
Christians in Ireland share responsibility in healing the pain of our troubled past



Archbishop Eamon Martin: “The reaction since my presence and words in the Church of Ireland cathedral on such a significant occasion, has affirmed my decision to accept the invitation.”

Three weeks ago I was invited to preach the homily at Choral Evensong in St Patrick’s [Church of Ireland](#) Cathedral, [Armagh](#), to mark the 500th

anniversary of Luther's *Ninety-five Theses*, writes Archbishop Martin, the Catholic Primate of All Ireland.

I willingly accepted, inspired by the example of [Pope Francis](#) who travelled to [Lund](#) in [Sweden](#) last October for a joint Catholic-Lutheran prayer service to begin the anniversary year.

On that occasion, Pope Francis and the president of the [World Lutheran Federation](#) acknowledged that, while the Reformation has brought “spiritual and theological gifts” to the Christian church, it was accompanied by prejudice and conflicts. Humbly they confessed and lamented before Christ that Lutherans and Catholics “have wounded the visible unity of the church”.

Most Christians on the island of [Ireland](#) do not look to this particular anniversary as belonging directly to them – Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists trace their reformation roots to other sources. However, various church services and important study events have taken place recently to reflect on the significance of the year 1517 in the story of Christianity.

Enriched

My own homily at Choral Evensong presented ideas about “Reconciling the Reformation”. I stressed the agreement that exists across our traditions on key doctrinal issues, including the core issue of justification which triggered so much of the polemic and mutual condemnations of the Reformation period.

I believe that, in a culture of openness and dialogue, we can learn from, and be enriched by, each other. This is not to deny the differences that remain over issues such as church, Eucharist, ministry and the papacy.

The reaction since my presence and words in the Church of Ireland cathedral on such a significant occasion, has affirmed my decision to accept the invitation. I received a very warm welcome from [Archbishop Clarke](#), Dean Gregory Dunstan and the local congregation who seemed unperturbed by my frequent use of quotations from the popes in Rome!

There was positive reaction also in the media and from other church leaders who contacted me personally to welcome my comments and say thanks. I have received positive feedback from within my own community, including from one gentleman who asked me to sign the order

of service as a souvenir of what he called “a very historic moment”.

Mind you, I have had to put up with a small number of Twitter trolls who tweeted “Shame on you” and suggested I would make a very good “Protestant bishop”! I take it they have not read my homily (available on www.catholicbishops.ie).

Sad reality

The sad reality is, that many people looking in from outside the various Christian traditions, particularly in Ireland, see a history of division and sectarianism, of intolerance, mutual recriminations, and open hostility.

This is a source of scandal, and something that has dimmed the light of the Gospel. Christians here, of all denominations, share the responsibility of leading the way in transforming relationships here, and in healing the legacy and pain of our troubled past.

That is why I value my personal friendship with the other church leaders. It is founded on the reality that what unites us is so much greater than what divides us. We share the conviction that “God loved us first”, with His free gift of grace and merciful love.

Deeper understanding

I know how tempting it is – out of possessiveness, or even fear – to remain closed in on ourselves – wrapped in the cosy comfort-blanket of “the way we’ve always been”. Still, I would invite theologians from across our traditions, and not just at international, but at national level, to courageously explore and clarify those areas that merit deeper understanding and dialogue between us.

The role of religion and faith in Irish society, North and South, has clearly changed dramatically, but our wounded world needs so much to be enlightened by the Gospel. All around us we see people confused by the superficiality of what is on offer to them.

This time last year Pope Francis and the Lutheran [Bishop Yunan](#) encouraged Christians to set aside conflict and move towards the communion to which God continually calls us. I am convinced that we are being called to reconcile the Reformation and combine our efforts out of our “certain hope” for the world. Report courtesy The Irish Times,

Diocesan and Parish Readers urged to be purveyors of hope

Four new Lay Ministers were commissioned to serve in Dublin & Glendalough by Archbishop Michael Jackson in Christ Church Cathedral on Saturday evening (October 21). Tom Healy (Malahide) and Alistair Doyle (St Matthias) were commissioned as Diocesan Readers and Gail Sheridan (Tallaght) and Mary Dillon (Arklow) were commissioned as Parish Readers.

