



## Young Dubliners to sing for Pope on New Year's Day

Twenty-five singers from Piccolo Lasso, the junior choir of the Dublin Choral Foundation, with their director Dr Ite O'Donovan, are travelling to Rome today to participate in the 40th International Congress of Pueri Cantores.

Dr Ite O'Donovan is the Irish National President of Pueri Cantores.

As part of the Pueri Cantores congress programme, the Piccolo Lasso singers will be among 3,000 singers from all over the world who will meet Pope Francis in a private audience on Thursday, 31 December in the Paul VI Audience Hall.

On New Year's Day the combined choirs of Pueri Cantores will unite with the Sistine Choir in singing the Mass for New Year's Day in St Peter's Basilica at 10am.

In addition to the Congress events, Piccolo Lasso will sing the Vigil Mass at the Dominican Church of San Clemente on Saturday 2 January at 6.30pm.

On Sunday 3 January Piccolo Lasso will sing at the 11am Mass in the Church of Ss Trinità dei Pellegrino, near the Ponte Sisto.

Piccolo Lasso and the senior choir, The Lassus Scholars, have sung on many occasions in St Peter's Basilica.

On 1 January 2011, two boys from Piccolo Lasso – cousins Mark Keegan and Conor Gleeson – presented the gifts at the Offertory to Pope Benedict in their distinctive burgundy robes.

Choir director Ite O'Donovan and singer Katie Conway were also introduced to the Pontiff.

Piccolo Lasso caters for boys and girls aged eight to fifteen.

Piccolo Lasso has represented Ireland at the International Congresses of Pueri Cantores held in various European cities since 1998.

In recent years they have performed in Rome (December 2010), Florence (October 2012) and Paris (July 2014).

The choir sang in Westminster Cathedral, London in October 2008 and 2009 and in February 2011.

Another visit to Westminster Cathedral is planned during 2015 and for Rome at the end of December 2015.

Piccolo Lasso has broadcast frequently on Television and Radio. Members have participated in many Opera Ireland productions including the

company's final production of 'Tosca' in November 2010.

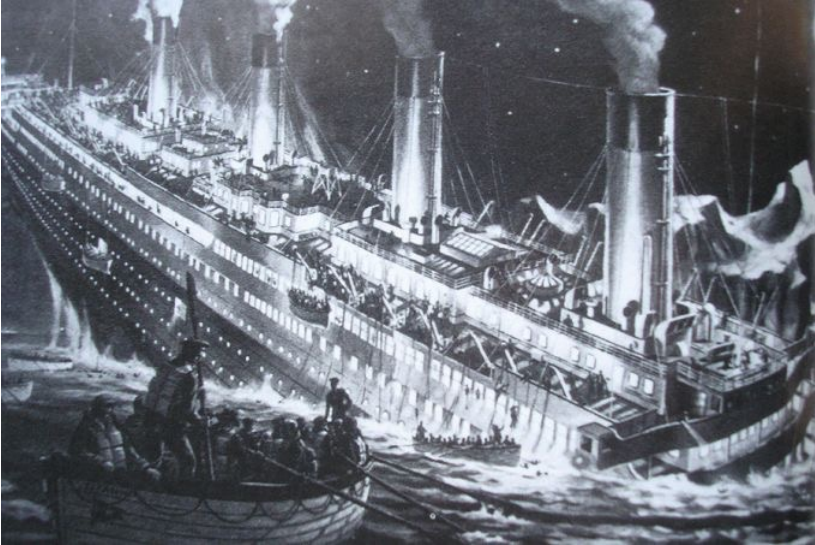
## **Priest who died on the Titanic could be on path to sainthood**

When the Titanic began to sink on April 15, 1912, Father Thomas Byles had two opportunities to board a lifeboat.

But he forewent those opportunities, according to passengers aboard the sinking ocean liner, in order to hear confessions and offer consolation and prayers with those who were trapped aboard.

Now, a priest at the former church of Fr. Byles in England is asking that his beatification cause be opened.

Some 1,500 people died when the Titanic hit an iceberg and sank in the Atlantic Ocean in 1912. Believed at the time to be "unsinkable," the ship lacked adequate lifeboats for all the passengers on its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York City.



Fr. Byles was traveling on the Titanic to preside at his brother's wedding in New York. The 42-year-old British priest had been ordained in Rome 10 years prior and had served as a parish priest at Saint Helen's Church in Essex since 1905.

Miss Agnes McCoy, a third class passenger and survivor of the Titanic, said Fr. Byles had been on the ship, hearing confessions, praying with passengers and giving his blessing as the vessel sank.

McCoy's testimony, and that of other passengers onboard, has been collected at [www.fatherbyles.com](http://www.fatherbyles.com).

