

Church News Ireland



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Image of the day



Escape to the beauty of Montalto Estate

Just outside Ballynahinch, this five-star visitor attraction spans 160 acres of breathtaking gardens, scenic walking trails, and rich history waiting to be explored. Whether you're after a peaceful retreat or a



fun family day out, Montalto has something for everyone.

🌲 Wander through one of Ireland's largest Alpine and winter gardens

🚶 Explore 7km of stunning walking trails

⚔️ Discover the estate's fascinating history, including the Battle of Ballynahinch site

🛝 Let little adventurers enjoy the natural play area

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☕ Unwind at the charming café after a day of exploring

A perfect spot to reconnect with nature, enjoy a leisurely stroll, or dive into local history—Montalto Estate is an experience not to be missed.

🔗 Explore more here:

<https://trekni.com/listings/montalto-estate/>

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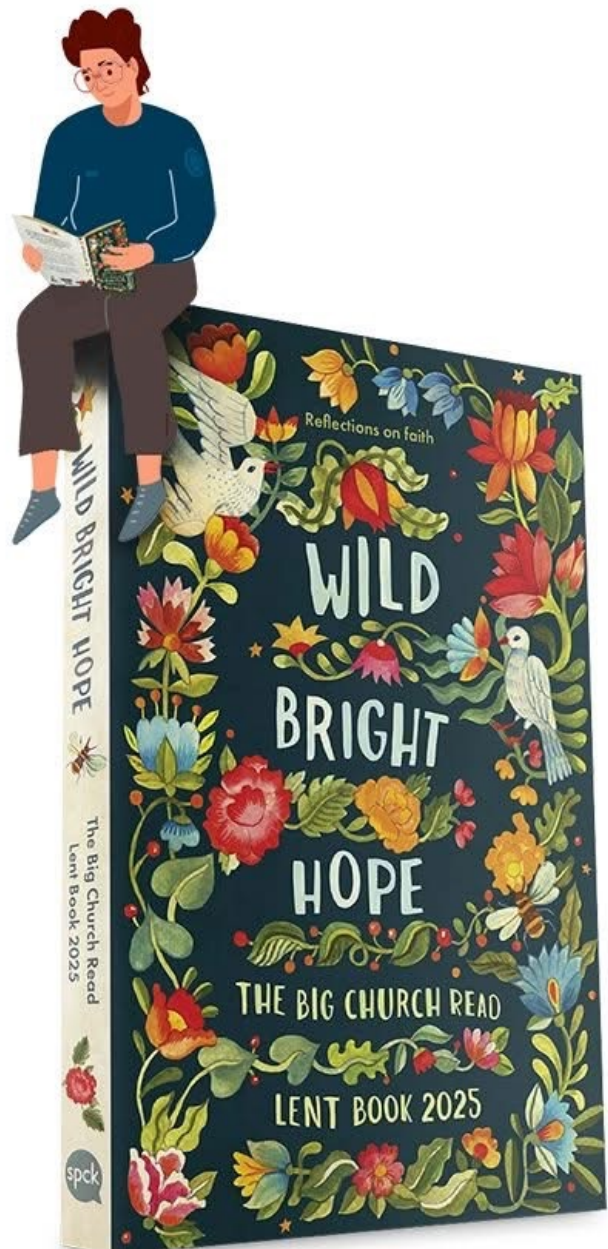
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News

Big Church Read during Lent in Antrim

Parishioners at All Saints were advised - Keep an eye out on Sunday for the sign-up sheet for the Big



Church Read that we will be taking part in this Lent.

Wild Bright Hope is a transformative Lent book featuring 12 dynamic voices, each exploring the power of hope. Each chapter is paired with a video from its author, providing deeper insight and an interactive experience. Let's read it together this Lent!

Anglicans pray for health of Pope Francis

The Archbishop of York has written to Cardinal Vincent Nichols, expressing his prayers, along with those of many faithful Anglicans, for the health of Pope Francis during his period of hospitalisation.

In his letter, Archbishop Stephen Cottrell assures the Cardinal, 'We are praying for a good and swift recovery, for his comfort and peace, and also for all those who tend to him and minister to him.'

Reflecting on his recent time in Rome for the Ecumenical Vespers for the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul presided over by Pope Francis, Archbishop Cottrell recalled the Pope's reminder that 'hope lies at the heart of the Gospel, the ecumenical endeavour, and this Jubilee Year.'

