



Bishop Noel Treanor with parishioners at the reopening of the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Rathlin Island on Sunday

Tiny Rathlin Island church is rededicated following renovations

Northern Ireland's most northerly church reopened its doors with a celebratory Mass on Sunday, the Belfast Telegraph reports.

Bathed in glorious sunshine, the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Rathlin Island will serve the picturesque island's tiny community of around 150 people after recent renovations.

Bishop of Down and Connor Noel Treanor reminded those gathered of how the island's parishioners met for worship in penal times in various parts of the island - including in the shade of an overhanging rock at Ballynagarad, at a large stone in Kilpatrick, and in a hollow called Lag an Sassanach.

Later, an old deserted mill on the site of where the Church of the Immaculate Conception now stands was converted into a place of worship on or around 1816.

However, the building was believed to have been a poor state of repair, and was eventually replaced in 1865 by the 48ft long by 18ft wide building that stands on the same site now.

The church lies a short walk from the harbour at the top of Church Brae.

The local website advises visitors to turn right after St Thomas' church - the local Church of Ireland - to find it.

In his homily, Bishop Treanor told those gathered for worship in the church yesterday that Rathlin, "like ourselves, is part of a world and of a society which, for all the achievements of modernity, is now searching for, indeed sometimes screaming for, ultimate meaning, purpose and hope".

He added: "Living in the world wide web we cannot escape the questions and challenges of human existence in our times."

St Patrick's Choristers raise the roof for Diocesan Housing Appeal

St Patrick's Cathedral's Choristers and special guests, the Suzanne Savage Trio, raised the roof on Friday evening (March 24) with a fantastic concert in aid of Dublin & Glendalough's Diocesan Refugee Housing Appeal.

The cathedral was packed for the concert which saw the choristers taking a break from their usual sacred music to let their hair down with some classic jazz numbers as well as some songs featured on their 'In Dublin's Fair City' CD. They were accompanied by Victoria Green on guitar, David Leigh on piano, Martina Smyth on organ and directed by Stuart Nicholson.

Suzanne Savage, with Dave Redmond on bass



and Phil Ware on piano, brought a smokey jazz club vibe to proceedings.

Dublin & Glendalough plans to raise €100,000 a year for the next three years to assist an accommodation programme being devised by the Irish Refugee Council and the Association of Missionaries and Religious in Ireland.

The IRC specialises in working with refugees and people in the asylum process. In association with AMRI it is in the process of acquiring several properties in Dublin and around the country which will provide first time accommodation for people waiting to come out of Direct Provision Centres.



Dean William Morton, Archbishop Michael Jackson, Suzanne Savage, Canon Horace McKinley and Nick Henderson, CEO of the Irish Refugee Council, with his daughter.

When people are granted leave to remain in Ireland it can be extremely difficult for them to find accommodation which enables them to leave Direct Provision Centres. The programme also provides practical assistance to help people emerging from Direct Provision, where they may have spent several years, adjust to become functioning and contributing members of society.

AMRI also wants to help provide accommodation for refugees, many of whom are from Syria, who arrive in Ireland under the Government's emergency response programme. The project will also help prevent additional burden being placed on homelessness services.

Bringing the evening to a close, Archbishop Michael Jackson thanked the cathedral and the choristers for organising such a wonderful concert. He explained to background to the diocesan appeal which emerged with Diocesan Councils were urged to do something practical to help with the refugee and homelessness situation.

“This project has to do with welcome and practical integration and the dignity of the individuals which is brought by independent housing,” the Archbishop explained. “Without the willingness of all who have given their talent this evening and lifted the roof, this could not happen. I thank the Cathedral Chapter, the Choristers and all who have given us not only enjoyment and entertainment but excellence of the highest quality. All of us associated with the project greatly appreciate your presence here.”

In addition to the proceeds of a retiring collection following the concert, Dean William

Morton presented Archbishop Jackson with a generous donation towards the project on behalf of the Board of St Patrick's Cathedral.

To contribute to the appeal monies can be forwarded by cheque to: the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough, Church House, Church Avenue, Rathmines, Dublin 6 (marked Housing Appeal). Donations can also be lodged directly to: DIOCESAN FUNDS OF DUBLIN AND GLENDALOUGH, Bank of Ireland, College Green, Dublin 2, BIC: BOFIE2D, IBAN: IE50 BOFI 9000 1769 3548 78, Reference: Housing appeal. Donations may attract a tax rebate.

Archbishop Eamon Martin says the Catholic Church does not want an Irish theocracy

Iona Institute holds first conference in Northern Ireland, the Irish Times reports

Archbishop [Eamon Martin](#) has told the inaugural conference of the [Iona Institute](#) Northern [Ireland](#) that the [Catholic Church](#) has no desire to create a theocracy in Ireland, but wants respect for its beliefs and values.



