



Prince Charles tells religious leaders that urgent action is needed to save the faith in Iraq and elsewhere

Prince Charles warns that Christianity in the Middle East is “under threat like never before”

In a visit to Archbishop’s House, Westminster on Thursday, to meet with Syrian and Iraqi Christians and representatives of those suffering persecution in the Middle East, the Prince of churchnewsireland@gmail.com

Wales said that “Christian communities in the Middle East are being targeted like never before by fanatical Islamist militants intent on dividing communities that had lived together for centuries.

“The impact of all this unmentionable violence and cruelty has had on individual lives is heart breaking,” he said: “Earlier this year I spent time with three remarkable people who had been subject to unimaginable levels of barbaric horror, including a Jesuit priest who had been working in Homs in Syria and a Chaldean Catholic priest from northern Iraq who had been kidnapped by Daesh, threatened daily with beheading but never renounced with faith, but had not renounced his faith nor lost his power of forgiveness. Their heart-rending testimonies are a powerful reminder, if indeed such a reminder is needed, of the terrifying depths to which people will sink, in the name of so-called faith.”

The prince pointed out that that Christians were not the only ones to suffer, and that many of Daesh’s victims were Muslims, and there was also the suffering of the Yezidi, but there was still an urgent need for the world to help the Christians who were threatened with destruction: “Despite what brainwashed militants would have

you believe, Christianity is not a foreign religions. As the atmospheric chapels of Damascus and countless others testify, it has been part of the life of the Middle East for countless centuries.”

He warned that, “According to Aid to the Church in Need, which is a truly remarkable organisation, Christianity is due to disappear from Iraq in 5 years unless emergency help at an international scale. This affects us all.”

Prince Charles has taken a keen interest in the plight of Middle Eastern Christians. Last September he gave a donation to Aid to the Church in Need’s campaign to help the Iraqi and Syrian faithful. He wrote a letter to Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphael Sako, saying he was “heartbroken” by events in Iraq. Again, it was the Prince who approached the charity indirectly through mutual acquaintances. John Pontifex, ACN’s head of press, says the Prince “feels passionately about the decline of Christianity in the Middle East” and that “it means a great deal to him”.

Last December the Prince recorded a video address for the launch of ACN’s Religious Freedom in the World 2014 report.

C of I newspaper's response to Rising and Somme Battles now online

The ongoing project to digitise the historical issues of the *Church of Ireland Gazette* has entered a new and exciting phase, with the successful uploading and indexing of this invaluable resource for the period 1911-1923. It is re-launched as Archive of the Month for January 2016 through the Church of Ireland website.

A generous grant from the National Commemorations Fund, administered by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and secured through the Church of Ireland Historical Centenaries Working Group, has made possible the latest phase of work, with the result that all the editions for the revolutionary period 1912-1922 (with an additional year either side of that) have been scanned and made fully searchable. This means that a total of 155 weekly editions may now be freely viewed and searched online by researchers all over the world, bringing to light this crucial period from a Church of Ireland perspective in general, and

also making it possible to find hitherto hidden events, people and places through the pages.

Written and read by lay and clerical members of the Church of Ireland, the *Gazette* (in print since 1856) provides the longest-running public commentary on the opinions and attitudes of members of the Church of Ireland, and indeed the wider Protestant community on the island. It is thus a recognised resource for understanding the complexities and nuances of this identity, North and South. The project to make it available for research and public interest is a collaborative venture between the RCB Library (which holds the only complete hardcopy set) and the Editor and Board of the *Gazette*, and to date has been funded largely through sponsorship.

At the start of 2016, it is particularly appropriate that the Church of Ireland can now bring to light how it viewed events such as the 1916 Rising and Battle of the Somme, and make another contribution to memory and knowledge for the Decade of Commemorations.

The *Gazette* was originally published and printed by its founder/proprietor Mr James Charles, from his premises at 61 Middle Abbey Street, Dublin.

In the initial stages, it is likely that Charles took a lead role in the editorial style, format and layout of the publication, but there was no official editor as such. From 1871 onwards however, editors were formally appointed all of whom were clergy until at some point between between 1906 and 1918 a layman, Ware W Wells, began to play a prominent role in the paper's editorial work.

