



Belfast cathedral invites prayers for Brussels

In the wake of the terrorist attacks on Brussels, a single candle is burning in St Anne's Cathedral and prayers are being said for all victims of violence. People are invited to light candles around this central flame and there will

be space for prayer and reflection in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit.

The Dean of Belfast, the Very Rev John Mann, said: “In view of the atrocities that continue to be perpetrated by terrorists in our world today, and particularly the Brussels attacks yesterday, a space for reflection and prayer is once again being established in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit in St Anne’s Cathedral.

“A single candle will burn all day and throughout the coming days, and visitors are invited to light their own candles around it to show solidarity with those who suffer at this time. Prayers have been prepared for the use of those who come to sit or kneel as we think of all victims of violence.

“In the quiet of this chapel we will also say prayers today for those who have lost loved ones in all kinds of tragic circumstances, especially thinking of the bereaved of the Buncrana accident last Sunday.

“During Holy Week our minds and hearts search, as far as we are able, the mind and heart of Christ, who gave himself for us and seeks ever to intercede for us. May God in his mercy bring peace to the hearts of the desolate and light

eternal shine on those who have died and are held in the unfathomable love of Jesus.”

Brussels cathedral service an act of defiance of terrorism

A scheduled Chrism Mass at the Anglican Diocese in Europe’s pro-cathedral in Brussels went ahead on Tuesday afternoon in an “act of defiance” against the terrorists who killed at least 34 people and injured 198 more in a series of bomb attacks in the city’s airport and a metro station.

The Ven Colin Williams, the diocese’s first full time archdeacon, with responsibilities for the Archdeaconry of the East, and for the Archdeaconry of Germany and Northern Europe, was the preacher at the service and arrived in the city just before the explosion at the Maelbeek Metro station.

He said: “Just as I arrived in Brussels the city closed around me and a bomb exploded in the Metro. I was in Brussels to preach at the annual Chrism Eucharist at which clergy and lay ministers renew their commitment to service and Holy Oils are blessed.

“I made my way on foot to the pro-cathedral and the service went ahead with depleted numbers – colleagues from Copenhagen, Helsinki and other places couldn’t get to Brussels.

“Sirens sounded and helicopters hovered overhead. Going ahead with the service felt like an act of defiance; and as the Eucharist began we lit candles to show again that the Light has come into the world and the darkness cannot overcome it.”

In the wake of the terrorist attacks on Brussels, Pope Francis has requested prayers for the conversion of heart of those taken in by fundamentalism.

At his Wednesday audience, the Pope said: “To all, I ask that you persevere in prayer and in asking the Lord in this Holy Week to comfort the hearts of the afflicted and to convert the hearts of those people taken in by cruel fundamentalism.”

He then led the crowd in saying a Hail Mary.

The Pope said: “I renew an appeal to all people of good will to unite in the unanimous condemnation of these cruel abominations that have only caused death, terror and horror.”

He prayed in silence “for the dead, the wounded, the families and for all the Belgian people”.

Belgian bishops ‘anguished’ by Brussels bombings

Meanwhile, the Belgian bishops have asked for mourning bells to be rung in churches around Belgium following yesterday’s terrorist attacks. It will follow the minute’s silence at noon (11am GMT), announced last night by the authorities.

“The bishops of Belgium are dismayed by the attack in Zaventem airport and the centre of Brussels,” a statement said.

“They share the anguish of thousands of travellers and their families, aviation professionals and rescue teams. They ask everyone to pray for the victims in this new dramatic situation.”

[In a statement yesterday, the bishops asked for prayers for the victims.](#)

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has joined Pope Francis and the Bishops' Commission of the European Community (COMECE) in deploring the attacks.

Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, the president of the US bishops' conference, wrote in a letter to Archbishop Joseph De Kesel of Mechelen-Brussel: "Please be assured of my prayers and unwavering fraternal support. The Church throughout the United States feels this senseless act of violence as a tragedy in our own family."

