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We don't run scared, former Ardoyne priest ministers in midst of Paris yellow-vest protest



Fr. Aidan Troy chats with parishioners following Mass outside St. Joseph's Church on Dec. 9, 2018, near the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

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Avenue Hoche, one of the tree-lined roads radiating out from the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, seems like an ideal place to locate a church for foreigners. An oasis in the city's chic 8th District, it's close to the Champs Élysées and the pleasant western neighborhoods that expats prefer.

But that location also put the street in the middle of France's often turbulent politics, as St. Joseph's, the parish for English-speaking Catholics in Paris, has learned several times since it opened there in 1869.

The "yellow vest" protests rocking the French capital for the past four Saturdays have filled Avenue Hoche with roving bands of angry demonstrators and riot police firing volleys of tear gas to disperse them.

The priest at St Joseph's however has had extensive experience of protests.

Fr. Aidan Troy, the Irish Passionist who has headed St. Joseph's since 2008, faced a sparse congregation at early Mass on Dec. 2 after the worst rioting of the protest series went late into the previous night.

He drew on an Irish saying — "This is the morning after the night before" — as he thanked worshippers for coming, noting that some of them might feel on edge due to the protests.

"There's always the danger that people get scared," he said. Noting that his previous assignment had been in Belfast, he added: "We don't run scared."

Parked cars and motorcycles have been burned to the right of the church entrance. The supermarket to the left was

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Fr. Aidan Troy preaches to a large congregation during Sunday Mass at St. Joseph's Church on Dec. 9, 2018, near the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

looted. Protesters have at times taken over the church's backyard or sat down on its front steps and plaza for a rest.

During the past four weekends of protests, though, St. Joseph's has stayed open, holding all its scheduled Masses, four baptisms and a short Advent retreat.

A youth group prepared 200 lunch bags for the homeless and went to distribute them with wet handkerchiefs over their noses against the tear gas.

Blocked streets and closed metro stations mean attendance has fallen off somewhat, but parish life has gone on. Some

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parishioners who couldn't get to church followed services on its YouTube channel.

The yellow vest protesters, many of them rural working poor facing rising taxes amid stagnating wages, have brought their grievances to Paris and forced the government to roll back some planned tax increases.

Among the thousands of protesters have been hundreds of local anarchists who donned the same vests to melt into the crowds and then loot, burn and clash with police.

Almost twice as many security forces turned out on Dec. 8 and stood their ground, but central Paris was still paralyzed.

Parishioners who've managed to reach St. Joseph's often found blocked streets and closed metro stations along their way.

"We saw carcasses of motorbikes and cars on the way to church and tarmacs torn up," said Michael de Haas, a South African IT engineer who coordinates the parish's religion classes for children. "It was like going through a movie scene."

Organist Daniel Morales-Carmona crossed police lines on Dec. 1 to play at the Saturday evening Mass, but the metro stopped four stations away from the Arc de Triomphe the following Saturday. He had to get out and walk the remaining distance.

Morales-Carmona soon came upon rock-throwing protesters and riot police firing volleys of tear gas, and ran for cover.

"I looked at my phone and I had five minutes to make it to church. That was impossible, so I had to turn around and go

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home," said Morales-Carmona, a native of Mexico doing advanced organ studies at the Paris Conservatory.

Tear gas has hung over Avenue Hoche for the past three Saturdays as riot police tried to break up roving bands of protesters gathering there.

The Arc de Triomphe is only about 300 yards away, and yellow vesters reached it on Dec. 2 to spray graffiti on the monument's walls and trash a small museum inside.

When protesters took over the churchyard one Saturday and began relieving themselves there, Troy opened the toilets inside St. Joseph's and invited the demonstrators — especially the women — to use them.

"That probably protected us from any damage," he said with relief while standing near a sliding glass door that could have easily been shattered.

St. Joseph's first brushes with French politics came a year after the Passionist order opened it in 1869. Artillery shells often fell in the area as the Franco-Prussian War and then the Paris Commune insurrection raged.

One morning, shrapnel smashed through two windows while Fr. Francis Bamber celebrated Mass. "The congregation was of course greatly alarmed," he later wrote, but they "waited courageously to the end of the service."

Once peace returned, the church settled down to serving parishioners ranging from wealthy English and American expatriates to their Irish maids and assorted other English speakers lured to the booming City of Light.

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A day before his death in 1900, the Irish playwright Oscar Wilde, who moved to Paris after two years in jail for "gross indecency" (i.e., a then-banned homosexual relationship), called for a priest from St. Joseph's who received him into the Catholic Church. Report courtesy National Catholic Reporter.

