

# Church News Ireland



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March 11, 2025

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Short reading and a prayer daily on this site

## Image of the day

### Mar Thoma Church at Midleton

Bishop Paul Colton of Cork - Delighted to be joined this evening at St John the Baptist Church, Midleton by members of the Mar Thoma Church, who also use the church building for their liturgy.

## News

### Inter-Church Ash Wednesday service in Belfast

**"Tonight, as the ashes are placed upon our heads, we hear the ancient words:**

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

But listen closely—because beneath those words, another voice is speaking.

A voice that called the Prodigal home.

A voice that spoke over Jesus in the Jordan River: “You are my beloved.”



*Rev Harold Good, Rev Paul Lutton, Canon Tracey McRoberts along with Fr Martin after the Inter-Church Ash Wednesday service.*

A voice that whispers to you now: "Remember who you are. You are more than what you have become. You are more than dust. You are beloved."

This is the invitation of Lent—a journey into the heart of grace.

So let us begin the journey together. Let us remember who we are. Let us come home. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen." (*The final words of Rev Paul Lutton's sermon*).



## London priest goes viral for blessing foreheads of commuters

**To kickstart Lent on Wednesday 5th April, the vicar of St Peter's Church, Notting Hill, spent the morning outside Notting Hill Gate tube station in London, 'ashing' pedestrians with the sign of the holy cross.**

The video of the Ash Wednesday event went viral online, accumulating hundreds of thousands of views across various social media platforms.

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Rev Pat Allerton told Premier Christian News that he was surprised by just how popular the video has been.

"We put this video out there...just checked five minutes ago, on TikTok it's been watched 320,000 times, 80,000 times on Instagram," he said. "It's just crazy what social media does."

On his personal Instagram page 'the portable priest', where he has amassed over 15,000 followers, Rev Pat captioned the video: "What a great reminder that says, 'For dust you are and to dust you shall return.'"

The popular worship song Goodness of God by Bethel Music played in the background.

Reactions to the video were overwhelmingly positive.

One user commented: "God bless you! The UK needs this more than ever," while another said: "With everything else going on in this country and in our capital at the moment, this has me in tears."

It was not only Christians singing Rev Pat's praises, with one saying: "I am not religious in any way, but I will say, well done that man!"

## **Ardoyne community shocked as priest stood down**

**Ardoyne community shocked as priest stood down over alleged affair with married woman**

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A cleric in the close-knit Catholic community of Holy Cross is removed from ministerial duties while parish probe his alleged relationship with a married woman

The close-knit Catholic community in Belfast's Ardoyne has been stunned by an alleged affair involving one of its priests, it can be revealed.

Fr Antony Connelly – a member of the Passionist Order based at Holy Cross parish in the north of the city – is alleged to have become embroiled in an inappropriate relationship with a married female parishioner.

A senior member of the Passionist Order confirmed to the Sunday World that a recent issue at Holy Cross had caused “deep concern” and was currently “under investigation”.

And as a result, Fr Anthony Connelly (48) has been removed for the time being from ministerial duties.

Fr James Sweeney, Passionist Provincial of Ireland & Britain – St Patrick's Province – issued the following statement: “I have been made aware of serious concerns raised about the alleged behaviour of a member of the Passionist Community in Holy Cross, Ardoyne.

“The priest concerned has left the parish and has been removed for now from ministry as a priest.

“Opportunities have been made available for those affected in any way to speak with members of the Holy Cross Passionist Community and the Province's professional safeguarding officer.

# CONCERT

## HAMILTON COLLEGE CHOIR

from Clinton, New York, USA

Conductor: Dr Charlotte Botha



SHARED PERFORMANCE WITH THE ROYAL SCHOOL CHAMBER CHOIR  
DIRECTED BY A. BOYD

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 7:30 PM**

St Patrick's Cathedral  
Cathedral Close, 43 Abbey St, Armagh

**Hamilton**  
COLLEGE CHOIR



**FREE ADMISSION PLEASE JOIN US!**  
Please email [performancesbooking@gmail.com](mailto:performancesbooking@gmail.com)  
for information and seats reservation



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“The first priority must be the well-being of individuals affected. We recognise, we are accountable to the people of the parish for our ministry and are rightly held to the highest standard,” Fr Sweeney said.

Fr Sweeney, who is based in St Paul’s Retreat at Mount Argus in Dublin, added: “Anyone with concerns should contact our safeguarding officer, Suzanne Phelan (email) [safeguarding@passionists.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@passionists.org.uk) or phone 00 353 85 1146391.”

Priests from the Passionist Community have been based continuously at Holy Cross parish on the Crumlin Road for more than 150 years.