"Of course, the terror of the Crucifixion is overcome by the hope of the Resurrection. Through unity, courage and comforting of the victims, the people of Belgium remind me of the Apostles comforted by the Risen Lord. In the face of unspeakable violence, they refused to allow fear to be their final witness."

Archbishop Kurtz added: "Jesus overcame death to offer us salvation. So too let us respond to hate with love and reject the extremists who would see us abandon our most vulnerable brothers and sisters."

Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh also added his condolences, urging prayers for those affected by the bombings.

President signs Book of Condolences at Embassy of Belgium

President Michael D. Higgins will sign a Book of Condolences for victims of the attacks today at the Embassy of Belgium in Dublin.

In a statement, President Higgins said he was “deeply saddened” to learn of the attacks and the tragic loss of lives in Brussels.

“These attacks strike at the fundamental right of all to live in peace. These actions must not undermine the will of all Europeans to live and work together,” he said.

The President added, “I wish to express my sincerest condolences to the families of all those bereaved and affected by today’s tragedies. All of our thoughts are with the people of Brussels at this time of tragedy.”

“I have conveyed to King Philippe today the sympathy of the Irish people at this most difficult time.”

Methodist President urges mourners of murdered prison officer's to reject 'dark deeds'

Communities across Northern Ireland must stand together to reject the dark deeds of the dark men who murdered a prison officer, mourners at his funeral were told.

Hundreds of family, friends and colleagues gathered in Belfast to say farewell to Adrian "Izzy" Ismay, a 52-year-old father of three who died after being injured in a dissident republican bomb attack.

The president of the Methodist Church of Ireland, Rev Brian Anderson, told the congregation that the dark act which took Mr Ismay's life was in stark contrast to the light the Cumbrian-born Falklands veteran brought to so many.

"In the darkest part of night, probably dressed in dark clothes, dark men did a dark, dark deed,

bringing us to this place today, leading to the loss of Izzy, causing us to travel through the valley of the shadow of death," he said.

Rev Anderson said the funeral provided a platform to send a strong message to those still intent on violence.

"It gives me the opportunity to voice the opinion and the thoughts of the overwhelming number of people across our country to say we reject what you have done, we stand against what you have done, we want to build an inclusive peaceful society in Northern Ireland and your contribution to it we do not want," he said.

"It's incumbent upon us as a society to ensure that those men who represent a time in our past don't get any fuel and we want them to go away and it's up to us at all levels of society to ensure we build a society that does not want them, does not need them and rejects them utterly."

Mr Ismay served in the Royal Navy, seeing action in the Falklands War, before joining the Northern Ireland Prison Service in 1987. Away from his job as a trainer of new recruits to the service, he was heavily involved in volunteering work with the Scouts, St John Ambulance and Community Rescue Service.

He died 11 days after suffering serious leg injuries when a bomb exploded underneath his van as he drove to work from his east Belfast home.

A dissident republican group calling itself the New IRA, which opposes the Northern Ireland peace process, claimed to have carried out the attack on the long-serving officer.

Young Macosquin Parishioners 'Buy' a Cow for Butere

Members of a Confirmation Group in the Parish of Camus-Juxta-Bann in Macosquin have raised one thousand pounds to provide a cow for an African diocese which enjoys close ties with the Diocese of Derry and Raphoe. The children, who will be confirmed on May 15th, hope theirs will be the first of many parishes in Derry and Raphoe which will support the Diocese of Butere, in Kenya, by providing a cow.

The children raised the money by holding a no-uniform day at school, and by organising a number of fund-raising events.

Last autumn, the Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, Ken Good, visited Butere, where Christianity was first introduced by the missionary son and

daughter of one of his predecessors, George Chadwick. Bishop Chadwick's son, Walter, established the region's first Christian church, while Walter's sister, Elizabeth, built Butere's first girls' school.

