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NEWS
IRELAND

Archbishop's plea to Irish government to help stop mass migration

Rome v Canterbury, at cricket

Zimbabwe's persecuted Anglicans



There are several large Islamic centres around Ireland, including this one in Clonskeagh, Dublin

Islam to become Ireland's second religion by 2043

ISLAM will become Ireland's second religion within the next 30 years because of dramatic population growth and immigration.

Irish Independent - The revelation came as construction work is expected to begin next year on Ireland's largest mosque. The Clongriffin centre, on [Dublin](#)'s northside, will be the largest Islamic religious complex in the State and will also boast a major cultural centre.

[An Bord Pleanála](#) earlier this year granted planning permission for the three-storey complex, which is earmarked for a six-acre site owned by developer Gerry Gannon.

Costing more than €40m, the mosque complex will be able to cater for more than 3,000 people and will feature two minarets, a prayer hall, a cultural centre, offices, bookshop, a library, a mortuary, a creche, a 600-seat events centre, school, a state-of-the-art fitness centre, and apartment blocks.

The entire complex will be 5,573sqm in size and will be able to cater for 600 worshippers for Friday prayers.

Population statistics compiled by the [Central Statistics Office](#) confirmed that Islam is now Ireland's fastest-growing religion and, at its current rate of expansion, it is set to become the second religion in the State after Catholicism by 2043.

In 1991, Islam accounted for just 0.1pc of the Irish population. That soared to 1.1pc – a 10-fold increase – by 2011, when a total of 49,204 Muslims were resident in Ireland.

Census

While there are indications the growth rate has slowed to 70pc between 2002 and 2006, a strong birth rate and immigration are expected to result in

Ireland's Muslim population exceeding 100,000 by 2020.

However, figures are not available for the population breakdown between the Shi'ite and Sunni branches of Islam.

The latest Census figures also revealed that 84pc of the Irish population describe themselves as Catholic, down from 91.6pc in the 1991 census.

The second fastest growing religion in Ireland is Orthodox Christianity, where numbers have doubled in the space of five years, rising to 45,223 in 2011. This is almost entirely down to immigration from the former Soviet bloc states where Orthodox Christianity is dominant.

The Protestant religions accounted for some 5pc of the population, dramatically down on figures from 1900-1920. But the good news for the Church of Ireland is that its overall population in the Republic is increasing by its greatest rate for almost a century with 129,039 Church of Ireland members in April 2011, an increase of 6.4pc in just five years.

The number of Irish people with no religion, atheists and agnostics, increased by 400pc in Ireland between 1991 and 2011 to a total of 277,237. This group included 14,769 primary school-aged children and 14,478 of secondary school age. There were 4,690 children aged under one year who had no religion.

Archbishop calls on Irish government to do more to stop mass emigration



Dublin's Archbishop Diarmuid Martin has called on the Irish government to stop mass emigration from Ireland.

The Archbishop of Dublin has called on the Irish government to take measures to curb emigration as families prepare for Christmas dinner with an 'empty chair' at the table.

Dr Diarmuid Martin has urged the coalition parties to introduce new job creation programmes in an effort to stop the rising tide of emigration.

In a seasonal interview with the Irish Independent newspaper, Dr Martin said Irish society was right to miss its emigrants this Christmas because they should never have had to leave in the first place.

The Archbishop, leader of the largest diocese in the Irish church said: "I feel particularly for those families who will have an empty chair at the kitchen table this year.

"Young emigrants might be enjoying their Christmas in places such as Australia and Canada but their parents will miss them and we should miss them - because they shouldn't have had to emigrate.

"Young people have a right to be angry if we don't invest in them and give them the opportunity to realise themselves with attractive employment opportunities.

“It is not the Government that creates jobs but a Government can create an environment which is job-friendly. However, in the long term it is the private sector that has to generate a lot more jobs.”

Dr Martin believes the Irish government can do more to aid job creation and highlighted apprenticeships as one potential area to get young people into the workforce.

He added: “Many more big firms should be looking at that and trying to see that there are apprenticeships that are available to young people. Most young people want to work.

“Young people who find themselves out of work for a long period of time are the most vulnerable and the most frustrated.

“High youth unemployment isn’t just a problem for Ireland. It is worse in a number of other European countries. In some places up to 50 per cent of young people can’t get jobs.

“The Government here is dealing with a crisis which is partly Irish in its making and partly international in its making. Pretty drastic measures are needed in order to bring about balance in public expenditure.”

The Archbishop also warned the Government that it should always have ‘a special focus on those who are most vulnerable’.

He told the [Independent](#) these included children, the elderly, and people in disadvantaged situations.

UHF adds Church of Ireland records for Co Down

The Ulster Historical Foundation (UHF) has added more than 16,000 Church of Ireland baptismal records to its AncestryIreland pay-to-view database for County Down.

The records were transcribed by Dr Brian Trainor, former Director of PRONI.

