

Reformation 500: Archbishop of Canterbury to mark Protestant and Catholic unity on justification



The Archbishop of Canterbury will mark a key point of agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation in a

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NEWS October 27

service at Westminster Abbey for the 500th anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation.

The **Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification** was agreed by the two bodies in 1999 after years of study and resolves the most contentious issue between them, dating back to the Reformation – how is someone saved?

The Declaration says that 'on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ'.

It encompasses 'a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations'.

The Declaration has also been affirmed by the World Methodist Council and the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) passed a resolution in 2016 that 'welcomes and affirms the substance of the Joint Declaration on the

Doctrine of Justification'. The resolution was noted in a motion approved by the General Synod of the Church of England earlier this year as it welcomed 'signs of convergence between the Churches on the doctrine of salvation'.

During the service Justin Welby will present copies of the ACC's text to Roman Catholic and Lutheran representatives.

The Bishop of Coventry, Rt Revd Dr Christopher Cocksworth, said: 'The Joint Declaration was a historic breakthrough in overcoming the divisions that emerged from the Reformation through a fresh statement of its key concern, how sinners can be put right with God and empowered to live in a new way. The good news of forgiveness and freedom through Jesus Christ is what unites us as Christians. It's the word of grace and hope that – together – we want to share with all the world.' The service will take place on October 31, the anniversary of the Reformation.

Wanton destruction of small C of I church near Clifden

The Church of Ireland Bishop of Tuam, the Right Revd Patrick Rooke, says he's 'horrified and



saddened' by what he says is 'wanton destruction' of a church near Clifden.

The vandalism was discovered at Errislannan Church of Ireland on Wednesday

Extensive damage was done to the church including the church bible being thrown through a window and the pulpit being split in two.

The altar rail was completely ripped from its fixings and thrown through the east window of the church and all lights were smashed.

The organ in the church has been smashed beyond repair.

Bishop Rooke, on hearing the news issued the following statement: "I am horrified and

saddened by the wanton destruction carried out by vandals in Errislannan Church, outside Clifden. I cannot see what possible gain might be achieved by those responsible. Errislannan Church is maintained and used by a very small church-going community in the Summer months only and for them this is a most devastating attack on a sacred place. I have no doubt, however, that they will galvanise the necessary support to ensure that the major repairs are carried out and worship will resume again next Summer as usual.”

Clifden gardaí are investigating the criminal damage at Errislannan Church of Ireland, which is used by the congregation during July and August.

Errislannan Priest in Charge, Very Reverend Stan Evans told Galway Bay fm News that he is shocked by the vandalism.

Senior BBC music producer marks 25 years at Christ Church, Lisburn

A local music producer is celebrating 25 years as the Director of Music at Christ Church, Lisburn. Richard Yarr has been in the role since 1992 and is also the Senior Producer for



Richard Yarr (left) is pictured as he accepted the award on behalf of John from Michael O'Keefe, CEO Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

Classical Music with BBC Northern Ireland. The church is celebrating it's 175th anniversary and Richard joined when it was marking its 150th year. He said: "Marking 25 years of work there, I really enjoy it, the people have become my family. I started when I was 18.

"It is a huge commitment, every Thursday there is choir practice and then the service is on a Sunday but it is very rewarding. I'm very proud to reach 25 years in one place and during the

time I have seen things develop. “I have seen some of the choir members go on to become music teachers. Music can touch people where words just stop. I get something out of playing the music, that’s why I go. It’s very much a connected thing for me.” During his career, Richard has proven he has many strings to his bow, taking up countless roles including creating BBC Radio Ulster School Choir of the Year in 2015. Richard added: “I created the programme here for BBC NI, it’s amazing, it’s one of the things I love most about the job I do.

