



St Maximilian Kolbe House
63 Jeddo Road
London
W12 9EE

tel: 020 8749 1321
e-mail: info@catholicunion.org.uk
web: www.catholicunion.org.uk

NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2017

Dear Member,

AGM Notice

Please see the Statement at the bottom of this Newsletter from the Secretary of the Catholic Union about the Officers and Members of the Council in advance of the AGM on 16 November 2017 at 6.30pm at Vaughan House, 46 Francis Street, Westminster. **PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS DATE HAS CHANGED FROM THAT PREVIOUSLY ADVERTISED.**

Craigmyle Lecture and Reception: Thursday 5 October 2017 at 6.30pm:

Her Excellency The Rt Hon Baroness Patricia Scotland QC, former Attorney General and now Secretary-General of the Commonwealth has kindly agreed to deliver this year's lecture at our usual venue of Notre Dame University, 1 Suffolk Street, London SW1Y 4HG (near Trafalgar Square).

Book now! Admission is free but registration is now open and booking is essential. No tickets will be issued but please contact the office by telephone, e-mail or otherwise to register for a place.

Catholic Union Office now open Monday-Friday mornings

I am pleased to report that our office staff, Marie Marron and John Ignoscia, have agreed to extend their hours to enable the office to be open five mornings a week. At present, Marie will work Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and John will work Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

President: Sir Edward Leigh, MP

Vice-Presidents: Professor Lord Alton of Liverpool, Baroness Morris of Bolton OBE, Lord Clarke of Hampstead CBE, KSG, , Mr Jonathan Evans MP, Mr Robert Ffello, Professor John Haldane, Baroness Hollins, Dr Terence Morris, Mr John Deighan KSG, Mr Leo Simmonds KCSG

The Voice of Catholics in Public Life

Recent Catholic Union Events

Lecture (1 June)

This lecture ("*Martyrs and Exiles: Persecuted Christian and other Minorities in the Middle East*"), organised by the Catholic Union Charitable Trust, was a great success with a record attendance of around 100 people. Gerard Russell (former diplomat and author of *Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms: Journeys into the Disappearing Religions of the Middle East*) addressed the current situation of Christian and other religious minorities in the Middle East and observed how they have proved remarkably resilient over many periods of persecution. John Pontifex from Aid to the Church in Need spoke about his recent visit to Aleppo and the hope that Christians will be able to return to the Nineveh Plains, the subject of a recent ACN report. The lecture was reported in the Catholic press.

The Catholic Union will be supporting ACN with its second "Red Wednesday" campaign on **22 November** to draw attention to the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities. Last year, this included the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral and many other buildings being illuminated in red as well as other events.

The Summer Gathering at Arundel Castle (15 July)

Around 55 members and their guests enjoyed the annual Summer Gathering at Arundel Castle, the home of the Duke of Norfolk whose ancestor Henry, 15th Duke of Norfolk, founded the Catholic Union in 1870 and the centenary of whose death falls this year. Mass was celebrated in the private chapel of the castle for the repose of the soul of Duke Henry and members then heard addresses from the Chairman (David O'Mahony), President (Sir Edward Leigh MP) and Director (Nigel Parker) and had the opportunity for questions and discussion. The day concluded with a tour of the castle.

In his address, David O'Mahony focused on the resignation of Tim Farron as Leader of the Liberal Democrats and the difficulty of reconciling party leadership with mainstream Christian beliefs. He said that tolerance shouldn't mean everyone having to think the same but rather that different views should be tolerated. Tim Farron had been asked about his *thoughts* and those thoughts had then been condemned which was a misunderstanding of a liberal, democratic position. Where a balancing of rights is involved, reasonable people can disagree. As Pope St John Paul II said, religious freedom is the litmus test for other rights, which are adversely affected when freedom of religion or belief is suppressed.

Sir Edward Leigh echoed the concern that "tolerance" was no longer good enough, and there was pressure to embrace alternative lifestyles, which inhibited vigorous discussion. He spoke about the challenge of paying for social care for the elderly and the pressure on the elderly that would result if the campaign to legalise assisted suicide were to be successful. He also commented on the hardening of positions on abortion and feared that a proposal to decriminalise abortion in Parliament might now attract a majority in favour.

Nigel Parker reviewed the work of the Parliamentary and Public Affairs Committee and his work since the beginning of March as Director. The PPAC was looking for more ways to have impact through its own submissions and in conjunction with other organisations. He said that the Catholic Union was networking with other groups who were speaking up for Christian beliefs in the public square such as

Theos (Christian think tank) and the Evangelical Alliance. He was keen to improve the communications of the Catholic Union with its members and with others through social media.

