Easter is about changes that bring new life. Our life is marked by changes, but do they all bring new life? Changes come in different forms and sizes. They always bring something new. But this doesn’t necessarily mean vitality, energy or progress. Resurrection embodies the most unexpected, shocking and incomprehensible change: a change from death to life. Believing in the Resurrection is not something that comes organically. It creates upheaval in our thinking, feeling and relating to the world. The change that is at the core of Jesus’ resurrection is ultimately a mystery. It is easier to grasp what the belief in the Resurrection does to us than to explain what it is. Lent was yet another opportunity to get more familiar with this Mystery. One of my Lent undertakings was a visit to Ascension Parish Graveyard, a small cemetery tucked away on Huntingdon Road, where several great philosophers are buried. I was moved by the simplicity of the gravestones and felt privileged to stand at the graves of such great minds as G.E.Moore, Peter Geach, Elisabeth Anscombe and her supervisor, the Austrian philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein. For me, Wittgenstein captures best what is required for believing in the Resurrection. In his Culture and Value Wittgenstein asks: ‘What inclines even me to believe in Christ’s resurrection?’ As someone who struggled with the idea of religion, he offers answers which basically amount to dismissing the role of ‘speculative intellect’ when it comes to dealing with the Resurrection. He says, ‘only love can believe the Resurrection’, repeating this proposition when he states: ‘it is love that believes the Resurrection’ (italics mine). That is, love is the condition for belief in the Resurrection. Does this mean that if we don’t love, we will never understand the Resurrection? I think so. Without love (receiving and giving it) we cannot see how the Resurrection launches new life, bringing new good things.

Our Institute in the past twelve months has been blessed with many new good things in the form of projects, opportunities, encounters and gifts, including the recent grant from The Maurice and Hilda Laing Charitable Trust for the upgrade of accommodation which we will undertake in a few months.

Our Easter gratitude goes to everyone who breathes new energy into the Institute through their prayers, presence and support. I would like to thank especially Dr Amy Daughton for the many great things she brought to the Institute. Amy has been with us for 7 years, first as Cardinal Hume Scholar, later as Tutor in Theology, and then as Director of Studies and Director of Research. Amy’s unique combination of expertise in practical, pastoral, philosophical, political and social theology as well as ethics have benefited many through her publications, lectures, seminars, and helped to strengthen the academic profile of our Institute. She has been a brilliant pedagogical leader, helping us to develop new initiatives, frameworks and processes. From 1 May, Amy will start her new post as Lecturer in Practical
Theology at the University of Birmingham. We congratulate Amy on this appointment, and thank her for her dedicated service.

In the spirit of Easter joy, we celebrate three doctoral successes this academic year: Catherine Sexton (Anglia Ruskin University), Jordan Pullicino (Anglia Ruskin University) and Rosalie Moloney (University of Cambridge). We also congratulate their supervisors: Dr Amy Daughton and Dr Susan O’Brien who supervised Catherine; Dr Amy Daughton, Dr Oonagh O’Brien and Dr Anne Francis who supervised Jordan and Rev. Dr Janet Tollington who supervised Rosalie.

I am delighted to announce that from 1 May, Dr Féridia Stone-Davis will become Director of Research (and will act as Director of Studies until September 2019). And, we most warmly welcome Ms Sue Price as a part-time Pastoral Outreach Coordinator. We have appointed two visiting fellows for 2019/20, Dr Kevin Grove (Notre Dame University) will be Cardinal Hume Scholar and Dr Susan Docherty will be our inaugural Mary Ward Fellow. By the end of May 2019 we hope to appoint a new Director of Studies to be in post for the new academic year. May these and other exciting developments and, most of all, our love that believes in the Resurrection continue to nurture our Institute’s mission. May we all ‘let him Easter in us’.

Dr Anna Abram

A FAREWELL FROM DR AMY DAUGHTON

As I write I am in the midst of wrapping up work all ready for colleagues to unwrap after Easter, as if the tasks of teaching and learning were a (only slightly) less exciting game of pass the parcel. The idea of these tasks as presents seems apt for my experience at Margaret Beaufort!

Higher education, the university sector to which I’m going, is increasingly characterised in terms of market exchanges market terms, consumers, producers, exchanges. There are strengths to that. It can mean reporting systems that are protections that safeguard, exchanges that name as their goal equity and just return for labour or price. What it can miss is what one finds here.