He concluded his message with a prayer that the Pope might be 'nourished by the hope of the Gospel and know the love and healing of Our Lord Jesus Christ in these days and the days ahead.'

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Cardinal Nichols responded with gratitude for Archbishop Cottrell's prayers and those of the Anglican faithful, acknowledging their significance during this challenging time for the Holy Father.

'In these times, when the burden of his office weighs ever more heavily, the Holy Father is strengthened by the prayerful support of so many,' the Cardinal wrote.

'Your words, filled with charity and fraternal care, are a testament to the deep bonds that unite us in Christ.'

To ensure the message of support reaches the Holy See, Cardinal Nichols has passed Archbishop Cottrell's letter to the Apostolic Nuncio.

New Wine failed to ensure Mike Pilavachi was fit for youth ministry review finds

A recent review found that senior leaders at New Wine failed to ensure that Mike Pilavachi was fit for youth ministry at both the New Wine and Soul Survivor festivals.

An independent investigation last year revealed that Pilavachi, 66, used his position to control people, form inappropriate relationships, and engage in abusive behaviour with young people, including wrestling and massaging male interns.



Mike Pilavachi

In response, New Wine launched a review to examine what went wrong, whether its leaders were aware of the abuse, and why more action was not taken.

This review was conducted in addition to a report commissioned by Soul Survivor Watford, which was also written by Fiona Scolding KC.

New Wine was founded by Bishop David Pytches and Barry Kissell, vicar of St Andrew's Chorleywood. Pilavachi joined in 1987 as a youth worker, forming a close relationship with Pytches, who became his mentor. In 1989, Pilavachi took charge of youth work at the New Wine Festival. As the youth meetings grew, the decision was made to launch a separate youth event, Soul Survivor, in 1993.

Soul Survivor, initially promoted through New Wine's materials, gained popularity quickly. Although Soul Survivor became independent, it retained close links with New Wine in governance, staffing, and finances.

Until 1996, it was overseen by the New Wine Trust. After that, it was managed by Soul Survivor Ministries, with Pilavachi still attending New Wine Trustee meetings. By 2003, New Wine continued to mention collaboration with Soul Survivor, highlighting their shared goals and youth events.

However, when allegations against Pilavachi emerged, New Wine initially downplayed the relationship between the two organisations, later apologising for this. Now, the review has described it as one of "parent and child", noting that Soul Survivor was "clearly born out of New Wine, both in terms of its personnel and finances, but also in terms of its philosophy and theology".

Although the two organisations distanced themselves in the early 2000s, the review concluded that "more consideration should have been given to discerning whether Mr Pilavachi truly was the best person to lead Soul Survivor."

The review also highlighted the absence of an accessible mechanism for raising "low-level concerns" about Pilavachi's close relationships, which were also noted at New Wine. It further highlighted that while the government issued safeguarding guidance in 1993 ("Safe from Harm"), it was unclear whether Soul Survivor fully applied these policies, particularly concerning young people like Matt Redman.

New Wine was also found to have a responsibility to continue monitoring Pilavachi's ministry: "We accept that, once Soul Survivor operated under its own trust, primary responsibility fell to that trust. However, New Wine was effectively promoting Mr Pilavachi's ministry during this period and so retained secondary responsibility for him. Many of Soul Survivor's trustees were also New Wine trustees and anything Soul Survivor's trustees knew about Mr Pilavachi's conduct should have been passed on to New Wine."

The review concluded that Pilavachi's inappropriate behaviour was "probably known" by New Wine.

It added: "If it was not known by New Wine, we think it would have been had New Wine exercised the oversight it should have."

Speaking to Premier on the review's findings, Bishop Jill Duff, chair of New Wine's trustees, said: "We made a statement that was not correct, and we apologise. What has helped us is inviting darkness to come to light. We're on a journey, and I'm pleased we're on it."

So far Pilavachi has not apologised or admitted wrongdoing. Contributing to the initial Scolding review, Pilavachi "denied some of the specific allegations put to him" but "accepted that too many people had commented on this behaviour for there not to be some truth in it". He also accepted that he "has made mistakes and not treated people well".

"I personally think he should apologise," Bishop Jill added. "Repentance is key to the Kingdom of God, and it releases

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people in ways that can't be imagined. I'm really sad there hasn't been an apology for unacceptable behaviour."

In response to the review's findings, New Wine has committed to enhancing safeguarding through safer recruitment, a system for monitoring concerns, a governance review, and fostering a culture of feedback and transparency.

