

“Building cathedrals of the heart” - Dr William Crozier is appointed as the Duns Scotus Chair in Franciscan Studies

On 1 January 2025 Dr William Crozier started as the inaugural holder of the Duns Scotus Chair in Franciscan Studies with the CCS, in the Dept. of Theology and Religion at Durham University. To our knowledge, this is the first permanent post in Franciscan Studies in the UK since the closure of the Franciscan International Study Centre in Canterbury in 2017.

The Duns Scotus Chair, initially a 5-year fixed term role, has been made possible through generous benefaction by Franciscan communities in Ireland, Great Britain, the USA, Canada, and Australia for which the CCS are extremely grateful. Several Franciscan partners were represented throughout the recruitment process.

Announced on the feast day of Blessed John Duns Scotus, the appointment consolidates the long-term interests of the CCS to develop a research programme area in Franciscan Studies in partnership with global Franciscan communities.

Dr Crozier, known as Billy, will participate in academic leadership for and development of a Franciscan Studies programme within the CCS, undertake research and teaching in Franciscan Studies, and also organise occasional academic conferences, summer schools, and other outreach activities in Franciscan Studies.

Billy says, “I am deeply humbled and honoured to take up the role of the inaugural holder of the Duns Scotus Chair in Franciscan Studies. I very much look forward to working in partnership with the CCS, the various Franciscan donors who have so generously funded the Duns Scotus Chair, and the wonderful staff and students at Durham. In all that I do in the post I will strive to fulfil the Franciscan vision of theology as a ‘practical science’, one geared towards the building of cathedrals of the heart and not simply the promotion of learning.”

Fr. Aidan McGrath OFM, Minister Provincial of the Franciscan Province of Ireland, said, “The Friars Minor in Ireland and in the United Kingdom warmly welcome the appointment of Dr William Crozier to the new chair of Blessed Duns Scotus in the University of Durham. The closure of the Franciscan Study Centre in Canterbury in 2017 was greatly regretted. Today, we anticipate a new springtime for Franciscan Studies in Britain and Ireland, and indeed, in the wider English-speaking world. The friars of the Franciscan Province of Ireland wish Dr Crozier every blessing and success in his work and we join with Franciscans near and far in thanking God for this much anticipated renewal in Franciscan studies.”

“The Friars Minor in Ireland and in the United Kingdom warmly welcome the appointment of Dr William Crozier to the new chair of Blessed Duns Scotus in the University of Durham... We wish him every blessing and success.”
– Fr. Aidan McGrath OFM



“The inauguration of the Duns Scotus Chair at Durham University represents a bright future and viable home for Franciscan Studies, not only in Britain and Ireland, but for the English-speaking world,” added Br James Boner OFM Cap., Provincial Delegate, Delegation of Great Britain.

Before his appointment Billy was a Leverhulme Early Career Research Fellow in the Dept. of Theology and Religion at Durham, focusing on the medieval Franciscan understanding of the relationship between theology and science. Billy specialises in the study of classical Franciscan theology,

philosophy, and science, specifically the thought of St. Bonaventure, Blessed John Duns Scotus, Alexander of Hales, and Robert Grosseteste. He is also interested in the reception of Franciscan figures in 20th and 21st century theology. He is trained in Latin, palaeography, codicology, and the editing of medieval texts, and has experience of teaching Franciscan theology (both in-person and distance learning)

at undergraduate and postgraduate level, as well as of supervising MA and PhD students working in classical Franciscan thought and its relevance for modern theology.

Billy did his undergraduate degree, MA, and PhD at Durham. He was a CCS Scholarship recipient throughout his postgraduate studies and received both Catherine McAuley and St Jude scholarships.

Prof Karen Kilby, the CCS Director, said, “Billy is a scholar of depth and breadth, a gifted teacher, and a wonderfully gentle person. We really look forward to seeing the Franciscan studies programme grow in the coming years under his leadership, and continuing to work together with all of our Franciscan partners who have been so supportive.”

The CCS are in the early stages of organising a second online Franciscan Summer School for June 2025, and a third International Franciscan Studies Conference, ‘Life and Love Transfigured’, 14-16 April 2026. Further details of both events will be shared via the CCS mailing lists and on our website.

