



**Durham**  
University

Centre for Catholic Studies

# Newsletter

Issue 44: Epiphany Term 2023

## Synodality project

**Christopher Lamb**

Centre for Catholic Studies



Over the last year, I have been working on a project promoting the Catholic Church's synodal process. This is principally through a podcast series, 'The Church's Radical Reform' which explores various elements of the synod, and this in turn feeds into my academic research on the topic.

The episodes have included the following:

- An interview with Cardinal Mario Grech, the leader of the synod office in Rome.
- An in-depth report on Australia's synodal process (the Plenary Council) explored how conflict within the Catholic Church can be navigated.
- Discussion with local leaders of synods, including Nicola Brady in Ireland and Fr Jan Nowotnik in England and Wales.
- A focus on where synodality is already taking shape such as in Latin America and Germany.

The episodes have been designed to develop an awareness of the practice of synodality, rather than the theory, by talking to those with first-hand experience of a relatively new mode of operating within the Church.

For each episode, I try to interview at least three participants to discuss a particular theme such as the role of women, the German synod, or how a synod works in practice. I have a team which helps edit the audio, add music and curate the episode for publication.

The interviews have helped me with my academic work, examining particular theological aspects that the synod process is opening up, including the relationship between the local and universal decision-making around contested topics, and how power is exercised in the Catholic Church. I find that the interviews raise topics that my academic research can investigate in more depth.

So far, I have produced seven episodes, and I am working on the eighth, which should be published by the start of

Epiphany term. I am hoping to build and expand my work by setting up a board of advisers to put forward different topics for the podcast to focus on. Furthermore, I am looking at ways to promote each episode better.

The podcast series has been shared across various Catholic networks, and the interview with Cardinal Grech was reported on by several international media.

I hope the series will continue to bring to light key questions in the synod process and promote a vital moment of Catholic renewal.

Chris's podcast series, 'The Church's Radical Reform' can be accessed via Soundcloud at: [shorturl.at/bcDG8](https://shorturl.at/bcDG8)



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# The Sepulchrine Fellow in the History of Catholicism

Dr Cormac Begadon



As my time working with the Centre for Catholic Studies has just come to a close, now is a nice time to reflect on my work over the last three years as the 'Sepulchrine Fellow in the History of Catholicism', a post that was funded thanks to the generosity and foresight of the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre. As an historian (largely) of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, I had been intrigued by their history as innovators and proponents of an often-radical system of education for females, nurtured in the cosmopolitan setting of eighteenth-century Liège. Rediscovering the Canonesses as Catholic women at the heart of the Enlightenment was a central theme of the fellowship, one which was explored in many public forums.

I was blessed to have been invited to spend time with the Canonesses in their homes in Colchester and Chelmsford, learning from them of their own understandings of their charism and history. I was invited to speak to their wider family on a number of occasions too, the two most memorable being at Foundation Day celebrations at New Hall School in 2021, and at Colchester in 2022 to mark the 380<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their founding. It was a genuine pleasure to speak about the Canonesses as enlightened Catholic women, and sharing their story with engaged school pupils was a particular highlight for me.

The project bore fruit, academically speaking, in a number of ways too. An invited workshop that we hosted in September 2021 examined the impact and memory of the French Revolution on Catholic female religious, the findings of which will be published in 2023. This event marked the birth of a new international research network: the International Scholars of the History of Women Religious Association (ISHWRA). Many of you will be familiar with the network, having attended some of our

monthly seminar meetings. The network's goal is that it will assist in the promotion of major research themes from a truly global perspective, especially in relation to matters of education, faith and spirituality, gender, politics, race, and social care. Although still in its infancy, we are delighted that the network has received support and encouragements from partners right across the globe, and we are looking forward to building on this.

The conclusion of the project was marked fittingly by two events. In October I was honoured to be a speaker in the Ushaw Lecture Series, attended by three of the Canonesses. As well as attending the lecture, they saw first-hand how their historic archive and library is being preserved and cared for by the Special Collections' team at Durham for the use of future generations. And just before Christmas the community received my wife and I at a beautiful dinner and reception at Colchester; a wonderful way to toast the project!

