

New Research Professor to develop Boundary Breaking Project *The Cross of the Moment* work



Prof Clare Watkins comes to us from the University of Roehampton to continue the impact work of the Boundary Breaking project.

The CCS is delighted to welcome Professor Clare Watkins, who this year takes up a new post designed to develop and widen the impacts of the [Boundary Breaking project](#) and its learning.

Clare comes to us following ten years at the University of Roehampton, where she has developed a distinctive Catholic approach to practice engagement in theology, drawing on theological action research methods and approaches. As a co-originator of theological action research, Clare remains Director of the [Theology and Action Research Network \(TARN\)](#), and brings experience of participative research and learning with a range of diverse Christian groups and churches.

In the new CCS project Clare take the role of Research Lead, working closely with Professor Karen Kilby as Principal Investigator, and Will Mattiello-Kent (Porticus) and Professor Paul Murray. The project – provisionally working under the title “Mobilisation for a healthier and more vital Church” – is funded for three years, and will work on dissemination, networking, and participative learning as it follows up on both practical and theological themes arising out of the Boundary Breaking project, and its reports [The Cross of the Moment](#) and [Attitudes of Catholics in England and Wales to Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church](#). More information about the project will feature in this newsletter and on the CCS website as it develops.

For those interested to know more of Clare’s work, her last book *Disclosing Church: an ecclesiology learned through conversations in practice*. (Routledge 2020), and forthcoming book, Clare Watkins and James Butler, *Christian Faith and Christian Learning: A Theological Action Research Account*. (Routledge 2025), describe her theological approach and methods.

Karen Kilby, as CCS Director, writes ‘It is a great thing to have Clare Watkins, the leader in her field in this country, working with us on this very important task and bringing her wisdom to the CCS.

‘We are grateful to Porticus, the English Benedictines and the Jesuits in Britain whose support has made it possible. We look forward to seeing the important work of the Boundary Breaking project widened, deepened and further disseminated, and we anticipate learning much from Clare as we work together in the coming years.’

A warm welcome for the CCS’s Career Development Fellow

The CCS is delighted to announce the appointment of Dr Nomi Pritz-Bennett as Career Development Fellow in Catholic Theology. Nomi recently completed her PhD at Edinburgh on the French Catholic philosopher Maurice Blondel (1861–1949), and then served for a year as Associate Lecturer in the School of Divinity at St. Andrews. Nomi is particularly interested in the Christian mystical and ascetic character of Blondel’s thought, as well as later Catholic ressourcement theology and more general questions concerning the nature of finitude in relation to evil and sin.

Nomi said: ‘I am delighted to be embarking on this new chapter as the Early Career Fellow in Catholic Theology. I have already been so warmly welcomed by a department I have long admired from a distance for its excellent research and collegiate life. What better place for an early career scholar of modern Catholic theology to be cultivated and challenged than at Durham and the CCS? I am very grateful for the opportunity. *Duc in altum!*’



Karen Kilby added: ‘I am pleased that Durham University has introduced a new kind of post, the “Career Development Fellow”, which provides early career academics time, space and opportunities to develop their skills and help launch their careers, while also helping with our teaching needs. We are very grateful to those who have given to the CCS Core Endowment, the income from which is helping fund Nomi’s post.’

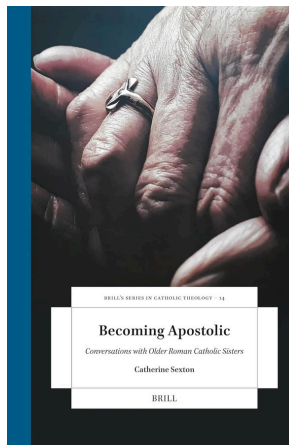
Becoming Apostolic: Conversations with Older Roman Catholic Sisters - a new publication by Dr **Catherine Sexton**

Some years ago, I undertook a piece of work with a congregation of Roman Catholic apostolic, or active sisters. With an average age of 78 and with few younger women entering, the sisters were uncertain how to live out their vocation to active ministry in later life and uncertain about what ministry means in old age. In my work with other religious, both in the UK and more widely, I have heard these questions repeated many times.

These concerns are set in a particular context of continued declining membership of religious orders in the UK and elsewhere, meaning that many congregations will no longer have a presence in the UK within the next 20 years.