Parish and Diocesan Readers are called to serve the Church and to work with clergy and other ministers. They lead public worship, assist at the Eucharist and share in pastoral and evangelistic work. Diocesan Readers are licensed to preach and teach the word of God.

The sermon was preached by the President of the Methodist Church in Ireland, the Revd Dr Alistair Graham, who said he was delighted to be present at what was a pivotal moment in the ongoing ministry of the new readers.

Drawing on the readings [Isiah 14: 3–11 and Matthew 14: 1–12], Dr Graham said that Matthew reminded us that preaching the Good News can often bring difficulties and danger;



Gail Sheridan, Mary Dillon, Tom Healy and Alistair Doyle at their Commissioning as Lay Ministers. Also pictured are the Revd John Tanner and Archbishop Michael Jackson.

John the Baptist lost his head because he preached God's word.

“Sometimes people react to the messenger as they try to ignore the message. There may be times when something you will say or do will touch a nerve and it does so because it is God's spirit working through you,” he told the newly commissioned readers.

He pointed out that in Isiah, God was telling people that the day of their oppression would end and that they would taunt the King of

Babylon. Dr Graham suggested that it was not the role of Christians to taunt but the act of announcing the Good News offered a contrast to those who rejected it.

“We will never want to taunt anyone but the hope we offer in Christ does bring a challenge to those without hope. We can’t offer the hope of Christ if we have don’t have the hope of the risen Christ... We need the rhythm of grace if we are to purvey hope to a hopeless world,” he said.

Dr Graham urged the new readers to focus on God’s purpose in their preaching.

C of I bishop blesses new GAA park

The Bishop of Cork Dr John Buckley has described the GAA as the greatest amateur organisation in the world that should be protected from materialism and professionalism, the Evening Echo reports.

Bishop Buckley, who has a deep involvement and love for the sport, was speaking at the official opening of the new Páirc Uí Chaoimh stadium on Sunday.

Bishop Buckley paid tribute to all who are involved in promoting Gaelic Games and referred

to the extraordinary contribution that the GAA has made to Irish life down through the years.

Our country would be incredibly the poorer without it, he said.

"No history of the country and its evolution would be incomplete without taking into account the influence of the GAA," he said.

"One need only recall the Irish Civil War to see the healing hand of the GAA at work." He described the GAA as the greatest amateur organisation in the world and that we should always guard against its erosion by materialism and professionalism, always prioritising the importance of the local club.

"The capacity of the GAA for promoting solidarity, good relations, breaking down barriers and creating a spirit of cooperation is almost unrivalled in Irish history."

Bishop Buckley was accompanied by Bishop Michael Mayes, the retired Church of Ireland Bishop of Limerick who was representing Bishop Paul Colton officiated at a blessing at Páirc Uí Caoimh on Sunday.

He said that society today needs people like the dedicated GAA volunteers and he mentioned

grounds people, officers, referees, managers and underage trainers who contribute so much locally.

Bishop Buckley prayed that the magnificent stadium in Cork and its facilities will give great joy and happiness to players and spectators. He prayed for all who would play there in the years ahead and asked that they be kept safe from injury.

Bishop Buckley also remembered and paid tribute to remember former great players who have gone to their eternal reward and who graced the old Athletic Grounds with their skills and talents and he mentioned in particular people like Jack Lynch, Christy Ring, Sean Condon, John Kerins, Tom Creedon, Weeshie Murphy, John Horgan and Dan Hoare who also worked hard for the new Páirc Uí Chaoimh.

Mothers' Union vigil in Dublin to highlight gender based violence

Mothers' Union is organising an All Ireland Prayer Vigil on Saturday November 25 as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence initiative. All are invited to join Mothers' Union in the Church of St John the Baptist, Seafield Road, Clontarf, at 11 am on November

25 to call for an end to all forms of violence against women and girls.