## Education

### Umbra sand dunes near Magilligan focus for Wallace HS

**The annual field trip for the Year 13 geographers took them to the Umbra Sand Dunes near Magilligan to investigate primary succession in a psammosere.**

They examined both biotic and abiotic elements of the ecosystem, including plant species, wind speed, air temperature, and light levels. The main focus was on collecting soil samples to study pH levels back at the centre.



The weather remained dry, and everyone enjoyed the experience.

## BHS Duke of Edinburgh's Award

**At the weekend Silver and Gold participants from Belfast High School took part in expedition training days in the Mourne.**

This training builds on previous training undertaken at Bronze



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level and includes topics such as first aid, health and safety, navigation techniques and compass skills, food and cooking, countryside safety codes, observation skills, methods of recording information and team building.

DofE Northern Ireland



**Do you want to bring your Scouts to Scotland for a trip of a lifetime in 2026?**

**International Expressions of Interest for the 40th Blair Atholl Jamboree in Scotland are now open.**

As we celebrate our 80th anniversary, we want this event to be truly unforgettable, and we need YOUR help!

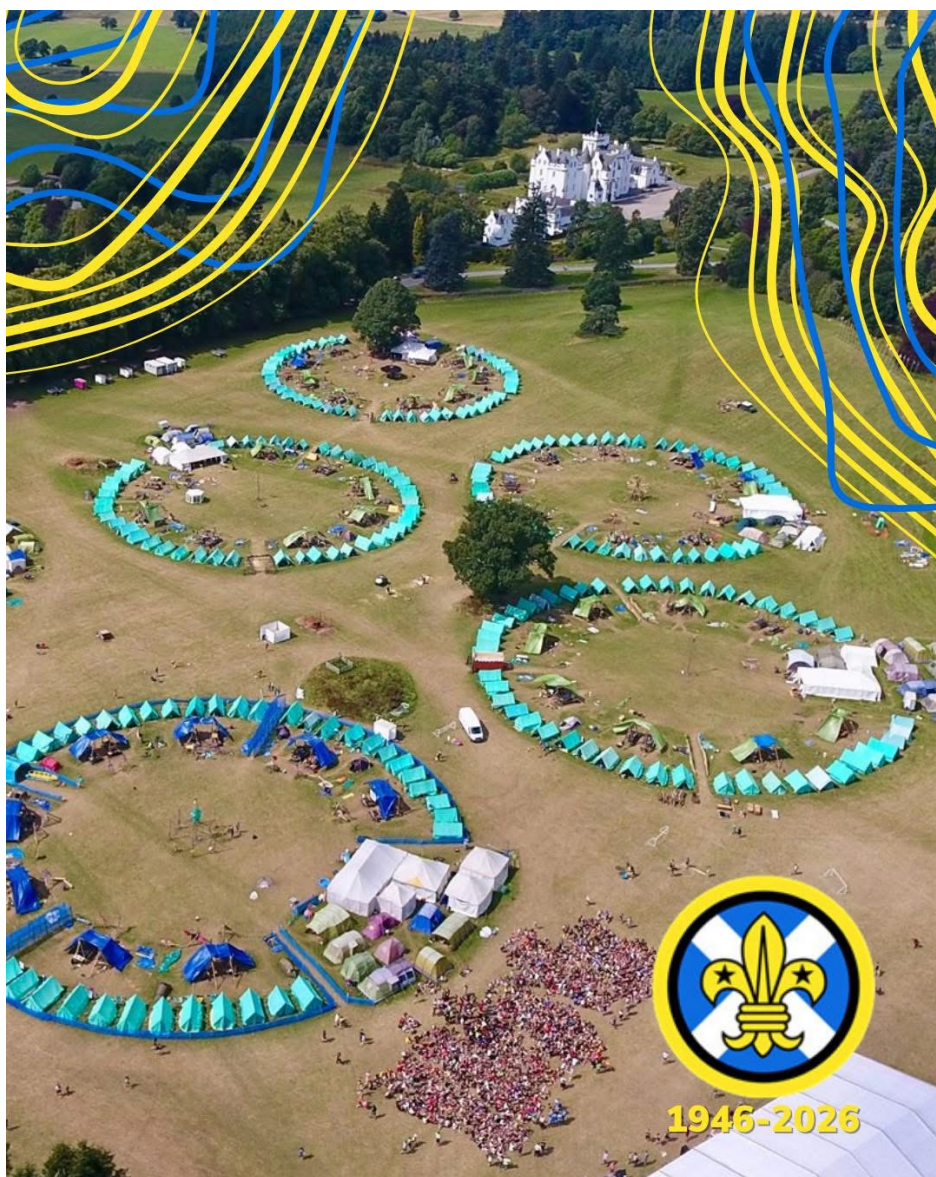
We're harnessing the power of social media to ensure we fill our international contingent allocation for next summer.

