

News Briefing: From Britain and Ireland



A former BBC political correspondent, Martina Purdy, (pictured left) has professed her vows as a member of the Adoration Sisters in Belfast. Her one-time media colleagues were in the congregation for the profession at St Peter's Cathedral in Belfast. Sr Martina and a former barrister, Sr Elaine Kelly, (pictured right), received their brown veils as well as the ring and brown scapular of the congregation. Speaking to the Irish News, for which she used to write, Sr Martina, 51, said that when she entered the community three years ago, "it was such a beautiful day and I thought it was never going to get any better than this, but I have to say it gets better. I'm just totally blown away."

Highlands suicide plea

An Inverness priest has called on politicians to address the "despairing spiral" that has led to a shockingly high rate of suicide in the Scottish Highlands. Fr James Bell of St Mary's Church spoke out after the funeral of a 39-year-old mother of four, who took her life recently. Fr Bell has called on policy-makers to follow the lead of Merseyside NHS in pursuing a "Zero Suicide" initiative, aimed at developing a suicide prevention programme.

Rare honour for McAleese

The former president of Ireland, Dr Mary McAleese, is to be installed this weekend as one of the first lay canons that the Church of Ireland's Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin has appointed. She will be admitted to the Cathedral's Chapter as an honorary lay canon along with a medical expert, Professor Jim Lucey, Medical Director of St Patrick's Mental Health Services and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Trinity College Dublin.

The role of young people and the future of the Church in Europe are the two main themes at this week's meeting of Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe in Belarus. Cardinal Vincent Nichols, representing the bishops of England and Wales in Minsk, said that the meetings would make "a crucial contribution" to next year's synod on youth and to "the future of Europe more generally, where many young people experience great uncertainty and anxiety, combined with generosity and care for the future."

Church and chapel up for award

A Catholic church of the Byzantine rite and a Jesuit school chapel have made the shortlist for the 2017 Church Architecture Awards. The Belarusian memorial chapel (pictured) in north London is the first wooden church erected in the city since the Great Fire of 1666.

The church was built for members of the diaspora community, many of whom moved to the UK following the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster. It is dedicated to the victims of the accident.

A newly built chapel at a Jesuit school in London is also on the shortlist. The 50-seat church at Donhead Preparatory school in Wimbledon has a glass lantern built into the roof above the altar, surrounded by exposed timber. A stained glass window forms a focal point of the chapel.

Anglican Primates from around the world will arrive in the UK this weekend for a gathering in Canterbury, their first such encounter since January 2016.

Since then, 16 new primates have taken office. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has said the new leaders will bring "fresh energy" but also "tough questions." Archbishop Welby has also acknowledged that "possibly as many as six" primates may not attend for a variety of reasons. "We will miss those who are not there," he said. The Nigerian Primate, Archbishop Nicholas Okoh, has already announced that he will stay away.

Liz Dawn, the Catholic actress who played Vera Duckworth in ITV's *Coronation Street* for 34 years, has died, aged 77. She died peacefully at home on 25 September surrounded by her family, who said they were "devastated". Ms Dawn featured in the Catholic Communications Network's series, "My Faith Story", saying: "I've never doubted my faith ... I've always felt God's presence in my heart ... The feeling of prayer is a comfort like no other." She added: "God's given me a good life." A statement from the programme makers said she was "a true *Coronation Street* legend" who was "such a kind, considerate and caring friend and colleague".

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