



Singing trio The Priests 'hugely honoured' to sing for Pope



Fr Eugene O'Hagan, Fr Martin O'Hagan and Fr David Delargy

The famous Northern Ireland singing trio The Priests are "hugely honoured" to perform for Pope Francis in front of an audience of 75,000 people in Dublin's Croke Park, the Belfast Telegraph reports.

The Very Reverend Eugene O'Hagan has confirmed that he will be taking to the stage at the Festival of Families concert in the Pontiff's honour, alongside his singing brother Fr Martin O'Hagan and their friend, Fr David Delargy, on August 25.

The group is one of a number of local artists - including 36-year-old Lisburn soul singer Dana Masters - who will join Donegal crooner Daniel O'Donnell, the River Dance troupe and country star Nathan Carter on the line-up of 2,000 performers participating in the two-hour music event.

Families from 116 countries have been invited to attend the historic occasion.

And Fr O'Hagan, who is also Vicar-General of the Diocese of Down and Connor, said it would be a momentous occasion for the trio - who have also performed in the past for Prince Charles.

"The eyes of the world will be watching Dublin, eagerly awaiting what words of encouragement and advice the Holy Father will say," he said. "It will be among the biggest events we've ever done. It is certainly a momentous occasion and a bit more special as it will be on our own island, on home turf. I will be a bit nervous knowing that there will be all these cameras there, picking it up and sending it across the globe."

Previously, The Priests shared the stage at London's Hyde Park with Pope Benedict XVI during his 2010 visit to the UK.

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This occasion though will be particularly special for them - both as performers and as priests - added Fr O'Hagan, as it will mark the first time that Ireland has welcomed the head of the Catholic Church since Pope John Paul II's visit in 1979.

"I remember being there but this will be a very different visit. Ireland is much more self-sufficient now," he added.

The cleric acknowledged that this Papal visit would likely bring the Republic's shifting attitudes on social issues such as same-sex marriage and abortion to the fore again, but stressed that he expected Pope Francis to stay focused on the family theme.

"The Holy Father's message is always accessible, it's never too far removed from ordinary people, and it will resonate with us all in different ways - it will resonate with me as a priest - but it will be something that will be positive to all of us," he said.

Changing C of I ethos at Greystones National School - Principal states she was forced to resign

The Principal of St Patrick's National School, Eileen Jackson is reported to be stepping down from her position over the changing of the Church of Ireland ethos there, the Greystones Guide reports

With details yet to be confirmed, a petition to stop Ms Jackson stepping down has already appeared online.



Eileen Jackson [pictured on the extreme left] is reported to be stepping down from her position over the changing of the Church of Ireland ethos there.

The petition, created by Dr Ciara Kelly, states...

Eileen Jackson has worked in St.Patricks NS for 32 years – 23 as principal. She has resigned with considerable regret because the Board of Management has changed the schools Church of Ireland ethos to be less inclusive and she cannot stand over it.

This comes on top of the Board of mangement turning down an extra teacher – our school was ENTITLED TO at the end of last year – which would have improved pupil teacher ratios within the school. So the BOM have currently presided over us having less teachers than our kids are

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entitled to and losing our excellent school principal straight after we have lost our deputy principal AND School secretary at a time of CRITICAL TEACHER SHORTAGES.

It can no longer be assumed we can have confidence in the Board of Management. Please sign if you do not want Eileen Jackson to be forced to resign.

And here is Eileen Jackson's letter to the parents of St Patrick's National School kids, explaining her decision...

Dear Parents/Friends,

Having completed my 37th year of teaching, 32 of which have been at St Patrick's NS, with 23 of them as Principal, I reflect on exciting developments and initiatives and many happy memories over that time.

We are most fortunate to have a state of the art school with a strong and vibrant community, and I feel a great sense of privilege to have been a member of the team that nurtured this progressive educational environment.

I am honoured to have led a team of dedicated professionals, worked closely with the best of people who gave most generously of their time and expertise to the betterment of our children and their educational experience and opportunities and, most importantly, to have had a role in the everyday lives of so many children and their families as well as sharing their most delightful celebrations and their harshest challenges. From them all, I learned so much more than they could ever have learned from me.

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However, educational advancement and manifestation of our Church of Ireland ethos must be to the forefront of decision-making at all times. I believe fundamentally that, within the National School system, this ethos requires us to offer faith-based education to the community, embracing diversity in the furtherance of the Church's core values of freedom of conscience, tolerance, and inclusivity.

Admission to State-funded education cannot and must not be an adjunct to, or a collateral benefit of parochial engagement.

St Patrick's appears to be taking a new direction and, in conscience, I am not the person to lead the school in this context. Therefore, after careful reflection, I have decided that the honourable and proper course is to tender my resignation as Principal with effect from 11th November 2018.

I made this difficult decision with considerable regret. I have become increasingly concerned at our departure from belief in, and commitment to, core elements of Church of Ireland ethos.

In the period prior to my departure, I will endeavour to ensure a smooth transition and to offer every help and support to my successor.

I pray that he/she, in fulfilling the role of Principal, will receive the fullest support from the entire school community and I am sure that the parent body will be at the forefront in this regard.

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I will miss the school, and I leave with precious memories of generations of children and their families. I wish you and your families, as well as members of the school and wider community, every health, happiness and fulfilment in the years ahead.

With very warmest regards, Eileen

Willowfield parish programme with 16 schools in East Belfast

Willowfield parish recently reported on what it describes as, “Another fantastic year serving the schools in our city and teaching kids to look after their physical and mental health with our Life Guards programme!”