The News from Parliament

After several years of devoted work in compiling our regular “News from Parliament”, John Barrie has decided that the time has come to pass on this task and I am delighted that one of our newest members Lisa Fraser has taken this on in collaboration with me. We hope to include additional features and a strong focus on Catholic/Christian issues. If you use e-mail and do not currently subscribe to the “News from Parliament”, please consider doing so by contacting the office.

Subscriptions

Many thanks to those members who responded to my last Newsletter by renewing their subscriptions or in several cases upgrading themselves to become Life Members.

I have also had the opportunity to take a closer look at our database and the subscriptions which our annual members are paying. I have discovered that there are quite a large number of members who pay by standing order and who are paying substantially less than the current annual rate which is a minimum of £30 per annum for single membership and £40 for joint members living at the same address. This may well be because old standing orders have not been updated. We will be writing to those members in due course but it would be helpful if annual members could check the terms of their standing orders and update them where necessary. I also noted that some members pay more than the minimum annual subscription and we are very grateful for this generous support.

Work of the Parliamentary and Public Affairs Committee (PPAC)

The PPAC met on 4 July for the first time since the General Election on 8 June. We discussed the composition of the new Parliament (noting the loss of one of our Vice-Presidents, Rob Ffello) and the Government’s Legislative Programme. We discussed the recent vote by the British Medical Association to support the decriminalisation of abortion, how that issue might return to Parliament in this Session and how we would respond to it.

We also discussed the response of the General Pharmaceutical Council to its consultation on freedom of conscience for pharmacists to which the Catholic Union and many other organisations and individual pharmacists had made submissions. We were pleased to note that the GPhC seemed to have taken account of the representations from Christian groups and had strengthened the references in its guidance to freedom of religion and conscience.

Finally, please feel free to send me feedback on the work of the Catholic Union, let me know if you are able to help us in any way and may I wish all our members an enjoyable and relaxing Summer.



Nigel Parker
Director

e-mail: director@catholicunion.org.uk

Statement from the Secretary re the Annual General Meeting on 16 November 2017

Dear Member,

As required by the Rules of the Catholic Union, this Statement sets out below the names of those Officers of the Union and Council members who have resigned during the year or are due to retire at the next Annual General Meeting to be held on 16 November 2017 at Vaughan House, Westminster.

- **President: Sir Edward Leigh MP**, who is eligible for re-appointment.
- **Vice-Presidents: Prof Lord David Alton, Mr John Deighan, Baroness Shelia Hollins, Professor John Haldane, Lord Anthony Clarke, Mr Jonathan Evans, Mr Robert Ffello, Baroness Patricia Morris, Dr Terence Morris and Mr Leo Simmonds** who are all eligible for re-election.
- **Chairman: David O'Mahony**, who is eligible for re-election.
- **Vice-Chairmen: Tony Cole and Sarah Nagle** who are both eligible for re-election.
- **Honorary Treasurers: Paul Natrass and Bernard Waddingham**, who are both eligible for re-election.
- **Secretary: Gaspar DaSilva** resigned as Secretary on 1 February 2017 and the Council appointed **Michael Pritchett** as Secretary on 8 June 2017.
- **Council: Peter Sefton-Williams** resigned during the year and was replaced on the Council by **Priscilla Sharp**. In addition **Peter Smith, Professor Pauline Dowd-Mercieca** and **Nicholas Bennett** also resigned during the year but were not replaced.
- **Gordon Heald, Priscilla Sharp, Stuart Sexton and Gerald Soane** are Council members due to retire at the AGM and are all eligible for re-election.

Nomination forms and guidance notes may be obtained by contacting the office. **Please note that the completed nomination forms must be returned to the Secretary via the office by 5 October 2017** (6 weeks prior to the AGM in accordance with the Rules).

Rule 16 (iii) provides that the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen shall be elected annually by the Annual General Meeting and they may serve a maximum of three consecutive terms after which they must leave that office for a period of at least one year before being considered for re-election to that same office.

Rule 16 (iv) provides that candidates for the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman may be nominated by the Council or they may be nominated by any member of the Union with the support of seven other members of the Union.

Any member of the Union is eligible, with his/her consent, for nomination as a candidate to fill any of the vacancies set out above. The name of each candidate, proposed and seconded by named members of the Union, must reach the Secretary via the office not later than **5 October 2017**.



Michael Pritchett
Secretary