

# Irish Community in France celebrates Two Historic Events

Photo: Carán MacGull



Irish pilgrims arrive at Notre Dame de Paris after walking through the Latin Quarter from the Collège des Irlandais.

rest of France, and from Ireland had their own gathering for a very special and unique occasion: Mass in Irish celebrated on the high altar.

The day began with prayers in the Chapelle Saint Patrick followed by an Irish pilgrim walk through the streets of the Latin Quarter stopping to pray at Eglise Saint Etienne du Mont and Eglise Saint Ephrem (where many Irish people are laid to rest in the crypt). On arrival at Notre Dame de Paris the small group of pilgrims completed the first two steps of the Pilgrim Way to the prayers of St Patrick said by Fr Maher.

With green light coming from the upper reaches of this historic place of pilgrimage, Mass began at 12 noon in Notre Dame de Paris with a solemn procession in front of more than 1,000 Irish people and friends of Ireland, led by the carrying of the Irish Tricolour along the nave of the cathedral.

Monsignor Patrick Jacquin, Rector of Notre Dame de Paris, welcomed the Irish who filled up the entire nave of this magnificent place of worship. He said that the Mass was not only intended to mark

**T**he Irish Community in France, and in particular the Irish Chaplaincy in Paris, has been fully involved in two major historical events in the space of a month. In February President Michael D. Higgins made an official visit to France as part of the presidency of the European Union and then a month later on 16 March, Mass was celebrated *as Gaeilge* at the high altar of the Notre Dame de Paris Cathedral for the first time in 850 years!

On the third day of his official visit to France on 20 February, President Higgins visited the Collège des Irlandais, home to the Irish Chaplaincy and the Centre Culturel Irlandais. Irish Chaplain Fr Sean Maher welcomed the president to the Chapelle Saint Patrick. He explained to the president the historical significance of the chapel and the role Irish people have played in Paris for the past 400 years. Four students sang the moving *Deer's Cry* from St Patrick's Breastplate.

President Higgins remarked on the beauty of the music and the

profound spiritual experience. He paid tribute to the community of the chapel who continue the unbroken tradition from the founders of the Collège des Irlandais.

In this Year of Faith and on the 850th Anniversary Jubilee Year of Notre Dame de Paris, parishes and communities are making special pilgrimage to the cathedral. On 16 March, Irish pilgrims from Paris, the



Bishop Noel Treanor of Down & Connor celebrates Mass with priests from France and Ireland at the high altar of the Cathedral.

Photo: Carán MacGull



Led by the Irish Attorney General and Ambassador to France, more than 1,000 Irish pilgrims and friends fill the nave of the cathedral for the Irish Pilgrimage Mass.

Ireland's presidency of the European Union, but also the 850th anniversary of the cathedral.

Bishop Noel Treanor, on behalf of the Irish Bishops, was the chief celebrant while Mgr Brendan Byrne, Administrator of Kildare & Leighlin, gave the homily. Among the concelebrants were Fr Sean Maher, Irish Chaplain to Collège des Irlandais; Fr Aidan Troy from St Joseph's English Speaking Church in

Paris; and Fr Thomas O'Connor who is a member of the Fondation Irlandaise. The prayers and readings were said in three languages: Irish, English and French.

During his homily Mgr Byrne spoke about how Irish people had been on pilgrimage to Europe right back to St Patrick himself, who studied in Auxerre and was ordained bishop by St Germanus. Throughout the centuries Irish priests, bishops, soldiers and scholars have made a major contribution to the history, culture and Christian faith of France and Ireland.

Music and singing was provided by the Kildare & Leighlin Choir directed by Fr Liam Lawton, and the choir of Chapelle Saint Patrick. Mass began with the prelude *Tar Anuas* and then *Faithful is the Lord*. Prayers of the Mass came from *Aifreann Mhuire na nGael*,

*Glendalough Mass* (by Fr Lawton) with hymns including *Ag Criost an Síol* (O Riada), the *Deer's Cry* (Davey), and ending with *Hail Glorious St Patrick*. As Mass concluded shamrock was blessed by Bishop Treanor and distributed to the more than 1,000 Irish pilgrims.

The Irish Pilgrimage Mass was also notable by the presence of the Attorney General, Máire Whelan SC, who represented the Irish Government and the Irish Ambassador to France, Paul Kavanagh.

With these two historic events the existing interlocking bonds between our two great nations can only strengthen!

*Read articles and view photos of these historic moments by visiting [www.irishchaplaincyparis.fr](http://www.irishchaplaincyparis.fr).*



Irish College Chaplain Fr Sean Maher explains the history and beauty of the Chapelle Saint Patrick to President Michael D. Higgins.

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