

Church News Ireland



Image of the day – Belfast fan vaulting

February 2, 2023

Image of the day

Belfast fan vaulting



Recently two choirs - Cappella Caeciliana from Belfast and New Dublin Voices - gave the first of two joint concerts. The Belfast venue was Saint Malachy's Church

February 2, 2023

Saint Malachy's is, perhaps, best known for its fan vaulted ceiling which is an imitation of the Henry VII Chapel in Westminster Abbey. Sir Charles Brett stated: It is as though a wedding cake has been turned inside out, so creamy, lacy and frothy is the plasterwork.

Saint Malachy's Church is a Catholic Church in Belfast. It is located in Alfred Street, a short distance from Belfast City Hall, though it precedes that building by over 60 years.

The Church was designed by Thomas Jackson of Waterford and it is in the ecclesiastical style of the Tudor period. It is cruciform in shape, 113 feet wide, 52 feet wide and 40 feet high. The original High Altar, Pulpit and Altar Rails were of Irish Oak however they were replaced with marble when the Church was renovated in 1926.

All that remains of the original ornaments is the canopy over the pulpit which has been painted white to match the marble of the present altar furnishings.

The Sanctuary floor is mosaic, the principal colour being blue. At the foot of the Altar is a pelican, a common Christian symbol of sacrifice.

[\[https://saintmalachysparish.com/\]](https://saintmalachysparish.com/)

Following their very successful joint concert in Belfast in January, New Dublin Voices and Cappella Caeciliana present the second half of their collaboration, this time in the historic surroundings of the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin, on Saturday 25th February at 7.00 pm.

People and places



Making music at St Mark's Dundela

Parishioners and the local community were invited to St Mark's Dundela to "Flex your musical muscles tonight with Open Handbells (5.45 pm Hall), Tower Bells (6.30 pm Church) and Open Choir (7.30 pm Hall)." And there was the enticement - " We'll break for MusicaliTea at 7.15 pm!"

The organisers later reported - "A couple of our young musicians had the pleasure of meeting some of the wonderful professional musicians we've been hosting the past few days. They gave them some wonderful advice on

February 2, 2023

learning an instrument - "enjoy it"! Also, for any other young (or not so young) musicians out there, their advice was not to dwell for too long on the tricky bars and become frustrated. Move on and come back to it later. Good advice for us all!



“Timothy Ridout and friends perform the last of their BBC Radio 3 recitals this evening featuring music by Webern, Mozart and Brahms.”

Mental health focus of CIYD Youth Forum

“You are heard by the God who created you” was one of the key messages to young people from across the



Church of Ireland who participated in the CIYD Youth Forum on Saturday (January 28).

The focus of this year's forum, which took place in the City North Hotel, Dublin, was on maintaining positive mental health and the importance of listening, being heard and wisdom. It was organised by CIYD, the forum was facilitated by Susie Mapledoram, Diocesan Youth Officer for the Diocese of Manchester.

The morning started with a time of worship followed by a reflection from the Bishop of Tuam, Limerick and Killaloe, the Rt Revd Michael Burrows. He spoke of the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas) which is marked on February 2. He observed that “two old people who are hanging around in the temple day in day out” – Simeon and Anna – recognised that this was no ordinary



presentation and observed the light that had come into the world. He described Simeon and Anna as representing the faithful people – “decent old souls who keep turning up – you will be them yourself,” he said.

Bishop Burrows explained that the presentation of Christ was a profoundly bitter sweet moment. “It is a celebration of a child’s birth, his presentation to God, the celebration of parenthood and hope. But this old man perceptively reveals that especially for Mary this child will bring trouble, the rising and falling of nations and a sword will pierce your own soul so somehow we are looking forward towards the cross. Simeon is glimpsing that Mary will stand at the foot of the cross of her son. It is terribly bitter sweet. But then life is bitter sweet. The older I get the more I know it. Bitterness and sweetness live together as you go through life. You cannot have light without shadows. Bitter sweetness is part



of what we are and have to cope with and handle. Part of good spiritual mental health is to cope with bitter sweetness because it isn't all easy all the time.

But know that your faith will help you balance the bitterness and the sweetness and that the sweetness will always transcend the bitter but never erode its reality.”

