

**CNI**  
CHURCH  
NEWS  
IRELAND

**February 28**

**Irish news and Pope Francis'  
letter to families**

**CHURCH'S  
TEACHING ON  
MARRIAGE AND  
FAMILIES  
DISCONNECTED  
FROM REAL LIFE**

The Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin addressed a group of priests this evening having received the results of questionnaire distributed in his diocese.



The questionnaire, distributed by Pope Francis to bishops ahead of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, addresses topics such as family planning, pre-marital cohabitation, and same-sex relationships.

“The general response was that the teaching on marriage and the family is poorly understood and that it was poorly accepted and disconnected from real life experience of families – and not by just younger people,” he told a meeting of priests and parish councils this evening.

<http://www.thejournal.ie/acchbishop-diarmuid-martin-survey-church-papal-synod-1337112-Feb2014/>

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/marriage-teaching-disconnected-say-dublin-catholics-1.1707564>



## **BUSY PERIOD FOR DERRY PRESBYTERY**

**A visit by the Moderator, training day and a concert are all part of the busy Spring season ahead for the Derry and Donegal Presbytery.**

Londonderry Sentinel - The Mission in Ireland evening is being held on Sunday, March 2, at 7pm in Kilfennan Presbyterian Church.

The speakers are John Woodside, Minister of Drogheda Presbyterian Church and Michael Sentence, a member of International Meeting Point, Belfast. There shall also be a little local flavour as Rev. Nigel Craig, Chaplain to Magee College will talk about recent outreach on the city side of Londonderry, out of the former Strand Church building.

On Saturday, March 29, in Letterkenny Presbyterian Church a Christian Aid Supporters Conference will held from 10.30am to 1pm.

The Moderator of the General Assembly, Rev Dr Rob Craig is to report on his recent visit to Rwanda and Burundi. There are also to be updates on work in the Philippines after typhoon Haiyan and a film presentation of Christian Aid work abroad.

A Taking Care training day for Designated Persons, they are the people in each Congregation responsible for Child Protection, is being held in Strabane Presbyterian Church on Thursday, 20th March. Another training day for Ministers, the majority of whose Church members live in Co. Donegal is to take place in Letterkenny Presbyterian Church in Tuesday, 1st April from 10.15am to 12.30pm.

Houston McKelvey Today, 9:42 am

Meanwhile, Strabane Presbyterian Church is hosting renowned hymn-writer, Graham Kendrick at a Concert on Saturday, March 22, at 7.30pm. Admission is £10 per person.



## **PRESIDENT PRAISES WORK OF ST VINCENT DE PAUL**

President [Michael D Higgins](#) has lavished praise on the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society in [Ireland](#) over the past 170 years.

Irish Times - He was speaking at the opening of a new Ozanam centre in [Cavan](#) town this week, named after Frédéric Ozanam who in 1833, as a 20 year old student, founded the St Vincent de Paul Society in [France](#).

“As a lay Christian with a passionate concern for social justice, a questioner of the status quo in church and state, and a defender of the civil rights of the poor and dispossessed, Frédéric Ozanam is indeed a figure who remains a powerful source of challenge and inspiration for both the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Ireland of today. His vision was one of uncompromising commitment to social justice,” the President said.

“It is my profound conviction that the ethics of friendship and the building of caring local communities which the St Vincent de Paul Society nurtures are key” to Ireland’s shared future, he said.

He also fully agreed with Vincent de Paul national vice-president Prof [John Monaghan](#), “who suggested that Irish people must move beyond anger and recrimination, and set about the task of building an alternative future. Here is what he said: ‘We do not want to look back on this period as one when the seeds of future social inequities were sown, but one in which the values necessary for a socially just, fair and caring nation emerged.’”

The Society’s practices were, in the President’s view, “an enactment of the values of solidarity and fraternity in the deepest sense.” The St Vincent de Paul Society has been in Ireland since 1844 when it became very active during the Great Famine. Today it has 9,500 volunteers in over 1,000 Conferences across the State.



#### **ST PATRICK'S DAY SPEAKER AT DOWN**

**The speaker at Down Cathedral on St Patrick’s Day is Alain Emerson from Emmanuel Church Lurgan and 24–7 Prayer Ireland.**

Alain is “excited about seeing a ‘new thing’ happening in the nation of Ireland in these days,” and will focus on Down diocese's theme, ‘Transforming a Nation for Him.’

Alain has lived outside Lurgan on the shores of Lough Neagh for most of his life. He spent a year in South Africa when he left school after which he studied a degree in Management at Queens and then a Masters in Divinity at Union Theological College.

During his time studying his uncle began a house church in Lurgan (Emmanuel) reaching out to a number of broken and vulnerable people. Alain took on a position of leadership with the youth and as the

church has grown his leadership within the church has evolved alongside this. Emmanuel is now in its 18th year and for the last 8 of these has been located on the interface in Lurgan. The church is committed to seeing the reconciling of people to God and one another.

Coupled with this, Alain has been involved in the leadership of 24–7 Prayer in Ireland for the last 7 years.

