



Pope Francis meets Philomena Lee and Steve Coogan

Philomena Lee, the woman who the Oscar-nominated film, Philomena, is based on met with the Pope Francis today in Rome.

The Journal.ie - Actor Steve Coogan who also stars in the film adaptation of Philomena's story was also in attendance.

Representing the Philomena Project, an organisation that is calling on the Irish government to enact legislation to open up adoption records and reunite mothers separated from their children as a result of forced adoption, Lee said she was honoured to meet the Pope.

Speaking after the event, Lee said she was “delighted to have been in the presence of Pope Francis” today.

She said: I have always put great faith in the Church and the good will to put the wrongs of the past right.

I hope and believe that his Holiness Pope Francis joins me in the fight to help the thousands of mothers and children who need closure on their own stories.

In 1952, when Philomena Lee became pregnant as a teenager in Ireland, she was sent to a ‘Mother and Baby Home’ to be taken care of. When her son was three years old, he was taken away, sold for adoption and sent to America.

Earlier this week, a Vatican spokesperson dismissed reports that said the Pope Francis was going to watch the Philomena movie.

[The Catholic Herald](#) reported the spokesperson stated:

The Holy Father does not see films, and will not be seeing this one. It is also important to avoid using the Pope as part of a marketing strategy.

<http://www.thejournal.ie/pope-francis-steve-coogan-philomena-1301125-Feb2014/>

Pope meets secret files campaigners

Read more:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-26050019>

New Presbyterian Moderator vows to reach out and serve

Incoming Presbyterian Moderator the Rev Dr Michael Barry has pledged that his theme for his Moderatorial year will focus on people and outreach

Billy Kennedy in News Letter - The 63-year-old Newry pastor said yesterday his aim would be to maintain the Presbyterian Church as being “fit for purpose” in all of its witness.

Dr Barry, a Carrickfergus man, was elected Moderator by a narrow one-vote majority over two other ministerial contenders – the Rev Liz Hughes, of



Whitehouse church in north Belfast, and the Rev Ian McNie, of Trinity Church in Ballymoney. The three had earlier tied in a three-way presbytery vote – the first time this has happened in Irish Presbyterian history.

Dr Barry, minister of First Newry (Sandys Street) church for 28 years, will be installed at the opening of the church's General Assembly in June, succeeding present Moderator the Rev Dr Rob Craig.

Describing himself as a traditional conservative evangelical, the Moderator-designate said that as a Reformed Protestant minister he could not, for theological conviction, participate in a Roman Catholic mass. But he has and would take part in civic, community and hospital worship at a local level in the Newry area where he ministers.

“I have enjoyed excellent relations with Roman Catholic priests in Newry and our involvement in the various local events and bodies does not conflict in any way with my Protestant theological standpoint,” said Dr Barry. More at -

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/life/churches/new-presbyterian-moderator-vows-to-reach-out-and-serve-1-5860287>

Presbyterian leader urges politicians to work together

The next Presbyterian Moderator has admitted that he will not attend any service in a chapel organised by Catholic clergy

Alf McCreary in Belfast Telegraph - But Dr Michael Barry said he was always willing to take part in joint services on other occasions.

"For years I have taken part with Roman Catholic clergy on civic occasions and school and other assemblies, and that is not an issue," he said.

Dr Barry, who's been minister of Sandys Street Presbyterian Church since 1985, had a baptism of fire when he took up the post in Newry. On the night of his installation a mortar bomb killed nine police officers in the town, not far from his church.

"I was in at the deep end," he said. "Those were very difficult times, but since then Newry is a different place. There has been much less tension, but the threat of violence remains real and we must do all we can to help produce a lasting peace."

Rev Barry's congregation dropped from 185 families in 1985 to 140, but he said things have improved significantly in Newry since the Good Friday Agreement.

In the wake of the stalled Haass talks on resolving divisive issues in Northern Ireland, he urged politicians to continue to work together. "I stand solidly behind the recent statement from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, which urged the politicians to try to work together to move the situation forward," he said.