The Catholic Archbishop of [Armagh](#) and Primate of All-Ireland was the keynote speaker at the event in south [Belfast](#), which was organised by the Catholic advocacy group to explore “faith in the public square”.

Delegates at the event in St Brigid’s Parish Hall also heard from former Police Ombudsman Nuala O’Loan and former SDLP MLA [Alban Maginness](#), among others.

The archbishop told attendees the Catholic Church expected that “in a true pluralist democracy or republic, religion and faith will continue to have an important part to play in the national conversation”.

He acknowledged the Catholic Church's "child abuse scandals and other shameful episodes" in the past.

He encouraged Catholics to meet like-minded Christians more often to share their values and contribute to discussions.

He said Catholics did not enter public debate "simply to win arguments", but to present "a coherent ethic of life, based on natural law, which includes, for example, our teaching about the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the person; about the centrality of the family; about solidarity, and the need for a fair distribution of goods in the world".

He claimed society is inclined to prioritise "a limited conception of freedom, often understood in a reductionist and limited fashion which doesn't always lead to human flourishing".

The archbishop also backed a recent call by bishops for Northern voters to engage in the democratic process and question politicians on matters such as child poverty, abortion, marriage, faith-based education, persecuted groups across the world and the rights of refugees.

He said the “voice of faith or religion is not simply for the privacy of our homes and churches”.

Meath & Kildare team to visit and learn from Leprosy Mission in India

Members from Meath & Kildare dioceses will be experiencing the work of The leprosy Mission (TLM) Ireland at first hand at the beginning of April. 12 people will be travelling to Kairigiri, in the region of Tamil Nadu on Easter Monday, 17th April and arriving back on 23rd.

The dioceses of Meath and Kildare is running a ‘Good for the Sole’ project this year to raise funds for life changing surgeries for those affected by leprosy. Members of the dioceses will see the difference that this can make in people’s lives.

The team are flying into Chennai and spending their time in the region of Tamil Nadu. They will be based in the TLM Hospital in Karigiri, staying in the hospital guest houses. They will be seeing the work of that hospital and another one about 3 hours away, meeting people who might have benefited from the kind of surgeries the dioceses have been raising money for.

The visit is also an opportunity to learn about research that is going on in relation to ending leprosy and developing better treatments for it in the meantime. The team will also get the chance to meet local people who are going through a rehabilitation programme after being cured of the disease. That includes medical aspects but also learning skills for rejoining the workforce and being readmitted into society.

Last year the dioceses raised money to buy specially designed sandals for leprosy sufferers. There will be an opportunity to visit the factory where these sandals are made.

So why are members of Meath and Kildare visiting Karigiri? The whole purpose of the visit was summed up by the team during a group discussion at a recent team day: "The team are journeying to the Karigiri and Vada hospitals to meet the real people behind the stories and to further develop our partnership with The Leprosy Mission Ireland."

There is a great mix of people coming from the dioceses. There was a wonderful response from students around the dioceses. Hannah Spendlove (Naas Union), Sophia Peschke (Naas Union) and Amy Colton (Geashill & Killeigh Union) are all in Transition Year. Rebecca

Redding (Tullamore Union) is doing her leaving certificate this year. Catherine Vance (Dunshaughlin) is in her final year training to be a primary school teacher. Also on the team we have Sharon Glynne (Navan Union) and Sharon Spendlove, Rev. Philip Heak, Christabel Clifford and Rhonda Willoughby (all of Naas Union). Along with them, Emma Rothwell, the Diocesan Youth and Children's Officer and Ken Gibson, CEO of The Leprosy Mission, will be leading the team.

The team members are looking forward to bringing home stories of what they have seen in India and running special events when they return. Some of the team members have already held events and raised money through the generosity and support of their parishes for the work of the Leprosy Mission.

The team would like to thank everyone who has supported them in their decision to travel to India.

They ask for your prayers:

- That travel would go smoothly
- Protection from sickness
- That time with the people of the The Leprosy Mission in India would be a time

of learning, of inspiration and chance to build lasting relationships.



Archdeacon Cecil Pringle, Bishop McDowell, Fr D'Arcy and Canon Ellis

C of I bishop speaks at The Gran's Novena of Hope

Bishop John McDowell was the speaker on Friday evening at The Graan's Novena of Hope organised by Fr. Brian D'Arcy as part of the theme of ecumenism.

Bishop McDowell received a warm welcome from the large congregation and in his address,

spoke of his early life in Belfast, his ecumenical work and the impact that the Reformation had on Christian churches.

