

Catholic Union AGM - Chairman's Report

As the 'Year of Faith' draws to a close, so does my first year as Chairman.

You will have hopefully all had time to read my report. I would like to spend a few minutes however by looking forward to 2014.

CUCT & CT

2014 will see the rebirth of the **Catholic Union Charitable Trust** which has been dormant for a number of years. The aim is to use the CUCT to assist in our outreach and fundraising activity, as well as to help 'promote the Catholic faith and advance Catholic moral and spiritual principles for the benefit of the wider community'.

This rebirth will help enable us to move forward in a more positive manner with our programme of seminars, conferences and debate. We intend to build a series of high profile events which will bring not only issues of the day to the public arena but will also enable us to gain a higher profile. It is time the CU moved more to the centre stage and to be in the spot light in our increasingly secular world. We intend to build on the good works already taking place, such as The Craigmyle Lecture.

Our lobbying activity, which is at the heart of the Catholic Union will continue but with an added impetus to 'get closer' to Catholic members in both Houses. I would like to see 2014 signaling the start of an annual reception in the House for up to 100 guests which would include members of both Houses as well as an annual mass for members of Parliament.

I would like us to continue to engage and get closer to other like minded Catholic organizations where there is a natural crossover and synergy.

Committee structure & Communications

Moving briefly to our Committees, I would like to thank all the Chairs and members of the various committees. The Parliamentary & Public Affairs and Joint Medical Ethics Committees continue to be at the forefront of the CU's work, with Dr Tony Cole and Dr Philip Howard as respective chairs. We shall be hearing from them shortly.

Members & Communications has been re-launched with special recognition to Mike Henderson as Chair. The Outreach Committee under the Chairmanship of Peter D Williams has been embarking on the difficult task of raising much needed funds and in 2014 we will continue our programme of targeting a series of high worth Catholics and making a personal pitch to them for funds.

And the Education Committee in 2014 will now be under the Chairmanship of Stuart Sexton, who brings a lot of experience to the position; I am confident we will see great things from this Committee, including the continuation of The Catholic Young Writers Award which is very much down to the hard work of Joanne Bogle.

Summer Gathering

Our annual Summer Gathering is one of the opportunities where we as members of the CU can come together in an informal way to discuss issues of the day and the workings of the CU. Given we are a UK wide organization, in 2014 the gathering will travel North to Ampleforth in July (25 – 27 July) so please make a note in your diary. I would encourage as many of you as possible to attend. Clearly we have a membership base in the North so this will be a good opportunity for them to feel engaged. We will also use the occasion to have a joint dinner with a number of Catenian organizations in the area.

Regional Network

Talking of the regions, I would like to see us in 2014 embark on 'greater engagement' with the regions. We will identify three or four areas including Scotland, NE & NW, making contact with the local bishop and use their contacts and influence to engage with the local parishioners and active Catholics. The aim will be to increase membership but also to encourage them to hold seminars in their patch.

Special thanks

And finally I would like to end by extending my thanks to all of you for attending the AGM tonight as well as your continued support. I would encourage you to spread the word of the CU via your local parishes and have friends and family sign up as members. We do need to grow our membership base.

Thank you for your continued and much valued support and I hope 2014 will see us continue to develop and evolve, ensuring we remain THE Voice of Catholics in Great Britain.