

## **Former journalist Martina Purdy and ex-barrister Elaine Kelly to take religious vows this weekend**



**Sister Elaine and Sister Martina, pictured ahead of their First Profession in St Peter's Cathedrals on Saturday. Picture by Hugh Russell**

Two women who swapped successful professional careers to embark on religious life

will take another major step towards their calling this weekend, the Irish News reports.

Former television journalist Martina Purdy and ex-barrister Elaine Kelly will take their vows on Saturday to become temporary professed sisters, more than three years after joining the Adoration Sisters.

Speaking ahead of the ceremony, which will be held at St Peter's Cathedral in west Belfast, Sister Martina and Sister Elaine have described their joy that they will become "brides of Christ".

The two women joined the Adoration Sisters, an order of nuns based in the Falls Road within weeks of each other in 2014, both wanting to embark on a life dedicated to their faith.

At the time, Sr Martina was a political correspondent with the BBC who had spent more than 20 years covering pivotal political events during the peace process, while Sr Kelly was a renowned barrister.

Both spoke at the time of how they had completely changed their career paths to fulfil a calling to God.

After serving as postulant and novice nuns, the women will this weekend take their biggest step so far by making their first profession of vows.

Large crowds of family, friends and members of the local community are expected to attend the ceremony where Mother Mary Josephine Caldwell, the superior general of the Sisters of Adoration, will receive and accept the vows of Sr Elaine and Sr Martina.

The main celebrant at the service will be Bishop of Down and Connor, Noel Treanor, with Fr Robert Sloan, Fr John Murray, Fr John Nevin and Fr Martin Graham also con-celebrating.

During the ceremony, the women will each receive the brown veil, as well as the ring and brown scapular (robe) of the congregation, which will "signify their spiritual union with God".

In six years time, the two women will make their perpetual vows.

Speaking to the Irish News yesterday ahead of entering a period of reflection, Sr Martina said it was a "big step" on a wonderful journey.

"We see it like a great adventure into the heart of God," she said.

"We think it's a mind-blowing that a barrister and a journalist have been called to receive God's life and commit to him. We were surprised as anyone else was when it happened.

"It's a big step, we will be making our vows before God."

Sr Elaine said the ceremony would be a "celebration" for everyone.

"We will have our families with us and our friends, Martina's friends from the BBC and my friends from the Bar will be there as well as people from the local community," she said.

"We see it as a celebration and the fact that it will be held in our own parish, at St Peter's, is wonderful.

"We want people from no matter where, no matter who to come and join us on Saturday."

Sr Elaine also said the ceremony will see them become "brides of Christ" and will mark how "God is in our hearts forever".

"Three and a half years ago I received the call and when I first entered, people couldn't believe it would be nine years of a journey," she said.

"But you live it every day and here we are, so far along the journey already.

"We are servants of God, we are called to be holy and humble. He takes the gifts he has given us and he makes the best of them.

"We want it to be a joyful occasion, there is a real tangible excitement in the community, you can feel it.

"The joy of the day is for everyone."

## **Connor Big sing raises the roof!**

Participants in the Connor Big Sing on Sunday September 17 did their best to raise the roof of Lisburn Cathedral with some fantastic contemporary Christian Music!

The afternoon training and evening praise service was hosted by the Dean and Chapter of Lisburn Cathedral. More than 80 people attended the training workshops and there were 240 at the evening Praise Service.

Training was facilitated by the Cathedral's Director of Music, Mr Stephen McLoughlin, and the leader of the Lisburn Community Choir and Children's Choir, Mrs Julie Harper.



Stephen worked with musicians helping them to approach new contemporary songs and with the coordination of music groups, while Julie trained the singers (sopranos and altos). Mark Tilley (co-leader of the Lisburn Community Choir) trained the tenors and basses.

Julie also covered vocal training exercises, posture and communication. The aim was that each group would feel better equipped to go back to their parish with the confidence to use much more varied musical material.

The afternoon session taught contemporary songs, and some of which were included in the evening Praise Service.



Dean Sam Wright said the initiative had been inspired by the most recent installation services for the Dean and Canons in Lisburn Cathedral which had included a number of contemporary worship songs.

“These songs received favourable comments from members of the congregations present – it was as a result of this feedback that the Chapter members felt that we could contribute to the worshipping life of the diocese by providing this training day in contemporary Christian music followed by an Evening Praise Service.”