Many use the term “diminishment” to characterise this process in women’s religious life; it is not a word which sisters themselves readily embrace, often preferring the language of ‘there’s still life in us yet’ and ‘we need to keep going until the end’.

So, rather than focus on ‘diminishment’, I sought, in this book, to understand how sisters make meaning and sense of their apostolic vocation in old age, and how this contributes to the evolving theology and identity of apostolic religious life for women. In order to do this, I interviewed and drew on the lived experience and narratives of a group of ageing sisters from five congregations.



In *Becoming Apostolic*, Dr Sexton explores how religious sisters make meaning and sense of their vocation in their later years.

The voices and theologies of this group of women religious are at the heart of this book, as it explores how sisters make meaning of their new personal, and institutional contexts, through what appear to be new articulations of ‘being with and being for’ as the foundation of active ministry.

Sisters articulated three distinct and emerging forms of ministry, through which they contend with the loss of active ministry, moving away from a task-based identity, towards one of being apostolic. These are: an emerging understanding of presence as ministry; an acceptance of the validity and necessity of ministering to each other instead of those outside their congregations, and ministry to their carers.

Dr Catherine Sexton - CCS Honorary Fellow

Becoming Apostolic: Conversations with Older Roman Catholic Sisters was published in July 2024 by Brill.

To find out more about this publication, join the CCS online Book Launch event on the 6th November at 5.30pm. Details will be available on our Eventbrite page (see p4).

CCS staff publications in recent press and media

CCS staff members Anna Rowlands and Liam Temple have both had articles featured in *The Tablet* during the past months.

Liam Temple wrote a piece for *The Tablet* in July to commemorate 150 years since the Capuchin friars first settled in England and Wales to begin their mission to live among the poor and rebuild the Church.
[In the Footsteps of Francis](#)

He also had an article published on *The Conversation’s* website in October, delving into the history of Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, the Capuchin Preacher to the Papal Household.

[The unique history of the only person who can preach to the pope](#)

Anna Rowlands took a deeper, theological perspective of the summer riots in towns and cities across the UK, in a piece for *The Tablet’s* August edition.
[Darkness Visible](#)

Subscribers to *The Tablet* can read the online articles at the links given on this page.

For those without a subscription, there is also an option to read pdf versions on the CCS website, given with kind permission from *The Tablet*.

You can also view pdf versions of the two articles from *The Tablet* under “[Recent Publications](#)”.



Sr Moira O'Sullivan installed as Ecumenical Canon in ceremony at Chelmsford Cathedral

Sister Moira O'Sullivan, Prioress of the English Community of Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre, was one of three Ecumenical Canons installed at Chelmsford Cathedral in April. Sr Moira accepted this honorary position on behalf of the Community, and also delivered the sermon during the service, in which she talked about the need to find a new gospel song that is relevant to our world today.

The Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre have been in partnership with the CCS for over a decade, first funding Dr Hannah Thomas in the post of the Sepulchrine Research Associate in Early Modern English Catholicism (1500-1800) from 2014-17, and subsequently, Dr Cormac Begadon as the Sepulchrine Fellow in the History of Catholicism (1640–present day) from 2020-23. The Canonesses' remarkable library and archival collections dating back to their foundation in 1642 are now housed at Palace Green Library.

The Canonesses have also been ambassadors for the CCS, introducing the Brentwood Ursulines to the Centre. The Ursulines and Canonesses are now making generous donations to endow 'The Clare and Hawley Chair in the History of Catholicism', named for their respective Foundresses, thus underpinning the History of Catholicism programme at Durham in perpetuity.



In their shared vision statement for the Chair the Sisters say, "We have long histories and value what we have learnt from our history to show us how best to live our values for today, with an awareness of how such research can reach and potentially influence current theological, spiritual and pastoral applications, to feed into the mission of the Church in its broadest sense and at grassroots. We see in the CCS a view of history as an agent for social justice and reform with which we empathise."

You can watch Sister Moira's sermon at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_sKOWwt0_s

CCS Scholarships and Bursaries now available for 2025-2026



Through generous donations from the Carmelite Nuns, the Congregation of Jesus, the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ), the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy, the Jesuits in Britain, Mater Ecclesiae, the Sisters of Christian Education, and a number of individual donors, the CCS is able to support 20 students this year with scholarship and bursary awards totalling just under £188,000.

