



**History in the making: They've shared sharp words in the past, but President Donald Trump met Pope Francis. The private audience with the pontiff was preceded by a cordial handshake for the cameras. Seereport page 12.**

## **Wicklow and Meath C of I reps meet with Fianna Fail on school admissions**

A delegation from the Church of Ireland has met representatives of Fianna Fail to outline their serious concerns with Government proposals on the role of religion in school admissions. The Wicklow News reports.

The delegation met with Fianna Fail Spokesperson on Education, Thomas Byrne TD, Fianna Fail Chairperson of the Oireachtas Committee on Education, Fiona O Loughlin TD and Fianna Fail Spokesperson on Urban Renewal and Housing, Pat Casey TD.

During the meeting the delegation emphasised the serious concern expressed across Church of Ireland communities that the proposals being advanced by Minister Richard Bruton would undermine minority faith schools. In particular the wide catchment areas that many Church of Ireland Schools serve, combined with the absence of choice of local national and secondary schools for Protestant families was emphasised. The importance of retaining Section 7 (3) (c) of the Equal Status Act was also stressed by the delegation, which comprised representatives of Church of Ireland primary and post primary schools, as well as the Board of Education.



**Dr Ken Fennelly, Secretary General Synod Board of Education; Tony Goodwin BL, Consultant to Board of Education on Admissions; the Revd Janice Aiton, Rector of Dunboyne Group of Parishes (Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Ratoath, Ashbourne, Maynooth, Enfield & Kilcock) and Chair of St Peter's NS Dunboyne; FF Shadow Education Spokesperson, Thomas Byrne TD; Garrett Fennell, Chair Temple Carrig Secondary School BOM; Pat Casey TD, FF Spokesperson on Urban Renewal and Housing; and the Revd Nigel Waugh, Rector of Delgany and Chair of Delgany NS BOM.**

The Fianna Fail representatives said that they recognised the concerns that have been voiced by minority faith schools and would work to ensure that any reforms introduced by the

Government would make provision for the important role these schools play in sustaining and supporting local Church of Ireland communities.

Representing the COI at the meeting with Fianna Fail were:

Garrett Fennell Chairperson Temple Carrig School, Greystones; the Revd Nigel Waugh, Chair of Delgany National School; the Revd Janice Aiton, Chair of St Peters National School in Dunboyne; Dr Ken Fennelly, Secretary, Board of Education; and Tony Goodwin BL, advisor to the Board of Education on Admissions.

## **Missionary appeals to Dublin legislators over sex trafficking**

Fr Shay Cullen addressed TDs and Senators in Leinster House last week and commended them for enacting the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, which criminalises the man who solicits sex.

State sanctioned execution of people suspected of being drug users or dealers in the Philippines has resulted in over 8,000 deaths since 30 June 2016, missionary Fr Shay Cullen told TDs and

senators in an address at Leinster House last week.

Warning that the rule of law was effectively gone, the Columban priest said a stand had to be taken against these human rights violations.

“We are all vulnerable if death squads are allowed to have their murderous way,” he warned.

Of President Rodrigo Duterte’s war on drugs, the 74-year-old said, “There are death squads everywhere. Teenagers are picked up and shot dead – their bodies left on the side of the road. Vigilantes are earning money from all these killings.”

The missionary has himself been the subject of death threats over his exposé of the abuses of the sex industry and his willingness to stand up for the rights of street children in the Philippines.

Fr Cullen told TDs and senators that there are death squads everywhere in the south east Asian country, and that President Duterte has vowed to kill three million people, if necessary, in his war on drugs.

“This guy is a real killer,” he said in his Oireachtas presentation, and explained that



**Front Row L to R: Maureen O’Sullivan, Preda Ireland, Fr Shay Cullen SSC, Matt Moran, Fr Pat Raleigh SSC, and Fr Gerry Neylon SSC. Back Row L to R: Fr Padraig O’Donovan SSC, Srs Geraldine McCarthy, Mary Ryan and Mainin McDonagh of APT Ireland, and Maureen O’Sullivan TD who facilitated the meeting.**

those “working to protect young people and give them sanctuary by taking them off the streets are in danger”.

Duterte has told human rights workers and journalists that if they get assassinated they “deserve it”.

“I got a death threat only a couple of weeks ago,” the Columban missionary revealed.

However, on investigation, it turned out to be an attempt at extorting money from his PREDA Foundation for street children and children who have been sexually abused.