## **From Tolerance to Inclusion – Dublin interfaith conference highlights role of faith communities**

Archbishop Michael Jackson was one of the contributors to a Dublin interfaith conference highlighting the contribution of faith to civil society held on Tuesday September 19. Dublin City Interfaith Forum (DCIF) brought together government officials, local authority delegates, politicians, faith community leaders and NGOs active in the area of integration and diversity for the Culture, Faith, Cohesion: Moving from Tolerance to Inclusion conference which took place at Richmond Barracks, Inchicore.

Their goal was to explore meaningful and effective engagement and interaction with a view to creating trust, building connections and challenging prejudice and intolerance. The conference was organised in collaboration with Dublin City Council.

DCIF Executive Officer, Adrian Cristea, said the event raised awareness of growing religious diversity in Irish cities, highlighted the important contributions faith communities make and engaged international and Irish stakeholders in





discussion on the added value of an interfaith approach in responding creatively to discrimination and prejudice in Ireland.

“Dublin City is, for some time now, a place of diversity, a place where religions, cultures and people meet and interact. This constitutes our new identity. Properly managed, this diversity gives us great strength. Mismanaged, it risks weakening us greatly. Information and education alone is not enough. People need to meet face to face, experience diversity and discuss issues with people who differ. Communities need to reach out to each other. Dialogue and exchange between people of different views, cultures and faiths is the glue

that will hold us together and enrich us all,” he said.

In his paper Archbishop Jackson gave an example of how the Dublin City Interfaith Charter, which was launched by the Lord Mayor and DCIF last December, is being worked out in the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough. He commended the charter which was the first of its kind in a contemporary European city and which was taken up by the European Council.

The charter encourages people to commit to their own religious beliefs and accept the freedom of others to do the same; dedicate themselves to the value of each human being; promote dialogue between different communities of belief; share their experiences, encourage dialogue in all spheres of life to eradicate misunderstanding, intolerance and exclusion; focus on encouraging the young towards acceptance of religious diversity; develop an appreciation of religious diversity and focus on similarities; and create social conditions that will allow all to share peace, joy and hope.

“The genius of this Charter, promulgated in a highly secularised society that takes to itself more often than not the moral high ground of a value-free pluralism, is that it does not shirk the

imperative of a modern democracy that it actively safeguard the beliefs, customs and practices associated with religious beliefs (rather than perhaps religious culture) and that it connect forcefully the dignity and value of each human being with the different communities of belief. This document does not seek to strip out the religiously motivated altruism inspired by belief in God as if it is a product or a commodity and make it serve a materialism that prefers to go it alone without reference to origins, derivations and inspirations. It actively suggests from within The Public Square – Is there a square more public than The Mansion House? – that there are communities of belief that can contribute to a better society, city and country. We do not hear this language emanating from enough politicians or from enough church and Faith leaders, for whatever reasons,” the Archbishop stated.

Outlining the emerging ‘Five Marks of Interfaith Understanding’ which is developing in Dublin & Glendalough, he said the initiative was designed to be attainable and was an invitation to the people of the diocese to express their faith in simple engagement with others “who are Other from us and from whom we in turn are Other”.

“It is based in the assertion in Genesis 1.27 that we are, like others, made in the image and likeness of God. The Five Marks initiative is designed to introduce and to engage people in understanding, leading towards advocacy; in moving from fear of change to celebration of diversity. Acceptance is the first step in each of these. Parishes, schools and colleges are actively encouraged to participate,” he explained.

The five steps include: reading passages from the Old and New Testaments on loving God and your neighbour to show willingness to respect and understand World Faiths; intercessions which include prayers for peace and understanding across cultures and faith traditions; seeking to meet those of other World Faiths to learn what it is to create and share civic space as people of faith together; organising a social event with people of other World Faiths; inviting a group from another World Faith to visit our place of worship and seek to visit theirs.

[You can read Archbishop Jackson’s paper here.](#)

*Dublin City Interfaith Forum draws its members from the Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities. DCIF*

*works with interested members of faith communities to deliver interfaith gatherings and activities in Dublin City. Recognising the diverse nature of the backgrounds of the residents of Dublin, DCIF seeks to provide the space and opportunity for Faith Communities to build relationships with and between Dublin City communities, statutory and voluntary organisations and the residents of Dublin City.*  
[www.dublincityinterfaithforum.org](http://www.dublincityinterfaithforum.org)

## **Six married men are being ordained by the Catholic Church in Ireland this week**

Bishop William Crean will ordain the men as permanent deacons in the Diocese of Cloyne at a special Mass this Sunday, September 24, in Co. Cork, the Irish Post reports.