Christmas Means More - PCI launches Christmas social media campaign

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has launched a new social media campaign as Presbyterians share what Christmas means to them in a series of short videos that will be released each day until Christmas Day itself.

Twelve Presbyterians from a range of working backgrounds are sharing their faith in vlogs to explain why the season means more to them than long working hours in the jobs that they do.

Those serving in full time and part time ministries participated, as well as those in busy professions and vocations at this time of year. The short films include:

- PCI's International Meeting Point on Belfast's Lisburn Road which will serve Christmas Day dinners to around 140 people, including many refugees who are perhaps spending their first Christmas in Belfast.
- A Belfast hotel manager who will oversee the serving of 10,000 meals between now and New Year. He says that for him, Christmas is all about Christ and nothing else.

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- A lady who admits to being a bit of a ‘baa humbug’ because she’s not a shopper is also featured - she became a Christian just after Christmas so this time of year means so much to her as she remembers back and is thankful for the birth of Jesus.

The first vlog is by landscape gardener David Lorimer and you can view it here: <https://vimeo.com/305847884>

Presbyterian Moderator, Rt Rev Dr Charles McMullen, also took time to film a short video that will go out with the others on PCI’s Facebook and Twitter accounts, [facebook.com/pciassembly](https://www.facebook.com/pciassembly) and [@pciassembly](https://twitter.com/pciassembly). Dr McMullen welcomed the creative initiative saying, “I understand that recent research shows that 67% of the population know a churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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practising Christian and that of these, 20% of people want to know more about faith matters. These videos are just a starting point for people to share their faith online in the hope that they will spark a conversation and encourage other Christians to share their faith on social media too.

“As a Church we have had a general Twitter account since 2009, the Moderator’s Twitter account opened in 2013 and we’ve had our Facebook page for the past 2 years. These platforms are a way to highlight PCI events and our news stories to a wider audience, so please share our campaign posts, especially if you manage a Church Facebook page.

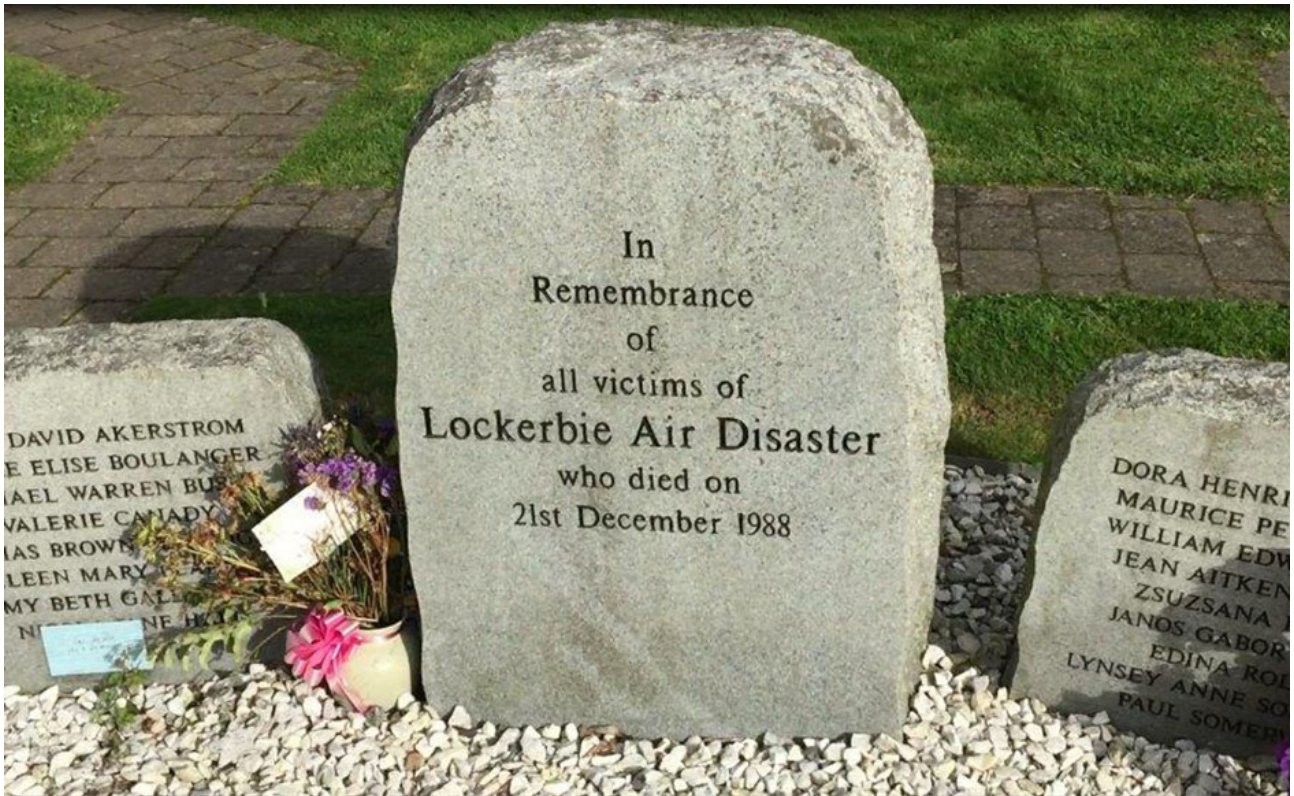
Dr McMullen concluded by saying, “We all have the power to share the good news with others and Christmas is a great time to remind people of the true meaning of Christmas. It’s not about the trees or the turkey, the presents or the pudding. It’s not just a busy time of year for people as their work demands extra shifts and late hours. It’s a time to reflect on Jesus’ coming into the world to be the light it has waited for and the hope that it needs. We celebrate that and rejoice as we remember Christmas truly means more.”