Report courtesy of Premier News.

Education

RBAI introduced to RNLI



Last week, the Eco Club hosted a workshop led by RNLI Lifeboats.

The boys learned about the dangers of Cold Water Shock and Rip Currents. Mr Killian O'Kelly instructed the boys on how to put on a lifejacket, how to throw a rescue rope and how the 'Float to Live' technique works.

This was a great experience, providing an excellent insight to the RNLI's work after the recent non-uniform day raised funds for this important local charity.

Introducing Lisa, DofE Torchbearer of the Year

Lisa has been a pillar of support for young people on their DofE journey for nearly three decades.

From her first Gold expedition in 1997, Lisa's passion for inclusivity and her dedication to helping young people reach their full potential has made a profound impact./

Lisa believes that young people are "our future" and her selfless approach has helped shape the lives of many, through offering equipment, supporting students with disabilities, and working to increase access for young people from diverse backgrounds.

"I've always worked with young people, and I just think they're our future. I want them to basically be the best person that they can."

As Lisa takes on a new chapter in her career to be a detective constable, her legacy of inspiring and empowering

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the next generation will continue. Read Lisa's full story:
<https://bit.ly/4a5TDDU>

Cathedral Calls



St Fin Barre's Cathedral Choir visits Kilkenny Cathedral

On Sunday 9th February, the choir of St Fin Barre's Cathedral travelled to St Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny and sang the Sunday services together with their choir.

They sang Haydn's Missa brevis in B flat, with Matthew Breen from Cork at the organ and conducted by Dr Harry Meehan of Kilkenny. Peter Stobart from Cork

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conducted Elgar's anthem The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Evensong included Walmisley in D minor and Edward Bairstow's Save us, O Lord.

The cathedral choir generously laid on lunch for their visitors, and the Very Rev'd Stephen Farrell, Dean of Ossory, had himself made the soup! The Rev'd Martin Steele, Dean's Vicar, also travelled from Cork with the choir and he preached at the morning service on Isaiah, chapter 6: 'here I am, send me'.

Clergy and ministry



Four parishes get grants to finance mission in Derry and Raphoe

Four parishes in Deery & Raphoe are the first to benefit from the Diocese's new Mission Fund Grant Scheme which was launched at last year's Diocesan Synod to

explore “creative ways of financing mission in the Diocese”.

Glendermott, Christ Church Derry and Termonamongan (Killeter) have each been awarded £5,000, while Kilbarron (Ballyshannon) is to receive €5,000 for projects seeking to “reach those with little or no connection to church” in their respective communities – a vision identified by the Church of Ireland’s Pioneer Ministry.

Glendermott’s award will help to fund a youth worker (already part-funded by the Benefact Trust) who will work with teenagers dealing with isolation and mental health issues. It will also support the parish’s wellbeing hub, provide Alpha courses and help Glendermott to run wellbeing courses in conjunction with Christians Against Poverty, GriefShare and Hope.

Christ Church Derry’s grant will underwrite ‘Unpacking the Passion’ – a new aspect to the Walled City Passion play performed on Londonderry’s iconic city walls over the past number of Easters.

The new element is a response to an increasing demand from local schools to provide direct engagement with the school community at primary and secondary level. The funding will help deliver interactive sessions with five schools in the run up to Easter, and ensure pupils can attend promenade performances of the drama.

The Parish of Kilbarron’s award will support community outreach at the newly-refurbished St Anne’s Hall in Ballyshannon. The grant will help pay for computer

equipment and broadband internet to extend the range and volume of courses and events to upskill those looking for work or to re-enter education.

It will also be used to tackle isolation among older members of the community who've no IT skills or access to the internet, and to assist the integration of the burgeoning refugee community by facilitating English language classes.

The Parish of Termonamongan's grant will go towards a community café and catering facility at the newly refurbished St Bestius Church. It will be used to engage with people who don't currently belong to the Church and to address rural isolation.

The café will also be used as a relaxed and informal venue for engaging with visitors to the Church who are not regular parishioners, especially local school groups visiting St Bestius' as part of their history, art, religion and music studies.

The Diocesan Mission Fund was launched at last October's Diocesan Synod to encourage parishes to consider ways of realising the Church of Ireland Pioneer Ministry's vision to "reach those with little or no connection to church".

It placed a particular emphasis on people rather than buildings; new projects rather than recurrent expenditure; mission and outreach rather than maintenance; and projects and programmes rather than structures. The grants were announced by the Diocese's Finance and General Purposes Committee.



