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NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 2020

Dear Member,

A Happy New Year to you all in this 150th Anniversary Year for the Catholic Union (our “sesquicentennial”!). I hope that in the year ahead we shall not only mark this anniversary but also with your help increase the impact and influence of Catholic thinking on politics and public affairs.

150th Anniversary Mass with Cardinal Vincent Nichols – 19 February 2020 at 6pm

Cardinal Vincent has kindly agreed to celebrate Holy Mass for us again this year at Farm St Church. Please see the enclosed invitation and register if you plan to attend the Reception afterwards.

Other Forthcoming Events

We hope to announce shortly dates for our other events this year including the Summer Gathering, Craigmyle Lecture, other talks and the AGM.

Recent Events

We have had a busy Autumn with three speaker events organised by the Catholic Union Charitable Trust in quick succession. On 10 October, Lord Glasman delivered the Craigmyle Lecture at Notre Dame University on “Catholic Social Thought and the Economics of the Common Good”. On 25 October, Fr James Hanvey SJ spoke at Farm St on “Pope Francis and his Vision for the Church” and then on 7 November Bishop Philip Mounstephen of Truro and Rehman Chishti (PM’s Special Envoy) spoke at St Mary Moorfields in the City of London about Christian Persecution overseas and the implementation of the Bishop’s Review for the FCO. The texts of the Glasman and Mounstephen talks are available on our website. At the AGM on 21 November, we elected Michael Henderson as a new Vice-President and welcomed Prof. Peter Hindmarsh and Ms Claire Harrington to the Catholic Union Council as well as re-electing Mr Ian Potts. We also thanked several long standing departing members of the Council for their many years of service including Dr Ian Jessiman, Dr Rosalind Bearcroft, Capt Michael Clark and Mr Stuart Sexton.

Fundraising and Development of the Catholic Union

Thanks to our fundraising efforts last year and the generosity of members of the St Thomas More Circle, we were able to take on James Somerville-Meikle who has been working for us as part-time Head of Public Affairs since July 2019. He has improved our contacts in Parliament and Government (including a meeting at 10 Downing St last year) and is making good use of our Twitter account. Please follow us at [@CatholicUnionGB](https://twitter.com/CatholicUnionGB) and if you don’t already do so, subscribe to our weekly “News from Parliament” which is edited by James and one of our excellent volunteers. As well as taking on James, and increasing my hours of work as Director, we have also tried to recruit a new

The Catholic Union of Great Britain: The Voice of Catholics in Public Life

President: Sir Edward Leigh, MP

Vice-Presidents: Mike Kane MP, Baroness Hooper, Baroness Morris of Bolton OBE, Lord Clarke of Hampstead CBE, KSG, Mr Robert Ffello, Professor John Haldane, Baroness Hollins, Dr Terence Morris, Mr John Deighan KSG, Mr Leo Simmonds KCSG, Dr Anthony Cole KCSG, Mr John Barrie KCSG, Mr Michael Henderson KCHS

Administrator and Membership Secretary but have not succeeded so far. If you know of anyone who you think might be suitable, please contact me for more details or an informal discussion.

The Benefactors and Supporters of the St Thomas More Circle enjoyed social events preceded by Mass in the Autumn at the House of Commons and at St Mary's Cadogan St, London to thank them for their support. The enclosed letter from Richard Collyer-Hamlin has more information about our continuing fundraising efforts through the St Thomas More Circle and an exciting new way to offer your support by becoming a "Friend".

Political Challenges

The Parliamentary and Public Affairs Committee continues to meet in Parliament and there is no shortage of difficult issues on the agenda and likely to arise in the year ahead. On life issues, we face the introduction of liberal abortion legislation in Northern Ireland, the prohibition of pro-life vigils outside abortion facilities (upheld so far in the courts) and proposals to decriminalise abortion in England and Wales with uncertain results. We also expect the issue of assisted suicide to return at some stage during the life of this Parliament and the Catholic Union continues to be part of the Care Not Killing Alliance which has opposed these proposals in the courts, so far successfully.

We continue to monitor carefully the issues of religious freedom and freedom of conscience in the UK and will follow closely the implementation of the Regulations on Relationships and Sex Education in schools. We have also strongly supported initiatives to support Christians and others persecuted for their religious beliefs such as "Red Wednesday" organised by Aid to the Church In Need with which we continue to develop close links.

We also wish to increase our activity and explore the implications of Catholic Social Teaching on other social and economic issues such as homelessness, poverty, criminal justice and the treatment of refugees in the year ahead, in collaboration with other Catholic and like-minded organisations.

Appeal for more Volunteers

The Catholic Union continues to be run mostly by volunteers and we need more to help us with our various activities. Do you have expertise in political work (e.g. writing policy submissions to Government and responding to Consultations), event organisation, media work including writing articles for the print press or social media? Would you like to do something more to help the Catholic Union? If so, please get in touch with me for an informal chat in the first instance.

Finally, may I thank you for your continued support and please keep the Catholic Union and its activities in your prayers.

Yours faithfully,

Nigel Parker
Director

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