While Anglicanism is now flourishing in Butere – the Diocese has more than 33,000 Anglicans spread among more than 30 parishes – its clergy live in severe poverty. The Confirmation Group in Macosquin hope the money they raised will be used to buy a cow whose milk will be sold to provide an income for one of the clergy in Butere.

This afternoon, Bishop Good visited Macosquin Primary School where the Confirmation Group and local pupils handed over cheques worth £1,000. The Bishop hopes that other parishes in the Diocese will follow Macosquin's example.

Sacred concert in Dublin fund raises for Gaza hospital

A multitude of voices from around the dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough joined the Christ Church Cathedral Choir on Monday evening (March 21) for a virtuoso performance of *The Crucifixion* by John Stainer. The stunning



Director of Music Ian Keatley conducts the choir and audience at the Come and Sing concert in Christ Church Cathedral.

concert was held in aid of the solar panel project at Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza.

The moving story of the Passion and Crucifixion was performed as part of the cathedral music department's Come and Sing outreach programme and members of parish choirs and singers from all over Dublin and Glendalough were invited to sing with the choir in the wonderful surroundings of Christ Church Cathedral.

The choir of about 70 voices was conducted by Ian Keatley with David Bremner playing the organ and soloists Jacek Wislocki and Michael Lee. The singers had been sent the music in advance and the combined choirs practiced together earlier in the evening before the performance.

The idea for the concert came from the cathedral's Residential Priest Vicar, the Revd Garth Bunting. He was supported in the endeavour by Precentor, Canon Neil McEndoo and Director of Music, Ian Keatley. Yesterday evening he told the audience that the concert was a wonderful way to start Holy Week. He added that his thoughts were also with the people of Gaza and Al Ahli Hospital which provides the finest medical care possible under adverse circumstances.

Archbishop Michael Jackson thanked Garth and Ian for organising the concert which helped bring together the parishes of Dublin and Glendalough with the mother church of the dioceses.

He thanked the people of the dioceses once again for their wonderful fundraising effort in Advent 2014. As a result of the money raised, €30,000 has been spent to improve the on-call staff facilities at the hospital.

The bigger part of the project, which was requested by the two remarkable women who run the hospital, Suhaila Tarazi and Samira Farah, is the installation of solar panels, he explained. Initially it had been planned to complete this extremely expensive project in three phases but the restrictions on importing materials into Gaza are very tight and everything needed must be brought in at the same time.

“So sporadic is the electricity supply and so expensive are the generators that solar panels are the only sensible option. We still have a significant amount of money to find and I trust in God that we will find it and your help is very much appreciated,” the Archbishop commented.

Al Ahli Hospital is located in Gaza and is run by the Diocese of Jerusalem with which the Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough have a partnership link. The cost of the project is in the region of €185,000 and close to €150,000 has been raised so far.

South Carolina Choirs' Easter Monday concert in Derry Cathedral

Ashley Hall Red Choir and Chamber Choir from South Carolina will stop off in Londonderry on



Easter Monday, March 28, for a very special performance in St Columb's Cathedral.

Ashley Hall is a preparatory girls' school in Charleston, South Carolina and the Red Choir is an auditioned ensemble for students who are dedicated to the art of choral music. The choir performs throughout the school year, with major performances at Christmas and graduation.

In addition to performing in the Charleston community, members of the Red Choir have performed throughout the United States and Europe, most recently completing a successful tour of Italy.

The choir is conducted by Dr Robin Garner who is in her tenth year as Director of Choral Activities at Ashley Hall.

Dr Garner studied music and conducting in both Ireland and the USA and is a founding member of the Southern Appalachian Chamber Singers, a professional choir based in Asheville, North Carolina.

The tour, which also takes in Dublin, Galway and Limerick is the first trip to Northern Ireland and the South of Ireland for many of the choir members, who are, understandably, very excited to have the opportunity to perform in such beautiful venues as the Cathedrals in Londonderry and Dublin as well as the two Abbeys. The choir has put together a beautiful programme of music to share with their audiences and they are looking forward to the performances.