You can find out more about our Franciscan Studies programme at <https://www.durham.ac.uk/franciscan-studies>

Uncovering the radical poverty missions of the Friars Minor Capuchins in Britain - Dr Liam Temple reflects on his research

“Let us cultivate radical poverty, both personal and communal, and out of love of the Lord’s Cross to lead a life of austerity and joyful penance.” These words, taken from the *Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin*, have taken on special significance to my research over the last four years as I have worked in partnership with the Capuchin Delegation of GB on their history and legacy.

The foundation and model of their gospel poverty is the example of Christ, the Word of God (John 1:14), who ‘emptied himself’ by taking on human form and becoming humble and obedient to the point of dying on the cross (Philippians 2:6-8). This radical poverty, embodied in the Capuchin values of minority and fraternity, manifests itself most clearly in their preferential option for the poor.

My research has uncovered the historical reality of this commitment to radical poverty, exploring the ways in which, from the 1850s onwards, the Capuchins have worked amongst the poorest Catholics on the peripheries of the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Establishing a Province in 1873, the friars played an important, and previously unknown, role in building up and supporting communities of Catholics before handing these missions and parishes over to diocesan clergy. Preaching, giving popular missions, providing spiritual retreats and pilgrimages, and ministering to poor seasonal hop-pickers in Kent all formed, and in some cases continue to form, an important part of their apostolate.



L-R: Br Ben Johnson, Dr James Kelly, Prof Karen Kilby, Br Robert Stewart, Br James Boner, and Dr Liam Temple.

My work in the Capuchin archives has allowed me to experience the contemporary reality of the Capuchin charism and the friars’ ongoing commitment to such radical poverty.

The project has resulted in two contracted books. The first, *Radical Poverty: The Capuchins and Catholicism in Britain, 1850-2021*, will be published with Bloomsbury in 2025/2026. The second, tentatively titled *The Capuchins, Transnational Catholicism and Britain, 1580-1700*, is contracted with Oxford University Press for publication in 2026/2027.

Both are based on extensive research in a number of international archives. I am immensely grateful to the Capuchin Delegation of GB for funding the project, which would not have been possible without their support and encouragement.

Dr Liam Temple
Capuchin Fellow in the History of Catholicism (2022-2024)

Distance Learning Programme continues to grow

The Distance Learning programme in Catholic Theology has now entered a second year and is maturing well, with 28 students enrolled. They come from a range of backgrounds and careers (teaching, chaplaincy, medicine, software engineering, law, psychotherapy, library science, non-profit consultancies etc) and a range of places in the world. The majority are living in Britain, but we have students from Massachusetts and Hawaii in the US and one student each from Nigeria, Cameroon and Canada. We currently have one religious sister, two Catholic priests and one Anglican priest enrolled. One student began her studies in a high security prison, and we hope she will be able to continue now that she has been released. The students range in age from their 20s to their 70s.

Pasquale Gallo. Consultant Paediatric Neurosurgeon, and MA Distance Learning student 2023-25 says, “My experience with the distance learning MA in Catholic Theology at Durham has been exceptional. The program’s flexibility, coupled with a robust and enriching curriculum, has allowed me to balance my studies with personal commitments and busy schedule. The faculty is supportive, and the curriculum is deeply enriching, allowing me to grow both academically and spiritually.”



Students and staff at the Distance Learning residential in Durham in April 2024.

For the first time this year it is possible for students to enrol in a single standalone module, ‘Catholic Theology: A Preliminary Tour’. This enables a wider group of students to dip their toes in the water, including those who have not previously done formal study of either theology or some other humanities subject. We anticipate that many of those who try out the subject in this way will be able to, and will wish to, continue.

The programme is designed so that participants can work through material at their own pace, studying equally well in any time zone and in many different life situations, alongside work, ministry, family or caring obligations.

Full details of the programme and a bursary fund are available at [Distance Learning – Durham University](#), including a video from current student Kate Wilkinson, a school chaplain, and one from Programme Director Karen Kilby and Module Convenor Anna Rowlands.

Dr Sarah Barthélemy, the Catherine de Francheville Fellow, reflects on her research project during her time at the CCS, which examined the demoiselles of La Retraite



Dr Barthélemy at the Cave of Ignatius in Manresa, Spain, where there is a representation of Catherine de Francheville on the wall (top left corner).

During my fellowship as the Catherine de Francheville Fellow in the History of Catholicism at the Centre for Catholic Studies (2021-2024), I primarily worked on bringing new attention to spiritual retreats for women, little explored in early modern historical scholarship. The book resulting from this fellowship will examine the case of the demoiselles of La Retraite, founded in 1675 by Catherine de Francheville (1620-89) in Brittany, then a land renowned for its missionary activity in the wake of the French Wars of Religion.