Fr. Brian D'Arcy also welcomed Canon Ian Ellis, rector of Rossorry Parish Church; Archdeacon Cecil Pringle and Dean Kenneth Hall to the service.

Funding boost for Mount Merrion Parish Church, Belfast

Mount Merrion Parish Church, in Belfast, is set to benefit from a £10,000 National Churches Trust Repair Grant to help fund urgent roof repairs to prevent the main roof collapsing.

The project will ensure that this modern listed building, which is in an unsafe condition, can continue its contribution to the community.

A total of 41 churches and chapels in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will benefit from a £247,205 grants package from the National Churches Trust, the UK church repair and support charity.

Broadcaster and Journalist Huw Edwards, Vice-President of the National Churches Trust said:



“I’m delighted that the future of Mount Merrion Parish Church is being secured by a National Churches Trust grant to fund urgent repairs.”

“According to a recent ComRes opinion poll, more than four in five Britons (83%) agree that the UK’s churches, chapels and meeting houses are an important part of the UK’s heritage and history.”

“In good repair and with increased use by local people, Mount Merrion Parish Church can continue to play a vital role in the life and well-being of Belfast for many, many years to come.”

Northern Ireland – Anglican – Grade B1

Mount Merrion Parish Church is a symmetrical double-height red-brick church in the modernist style, dominated by a vertical glazed gable with a spire. It was built in 1963 to designs by Dennis O'Donoghue Hanna. Of particular interest is the unusual and impressive roof structure, and supporting frames made from laminated timber, or 'glulam'.

The two laminated portal frames which support the main roof of this B1 listed building are 'delaminating' – the layers are separating. This is due to water ingress. If allowed to continue, this could result in the collapse of the roof. By replacing the timbers, the structural integrity of the roof will be secured. Further works will prevent water entry and heat loss.

Mount Merrion Parish Church is used by a huge variety of local groups. There is an Allotment Project, a Community Drop-in, a toddler group, Messy Church, holiday clubs, youth work, homework club, keep-fit classes, music tuition, hosting of public meetings, parties and fundraising events. A members of the congregation is trained as a 'Christians Against Poverty' Lifeskills Coach, and runs courses helping residents in the local community.

The project to keep the roof secure means that the church can remain central to its community.

Mount Merrion Parish

Church www.mountmerrionchurch.org.uk

Earth Hour: The world goes dark

Some of the world's most recognisable landmarks were plunged into darkness last weekend as part of a global campaign to raise awareness of climate change.

What is Earth Hour?

Now in its tenth year, Earth Hour is organised by the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Coordinator Siddarth Das told the BBC the event was started "to show leaders that climate change was an issue people care about".

More than 170 countries and territories are believed to have taken part on Saturday, turning off all non-essential lights at 8.30pm local time.

What went dark?

Around 400 landmarks were dimmed, including Big Ben, Tower Bridge, the Empire State Building, the Eiffel Tower, the Sydney Opera House, the Brandenburg Gate and the Kremlin.



Yet Earth Hour "isn't just about reducing emissions for a single hour on a Saturday night", says Canada's Globe and Mail. "Emissions aren't the metric by which to measure this event".

Rather it is symbolic, says the paper, showing that "by disconnecting, we're connecting with the biggest issues confronting the world today".

What about the 'right to light'?

"This feel-good exercise not only does absolutely nothing for the planet", says USA Today, it "ignores the reality that what the world's poorest need right now is more light and energy, much of which will be powered by fossil fuels, not darkness."

With developed nations getting just ten per cent of their energy from renewable sources, compared to Africa's 50 per cent, the idea of turning off your lights for one hour a year to highlight the problems posed by fossil fuels "appears rather hypocritical", says the paper.

Cork commissioning of lay assistants at the Eucharist

Every three years in Cork, Cloyne and Ross, parishes recruit lay people who are trained and commissioned to serve as lay assistants at the Eucharist, and who assist with the distribution of the sacrament. The short training course, outlined by the Bishop, Dr Paul Colton, and delivered locally in each parish covers the Church's understanding of liturgy and the Holy Communion, as well as all the practical aspects of serving in this ministry. Nearly 300 adults from the Diocese serve in this local ministry and they will be commissioned, in their parishes, during morning Service on Sunday, 23rd April.

In one parish, Carrigaline Union, a group of 17 parishioners recently completed the 6 week PRISM Holy Communion Course and are pictured above on the last night celebrating



together with some of the 'old' team. Altogether there will be 30 people commissioned on Sunday, April 23rd to be Lay Assistants at the Eucharist in the Parish Union (7 for St John's Church, Monkstown and 23 for St Mary's Church, Carrigaline).

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