

‘WOMEN LEADERS: TOWARDS A BRIGHTER FUTURE’ CONFERENCE

6 MARCH 2024

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES OF THE PANELLISTS (*alphabetical order*)

ALFORD, SR. HELEN, OP



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Helen Alford studied Manufacturing Engineering at the University of Cambridge, and worked in a number of manufacturing environments. After finishing a PhD on “human-centred technology,” she joined the Dominican Sisters of St Catherine of Siena of Newcastle, Natal (South Africa) and was sent to teach at the Dominican University in Rome, the Pontifical University of St Thomas (Angelicum). She is now an Ordinary Professor of Economics and Ethics and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences; between 2017 and 2021 she was also Vice Rector in the same

university. Her research mostly looks at the impact of ethics and Christian social thought on the field of management, sustainability and artificial intelligence. She is an Ordinary Member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, of which she was nominated President by Pope Francis in April 2023, a Consultor to the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, and Senior Adviser to the “Blueprint for Better Business” based in the UK.

BAMIRYIO TOGYAYO, SR. ESPÉRANCE

Sr Espérance is a Comboni Missionary sister with a Bachelor degree in Nursing and a Master degree in Health System Management. Missionary experience: In UAE, Dubai for pastoral work 2000 – 2001; Sudan from 2002 – 2011: Coordinator and Administrator of a Mission Hospital Was in the initial Team of Solidarity with South Sudan in the health sector starting a Nursing School; Congo – Togo – Benin 2011 – 2014: Provincial Team leader (Internal service to the congregation); Uganda 2015 -2017; South Sudan 2017 – 2022: Director of the Catholic Health Training Institute; a project of the Bishops’ Conference of Sudan; Italy June 2002 to date: Internal service to the Congregation.



BECQUART, SR. NATHALIE XMCJ



Sr Nathalie Becquart, XMCJ, is Under-Secretary to the General Secretariat of the Synod at the Vatican, first woman appointed by Pope Francis in that position. Formerly the French Xaviere sister served as first woman Director of the National Service for the Evangelization of Young People and Vocations at the Bishops' Conference of France. She graduated from HEC school of management (master in Entrepreneurship), then studied philosophy and theology in Paris at Centre Sèvres, sociology at EHESS, and specialized in ecclesiology at Boston College. She was named by the BBC on the list of the 100 most

inspiring and influential women of the world in 2022 and by FORBES on the list 50 Over 50: Europe, Middle East and Africa 2023.

CHAVEZ, ELISA

Elisa Chavez is a Human Rights Advisor to the Norwegian NGO Stefanus Alliance International. She leads a global project on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and Gender Equality as intersecting rights, and is also involved in training, resource development and publication in this thematic area, in addition to coordinating select projects with local partners in Iraq, Lebanon, and Korea. She is currently also serving as an advisor on FoRB and gender equality to the inter-governmental International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (IRFBA). She holds a Master in Global Affairs & Policy, with a double emphasis on International Law and International Policy.



CIRILLO, GIULIA ISABEL

Giulia Isabel Cirillo is the Advocacy Coordinator at UISG, the International Union of Superiors General. Alongside its core mission of training, supporting and connecting Catholic women's congregations, UISG acts as an umbrella organisation for Sisters tackling the world's most pressing development challenges. The UISG advocacy office was launched in 2020 to empower Sisters and the communities they serve in promoting social and environmental justice. Giulia designs and implements programmes to build capacity in advocacy and communication, explore the links between faith and development, and expand partnership opportunities for UISG and Sisters at large. Her mission is to leverage the potential of UISG as a global-scale, locally-rooted network to deliver sustainable, systemic change. Giulia holds a Bachelor's degree in Classics and a Master's degree in Gender Studies from the University of Cambridge. Before joining UISG, she worked with humanitarian and development organisations based in Rome, London, Malta and Spain. Born in Surrey and raised in Rome, she currently lives near Barcelona.

DUTTON, ALISTAIR

Alistair was elected Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis after having served as Chief Executive of Caritas Scotland for nine years. Previously, Alistair had been Caritas Internationalis' Humanitarian Director for five years and interim Director of The Sphere Project, which sets international standards for humanitarian aid. An engineer, Alistair studied physics at the University of Durham, and philosophy, politics and economics at the University of Oxford. Alistair has worked in the international relief and development sector for more than twenty-five years,

during which time he has worked in more than sixty countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Alistair entered the sector when, as a Jesuit novice working for the Jesuit Refugee Service, he was seconded to Caritas Nepal.