Elsewhere in his address, he warned that human trafficking is “a billion dollar business” which is expanding, and that legalising prostitution is not the answer, as it “opens the door” for traffickers.

He praised legislators for adopting the Swedish model by enacting the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, which criminalises the man who solicits sex.

He recalled his campaign to have the US Navy base on Subic Bay shut down.

“It was a huge facility built during the Korean war and continually expanded during the Vietnam war. Thousands of US sailors would be coming into Olongapo City and it became the brothel city of South East Asia. Sixteen thousand women and children were working as sex workers in the bars and clubs and on the streets.”

One notorious part of Olongapo City was ‘Walking Street’, where the sex bars were located, and this had up to 25,000 people

working in places like sex hotels, sex bars and brothels.

Having been made aware of the plight of the children and women trapped in the sex industry, Fr Cullen soon understood that “sexually exploited women were not there voluntarily” but were coerced through bonded labour via a cycle of debt from which they were never able to free themselves.

It was a religious sister who drew his attention to the scandal she discovered in Olongapo of at least 18 underage girls, some as young as 9 years old, who were suffering from venereal disease and STDs. The children said that sailors and farmers were abusing them.

That was when he started his campaign to shut the US military base and convert the area to a new economic zone where there would be work with dignity for the people of Olongapo City.

In 1992 the military base closed down and the last US ship left Subic Bay on 22 November that year.

Today, by contrast, the conversion dream has been realised, and where the military used to be located there is now a commercial zone with malls and a marina, where people from



Singapore, Hong Kong and Manila are bringing their yachts.

“So the campaign was a big success; we helped to save lives and ended the human sex industry that was going on there,” Fr Cullen said.



## **New patron of CAI at IDAHOT service**

**After the IDAHOT service in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, Bishop Walton Empey, the new patron of Changing Attitude Ireland, replacing the late Dean Victor Griffin, preacher Revd Dr Brendan McCarthy and the Dean of CCD, Very Revd Dermot Dunne.**

## **Enniskillen Cathedral joining in global prayer movement**

Archbishop of Canterbury to join in a focused time of prayer known as “Thy Kingdom Come” from Ascension, Thursday, 25th May until Pentecost, 4th June. St Macartin’s Cathedral parish, Enniskillen, is joining with other Christian communities and will be opening their new Iona Prayer Room in the Cathedral Hall between 9am and 9pm each day for formal, focused or private prayer.

The formal prayer sessions will continue throughout each day with readings from the Old Testament and New Testament, as well as morning and evening prayer.

Focused prayer will include those for children, the government, education and for Fermanagh. There will also be time outside the organised prayer times for private prayer.

The rector of St Macartin’s Cathedral, the Very Revd Kenneth Hall said: “Our prayer is that everyone within the Cathedral family will find the time to spend at least one hour in prayer during the 10 days.”

## Free seminar to address issues surrounding mental health

The Church and Society Commission (CASC) of the Church of Ireland is issuing an invitation to clergy and church leaders from all denominations to attend an information morning addressing issues surrounding mental health. The seminar takes place on Thursday June 15 from 9.00 am to 12.30 pm in the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, Braemor Park, Dublin 14. It will conclude with a light lunch at 12.30 pm. Attendance is free and there will be free parking available onsite for attendees.

The speakers at the event will be:

- Dr Eilis Hennessy, Senior Lecturer in developmental psychology in UCD School of Psychology, 'Challenging stigma to improve young people's mental health',
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- Dr. Regina Mc Quillan, Palliative Medicine Consultant, St Francis Hospice and Beaumont Hospital, 'Supporting the Mental Health of People Living with a Life Limiting Illness'
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- The Revd James Mulhall, Social Worker, Career Guidance Counsellor and Church of Ireland Curate in the Lismore Union of Parishes as well as being the Safeguarding Trust Child Protection Officer for the Dioceses of Cashel, Ferns and Ossory, 'Faith and Mental Health'.
  - The introductory remarks on the day will be made by Archbishop Michael Jackson.
- Places are limited, and will be allocated on a first-come/first-served basis. To secure a place, please email [seminar@ireland.anglican.org](mailto:seminar@ireland.anglican.org) or contact Caoimhe Leppard in Church of Ireland House, Dublin, 01 4125608.

