



Pope Francis prays after opening the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica Dec. 8, 2015 launching the extraordinary jubilee of mercy.

It's time to rediscover God's mercy, Pope says at Jubilee launch

Pope Francis has officially commenced the Jubilee of Mercy, calling those who pass through the newly-opened Holy Door to

rediscover God's mercy and experience the mystery of his love.

“This Extraordinary Holy Year is itself a gift of grace,” Pope Francis said in his homily for Mass, just before opening the Holy Door in St. Peter’s Basilica.

“To pass through the Holy Door means to rediscover the infinite mercy of the Father who welcomes everyone and goes out personally to encounter each of them. This will be a year in which we grow ever more convinced of God’s mercy.”

Mercy, he said, must be placed before judgement, though “God’s judgement will always be in the light of his mercy.”

“In passing through the Holy Door, then, may we feel that we ourselves are part of this mystery of love,” he said.

“Let us set aside all fear and dread, for these do not befit men and women who are loved. Instead, let us experience the joy of encountering that grace which transforms all things.”

The Dec. 8 opening of the the Jubilee of Mercy, an Extraordinary Holy Year, coincided with the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. The Holy Year will close Nov. 20, 2016 with the Solemnity of Christ the King.

The Jubilee was officially inaugurated by the opening of the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica. Pilgrims who pass through the door -- which is only opened during Jubilee years -- can receive a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions.

Pope Francis presided over the rite of the Holy Door's opening before passing through himself. He was followed by [retired pontiff Benedict XVI, who attended the rite in one of his rare public appearances.](#)

The opening of the door is meant to symbolically illustrate the idea that the Church's faithful are offered an "extraordinary path" toward salvation during the time of jubilee.

Pope Francis in his homily spoke of the Holy Door in connection to the day's Gospel, which recounts the angel Gabriel announcing to Mary she would be the mother of God.

“We carry out this act, so simple yet so highly symbolic, in the light of the word of God which we have just heard,” Pope Francis said.

Pope Francis concluded his homily recalling the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s closing, which is also commemorated Dec. 8. He stressed that the Jubilee of Mercy is a challenge for us to the “openness” inspired by the Council.

The Council was “a genuine encounter between the Church and the men and women of our time,” in which the Holy Spirit “impelled the Church to emerge from the shoals which for years had kept her self-enclosed so as to set out once again, with enthusiasm, on her missionary journey.”

“Wherever there are people, the Church is called to reach out to them and to bring the joy of the Gospel,” the Pope said.

“The Jubilee challenges us to this openness, and demands that we not neglect the spirit which emerged from Vatican II, the spirit of the Samaritan, as Blessed Paul VI expressed it at the conclusion of the Council.”

Millisle's Holocaust link



Methodist minister, The Rev Andrew Kingston at the Holocaust Memorial outside Millisle Primary School.

Before and during the Second World War the village of Millisle in County Down welcomed a number of the children from the Kindertransport, which rescued over 10,000 from certain death in the concentration camps. A 70-acre farm was set up on the edge of Millisle and it became a type of self-sufficient kibbutz. A memorial to the

events of the Holocaust is in the grounds of Millisle Primary School .

Israel and Ireland : Bishop Trevor Williams shares reflections on reconciliation

Bishop Trevor Williams, former leader of the Corrymeela community, will reflect on a visit to Israel, the occupied Palestinian Territory and Gaza at Belfast's Cathedral's final Autumn Talk, today Wednesday December 9.

Bishop Williams, who is chair of Christian Aid Ireland and former Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe, will be talking about what has been learned about reconciliation in Northern Ireland and comparing the situation here with these places where they also have 'peace walls.'

Bishop Williams will show videos from his 2013 trip with Christian Aid and describe some of the work that is being done in Israel, the occupied Palestinian Territory and Gaza.

He said many stories had touched him during this visit. "One of the most difficult was meeting a chicken farmer whose farm had been hit by a



Bishop Trevor Williams.

bomb and completely destroyed,” Bishop Williams said.