FÉLICITÉ, PATRICIA ADÈLE



I was born into a working-class family in one of the poor districts of the diocese of Port-Louis in Mauritius. I grew up in my parish as a member of the children's choir and as a volunteer with the religious community of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. My personal, spiritual and professional path has been shaped by the formation service for young people and lay people set up by my bishop, Cardinal Maurice Piat. My career :

- Youth movement trainer;
- Involved with Caritas Mauritius for 35 years;
- Member of the steering committee for the Diocesan Synod 2000-2004;
- Director of Caritas Mauritius for 15 years;
- Ally of Aide à Toute Détresse Quart Monde in the search for "the hidden dimensions of poverty" and facilitator of the Université Populaire Quart Monde;

- Former Coordinator of Caritas in the Indian Ocean region, former member of the Regional Commission of Caritas Africa, former member of the Representative Council of Caritas Internationalis and Vice-President of the Women's Leadership and Participation Committee of the Caritas International Network;
- Involved in civil society in the defence of children's rights and works with the private sector in the fight against poverty.

HADEBE, DR NONTANDO (ONLINE)

Dr Nontando Hadebe is a woman theologian and a member of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and Catholic Women Speak/Preach as well as other organizations working on gender justice. She is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Nontando is also the current International Coordinator of Side by Side; an international faith movement for gender justice that Christian Aid is a global member of.



HEANEY, DR MEAVE

Associate Professor Maeve Louise Heaney VDMF is a consecrated member of the Verbum Dei Community and has worked in theological formation in Ireland, England, Spain, Italy, the United States. She is the *Director of the Xavier Centre for Theological Formation* at Australian Catholic University and President of the *Australian Catholic Theological Association (ACTA)*. A theologian, musician, and composer, she specializes and researches into the areas of theological aesthetics, music, spirituality, ministry and leadership. Her most recent book is entitled *Suspended God: Music and a Theology of Doubt*, and in 2020 she released her 5th album of original music: *Strange Life: The Music of Doubtful Faith*.

MURRAY, CRISTIANE

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Cristiane has been living in Italy since 1986.

As a journalist, she worked at Vatican Radio for 23 years, and for two years, in 2018 and 2019, she collaborated with the Secretariat of the Synod in the preparation and implementation of the Synods for Youth and for the Amazon Region.

In 2019, she was appointed by Pope Francis as Deputy Director of the Holy See Press Office.



MURRAY, SR. PATRICIA



Sister Patricia Murray I.B.V.M., a Loreto Sister from the Irish Province, is the Executive Secretary of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), holding this position since 2014. She holds a Master's degree in both Education and Theology and a Doctorate in Practical Theology. She has been a member of the General Council of her congregation and was the former Executive Director of Solidarity with South Sudan. In 2020, Sister Murray has been awarded the Presidential Distinguished Service Award by the Irish Government.

In February 2023, Sister Murray was appointed by Pope Francis as Consultant to the Dicastery for Culture and Education.

NIRMALINI SR, A.C. (ONLINE)

Sr. Nirmalini, the Superior General of the Apostolic Carmel, is known the world over as the dynamic President of the Conference of Religious, India. She originally hails from Mangalore, but has been born and brought up in Mumbai. A vibrant and highly motivated person, Sr. Nirmalini was appointed the principal of Mount Carmel Convent School, Delhi from 2002 to 2015 and has made an impact on students, staff and the church by her remarkable involvement in human rights movements and contributions to the society. She has been the organizer of many seminars for educational institutions both in the church and other secular ones as well. She has been the recipient of many awards such as the World Human Rights Award, Best Principal Award, World Disaster Education Award, the Best Teacher Award. In 2020, Sister Nirmalini was elected as Superior General of the Apostolic Carmel Congregation. In 2021, she was elected as the National President of the Conference of Religious, India (CRI) by absolute majority for the term 2021-2024. Earlier, she was elected the President of the Women's Section. Under the aegis of the CRI, Sr. Nirmalini has initiated the CRWI (Conference of Religious Women, India) through which a Grievance Redressal Cell has been established at Jayanagar, Bangalore, which offers a platform to voice out the complaints, grievances, malpractices and injustice faced by women religious in India. By organizing and participating in rallies against injustice, like the one in support of the women wrestlers in Delhi, she has inspired millions to "pray on their feet" and stand with the oppressed and marginalized. "We do not lose hope, we carry on with what we are doing," Sr. Nirmalini says, "doing works of humanity, reaching out to human beings to share with them the message of Christ.: I think we will continue doing that with a lot of passion." Sr. Nirmalini was selected as participant of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, to be held in 2023-2024, representing the religious in India and the Church.





PALACIOS SILVA, SR. RUPERTA

Sr Ruperta is a member of the Congregation of Carmelite Missionaries of Saint Teresa.

She has a Bachelor's Degree in Religious Sciences from the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. Sr Ruperta is the Coordinator of SEPAC, the Secretariat of Afro-American and Caribbean Pastoral of CELAM, the Latin American Episcopal Conference.