The campaign will run until Christmas Day. You can watch all the short films on vimeo.com/presbyterianireland.

A message of hope and peace on Lockerbie air disaster anniversary

A “Walk of Peace” pilgrimage walk is being held to mark the 30th anniversary of the Lockerbie air disaster.

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Air disaster memorial within the Garden of Remembrance at Dryfesdale Lodge.

Scores of people are expected to silently climb Burnswark, an ancient and dramatic landmark south east of the Dumfries and Galloway town, on December 22 to remember those who died.

They are encouraged to share ideas, memories and insights into the tragedy which claimed the lives of 270 people.

Very Rev Dr Alan McDonald, a former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, is taking part and said he hoped that a powerful message of peace and hope would be spread across the world.

Pan Am Flight 103 exploded 31,000 feet over Lockerbie on December 21, 1988.

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A total of 259 people on board the New York-bound Boeing 747 – known as Clipper Maid of the Seas - were killed, along with 11 people on the ground.

Dr McDonald, who was Moderator in 2006-07 and has family links to the area, is also leading a special remembrance service at Tundergarth Parish Church on December 21.

Hope

The building, which has a Book of Remembrance, is close to where the nose cone of the Jumbo jet, blown up by a terrorist bomb, came to rest.

Dr McDonald said: “The people who have been organising this service, and the walk up a neighbouring hill the next day, wanted something that would focus on hope and the future.

“We have put together a service with the theme ‘The Pilgrimage to Peace’.

“Hopefully, it will link together with the physical pilgrimage that will take place the next day.

“We will seek hope and peace for all on December 21-22.”

Scottish harpist Wendy Stewart is performing at the church service, which starts at 3pm.

Dr McDonald, who moved to Cromarty on the Black Isle after retiring as the minister of St Leonard’s Parish Church in St Andrews, Fife in 2016, is standing in for the current Moderator, Rt Rev Susan Brown, who is unable to attend.

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She laid flowers at the Lockerbie Air Disaster Memorial, which lies within a Garden of Remembrance at Dryfesdale Lodge, during a recent visit to the town.

Peace

Rev Adam Dillon, Clerk to the Church of Scotland Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale, said: “The horror of the night will live on in the memories of those who lived in Tundergarth and Lockerbie.

“This 30th anniversary gives the communities a chance to focus on looking forward - drawing on the resilience and temerity that has been required of them since 1988.

“My thoughts and prayers remain with all affected.”

Dr Jan Hogarth, one of the organisers of the pilgrimage walk to Burnswark which overlooks the area where Pan Am Flight 103 came down, said she is “delighted” that Dr McDonald is leading the service.

“I hope he can help shift people’s perspective from an area associated with a tragedy to a special spiritual landscape with a courageous community, who held this tragedy with love, compassion and kindness,” she added.

“Thirty years on, you would hope humanity would be working towards achieving peace on earth.

“We don’t have time to look backwards, we must work together to achieve this ambition.”

Libyan Abdelbeset Ali Mohamed al Megrahi was the only person to be convicted of blowing up Pan Am Flight 103.

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He was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment but was released from a Scottish prison in 2009 on compassionate grounds.

Megrahi died at his home in Tripoli in 2012 aged 60.

Eglinton Primary pupils hand over Parish gifts to Foyle Women's Aid

Three young Eglinton Primary School pupils lent a hand, this week, as scores of Christmas presents donated by members of Faughanvale Parish were handed over to Foyle Women's Aid.



The gifts were gathered over the last few weeks and stored beneath the 16-foot Christmas tree which has been erected in St Canice's Church, Eglinton, for the festive season.

