

Three ways of reconciling the Reformation, Archbishop Martin



The Most Revd Eamon Martin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland,
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was the preacher at Choral Evensong in Saint Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh, on Sunday, 8th October, to mark the 500th anniversary of Luther's theses.

Archbishop Martin presented three ways of reconciling the Reformation by emphasising ... "the importance of friendship and trust" and "a shared encounter with Christ in the sacred scriptures and in prayer," and by "strengthening our shared Christian witness on the island of Ireland."

Archbishop Martin said, "The Christian churches have more in common with one another than they have differences between them," said Archbishop Martin, who quoted from the recent joint declaration issued by His Holiness, Pope Francis, and the President of the World Lutheran Federation, Bishop Munib Yunan.

The quoted section of that joint declaration reads: "We lament before Christ that Lutherans and Catholics have wounded the visible unity of the Church. Theological differences were accompanied by prejudice and conflicts, and religion was instrumentalised for political ends. Our common faith in Jesus Christ and our baptism demand of us a daily conversion, by which we cast off the historical disagreements

and conflicts that impede the ministry of reconciliation. While the past cannot be changed, what is remembered and how it is remembered can be transformed”.

Responding to that call for daily conversion, Archbishop Martin presented three ways of bridging the differences between the Christian denominations or, as he said, ‘reconciling the reformation’.

“Firstly, I want to emphasise the importance of personal friendship and trust,” he said. “This trust is founded on the reality that what unites us is so much greater than what divides us. We share the conviction that ‘God loved us first’, with His free gift of grace and merciful love, and before any human response that we might have given. Sometimes we underplay the extent of agreement that exists across our traditions on key doctrinal issues, including the core issue of justification, which triggered so much of the polemic and mutual condemnations of the Reformation period.”

The Archbishop said there was no denying the differences between the churches: “However, changing the paradigm from disagreement and difference to one of friendship and trust, frees up our theologians to debate and clarify the areas of

difference that merit deeper understanding and dialogue.”

The second bridge offered by the Archbishop was that of ‘a shared encounter with Christ in the sacred scriptures and in prayer’. “Saint Jerome was convinced that ‘ignorance of the scriptures is also ignorance of Christ’,” Dr Martin said. “During the period surrounding Luther’s reformation, Christians rediscovered the centrality of God’s Word in the life and mission of the Church. We cannot however allow the Word of God to remain shut up within us, or resort to individualism in our interpretation of it. Jesus’ moving prayer to the Father: “that they may be one, so that the world may believe”(Jn 17:21) promises us that as we grow closer to Christ in his Word and in prayer, we draw closer to each other. Our shared immersion in the Word inspires us to prayer and onwards to a merciful outreach towards the poor and marginalised.”

The Archbishop’s third suggestion for ‘Reconciling the Reformation’ on the island of Ireland was for all Christians here to strengthen their witness to wider society. “The role of religion and faith in Irish society, north and south, has clearly changed dramatically, influenced by the process of secularisation and evidenced by a steady decline in Church attendance and in

vocations to ministry,” he said. “More and more people are now living their lives without any reference to God or to religious belief.

“It is in this environment that all of us as members of Christian traditions are being called to courageously go out of ourselves’ to engage in mission. Our wounded world needs so much to be healed and enlightened by the Gospel, and we are all called to be prophetic in shining the light and truth of the Gospel into some of the trickiest and most sensitive issues of our time.

“I am convinced that in the midst of an increasingly secular world, we in the various Christian traditions are called to combine our efforts out of our ‘certain hope’ for the world. We therefore present to public discourse our consistent Christian conviction about the sacredness of all 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, about a society that is marked by peace, justice and care for all, especially the most vulnerable.

“We people of faith, in the various Christian traditions on the island of Ireland, share the responsibility of leading the way in transforming

relationships and in healing the legacy and pain of our troubled past.”

Annual meeting of C of I and Catholic bishops

In the spirit of the recommendation of the International Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM) that there should be regular meetings of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in individual countries to discuss common concerns, a sixth such meeting of Irish bishops took place in Dublin on Saturday, 28th September.

Thirteen bishops were present representing the Irish Episcopal Conference and the House of Bishops. In an atmosphere marked by positivity and candour, the bishops discussed a wide range of issues of common interest in relation to the ministry and service churches offer in Irish society, both north and south of the border.

These included education; engagement with young people; the World Meeting of Families, emphasizing its ecumenical possibilities; the plight of refugees and migrants; and current social issues. All the participants said the experience was very valuable as they shared

insightful perspectives that engendered renewed commitment to promoting the Kingdom of God.

