



2nd Sunday Advent – 08 December 2024

CHURCHES AND THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST



A recent newspaper article claimed that King Charles and the Princess of Wales, who are both suffering from cancer, have found “strength in spirituality” in dealing with their illnesses. It is a sentiment which will be appreciated by people from all political and cultural backgrounds in these islands and further afield who would describe themselves as religious or spiritual, though these are not necessarily the same thing. Many people nowadays would claim that “religion” is merely the structure of maintaining a Christian faith but that “spirituality” is the essence of faith itself, and not necessarily confined to Christianity alone.....In my recent book, *Keeping the Faith*, I set out to reflect on these and other issues which have helped to shape my values and career, during which I have spent more than 60 years as an author and journalist, and nearly 25 of those as the religion correspondent of the Belfast Telegraph. Looking back to my childhood as a Presbyterian by accident of birth, I realise yet again how churchgoing was obligatory in the small model village of Bessbrook where I was brought up. Sunday worship was an important social occasion, and the Presbyterian Church was also known as the Meeting House because it gave everyone, including local farmers, an opportunity to meet one another and to catch up on local news and gossip. The same applied no doubt to the Anglican and Catholic Churches in our village, and smaller groups like the Quakers and Plymouth Brethren, but significantly each denomination kept strictly to its own beliefs and religious cultural practices. The only inter-church service of the year was held in the local Methodist Church early on Christmas morning after we villagers walked around the dark streets with flash lamps while we awakened people with our medley of Christmas carols. There was also a kind of cultural apartheid in death. People from the main denominations would express condolences to the bereaved but very few would dare to cross the threshold of a church belonging to “the other side”. Quite often it was regarded as respectful enough to stand silently outside the walls of the church, while the funeral service took place inside.... There is no doubt the churches of all the main denominations singularly and collectively failed to lead their congregations across the man-made barriers and rules which were regarded at the time as the teachings of the Gospel - which they certainly were not - and which inevitably led to future scepticism and criticism when people felt free to make up their own minds about such important issues. That said, I refer in my book to a number of individuals whose deep Christian faith made a difference to those around them. They included the Rev Dr Ray Davey, a former Presbyterian padre during the second World War who spent years in Italian and German prisoner-of-war camps, and returned to his native Ulster to establish the seminal inter-church Corrymeela Community. I was also in awe of my first Belfast Telegraph editor, John E Sayers, a dedicated member of the Methodist Church who survived a Royal Navy shipwreck and worked in Churchill’s map room during the second World War. He then returned to Northern Ireland to try to drag stiff-necked unionism into the 20th century, thus incurring the baleful hostility of the Rev Ian Paisley, who was regarded by many of us as one of the people most responsible for the Troubles. Sadly, Sayers and his supporters lost and Paisley won, and look what happened in the North over the next 40 years or so. Part of my motive in writing my book was to pay tribute to people such as Sayers and Davey and many, many other liberal and courageous bridge-builders who are now part of the forgotten undergrowth of Irish history. If they, and the thousands of others like them, had been successful, how much death, injury and heartache would have been avoided from 1968 onwards. Today, there is talk of a possible Border poll which looks as if it will not come any time soon, and much less some kind of Irish unity on a very long finger. However the stark reality remains that you cannot successfully unite the island properly until you unite the people in the North. Meanwhile, the churches still have their huge crosses to carry as they try to move on from the terrible mistakes of the past and strive to remain relevant in the face of advancing secularism. Perhaps GK Chesterton was right after all when he claimed that “the Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried.”

Courtesy Alf McCreary & The Irish Times
Full Article [here](#)

Remembered this Weekend

We remember all belong to us as well as those who have died through hunger, violence & war.



Communion & Confirmation

St. Brigid's & Warrenmount
1st Communion 17 May 2025
Confirmation 08 May 2025
CBS Francis Street
1st Communion 24 May 2025
Confirmation 22 May 2025



Christmas Services

The timetable for Christmas Services at the back of the church. Download [here](#)



Christmas Concert

A fundraising concert for St. James's Hospital will take place on Thursday 12 December at 7pm here in James's St. Church. Tickets available at: www.supportstjames.ie



Annual St. Vincent de Paul Collection

Takes place this Sunday 08 December. This collection takes place inside the church and all donations go to the local St. Vincent de Paul and will be used for those in need in our own Parish here in Francis Street. As this is a once a year collection, please be as generous as you can.



Christian Concert

3 cinemas in Dublin are showing a Christian Christmas concert: A Drummer Boy Christmas Live: The Cinematic Concert Experience (U) all showing on Saturday 14th December at 2pm. Screenings are at:
Movies @ The Square, Dublin
Movies @ Dundrum
Movies @ Swords. More info [here](#)

SECOND SUNDAY ADVENT

Penitential Rite

The Lord our God is close at hand.

You prepare the way, O Lord, that we may prepare for You. Lord have mercy

You call us to new life, a life of justice and compassion. Christ have mercy

You bring us together, with the poor and the destitute. Lord have mercy

May our gracious God, who calls us to prepare, by lives of justice and compassion, forgive us our sin and bring us to life everlasting. Amen

Baruch 5:1-9

See, Jerusalem, take off your dress of sorrow and distress, put on the beauty of the glory of God for ever, wrap the cloak of the integrity of God around you, put the diadem of the glory of the Eternal on your head: since God means to show your splendour to every nation under heaven, since the name God gives you for ever will be, 'Peace through integrity, and honour through devotedness'. Arise, Jerusalem, stand on the heights and turn your eyes to the east: see your sons reassembled from west and east at the command of the Holy One, jubilant that God has remembered them. Though they left you on foot, with enemies for an escort, now God brings them back to you like royal princes carried back in glory. For God has decreed the flattening of each high mountain, of the everlasting hills, the filling of the valleys to make the ground level so that Israel can walk in safety under the glory of God. And the forests and every fragrant tree will provide shade for Israel at the command of God; for God will guide Israel in joy by the light of his glory with his mercy and integrity for escort.

Philippians 1:3-6. 8-11

Every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy, remembering how you have helped to spread the Good News from the day you first heard it right up to the present. I am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Christ Jesus comes. God knows how much I miss you all, loving you as Christ Jesus loves you. My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception. so that you can always recognise what is best. This will help you to become pure and blameless, and prepare you for the Day of Christ, when you will reach the perfect goodness which Jesus Christ produces in us for the glory and praise of God.

Alleluia, Alleluia

Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.. and all mankind shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia

Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah: A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley will be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low, winding ways will be straightened and rough roads made smooth. And all mankind shall see the salvation of God.

Prayer of the Faithful

Father, Son and Spirit, through your love we discover the true beauty of our nature as human beings. We thank you. Lord hear us

Lord God, you call us to prepare for the coming of Christ, by a gentle change of heart. Guide us on our journey. Lord hear us

Lord, in our daily lives, help us to deal with each other with greater patience, understanding and kindness. Lord hear us

We remember all who have died. In this season of hope, we look to the time when we will be happily re-united in the Kingdom of your love. Lord hear us

May we as a society, accept our responsibility for those, who are poor, and disadvantaged. May our concern be rooted not in a passing sense of guilt, but in a real desire to change our society. Lord hear us

In silence we remember those in need of our prayer and support.....Lord hear us



Reflection

May I have the courage today
To live the life that I would love,
To postpone my dream no longer
But do at last what I came here for
And waste my heart on fear no more.
May I live this day
Compassionate of heart,
Clear in word,
Gracious in awareness,
Courageous in thought,
Generous in love.