Crucially, Wells was in the *Gazette* premises in Abbey Street for the duration of events of Easter week, which gave him a bird's eye view of events unfolding in the area near the General Post Office. As the lead article of the special edition 28 April-5 May noted, he was 'probably at closer quarters with much of the fighting in the capital than any other civilian in Dublin', with 'access to special sources of information' enabling him 'to supply a lengthy and exhaustive analysis of the circumstances of the insurrection'. The edition (publication of which was suspended for a week because of the fighting) thus became an important contemporary source about events in Easter week, and was reprinted and went to wide circulation for a general audience – well beyond the Church of Ireland community.

The *Gazette* office premises in Middle Abbey Street reportedly had a remarkable escape from the fire which devastated the Sackville Street, and it was the last building on its side of the street to be saved from the fire which ‘stopped immediately short of this office’.

For all of these reports, and much more on a wide range of topics, the public is now invited to explore the *Gazette*. The RCB Library, which manages the project, is delighted to acknowledge the support of the Irish Government for this significant contribution to knowledge, and service provider Informa for delivering the exceptionally high-quality search engine, which is available via this link from 1st January 2016:
www.ireland.anglican.org/library/archive

Hope in sight for victims of Columbia’s 50 year long conflict

Christian Aid has hailed a victims reparations deal between the Colombian government and the FARC rebel group as a breakthrough on perhaps the most complex point of the peace talks agenda.

Bolstering the chances of the two sides reaching final agreement next year to end the five-decade old conflict, the deal will give victims of the conflict the right to compensation.

In addition, the deal instigates the setting up of a truth commission and a special unit to search for those who disappeared during the conflict. Special tribunals will be established to try the most serious crimes – war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity – while an amnesty will cover other conflict-related offences.

Christian Aid’s country manager in Colombia, Thomas Mortensen, said today: “The task ahead will be immense, but both sides with this deal have signed up to going the distance.

“We welcome the fact that the rights of victims are at the centre of the peace agreement and we encourage the international community to prioritise the rights and interests of the victims in their support of building peace in Colombia.

“The conflict claimed the lives of some 220,000 people with 15% of the population alive today – some seven million people – victims in one way or another of what took place. At least 5.7 million people were internally displaced, while an estimated half a million women experienced

sexual violence in a conflict-related context over the past 10 years alone

“One major problem regarding sexual violence that will require tackling is the fact that impunity for perpetrators has been rampant. Sexual violence is a terrible crime that leaves the victims marked for life, but the impunity rate is almost 100%.”

Christian Aid and its partners have promoted a negotiated end to the armed conflict for decades. In recent rounds of talks, it supported communities of victims, including women’s groups, in engaging with the Government and FARC to influence the peace process.

With this aspect of the talks now settled, negotiators must now move on to discussing disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, and agree on an adequate mechanism such as a plebiscite to ensure that the public has a chance to legitimise the eventual over-all agreement,.

One major concern of FARC is how to ensure that its demobilised combatants are not killed by paramilitary forces. Ironically, it will have to be the armed forces, their former enemy, which guarantees their safety.

To do so, the armed forces will have to establish a monopoly of the use of force in Colombia. One worrying development, however, is that in some parts of the country there are reports of large groups of armed paramilitaries apparently trying to fill the power vacuum left by the FARC.

Media digest

Joint Christmas Message from the Bishops of Cork

Joint Christmas Message from the Bishops of Cork: The Most Reverend Dr John Buckley and the Right Reverend Dr Paul Colton Christmas 2015 As the season of Christmas approaches, as Bishops of Cork, we pray that God will bless all ... [Continue reading →](#)

<http://churchofirelandcork.com/2015/12/18/joint-christmas-message-from-the-bishops-of-cork/>

Catholic Church isn't a force of evil when it comes to schools debate

Irish Examiner

There's also the fact that there is no such thing as **Church of Ireland** baptism or Catholic baptism. You are baptised as a Christian, not as a member of ...

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/columnists/victoria-white/catholic-church-isnt-a-force-of-evil-when-it-comes-to-schools-debate-371942.html>

Don't forget that the 1916 proclamation began 'in the name of God...'

The Irish Catholic

Mary Kenny writes - A century later, secularism is a growing force in **Ireland**, and it is mustering an active ...