Mothers' Union engages each year with the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, which runs from November 25 (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) and December 10 (International Human Rights Day) and hold the prayer vigil annually on November 25 or as near as possible to that date. The idea of the vigil is to create awareness of gender violence in the form of both physical and emotional abuse against both men and women.

This year, Mothers' Union worldwide is focussing on the issue of stigma, where society responds negatively to, or by blaming those who are, victims of gender-based violence. Mothers' Union is calling on members and others around the world to talk about gender-based violence, and challenge myths and harmful attitudes around it. They are calling on people everywhere to: break the silence surrounding gender-based violence, lift the shame which is often placed unfairly on survivors, and shift the blame from victim to perpetrator.

This year's speakers in Dublin include: Dean Philip Knowles; Nadine O'Brien, an outreach

worker from Aoibhneas Women & Children's Refuge in Coolock; and Emeline Le Prince, a service worker from Sonas Services.

Gender-based violence is most often directed at women and girls, although men and boys can also be affected by the forms of violence. It affects all cultures and societies, and can be carried out by: partners; family members; members of the community; strangers; armed groups; the state; and others.

Globally, around one in three women will be affected by gender-based violence at some point in their lifetime.

For more information see www.dublin.mothersunion.ie or their Facebook page @ Mothers' Union Dublin & Glendalough. Refreshments will be served after the vigil.

Priest warns parishioners to leave if church is being robbed

A priest in Donegal has warned parishioners to "leave the church immediately" if they suspect that thieves are trying to steal from candle shrine boxes.

Fr Francis Lynch was speaking after thieves targeted St Patrick's Church at Killygordon, between Strabane and Ballybofey, for the third time.

The Donegal curate said he feared his parishioners could become targets.

Fr Lynch said thieves escaped with an undisclosed amount in cash after stealing candle donations on Saturday. He said many parishioners, but mostly women, visit the church to light candles and say prayers after visiting the adjoining cemetery.

"I would be afraid that some innocent woman going in there may be assaulted," Fr Lynch said.

He said the recent thefts were, not just an attack on the church, but also on the people of the parish.

"I say to everyone who goes into church now to light candles 'Be vigilant and if you see anything suspicious, if you think there's anything going on, leave the church immediately.

"I'm saying if you are up at the front of the church praying and you hear them rattling at the back, don't turn around, just leave,'" he said.

Fr Lynch said that if the thefts continued, he feared he might have to close the church outside of Mass times.

He told Donegal's Highland Radio: "This has happened three times this year now. I want everyone to be alert, especially women because they are the major candle-lighters."

Local

source

of Advent Calendars



You can get your *Real Advent Calendars* from the *Church Resources Exhibition Hall* at this year's Church Life event: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Shaw's Bridge, Belfast (Tuesday 14 November: open 9.00 - 5.00).

CRE says these advent calendars will make great gifts for children in Sunday School, youth organisations and in your own family circle. The 2017 *Real Advent Calendar* has a new look and comes with a 24-page Christmas story activity book designed to be used every day in Advent.

The *Real Advent Calendar* has a line of the Christmas story behind each window. There is also a *Fairtrade* chocolate behind each window and it is the only calendar to include a 24-page copy of the Christmas story to be read throughout Advent. This year, there is also an extra chocolate for Christmas Day. The whole calendar is foiled for freshness.

Costing £3.99 - you can buy on the day of the event. Or, to be sure of getting as many as you need, pre order now by phoning Paul Scott on 0799 078 0453 (anytime).

CRE can also take orders to be collected from their office, or for delivery by CRE to you, if you are not going to be able to attend the *Church Life* event.

Stunning cascade of knitted poppies adorns village church

A stunning cascade of poppies has been unveiled at a village church in East Lothian.

More than 6,000 knitted and crocheted poppies adorn the artwork, which is 40ft long and 11ft high, outside Aberlady Parish Church.

The cascade, which was organised by Aberlady Craft Group ahead of Remembrance Day next month, inspired people from as far afield as Australia and France to send contributions.

Additional poppies have been installed within the church itself and on the pew ends with others made into brooches, which will be sold.