The majority of these awards offer help towards tuition fees, with the exception of the recipients of two Louis Lafosse and two FCJ Bicentenary PhD Scholarships.

The Louis Lafosse and FCJ scholars are each in receipt of full home rate tuition fees and a maintenance allowance at the UK Research Council's national rate, all funded by significant annual donations from the Sisters of Christian Education and the Faithful Companions of Jesus respectively.

The cost of studying has increased dramatically, especially for overseas students with tuition fees alone at £26,750 per annum for a full-time MA student.

CCS students and staff are grateful to all who have donated generous scholarship funds to enable talented students to continue their studies.

Students are the lifeblood of the CCS. Since 2009/10 the CCS has been able to support 79 postgraduates with scholarships and bursaries awarded on the basis of demonstrated need, coupled with excellent academic performance, many receiving support for the duration of their studies at Durham.

Recipients have gone on to lecturer and research posts across the globe, to teach in schools, to work full time in the church, making world-wide impact.

The CCS currently awards named bursaries and scholarships on an annual spend-down basis, and we will continue to do this.

In order to complement this and to provide greater stability, we would like to raise a £2m scholarship endowment. This would guarantee in perpetuity a minimum level of annual scholarship and bursary funding, so that we can continue to attract the best students from around the world and nurture their development in a supportive community. Anyone interested in finding out more about this opportunity should contact Tim Guinan, Senior Development Manager tim.guinan@durham.ac.uk or call +44 (0) 7771 500 808.

Events: Michaelmas Term 2024

Catholic Theology Research Seminars*

Thur 10 Oct 5pm BST (GMT+1)	Nomi Pritz-Bennett (University of Durham) <i>The Natural Mortification of Finitude: Loss and the Construction of Real Persons</i>	5pm drinks SCR, 5.30pm Sem Rm B, and Online
Thur 5 Dec 5pm GMT	Emma Percy (University of Aberdeen) <i>Can Aquinas offer some hope to trauma theology?</i>	In-person, Sem Rm B, Abbey House and Online

Book Launches

6 Nov 2024 5.30pm GMT	Dr Catherine Sexton <i>Becoming Apostolic: Conversations with Older Roman Catholic Sisters</i>	Online
30 Jan 2025 5.30pm GMT	Jonathan Bush & Maria Power <i>Lay Catholics in 20th Century Britain</i>	Online

Bishop Dunn Memorial Lectures

21 Nov 2024 6pm GMT	Fr Hyacinthe Destivelle, OP <i>Habemus Papam. An Ecumenical Primacy in a Synodal Church</i>	St Cuthbert's Catholic Church
23 Jun 2025 TBC	Fr Timothy Radcliffe, OP <i>The Synod: a time of hope?</i>	Chapter House, Durham Cathedral

International Scholars for the History of Women Religious Association*

Tue 29 Oct 3pm GMT	Adriana Alonso Rivera (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla) <i>The Imitation of Christ from Visual and Written Sources in the Augustinian Recollect Enclosure of Puebla de los Ángeles (Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries)</i>	Online
Thu 21 Nov 2pm GMT	Maria Williams (Independent scholar) <i>The MSC Milan Collegio and Mother Cabrini's Global Teaching Force 1884-1926</i>	Online
Tue 10 Dec 5pm GMT	Patricia Stoop (University of Antwerp) <i>Women Religious in the Low Countries (c. 1350-1600) and Their Roles in the Production and Circulation of Literature and Knowledge?</i>	Online

* 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

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

Enrol for a Postgraduate Certificate, a Postgraduate Diploma, the full MA, or even test the waters cautiously by enrolling on the core module, 'Catholic Theology: A Preliminary Tour', as a stand-alone option.

Watch a video about the course with Karen Kilby and Anna Rowlands talking about the programme's scope, modules and who the programme is intended for at shorturl.at/uHMR9, and find full details of the programme at shorturl.at/jvLW7.

Any questions? Please contact Theresa Phillips, the CCS Manager: theresa.phillips@durham.ac.uk.

centreforcatholicstudies.co.uk - Catholic Theology in the Public Academy

✉ ccs.admin@durham.ac.uk

☎ +44 (0) 191 334 1656

🐦 @CCSDham

📘 @centreforcatholicstudiesuk

▶ Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University

🎧 Find us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or Soundcloud