Durham University
Centre for Catholic Studies

Newsletter

Issue 55: Michaelmas 2026

Update from Anna Rowlands as the St Hilda chair in CSTP

The last year has been a very rich and varied one. I was delighted to be able to undertake some focused research on my book project, which focuses on three women political theologians of the twentieth century: Hannah Arendt, Simone Weil and Gillian Rose.

It has been great to spend time with their texts, letters and archive materials. I've started to use some of that material in a series of public lectures I have been invited to give in New York this year, as the holder of the Vincentian Chair of Social Justice at St John's University, New York. That has been an opportunity to map how their thinking also related to forms of Catholic wartime resistance in France, war efforts in the US and London and to more recent themes in papal social teaching.

I also enjoyed editing a special edition of the *Journal for Moral Theology* that sought to gather and 'archive' the experiences of women theologians who took part in the Synod on Synodality. And Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and I are nearly there on getting all the chapters edited and slowly online for our *Oxford Handbook on Religion and Contemporary Migration*.



Above: *Prof. Anna Rowlands at the launch of Pope Leo's first encyclical, Magnifica Humanitas.*

Finally, the unexpected event of the year was being asked to take part in the launch of Pope Leo's first social encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*. Much of the end of my research year was thus given over to engaging with the extraordinary public response to that document and the rising concern around questions of AI development. I'm now looking forward to a year of some normality with a return to teaching!

Welcome to our new research associate



Thanks to a generous donation from the Society of the Sacred Heart, the CCS is delighted to welcome Kate Kelly Middleton who has come to us from the US, where she has just completed her doctoral work on inter-religious ethics. She has a wonderfully rich background in US intelligence work as well as chaplaincy and schools experience and is a trained ethnographic researcher as well as constructive theologian.

Her array of skills will be very welcome as a contribution to our ever-widening CCS community. She will undertake post-doctoral research work relating to Catholic social teaching and how we approach the 'other'. She is also working as an accompanying theologian on a Vatican-linked project around work-as-care and care-as-work connected with *Laudato si'* and its vision of integral ecology.

Kate Kelly says: 'It has been great to start at the Centre for Catholic Studies as a Research Associate in Catholic Social Thought and Practice. In my research I am being challenged to articulate and embody a form of outgoing synodal theology and to continue building capacities in theological accompaniment at the intersection of integral ecology and the world of work. All of this is within a department full of life and humor, where mentors model the vocation of the theologian in the midst of some of the most pressing issues concerning human flourishing today. I was told by those I trust most that Durham is the place to be, and I couldn't agree more.'

Timothy Schmalz sculpture installed outside St Cuthbert's Church

Timothy Schmalz, renowned sculptor, attended the second Catholicism, Literature and the Arts conference, 'The Poetics of Liturgy and Place' hosted by the CCS and the University of Notre Dame in London in July 2022, creating an original sculpture in clay during the conference.

Following that event, the CCS was offered one of Timothy's bronze sculptures, 'When I was Thirsty'. Over the summer this was installed outside St Cuthbert's Church in Durham. The sculpture is a wonderful gift to the parish and chaplaincy and a fantastic witness to the wider community. Do go and see it when you are next in Durham.



Timothy Schmalz's 'When I Was Thirsty' scultpure, installed in its new home outside St Cuthbert's Church.

Events: Michaelmas Term 2026

Catholic Theology Research Seminars*

Thu 15 Oct 4pm BST (GMT+1)	**Ibuki Yamane** (Research Fellow, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science) *The Communal Nature of Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Theology and the Lived Example of Macrina the Younger*	**Lindisfarne Room, St Cuthbert's Soc.** and **Online**
Thu 5 Nov 4pm GMT	**Fiona Ellis** (University of Nottingham) *From Nihilism to Natural Theology*	**Lindisfarne Room, St Cuthbert's Soc.** and **Online**
Thu 3 Dec 4pm GMT	**Nicholas Sagovsky** and **Jeremy Morris** (Hon. Fellows, Durham University) *'Securus Iudicat Orbis Terrarum' (Augustine): What has Newman got to do with synodality?*	**Lindisfarne Room, St Cuthbert's Soc.** and **Online**

Conferences

Tue 8 Jun 9.30am - 6.30pm BST (GMT+1)	**Early Career and Postgraduate Conference 2027** The ECC is a chance for postgraduate students and other early career researchers to meet and to present their research in a collegial environment.	**St Chad's College, Durham**
Tue 13 - Wed 14 Jul Time TBC	**The Fourth Lived Catholicism Conference** The Fourth Lived Catholicism Conference will take place online in July 2027. Further details to follow.	**Online**

Romero Lecture 2027

Wed 10 Mar 6pm GMT	**Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ** *This lecture will be on Magnifica Humanitas. Title TBC.* Follwed by a drinks reception at 7.15pm	**Ushaw Historic House**

Bishop Dunn Memorial Lecture

Thu 8 May 2027 6pm BST (GMT+1)	**Bishop Erik Varden OSCO** (Prelate of Trondheim) *How to live well in a world that unravels?* Vespers at 5pm in St Cuthbert's Chapel, Ushaw. A drinks reception follows the lecture at 7.15pm.	**Ushaw Historic House**

* Registration for CCS events 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

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Study at your own pace, in any time zone, alongside work, ministry, family or caring commitments.

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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.

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