*“I read the book Red Moon Rising written by Pete Greig (founding champion of 24–7 Prayer) and it wrecked my life, thrusting me into a renewed life of prayer and mission. In recent years we have been committed to serving and inspiring the churches in Ireland to prioritise prayer in the form of prayer rooms and leading national initiatives of prayer as we seek to mobilise a nation to seek God’s face”!*

Alain is husband to Rachel and Dad to Annie and Erin. He enjoys reading, football (the mighty Liverpool) and hanging out with friends.



#### **LEGACY OF THE TROUBLES EXPLORED**

**Professor Brandon Hamber, Director of the University of Ulster’s Institute for Conflict Research, was one of the speakers at a unique and informative conference for clergy in Coalisland this week.**

Professor Hamber, who has an international reputation for conflict transformation work, was speaking on ‘the legacy of the Troubles’ to clergy from Mid Ulster and across Northern Ireland.

The event was organised by a group of local clergy in partnership with the Irish Churches Peace Project which is supported by the European Union’s PEACE III Programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body. Good Relations Departments in Dungannon Borough Council, Magherafelt and Cookstown District Councils also supported the event.

The conference called ‘Go, and do thou likewise’ was exploring the question: ‘how can clergy address the legacy of the Troubles?’ Also speaking at the conference was Professor Peter McBride, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health. Professor McBride was speaking about the impact of the Troubles on clergy themselves, mental health issues and finding peace of mind. Other speakers at the conference included Dr Gladys

Ganiel of the Irish School of Ecumenics, Revd Dr David Clements and Fr Stephen Kearney. Dr Clements and Fr Kearney spoke respectively about their experiences of the Shankill bomb and the reprisal killings at Greysteel.

The conference was hosted by Revd Andrew Rawding and Fr Paul Byrne. In a joint statement, they explained, "If you take a walk through our parish in Coalisland, County Tyrone, you will see multiple signs of 'the legacy of the Troubles ... which trigger fear, painful memories and a sense of injustice every day for many of our parishioners. As clergy living and ministering in the town, we are faced with the challenge of addressing the impact of these visible and invisible wounds."

This is the first event held by the Irish Churches Peace Project (ICPP) in the Coalisland and Dungannon area and it is hoped that it will be a springboard to other initiatives supporting clergy, churches and the wider community to work together to address this challenging and sensitive issue.

ICPP is an initiative of the Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodist Churches, and the Irish Council of Churches, set up to promote reconciliation in our communities through churches working together



#### **BELFAST TEENS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**Fourteen young people from opposite sides of the peace line in Belfast are settling back into home life after a two-week trip of a lifetime to South Africa.**

News Letter - Paul McCusker, a leader with the Belfast2blanco project which saw the teens visit a very deprived township to help out within the local community, said their experiences have inspired them to make positive changes to their lives back on the Shankill and Ardoyne.

"It was a tough experience, very worthwhile, but hard too because people in the area are living in extreme poverty," he said.

After cleaning up the streets, replacing broken windows, helping with the food run, visiting and helping in the nursing homes, organising a fun day for the local children and visiting the sick, the group now intends to continue meeting each week and discussing good things they can do for their local communities at home.

Check out more of the group's videos here on YouTube and visit [www.belfast2blanco.com](http://www.belfast2blanco.com) for more information.



## **NEW POST FOR CHURCH ARMY EVANGELIST**

**Bishop Harold Miller has introduced Captain Colin Taylor as Evangelist in Charge in the Parish of Dromara and Garvaghy in the Diocese of Dromore.**

The service took place in St John's Church, Dromara, and the preacher was Revd Canon Kathleen Brown MBE, a former rector of St Paul and St Barnabas, Belfast.

Colin is in his thirty–eighth year of ministry as a Church Army Evangelist and is married to Eleanor a former teacher. He began work as a 19 year old with the Church Army in residential hostels in Manchester and London before entering Church Army College which at that time was in Blackheath, south west London.

On commissioning Colin first worked as an assistant missionary in the Blackburn Diocese and then after a year moved to work in the Diocese of Down and Dromore as an itinerant evangelist undertaking missions, work in schools and work amongst teenagers.

Colin worked in a variety of parishes and in 1983 he and Eleanor moved to Comber Parish where he was part–time parish evangelist alongside an on–going role in the Diocese. In 1986 Colin and Eleanor moved to the parish of St Clement, Belfast, where he undertook a similar role.

From 1990 onwards Colin studied for a Youth and Community work degree in Jordanstown. From 1994 he was Youth Worker in Charge in the Bangor YMCA and later worked in the City of Belfast YMCA in a variety of roles, eventually becoming Youth and Community Director.

In 2006 Colin took on the role of Evangelism Resource Officer for the Church Army in Ireland and Scotland. The role involved the pastoral care, support and management of Church Army Evangelists and engagement with the wider church on Evangelism and Fresh Expressions of Church.

After this post was made redundant in 2013, Colin has engaged in a “patchwork” of ministry as Diocesan Curate in Down and Dromore, along with

preaching, teaching, providing pastoral care in vacant parishes and delivering youth work and other training in a number of churches.

Over the last period he has felt the call to parish ministry and is delighted that the Bishop of Down and Dromore has given this opportunity to minister in the parishes of Dromara and Garvaghy.