Registers for the following churches have been added:

Killinchy 1820-77 (418 records)

Blaris 1661-1720(7709 records)

Magheralin 1783-1870 (6628 records)

Bangor 1803-43 (1050 records)
Ballywalter 1845-75 (125 records)
Ardkeen 1746-1871 (541 records)

The UHF intends to add more Church of Ireland soon. These will be from the parishes of Antrim, Carrickfergus, Comber, Donaghadee, Down, Drumballyroney and Kilmore.

- See more at: <http://irish-genealogy-news.blogspot.co.uk/2013/12/uhf-adds-church-of-ireland-records-for.html#sthash.wZnooLNB.dpuf>

Police officers make generous donations to Churches together programme



Helen Sweeney from the Whiteabbey and Jordanstown Churches Together programme receives the gift boxes from Inspector Alan McKeown.

Local PSNI officers and staff have given their backing to a project organised by the Whiteabbey and Jordanstown Churches Together programme.

Newtownabbey Today - The locally-run initiative, which is aptly called Storehouse, is aimed at helping people in the local community who could benefit from a helping hand.

Officers and staff from Newtownabbey, Ballyclare and Carrickfergus police stations recently prepared two gift boxes consisting of food and toiletry items, which they handed over to Helen Sweeney from the Churches Together programme.

Started in September 2011, Storehouse is supported by Whiteabbey Methodist and Presbyterian Churches and St Patrick's Church of Ireland, Jordanstown. It accepts referrals from the Citizens Advice Bureau, Health Visitors, Northern Ireland Probation Board and the local community who identify suitable candidates to receive the boxes, which are then delivered to them.

Representatives from Whiteabbey and Jordanstown Churches Together will be visiting Newtownabbey police station in January to explain the referrals process to officers and to request that they make referrals to the programme, should they come across someone who is in need and would benefit from a gift box.

Taoiseach on same-sex marriage: 'I wouldn't have the same opinion as the Tánaiste'

The Taoiseach does not share the view of the Tánaiste that same-sex marriage is the “civil rights issue of this generation” ahead of a referendum on the issue which is due to take place in 2015.



TheJournal.ie -
Enda Kenny

stressed that he will support the referendum's passage and campaign for it but said that the single biggest issue for him is “jobs and employment”.

Eamon Gilmore [has previously said](#) that “the right of gay couples to marry is, quite simply, the civil rights issue of this generation and, in my opinion, its time has come” with the [Cabinet agreeing in November to a recommendation](#) from the Constitutional Convention to hold a referendum.

Several Cabinet ministers, including Fine Gael's Leo Varadkar and Alan Shatter, have publicly come out in favour of legalising marriage between same-sex couples.

The Taoiseach's [refusal to state what his position](#) was caused some controversy in the summer of 2012 and though he has now committed to supporting a referendum when it is held he has not specifically outlined his beliefs on the issue.

“I wouldn’t have the same opinion as the Tánaiste, don’t get me wrong on that now, I support it and will canvass for it when it comes,” Kenny said. “But for me, the single biggest issue is our jobs and employment. This is what politics is about, this is about motivating people, about opening doors of opportunity, about sorting out the problems that are there.”

Though it is pencilled in for early 2015, the Taoiseach is less certain, saying that a date is not decided and that the referendum could be part of a series of votes held on one day dealing with recommendations from the Constitutional Convention.

Kenny also acknowledged possible difficulties within his own party on the issue of rights for same-sex couples when asked if he believed a bill parents in a same-sex relationship would be supported by all in the Fine Gael parliamentary party.

“It’s a matter for debate and discussion,” he said. “Obviously the Fine Gael party has a very broad range on any piece of legislation. People are entitled to have their own views of course.” The Taoiseach added that for him “my politics, the big thing, is getting our country back to work. Everything flows from that”.

GB NEWS

Canterbury V Rome - at cricket

The Church of England has agreed to play a cricket match with the newly formed “Vatican cricket club”, with Lord’s cricket ground as the planned venue.

The announcement was made today at a press conference hosted by Archbishop David Moxon, the Archbishop of Canterbury’s representative in Rome.

The match is scheduled to take place in September 2014, probably at the “home of cricket”, although Lord’s has yet to be officially approached.

Known formally as the St Peter’s Cricket Club, the Vatican team members will be made up of priests and seminarians drawn from various colleges in Rome and Vatican offices. Similarly, to ensure a level playing field, the Church of England side will be made up of “ordinands and those associated with theological colleges”, Archbishop Moxon said.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, welcomed the initiative in a telephone call to Archbishop Moxon today.

“He said he was delighted by the idea, is looking forward to seeing the teams playing in England, and he appreciates the partnership, the sense of playfulness, and friendship,” Archbishop Moxon said. Furthermore, he said Archbishop Welby hopes it will “raise money for charity” and joked that he had “forgiven the Australian cricket team”.

The Australian side recently thrashed England in the latest Ashes series in Australia.

Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, formally wrote to Archbishop Welby earlier this month requesting the Anglican leader’s consent for the match.

“We are convinced that the game being played between teams of these, our two sisterly Churches, would evoke much attention and would also be an opportunity to witness our common faith in the Lord through a sport shared so many,” he wrote.

Recalling how his dicastery has been looking for new ways to promote dialogue between the Christian faith and contemporary cultures, he said that he had “discovered” that “one of the gateways to the English-speaking world is through the cricket pitch as the game appeals to millions of people of all faiths and cultures”.

John McCarthy, Australia’s ambassador to the Holy See, who first had the idea of creating the Vatican side, said he was “thrilled” at the “generous response” of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

“We now have a whole new game that is part of the cricketing calendar,” he said. “One of my Christmas wishes has been achieved – seeing this game come about.”

The St Peter’s Cricket Club was formed in October this year under the patronage of the Pontifical Council for Culture. Matches between various teams at the Vatican will be played between March and May, from which a 1st XI side will be formed to play the Church of England.

The newly formed club hopes to play against sides made up of Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs and other faiths in the future.

During the press conference, a match cricket ball was presented to the Church of England as a “symbol of challenge in the spirit of competitiveness and friendship.”

WORLD NEWS



The Diocese of Masvingo's cathedral.

Persecution continues for Zimbabwe's Anglicans

Christians in Zimbabwe are facing a new wave of persecution after excommunicated former bishop Nolbert Kunonga and his supporters refused to surrender church property in the Diocese of [Masvingo](#).

In a letter to fellow Church of the Province of Central Africa (CPCA) bishops and friends, Bishop of Masvingo Godfrey Tawonezvi reported, “Kunonga people are still holding on to two of our church buildings, St. Peter's and St. Luke's Church.”

“What is worrying most is that Kunonga has turned St Peter's Church into his cathedral. This means that Kunonga will be frequenting St. Peter's Church and this gives him an added advantage in destabilizing our diocese,” said the bishop.

The bishop reported that Kunonga even has priests working in different parishes in the diocese. “Some of these priests are refusing to surrender church property such as furniture that belongs to our parishioners in that community,” said Tawonezvi.

“We have failed to get the necessary support we need from the Zimbabwe police over this issue while our efforts to regain St. Luke’s Church are being frustrated by a village headman who is a Kunonga supporter.”

Tawonezvi explained that the headman has continued to mobilize the community to turn against the Anglican Church in the diocese despite the church’s complaint to the area chief about the headman’s conduct.

“This is an ecclesiastical issue which is being politicized by Kunonga and his supporters,” he said.

Correspondence between the Anglican Church in Masvingo, the Republican Police and lawyers indicate growing security concerns and refusal by Kunonga and his supporters to give up church properties. This is evident in a letter sent to Tawonezvi earlier in the year by the area police chief.

“We also continue experiencing problems from Kunonga people at Daramombe Mission. Their aim is to make the mission ungovernable and tarnish our image as the responsible authority, said Tawonezvi.

“We are also experiencing problems from the district education officer who is Kunonga’s supporter. He was once at Daramombe Mission as the school head but we did not have any choice except to get him removed from the mission by the Ministry of Education.”

The district education officer (DEO) has been fabricating stories and dragging the Diocese of Masvingo before the courts, the bishop said. “The DEO and other Kunonga supporters have dragged the bishop and other priests on false allegations so that the diocesan leadership can be imprisoned and embarrassed,” said the bishop.

“We continuously receive threats but we continue to soldier on. The struggle continues in the Diocese of Masvingo as I reported at the provincial synod.”

The church [recently revealed](#) that the legal costs of recovering most of the properties stolen from the province means dioceses in Zimbabwe have combined debts of almost US\$400,000.

Overdue repairs at site of Christ's birth

As visitors descend upon Bethlehem this holiday season, they will notice a different look for the Church of the Nativity. Wrapped in scaffolding, the basilica located at the traditional site of Jesus' birth is undergoing a much-needed facelift after 600 years.

Experts say that water is leaking from the rooftop and threatens to cause serious damage to mosaics and other priceless items. Project manager Afif Tweme said the first stage of the project began in September and is addressing the most pressing issues: the rooftop and windows.

"The water also has a bad effect on the plastering surfaces, on the mosaics, on the floors, on the frescoes..." said Tweme, who works for the "Community Development Group," a Palestinian engineering consulting firm.

... Standing above the grotto where, according to tradition, Jesus was born, the church attracted more than 2 million visitors last year. But the building, with remnants up to 1,500 years old, has been neglected for decades.

Full story here -

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/church-nativity-undergoes-facelift-21188502?singlePage=true>

Prayer for Today

**Shepherd of Israel,
may Jesus, Emmanuel and son of Mary,
be more than just a dream in our hearts.
With the apostles, prophets, and saints,
save us, restore us,
and lead us in the way of grace and peace,
that we may bear your promise into the world.
Amen.**

