

Church News Ireland



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January 9, 2025

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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

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Image of the day – A President with a moral compass

Remembering Carter: A president with a moral compass by Thomas Higgins

Thomas Higgins, a member of President Jimmy Carter's Cabinet, remembers a consequential president and a moral man.

Thomas Higgins writes in the National Catholic Reporter

[\[https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/guest-voices/remembering-carter-president-moral-compass\]](https://www.ncronline.org/opinion/guest-voices/remembering-carter-president-moral-compass)

News

Taize European meeting in Paris

The next European meeting held by the Taizé community will take place in Paris and throughout the Île-de-France region from 28 December 2025 to 1 January 2026.

Tens of thousands of pilgrims are expected to come to Paris for the five day event, dedicated to prayer, workshops, discussions and cultural exchange, and concluding with a prayer for peace and a celebration to welcome the New Year.



Notre Damme, Paris

Brother Matthew, prior of Taize, made the announcement last Monday, in Tallinn, Estonia, where the most recent European meeting took place.

The Paris meeting is being organised at the invitation of Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris, together with all the Catholic bishops of the Paris province, as well as Protestant and Orthodox leaders of the region.

Archbishop Laurent was present at the gathering in Tallinn. Following the announcement he addressed the crowds of young people saying: "Notre Dame will welcome you".



Taize Prayer - Good Counsel College Church, New Ross, Y34 R297

LINKS

For more information about the Taizé community and updates on how to participate in the Paris European meeting at the end of 2025, see: www.taize.fr/en

Watch the announcement on the Taizé YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/live/viSXAQ0u4Vk

Read more about Taize here: www.taize.fr/en

Brother Matthew has published a new letter for the year 2025, entitled 'Hope Beyond All Hope', See: www.taize.fr/en/article39682.html

Bishops and archbishops to preach message of hope and justice on Peace Sunday

Peace Sunday will be on 19 January this year. Peace Sunday will be focused on the liberating justice of God during the Jubilee Year and movement towards achieving peace, with the theme “Forgive Us Our Trespasses: Grant Us Your Peace”.

Many parishes, Catholic schools and groups across England and Wales are expected to mark the day. Liverpool cathedral is hosting a Peace Sunday Mass, celebrated by Pax Christi’s former president, **Archbishop of Liverpool Malcom McMahon**.

Each year Pope Francis, and other popes before him since 1968, give a theme for prayer and reflection for 1 January – World Peace Day. Peace Sunday, designated by the Bishops of England and Wales, is an opportunity to learn about peacemaking, based on the theme, and also to support Pax Christi England and Wales.

Peace Sunday is part of the international Catholic peace movement which embodies peacemaking and peace-building that Pope Francis has repeatedly emphasised is central to Catholic faith in action. Pax Christi produces resources on peace and non-violence, organises events and vigils and represents the Catholic Church in the peace

Peace Sunday 2025



**'Forgive us our trespasses.
Grant us your peace.'**

Charred Cross in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral. Photo: Ann Farr

movement, working with young people in schools, youth groups and churches.

Sr Katrina Alton CSJP, national chaplain to Pax Christi England and Wales, said, "In a world hungry for revenge and where 'sorry' really does seem to be the hardest word, Pope Francis has boldly chosen 'forgiveness' as the central theme for World Peace Day 2025. This is in stark contrast to the calls for 'revenge' and 'an eye for an eye' that are currently played on repeat by our politicians and amplified by the media. But are we being naïve and foolish to look at

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the challenges facing us today through the lens of forgiveness? Do we really have the faith to believe that when we choose to forgive then God will grant us peace?"

The "obscene" slaughter in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and elsewhere around the world has been criticised by **Bishop of Derry Donal McKeown** and other Irish bishops in their messages for World Day of Peace.

Speaking in Derry, Bishop McKeown recalled how in the "optimistic 1960s" there was a dream of peace and an end to the waste of vast sums of money on armaments.

"When we look at the state of the world ... we might ask whether it is a waste of time to pray for peace," he said, regretting that the slaughter in so many places seemed to "mock" those who would "dare to dream" of peace and forgiveness.

Noting that the Church has its own internal wars, he added, "We argue over who is responsible for the mistakes of the past and the shape of the future. So often, these discussions are tinged with the desire for certainty and control."

Bishop Paul Dempsey, a Dublin auxiliary, spoke about the role of the faithful in creating a peaceful world.

Speaking in St Brigid's Church in Killester, Dublin, he said it was not easy to remain hopeful "as we witness daily the heartbreaking scenes of the lives of innocent men, women and children being destroyed as a result of 'exploitation and oppression where might makes right'."

He appealed for the guns and bombs to be “silenced”.

Separately, the leader of the Irish Church, **Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh** criticised the international community’s failure to prevent the escalation of the conflict in Gaza and to protect civilians there.

In his message for World Day of Peace, Archbishop Martin likened modern warfare to “terror” and said the near-complete destruction of Gaza, and the bringing of its population to the brink of famine, “is, by any standard, a disproportionate measure”.

