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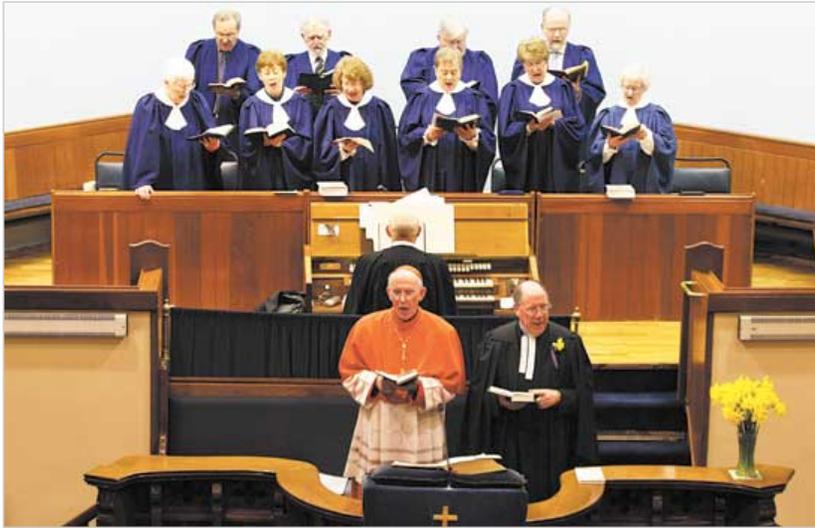


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Cardinal: Do not glamorise Troubles

By Claire Simpson

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Worshipping together: Cardinal Sean Brady gives the sermon with Reverend Dr Wesley Blair at the Ballynafeigh

Methodist Church on the Ormeau Road, south Belfast, yesterday PICTURE: Colm O'Reilly

THE violence of the Troubles should never be “glamorised”, the head of the Catholic Church in Ireland has warned.

Speaking at an inter-faith service at Ballynafeigh Methodist Church last night, Cardinal Sean Brady appealed to young people not to be “lured” into violence.

The cardinal said that public outrage at the deaths of PSNI officer Stephen Carroll and British soldiers Cengiz ‘Pat’ Azimkar and Mark Quinsey demonstrated how “we have come further along the road to a shared and settled society than many had realised”.

However, he said that peace is “something we should thank God for constantly and never take for granted”.

“It is also important that in our approach to the past we do not treat the violence of the past with a moral ambiguity which it did not receive or deserve at the time,” he said.

Cardinal Brady said that the north’s Churches played a key role in helping people to move away from conflict by insisting there was no moral justification for violence.

And he insisted that any attempt to glamorise “the violence of the past... must be challenged”.

“Young people with no memory of the misery wrought by violence or its utter futility, are more likely to be lured into violence if its evil and horror are not clearly and consistently acknowledged,” he said.

“We cannot forget that the overwhelming majority of people on the island of Ireland had already rejected recourse to violence before the Good Friday Agreement was ever constructed.

“We cannot forget that the basic architecture of a political agreement was available long before the violence stopped.”

The cardinal said that one of the biggest challenges facing the north’s Churches is how they reflect on the legacy of the Troubles.

He said the Churches need to “give full and serious consideration” to the Consultative Group on the Past’s recommendation that they should work to “review and rethink their contribution to a non-sectarian future in the light of their past, particularly in the area of education”.

“The proposed assessment will require great wisdom,” he said.

“Healing and reconciling the past must be built on solid foundations.

“What is required is honest acknowledgement by everyone of evil as evil, perpetrated by omission or commission.

“Genuine repentance from that evil and a recovery of the largely lost art of Christian forgiveness are also required.”

He added that it would be “very easy to blame the Churches for a divided society”.

However, the cardinal said that many prejudices, such of those based on politics, class or ethnicity have no basis in religion and “are often more alive and pernicious than those based on religion”.

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