

## New roles for Anna Rowlands and Gabby Thomas

Two recent appointments for key roles within the Church have been given to women with links to the CCS.

Professor Anna Rowlands has been appointed by Pope Leo to serve in the capacity of a 'Member' of the Dicastery of Integral Human Development. This department of the Vatican looks after matters related to social teachings, social outreach and public engagement of the church on range of peace, justice and integral ecology issues. Anna has long been associated with their work and is honoured to be re-appointed to this oversight and accompaniment role that she also held under Pope Francis. The appointment lasts for five years.

Meanwhile, former CCS staff member the Rev. Dr Gabrielle Thomas has been appointed as the next Dean of Berkeley Divinity School at Yale.

Gabby worked with the CCS from 2017-19 as the Post-doctoral Research Associate on "Ecclesial Learning about Women and the English Churches through Receptive Ecumenism", a project funded by the National Board of Catholic Women. This research led to her second book, *For the Good of the Church: Unity, Theology, & Women* (SCM Press, 2021).

Gabby, a noted scholar of fourth-century Christian theology and Anglican Studies, will begin her tenure on 1st July, also joining the Yale Divinity School faculty as Professor in the Practice of Early Christian, Anglican, and Theological Studies.



**Above:** Prof. Anna Rowlands, a 'Member' of the Dicastery of Integral Human Development.

**Right:** Rev. Dr Gabrielle Thomas, Dean of Berkeley Divinity School at Yale.



Gabby's first monograph was *The Image of God in the Theology of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, 2019). Her third monograph, *The Problem of the Devil in Cappadocian Thought*, is forthcoming later this year by Cambridge University Press; work towards this project had already begun during her days in Durham, and we are delighted to see it come to fruition. In addition, she is co-editor of the volume *Women and Ordination in the Orthodox Church: Explorations in Theology and Practice* (Cascade, 2020).

We would like to congratulate both Anna and Gabby on their appointments, and wish them all the best in their new roles.

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## Lived Catholicism's third online conference offers an in-depth view of synodality on an international level

The emerging field of Lived Catholicism draws on the experience and meaning making of Catholic individuals and communities in their context. Applying this lens to the global synod project via an online conference offered the opportunity the complexities of synodality across different contexts, exploring new questions, tensions and learning.

LC25 was held on 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> December, and attracted 109 registrations from 19 countries including Australia, Japan, Philippines, India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Europe, the US and Canada. We were grateful for significant papers from our keynotes: Fr Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator SJ, Dr Estela Padilla, and Professor Tricia Bruce. A particular highlight was a panel of four archbishops: +Gordon (Trinidad and Tobago), +Lackner (Salzburg), +Mpako (Pretoria) and +Sherrington (Liverpool).

The range of papers offered a rare opportunity to view synodality through the perspective of democracy, change management, ethics, marriage care, hearing voices on the margins, digital Catholicism, migration, community organising, clericalism, women's experiences, and the LGBTQ community, as well as strong panels on practical theology and ecclesiology.

Since 2021, over the three Lived Catholicism conferences we have attracted around a hundred presenters and 400 participants. This is an excellent foundation to draw on to develop the field of Lived Catholicism, and offer new perspectives on synodality.

Most of the presentations from the conference are available on the Lived Catholicism conference page: <https://livedcatholicism.org/lived-catholicism-conference/>



Dr Avril Baigent  
Researcher, Lived Catholicism,  
Durham University

# The Third International Franciscan Studies Conference - *Life and Love Transfigured: "It's like Christmas!"*



To mark the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Francis' Transitus, the third Franciscan Studies Conference – *Life and Love Transfigured: Exploring New Horizons in Franciscan Studies* – was held at Ushaw College and Durham on April 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> 2026. The conference was a truly international event, with participants attending from as far away as Japan, Hawaii, Australia, American, South America, and Eastern Europe, as well as a strong showing from Ireland and the United Kingdom. Over 150 people participated, with representatives of all the major branches of the Franciscan family being present.

The conference was a holistic event, speaking to both the head and the heart. It consisted of a mixture of academic parallel papers, workshops with a more pastoral and spiritual focus, as well as acts of ecumenical worship and time for shared conversation and fellowship. Plenary lectures were delivered by Prof. Daniel Horan, Prof. Richard Cross, Rev. Dr Michael Cusato OFM, Prof. William Hyland, and Prof. Darleen Pryds, and Dr William Crozier, scholars of Franciscan theology, history, and spirituality. Billy Crozier's paper was not part of the original plan—as one of the conference organisers he stepped in when another speaker had to withdraw very late in the planning process—but for many it was a highlight of the conference.

The workshops proved very popular, with a diverse range of workshops on offer. These included workshops on prayer and spirituality, digital evangelisation, Franciscan approaches to nature therapy, Poor Clare music, the choral works of Franciscan Tertiary Franz Liszt, the architecture of

Franciscan places of worship, manuscripts held in Durham Cathedral library, as well as a hands-on workshop in which participants got to try their hand at medieval ink-mixing and calligraphy.

Fr Casey Cole OFM gave a public lecture on Franciscan digital evangelization, while Br Richard Henricks OFM Cap. preached at the opening ecumenical service in St Cuthbert's Chapel at Ushaw. This was presided over by Rt Rev. Stephen Wright, Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle, and Sr Gabriel Davidson OSC, from Arundel, acted as cantor. His Beatitude Cardinal Pizzaballa OFM – Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem – recorded a video for the opening session of the conference, reflecting on St. Francis' transitus and the relevance of Franciscan spirituality for today.

The conference had a great sense of energy about it, with one participant in the concluding plenary session saying: 'It's like Christmas!'. It was a truly wonderful experience to welcome so many different members of the Franciscan family to Durham, especially representatives of the Franciscan congregations which have supported the Franciscan programme, some quite literally travelling from half-way around the world! It was also a pleasure to be able to end the conference on a celebratory note, with a launch of Dr Liam Temple's new book.