Resources for Peace Sunday, including poster, liturgy and children’s activities and prayers are available at:
<https://paxchristi.org.uk/peace-sunday-2025/>.

Archbishop of York: C of E confronted by 'darkness' over abuse

The Archbishop of York says there is a 'darkness' in the Church of England because of abuse scandals, but that he's committed to leading change over safeguarding.

Most Rev Stephen Cottrell is now leading the church until a successor to former Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby is appointed later this year.

In a letter addressed to 'clergy, lay ministers and people of the Church of England' to mark Epiphany, he said he would



York Minster

work to ensure new proposals for independent scrutiny of safeguarding are brought before the General Synod next month.

These proposals are part of a process announced by the CofE in December to assess any ongoing safeguarding risk or new evidence in the light of the Makin Review which found the church had failed in its handling of abuse allegations against the late Christian barrister John Smyth.

Archbishop Cottrell said that while 'significant progress' had been made, the recent events and particularly the Makin Review 'have sometimes felt as though we have been separated from the light and hope of Christ. Reading reports of abuse, cover-ups, and institutional failure, we are

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confronted with a darkness that has harmed so many. To those who have been hurt, I offer my deepest apologies.

'These painful reports serve as a stark reminder that victims and survivors are asking for – and deserve – more than words of lament. They call us to action.'

While recognising that 'significant progress' in safeguarding has been made by thousands of faithful safeguarding officers and staff, Archbishop Cottrell said more has to be done to make the church 'safer and more accountable and for our processes to be trusted.'

The Archbishop has himself been strongly criticised by victims and survivors for his own handling of some safeguarding cases. In December it emerged that he had twice re-appointed a priest with a known history of sexual abuse to a senior role in his diocese while he was Bishop of Chelmsford. David Tudor remained in post nine years after Stephen Cottrell was first told of concerns about him.

Writing in the letter he says: 'Whether it is my decisions that are called into question or anyone's within the church, our safeguarding practices must be subject to independent oversight and scrutiny.'

He added that he would work with the lead bishop for safeguarding Rt Rev Joanne Grenfell on several initiatives to improve safeguarding and seek approval for new clergy conduct measures to strengthen the Church's disciplinary provisions.

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He also committed to 'finalising the provisions of the forthcoming Redress Scheme so as to express in tangible ways the Church's heartfelt sorrow and shame for the abuse survivors have suffered.'

Pope appoints Trump critic as Washington's new archbishop

Pope Francis on Monday named a Catholic cardinal who has criticized Donald Trump's political agenda as the new leader for the Catholic Church in Washington, D.C., days before Trump is set to be inaugurated as U.S. president.

Cardinal Robert McElroy, 70, has been the bishop of San Diego since 2015. He will replace Cardinal Wilton Gregory, who has led the archdiocese of Washington since 2019 and is retiring.

McElroy sharply criticized Trump's plan during his first administration to launch a mass deportation campaign targeting millions of immigrants living in the United States.

He called on Americans to "disrupt" those plans in a 2017 speech and later told a Catholic magazine that Catholics "simply can't stand by and watch [immigrants] get deported".

"It's a bold move," Massimo Faggioli, an Italian academic who has followed the Francis papacy closely, said of McElroy's appointment.

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Faggioli, a professor at Villanova University in Philadelphia, noted the announcement came on the fourth anniversary of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol by rioters who hoped to overturn Trump's 2020 election loss to President Joe Biden.

He called it "a statement to the halls of power in D.C. and boardrooms in America".

McElroy is also an outspoken ally of Francis among the U.S. Catholic bishops, who are largely divided over the pope's pastoral agenda.

He has taken progressive positions on issues such as being more welcoming toward LGBTQ Catholics and has called for the ordination of women as deacons -- ordained ministers who, unlike priests, cannot celebrate the Mass.

McElroy, who was made a cardinal by Francis in 2022, is originally from San Francisco.

The cardinal has a doctorate in theology from Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University, as is usual for Catholic prelates. He also earned a doctorate in politics from Stanford University, where his dissertation focused on American foreign policy.

Gregory, aged 77, was the first African American leader of the Catholic Church in Washington, and the first Black U.S. cardinal.

He was known for a low-key approach and rebuffed calls from some conservative Catholics to deny communion to

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Catholic politicians who support abortion rights, such as Biden and former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

McElroy has also rebuffed such calls.

Education

Record number of students attending post-primary schools after 2.1% rise since September

New figures published by the Department of Education for the Republic of Ireland show total enrolments in post-primary schools stood at 425,433 in September 2024 – an annual increase of 8,858.

The number of students attending post-primary schools in Ireland has reached a new record with over 425,000 enrolled at secondary level in the current academic year, Sean McCarthaigh writes in news.ie

New figures published by the Department of Education show total enrolments in post-primary schools stood at 425,433 in September 2024 – an annual increase of 8,858.

The latest figures show the number of students attending secondary schools increased by 2.1 per cent over the past 12 months and has grown by approximately 90,000 in the last 20 years.