Margaret Beaufort is a place of exchange to be sure, not a mechanical quid pro quo, but a place where it is possible to meet a genuinely mutual exchange of gifts. The gifts I’ve received are many. I have had the delight of learning from my students and my colleagues: At our international summer school in 2015, I learned that it genuinely is more fun to go teach theology if you spent the morning swimming in a Maltese lagoon, which was perhaps a lesson I should have learned earlier. I learned that if you draw a stick figure, you can basically teach anything! I have learned how to listen, how to recognise profound insight in the long brew of experience, and in the freshness of someone taking up ideas for the first time. I learned also about the richness of the theology of our practice, of what we do. These are lessons that were shared with me by students and co-supervisors in doctoral and master supervisions, and I had the great gift of accompanying students at their completion of those projects, and seeing their thinking go beyond what I could offer—especially our newly minted doctors, Dr Catherine Sexton and Dr Jordan Pullicino!

They were shared with me also in our classrooms, these dedicated spaces for women in Catholic theology, and in the ecumenical gatherings of our Federation. Our students have such care for each other in these rooms, attending to each other. This is the idea put into action, where learning happens in and through the very practices of our time together: the giving of time, of expertise, of experience, of vulnerability. In this way I have continued through my time here to learn about community, how to build and tend to it. I prize these gifts that you have given me. And I make sense of them theologically, which is what I offer back to you.
The last Mass that I helped to organise was for Fairtrade Fortnight and so we went forth on a hymn of Marty Haugen, taken from Isaiah 55. Isaiah 55 is the call to the waters, the waters that are everlasting, to labour that satisfies, to wine and milk that cost nothing. It is a beautiful image of festivity. Which is what gifts are, the festive, which disrupts the expectation of getting something back, it creates instead a kind of clearing, a suspension of that expectation of getting something out of a situation. And so the festive nourishes us for the everyday, reframes our everyday toward generosity. Later in that chapter, Isaiah speaks of the work of God, God’s rain that goes out and brings back bread, of the Word that goes out and accomplishes God's intent. Our work here is part of that cycle, we are also the going out of God's work, returning to create the banquet, the festival. That is the fruit of our labour, ultimately.

I can see that labour and that fruit in the work our students offer into our community, like Kate and Mari who look after our alumnae, like Rosalie who has carefully tended our residential life. It is also in the work of our Directors and Council members—there are many whose generosity I should name, but I especially want to thank Janet Soskice, who not only dug the (metaphorical) foundations of this Institute but was also my Director of Studies back in 2003 when I matriculated and has accompanied my growth as a scholar ever since. I can see it in the dedication and attention of Ela, Lynda, Mick, Neil, Mel, Ged, Sue. In the past too, from Susan, Anna, Philomena, Anne, Oonagh, Thea, Asia and her family, and all those I didn’t have the chance to work with, who built what we now work from. Our Federation colleagues, who I have to say mostly give me the especially precious gift of laughing at my jokes during committees which I recognise might be the most truly selfless example I'm naming, but whose leadership in their own spaces offers a model of replenishment. And, most closely, in these most recent months, Anna and Ferdia, who both just astound me weekly in their scholarship, their kindness, their patience, their indefatigability...!

These are all things from which I have benefited from and been shaped by, it is what I take with me. And this way, what we do together here is a gift of self. I don't pretend that isn't itself really hard work! But it, and we, points beyond ourselves to the waters, to the feast. Our work is a gift we offer that comes back to nourish us, and each other. We can be the action of God in the world, creating the waters. I thank each of you for your part in showing that to me, and to the world in our life here, and I hope I can further thank you and best honour you by taking these lessons with me and using them, so that they will cascade to those we have not yet even met, transforming classrooms, and committees, and communities, into abundance.

NEW PASTORAL OUTREACH COORDINATOR

I have been associated with MBIT for several years, starting with the Thursday afternoon Life and Service sessions, and then gradually going a bit further and deeper each time with new challenges. My current challenge is working towards finishing my PhD within the next 18 months or so. I am looking at the spirituality of severely disabled non-verbal children. I have a new challenge as well—taking up the role of Pastoral Outreach Coordinator for MBIT. This is a new post, with main focus on pastoral outreach. This will be working with parishes and schools, developing programmes, retreat days, quiet days that support and encourage people to go just that little bit deeper in their own theological journey. I will be supporting the Thursday afternoon programme and events at MBIT. I will also be able to offer pastoral supervision, which is a way of helping people reflect on their practical experience in ministry within the church. I will be continuing to work two days a week as a lay chaplain for a local charity. This is a very good way of keeping my feet on the ground in the reality of practical theology as lived in the world of work. I am looking forward to seeing how the role develops in conjunction with Anna and Ferdia—bear with me as I find my feet. I will be at MBIT on Thursdays in term time and working flexibly during the rest of the week. I am looking forward to meeting you as the Pastoral Outreach Coordinator!