The parish report continues, “This year we delivered the programme in 16 schools as well as various community groups and at one off events. This year the Fittest School trophy was awarded to Lough View Integrated Primary for the second time in four years! A fantastic effort by all the P5-7 pupils.

“We awarded the Michael Rice Memorial Cup to the school in a special assembly before the end of term. Pictured with the trophy is Olivia and Joshua who also got the top individual scores out of all the pupils who took part this year!

“One teacher wrote on their evaluation; 'This programme has had the most positive impact on pupils that I have witnessed in over 20 years of teaching. Pupils, teachers and parents were all very enthused and motivated by this

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Life Guard programme. Laurence + Luke were the most incredible instructors.'



“Thanks so much to all the schools for the opportunity to work with your fantastic kids and staff and to those who raised money to donate to the Life Guards programme. We were so blessed by your generosity.

“Excitement is already building for the next school year and we are delighted to be partnering with Heart Research UK and Subway.

“If your school has never taken part in the programme and you'd like to book, get in touch with Laurence at laurence@wpcabelfast.co.uk.”

‘We accept diversity’ – Uniting Church in Australia to allow same-sex marriage

The national assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia is to allow its clergy to solemnise [same-sex marriages](#).

It has created a new statement on marriage, as being for “two people”; it will stand alongside its current statement,



A marriage equality sign outside of the St Michael's Uniting Church in Melbourne last week. Its churchgoers last year expressed their support for marriage equality, and want it to be the first Uniting Church to marry a same-sex couple

that marriage is for “a man and a woman”. Clergy will be able to refuse to officiate at same-sex weddings.

The President of the Uniting Church, Dr Deidre Palmer, noting that the matter had been debated in the Church for years, said that it was important that the religious convictions of ministers be respected and protected. “We accept the diversity in our midst, and we are allowing our members the freedom to decide on whether they conduct same-sex marriages or not,” she said.

The first same-sex weddings are not expected until later in the year, when a new marriage liturgy is completed.

The Uniting Church, Australia's third largest Christian denomination, was formed in 1977, combining the

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Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches. A significant number of Presbyterians refused to join, remaining in the continuing Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Anglican response

In December 2017 seven Australian anglican diocesan bishops wrote to the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, to support the same-sex marriage legislation which was then before the Australian Parliament. The legislation was expected to pass largely unamended, despite conservative politicians' attempts to include a range of exempted religious categories such as church schools, charities, and individual conscience.

Other Australian religious leaders, including the Primate, Dr Philip Freier, and the Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Glenn Davies, supported moves to increase religious protections in the legislation.

The seven bishops stated, however, that the stated protections in the Bill for the clergy were a “fulsome” recognition of the “religious rights and freedoms that underpin a democratic, plural, and multicultural society”.

Four of the bishops were from regional dioceses in the province of Victoria, including the lead commentator, the Bishop of Wangaratta, the Rt Revd John Parkes. The others were the Rt Revd Kay Goldsworthy (Gippsland), the Rt Revd Andrew Curnow (Bendigo), and the Rt Revd Garry Weatherill (Ballarat). There was no representation from the diocese of Melbourne, where the Primate is the Archbishop.

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The other three bishops who signed the letter were the Rt Revd Bill Ray (North Queensland), the Rt Revd Sarah Macneil (Grafton) and the Rt Revd John Stead (Willochra).

News briefs

+++Limerick recital - On Thursday the lunchtime recital in St Mary's cathedral, Limerick, will be given by the CUE Choral Ambassadors from the USA, directed by Randolph Edwards.

+++Summer Music at Sandford - continues in Sandford parish church, Ranelagh, each Friday with the recitals beginning at 1.10 pm. Next Friday there will be an organ recital by Simon Stroughair.

+++Irish College of Preachers Conference 2018 - The conference will take place in the Church of Ireland Theological Institute from 5 to 7 September. It is designed to be a practical help and resource to preachers, either ordained or lay. The Venerable Andrew Forster will lead the conference this year. Andrew Forster is Archdeacon of Ardboe in Armagh Diocese. He has served in the Dioceses of Down & Dromore, Kilmore and Armagh and is a member of the Executive Committee of the Representative Church Body, the trustee body for the Church of Ireland. Details of the conference may be obtained from Bishop Ferran Glenfield at bishop@kilmore.anglican.org

+++American choirs visit - Yesterday (Sunday) the 11am Eucharist and the 15.30 Evensong in Christ Church cathedral, Dublin, wassung by the Choir of Trinity Episcopal cathedral, South Carolina, while in St Patrick's cathedral, churchnewsireland@gmail.org

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St. Martin's Episcopal Choir from Houston, Texas, sang the 11.15am Choral Eucharist and the 3.15pm Choral Evensong.

+++Start of Term Prayer Service - The Diocese of Armagh warmly invites all teachers & educational support staff - on Thurs 6th Sept 2018, 4.15pm at St Mark's Parish Church Armagh. Please register your attendance - click [here](#)

+++Armagh Youth and Children's ministry resource fair - Sat 22nd Sept 2018, 11am to 3pm. St Mark's Parish (Crozier) Hall, Armagh. Not to be missed. Food, resources, Christian agencies and networks to meet, workshops for youth and children's leaders (and one Archbishop). Cost £5.00 per person. Including afternoon tea. To book in email doycarmagh@gmail.com

+++Transformed - 'Small Steps, Big Difference' - Derry & Raphoe Diocese is holding an Encouragement Event in the Millennium Forum, Newmarket Street, Londonderry, , on Saturday 6th October from 15:30 – 17:00 , to celebrate parishes' contribution to 'Transforming Community, Radiating Christ'.



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