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# NEWS

## FROM BRITAIN AND IRELAND

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# Sterling crash hits overseas charity projects for starving and sick

**Christopher Lamb**

BRITAIN'S LARGEST Catholic charity has admitted that the recession threatens to derail a number of its projects.

Grants by the international aid agency Cafod to projects around the world have plummeted in value as the pound has fallen 30 per cent against the dollar. "It is our most immediate problem," Cafod director Chris Bain told *The Tablet*. "It's going to have an impact on the budgets we are setting and it's a key issue."

Already the charity has reduced its contribution to the Justice and Peace Network in Britain, arguing that it will only fund work that complements its own. Further afield, projects affected by the weakened pound are in Uganda, Bolivia and Cambodia.

In Uganda, a care home for people with Aids has found the money given by Cafod has fallen in value by 20 per cent and in Cambodia,

the aid agency's £30,000 grant to an HIV programme run by religious sisters is now worth £12,000 less, representing the annual food budget of their hospice.

Mr Bain said that Cafod had also seen a decrease in new donors since the economic downturn and that future budgeting was going to be "very tight". "While the bedrock of our support is holding up, the number of new supporters may be down," he said. "This, I understand, is the case with a number of development aid agencies at this time. We are tracking everything regularly, and have contingencies in place in case income falls. Our future budgeting is taking into account all options, including a fall in income."

Mr Bain said he was confident that the "extremely generous" Catholic community would make up any shortfall and that people who retained their job during a recession could afford to be generous. According to Cafod's most

recent accounts lodged with the Charity Commission, £41 million of its £47m income in 2007-08 came from donations and the agency admitted that this year's Advent appeal had raised less than other year's.

Mr Bain said that the agency had not invested in the stock market, though it had deposited cash reserves in banks and other institutions, from which it expects to earn a return from the interest. The Charities Aid Foundation recently said that cuts in interest rates in the past six months would cost UK charities about £800 million of annual income.

Cafod also believes that the decline in the value of the pound and the contraction in the economy are set to wipe £7 billion from the UK government's aid budget over the next seven years, which it says will leave the poorest in the developing world "fighting for survival".

*(See Paul Donovan, page 12.)*

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## 'I am writing to express dismay at the effect of the Vatican decree'

■ **Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor has moved to limit the damage caused to relations between the Jewish and Catholic communities in Britain by the lifting of the excommunication of Bishop Richard Williamson, who has denied the Holocaust. The cardinal wrote to the Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks, to express his horror at the comments of Bishop Williamson and received a cordial reply this week. Their exchange follows.**

Dear Chief Rabbi,

I am writing to express my dismay at the effect of the Vatican decree releasing from excommunication bishops consecrated illicitly. Specifically I naturally deplore the comments made by the Englishman, Rev Williamson, in his denial of the full horror of the Holocaust.

His statement and views have absolutely no place in the Catholic Church and its teaching. Pope Benedict's reaffirmation of this on 28 January 2009 was made very clear when he expressed "full and unquestionable solidarity with our brother and sister recipients of the First Covenant ... May the Shoah be for all a warning against forgetfulness, against denial or reductionism, because violence against a single human being is vio-

lence against all".

Perhaps I should add that the lifting of excommunication is only a first step towards reconciliation of the bishops concerned. None of them is yet able to exercise any office either as priest or bishop in communion with the Catholic Church.

I put this in writing to assure you of our continued understanding and friendship. In these difficult times we are called to bear witness to peace and goodwill. I like to think this is especially true of relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish Community here in Britain.

With kindest wishes,

Yours sincerely,

**Cormac Card. Murphy-O'Connor**

*Archbishop of Westminster*

Your Eminence

I thank you for your letter, from the depths of my heart. Your dismay and your understanding of the seriousness of Holocaust denial matches the feeling of many Jews around the world who believe that great damage has been done to Catholic-Jewish relations.

Cardinal, for the better part of two thousand years the relationship between Jews and

the Church was adversarial, and sometimes worse. It led to centuries of persecution and suggested that faith was a prelude to tragedy. Whereas you and I both know that Judaism and Christianity, in their different ways, are a defiance of tragedy in the name of hope.

Vatican II, with its declaration, *Nostra Aetate*, is one of the greatest signals of hope in our lifetime. Since then successive Popes have worked so that today Jews and Catholics meet as friends, witnesses to the power of divine love to inspire human hearts in the work of reconciliation. That work must continue, and widen, not least to embrace Islam with which there is much healing to be done.

Last November, as leaders of all the faiths in Britain stood together in prayer at Auschwitz-Birkenau, witnesses to the Holocaust that some still deny, we committed ourselves to work together to take a stand against hatred in the name of the God of love.