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/northern-ireland/presbyterian-leader-urges-our-politicians-to-work-together-29984923.html>

Permanent mission at Warrenpoint Port

2014 has got off to a positive start for seafarers with news that following meetings and consultation The Mission to Seafarers will soon have a permanent presence at Warrenpoint Port.

A significant number of ships use the port and it is felt important that the crews should have access to help and advice, if needed. There will also be a facility to purchase phone top-ups etc. In addition, the formation of a joint approach covering all ports, North and South, remains under discussion and hopefully will be realised during this year.



The Mission to Seafarers
Caring for seafarers around the world

Geoff and Eleanor Launchbury are volunteers with The Mission to Seafarers, indeed Geoff has been involved for almost 30 years. Christmas is a busy time and Eleanor writes below of the ways in which seafarers have been blessed by the mission:



“I wish to thank most sincerely all those who so generously contributed toiletry items which were used in this year’s Christmas parcels for seafarers. The parcels were prepared by volunteers and 220 were distributed in Belfast, Lisahally and Londonderry during the two weeks before Christmas. All were most gratefully received and appreciated.



One captain who came to the Centre was most anxious to convey his thanks for the generosity shown to him and his crew. He told me that when they are at sea for a long time they can feel forgotten and alone, and to receive a gift when they arrive in port, particularly at this time of year, is a wonderful boost to morale.



This year, unusually, there were a number of ships in Belfast Port over the holiday period and this was reflected in the numbers coming to the Centre. We welcomed 227 seafarers between Christmas Eve and New Year’s Day, 25 on Christmas Day and 38 on Boxing Day alone. Geoff and I were there on Boxing Day evening and were glad to have some of our family there to help us. It was a busy evening!

An appeal was launched at the Centre for the Philippines Disaster Fund which raised in excess of £5000 from benefactors and visitors to the Centre during December. The money will be used as required on the ground in consultation with ISWAN (International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network).

The Chaplain, the Revd Colin Hall–Thompson thanks the congregation of St. Columba’s for their help and support and asks that you continue to pray for the success of the new initiatives.”

<http://www.missiontoseafarers.org/>

Cork floods - Bishop Colton's concerns

The Bishop of Cork, the Rt Revd Dr Paul Colton made the following statement:

Since Wednesday evening I have been in on-going contact with people most directly affected by the flooding in Cork City. I am also conscious of the flooding that occurred in other parts of the county last evening – in Clonakilty, Bantry, Youghal, Kinsale and Carrigaline, for example – as well as in the wider region.



Ralph Riegel (Irish Independent), Paul Byrne (TV3) and Eoin English (Irish Examiner) chat and tweet with Bishop Paul Colton and Dean Nigel Dunne. Photo: Michael MacSweeney/Provision

Starting at 8 a.m. On Thursday morning I began a visit to my neighbours in Cork City centre, to call on and speak with business people and traders, many of whom I know personally, or who I know to meet and see.

I was able to see at first hand the damage that the flooding caused. For many this was their third such disastrous event already in 2014

impacting on their businesses.

My heart goes out to all those affected by the floods of recent days, most especially those whose homes have been overrun with flood-waters, including students living near us, and, indeed, one of our own retired clergy and his wife. My sympathy and solidarity is also with those in business who, not least amidst the commercial challenges of the current times, find it hard to take these further setbacks and challenges to their livelihoods.

I have been struck today by the range of emotions I encountered: despair, fear and some tears, but also, resolve and resilience already, great community solidarity, and even good humour and laughter. People were sharing resources with each other, lending a helping hand; and making a

fresh start at 8 a.m. even though many of them had been up most of the night.

On behalf of us all in the Church of Ireland community I send our good wishes to those affected and assure them of our prayers. Prayers and good wishes must be matched also, however, by practical response and support in whatever way any of us can at every level of our community and society, locally and nationally.

It wasn't just a cup of coffee that was the draw for the Bishop of Cork (Dr Paul Colton), the Dean of Cork (the Very Reverend Nigel Dunne), and a selection of journalists and a photographer to a favoured regular haunt (Nash19, Princes Street, Cork) re-opening the morning after the tidal floods during the Bishop's pastoral visit to Cork city centre on Wednesday, 5th February. It was twitter, and the Cork spirit of friendship and cooperation!