Acknowledging the decline in those signing up to become priests in Ireland, he said the diocese's new deacons should not be seen as a replacement for the priesthood.

"It is encouraging that we will have our first permanent deacons ordained for the diocese," he said. "Although this takes place in the context of falling numbers of priests, it would not be

correct to see the diaconate simply as a replacement for the priesthood.

“The fullness of the Church’s ministry is seen in the co-operation of bishops, priests and deacons with the people of God in a co-responsibility which includes a variety of gifts and a variety of roles.”

The history of the diaconate goes back to the Acts of the Apostles in the Church’s earliest days, when the Apostles chose seven men to assist in the care of the faithful.

Over the centuries many of the tasks of the deacon were undertaken by priests and by monastic and religious communities.

The diaconate became a final stage on the road to priesthood, while always maintaining its distinction as a separate order.

However for the last 50 years permanent deacons – those not destined to become priests – have served the Church throughout the world.

The Bishops of Ireland began the process of introducing permanent deacons in Ireland in the 1990s.

The first were ordained for the Archdiocese of Dublin and the Diocese of Elphin in 2012. The diocese of Cloyne first accepted applications in 2013.

Bishop Crean added: “Deacons hold a special ministry within our Church which is to complement, but not to replace, the contribution of our priests or that of the ministry of lay people who serve the community of the Church in an increasing number of ways.

“Deacons are called to assist and encourage both priests and the lay faithful.”

The men, ranging in age from 40-52 and including an accountant, a sales assistant and a cabinet maker, will be ordained deacons for service in the diocese in Saint Colman’s Cathedral in Cobh.

A permanent deacon – who can be married or single – is different to the priesthood, but it is still a participation in the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Traditionally they work closely with a diocesan bishop and focus on three areas including assisting at the altar to celebrate the sacraments, leading people in prayer and helping the poor.

Permanent deacons continue in their secular employment and are responsible for their own upkeep and the upkeep of their families.

Ireland's new permanent deacons are...

- Garrett Cody (52), originally from Glasheen, Cork, now lives in Garryvoe, in the parish of Ballymacoda, with his wife Bridget and three teenage children. Garrett works as a Manager with the HSE in Older Persons' Services in Cork. The greatest challenge Garrett expects to face is the integration of family and professional life with ministerial responsibilities.

- Peter Gurbal (44), originally from Bratislava, Slovakia, now lives in Cobh with his wife Lenka and five children ranging in age from 13 to one year old. Peter is a sales assistant in the grocery sector. Peter is interested in all aspects of ministry, especially leading prayer groups among the younger generations.

- Damian McCabe (40), originally from the northern coast at Fahan, Buncrana, Co. Donegal now lives on the southern coast at Whitegate in the parish of Aghada, with his wife Rachel and two daughters aged nine and three. Damian works as a Chartered Accountant with PepsiCo



Ireland. Damian enjoyed his time of formation, especially growing in his own faith and developing a clearer understanding of the Church.

- Edward Mulhare (50), originally from Cahergal Lawn, Ballyhooly Road, Cork, now lives in Castlemartyr, parish of Imogeela with his wife, Valerie, and five children aged from 18 to nine years old. Edward works as a Cabinet Maker with ORM Ltd, Castlemartyr. Eddie says: “The deacon will be a witness to the faith in the workplace, the housing estate and among neighbours and friends.”

- John Nestor, (47), originally from Douglas, Cork, also lives in Castlemartyr with his wife Catherine and two teenage children. John is a triplet. John is a social care worker. John sees the deacon being of service to the marginalised and promoting justice and the social teaching of the Church.

- Brian Williams, (43), originally from Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, is at present moving to the parish of Macroom, Co. Cork with his wife Sharon and two daughters aged nine and five. Brian has been the Director of Cloyne Diocesan Youth and

Community services for the past 10 years. Brian's hopes for his ministry as a deacon: "I hope that as a deacon I might be able to reach out to and connect with people who are feeling isolated in our communities."