He continued: “Candlemas is a hinge moment – we look back at the crib and forwards towards the cross. It is on the cusp... Life is full of hinge moments. These are crucial tests of our faith and of our mental health. If we can handle the hinge moments well and faithfully, you have a pathway to a certain maturity of approach that will stand you well... It's not always easy but the light is always there”.

This was the second event in a three year programme focussing on the wellbeing of young people. Susie



emphasised that the forum was about hearing the voices of young people and their wellbeing. She encouraged the participants to reflect on the importance of listening and being heard through the lens of Elihu in the Book of Job.

She said bitter sweet moments in life could have a knock on effect on mental health and it was important to take care of mental wellbeing. It was also important to talk about mental health to take away the stigma which can be attached to mental health struggles. Speaking out impacts other young people and Susie said that young people speaking to other young people was very important. Elihu highlighted the importance of being heard and being listened to, she stated.

She also talked about the concept of wisdom which was generally attributed to older people but she said that did not mean that profound wisdom could not come from younger

February 2, 2023

people. “Speak up and tell your truth and your wisdom,” she urged. “The value of being heard and the gift of listening is precious... You are heard by the God who created you. Elihu is young but he is connected to the God he serves so he speaks with wisdom. Wisdom comes at any age because God’s wisdom is in us. So listen and speak up.”

The afternoon session focussed on anxiety and then working groups to begin to develop ideas about how young people can be really heard and some practical responses. Throughout the day young people gave some inspirational insights into their own experiences and encouragement to others.

CIYD’s Youth Forum seeks to bring young people from across the Church together to debate issues affecting all young people, encourage and support youth participation, facilitate change and action, and support young people on their spiritual journey.

News reports

Scottish Episcopal College of Bishops affirm the importance of open debate on Gender Recognition Bill debate

Following recent developments and debate regarding the Gender Recognition Bill, the College of Bishops makes the following statement:

February 2, 2023

“The Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill has been the subject of much public debate and comment in recent weeks. Matters now appear to be destined for settlement in the courts.

"The College is keenly aware that the issue of gender identity directly affects members of our own church. We seek to be a church where everyone, regardless of race, gender or sexual identity, is valued, cared for and listened to. For we are all members of the Body of Christ within which gender is both cherished and transcended.

"The Scottish Episcopal Church encompasses a diversity of viewpoints on this and many issues, and we would want to affirm the importance of open debate, but always within a respectful atmosphere where the most vulnerable feel protected and safe.”

Synodality featured at ecumenical gathering of Church Leaders

Synodality may not be a word that trips easily off the tongue of many Christians.

Nonetheless the Catholic Church's synodal process is proving timely for people of many different traditions. On 26 January this year, Anglican theologian and ecumenist, Rev Prof Nicholas Sagovsky, spoke inspiringly about synodality at the Focolare's annual meeting for Church Leaders from a wide variety of traditions. His topic was: Living as synodal Christians: a fresh approach to Ecumenism.

February 2, 2023

Nicholas Sagovsky's thought-provoking talk was scripturally and historically based. It did not shy away from the challenges all Christians face and put into relief how to be in a place of 'unknowing' is the right place for the 'synodal' Christian. Examples of response to the difficult challenges of synodal living were given by the Brussels-based Catherine Burke and Andreas Amann, the Focolare's delegates for the zone of Western Europe. They told of the light that can be generated through listening and walking, one step at a time, together on the way.

For the first time since the pandemic, about thirty participants met in person - at the Focolare Centre for Unity Welwyn Garden City, - as well as online. Those online included Nicola Brady, the General Secretary of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, joining from Belfast, and Bishop Joseph Toal, Bishop of Motherwell, online from Scotland.

The Catholic Bishops' Conferences of Scotland, Ireland, and England and Wales were represented online and in person, alongside representatives from the Church of England and the Church of Ireland as well as from the Lutheran, United Reformed and Moravian Churches. This ecumenical mix was enriched by the presence of two officers from the Salvation Army.

Bishop Robin Smith, formerly the Bishop of Hertford and a long-standing member of the Focolare's International Secretariat for Ecumenism, guided everyone through the day. Afterwards he said: "Once again the good Lord surprised us by his presence. It truly was a very special time. Nicholas our speaker was superb; and it was evident,

February 2, 2023

both from the moving contributions and in the discussions outside the formal sessions, that everyone was engaged at a very profound level."