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We're asking all our followers to help us spread the word by sharing this post with your friends, family, and Scouting groups. Let's make sure the global Scouting community knows about the incredible opportunity to create lasting memories in 2026!

Please visit

[www.jamborette.org.uk](http://www.jamborette.org.uk) for more information and to register your interest!



## Cathedral Calls

### Westminster Cathedral's Great Cross: Two Sides, One Story

In this new video from Christian Art, Fr Patrick van der Vorst visits Westminster Cathedral to explore one of London's hidden gems: the Great Rood Cross.

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**Suspended 30 feet above the sanctuary, this monumental cross frames the centre of the Cathedral, the mother church of England and Wales and the seat of the Archbishop of Westminster.**

Carved in Bruges to the designs of architect John Francis Bentley, the Great Rood is a striking neo-Byzantine masterpiece. At its centre, Christ is depicted in his final moments, his eyes partially visible. Encircling his head are the Greek letters -meaning victory-a symbol of his triumph over death.

Fr Patrick examines the four symbolic creatures at each corner-a winged lion, a bull, a winged man, and an eagle-representing the Gospel writers. Beneath them, an inscription reveals their names, almost invisible from the pews.

**CHURCH OF IRELAND**  
**The Cathedral Church of Saint Patrick, Armagh**  
*Celebrating the life, faith and witness of*  
**Saint Patrick**  
Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2025  
**7.30pm Vigil Service and Procession of lights**  
*After the short service, the route takes us from St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral to St Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral for closing prayers, followed by refreshments.*  
Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025 – St Patrick's Day  
**10.00am Eucharist (Rite 2) in Irish**  
*Celebrant: The Revd Canon David Hilliard*  
**11.00am Choral Eucharist (Rite 2)**  
*Choir: The Armagh Diocesan Singers*  
*Celebrant: The Dean of Armagh*  
*Preacher: The Very Revd Sarah Rowland Jones,*  
*Dean of St Davids, Wales*

*Clergy, parishioners, and friends are invited to join us in Armagh for these services, held on the site of St Patrick's 'Great Stone Church' of 445AD. Clergy are invited to robe*



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Moving in closer, he reveals the golden finials-pomegranates entwined with palm leaves. The pomegranate, with its many seeds, represents all the faithful of the Church gathered together as one in Christ. The palm leaves recall Palm Sunday, foreshadowing His ultimate triumph over sin and death.

However, the cross holds more than meets the eye. Stepping onto the sanctuary, Fr Patrick uncovers the hidden reverse side, where a powerful image of Our Lady of Sorrows, the Mater Dolorosa, is revealed. A sword pierces her heart, aligning perfectly with the wound in Christ's side. This profound symmetry, shown in a 3D visualisation, symbolises their shared suffering-uniting Mother and Son in the mystery of salvation.

Flanking Mary, two titles appear in Greek: He Theotokos (Mother of God) and He Eleousa (The Chosen One). At the cross's four ends, lines from the Stabat Mater are inscribed:

Stabat Mater Dolorosa (The sorrowful mother stood), Eia Mater Fons Amoris (O Mother, fount of love), Fac ut Ardeat Cor Meum (Make my heart burn in me), and Juxta Crucem Tecum Stare (Beside the cross, let me stand with you).

Fr Patrick explores the significance of Mary's deep purple robe, linking it to ancient Jewish tradition. Purple, a blend of royal blue and sacrificial red, embodies two central themes of faith-praise and sacrifice-encapsulating the entire Christian story.

As Westminster Cathedral darkens for the evening, a single spotlight remains on the cross.

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Fr Patrick invites viewers to take a fresh look at this extraordinary work of sacred art-one. that tells not one, but two intertwined stories of faith, suffering, and victory.

Watch the YouTube video here:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mcm-o3Bga0E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mcm-o3Bga0E)

## Clergy and ministry

### Neurodiversity and Children's Spirituality theme for Cashel+ clergy



**On Shrove Tuesday the Bishop hosted a day in the Newpark Hotel in Kilkenny for the clergy of the Diocese**



## **of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory on the theme of Neurodiversity and Children's Spirituality.**

It was facilitated by Claire O'Neill, an experienced teacher and teacher-educator. Currently undertaking postgraduate research in this area, Claire writes regularly about inclusion, autism, and neurodiversity-informed approaches.

The Bishop also shared input from the Revd Canon Anne Taylor, who for many years served in Rathfarnham in the Diocese of Dublin and is now vicar of St Peter's Church, Formby in Liverpool Diocese. In her parish a number of simple and practical steps have been taken to include the needs of neurodiverse children and adults, as well as having specific events for older people experiencing dementia.



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After lunch the clergy had a meeting with the new diocesan safeguarding officer Mr John O'Sullivan and other staff members from the Diocesan Office.