“Hearing the talent out there and travelling all around the country, especially seeing what it means for the younger kids.” He is currently celebrating as his team BBC Radio Ulster/Radio Foyle picked up seven golds at the IMRO awards earlier this month. Richard read music at Queen’s University and graduated with First Class Honours, and the May Turtle Scholarship for academic excellence, in 1992. He then gained a choral scholarship to King’s College London, where he completed a Master of Music Degree, before returning to Queen’s to undertake Doctoral studies. Since 2000 Richard has been producing for BBC Radio Ulster and Radio 3. He is currently responsible for Ulster Orchestra content on BBC platforms, chamber music recorded across Ireland and local broadcasts of

Choral Evensong. He also oversees BBC Radio Ulster's weekly classical music show. And he is sought after as an adjudicator. Report courtesy The Ulster Star.

Cigarette case 'saved' WW1 priest

A cigarette case that saved the life of a soldier priest in [World War One](#) is to go on display at a new library in County Tyrone, BBC NI reports.

Fr Aloysius Bouchier, from County Waterford, was carrying the case when he ventured into No Man's Land to retrieve the wounded.

He was shot but the silver cigarette case in his breast pocket took the force of the round and saved his life.

He was later awarded the Military Cross for bravery.

The item is going on show in a new library built by the Servite Order of which Fr Bouchier was a member.

The £1.4m project is being launched at Benburb Priory, the Servites' home.



It includes books, some of them dating back to the 16th century as well as archives relating to the order.

The restoration of the priory's former stable block was supported by the heritage lottery fund.

Thousands of books had been sent to Benburb by the Servites for storage.

Some had been damaged over the years by damp or mould and major conservation work was undertaken.

Paper conservator Sean Madden got the job of restoring the most important items.



The new £1.4m library got Heritage Lottery money

Some were bound with leather or wood which posed a particular challenge.

"They've had to deal with the ravages of bad handling, insects, damp, bad light, you name it it has happened to them," he said.

He said the oldest books were like "pieces of art" with their bindings and "wonderful paper and printing inside.

Fr Chris O'Brien said the Servite archive would be of interests to scholars.

It included minutes of meetings, financial records, "plans of things that were built and plans of things that were never built".

Exhibition shines a light on the Reformation

A new exhibition entitled 'Reformation 500: the Reformation in Europe, and its Local Legacy' has officially opened at the Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum, the News Letter reports

The free exhibition marks the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, which followed the publication of Martin Luther's 'Ninety-five Theses' in 1517.

Speaking at the official opening of the exhibition, Alderman James Tinsley, Chairman of the council's Leisure & Community Development Committee, said: "The Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum is always keen to host exhibitions of key historical events. Our children learn at school about the Reformation in history classes and this exhibition presents how this period affected Lisburn and the surrounding area. The Reformation progressed from Europe into Britain but ultimately at the time failed to gain traction in Ireland. "There is a wonderful range of artefacts on display in the exhibition, including a rare 1576 edition of Foxe's Book of Martyrs, a

copy of the first Bible ever printed in Belfast (1751), as well as unique engravings of key Reformation figures, including Martin Luther. I would encourage residents to come and see this exhibition.”

Highlights of the exhibition, which is open Monday to Saturday, 9.30am to 5pm, include the stories of: Martin Luther, Henry VIII and the Tudor children; Early Christianity in Ireland, and the failure of the Irish Reformation; The Plantation, Cromwell and the Protestant Ascendancy; and The Local Legacies of the Reformation in Lisburn. For more information log on to www.lisburnmuseum.com/Reformation

Landmark Belfast church celebrates 50th anniversary

It is one of Ireland's most distinctive places of worship, and St Bernadette's Church - situated just off Belfast's ring road - has been recently described by an architectural commentator as "a quiet anomaly in Knockbreda, south Belfast", where "it forms a prominent landmark and an architecturally interesting presence amid its suburban surroundings".



In a similar vein, the government's listed buildings department has said that "St Bernadette's is of special architectural interest as an exceptionally well detailed and proportioned mid-twentieth century church."

The story starts in 1954 when a local businessman, Peter Woods, offered the diocese two-and-a-half acres of land on which to build a church, school and parochial house.

On October 29 1967, Bishop of Down and Connor William Philbin opened and dedicated the new church of St Bernadette's

The site at the corner of Rosetta Road and what was then a quiet country road called Hillfoot



Road was purchased in May 1954 by Holy Rosary Parish.