Preparations are now underway for the next Franciscan Conference which will mark the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Francis' canonisation...

## Capuchin Theology Project: Research Update - *Br Ben Johnson*

The Capuchin Theology Project funded by Capuchin Friars of Australia, is now in its third year. The research continues to make substantial progress in recovering and advancing scholarship on the theology of the Capuchin reform within early modern Catholicism. The project undertaken through Durham University and the University of Notre Dame, Australia, pays particular attention to the influence of St Bonaventure on Capuchin mysticism. This study addresses a significant gap in existing English-language scholarship, by drawing on sources that remain largely inaccessible to the wider academic community.

Over the past year, research has expanded through ongoing archival work, uncovering a substantial body of material that has yet to receive adequate attention in current scholarship. Proposals to present findings at several major international academic conferences in 2026 have been accepted, reflecting a growing demand for scholarship on the Capuchin contribution to the Catholic Reformation. The direction and outcomes of the research have been guided immensely by the expertise and assistance of Associate Professor James Kelly.



The highlight of 2026 will be the Capuchin Roundtable, hosted at Durham University. Funded by the Capuchin Provinces of Australia and St Augustine (Pittsburgh) and the Capuchin Delegation of Great Britain, the Roundtable represents a landmark moment not only for this project, but for the field of Capuchin studies more broadly. This initial gathering will bring together ten internationally recognised scholars — both friars and lay academics — many of whom have worked in isolation on related questions. For the first time, their research will be brought into direct and sustained dialogue. It is envisaged that an edited collection of the papers will be published in 2028, coinciding with the 500th anniversary of the formal approval of the Capuchin reform. This publication will make a fitting milestone for a body of work long overdue for renewed scholarly attention.

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## New cotutelle agreement with the Angelicum in Rome



The Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University has worked with the University of St. Thomas Aquinas (the 'Angelicum') in Rome to set up a cotutelle agreement for postgraduate research studies that lead to a dual award of degrees, the PhD at the University of Durham and the Doctor of Sacred Theology (STD) through the Faculty of Theology at the Angelicum. This follows on from a similar arrangement previous set up with another Pontifical University, the Antonianum.

The hope is to enable some of those destined to teach in Catholic seminaries studying in the Pontifical University system to benefit also from the particular strengths of what is available in the CCS and wider Department of Theology and Religion.

## The Bishop Dunn Memorial Lecture 2026



### Canon Dr Paula Gooder

Canon Chancellor for St Paul's Cathedral

*'Who do you say that I am? Encountering  
the Jesus of Mark's Gospel'*

Registration is now open at

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1989299228543>

**22 Jun 2026**  
6.45pm  
Ushaw Historic  
House



# Events: Easter Term 2026

## Catholic Theology Research Seminars\*

Wed 6 May 4pm GMT	<b>John Berkman</b> (University of Toronto) <i>Holiness Beyond Virtue: Aquinas on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.</i>	<b>Sem Rm C and Online</b>
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## Conferences

Tue 2 Jun 9.30am - 6.30pm BST (GMT+1)	<b>Early Career and Postgraduate Conference 2026</b> The ECC is a chance for postgraduate students and other early career researchers to meet and to present their research in a collegial environment.	Waterside Building Business School, Durham
Mon 29 Jun - Wed 1 Jul 9.30am BST (GMT+1)	<b>EMBIG V</b> The fifth Early Modern British and Irish Catholicism conference, jointly organized by Durham University and the University of Notre Dame. Register to attend at: <a href="https://pay.durham.ac.uk/event-durham/the-fifth-early-modern-british-and-irish-catholicism-conference-embic-v">https://pay.durham.ac.uk/event-durham/the-fifth-early-modern-british-and-irish-catholicism-conference-embic-v</a>	University of Notre Dame (USA) in England, London

## International Scholars in the History of Women Religious Association

Tue 19 May 2pm BST (GMT+1)	<b>Jaime Goodrich</b> (Wayne State University) <i>Archival Stories and Silences – Rival Lives of Abbess Lucy Knatchbull, OSB</i>	Online
Tue 23 Jun 12pm BST (GMT+1)	<b>Jaime Ricardo Gouveia</b> (University of Coimbra) <i>Sexual violence by confessors against women religious in the Portuguese Atlantic (16th-18th centuries)</i>	Online

## Book Launch

Wed 17 Jun 5.30pm BST (GMT+1)	<b>Christopher Insole</b> (Durham University) <i>If God is the Answer, What is the Question?</i> Chair: Nomi Pritz-Bennett Respondents: Judith Wolfe and Mark Wynn	Online
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## Bishop Dunn Memorial Lecture

Mon 22 Jun 6.45pm GMT	<b>Canon Dr Paula Gooder</b> (Canon Chancellor for St Paul's Cathedral) <i>Who do you say that I am? Encountering the Jesus of Mark's Gospel</i> Booking is now open at <a href="https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1989299228543">https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1989299228543</a>	<b>Ushaw Historic House</b>
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\* Registration for CTRS Seminars, Book Launches, and ISHWRA seminars opens three weeks in advance at <https://centreforcatholicstudies.eventbrite.com>

To receive details of our events and other news to your inbox, please register for the CCS mailing list at <https://www.durham.ac.uk/ccs-email-list>

## Catholic Theology by Distance Learning

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Watch videos from staff and students talking about the programme's scope, modules and flexibility, and find full details at <https://www.durham.ac.uk/ccs-distance-learning>.

Any questions? Please contact Theresa Phillips, the CCS Manager: [theresa.phillips@durham.ac.uk](mailto:theresa.phillips@durham.ac.uk).

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