Link - [www.focolare.org/en/]

Hands off Africa, Pope tells foreign powers

Pope Francis condemned the “economic colonialism” of Africa and told corporations and foreign powers to “keep their hands off” the continent while visiting the resource-rich Democratic Republic of Congo.

On the first day of an apostolic trip that will also take him to South Sudan, the Pope denounced the centuries-long exploitation of Africa.

“Hands off the Democratic Republic of the Congo! Hands off Africa!” Pope Francis told diplomats and Congolese government authorities in his opening speech in the garden of Kinshasa’s national palace.

“May the world acknowledge the catastrophic things that were done over the centuries to the detriment of the local peoples, and not forget this country and this continent.” He received an enthusiastic welcome on his arrival, with tens of thousands of people lining the main road from the airport into Kinshasa.

Describing Congo’s vast mineral and natural wealth as a “diamond of creation”, the leader of the Catholic Church

February 2, 2023

denounced Africa's exploitation by colonial powers, multinational companies and extraction industries.

“Stop choking Africa – it is not a mine to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered,” said the Argentinian pope.

Edinburgh Ecumenical Service for Peace in Ukraine

The Most Rev Mark Strange, Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church will join other Scottish Church leaders, as well as the Rt Rev Kenneth Nowakowski, Eparchial Bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London, for an Ecumenical Prayer Service for Peace.

The service takes place at St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, on Broughton Street, Edinburgh on Friday 24 February at 7pm, and is held to pray especially for peace in Ukraine.

New board to oversee ‘unprecedented’ Church of England investment in mission and ministry

The membership of a new 12-person board that will oversee around £350 million of grant funding to support the mission and outreach of the Church of England's dioceses and parishes over the coming three years has been announced.

February 2, 2023

The Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB), will distribute and monitor funds made available by the Church Commissioners and the Archbishops' Council to help churches across the country reach more people with the good news of the gospel, prioritising investment in the most deprived communities.

Members of the Board, who are appointed for an initial three year term, will also track the effective delivery and impact of £226 million of existing funded mission projects across the country.

The Board's members, all practising Christians, have been drawn from diverse roles including charity and aid agency work, investment banking, finance, and the NHS.

They bring a wide range of expertise in areas including strategic leadership, planning and change management, grant-making, impact measurement and evaluation, investment appraisal and social investment.

John Spence, Chair of the Board, said: "I am delighted that we have recruited such a talented and diverse group and deeply grateful for the generous gift of their time and expertise.

"They will play a crucial role in ensuring the effective distribution and impact of a grant making programme that is unprecedented in the Church in its size and scope."

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: "We are blessed with a wonderful group of people who are joining

February 2, 2023

the Board at a time when the message of the Christian faith is needed more than ever before.

“Their work to support God’s ministry and mission through the local church will be key in helping the Church of England in our dioceses and parishes share the Good News of Christ with many more thousands of people.”

In the media

Troubles legacy bill will ‘extinguish’ victims’ hopes of justice

Canon Alan Irwin’s father Thomas was shot dead near Omagh in 1986, and his uncle Frederick was murdered near Dungannon in 1979. Both were off-duty UDR members - News Letter feature

The Co Fermanagh clergyman delivers a withering assessment of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill, saying it shows a “blatant disregard” for innocent victims of terrorism and their families, while telling them “their loved one’s life was of no consequence”.

The proposed legislation would provide immunity from prosecution for those accused of Troubles offences, if they cooperate with a new truth recovery body, and would also halt future civil cases and inquests linked to killings during the conflict.



A member of RBP 58, Sixmilecross, Tyrone, and the rector of Colaghty Church of Ireland, Canon Irwin illustrates his criticism with a biblical quotation:

“It is a joy for the just to do justice, but destruction will come to the workers of iniquity.” (Proverbs 21:15).

He says: (There is) “little prospect of joy for the innocent victims of republican or loyalist terrorism, with the current legacy proposals and the amendments currently processing through parliament.

“The greater joy is to the perpetrators who carried out the despicable horrors on these isles. For them, such proposals afford exemption from prosecution for the murderous acts inflicted.