During this period, communities and groups actively participated in the process of (re)catholicization, and the demoiselles' best-known contribution to the early modern mission was to run retreats for women. My monograph will explore the ways in which these committed Catholic women, from an ambiguous place on the spectrum of religious life, engaged with the spirituality of the Catholic Reformation as both leaders and collaborators with the male clergy.

I also co-founded the network ISHWRA (International Scholars for the History of Women Religious Association) in collaboration with Dr Cormac Begadon (Durham University) and Dr Gemma Betros (Australian National University) to bring scholars together and address new research questions, through a monthly research seminar and a biennial workshop. In 2023, we were awarded a BA/Leverhulme Trust Small Research Grant for our second international workshop, which took place at Durham University in July 2024. The workshop, under preparation for publication, addressed the omission of women religious from the history of intellectual, political, and theological movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

My time in the UK has allowed me to develop new research perspectives, notably regarding the significance of material culture. As I return to the continent, I am especially grateful to the colleagues who introduced me to the intersection of theology and history. I wish the very best to the vibrant and dynamic CCS!

“Conversation” articles reach 40,000 readers

In the past year, Liam Temple has written two articles for *The Conversation*. The first, on the canonization of Carlo Acutis, has resulted in radio interviews in Australia and New Zealand and a magazine interview in Canada.

The second, on the history of the papal preacher, was written to support Liam's work with the recently retired papal preacher Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa on a new edition of some of his papal sermons. This article was also translated into Portuguese for a wider audience.

The two articles have been read a total of 40,000 times. They can be accessed here:

[What the First Millennial Saint Says about the Catholic Church's Future.](#)

[The Unique History of the Only Person who can Preach to the Pope.](#)

Researching the Capuchin history in Australia

From January 2025 Liam Temple will begin a new three-year research project exploring the history of the Capuchins in Australia. This project, generously supported by the Australian Capuchin Province of the Assumption of The Blessed Virgin Mary, will explore the spread of the friars in Australia in the context of the Second Vatican Council and the rise of transnational Catholic migration. The project will result in a monograph on this history.

FMDM article in prestigious Historical Journal

Former FMDM Fellow Dr Brian Casey has had an article published in *The Historical Journal* on 'The Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood and the provision of healthcare in provincial Ireland, 1942-1970'. It is freely available to read at:

<https://tinyurl.com/FMDM-historical>

Events: Epiphany Term 2025

Catholic Theology Research Seminars*

Thur 16 Jan 5pm GMT	Liam Temple (University of Durham) <i>"This Poverty of Spirit": The Capuchins on the margins of Catholicism in England and Wales, 1850-1873.</i>	5pm drinks SCR, 5.30pm Sem Rm B, and Online
Thur 13 Feb 5pm GMT	Antonia Pizzey (Australian Catholic University) <i>Imagining Church: Mystery, Imagination, and Metaphor.</i>	Online
Thur 13 Mar 5pm GMT	Eilish Gregory (University of Durham) <i>The Global Nursing Mission of the Little Company of Mary, 1877-1941.</i>	In-person, Sem Rm B, Abbey House and Online

Book Launch

TBC	Jonathan Bush & Maria Power <i>Lay Catholics in 20th Century Britain</i>	Online
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International Scholars for the History of Women Religious Association*

Tue 21 Jan 2pm GMT	Joanne Myers (Gettysburg College) <i>"I chuse the better subject": Original Verse by English Nuns in Exile (1600s–1700s).</i>	Online
Tue 18 Feb 2.30pm GMT	Catherine Sexton (Durham University) <i>Holy Listening and Sacred Reading: British and Irish Sisters' Reflections on Ageing and Ministry in the Twenty-First Century.</i>	Online
Tue 18 Mar 2pm GMT	Azariah Alfante (University of Glasgow) <i>Answering the Call: The German Benedictines of St Scholastica's College in Early Twentieth-Century Manila.</i>	Online
Tue 8 Apr 2pm BST (GMT+1)	Alexandra Verini (Ashoka University) <i>The Ethnographic Graze: Women Religious Documenting Colonial Spaces from Loreto to the Ursulines</i>	Online

Bishop Dunn Memorial Lecture

23 Jun 2025 7.30pm BST (GMT+1)	His Eminence Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe, O.P. <i>The Synod: a time of hope?</i>	The Chapter House, Durham Cathedral
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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

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.

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