

INTERVIEW WITH ANNA LISE GORDON, DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY



*Interview conducted by Quentin Wodon
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EXCERPTS:

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- “Prof. Grace is a real gentleman ... and he has the most beautiful handwriting in the world! I have also seen a steelier and more rebellious side to Prof. Grace, inspired by his values and commitment.”

Could you briefly introduce yourself and explain what your work on Catholic education entails?

Since September 2018, I have been Director of the Institute of Education at St Mary's University. One of the privileges of this role has been the opportunity to get to know Prof. Grace in his capacity as Honorary Professor and Director of the Centre for Research and Development in Catholic Education. The Institute of Education at St Mary's is proud of its contribution to initial teacher education and ongoing professional development of teachers, with a strong and clear commitment to Catholic education. Prof. Grace, together with other expert Catholic colleagues, sets the tone for many of our endeavors and service to Catholic education at St Mary's University.

How and when did you first meet with Prof. Grace and how did you interact with him over the years?

I remember one of my first meetings with Prof. Grace over lunch in the refectory at St Mary's. Such wide-ranging and enjoyable discussions! We shared our different memories of Durham University and our passion for all aspects of education. I also remember being inspired by Prof. Grace's active encouragement and support for me as a Christian (albeit not Catholic) woman in leadership.

Box 1: Interview Series

What is the mission of the Global Catholic Education website? The site informs and connects Catholic educators globally. It provides them with data, analysis, opportunities to learn, and other resources to help them fulfill their mission with a focus on the preferential option for the poor.

Why a series of interviews? Interviews are a great way to share experiences in an accessible and personal way. This series will feature interviews with practitioners as well as researchers working in Catholic education, whether in a classroom, at a university, or with other organizations aiming to strengthen Catholic schools and universities.

What is the focus of this interview? This interview is with Anne Lise Gordon, Director of the Institute for Education at St. Mary's University in London. The interview is part of a series in honor of Professor Gerald Grace's retirement from St Mary's University.

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How do you see Prof. Grace's main contributions to practice or research in Catholic education?

Although I am not directly involved in the world of Catholic educational practice and research, the influence of Prof. Grace's work is impressive, particularly the impact of his writing on the scholarship and research of so many others. His excellent editorship of the *International Studies in Catholic Education* journal over many years has extended our understanding of Catholic educational research far and wide.

In what way did Prof. Grace influence your own practice or research in Catholic education?

I have learnt much from Prof. Grace's writings over the years, particularly his focus on Catholic values and the distinctive nature of Catholic school leadership. Prof. Grace sets exacting standards for himself and has inspired me to try to do the same!

How can Catholic education scholars make sure that their research is useful to practitioners?

At St Mary's University, we work with more than 500 primary and secondary schools each year for initial teacher education and professional development for teachers, including MA and PhD studies. Above all, teachers want up-to-date evidence- and research-informed guidance to improve practice in schools and have a positive impact on the lives of children and young people.

What are for you the most critical areas of future research in Catholic education, and why is that?

We have a significant shortage of Catholic religious education teachers and senior school leaders for our schools, so research to support development in these areas is essential.

What is your advice for graduate students who may be interested in conducting research in Catholic education?

Network actively, with purpose, with esteemed colleagues in Catholic education at St Mary's University and beyond. Follow your passions in Catholic education as this is most likely to lead to high-quality research with impact.

Is there a personal anecdote of your interactions with Prof. Grace that you would like to share?

Prof. Grace is a real gentleman, always polite and considerate ... and he has the most beautiful handwriting in the world! I have also seen a steelier and more rebellious side to Prof. Grace, inspired by his values and commitment to justice, that shines through on occasions when needed, and always with positive outcomes.



Photo of Prof. Grace taken on St. Mary's campus.