Dr Cormac Begadon has spent the last 3 years working with the CCS as the Sepulchrine Fellow in the History of Catholicism. Prof. Paul D. Murray, CCS Director, says, "We celebrate Cormac for the great work he has done over the last 3 years, both his research into the history of the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre and his part in co-instigating ISHWRA, which gives Cormac a continuing connection with the CCS. The CCS is also grateful to the Canonesses for providing the funding for this post."

Anyone interested in supporting such a project should contact Tim Guinan, CCS Development Executive: [tim.guinan@durham.ac.uk](mailto:tim.guinan@durham.ac.uk) or +44 (0) 777 1500 808.

## Events: Epiphany Term 2023

### Catholic Theology Research Seminar\*

Thursday 19 January

**Dr Tia Noelle Pratt** (Villanova University), *Doing THE WORK: Anti-racism and the Catholic Church*

A joint seminar with St Cuthbert's Catholic Chaplaincy  
5pm GMT, online

Thursday 16 February

**Prof. Christopher Insole** (Durham University),  
*Pantheism: a Word for the World*

5pm GMT, in person, Seminar Room B, Abbey House

Thursday 16 March

**Dr Alana Harris** (King's College London),  
*Student Power in Christ: Mildred Neville, the Young Christian Student Movement, and International Relations in Britain 'after Empire'*

A joint seminar with St Cuthbert's Catholic Chaplaincy  
5pm GMT, in person, Seminar Room B, Abbey House

### Ushaw Lecture Series\*

Tuesday 21 February

**Inaugural Judeo-Christian Lecture: Prof. Daniel Langton** (University of Manchester), *Darwin's Jews: Evolutionary Theory, Jewish Thought and Interfaith Relations*

6.00pm at Ushaw with drinks reception from 5.30pm  
Help with transport is available.

### Registration

\* Registration for Catholic Theology Research Seminars, Ushaw Lectures, ISHWRA seminars and the Book Launch opens three weeks in advance at <https://centreforcatholicstudies.eventbrite.com>

To receive details of our events to your inbox, please register for the CCS mailing list at <https://tinyurl.com/ccsmailinglist>

### International Scholars of the History of Women Religious Association\*

Wednesday 18 January

**Prof. Elizabethada Wright**  
(University of Minnesota Duluth)

*Mother Mary Joseph Lynch (1826-98), the Sisters of Mercy and "Native American Boarding Schools"*  
2pm GMT, online

Wednesday 15 February

**Dr Shannen Dee Williams**  
(University of Dayton)

*Bearing Witness to a Silenced Past: Black Catholic Nuns in the African American Freedom Struggle*  
2pm GMT, online

Wednesday 8 March

**Dr Peggy Dalmas**  
(University of South Alabama)

*The Leadership of Catholic Women Religious in American Secular Institutions of Higher Education*  
2pm GMT, online

### CCS Book Launch Series\*

Tuesday 24 January (5.30pm GMT)

An online celebration of the publication of:

*Receptive Ecumenism as Transformative Ecclesial Learning: Walking the Way to a Church Reformed*—a book edited by **Paul D. Murray, Gregory Ryan, and Paul Lakeland**.

Paul and Greg will be joined by Linda Hogan (Trinity College Dublin) and Gabrielle Thomas (Candler School of Theology) to discuss the work.

All are welcome!

## Some Key Events in 2023: Save the Dates!

**Early Career Conference in Catholic Theology and Catholic Studies 2023:** Monday 5 June 2023, online

**Bishop Dunn Memorial Lecture 2023:** Wednesday 21 June 2023, in person at St Cuthbert's Church (Durham)  
Cardinal Mario Grech and Sr Nathalie Becquart (Synod of Bishops): 'Common Obedience to the Spirit of Christ: Synodality, Collegiality, and Apostolicity'

**Popery, Politics and Prayer: British and Irish Catholicism**

The Fourth Early Modern British and Irish Catholicism (EMBIC) Conference: 11-13 July 2023, in person in Durham