



Bishop helps distribute festive cheer in Dromore

Bishop Harold Miller of Down and Dromore joined volunteers in bringing some festive cheer and spirit in the Dromore area this week as he helped local charity Via Wings with its annual Christmas hamper distribution.

The Dare2Care project gives out food to families in need in the area who otherwise wouldn't have a festive feast.

55 homes were being supplied hampers and 17 full Christmas dinners this year by the charity which was founded in November 2009 by a small group of parishioners from Dromore Cathedral.

"We are reaching out to those most in need," explains founder Gail Redmond.

"So many families are struggling at this time of year and can't afford to put food on the table never mind the turkey and the trimmings.

"This year as well as food we are providing oil, coal, electric and Santa deliveries and in total 200 mouths will be fed.

"It is great to have the Bishop's support today and we are delighted he was able to come along to the House of Hope and join in."

Commenting on the festive gesture, Bishop Harold said:

"It has been such a privilege to be part of this today and to see how Gail and her team are

bringing practical help to so many people. They really are embodying the hope and joy that are at the centre of the Christmas story.”

Bishop rejects claim Catholic schools are not diverse



Minister Jan O'Sullivan

The Bishop of Waterford & Lismore has accused the Minister for Education & Skills of attempting to secularise the national school education system and to create a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model of school.

Bishop Phonsie Cullinan also insisted that it is not true that Catholic schools are unreflective of a diverse society.

He was reacting to the announcement by Minister Jan O’Sullivan of plans to remove two of the Rules for National Schools which emphasise the importance of religious instruction. Rule 68 states that “of all parts of the school curriculum, religious instruction is by far the most important” and Rule 69 states that the religion of each child should be ascertained from the parent.

“The minister has claimed that Rule 68 does not speak to ‘the diverse and welcoming nature of our modern school system’,” Bishop Cullinan wrote in a letter to The Irish Catholic. “This is not the case. Go into any parish school and you will see children of all colours, ethnic groups and religions.”

He said the Chief Inspector’s report for 2010-2012 found that 96% of primary schools cultivate “an inclusive, child-centred ethos”.

The bishop said the current national school system in Ireland “is clearly working” and should be credited for producing “highly well-educated young people”. He said the “real issue”, particularly in large centres of population, is oversubscription and “the fact is that there are not enough school places”.

“There is a case for transferring patronage of some schools, so that parents’ rights as the primary educators of their children can be honoured. But in practice this is extremely difficult because of local opposition. Most people simply want their local parish school to remain the same,” Bishop Cullinan said.

In the letter he asks if the Minister for Education is “attempting to develop a one-size-fits-all type of school in the education of young people and thereby promoting a secular philosophy of education?”

Pope Francis to receive European unity prize

Pope Francis was selected to be the 2016 recipient of Germany’s Charlemagne Prize for his commitment in promoting European unity.

The announcement was made in Aachen, Germany by the prize’s executive committee. Citing his address to the European Parliament in 2014, the committee commended the Pope’s message of “peace and understanding” as well



as “compassion, tolerance, solidarity and the integrity of creation throughout his pontificate.”

“In a time when the European Union is facing the greatest challenge of the 21st century, it is the Pope ‘from the end of the world’ who orients millions of Europeans to what the European Union brings together at its core: a valid system of values, respect for human dignity and civil liberties, the uniqueness of human beings whatever their ethnic, religious or cultural background and respect for our natural resources,” the committee’s statement said.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, told journalists shortly after the announcement that the Pope accepted the award

as “a sign of encouragement for peace in Europe and the world.”

The Charlemagne Prize, named after the first Holy Roman Emperor, is “given to public figures or bodies ‘distinguished by their outstanding work toward European unity or cooperation between its states.’”

Pope Francis is the second pontiff to receive the prestigious award following St John Paul II, who received an “extraordinary” version of the prize in 2004. Past recipients include former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, American diplomat Henry Kissinger, and former US President Bill Clinton.

“It is interesting the fact that the first non-European pope of this era receives a great European award, which means that he is a person who is able to understand Europe’s role in the history of making peace in today’s world from a global perspective,” Fr Lombardi said.