## **Pope offers olive branch to President Trump**

The Pope has held a private audience with US President Donald Trump, putting aside their previous clashes.

The president, accompanied by his wife and several aides, arrived at the Vatican on Wednesday morning and thanked the pope saying it was "a great honour" to be there.



During the meeting, the two leaders with contrasting styles and differing worldviews attempted to broadcast a tone of peace.

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The Pope previously denounced policies that didn't welcome migrants. During one of his weekly Wednesday catechism lessons he said: "In the social and civil context as well, I appeal not to create walls but to build bridges.

"To not respond to evil with evil."

Although the pontiff didn't refer to Trump in his comments, it came amid a global uproar over the president's administration's attempts to impose a travel ban on seven mostly Muslim countries.

Returning from a visit last year to the US-Mexico border, he was asked about Trump's campaign pledge to build a border wall and he replied that anyone who wants to build a wall is "not Christian".

In response, Trump said: "For a religious leader to question a person's faith is disgraceful."

The meeting ended 30 minutes later when Francis rang the bell in his private study. Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, had a private audience with Francis at the Vatican in 2014 that lasted 50 minutes.

The pope gave the president a medal featuring an olive branch, among other gifts prompting Trump to say "We can use peace".

According to NPR, he also gave the president copies of his writings, "Including his encyclical on climate change - a topic on which Trump has a very different opinion".

Austen Ivereigh, UK-based Catholic writer and journalist reported that the tension at the beginning of the meeting wasn't present by the end.

Ivereigh said: "They were much more relaxed with each other, there were smiles, there was exchanges of gifts - there was clearly some warmth there."

He continued that journalists overheard Trump tell the pope at the end of the meeting "I won't forget what you said", although it's not clear what he was referring to.

Ivereigh added: "That was an important gesture that certainly the meeting had some impact on him."

Trump presented the pontiff some books written by Martin Luther King Jr and said: "I think you'll enjoy them. I hope you do."



## **2,000 young people to attend 'Fan the Flame' mass in Derry**

Over 2,000 young students who received the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Diocese of Derry this year will gather to celebrate the Eucharist in Celtic Park GAA stadium, Derry. The Mass will be celebrated on Wednesday 7 June beginning at 11.30am and finishing at 1.00pm.

The annual 'Fan the Flame' Mass, organised by the Derry Diocesan Catechetical Centre, and now in its 11th year, will welcome primary students from across the counties of Derry, Tyrone and Donegal to celebrate their Confirmations together and mark in a special



way the end of their final primary school years. The name 'Fan the Flame' comes from the Saint Paul to Timothy: "Fan into flame the gift God gave you".

Each year the Fan the Flame Mass sees a procession through Celtic Park of thousands of students under their school banners. The students and schools will also be involved in the music and liturgy of the day. The Mass has grown each year, and now also sees many teenage volunteers who are involved with the Pope John Paull II awards.

The ceremony will conclude with a release of balloons symbolising the breath of the Holy Spirit.

For more information on the Fan the Flame Mass, see [www.derrydiocese.org](http://www.derrydiocese.org).

## Today in Christian History, May 24

**May 24, 1089 (traditional date):** Archbishop of Canterbury, scholar, and church reformer Lanfranc dies. Known primarily for his development of the doctrine of transubstantiation, in which the eucharistic bread and wine become Christ's body and

blood, he also educated brilliant scholar Anselm and future pope Alexander II.

**May 24, 1543:** Polish astronomer and cleric Nicolas Copernicus dies in Poland. His heliocentric (sun-centered) concept of the solar system was radical, though not unheard of before his time. Still, some theologians strongly criticized the theory. The Roman Catholic church never ordained Copernicus, but he participated in a religious community at the cathedral of Frauenburg.

**May 24, 1689:** Parliament passes England's Toleration Act, granting freedom of worship to Dissenters (non-Anglican Protestants). but not to Catholics and atheists.

**May 24, 1738:** Father of Methodism John Wesley feels his "heart strangely warmed" when he hears a reading of the preface to Luther's commentary on Romans at London's Aldersgate Chapel).

**May 24, 1844:** Samuel Morse sends the first long-distance telegraph message: "What hath God wrought.

**May 24, 1854:** Presbyterians found the first black college in the United States: Pennsylvania's Lincoln University.

**May 24, 1878:** Harry Emerson Fosdick, popular champion of liberal Christianity and often called "the most influential interpreter of religion to his generation," is born.