Ever-vigilant Cork photographer Michael MacSweeney snapped this shot of the group taking a break – over coffee, chat and a tweet – from their various duties (pastoral and media) in the course of morning visits to Cork the morning after the floods:

'Get on' with Haass deal - Eames/Bradley

Authors of a landmark report on dealing with the past have told NI political parties to "get on with it" and resolve the outstanding issues on the Haass proposals.

UTV news - In 2009, a report on how to move forward with the legacy of Northern Ireland's Troubles by Denis Bradley and Robin Eames was published, costing almost £1.3m.

The Consultative Group on the Past's document recommended a £12,000 reconciliation payment to families of those killed in the Troubles, including relatives of paramilitaries.

Another proposal was the development of an independent legacy commission to investigate unsolved killings and a reconciliation forum to tackle social issues arising from the conflict.





There were a total of 246 respondents to the consultation - most of the 174 individuals who responded were opposed to its contents.

Reflecting on it five years later, Lord Eames said in a sense it had been "beyond its time" and even "at the wrong time"

"It was never easy facing anger, disappointment, deep hurt, but I think both of us had kind of been used to that over the years," Mr Bradley explained.

He said his experience working in therapy over the years as well as Lord Eames' years as a Church of Ireland Primate were good preparation for the feedback they received.

Lord Eames added: "You had to read behind it, there was a hurt and a rawness that came to the surface. And there was also orchestration in some instances, let's be honest about it. But many of the people who perhaps had reservations in those early days, are among those who are now saying to us 'you got it right - we just weren't ready for it'. More at

<http://www.u.tv/News/Get-on-with-Haass-deal-Eames-Bradley/b3ff2253-c761-467c-a822-4334e596b846>

<http://www.community-relations.org.uk/about-us/news/item/215/eames-bradley-report/>

Dublin colleges examine NI applications criteria

Two of the Republic of Ireland's leading universities are considering changes to their admissions policy to increase their intake of students from Northern Ireland.



Report includes criticism by Professor Brian Walker of low numbers of northern students admitted.

Read more:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-26056346>

RTE apologises to Iona Institute for ‘homophobia remark’



On the Saturday Night Show last weekend, presenter Brendan O’Connor read out an apology to Breda O’Brien, The Iona Institute, and writer and broadcaster John Waters after a guest a fortnight before had accused all of the aforementioned parties of being ‘homophobic’.

David Quinn of Iona Institute writes - RTE has also agreed to pay damages to the injured parties.

The apology read: “On the Saturday Night Show on the 11th of January last, comments were made by a guest suggesting that the journalist and broadcaster John Waters, Breda O’Brien and some members of the Iona Institute are homophobic. These are not the views of RTE, and we would like to apologise for any upset or distress caused to the individuals named or identified. It is an important part of democratic debate that people must be able to hold dissenting views on controversial issues.”

We might add that it is also a very important part of democratic debate that individuals do not constantly have their motives and intentions called into question.

Accusations of ‘homophobia’, which are made with great regularity in the debate about same-sex marriage and adoption, are precisely an attempt to demonise and impute the worst of motives to those who believe that marriage is the sexual and emotional union of a man and a woman by definition, and that children deserve the love of both a mother and a father whenever possible.

More at -

<http://www.ionainstitute.ie/index.php?id=3390>

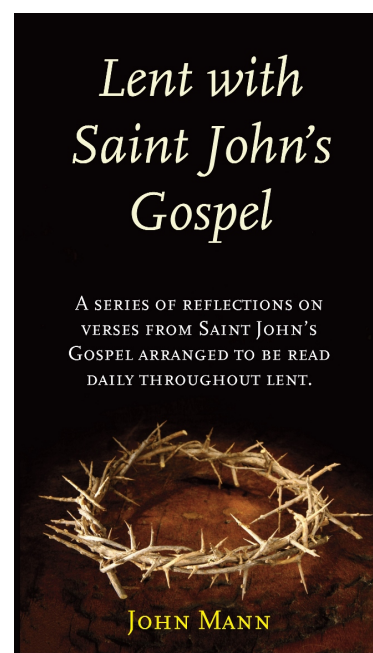
Lent book by Dean of Belfast

The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke, Archbishop of Armagh, will launch a new Lent book written by the Very Revd John Mann, Dean of Belfast, and published by The Columba Press at St Anne’s Cathedral, Belfast on Monday 17 February 2014 at 12.00 noon.