## Rector of Gilnahirk and canon in Down Cathedral

**After serving as Bishop's Curate for almost three years the Revd Ken McGrath has been appointed Rector of Gilnahirk...**

...and has also accepted Bishop David's invitation to become a canon in Down Cathedral.

## Ministry of hospitality at Knock





**The wonderful catering committee at St Columba's Knock, Belfast, provided a delicious parish lunch for 140 people.**

The parish posted - Thank you to all those who assisted in so many ways and to everyone who attended. There was great fellowship throughout our lunch.

## **Rev Canon Walter Lewis**

**It is with sadness that we record the death of the Rev Canon Walter Lewis who passed away peacefully on Wednesday March 5 in Bohill Nursing Home, Coleraine, aged 79.**



Walter served his entire ministry in Connor Diocese. He was ordained a deacon in 1971 and a priest the following year. He was curate of Whiterock, Belfast, from 1971 to 1973, and St Mark's, Ballysillan, from 1973 to 1982; then Bishop's curate in St Andrew's, Glencairn, from 1982 until 1984.

In 1984, Walter became rector of St Thomas', Belfast, where he served for 27 years until his retirement. He was a Canon of Belfast Cathedral from 1997-2012.

Sympathy is extended to Walter's wife Evelyn, daughter Talitha, and son Christian.

The service will be in Agherton Parish Church, Portstewart, on Saturday at 1.00 pm prior to burial at Portstewart cemetery.

## **Dame Brigid Weir**

**Brigid Weir, a beloved former school principal and recipient of the prestigious Papal Award, has died.**

Brigid, a lifelong educator and dedicated member of the Catholic Church, was widely respected for her leadership of Donacarney Girls National School, where she nurtured generations of students.

Her contributions to education and community life were recognised in 2023 when she was invested as a Dame of St. Sylvester, an honour bestowed by the Pope upon lay people who demonstrate exceptional service to the Church. The award was conferred on Brigid for her work for the Catholic Church and its affairs in the Diocese of Meath.

Tributes have been paid from the community at large, recalling Brigid's warmth, wisdom and dedication.

## **In the media**

**Crowds protest in Dublin calling for Catholic church to allow women to be ordained as priests - Irish Independent**

**“Women see through the Catholic church’s lip service on equality” and their “second-class treatment”, according to an organiser of a Dublin protest calling for**

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## **the ordination of women as priests, Sarah Mac Donald writes, 09/03/2025.**

Soline Humbert, a ‘spiritual director’ who has felt called to the priesthood since she was 17, said the church’s stance on women was one of the main reasons why there had been “a huge exodus” from the pews in Ireland.

The protest took place at the Spire and outside the Pro Cathedral in Dublin at the weekend, with members of Catholic group We Are Church Ireland calling for change in the church’s “patriarchal structures”.

The Catholic church has ruled out ordaining women as priests and, though evidence suggests that women were ordained as deacons in the early church, it has consistently stalled on calls for the female diaconate to be reintroduced.

During the recent two-year global synod gatherings in Rome, female ordination was removed from the discussion by Pope Francis despite being one of the main issues identified by Catholics around the world as an area they would like to see changed.

Speaking to the Irish Independent, Ms Humbert urged the church to look to the example of St Brigid, Ireland’s co-patron saint, who was ordained a bishop in the fifth century.

“The story of St Brigid’s ordination was recorded and persisted through centuries when women were deemed not capable of receiving ordination. I think it is a message which is right for our times.”

She explained that protesters wore green St Brigid cloaks to highlight their message.

“Passers-by were supportive of our protest,” she said.

“Many had walked away from the church because of abuse and misogyny. They see that equality for women is just lip service.”

“The story of St Brigid tells us that the Holy Spirit wants women to be ordained, and it is up to the male bishops to listen to what the Spirit wants and not squash it or ignore it as it has been doing for centuries. The message is loud and clear: the patriarchal church has to go.”

Another protester, Colm Holmes, who is chair of We Are Church International, said he was very disappointed by the global synod’s final report and the removal of the issue of women priests from the discussion while “the can was kicked down the road on women deacons”.

However, he noted that the Irish Synodal Pathway, which is discussing reform in the Irish church and has been ongoing since before the global synod, is once again holding a consultation period among Irish Catholics up to May 31 this year.

“The focus of this process will be a national synthesis which was produced in 2023 from all the consultations here in Ireland. The 17 themes which emerged in the summary focused much more on women and their role in the church including the ordination of women,” Mr Holmes said.

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Whatever emerges would still be referred back to the Irish bishops, who must have “the backbone” to move this issue forward, he added.

## Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

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## Church News Ireland

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](mailto:houstonmckelvey@mac.com)

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## Church News Ireland

[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)

Link in Monday through Saturday from early morning

**Please recommend to your friends**

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