The Church of Ireland bishops present included: Archbishop Richard Clarke (Armagh), Archbishop Michael Jackson (Dublin & Glendalough), Bishop Patricia Storey (Meath and Kildare), Bishop Kenneth Good (Derry & Raphoe), Bishop Michael Burrows (Cashel, Ferns and Ossory) and Bishop Patrick Rooke (Tuam, Killala and Achonry)

The Roman Catholic bishops present included: Bishop Tony Farquhar (Retired Auxiliary Bishop of Down and Connor), Bishop John Fleming (Killala), Bishop Donal McKeown (Derry), Bishop Brendan Leahy (Limerick), Bishop Raymond Browne (Kerry), Bishop Kevin Doran (Elphin) and Bishop Alan McGuckian (Raphoe)

Rector Appointed to Christ Church, Dun Laoghaire

The Revd Ása Björk Ólafsdóttir O'Hanlon has been appointed Rector of Christ Church, Dun Laoghaire in the Diocese of Dublin. She has been Vicar of the parish since January 2013.



Ása is Icelandic and has lived in Ireland since 2010. She has three adult children: Gabriel and Sebastian, who live in Reykjavick, and Messíana

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who lives in Dun Laoghaire with Ása and her husband Martin. Before coming to Dublin she was Rector in the Kells Union of Parishes and previously was District Pastor and assistant to the Dean of Kjalarnes district, Iceland.

During her time in Dun Laoghaire, Ása saw an opportunity to put the Gospel into practice with a venture called The Dining Room. Based in the Parochial Hall, the Dining Room catered for the people on the fringes of society in Dun Laoghaire and welcomed the hungry and the lonely three lunchtimes a week for a hot meal and a chat. It ran for two and a half years and today Crosscare has taken over the role.

Ása says she aims to listen carefully to the needs and interests of the people within her congregation as well as in the wider community and work faithfully in a “beautiful but sometimes secular world”. She enjoys the fellowship and cooperation of her neighbouring Church of Ireland clergy and also working ecumenically with Church and community leaders in the Dun Laoghaire area.

“Being the third of four sisters and two brothers, I am used to a large family and I look at Ministry as working within a large family where everyone has a role and we work and serve our Lord

together. We may not always agree, but the general goal is the same,” Ása says.

Crafty Harvest at Lisnaskea



Flowers created from sugar craft

Lisnaskea Parish took the theme of harvest to a wider interpretation, celebrating the gifts and talents of parishioners not only in the growing of fruit, flowers and vegetables but also handwork such as knitting, embroidery and crochet as well as paintings and crafts.



Hedgehog made from paper folding

Called 'Crafty Harvest Weekend,' Holy Trinity Church was open throughout last weekend from Friday, 29th September to Sunday, 1st October for visitors to come to enjoy. Local bands were invited to play music during the weekend. On Sunday evening, the Crafty Harvest weekend ended with the singing of favourite hymns.

Belfast Cathedral Pets' Service this Sunday

Belfast Cathedral is hosting a special Pets' Service on Sunday, October 15 and all creatures great and small are welcome to attend.

Dizzy dogs, cautious cats, reluctant rabbits and happy horses are all welcome to bring their (well behaved) owners along to this service which will feature a special blessing of all the pets.

Dean's Vicar at St Anne's, the Rev Canon Mark Niblock, said: "October 4 was St Francis of Assisi Day and this service, new to St Anne's, is inspired by his love of animals.

"This is also the time of year when churches celebrate the Harvest, and we want to reflect on the important place animals play in our lives at this service of thanksgiving and blessing."

This will be a short service featuring appropriate music on the organ and from the Cathedral Girls' Choir, there will be readings, and each individual pet will receive a blessing.

Canon Niblock said that in bygone days it was common practice for people to bring their

animals to church with them, so this forward step on the part of St Anne's is also a reflection on the past.

"This is an opportunity for people from Belfast and beyond to bring their pets along to engage with St Anne's and have some fun," Canon Niblock added.

Kirk names Moderator Designate for 2018-19

The Highland minister who married Madonna and Guy Ritchie and baptised their son Rocco will be the next Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Rev Susan Brown, minister of Dornoch Cathedral, will step into the 12-month role next May, succeeding Right Rev Dr Derek Browning.

The 58-year-old says she is "deeply moved and honoured" to be chosen as the Church of Scotland's ambassador for 2018-19.

"Being Moderator will not be about what I can do, but about what God wants to do," she said.



Moderator Designate Rev Susan Brown

“I am conscious that it is both a great privilege and a great responsibility - one I can only undertake at God’s prompting.”

Rev Dr George Whyte, Principal Clerk of the Church of Scotland, welcomed Mrs Brown’s appointment.

He said: “I was delighted to hear of Susan’s nomination. She brings great personal qualities and a wide range of ministerial, community and family experience to the post.