The book is a series of 47 daily reflections (including Sundays and continuing right up to Easter Day) on selected individual verses from St John’s Gospel.

The new publication is the result of a process initiated by the Church of Ireland Literature Committee in 2012 which issued an open call for authors to produce a Lent book with the potential to be both an aid to personal devotion and also a resource for group discussion during the penitential season. *Lent with St John’s Gospel* fulfils this aim with daily reflections also arranged in weekly sections for group discussion in parishes or homes.

Dean Mann says, ‘Lent is a very special time in the Christian Year. Some may approach it with a sigh and others with joy, but one way or another it is an opportunity to try and restore equilibrium in all of the balances that we try to maintain between, for example: work and rest, activity and inactivity, prayer and action.’ He continues, ‘Lent may be seen as an encouragement to do more or a chance to re–find a spiritual discipline – but I feel, and it is reflected in the book, that though Lent may allow space for both of these things, it is increasingly important to see it as a time of gently directed thought, of which the element of reflection in devotion is no small part. St John’s Gospel, as my source of daily Biblical texts, I chose for this



reason and in order to bring the focus of our Lenten thoughts on a distinct area of the Scriptures. I do hope that those who share the reading of this book with me over the course of Lent 2014 may find something of help.'

Columba Press commends the new book as one offering: 'depth, intelligence, compassion and insight in abundance ... these reflections [provide] an invaluable backcloth to a thoughtful and prayerful Lent'.

Lent with St John's Gospel will be available at the launch and thereafter at St Anne's Cathedral Belfast and through Columba Press and various outlets. The publication will also be formally commended at Church House Dublin on Wednesday 19 February.

Columbanus focus of broadcast service

The Revd Alistair Morrison leads a service from the Church of St Columbanus, Bangor, County Down, reflecting on the life and journey of the Irish monk Columbanus who left the monastery in Bangor almost 1,500 years ago and travelled to Europe as a missionary.

The preacher is Canon Simon Doogan and the readings are Deuteronomy 1, vv26-33, and Acts 18, vv18-28. Sunday Worship. Sunday. BBC Radio 4. 8.10am

Gifts to Dublin parish

A range of gifts which will enhance the practical and worship life of Holy Trinity Church, Killiney, were dedicated by Archbishop Michael Jackson on Sunday February 2, the Feast of the Presentation.

The gifts, which range from Advent candles to a piano, were from parishioners. Church wardens, Linda Peters and Stephen Rhys-Thomas, sought their blessing from the Archbishop.

In his sermon, Archbishop Jackson spoke of the dedication of Jesus and Samuel and said that things changed drastically and radically through both dedications. He said it was not possible to live without the joy of change and new life. "Every day is a gift from God; every day is a radical day; and every day is a day of change because night and day, day and night of themselves speak wonderfully of change and return change to us as a gift to do with change what we will and what we must," he stated.

While celebrating the Presentation of Jesus in The Temple, the parish was also celebrating the generosity of its people in the gifts they have given for others to enjoy and in memory of people and situations which matter deeply to them, the Archbishop said. (The Archbishop's sermon is reproduced in full below.)

“As well as the things themselves that people have given, we celebrate the gifts which lie within the gifts.

There is *the gift of commitment*, by which people have decided to offer something of themselves, in memory of someone who means so much to them, for the enjoyment of others. This is a commitment on their part to others and it is a commitment to their desire that the life of this community will flourish and develop in new ways. There is the gift of generosity, because always it is possible for people to do otherwise with their money. People who want to be generous are thinking of other people first and are genuinely delighted when others enjoy what they receive. This is what makes a day like today so special in the life of this parish. It is when people whom we know and people who know us are generous with themselves and with what they want to have others enjoy and share,” he said.