Sue Price
I was awarded my PhD in Practical Theology in May 2019. My research involved a group of older sisters from 5 English foundations who were no longer in formal, full-time or paid ministry external to their communities. I listened to the sisters’ experiences, asking in what ways they continue to be apostolic until the very end of their lives, and how they understand their vocation to apostolic religious life at this stage in their lives. My work found that ministry for these sisters is increasingly community-based and that, alongside the continuing importance of a ministry of prayer, sisters come to embody their vocation to apostolic religious life through three emerging forms of ministry: ministry to each other; to their carers and through intentional presence, as ministry which is both sacramental and incarnational in nature. This embodiment of their ministry and vocation means that their care and concern for others becomes very much part of their identity, as they minister out of their God-given self. In identifying the richness of the sisters’ on-going ministry, it appears that reduced social influence and physical limitations do not constitute a diminished response to their vocation.

**Dr Catherine Sexton**

In February 1967 a group of Catholic students from Duquesne University experienced what has come to be called ‘baptism in the Holy Spirit’, a powerful spiritual experience expressed in a renewed faith and love of Scripture. Thus began what is known today as Catholic Charismatic Renewal. My experience of this ‘Catholic Pentecostalism’ in the early 1990’s led me in recent years to ask how this predominantly lay-led, spiritual movement may have contributed to the life of the local church, in England.

Thus, began my PhD studies at the Institute. The focus I chose was ‘giving testimony’, a common practice in charismatic groups, whereby the foundational faith experience (baptism in the Holy Spirit) is recounted and shared with others as a witness of faith. I proposed a theological reading, examining interviews with charismatic practitioners, interpreting them in terms of the Scriptural account of Pentecost, in Acts 2. I identified these personal stories of faith, as told in terms of a story of Church (Pentecost), and as ‘prophetic voice’. As such, I argued that their ecclesial contribution offers an example of marginal voices affirming both their marginality, while also seeking, and challenging, their relation to the ecclesial centre. This, I also argue, contributes to Catholic tradition, as a form of transmission of faith. **Dr Jordan Pullicino**

I passed my viva in February with my thesis ‘Putting Tamar in her place’: Genesis 38, the unusual story of Tamar and her father-in-law Judah, is often considered a secular chapter of the Bible. When it is viewed as a story within a story in the context of the Joseph narrative, it is clear that Tamar, not Judah, is Joseph’s alter ego. As ancestress of King David she deserves to be included among the biblical patriarchs, while her devotion to perpetuating Abraham’s line earns her recognition as an agent of God. **Dr Rosalie Ni Mhaoldomhaigh**

My research project entitled ‘How Do I Look? A Christian Gaze on Self(ie) Image’ started life as a review article of some art exhibitions in which women artists offered new gazes on women as subjects rather than objects. Following an insight from the French Catholic writer Fabrice Hadjadj, I asked whether as Christians we could look on others as Jesus does, that is to say with a “theotic”, i.e. divinizing gaze. As I am now trying to turn this into a book, the research has forced me to go considerably outside my areas of competence, and here the research seminars with my colleagues at Margaret Beaufort have been a huge help. For example, my colleague Louise gave me links to a database of psychological studies on self-image. Especially as most of my colleagues are women, their gaze has been especially helpful, confirming my suspicion that one work of art was not as innocent as it looked. I’m especially grateful to Amy’s positive response when what I thought would be a straightforward bit of writing got “derailed” by something I hadn’t noticed before. “Like all good research”, she said. Similarly colleagues have been happy to share their networks, which has led to a positive conversation with a publisher. I also enjoy being able to contribute from my experience as an artists’ chaplain – there are quite a few secret artists in the Margaret Beaufort community! **Dominic White OP, Research Associate**
It is this great absence that is like a presence, that compels me to address it without hope of a reply

R.S. Thomas

Presence and absence. Saying and unsaying. What happens when we talk about God? Must language always fail? Why? And is the ensuing silence really failure or does language ‘fail’ rather through super abundance? These were among the themes running through Dr Stone-Davis’ Autumn seminar series entitled ‘The im/possibility of talking about God’.