The choir's appearance at St Columb's Cathedral is part of an Easter tour by the choir and is free and open to all.

To find out more telephone St Columb's Cathedral on 02871 267313.

Pope Francis to wash the feet of 12 refugees today

The Vatican has announced that Pope Francis will today, Holy Thursday, wash the feet of 12 refugees as a sign of service and attention to their situation.

The refugees are being hosted by the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers, known as the *Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo*, or CARA in Castelnuovo di Porto outside Rome.

Many of these young people are not Catholic.

Last year, Pope Francis carried out the foot-washing ritual at Rome's Rebibbia prison, and the year before at an elderly care home and the year before that, in one of his first acts as pontiff, at a juvenile prison.

It is expected that, as on previous occasions, the Pope will wash women's as well as men's feet this year.

A change in the rules made at the request of Pope Francis means women may now officially be among those whose feet are washed.

Last year on Holy Thursday the Pope washed and kissed the feet of 12 inmates at Rebibbia prison, six men and six women.

In December 2014, the Pope sent a letter to Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, asking for the rubric to be changed so that it cannot be used to exclude women.

However, as the Association of Catholic Priests has highlighted, changing just one word took the dicastery 13 months.

It was only in January this year that the rubric was actually changed.

Release of *He Is Risen!* A C of E Just Pray Easter Film

The latest Just Pray film released today portrays a passion play which features individuals who have struggled with drug addiction, crime and homelessness on their journey to faith. You can find out more about those involved by visiting <http://justpray.uk>.

The film is available to watch on YouTube and encourages people to share their Easter stories, photos and videos online using #EasterJoy.
<http://bit.ly/HelsRisenCofE>

It has been reported in *The Telegraph*, which you can read online here: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/12201607/Church-of-England-turns-Jesus-into-drug-addict.html?utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter

News links to reports on faith, politics and education

Christian Today

Reports that the Archbishop of Canterbury was amongst Christian leaders speaking of their sorrow over yesterday's bomb attacks in Brussels - he spoke out via Twitter and Facebook and a statement was also released on his website (*see CNI yesterday*).

Exp

Review of the second programme in the series of Mary Berry's *Easter Feast*, which featured the Archbishop of York. During the programme, the presenter spoke about how her faith had given her comfort after her 19-year-old son was killed in a car accident.

<http://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/654808/Mary-Berry-son-death-faith-Easter-Feast>

Christian Today

Further report that a lawyer who represents a woman who received compensation and an apology from the Church of England last year following a claim of sexual abuse against Bishop George Bell has criticised the Bell Group, launched at the weekend. Speaking to the Brighton Argus Tracy Emmott said, "It is disappointing that my client's account continues to be so relentlessly challenged in what appears to be nothing short of a campaign to discredit and invalidate her evidence which has already been considered by independent experts as part of her legal claim." Article notes the Bell Group declined to comment.

Star

Reports that a number of chocolate manufacturers have dropped the word "Easter" from their eggs for commercial reasons. The article quotes research commissioned by the Meaningful Chocolate Company which found a majority of consumers would prefer the word Easter to appear on their chocolate eggs. The Bishop of Salisbury Nicholas Holtam is quoted.

<http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/502959/PC-Chocolate-makers-ban-Easter-from-eggs>

Times

Diary item about the reception held at Lambeth Palace on Monday to mark the 10th anniversary of the 'Archbishop Cranmer' blog. The Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines is quoted.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/uk/article4719286.ece>

Tel

Article about Saint George's Day and England's Patron Saint. Article notes that as a Christian martyr, St George represents "traditional English chivalry and bravery", even though he wasn't English, and probably never set foot in this country.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2016/03/22/when-is-st-georges-day-and-what-do-we-know-about-englands-patron/>

Obituary

Times: Former Moderator of the Church of Scotland, Sandy McDonald.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/obituaries/article4719349.ece>

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