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For the second year in a row, the number of students attending multi-denominational schools at post-primary level has exceeded the numbers enrolled in Catholic schools.

Preliminary enrolment figures for the 2024/25 school year reveal that multi-denominational schools currently account for 48.6 per cent of all second-level students with 47.6 per cent attending post-primary schools with a Catholic ethos.

They also show that numbers attending multi-denominational schools increased by 2.8 per cent or just over 5,700 in the past 12 months ahead of the 1.6 per cent increase in the student population at Catholic schools where enrolments rose by approximately 3,100.

In contrast, there was a slight reduction in the number of students attending Church of Ireland schools at post-primary levels to around 12,400.

Despite the increase in the number of students at secondary levels, the number of post-primary schools remained static at 722.

Over the past decade, however, the number of multi-denominational secondary schools has grown by 26 to 358, while the number of Catholic schools has decreased by 12 to 337.

The rise in student numbers at post-primary levels was reflected in increased enrolments in almost every county across the Republic with the largest increases in Dublin (2,840), Cork (745), Kildare (684), Galway (584) and Meath (576).

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Only two counties recorded an actual decrease, albeit by small numbers – Waterford and Leitrim.

The figures are based on the annual census recorded by all schools of their student numbers on September 30th, 2024

In sharp contrast to the large increase in numbers attending secondary schools, the total number of pupils enrolled in primary schools in the current academic year has fallen by almost 1 per cent.

Total enrolments in mainstream primary schools in September stood at 542,417 – an annual decrease of 4,341

It represents a reduction of 0.8 per cent – twice the rate of decrease of the 2023/24 school year.

The number of pupils attending primary schools in the Republic has been falling since 2018, although an influx of Ukrainian refugees halted that trend briefly in 2022.

The proportion of primary students enrolled in Catholic schools has continued to decline, albeit at a modest pace and now stands at 88.4 per cent – down from 88.9 per cent 12 months ago.

The latest figures show numbers attending Catholic schools are down 4,829 to just under 480,000 – a drop of 1 per cent.

They also reveal that eight Catholic primary schools have closed, been amalgamated or changed ethos in the past 12 months.

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The total number of primary schools with a Catholic ethos now stands at 2,722 – a decrease of over 100 in the past decade.

Enrolments in multi-denominational schools currently total 45,013, representing 8.3 per cent of the primary school-going population – up from 8.1 per cent in 2023/24.

There are currently 170 multi-denominational primary schools nationwide – up from 113 a decade ago.

The Department of Education figures show that most counties recorded a decrease in enrolments at primary level due to the overall demographic trend with the biggest reductions in Dublin (-1,842), Cork (-581), Meath (-344) and Clare (-325).

Slight increases in the primary school population were registered in Westmeath, Offaly, Monaghan, Leitrim, Laois, Wexford and Kildare.

The latest figures show the number of Ukrainian pupils at primary level has fallen by 7.2 per cent over the past six months.

A total of 10,459 students from Ukraine were attending primary school in the Republic in December – a decrease of 808 since the end of the 2023/24 school year last June.

In contrast, the number of students from Ukraine attending post-primary schools grew by 1.1 per cent over the same period.

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The figures show there were 6,924 Ukrainians enrolled in secondary schools last month – an increase of 78 since June.

Children from Ukraine account for 10 per cent of all primary level pupils at schools in Cork and over 9 per cent of pupils at schools in Dublin and Kerry.

At post-primary level, students from Ukraine represent 11.4 per cent of all enrolments in secondary schools in Dublin and over 9 per cent in schools in Cork and Kerry.

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

Workplace bullying is real, and it doesn't always look obvious even in church management and organisation

It can show up in subtle ways that erode team morale, break down trust and impact wellbeing.

Workplace bullies will:

- Undermine others' work
- Take credit for team efforts
- Spread negativity or gossip
- Use intimidation to silence voices
- Withhold information that others need to succeed

The impact?

Good people become disengaged and the workplace becomes a toxic environment.

So how do we deal with it?

→ Call it out – Address bullying behaviours directly and clearly; don't let them slide.

→ Create safe spaces – Encourage open conversations where everyone feels heard and respected.

→ Lead by example – Model respect, transparency and fairness in your interactions.

→ Offer support – Provide resources for those impacted and make sure they know they're not alone.

A positive, respectful workplace DOESN'T tolerate bullies, no matter how subtle their tactics.

It's up to all of us to stand up, support each other and create a culture where everyone can thrive.

P.S. How do you deal with workplace bullying?

In the media

Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas

BBC News: In pictures - a superb gallery

[<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvg72pdvw1ro>]

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What is Starmer's record on prosecuting grooming gangs?

BBC News

[<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvgn2wvxx5qo>]

The hiring fairs that sent children out to work for £2 a month

BBC News. NI feature on local initiative

[<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx2n7n15znxo>]

Keeping 'er lit: The quare task of mapping local dialects

BBC News.

[<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c8j9ppymw23o>]

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Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at houstonmckelvey@mac.com

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early morning**

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