Rev Brian Hilsley, minister of Aberlady Parish Church, said: “On behalf of all at the Kirk, I would like to express admiration of and warm appreciation for the outstanding efforts of the Aberlady Craft Group in bringing this imaginative project to fulfilment.

“Our commemorations have special significance during the years 2014 to 2018 as we mark the 100th anniversary of the First World War.



Rev Brian Hilsley said the installation is a "magnificent tribute" to military personnel who have lost their lives.

“This installation is a magnificent tribute to all those who lost their lives in that conflict and since then.

“I pray that it will bring blessing to many and bear fruit in encouraging us all in the commitment to peace.”

"We look forward to the prospect of many additional visitors enjoying our beautiful church, enhanced by the cascade, and to the annual

Remembrance observances on Sunday, November 12.

Work on the installation began in January this year at the regular meetings of the village craft group and as news of the project spread, poppies began to arrive from around the world.

Aberlady Craft Group spokeswoman, Anne Frost, said: "Many of the group's family and friends heard about it and sent in poppies.

"Some spread the word on cruises and we even had a delivery from a cruise ship."

Local groups and members of the community also became involved and Aberlady Primary School pupils helped make poppies.

The combined community effort has been attached to a free-standing frame and will remain in the church yard until November 23.

All funds raised by the cascade and donations will go to Poppy Scotland.

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Full communion proposed for US-based Methodist and Episcopal Churches

The body responsible for official dialogue between the US-based Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church has adopted a draft proposal for full communion. The proposal has been published in a report, [*A Gift to the World: Co-Laborers for the Healing of Brokenness*](#), which has been released for consultation. The Episcopal Church-United Methodist Dialogue Committee will consider responses from laity, clergy and bishops before presenting formal resolutions to the two churches' legislative bodies.

The committee is organising a series of regional conversations between United Methodists and Episcopalians to discuss the proposal; and agreed “to share communication celebrating the close relationship between the two denominations, especially highlighting the practical and missional opportunities that a full communion agreement would provide.”

In the preamble to their report, the committee says that the proposal “is an effort to bring our churches into closer partnership in the mission

and witness to the love of God and thus labour together for the healing of divisions among Christians and for the well-being of all.

“The vision of Revelation 22 is of the tree of life planted on both sides of a river ‘and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations’ (Revelation 22:2). Faithful to Jesus’ prayer that his disciples be one so that the world may believe (John 17: 20-23), may this proposal be an expression of God’s will for the churches.”

The report details a number of actions that both churches will need to take for the full communion to take effect. On the matter of episcopacy, the committee says: “We affirm the ministry of bishops in The United Methodist Church and The Episcopal Church to be adaptations of the historic episcopate to the needs and concerns of the post-Revolutionary missional context. We recognize the ministries of our bishops as fully valid and authentic.

“We lament any ways, whether intentionally or unintentionally, explicitly or implicitly, that Episcopalians may have considered the ministerial orders of the United Methodist Church or its predecessor bodies to be lacking God’s grace.

“It is our hope and prayer that in this full communion proposal we may heal these divisions, right the sin of separation from the 1780s, and share in these mutual adaptations of the historic episcopate for the greater unity of the church in mission and ministry.”

It says that the Episcopal Church will need to enact “a temporary suspension, in this case only, of the 17th century restriction that ‘no persons are allowed to exercise the offices of bishop, priest, or deacon in this Church unless they are so ordained, or have already received such ordination with the laying on of hands by bishops who are themselves duly qualified to confer Holy Orders.’”

It explains that: “the purpose of this action will be to recognise the authenticity of elders and deacons in The United Methodist Church and to permit the full interchangeability and reciprocity of all United Methodist elders in full connection as priests and all United Methodist deacons in full connection as deacons in the Episcopal Church without any further ordination or re-ordination or supplemental ordination whatsoever.”

In a statement announcing the proposal, the committee “called for continued prayers for the

United Methodist Church's Commission on a Way Forward, which is working on proposing a way forward for the denomination in regard to human sexuality." The UMC commission is due to meet in Nashville, Tennessee, next week before presenting an interim report to its Council of Bishops in November.

The two churches are both US-based, but are present in a large number of countries around the world.

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