Two years later, work began on the building of a much-needed Catholic primary school; St Bernard's Primary School opened in May 1958.

The next step was a fundraising plan for the building of a church.

The large growth in Catholic population in the area had resulted in the modest-sized Holy Rosary Church on Ormeau Road bursting at the seams.



Parishioners were asked to donate one shilling a week towards the cost of the church, while other activities to generate funds took place.

An important change during the planning process was the decision that the church be named in honour of St Bernadette, rather than the originally-intended St Bernard, and so the seeds of the building's strong links to Our Lady were sown.

The foundation stone of St Bernadette's Church was eventually blessed and laid on September 8 1965 - the Feast of the Birth of Our Lady.

Work proceeded at pace and on October 29 1967 - then the date of the Feast of Christ the

King - Bishop of Down and Connor William Philbin opened and dedicated the new church.

The principal celebrant was Monsignor Patrick Mullally and Cahal Daly, then Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise - also a previous and subsequent resident of Holy Rosary Parish - preached on the role of religious education in schools in bringing love, forgiveness and reconciliation to divided communities.

St Bernadette's is of special architectural interest as an exceptionally well detailed and proportioned mid-twentieth century church

The music for the Dedication Mass was provided by the Belfast Gaelic Choir, conducted by Gerry O'Rawe, and the Holy Rosary Parish Choir, directed by Danny Burke, with organists Bob Leonard and Fr Noel Watson. Bob Leonard and Gerry O'Rawe served respectively as organist and choirmaster in St Bernadette's between 1967-78 and 1988-2004.

In the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, and in recognition of the great efforts made across the parish and beyond to get to that day, parishioner George Black spoke on behalf of the laity at the Mass and a reception.

The Church building itself was, according to its architect Brian Gregory, heavily influenced by the latest developments in ecclesiastical architecture "both by reason of its simplicity and the use of modern materials, and also its alliance with contemporary artists who brought a fresh idea to old themes".

The church's exterior, in its simplicity and with the use of concrete as the main building material, is an example of the architectural style known as Brutalism.

Its fan-shaped structure can accommodate around 1,000 people, all of whom are within 60ft of the altar and have a clear view of it, in keeping with the thinking that had emerged from the Second Vatican Council.

The size of the church, measuring 105ft by 105ft at its extremities, also made it the largest parish church in Down and Connor, an honour which it retains to this day.

The interior, with its play of light and colour, provides a marked contrast to the mainly monotone exterior, and is distinguished by some important pieces of furniture, including an acclaimed sculpture of Christ by Dame Elisabeth Frink.

The 40ft high ceiling enhances the impression of spaciousness, while the stained glass windows, using the method of dalle de verre or slabs of glass, reflect the Alpha and Omega in a range of vibrant colours, culminating in a vivid cross in the centre.

The church is specifically oriented such that on a bright day the morning sun shines directly onto the sanctuary wall, illuminating it during the time at which Mass is normally celebrated; in the days around midsummer the high sun lights up the tabernacle itself.

St Bernadette's - which cost around £3 million in today's terms - was not fully paid off until 1976, with fundraising having lasted nearly 20 years.

As well as the church building, very significant funding was at that time also required for five parish schools and a new building for Rosario Youth Club.

St Bernadette's remained as part of Holy Rosary Parish until February 1988, when it became a parish in its own right, with its own Parish Priest, the first of whom was Fr Fred MacSorley.

The renovation was a huge undertaking and is now almost complete - the cost was around £1

million - and was achieved without any public funding

He oversaw the addition of the parish centre, which opened in 1994, and remained until his retirement in August 2003 when Fr Paul Armstrong was appointed.

Since then, Fr Armstrong has served the parish single-handed, as the shortage of priests in Down and Connor resulted in St Bernadette's no longer having an assistant priest.

When the church was in its fifth decade it was clear that significant renovation work - particularly of the roof, windows and heating - was going to be required.

It was a huge undertaking and is now almost complete - the cost was around £1 million - and was achieved without any public funding.