February 2, 2023

“Innocent victims are effectively being told that justice is now unattainable, at least for terrorist atrocities.

“While we acknowledge the prospect that justice may not happen, it is as reprehensible as it is morally and inherently wrong to take away or to extinguish the hope of justice for the innocent.

“It shows a blatant disregard towards them and the impact those terrorist acts had on their lives, and their lived experiences since.

“It is saying to them your loved one’s life was of no consequence, and in the greater scheme of things, a stumbling-block to moving forward.”

Canon Irwin adds: “Yes, we want answers, but equally, justice surely isn’t too much to ask.”

And he asks: “Why must those terrorist acts now, under this proposed legislation, stand without the rule of law that applies to other crimes?”

“If it is only to prop up a flawed Belfast Agreement and those subsequent agreements since, then it is fundamentally wrong.

“Has society lost its moral compass that the desire to pursue justice, and to expose the truth, is no longer applicable to terrorist violence, republican and loyalist?”

Canon Irwin says it is “clear the foundation stones which needed laid in 1998 (the year the Belfast Agreement was

February 2, 2023

signed) were that of accountability, collective and individual, taking responsibility for one's actions, with justice then enacted.

“Then we might have seen acts of repentance, restitution and conciliation, leading to an end of the eulogising and glorification of terrorism.”

He adds: “We can get discouraged, overwhelmed by what is happening around legacy, and may even be lured into accepting what is proposed as the best solution, but any proposal that fails to execute true justice is an affront to any civilised democracy.”

In encouraging perseverance in the quest for justice, Canon Irwin references the biblical ‘parable of the persistent widow’ before the unjust judge (Luke 18: 1-8).

He says: “Her constant plea for justice at first failed to initiate a response, but she continued troubling him until he concedes to her demands, if only to avoid further embarrassment for himself.

“Do not let your cry for justice wane, don't lose heart; pray continuously, for God is attentive to your cries for truth and justice.

“Remember the words of the preacher: ‘For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.’ (Ecclesiastes 12:14).

February 2, 2023

“Let no-one extinguish that light of hope that true justice will prevail; we owe it to those who give so much in the pursuit of peace.”

Canon Irwin refers to a phrase chosen by Anne Graham, sister of murdered law lecturer and politician Edgar Graham, for her brother’s memorial plaque at Stormont – “keep alive the light of justice”.

Canon Irwin concludes: “Apt words: for without justice, evil thrives.”