He says: "It seems to be very much the 'right' place to go and while many people ask 'and just where is Dromara?' we will no doubt get used to the village very quickly. Moving to the country is a big challenge for a 'city boy' but there are so many opportunities.

"Although we are sad to leave St Clement's, our parish family of 28 years, God is very much in this and it is a 'Here am I Lord, send me' moment for both myself and Eleanor."



## **POPE FRANCIS' LETTER TO FAMILIES**

**This week the Pope issued the following letter to families -**

*Dear families,*

With this letter, I wish, as it were, to come into your homes to speak about an event which will take place at the Vatican this coming October. It is the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which is being convened to discuss the theme of "pastoral challenges to the family in the context of evangelization". Indeed, in our day the Church is called to proclaim the Gospel by confronting the new and urgent pastoral needs facing the family.

This important meeting will involve all the People of God – bishops, priests, consecrated men and women, and lay faithful of the particular Churches of the entire world – all of whom are actively participating in preparations for the meeting through practical suggestions and the crucial support of prayer. Such support on your part, dear families, is especially significant and more necessary than ever. This Synodal Assembly is dedicated in a special way to you, to your vocation and mission in the Church and in society; to the challenges of marriage, of family life, of the education of children; and the role of the family in the life of the Church. I ask you, therefore, to pray intensely to the Holy Spirit, so that the Spirit may illumine the Synodal Fathers and guide

them in their important task. As you know, this Extraordinary Synodal Assembly will be followed a year later by the Ordinary Assembly, which will also have the family as its theme. In that context, there will also be the World Meeting of Families due to take place in Philadelphia in September 2015. May we all, then, pray together so that through these events the Church will undertake a true journey of discernment and adopt the necessary pastoral means to help families face their present challenges with the light and strength that comes from the Gospel.

I am writing this letter to you on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple. The evangelist Luke tells us that the Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph, in keeping with the Law of Moses, took the Baby Jesus to the temple to offer him to the Lord, and that an elderly man and woman, Simeon and Anna, moved by the Holy Spirit, went to meet them and acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah (cf. *Lk 2:22-38*). Simeon took him in his arms and thanked God that he had finally “seen” salvation. Anna, despite her advanced age, found new vigour and began to speak to everyone about the Baby. It is a beautiful image: two young parents and two elderly people, brought together by Jesus. He is the one who brings together and unites generations! He is the inexhaustible font of that love which overcomes every occasion of self-absorption, solitude, and sadness. In your journey as a family, you share so many beautiful moments: meals, rest, housework, leisure, prayer, trips and pilgrimages, and times of mutual support... Nevertheless, if there is no love then there is no joy, and authentic love comes to us from Jesus. He offers us his word, which illuminates our path; he gives us the Bread of life which sustains us on our journey.

Dear families, your prayer for the Synod of Bishops will be a precious treasure which enriches the Church. I thank you, and I ask you to pray also for me, so that I may serve the People of God in truth and in love. May the protection of the Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph always accompany all of you and help you to walk united in love and in caring for one another. I willingly invoke on every family the blessing of the Lord.

*From the Vatican, 2 February 2014 Feast of the Presentation of the Lord*



**TUNED TO GOD'S FREQUENCY**

**'There's a philosophy in news media, 'If it bleeds, it leads','' says Rob Clarke, CEO of Spirit Radio.**

Irish Independent - "We try to do the opposite. Life is enough of a challenge; we see ourselves as having a



role to encourage people to keep going.

"And the good side of life is as true as the bad. We've so much to be grateful for, but that's one of the weird things about human nature: people prefer to gripe. At Spirit, we want to do something different.

Doing something different: that could fairly well sum up Spirit, which just celebrated its third anniversary. The Bray-based operation is Ireland's first Christian radio station, which seems ironic in this traditionally Catholic country. Indeed, we were the last European nation to get a dedicated Christian service.

<http://www.independent.ie/entertainment/music/tuned-to-gods-frequency-30032865.html>



#### **Priest held over €500k theft from his order**

**A priest has been arrested by gardai investigating the theft of more than €500,000 from his religious order.**

**Independent** - It follows a six-month investigation by a team of detectives into complaints of theft, which allegedly took place over a 13-year period.

The cash was allegedly taken from the order by making false claims for Mass stipends.

Under canon law, a priest is entitled to receive one stipend from the diocese or the order from collections made during the celebration of Mass.

Additional stipends cannot be claimed if the priest celebrates multiple Masses on one day.

However, it is alleged that the 59-year-old suspect lodged several claims on a regular basis and received payments from the authorities.

It is alleged that some of the claims were made in the names of other priests, who were unaware they were being implicated in the scheme, while others were sought using fictitious names.

It is also alleged that the money was used to fund a lavish lifestyle, which involved foreign travel, stays in luxury hotels and purchases of expensive items, including jewellery.

The suspect allegedly collected the payments by making regular checks on the post, without arousing the suspicions of other members of his order.

However, the authorities became suspicious last year and after making internal inquiries they lodged a complaint with the gardai.

More at -

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/priest-held-over-500k-theft-from-his-order-30049059.html>