The official Catholic **Church** may not have approved of the 1916 rebellion (and ... Tom Clarke, an old Fenian who had quarrelled with the **Church**, ...

<http://www.irishcatholic.ie/article/don%E2%80%99t-forget-1916-proclamation-began-%E2%80%98name-god%E2%80%A6%E2%80%99>

From who ends up cooking to their fave films, the star clerics (The Priests) on having festive fun - Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/life/features/from-who-ends-up-cooking-to-their-fave-films-the-star-clerics-on-having-festive-fun-34294298.html>

Paramilitary disbandment strategy panel unveiled - BBC News

A panel is appointed to develop proposals for a strategy to disband Northern Ireland paramilitary groups.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-35121859>

How IRA turned south Armagh into a fuel complex - Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/how-ira-turned-south-armagh-into-a-fuel-complex-34296873.html>

churchnewsireland@gmail.com

Arlene Foster a 'breath of fresh air' for DUP's leadership says Kyle Paisley - Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/arlene-foster-a-breath-of-fresh-air-for-dups-leadership-says-kyle-paisley-34294374.html>

Arlene Foster: I'd accept no prosecutions if Provos told who put bomb under school bus

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/arlene-foster-id-accept-no-prosecutions-if-provos-told-who-put-bomb-under-school-bus-34297648.html>

Muslim scholar gives evidence in support of Pastor McConnell - News Letter

A Muslim scholar who came to Belfast to give evidence in support of Pastor McConnell has spoken of his “love and concern” for the preacher when he appeared in the witness box today.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/video-pastor-praises-muslim-supporter-1-7119715>

Catholic priest Father Patrick McCafferty, from Crossgar, appeared as a character witness for Mr McConnell - News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/catholic-priest-tells-how-a-doctrinal-dispute-with-pastor-mcconnell-led-to-friendship-1-7120036>

Born in Syria, raised in Belfast: Student tells of hopes and fears - BBC News

A Syrian-born student who grew up in Northern Ireland tells of his worries for his extended family.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-35104164>

Mail/Tel/Exp

Reports on the Prince of Wales' meetings with representatives from faith communities.

Speaking about the future of Christians living in Iraq, the Prince warned UK-based clerics from Orthodox churches from the Middle East that Christians will "disappear" within five years.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3364947/Prince-Charles-fears-Christians-Iraq-disappeared-five-years-without-greatly-increased-emergency-help.html>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/12>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/627687/Prince-Charles-Islamic-State-Christians-Iraq-five-years057151/Christians-could-be-excluded-from-refugee-resettlement-plans-says-Cardinal.html>

Premier/Northern Echo

Coverage of the appointment of the Ven Andrew Tremlett, Canon of Westminster, as the new Dean of Durham. The Bishop of Durham is quoted.

<http://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/New-Dean-swaps-Westminster-for-Durham>

http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/14149663.New_Dean_of_Durham_named_as_Andrew_Tremlett_Canon_of_Westminster/?ref=rss

Guard

A report on the Churches Conservation Trust and attempts to diversify the use of their Church buildings to raise money for their upkeep. The article notes the Church Commissioners who co-sponsor the Trust.

<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/dec/17/kings-lynn-st-nicholas-chapel-christmas-disco-under-gaze-of-angels>

City A.M.

A report on the list of the world's top 20 donors to charity. The Church Commissioners are in 14th place globally and the third highest UK donor.

<http://www.cityam.com/city-ams-world-charity-index-2015-whos-made-list-top-givers>

Mail online

Agency report from Bethlehem on the detrimental effect on tourism, recent violence and protests have had. Palestinian officials say Bethlehem hotels that are usually 80-90 percent full at this time of year but have not reached even half that level this year. The drop is a major concern for a city that lives largely on tourism and where unemployment exceeds 20 percent.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-3365235/Unrest-puts-heavy-damper-Bethlehem-Christmas-festivities.html>

Comment

Independent: The House of Lords should not be punished for opposing tax cuts

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/the-house-of-lords-should-not-be-punished-for-opposing-tax-credits-a6777746.html>

Guardian: It's time for progressives to reclaim the Christmas season and to give it a new force

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/18/its-time-for-progressives-to-reclaim-the-christmas-season-and-to-give-it-a-new-force>

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