Helen Mary Mocklare, another third class passenger, offered more details about the final hours of the priest's life.

“When the crash came we were thrown from our berths ... We saw before us, coming down the passageway, with his hand uplifted, Father Byles,” she recalled. “We knew him because he had visited us several times on board and celebrated Mass for us that very morning.”

“Be calm, my good people,' he said, and then he went about the steerage giving absolution and blessings...”

Mocklare continued: “A few around us became very excited and then it was that the priest again raised his hand and instantly they were calm once more. The passengers were immediately impressed by the absolute self-control of the priest.”

She recounted that a sailor “warned the priest of his danger and begged him to board a boat.” Although the sailor was anxious to help him, the priest twice refused to leave.

## **Heavy criticism of Irish government on homelessness and poverty by bishop**

The Bishop of Cloyne, Dr William Crean, has criticised the Government's treatment of the poor, describing homelessness as a scandal and last month's budget an insult to the poor.

In his festive message, Bishop Crean said that Ireland "cannot claim to be a progressive society if we choose to leave so many in poverty".

"The level of homelessness being experienced by so many families is a scandal that cries out for an urgent and immediate response. For many Irish families the recession is certainly not over. Many of the increases in the Budget for 2016 are paltry and an insult to the poorest among us," the Bishop of Cloyne said.

Dr Crean, who is Chairman of Trócaire, the overseas aid agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland, also pleaded for generosity and compassion to victims of the conflict in the Middle East, despite the migrant issue taking "a different twist" since the attacks in Paris.



***Bishop William Crean of Cloyne.***

“All has changed utterly in 2015,” he said. “Our common humanity begs us to respond with generosity and compassion despite these horrific events.”

In his message, distributed and read out at all Masses in the diocese of Cloyne over Christmas period, Bishop Crean said “the scale of the migration left many people anxious and fearful”.

Bishop Crean, who has previously described the death of Syrian migrants as similar to the death of Irish migrants on board “Coffin Ships” during



the Great Irish Famine of the 1840s said, “While the diversity of culture and belief can bring its richness, equally it can be the source of tension and even conflict.”

He added, “Still, in faith, following the example of Jesus, we trust that what at first seems like a burden, in time will bring great blessing. We need to be generous in the face of great hardship and, in time, our goodness will be rewarded.”

## **News links to reports on faith, politics and education**

### **Irish aid reaches 40,000 people fleeing Syrian war**

Irish independent

<http://www.independent.ie/world-news/middle-east/irish-aid-reaches-40000-people-fleeing-syrian-war-34320027.html>

### **Interview with Seamus Mallon**

News Letter

The actions of the IRA have “tarnished the very name of republicanism” and forced some Sinn Fein politicians into lying about their past, one of the leader nationalist politicians of the 20th century has said.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/the-ira-tarnished-the-very-word-republican-seamus-mallon-1-7135477>

## **Liam Clarke: A fearless and formidable man who always kept ahead of the pack**

Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/liam-clarke-a-fearless-and-formidable-man-who-always-kept-ahead-of-the-pack-34316929.html>

## **Rising water claims Galway church**

Irish independent

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/rising-water-claims-galway-church-34320011.html>

## **The A-Z of NI politics in 2015**

BBC News

BBC News NI 's Political Correspondent Gareth Gordon takes a look at a tumultuous year in politics

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-35029416>

## **Concerns after Ulster Unionists 'unceremoniously dumped' from cross-border bodies**

Irish News

<http://www.irishnews.com/news/2015/12/29/news/concerns-after-ulster-unionists-unceremoniously-dumped-from-cross-border-bodies-365902/?param=ds12rif76F>

## **2015 in review: Education in Northern Ireland**

BBC News

While 2015 ended on a positive note for education, it was largely dominated by concerns about resources, as Robbie Meredith reports

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-35154440>

## **Schools violence: Police called out ten times every day**

Belfast Telegraph

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/schools-violence-police-called-out-ten-times-every-day-34319880.html>

## **Minister calls for new laws for unbaptised pupils**

Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/minister-calls-for-new-laws-for-unbaptised-pupils-1.2478028>

## **Taoiseach Enda Kenny has promised a citizens' forum on abortion restrictions if his government is re-elected**

News Letter

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/abortion-forum-pledged-in-republic-government-re-elected-1-7134737>

## **Council of State to test validity of asylum Bill**

Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/council-of-state-to-test-validity-of-asylum-bill-1.2478848>

## **Tories accused of 'tax on marriage' with stamp duty hike**

Daily Telegraph

[churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/personalfinance/tax/12072092/Tories-accused-of-tax-on-marriage-with-stamp-duty-hike.html>

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