The Vatican spokesman also confirmed that Pope Francis will not be traveling to Germany next year to receive the award, but will be

presented with the Charlemagne Prize by a delegation in Rome.

Church leaders Christmas sermons

Bishop Colton in St Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork

As a family, in October, we went to London for one of the Irish matches in the rugby world cup. We stayed in a small hotel behind the National Gallery; the *19th* Century facade forms one of the famous sides of Trafalgar Square. I wandered in to look at the paintings. In fact our hotel was directly behind the 20th century, post-modern style Sainsbury Wing of the gallery; the hotel entrance was just beside one of the large delivery doorways to that temple of art.

In that doorway, all weekend, were living nine young people. London passed them by on that busy little street. They were there when we arrived. The next morning, as I went to buy a newspaper, they were kicking ball on the street.

As we came and went from our hotel, I could see them sitting in that gallery doorway, chatting and

laughing. Some slept. At night all settled down under cardboard and blankets for the night.

Throughout our four days they were never not there. The world passed them by. We passed them by. I passed them by. What was I, a fleeting visitor to that place, to do in the face of such an undoubted tangle of complex human needs?

More at -

<http://churchofirelandcork.com/>

Archbishop Michael Jackson's Christmas Day Sermon

In his sermon the Archbishop focused on the big questions of incarnation. Christmas offers the opportunity to reflect on these questions: good and evil, of life and death, of suffering and flourishing, he said. These questions, posed at Christmas, are not designed to put us off but rather to give us fresh assurance that God is with us.

But Dr Jackson said that 2015 is different. "These big questions hit us at a time when we are now rather frightened and confused by the world itself

as we live in it and as we have made it through politics, through armaments, through heartlessness, through disengagement, through neglect of The Other and through lifestyle choices of consumerism over against community; and through the almost supine absence of engagement around a fresh expression of The Common Good in our own place and in our own time. Most of all incarnation is about justice...

More at -

<http://dublin.anglican.org/news/2015/12/Archbishop-Michael-Jacksons-Christmas-Day-Sermon>

Archbishop Eamon Martin's Christmas 2015 Homily for Midnight Mass in Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh

Twelve days ago I had the joy of opening two 'Holy Doors' for the Jubilee Year of Mercy in the Archdiocese of Armagh – one at Saint Peter's Church in Drogheda, the other, here, at Saint Patrick's Cathedral. It is my prayer tonight that during this Holy Year you, and your families, will have a profound personal experience of God's love and mercy in your lives. Pope Francis has described the Holy Year of Mercy as an 'extraordinary moment of grace and spiritual

renewal'. That is why, this year, I am wishing you all a “Mercy” Christmas.

More at -

<http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2015/12/25/archbishop-eamon-martins-christmas-2015-homily-for-midnight-mass-in-saint-patricks-cathedral-armagh/>

The Archbishop of Canterbury's Christmas Sermon

At a Carol service last week I met Mary Berry. She was a delight, and it was a privilege to meet her. The conversation was going so well – I can bluff even when it comes to Bake Off – until the person next to me spoiled it ever so slightly by saying “Justin has never watched a single complete episode of Bake Off.”

More at

<http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2015/12/the-archbishop-of-canterburys-christmas-sermon.aspx>

Massacre of the innocents: Isil are today's King Herods say Archbishops - Daily Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/12068614/Massacre-of-the-innocents-Isil-are-todays-King-Herods-say-Archbishops.html>

Archbishop Welby calls Isis modern-day King Herod who massacred innocents - IBT

http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/archbishop-calls-isis-modern-day-king-herod-who-massacred-innocents-1534893?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=ibtimesuk

Pope condemns consumerism in Christmas homily - Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/pope-condemns-consumerism-in-christmas-homily-1.2477419>

Society is 'intoxicated by consumerism' - the pope gives his Christmas message - Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/society-is-intoxicated-by-consumerism-the-pope-gives-his-christmas-message-34314029.html>

Eamonn McCann: Mother Teresa not such a good role model - Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/eamonn-mccann-mother-teresa-not-such-a-good-role-model-1.2476467>