Your Eminence, we are cherished friends. Let us work together to ensure that the friendship between our faiths continues and deepens, becoming a source of hope to people of all faiths.

With warm regards,

**Jonathan Sacks**

*Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth*

## Dublin child abuse report delayed by months

DELAYS DOGGING the long-awaited report into child abuse in the Archdiocese of Dublin may mean it is not delivered to the Government until the summer, *writes Paul Keenan*.

The commission, under the leadership of Justice Yvonne Murphy, is charged with examining the handling of a representative sample of allegations of abuse by priests of the archdiocese since 1940, made between January 1975 and May 2004.

It is thought that the latest delay is due to the fact that inadequacies over child protection procedures in the Diocese of Cloyne were recently referred to the commission for inclusion in the report.

However, preliminary findings of the report have been circulated to several interested parties including the Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, and his predecessor, Cardinal Desmond Connell. They have been accompanied by a warning that any leaks will be punished with a hefty fine and the possibility of a lengthy jail sentence.

Meanwhile, the majority of priests in the Diocese of Ferns have volunteered to be vetted by the Irish police, which will involve their background being scrutinised.

## Traditional family values 'enhance childhood'

**Isabel de Bertodano**

THE ARCHBISHOP of Canterbury has called for the contribution of Churches and faith communities to be recognised as "acutely relevant" when it comes to the wellbeing of children.

Referring in particular to the Christian tradition of marriage, Dr Rowan Williams said that religions should be regarded as a means of changing government policy on children and attitudes towards the young.

Dr Williams made the comments in his afterword to "A Good Childhood", a major independent report sponsored by the Church of England-affiliated Children's Society. The report, published on Monday, took three years to compile and paints a bleak picture of anxious, materialistic children surrounded by pushy adults and broken families.

It makes many recommendations on how children's lives can be improved, including by the strengthening of family bonds.

"Children with separate, single or step parents are 50 per cent more likely to fail at school, have low esteem, be unpopular with other children and have behavioural difficulties, anxiety or depression," it says.

It adds that bringing up children is one of life's most challenging tasks and should ideally be done by two people. The report also suggests that children and family life are damaged by working mothers.

Dr Williams, patron of the inquiry, writes that a belief in the importance of marriage is an essential element of Christianity. "The stable family unit when it is fully what it can be makes a statement about 'how things are' – about what cannot be shaken in a world where everything seems to be mobile and uncertain."

Bob Reitemeier, chief executive of The Children's Society and a Catholic, emphasised that though the traditional family was promoted the most important factor was the love shown to a child, which "could happen in any family or not happen in any family".

Jim Richards, director of the Westminster Catholic Children's Society, pointed out that the message of the report chimed with the Church's concept of the common good.

"If we really care for our children we don't pursue our individual interests," he said. "The same roots of this dreadfully selfish society have caused our current economic woes and caused our children to be unhappy."



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# Cardinal's ex-aide wins *Daily Mail* libel battle

## Strand News

A FORMER senior aide to Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor has won a libel battle against the publishers of the *Daily Mail* over a newspaper story that unjustly labelled him a hypocrite over an ex-girlfriend's abortion 20 years ago.

Following a unanimous jury verdict in his favour, Austen Ivereigh was awarded £30,000 libel damages and the newspaper ordered to pay legal costs totalling around £3 million. Mr Ivereigh said his reputation had been "comprehensively vindicated".

Awarding costs against the *Daily Mail*, Mr Justice Eady said that Mr Ivereigh had achieved an "unqualified victory" against the newspaper's "intransigence". He had done so "in light of the sneering belittling of his personality and his character made by the defendant".

"The defendants chose a strategy that in the end yielded nothing and are to be regarded as 'in substance and in reality' the losers," said the judge.

"This defendant has most certainly not substantially denied the allegations or offered an apology. It was not unreasonable for the claimant to pursue a libel action where such libel had such a bearing on his reputation and feelings."

Mr Ivereigh, 43, sued over a *Daily Mail* article that appeared in June 2006 which falsely suggested he gave his student girlfriend little option but to have an abortion after she fell pregnant by him in December 1988. Mr Ivereigh testified that the groundless claims took a devastating toll on his reputation, forcing him to sue to "nail the lie" and put the claims to rest.

His case first came before a London High Court jury last February when – after two weeks in court – the jury failed to reach a verdict.

Mr Ivereigh pursued his case in a second

trial that began last month and lasted nine days in all, with the jury delivering its verdict on Thursday of last week.