“His brother’s attitude was ‘what can we do now, the funders have not come forward yet?’ They were totally dependent on outside funding. This is a real strike on human dignity. The whole situation had eroded their normal human existence and they were totally dependent on others to survive.”

The Bishop will recount stories of Jews and Palestinians working together for human rights for all.

“Israel and Palestine is a much more exaggerated problem than here in Northern Ireland, but the dynamics are similar,” he said.

“Once we become an ‘us and them’ society we are in trouble. Reconciliation is about how you live with difference and how you live well with each other. When one group is over another you destroy the basis of a harmonious community.”

Bishop Williams’ talk begins at 12.45pm in the Cathedral Halls, and will last 45 minutes. Refreshments served at 12.15pm. A suggested donation is £5.

Living in the Light : Dublin Multi Faith Service

The Dioceses of Dublin & Glendalough will officially launch the year of ‘Come & C’ on Saturday December 12 in Castleknock Community College, Dublin. This multi-faith all age service will include music, readings, testimony, creative activities and prayer space

where you can take time out to hear how God wants you to be His light within your community.

The service forms part of a yearlong programme of occasional songs of praise type events. Each service will bear the unique mark of the host community with the service on December 12 reflecting the diverse, multi-cultural and multi-faith environment that can be found in this vibrant and fast-growing part of Dublin. All are welcome to attend the service.

Extending an invitation to everyone, Archbishop Michael Jackson said: “The enthusiasm shown by members of the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough around the Come&C initiative has been wonderful. It has built up during the autumn with a Come&C Day in High School, Dublin, meetings across Rural Deaneries and a presentation by Dr David Tuohy at Diocesan Synods. I am very excited by the service to launch the Year of Come&C on December 12 and wish to encourage all members of the dioceses to come”. A map indicating the location of Castleknock Community College can be found at: <https://www.google.com/maps?ll=53.373418,-6.391249&z=15&t=m&hl=en&gl=US&mapclient=embed&>

Join Irish Methodists on Nepal Fundraising Treks 2016

After the enormous success of the 2014 Methodist Church in Ireland (MCI) Everest Base Camp Fundraising Trek, they are delighted to announce two further fundraising treks to the Himalayas in 2016 in aid of The Surf Project & Kopila Nepal!

They are looking for 20 enthusiastic & willing participants to join them on what will be a fabulous spirit filled adventures in the Beautiful Himalayas!

Everest Base Camp Trek, 30th Sept - 18th Oct 2016.

Participation Fee: €2,250/£1,650.

Includes: International Flights, Internal flights & transportation, Food & Accommodation, Trekking and Support costs, pre-departure training & Information & rental of Down Sleeping Bags, Down Jackets & Duffel Bags.

Fundraising Target: €1500/£1350

The Trek: The Everest region or Sagarmatha as



it's known in Nepal, offers spectacular mountain scenery, and views of 8 of the worlds 14 highest peaks, all of which exceed 8000m. It is a trekker's paradise and a feasible goal for most fit walkers. We will begin our trek through lush green forests before emerging above the clouds to enjoy the panoramic views of one of the natural Wonders of the World!

This trip entails overnight stays and sightseeing in the magical ancient city of Kathmandu and 14 days consecutive trekking in the stunning surroundings of the Himalayas. No previous trekking or hiking experience is required, all that's

needed is a good level of fitness, a sense of adventure and some determination!

Himalayan Trail Trek, 20th - 30th Oct 2016.

Participation Fee: €1650/£1200.

Includes: International Flights, Internal flights & transportation, Food & Accommodation, Trekking and Support costs, pre-departure training & Information & rental of Down Sleeping Bags, Down Jackets & Duffel Bags.

Fundraising Target: €1500/£1350

The Trek: Whether it's the opportunity to trek in the majestic Himalayas, view the breathtaking terraced landscape, immerse yourself in a unique culture, or embrace the warmth and hospitality of the Nepali people, this is one Itinerary that allows you to experience and enjoy all of the above and much, much more!