The gifts which will be used throughout parish life include: Advent candles from Stephen and Linda Franck, a bench in the Garden of Remembrance presented by Wendy Airey in memory of Richard Airey, CDs for the church from Anne Peters in memory of Frank Peters, a cabinet for notices and the refurbishment of the vestry presented by Cynthia Hughes in memory of Ben



Church warden, Linda Peters; lay reader, Nigel Pierpoint; Archbishop Michael Jackson; rector, the Revd Niall Sloane; and acting church warden, Stephen Rhys Thomas in Holy Trinity, Killiney, where the Archbishop dedicated gifts which were presented to the parish.

Hughes, chairs for the Carry Hall by the Day family, copies of the Church Hymnal from Edgard and Daphne Hall, crystal cruets by the Duncan family in memory of Maurice Duncan, a notice board by Ernest Smythe in memory of Lillian (Babs) Smythe, a piano for the Carry Hall by Eileen McCracken, an Alter set by Betty Burdett in memory of John Burdett, recovering of chairs and stool from Henry and Marianne Irvine, refurbishment of the choir area by Helen Irwin in memory of Sam Irwin, reordering of the baptistery and creation of a children's area by Helen Middleton in memory of Ian Middleton, steps to the Garden of Remembrance from John Course in memory of Patricia Course, a storage heater for the vestry from Stanley and Pamela Clarke, a wedding kneeler from Paul and Ruth Stewart and a wooden coffin stand by Nicholls Undertakers.

Other gifts were donated anonymously including: a CD player, curtains and rails behind the choir, a fridge for the Carry Hall and a microwave for the Carry Hall.

<http://dublin.anglican.org/news/2014/02/Generous-Gifts-Enable-Parish-Life-to-Flourish-at-Holy-Trinity-Killiney.php>

A woman of great faith

There has been widespread regret following the death at the weekend of Mrs Edyth Lovell, MBE, wife of the late Canon Lovell.

Londonderry Sentinel - The Service of Thanksgiving, at Christ Church, Strabane, attracted a large, inter-denominational congregation also reflecting her charity work and community work, and was conducted by the Rector of the Parish, Rev Lennox, the preacher was Rev Marie Walshe, a child of Strabane Parish and a close friend of Mrs Lovell and the Rector of Leckpatrick and Dunalong lead the intercessions, while the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Rt Rev Ken Good, attended and took part in the service. The hymns, which were chosen by Mrs Lovell, were 'Psalm 121' the Church of Ireland Chant and pointed version, 'Dear Lord and Father of mankind', 'Thine be the Glory' and 'O the Love of my Lord is the essence'. More at -

<http://www.londonderrysentinel.co.uk/news/local-news/a-woman-of-great-faith-1-5852881>

New rector to take up post in Athy

The appointment of a new Rector to the Athy Union of Parishes (Church of Ireland) has been announced.

Leinster Leader - The Revd Olive Donohoe is to be the new Incumbent in Athy Union.

Originally from Dublin, Olive has followed an interesting route to Athy.



Having completed a degree in what was then called Natural Science in TCD, she trained as a Certified Public Accountant.

She then worked for three years in The Sunday Tribune. She moved to the Revenue Commissioners where she was an Inspector of Taxes.

Following the decision by the Church to ordain women, she spent three years in the Theological College and a year completing a Masters in Pastoral Leadership in All Hallows.

Olive was appointed Curate to Bandon Union of Parishes in 1995 and spent three years there.

For 12 years she was Rector of Mountmellick Group of Parishes before spending four years part time in Stradbally Union of Parishes.

Olive has a great passion for social justice issues and has worked to develop parish links and responses in a local context.

She works with St Vincent de Paul and more widely with organisations for the homeless. More at -

<http://www.leinsterleader.ie/news/local-news/new-rector-to-take-up-post-in-athy-1-5857735>

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