As well as falsely branding him a hypocrite over the abortion 20 years ago, said Mr Ivereigh's QC, Ronald Thwaites, the *Daily Mail* had noted his subsequent 2006 relationship with a divorced mother who became pregnant with twins. The woman, known in court as Mrs X, had miscarried the children after the relationship with Mr Ivereigh ended. Mr Thwaites said that the *Daily Mail* unfairly used this second episode as a "hook to hang the old story".

The "sting" of the *Daily Mail* article, said Mr Thwaites, was that Mr Ivereigh was alleged to be a "hypocrite in respect of abortion", facing claims that, in 1989, he "cornered" his then student girlfriend into a position where she had no choice but to terminate their child.

In the case of both women, Mr Thwaites demonstrated that Mr Ivereigh was against abortion and had promised to support them if they continued with the pregnancies.

Mr Justice Eady imposed a permanent injunction barring the *Daily Mail* from repeating the offending claims. After the jury's verdict, it emerged that in November 2007 Mr Ivereigh turned down an offer from the *Daily Mail* to settle the case for £10,000.

After the verdict Mr Ivereigh said: "Following this comprehensive vindication, it's now clear that I am not a hypocrite on abortion and that my words and actions have been consistent with each other."

Mr Ivereigh is now pursuing his case against the *Catholic Herald*, which repeated the *Daily Mail* story when it reported Mr Ivereigh's resignation as Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor's director of public affairs in 2006. These proceedings were stayed in March 2008 pending the outcome of the libel trial against the *Daily Mail*.

## FROM THE ARCHIVE

### 50 YEARS AGO

#### Letter from J. Gosling

In your issue of January 31st you write "It may be assumed that the Council will meet at the Vatican." This is a natural Catholic assumption; and yet if the main concern of the Council is to be re-union, and one of its purposes to have representatives of the Orthodox Churches present, it is to be hoped that it will not be at the Vatican. On the Catholic side there is no matter of principle involved, and so everything possible should be done not to inflict needless pin pricks on the East. It is hard for us in the West to realise the fear and suspicion which understandably colour the attitude of the Orthodox towards us, and the associations with this fear of the name of Rome; but these things have to be taken into account, and it would be a small act of charitable consideration to choose some other place, if practicable, with associations emotionally less difficult.

*The Tablet*, 7 February 1959

### 100 YEARS AGO

The speeches at the dinner of the Sphinx Club in London on Wednesday were almost entirely devoted to the discussion of the advantages and evils of publicity. Mr Plowden spoke strongly in favour, with few reservations, of the publicity given by the Press. With all its faults he was, he said, an out and out believer in publicity. The only restriction he would suggest to the Press was that they should at least appear to aim at the truth. A news boy hawking false news would be run in, but an editor who permitted the appearance of terminological inexactitudes could not be touched. He concluded with a reference to the imbecilities and banalities of the Press.

The Lord Chief Justice struck a more serious and deeper note. He had no objection to the fullest and freest publicity in the Press in the sense of discussion, criticism or advertisement. But he did consider that the publication and publicity given to the proceedings of the Divorce Court was a public evil. He could quite understand that, from a business point of view, the newspapers were obliged to meet the wishes of their readers, but he would like to see the leading journals of the day make a stand and say, "We will not publish these details." It was a matter for serious consideration by those who were interested in the administration of justice and in the high standard of moral character in this nation whether the time had not come when they ought to put a stop to the publication of proceedings in the Divorce Court.

*The Tablet*, 6 February 1909

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## Plater Trust's first grants total more than £200,000

THE YOUNG Christian Workers (YCW) organisation is among those to have received a grant from the Plater Trust, writes Isabel de Bertodano.

Grants totalling more than £200,000 were also awarded to St Mary's University College, the International Young Leaders Network (IYLN) and a group of five universities working on a collaborative Catholic Social Teaching project. YCW works across Britain and has been awarded more than £86,300 to "build an inno-

vative school for life", which aims to train ordinary young people as lay leaders.

The IYLN has been awarded £40,000 towards its Leaders To Come programme, while St Mary's in Twickenham, Middlesex, received £17,000 to support Catholics working in health care with training and resources. St Mary's is also among a group of universities awarded £60,000 to develop Catholic Social Teaching as a course available to students of education, social care and other subjects.

The other four are Newman University College in Birmingham; Liverpool Hope University (and the Archdiocese of Liverpool); Leeds Trinity and All Saints College; and Heythrop College in London.

This is the first year the Plater grants have been awarded.

The money comes from investments made by the Plater Trust, which was set up when Plater College in Oxford closed in 2006 and its buildings were sold for £5.6 million.



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