## **Celebrations as St John's Church in Laragh reaches 150th Anniversary**

One hundred and fifty years to the day since the dedication of St John's Church, Laragh, parishioners and friends filled the beautifully restored church for a special celebration service. The Bishop of Glendalough, Archbishop Michael Jackson, presided and preached at last night's (Tuesday September 19) service with the Rector, the Revd Brian O'Reilly.

Apart from parishioners and friends from across the community, two former Rectors, the Revd Olive Henderson and Canon John McCullagh and the Parish Priest of St Kevin's, Laragh, Fr Oliver Crotty, were given a warm welcome.

In his sermon Archbishop Jackson focussed on the Collect for a Dedication Festival and said the prayer drew together the positive values and virtues that we associate with religion and church.



**Archbishop Michael Jackson cuts the cake marking the 150th anniversary of St John's Church Laragh with the Rector, the Revd Brian O'Reilly and the congregation**

“A church, as a House of Prayer, takes its role, its energy and its personality from the people who use it, who come to it and who go from it again. There is room for different people and for different types of people in the lifetime of any church: people who are familiar and people who are exploring, people who are sowing and people who are harvesting. The hope that flows through the Collect goes a lot further and ties us into the life of The Holy Spirit because the expectation is clearly expressed that *being filled*

*with the Holy Spirit, we may become a living temple acceptable to Almighty God ...* We ourselves are now called forward to be the church, a living temple, God's habitation of choice, moving out into the community and taking on the job of engagement and participation, meeting and doing, confident and proud to be Christian, making ourselves known not for our own sakes but for the sake of God and the other person," he stated.

He looked at the history of St John's Church and said it was built so that people from the locality could walk to church. Laragh and Glendalough lie in the parish of Derrallossary which dates from the 13th century. A subscription was opened in 1843 to build a church at Laragh because of the size of the parish and to be a chapel of ease for the people.

"Today's church is the fruit of 125 subscriptions. It remains as it was. It has been lovingly and beautifully restored and for all this work I should like to thank and congratulate the rector and parishioners of today for the sensitive and careful work you have done. In a world of encircling cynicism and encroaching consumerism, this church stands as the church built for people to walk to it. It does indeed

sound both incredible and impossible but it is true.

“Walking is the new world, even though most churchgoers do not seem to have spotted it. Walking gives time to be together, walking gives time to think, walking gives time to connect, walking gives time to make a community of faith, hope and love, walking gives companionship. And Glendalough and Laragh can lead the way in the twenty-first century too. Walking and pilgrimage are part of the way in which we let the Spirit of God enter into and live within our lives. This is a very new and a very ancient walk with God but we no longer live in the Middle Ages; we now live in the third millennium. Already this church and your rector are paving the way in bringing Glendalough back into the mainstream of pilgrimage in the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough, or rather Glendalough and Dublin, in just after the 800th year of the uniting of these dioceses to one another,” the Archbishop said.

Fr Oliver Crotty and St Kevin’s Parish Council presented a gift to the parish of St John’s of an Icon of St Kevin. Fr Oliver said it was a symbol of the friendship between the two parishes and their people.

[You can read Archbishop Jackson's sermon here.](#)

## **'The wee church in the hills' at Fermoye goes on the market**

Fermoye Church of Ireland has been put up for sale, having been closed for some time, the Coleraine Times reports.

The district of Fermoye lies in the south of Dunboe, which was since the thirteenth century a large and important parish in the Diocese of Derry, permanently linked to the Archdeaconry of Derry.

Rev Diane Matchett explained the history of the church whose sale is being handled by Benson's who describe the 'quaint church building formally known as the Church of the Ascension' as being situated in an 'idyllic countryside location'. When the Clothworkers' Company of London were given this land in the Plantation, they found a parish consisting of 60 townlands, stretching from Downhill to the Bann and from Kilcranny to Formoye (as it was spelt then). They adopted and improved the existing Parish church, St Adamnan's in Downhill and later, when it was destroyed in 1689, gave the land in



Articlave on which St Paul's church was built in 1691 to replace it.

By 1840 a growing number of parishioners were living in Fermoyale and finding it difficult to travel to St Paul's, so the Company were approached by the then Rector, Archdeacon Thomas Bewley Monsell, to provide a new district church in Fermoyale which was established as a permanent curacy, comprising nine townlands taken from the Parish of Dunboe.