Dean Austin Laverty

Dean Austin Laverty gave ‘extraordinary faithful and faith-filled service’, funeral hears

The funeral in Ardara of Dean Austin Laverty, who served in a variety of roles across the diocese of Raphoe for over 60 years, has heard that he had an ‘unfussy dedication to the craft of pastoral service’

Dean Austin Laverty gave “extraordinary faithful and faith-filled service” to the diocese of Raphoe for over 60 years, mourners at his funeral have been told.

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One of the most senior clerics in Donegal, the Stranorlar-born priest, who served in a variety of roles across the diocese, died unexpectedly on Saturday. He was the parish priest in Ardara from 1992 until his retirement in 2022 and he served most recently as Pastor Emeritus in the parish.

Mourners at his funeral Mass in the Church of the Holy Family in the town were told by diocesan administrator Monsignor Kevin Gillespie, that the people of Ardara “have benefited so much and appreciated so greatly Fr Austin's excellent ministry for these last 32 years”.

“The presence and stability of that priestly ministry may not be as commonplace in the future, but you came to know this Good Shepherd from the cradle to the grave,” he said.
Courtesy Donegal Live

Events

Spinathon 2025 fundraiser for EBM's Meals on Wheels

Miles on Wheels! Cycle the 100 miles travelled by Meals on Wheels to raise funds for this vital service!

The East Belfast Mission delivers hot nutritious meals five days per week to over 250 elderly and sick clients in the local East Belfast area who would otherwise be without a substantial daily meal.

Choose between 30 minute or 1 hour slots and help us reach 100 miles on Thursday 13th of March!

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Sign up today!

<https://ebm.enthuse.com/cf/east-belfast-mission-spinathon-fundraiser-2025>

New Wine at Redcross

Tickets are available to book now for New Wine's weekend of events in Redcross on Saturday 29th March.

Join us for a day of seminars and an Evening Celebration at Redcross Church of Ireland on Saturday 29th March.

10am: Seminar one - Carrying the Presence of God beyond the walls - exploring together through scripture and life stories what it looks like to be a Spirit filled Christian beyond the walls of our churches

11.30am: Seminar Two - Hearing God - Explore how to recognise and respond to God's voice through biblical principles and learn to share prophetic words with others in an encouraging way.

1.30pm: Seminar Three - Healing - Exploring through biblical teaching and real life stories that will encourage you in practical ways to pray for healing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

7.30pm: Evening Celebration - Speaker Simon Genoe

<https://www.newwineireland.org/events/redcross-weekend>

Cinemagic at the Ulster Museum

Animate your imagination!

Join Cinemagic on 23rd March at the Ulster Museum, Belfast for a hands-on Digital Animation workshop where, using iPads and animation software WheelWorks artists will guide young people through the basics of creating animated images.

Reserve your spot now:

<https://wegottickets.com/event/649329>

On the Pulse Short Film Festival is supported by Department for Communities through Northern Ireland Screen

St Ann's, Dublin recital

On February 23rd, Sunday at 12:45 pm, **Kah Mun Ong and Martina Rosaria O'Connell** will perform a programme of music for flute and piano with works by Boulanger, Beach, Schumann, and Saint-Saens. Please find more information here: <https://www.stannsrecitals.com/events/kah-mun-ong-and-martina-rosaria-oconnell-perform-clara-and-robert-schumann-amy-beach> . Just a reminder that tickets are 10 euros.

In the media

Church's relationship with democracy has always been inconsistent - Irish Examiner

Pope Francis finds himself defending democracy against Vance's style of American Catholicism — a novel role for an absolute monarch, writes TP O'Mahony.

In 1899 Pope Leo XIII wrote to the bishops in the USA condemning what the Vatican referred to as Americanism — a progressive movement for reform in the Catholic Church and the development of a political dimension to religious faith.

Throughout its history the Vatican has maintained its own position as an absolute monarchy and until very recently popes have been reluctant to join the project of democracy, with an enduring suspicion of liberal social doctrines. The great social encyclicals aimed at improving the lot of the poor had a very marginal impact throughout the Western world, while avoiding talk of political systems. It wasn't until 1991 that a papal encyclical fully endorsed democratic systems of government.