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The formal hand-over was made by sisters Jenna and Chloe Boyd, and Jack Thompson – all parishioners at St Canice's – and overseen by the Rector, Rev Canon Paul Hoey, and Ernest Moore (People's Glebe Warden).

Canon Hoey said: "I'm very touched - but not surprised - by the generosity shown by our parishioners. This community benefitted from the generosity of others after the flood sixteen months ago, and it's right that we now remember others in their time of need.

"We appreciate the help that Foyle Women's Aid provides for the victims of domestic violence in the North West. The organisation does tremendous work all year round, but we're aware that Christmas can bring particular pressures to bear on the charity and bring great distress to many homes. We pray that God will show his mercy to those who suffer the consequences of domestic violence and, in the meantime, hope that our gifts will offer some small comfort to children who are affected."

The gifts from St Canice's Church were received on behalf of Foyle Women's Aid by John O'Hagan and Ivan Barber from Teamlink. They thanked the parishioners for their generosity and said it was a sad fact that every single present would be needed this Christmas.

News links

Primate hails Irish charity's work on visit to war-torn northern Iraq

Belfast Telegraph

The leader of the Catholic **Church** in **Ireland** accompanied Trocaire chief executive to Batnaya on the Nineveh Plains in the north for the country.

People of Ireland make a difference in Iraq, Yemen and Sudan

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Vatican News

By Sr Bernadette Mary Reis, fsp. **Ireland's** Primate is in Iraq visiting displaced families and encouraging the people of **Ireland** to contribute to relief ..

Thinking Anew – 'It takes prophets to interpret the present'

Irish Times

That was true of the Rev Joe Parker who was **Church of Ireland** chaplain with the Missions to Seamen in Belfast when, on Friday July 21st, 1972, his ...

'Advent Sign Shine' under way

Southern Star Newspaper

THIS Advent, the local Roman Catholic, **Church of Ireland** and Methodist churches, along with Clonakilty Tidy Towns, are engaging in a novel initiative ...

Priests hear Christmas shoppers' confessions at Irish mall

IrishCentral

Breege Hession, who met with Fr Ryan at the mall, said: "I think it is a great idea and will maybe bring young people closer to the **church** and speak to ...

Paedophile Irish priest heads to Rome after serving sentence for child abuse in Chile

Independent.ie

Irish News ... Paedophile **Irish** priest heads to Rome after serving sentence for child abuse in Chile ... An **Irish**-born priest, who was convicted of sexually abusing a girl in his care at a religious school in Santiago but ... The priest's release comes as a growing sex abuse grips the Catholic **Church** in Chile.

Church of England puts faith in its first Christmas TV ad

The Times

To some cynics it might be a sign of desperation; to others a much-needed reminder of what Christmas is all about. The **Church of England** today ...

Churches offer shelter at night as winter sets in

Church Times

More than 2000 **Church of England** congregations will be running or supporting night shelters during the coldest months of the year.

Nazi bombs on Belfast did not discriminate between Catholic and Protestant yet Sinn Fein leads opposition

<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/opinion/nazi-bombs-on-belfast-did-not-discriminate-between-catholic-and-protestant-yet-sinn-fein-leads-opposition-to-1941-blitz-memorial-1-8741259>

Infrastructure projects worth £2bn stalled

The Institute of Directors says Stormont is needed implement £2billion worth of infrastructure projects.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-46572762>

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NI school maintenance backlog at £327m

The principal of Rathcoole Primary school in Newtownabbey says that parts of the school are in a state of disrepair.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-46568439>

To heat or eat: Why NI food banks are busier than ever

Ahead of Christmas, food bank volunteers have seen straw used for warmth in a house in County Down.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-46544874>

Theresa May condemns Tony Blair's new Brexit vote call

The PM accuses her predecessor of "undermining" talks with the EU and "insulting the office he once held".

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-46582705>

Bishops pray for politicians' integrity amid Brexit turmoil

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/dec/15/bishops-pray-for-politicians-integrity-amid-brex-it-turmoil>

Ireland and the EU: A special case

The Republic of Ireland's unique position when it comes to approving some EU laws.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46552486>

Religious Education Council reaction to the Government response to the Commission on RE

<https://www.religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk/news/government-response-to-the-commission-on-re/>

Ukraine Orthodox priests to establish church independent from Russia

<http://www.thejournal.ie/ukraine-orthodox-priests-to-establish-church-russia-4397666-Dec2018/>

After China deal, two underground bishops step down at Vatican's request

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/issues/catholic-herald-app-2018-12-07/after-china-deal-two-underground-bishops-step-down-at-vaticans-request/>

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