He persuaded the Company to give a site for the church and they also agreed to provide an annual grant towards the upkeep of the building. Fermoyale Church was completed in 1844 to

designs by Herbert Williams, a pupil of Samuel Angell, the Surveyor to the Clothworkers. The church, a simple and dignified structure, built of local basalt in the Victorian Gothic style, was originally dedicated to St Matthew but has always been known as the Church of the Ascension.

It was planned to establish Fermoyale as a new village on the coach road between Coleraine and Limavady so the Clothworkers also built a dwelling for the incumbent and a school beside the church with the intention that they and the church would be at the centre of this village. The new village was slow to develop due to the famine of the 1840s and was finally doomed to failure with the opening in 1852 of the railway from Limavady Junction to Coleraine which led to the seaside village of Castlerock being developed instead. Fermoyale church continued with its small numbers but had lost its intended congregation to Castlerock.

When the Clothworkers sold their estates, they gave the parish a gift of £200 and in 1869 the lands of Fermoyale were purchased by the Representative Church Body of the Church of Ireland. In 1873 the church was united with the mother church in Articlave.



Eventually the school and later the church had to close. As Castlerock grew, a new district parish was created there in 1868 with a further 17 townlands taken from the parish of Dunboe. Christ Church Castlerock was opened in 1870 and was later incorporated into the United Parish of Castlerock, Dunboe and Fermoy, the situation which continues to this day.

Fermoy church remained closed for many years until it was re-opened in the 1960s by Canon W B Evans, thanks to a great deal of voluntary work by parishioners of St Paul's and Christ Church which included the provision of heat and light by bottled gas. Several services were held each year including on Ascension Day, at harvest time and an annual Orange service which was held by Macosquin district to help pay for the upkeep of the church. Sadly, in 2006, during the incumbency of Rev Malcolm Ferry, the ceiling collapsed and the roof was rendered unsafe. The church had to be closed.

The Select Vestry spent a number of years trying to repair the roof and also seeking to find ways to make use of the building but finally had to take the decision to close the church and put it up for sale. On May 22 this year, the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Ken Good, held a service of deconsecration at the church which

brought to an end, after 160 years, the life of the 'wee church in the hills'.

## **Christian Aid launches Rohingya Crisis Appeal**

Christian Aid has launched an appeal to help all communities displaced by violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State, and Rohingya Muslims who have crossed the country's border into Bangladesh as refugees.

Figures show 412,000 Rohingya people have fled into Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district since a fresh outbreak of violence erupted in Rakhine State on 25 August. A reported 210 villages have been destroyed in the north of the state, leading to an unknown number of displaced people within Myanmar.

For the last 12 months, Christian Aid in Myanmar has been working in camps and with conflict-affected communities through local partners in Rakhine State and supports all ethnic groups displaced by violence. Permission to work in refugee camps in Bangladesh has been limited until now to a

handful of non-governmental organisations (NGO), but authorities in Bangladesh are now willing to accept further NGO support. Christian Aid is working with authorities in both countries to secure permission to work with those in need.

Ram Kishan, Regional Emergency Manager South Asia, said: “The number of refugees arriving in Bangladesh is rising rapidly - an estimated 15,000 people coming across the border daily – and now monsoon rains causing flooding in the makeshift camps are making the situation even worse. In Myanmar, internally displaced people in Central Rakhine haven’t received regular assistance for days.

Although civilians in the north of the state are not receiving regular aid, we have local partners there who can respond and scale up their efforts. The humanitarian needs on both sides of the border are mounting up.”

Madara Hettiarachchi, Head of Humanitarian Programmes, Asia & Middle East, added: “Those who have made it to the border have walked for days, crossing difficult terrain and

without food. Many are sick and access to water and medical supplies are limited.

“Now is the time to take action. The number of those who need humanitarian help is huge and we need to dramatically scale up our work not only for the initial response but for the long-term. We have the local partners in place ready, now we urgently need the funds to support that work.” In Bangladesh, Christian Aid is initially sending €45,000 / £40,000 to local partners to provide food, water, hygiene and sanitation, and healthcare provisions to 23,000 people. Through the appeal the charity hopes to raise more funds so the response can be scaled up in both countries.

To donate to the Rohingya Crisis Appeal, visit [www.christianaid.ie](http://www.christianaid.ie) or call 01 496 7040 (Republic of Ireland) or 02890 648133 (Northern Ireland).

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