Beginning (fittingly) with the account of creation in the Book of Genesis and looking also at St Augustine’s reflections on humanity’s inbuilt desire to know God in his Confessions (“But where in my consciousness, Lord, do you dwell?”), Férdia asked whether language is ‘natural’ or in some sense ‘God given’. Building on this notion, and asking whether that means language is therefore always successful, she then introduced a series of theological and philosophical attempts to approach God through language: Thomas Aquinas’ celebrated ‘five ways’ or ‘proofs’ for the existence of God, Psuedo-Dionysius’ exposition of ‘negative theology’ (defining God by what he is not because he is beyond assertion and denial) in his Mystical Theology and Anthony Flew’s rather less positive view of what exists at the edge of words in his essay Death of a Thousand Qualifications (“Just how does what you call an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary gardener or even from no gardener at all?”)

From here Férdia explored the importance and function of metaphor and poetry to talking about God, impressing upon us the risky, imprecise but also creative qualities of language. We went on to address the language of the sacraments and specifically the Eucharist understood as what Herbert McCabe calls ‘the creative language of God’. Then the language of prayer – what is prayer? And who speaks to whom when we pray? A further session considered gendered language and asked, using St Julian of Norwich’s Revelations of Divine Love as a starting point for discussion, whether some kinds of language bring us closer to God than others. The course concluded with an exciting practical spiritual exercise devised by PhD candidate, Sr Pavlína Kašparová, to help us explore how we can communicate our experience of God through the language of art.

Férdia led us through this complex material with a sure hand, always providing further explanation where desired and readily directing us to further fruitful avenues of research. Her series was challenging, at times vertiginous, but always utterly absorbing.

Claire Kokelaar

women on our church. Whether we were examining the visions of Julian of Norwich or the recent activities of our contemporaries across the globe as part of Catholic Women Speak, it felt as though we were pulling at the thread that connects the prophetic, the mystical and the call to action of our faith.

For me it was just what I needed as I considered how I might pursue my learning in a theological environment. I was encouraged by the quality of the lectures and presentations and challenged by the discussion that followed. I heard different voices and found new friends.

Chris Quinn

 SNAPSHOTS FROM OUR CATHOLIC THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE COURSE

The series of lectures ‘Women Who Changed the Church’ was my introduction to Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology. Taking place every Thursday afternoon in the Michaelmas Term, these public events gave me an insight into the opportunities of engaging with and seeking spiritual support and challenge from the institute. Starting with Hildegard of Bingen, followed by Julian of Norwich and moving on to Dorothy Day, we heard about and discussed the impact of these and other
Upcoming Courses & Events

Christian Mysticism
Begins 25 April 2019, MBIT
A four week Thursday afternoon course, led by Jubilee Fellow, Dr Louise Nelstrop

Conversation day on Christianity and Ecology
4 May 2019, 11am–4pm, MBIT
A joint event featuring Margaret Barker and Elizabeth Theokritoff organised by the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology and the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies

Easter Concert
10 May, chapel, 7pm, MBIT
A programme of early music by the Chameleon Ensemble, including Bach Easter Chorales, Telemann Easter Cantata and Pepusch

Mary Ward Lecture: How to Believe
24 May 2019, 4pm, Runcie Room, Faculty of Divinity
A lecture by Professor John Cottingham, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Reading University, Professor of Philosophy of Religion at the University of Roehampton, London, and an Honorary Fellow of St John’s College, Oxford

Beyond Here There Be Dragons: The World’s Oldest Story
28 May 2019, 4.30pm, MBIT
A talk by Professor Robert Miller, The Catholic University of America

Circling around the Triduum: James MacMillan’s Musico-Theological Vision
31 July 2019, 11.30am, venue tbc
A lecture by Professor Jeremy Begbie, Duke University, taking place as part of a postgraduate study day on Theology, Creativity and the Arts

Margaret Beaufort
26 September 2019, venue tbc
A lecture by Professor Richard Rex, University of Cambridge

Symposium: Religious Life for Women – A Sustainable Future
24–25 October 2019, London University of Notre Dame (USA) in England
Two-day symposium on findings of a research project funded by the Conrad Hilton Foundation Catholic Sisters Initiative

Who's Who

Dr Anna Abram
Principal

Dr Fédia Stone-Davis
Director of Research & Acting Director of Studies

Sue Price
Pastoral Outreach Coordinator

Ela Wolbek
Administrator

Mr Mel Kanellas
Bursar

Mrs Lynda Turner
House Manager

Mr Neil Warmsley
Gardener

Mr Mick Turner
Domestic Assistant

Margaret Beaufort
26 September 2019, venue tbc
A lecture by Professor Richard Rex, University of Cambridge

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