“I look forward to working with her throughout the year.”

Church group says number of kids using gambling sites is 'astonishing'

A group representing a number of church organisations has told Premier News the number of children gambling in the UK is "astonishing".

The Joint Public Issues Team's comments follow an investigation by The Sunday Times, which revealed gambling firms are using children's cartoon characters to promote online betting.

The Gambling Commission's Young People and Gambling Report indicated that 450,000 children are gambling in England and Wales every week.

The Advertising Standards Agency has opened an investigation to see if online bookies have targeted youngsters with characters such as Peter Pan and Jack and The Beanstalk, for games - some of which can be played for free, without any age verification required.

Rachel Lampard, team leader of the Joint Public Issues Team, told Premier why this is problematic.

Speaking during News Hour, she said: "Children find it attractive, they have fun, they might even win some money - they can't collect it...but they think they've won.

"It gives this message that gambling is an ok activity for children and that's a really big problem."

Betting firms are not permitted to target children under 18-years-old.

Lampard urged parents to have conversations with their children about their online activities as gambling can have a long-lasting negative effect on them.

She explained: "It leads to disruptive relationships, it leads to truancy, it can lead to stealing, it can lead to deterioration in mental health.

"All of those can have a massive impact not just on children as they grow up - but if that happens at a really important time in their formation as well, it can really affect them as an adult as well."

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Conservative Anglican leader breaks ranks: 'We are not walking together'

A conservative Anglican leader has broken rank to launch an attack on fellow Church heads around the world, saying: 'You have to either be a relativist, pluralist or there's no place for you' in the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Greg Venables, Archbishop of the South America, was among 34 heads of Anglican provinces around the world to attend a meeting in Canterbury last week. But in comments released by the traditionalist grouping GAFCON, of which he is a part, Venables offered a different reflection from that given by the Archbishop of Canterbury and other officials.

At the end of the week-long gathering, a communiqué from the meeting described it as a 'gift from God' and restates the leaders would 'walk together' despite deep differences over issues such as same-sex marriage.

Justin Welby declared 'business as usual' and said primates had 'arrived feeling beleaguered and left feeling uplifted' as the talks mainly



Archbishop Greg Venables was re-elected as the new Primate of the Anglican Church of South America after previously holding the role from 2001-2010

focused on issues other than sexuality which, he said, 'has not been the case for 20 years'.

The Archbishop of Hong Kong, Paul Kwong, who has attended the previous five meetings, said it was the best he had ever been to not because everyone agreed but because everyone was committed to walking together.

But Venables, who left half way through the week, denied this and said 'we aren't walking

together because the situation has not been dealt with'.

In comments released on Monday he said: 'What was identified clearly in the meeting is that some aren't walking together, some are walking together but at a distance, and some are walking together.'

In a critique of the 80 million-strong worldwide Anglican Communion Venables said it had 'lost touch with the plain truth as revealed in Scripture, and that's a tragedy, but we've gotta keep on being there proclaiming it and speaking it. Not walking away, but not pretending either that we are walking together with people who are ignoring the plain truth of Scripture, even though they might appear to be orthodox.'

His comments differed markedly from those of the Archbishop of Kenya, Jackson Ole Sapit, who is also a member of the GAFCON primates' council. He called on his fellow conservatives 'constructively engage' in an interview with Christian Today earlier in the week.

'There are a whole range of areas that the Church is doing beautifully in and it can do even more when it is strong, when it is united because

you can have a stronger voice than when we are disintegrated.'

He added: 'We can influence society, we can be able to able to influence decisions, even internationally, when we are together.'

'But divided we shall be weak.'

During the meeting the primates agreed to issue 'consequences' to the Scottish Episcopal Church for their decision to permit clerics who want to marry gay couples to do so. The de facto sanctions mean Scottish delegates cannot vote on key decision making within the Anglican structures nor represent the wider Anglican Communion.

But Venables went on to criticise the lack of 'Church discipline' and appeared to call for a more stringent and hierarchical system to punish provinces.

Unlike the Roman Catholic Church there is no one head of the Anglican Church with each province independent and the Archbishop of Canterbury considered 'first among equals' with the other leaders.

'Maybe the Anglican way doesn't have a way of doing this,' said Venables calling for stricter discipline. 'Maybe that is what we just have to accept. The problem is part of the role of Church leadership is discipline. If we cannot exercise discipline when people wander away from the truth, then the Church cannot function as the Church, and that's where the wheels have dropped off.'

He went on: 'Certainly there is a need for leadership to exercise discipline. And we haven't found it.'

He added: 'One of the messages from the Primates Meeting was it's "business as usual." Things haven't changed. This is how it's going to be, and that saddens me deeply.'

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