News Letter January 30, 2023

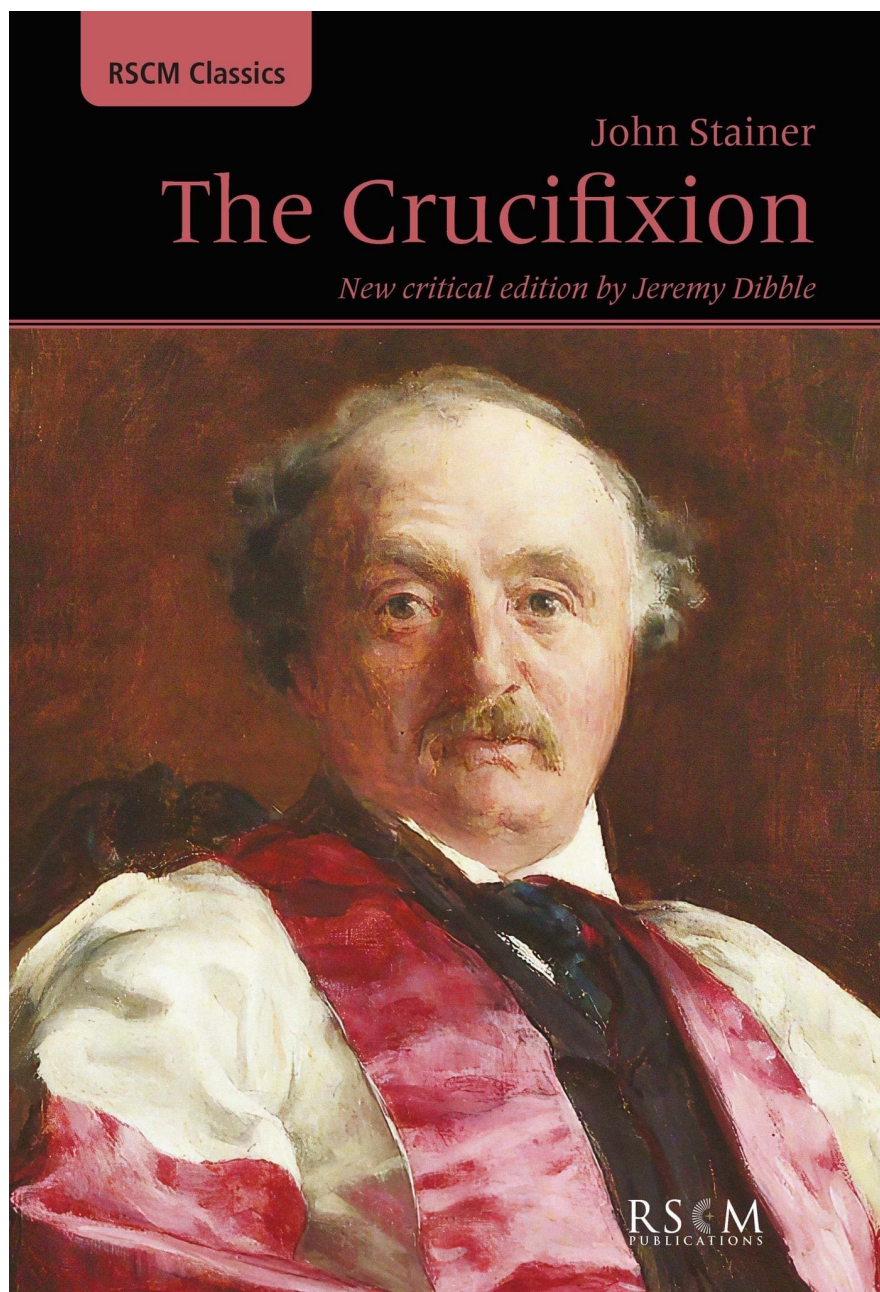
Research shows two-thirds of people in Republic have no friends in north

Irish News - Only a quarter of people living in the north had travelled across the border in the last five years and more than one third had not taken an overnight trip

Webinars, music, resources, broadcasts, and books

RSCM New edition of Stainer’s The Crucifixion

The Royal School of Church Music announces the publication of a new Critical Edition of Sir John Stainer’s The



Crucifixion, edited by the leading Stainer expert, Professor Jeremy Dibble, using Stainer's original manuscript, recently given to the Durham University Library. This handsome new edition has comprehensive introductory, editorial and performance notes, uses state-of-the art music engraving, and includes facsimile pages

from Stainer's original autograph manuscript. The new edition is compatible, page for page, with existing editions, so can be used where others will be using other editions.

Available direct from the RSCM's webshop at £6.95

<https://www.rscmshop.com/books/9780854023363/stainer-the-crucifixion--new-critical-edition>



Join in a Celebration of Byrd at Chelmsford Cathedral in May

Book now for a superb weekend of choral and organ music, plus the opportunity to explore historical places where composer William Byrd spent much of his life.

12-14 May 2023. See events at -

www.cathedralmusictrust.org.uk/

Poem for today

Mirror in February by Thomas Kinsella

The day dawns, with scent of must and rain,
Of opened soil, dark trees, dry bedroom air.
Under the fading lamp, half dressed -- my brain
Idling on some compulsive fantasy --
I towel my shaven jaw and stop, and stare,
Riveted by a dark exhausted eye,
A dry downturning mouth.
It seems again that it is time to learn,
In this untiring, crumbling place of growth
To which, for the time being, I return.
Now plainly in the mirror of my soul
I read that I have looked my last on youth
And little more; for they are not made whole
That reach the age of Christ.

Below my window the wakening trees,
Hacked clean for better bearing, stand defaced
Suffering their brute necessities;
And how should the flesh not quail, that span for span
Is mutilated more? In slow distaste
I fold my towel with what grace I can,
Not young, and not renewable, but man.

February 2, 2023

Speaking to the soul

Short reading and a prayer - daily on this site

Church News Ireland

The publication of Church News Ireland is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD. He may be contacted at houstonmckelvey@mac.com