Sr Ruperta was a missionary in Brazil for ten years, and has taken part in several diploma courses, seminars and meetings in relation to black pastoral care, culture and theology.

PORRO, CHIARA

H.E. Ambassador Chiara Porro is a career diplomat who joined Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in 2009. She has held a range of positions in Canberra, including most recently as Director, Ministerial and Executive Liaison Section, Executive Branch. She was seconded as an Adviser to the International Division of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2016-17), and has worked in DFAT's Budget Branch (2015-16) and Africa Branch (2014). Overseas, Ambassador Porro has served as Deputy Consul-General in Noumea, New Caledonia (2018-2020), on a short term mission to West Africa (2016), and as Second Secretary in New Delhi, India (2011-2014). Ambassador Porro holds a Master of International Relations and Diplomacy from the University of Leiden, the Netherlands and a Bachelor of Arts in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from the University of York, United Kingdom. She speaks Italian and French. Ambassador Porro presented credentials to His Holiness Pope Francis on 27 August 2020. Ambassador Porro is married and has two children.



ROBERTSON, KIRSTY



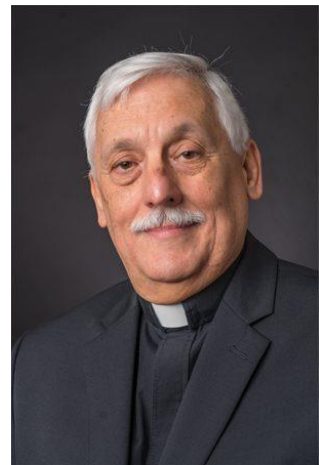
Kirsty has lived, worked and travelled in over 50 countries, including in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, working with the development arm of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and at Machermo, a health post in the Gokyo Valley in Nepal, looking into the protection of the rights of porters for the International Porters Protection Agency. Kirsty started her career in aid and development at Caritas Australia, then went on to work at other NGOs and as a Development Consultant before returning to Caritas Australia in September, 2019 to become Caritas' first female CEO. Caritas Australia is a Member of Caritas Internationalis, the second largest humanitarian agency in the world; and in May 2023, Kirsty was elected as the Vice President of the International Confederation.

Throughout her career, Kirsty has been dedicated to tackling big issues like poverty, injustice and inequality to build a better tomorrow. She is especially dedicated to improving outcomes for women and girls around the world, and believes that we all have a responsibility to provide support and compassion so that all women can reach their full potential. Kirsty has a Graduate Certificate in Catholic Culture and Leadership from

Australian Catholic University; a Master of Arts in Cultural Anthropology from Macquarie University; and a Bachelor of Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney.

SOSA ABASCAL, FR. ARTURO SJ

Father Arturo Sosa Abascal, SJ, of Venezuela, was elected Superior General of the Society of Jesus in 2016. Fr. Sosa leads the Society of Jesus, the largest religious order of priests and brothers in the Catholic Church. Father Sosa entered the Society of Jesus in September 1966 and was ordained a priest in 1977. He holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy from the Catholic University Andrés Bello in Caracas, a bachelor's degree in theology from the Gregorian University in Rome and a doctorate in political science from the Universidad Central de Venezuela. He was provincial superior of the Society of Jesus in Venezuela from 1996 to 2004. As the rector of the Universidad de Frontera in Tachira, 600 miles from Caracas near the border with Colombia, Fr. Sosa worked on an apostolic project that brought people together on both sides of the border. He also helped organise Jesuit universities in Latin America into an effective network to fight poverty and promote youth leadership. At only 34, he was elected as a delegate to the Jesuits' General Congregation 33, the youngest delegate of that congregation; he also took part in GC 34 and GC 35. During GC 35, Fr. Sosa was named by his predecessor, Father Adolfo Nicolás, SJ, to a leadership role, helping to advise on matters related to the governance of the Society.



TROTT, CHRISTOPHER



Chris Trott became the British Ambassador to the Holy See in September 2021. He has been a British diplomat since 1991. His most recent roles have focussed on the Sudans, first as the Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan from August 2016 until March 2019, and then as British Ambassador to the Republic of South Sudan from May 2019 until the end of 2020. He has worked in Burma, Japan, Afghanistan, the South Pacific and both West and Southern Africa. In 2007 he was appointed as Her

Majesty's Ambassador to Senegal, accredited also to Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde and Mali. In 2011 he was appointed as Consul General in Cape Town, South Africa, followed by a short stint in Honiara as High Commissioner to the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Nauru. Among various roles in the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office in London, he worked as Deputy Head of the Human Rights department and as Deputy in a then newly formed unit in the Department for International Development designed to address stabilisation post-conflict.