This short trek in the Annapurna region brings you to one of the best loved vantage points in all Nepal. Poon Hill is famed for its spectacular sun rise and unobstructed 360° views of the Annapurnas, Machupuchre, Nilgiri South and Daulagiri.

We will also have the opportunity to visit Kopila Nepal and see first hand the work that they do and where some of fundraised money will be going towards!

Download Brochures:

[Everest Base Camp Trek, 30th Sept - 18th Oct 2016.](#)

<http://www.irishmethodist.org/sites/default/files/Everest%20Brochure%202016.pdf>

[Himalayan Trail Trek, 20th - 30th Oct 2016.](#)

<http://www.irishmethodist.org/sites/default/files/Himalayan%20Trail%20Trek%20Brochure%202016.pdf>

Lisburn youth Funday, Bunday Sunday raises more than £1,000 for Abaana

The Mettle Youth Group from Lisburn Cathedral held a Funday, Bunday Sunday on November 29 and raised a staggering £1,050.40 for the work of the charity Abaana.

The group already sponsors a young boy who was rescued last year from living rough on the

streets in Kampala, Uganda, and now lives in Abaana's Children's Home.

The young people baked and baked and baked on Saturday evening and Sunday morning and then served buns and cakes to the church family after the morning services.

The money raised will be used to help Abaana to rescue more children in Africa from the streets, fund the provision of fresh water supplies to communities and help with the charity's education programme.

Moderator urges Scots to join him in helping feed Syrian refugee families

The Moderator of the Church of Scotland is asking Scots to join him in helping feed Syrian refugee families this Christmas season through the 'A Place at the Table' campaign.

"Syrian families who have been forced to flee their homes because of armed conflict need all the support we can give them," said Rt Rev Dr Angus Morrison. "And this is something just about every one of us can do to help."

"Join me in contributing to 'A Place at the Table,' and you can help support this crucial work."

To take part in 'A Place at the Table,' simply set an empty place at your dinner table or your work celebration and donate the money which would have been spent on the meal. Even a small donation can make a big difference. A donation of just £20 can feed a Syrian refugee family for a month.

'A Place at the Table' was started in 2013 to support the National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, a Church of Scotland partner church that is feeding, sheltering and supporting refugees and internally displaced people. Since then it has raised more than £80,000, helping feed, shelter and support more than 24,000 families every year.

As well as turning its churches and schools into refugee centres, the Synod is reaching out to those families with food and other necessities, such as rent, fuel and hygiene products. As more and more families flee the conflict, however, the need is overwhelming their local resources.

Since the conflict started in 2011, more than 11.6 million Syrians have had to flee their homes with

7.6 million of them becoming refugees in their own country and 4 million fleeing to Lebanon and other neighbouring countries.

Donations can be sent to World Mission Finance, Church of Scotland, 121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN or [via the Church of Scotland's 'My donate' page](#).

Only 1 in 10 Advent calendars have Christian theme

Just 11% of Advent calendars being opened have a Christian theme, a survey has found.

Research says only one in ten of the treats used to countdown to Christmas day will feature the true meaning of the season.

A huge 89% of calendars will instead feature TV shows, high street bands, pop stars and films.

The study by online home handyman provider Fantastic Services found 38% of people bought their own Advent calendar while 42% got one from their parents.

In November a maker of Christian advent calendars challenged the big UK supermarkets to
churchnewsireland@gmail.com

sell more Advent calendars that are centred around Christmas.

The Meaningful Chocolate company estimates that there are more than one million advent calendars designed with animals on the front for pet lovers, with no reference to Christmas.

It believes the number of advent calendars based on the Christmas story is around 400,000.

David Marshall, the company's founder, commented "Dog lovers are fine as a group of people who love their dogs. I'm a dog lover myself. But Christians really care about children.