The most visible - and symbolic - element of the renovation was the removal of window grilles which had been installed in the 1970s in response to sectarian strife in the area and repeated vandalism.

With this and the recent removal of the hedge which previously restricted the view from the ring road, St Bernadette's again stands properly

visible to passers by as an icon of hope and faith.

And while the church building is at the heart of the parish - which today has a population of around 3,500 - it is the faith in action which radiates from St Bernadette's which helps make it a truly special landmark.

- A 50th Anniversary Mass to celebrate the opening and dedication of St Bernadette's Church will take place at 3pm on Sunday October 29. Bishop Anthony Farquhar will preside. The liturgy will include many of the parts of the Mass of Dedication that was celebrated 50 years ago.
- With thanks to Patricia Kernaghan, who has researched the history of the church and parish.

Courtesy the Irish News

Grassroots campaign launched to persuade C of E to adopt gay blessings

A 'grassroots' campaign is underway to persuade the Church of England to adopt formal services to bless gay couples.

The Church's ruling general synod will debate whether to offer official liturgy after a same-sex couple has married or formed a civil partnership in a separate ceremony.

The **proposals were put forward by the diocesan synod** – the equivalent of a local council – in Hereford and fall short of same-sex weddings in Church but would allow priests to bless couples.

Now a campaign has been launched across the CofE's 41 dioceses to persuade each local synod to follow suit and adopt the same motion, 'strengthening the message from Hereford and demonstrating the groundswell of support for authorised services for couples'.

The move launched by the One Body One Faith lobby group aims to pressure the national general synod to debate and pass the same motion. While the Church's by-laws mean the call cannot be removed from the agenda 'until debated or resolved otherwise', there is no time limit to when it must be debated by.

The motion insists offering the service for gay couples would be optional and no conservative clergy would be forced to offer the blessing if they did not want to.



The motion stops short of gay weddings in church but allows for a priest to bless a gay couple after they have been married in a seperate ceremony.

'No parish should be obliged to host, nor minister conduct, such a service', the motion says adding the service should also be 'neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England'.

The motion added: 'It would contribute to a "mixed economy" in which different viewpoints could continue to exist.'

The Bishop of Hereford backed the motion and it is likely a number of other bishops would do the same.

'It's about exploring - what are the acceptable limits, how far can we go? Some people would want to go the whole hog and say we should have same-sex marriages in church,' he said.

'This motion is not saying that and I'm not saying that either. But I am saying go further than just leaving it to individual clergy to do something informal.

'So it's moving things forward whilst remaining sensitive that we can't rush these things.'

Chief executive of One Body One Faith Tracey Byrne told Christian Today most people in average CofE parishes would back the call.

'It is so important to ordinary people who want to see justice. They want to see people treated fairly,' she said, adding it could provide the compromise the church is looking for between the two deeply entrenched viewpoints.

'It protects the consciences of those who disagree,' she said. 'There are bits to be fleshed out but I think it is a way to go and I think it is

something people would like to see discussed at a local level.'

She said 'nothing has to change' for those who do not want same-sex blessings but for those who do want to it gives an official opportunity to do so.

But Susie Leafe, director of the conservative Anglican grouping Reform, reacted to the initial motion by saying it was a 'fundamental departure' from traditional teaching. She added that the vote ignored the Bible and Jesus' understanding of marriage being between one man and one woman as the 'understanding of the vast majority of the worldwide church for two millennia'.

A CofE spokesperson said the Church was aware of the vote and a debate at general synod would be held at a time chosen by its agenda setting Business Committee.

'The diocesan synod's decision does not change the teaching or practice of the Church of England, whether in Hereford or anywhere else in the Church,' the spokesperson said.

'It is recognised, however, that there is real and profound disagreement in the Church of England

over questions relating to human sexuality and the House of Bishops has recently embarked on the preparation of a major new teaching document on marriage and sexuality.

'We are seeking to find ways forward rooted in scripture and the Christian faith as we have received it and which values everyone, without exception, not as a "problem" or an "issue", but as a person loved and made in the image of God.'

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