LW252).

Weekend celebration in Trim to honour Jonathan Swift

St Patrick's Cathedral, Trim, will host a weekend of celebration in honour of Jonathan Swift from 3–5 November 2017.

All events will take place in St Patrick's Cathedral, which is on Loman Street in Trim.

Friday 3rd November

7.30pm – Congregational singing 'Songs of Praise' interspersed with Pat Dunne's 'Swift Bites'. €10 including supper. Tickets available at Siopa Caislean, The Deanery on Loman Street,

or by phoning Pat on 087 988 8838. All monies raised will be donated to the Cathedral restoration fund.

Saturday 4th November

2–5pm – Exhibition of Swift memorabilia with Willie Dalton and organ recitals. €5 including tea/coffee.

Sunday 5th November

11.30am – A service of morning prayer as celebrated c. 1700 with a talk on Swift by Dr Ruth Illingworth.

7.30pm – A concert with Credo music, poetry and prose. Tickets cost €10.

Quarter of C of E churches childless

Twenty-five per cent of Church of England services do not have a single youngster among their congregations, newly published statistics reveal.

The 2016 Mission Statistics also show the average-sized Church of England congregation typically attracts nine children to each service.



Approached about the issue, the Youth Officer for the Diocese of Chichester in Sussex told Premier that churches, too often, do not properly cater for older children.

Dan Jenkins said one issue was a shortage of volunteers leading to Sunday schools grouping teenagers together with younger children.

He told Premier News: "If there do happen to be any teenagers [at church], then they'll often just go out with the children and help with colouring."

"That's not enough to keep young people engaged and show young people that the church wants to invest in them."

According to the figures, the typical medium-sized Church of England church can expect

three youngsters at its service, compared to 35 children among the largest five per cent of congregations.

Calling for a more relationally-minded approach to Sunday schools and youth groups, Mr Jenkins said "young people commit to relationships, not programmes".

He also cited potential for churches to work more closely with schools and parents, in order to encourage more families into church.

Mr Jenkins: "They [children] are committed to those that they're in relationship with, those that they know; whether that is leaders, other adults in the church or to their own friends, that's really what engages them with a particular activity.

Giving his reaction, former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey of Clifton told The Times: "We are one generation from extinction.

"If we do not invest in young people, there is going to be no one in the future."

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