Yes, the emphasis on the dignity of the human person, on human rights and on social solidarity, and the centrality of the common good, had begun with Leo XIII whose 1891 encyclical (which came to be known as the “workers’ charter”) was a response to the appalling conditions experienced by the working classes during the Industrial

Revolution. But that came over 40 years after the publication of the Communist Manifesto.

Communism (and socialism, with which it was too readily conflated) was, for Rome, the great fear — culminating with the publication in 1937 of *Divini Redemptoris*, an encyclical addressing specifically “the menace of Communism”. That document urged governments to adopt measures to help the poor, but without endorsing any system of government.

The anti-democratic position finally changed, so far as wider society is concerned, in the 1960s, with Vatican II (1962-65). “It was in the Council that the Church finally made peace with the liberal democratic state,” according to Anthony Annett of Fordham University in New York.

But prior to that, Americanism — which actually had its roots in France — was growing Catholic support for the agenda of the Democratic Party, which was agitating for a graduated income tax, the setting up of a social security system, and the enactment of federal welfare programmes.

This would all culminate in the New Deal — a major programme of social and economic reform introduced by President Franklin D Roosevelt in the 1930s with the aim of aiding the USA’s recovery from the Great Depression (beginning with the 1929 Wall Street crash), and improving the welfare of the poor.

Given the wrecking ball that the Trump Presidency (under the driving force of Elon Musk’s “shock and awe” attack) has taken to a whole range of federal programmes, and cutbacks to social service schemes including education, the

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irony is that today Pope Francis would undoubtedly be one of the foremost champions of the 'Americanism' his forebear condemned.

There is, however, a double irony here. On the one hand, aspects of Americanism — despite being condemned as a “heresy” — washed back to Europe and fed progressive ideas into that seminal Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Secondly, the Vatican itself became after the Second World War a promoter of 'Catholic democracy'.

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This would eventually see a Catholic President in the Oval Office for the first time when John F Kennedy won the 1960 race for the White House. Here at home, it could also be argued that 'Catholic democracy' had shaped the contents of and won popular endorsement for Bunreacht na hEireann, the 1937 Constitution.

Now there is a Catholic Vice-President in Washington in the person of JD Vance, and the oleaginous Archbishop of New York, Cardinal Timothy Dolan (a “close friend” of Trump), has sought to assure people that the President “takes his faith seriously”.

Pope Francis has already taken the very unusual step of issuing a rebuke of the VP, who converted to Catholicism in 2019. Appearing on Fox News to discuss immigration, Vance defended Trump's America First border-enforcement policy by invoking 'ordo amoris', which he characterised as an “old school” Christian concept of social responsibility.

Some Catholic commentators pushed back against Vance's superficial understanding of the concept, but more

extraordinarily, Pope Francis himself took the time to correct Vance's flawed theology in a pointed letter to the American bishops, while offering a powerful defence of migrants and refugees.

American Catholicism

Whether the pope's letter has any effect on the occupant of the White House and his lieutenants is very doubtful. According to the Washington Post, 56% of Catholics supported Trump in the 2024 election, compared to 41% for Kamala Harris.

“The biggest question now — for Americans as well as the Vatican — is ‘what kind of democracy will the United States of America become?’,” according to Massimo Faggioli, professor of theology at Villanova University. American Catholicism is changing, said Faggioli, and the Trump presidency may end up ideologically dividing the country's Catholics “even further”.

In this context, just days before Trump's inauguration, the pope transferred Cardinal Robert McElroy from San Diego to Washington DC. He is expected to spearhead an attempt by the American Church to represent a “moral counterexample” to the Trump administration. In this he may not have the support of all 273 bishops in the US hierarchy.

But for this to be effective, American Catholicism — like Irish Catholicism — will have to rediscover the social gospel; the understanding that the New Testament has very real socio-economic implications.

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In the USA one can point, for example, to the 1933-founded Catholic Worker movement, always associated with Dorothy Day, a socialist and pacifist. In Ireland, it is more a matter of discovering this social gospel in the first place, because there has never been a Catholic Left in this country.

But now, with the fresh challenges posed by the second Trump presidency, the very viability of democracy is about to be stress-tested, especially in a country that loved to boast that it was an essential part of its mission to “export democracy”.

That stress-test of course — given the rise of the far right in parts of Europe — will by no means be limited to the USA. How the Vatican responds is an important element in the unfolding drama that, thanks to the disruptive effects of the second Trump presidency, could transform the Western world.

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TP O'Mahony was Religious Affairs Correspondent of the Irish Examiner

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

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**Link in Monday through Saturday from
early morning**

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