"Supermarkets should offer a quality product that reflects some of the meaning of the season, and that will sell.

"There is one UK supermarket that I won't mention that is quite happy to offer pet owners an advent calendar that caters for them but will not offer Christians an Advent calendar that connects with Christmas. That is a real shame."

Media digest

RE needs to be renamed, include non-religious viewpoints and focus less on indoctrination

Belfast Telegraph

The Transferors Representatives' Council (TRC) represents the three main Protestant dominations - the **Church of Ireland**, the Presbyterian Church ...

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/education/re-needs-to-be-renamed-include-nonreligious-viewpoints-and-focus-less-on-indoctrination-34267671.html>

Call to change Northern Ireland school worship system

BBC News

By Robbie Meredith BBC **News** NI Education Correspondent ... was critical of the Northern **Ireland** syllabus, saying that study of world **religions** "is only ...

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35010666>

Academic selection 'reinforces privilege and disadvantage' says report - BBC News

A report into the effects of deprivation on educational achievement recommends the end of academic selection saying it reinforces 'privilege and disadvantage'.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35034595>

Born-again Christians feared ISIS-style terror attack after man walked into church with shotgun ...

Belfast Telegraph

A Dublin congregation thought they were going to be killed in an ISIS-style terrorist attack when a masked man brandishing a sawn-off shotgun ran ...

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/bornagain-christians-feared-isisstyle-terror-attack-after-man-walked-into-church-with-shotgun-shouting-threats-34265353.html>

'Please come back. We forgive you' - Church goers plead for armed raider to return so they can ...

Irish Independent

We forgive him and we would like to see him in **church** again. "Gardaí have ... "We look forward to seeing him in the **church**," he added.

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/please-come-back-we-forgive-you-church-goers-plead-for-armed-raider-to-return-so-they-can-help-him-34267340.html>

Dublin church-goers robbed at gunpoint during service - Irish Times

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/dublin-church-goers-robbed-at-gunpoint-during-service-1.2457133>

Hunt on for gunman who held up church in Dublin - Irish Examiner

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/hunt-on-for-gunman-who-held-up-church-in-dublin-370232.html>

Stormont has not been able to face difficult decisions on abortion - News Letter

Much of the debate surrounding the determination by Mr Justice Horner will quite understandably and rightly focus on the rights and wrongs of terminations in relation to fatal foetal abnormality and victims of sexual violence.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/stormont-has-not-been-able-to-face-difficult-decisions-on-abortion-1-7099926>

Eve Standard: Op-ed by former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams on Just Pray.

<http://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/dr-rowan-williams-too-many-of-us-forget-that-religion-is-about-peace-and-goodwill-a3131356.html>

Mail

UK foodbanks are preparing for increased demand this Christmas as their use across the country is poised to reach record levels, according to The Trussell Trust. It has received almost £750,000 in extra funding from the Big Lottery Fund, but the Trust is concerned that its service will still be under pressure from growing numbers of people on low incomes who will face deciding between eating and heating.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-3350325/Demand-foodbanks-hit-record-levels.html>

Comment on the Butler-Sloss Commission on Religion and Belief in British Public Life

Telegraph: Faith integration is bad enough in Britain: reducing the role of the Church will only make it worse.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/12037784/Faith-integration-is-bad-enough-in-Britain-reducing-the-role-of-the-Church-will-only-make-it-worse.html>

BBC

Caroline Wyatt, the BBC's Religious Affairs correspondent.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/the-reporters-35005026>

Guardian: Education may be the answer.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/07/the-guardian-view-on-religion-in-public-life-education-may-be-the-answer>

Mail: "The multi-cultural hand-wringers sounding the death knell for Britain as a Christian nation."

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-3350396/DAMIAN-THOMPSON-multi-cultural-hand-wringers-sounding-death-knell-Britain-Christian-nation.html>

Times: Don't abandon religion to the extremists.
[http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/
article4634798.ece](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article4634798.ece)

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