



## VHI Celebrates the Distinguished Residency of Msgr Georges Lemaître with 2024 Von Hügel Lecture, Given by Director of Vatican Observatory

On Wednesday, 20 November, the Von Hügel Institute for Critical Catholic Inquiry hosted its annual Von Hügel Lecture —'Why Do We Look Up?' — given by Br Guy Consolmagno, SJ.

Br Guy is the Director of the [Vatican Observatory](#) and is known internationally for inspiring audiences into a deeper appreciation of the multiple, interrelated ways in which human beings are drawn to study the cosmos of which we are part. The lecture took place in front of an audience of scholars, students, and members of the general public, from Cambridge and beyond. Br Guy told stories of astronomical discovery and cosmological pioneers, particularly highlighting the legacy of Msgr Georges Lemaître, and reflecting deeply on the question of why humans continue to study the heavens.

This year, the Von Hügel Lecture celebrated the centenary of Lemaître's 1924 residency at St Edmund's House. While at St Edmund's House—now St Edmund's College—Lemaître carried out some of the foundational work that led to what later came to be known as the 'Big Bang' theory. This lecture celebrated the interplay between science and faith, and how interdisciplinary study is a key ingredient for discovery.

[The Times](#) covered Br Guy's significant work at the Vatican Observatory and also made reference of this year's Von Hügel lecture. To watch Br Guy's lecture, click on the button below or visit the Von Hügel Institute's [YouTube Channel](#).

*Photo Credit: Tristan Selden.*

WATCH THE LECTURE



## 'Shakespeare's Virtues' Brings Together Participations from Around the World

The Michaelmas 2024 online lecture series — 'Shakespeare's Virtues: Three Lectures on Living' by [Professor Julia Reinhard Lupton](#) — brought together scholars, students, and learners from across the globe, including participants from the US, UK, and Ukraine.

Across three Shakespeare plays, Professor Lupton examined the nature of virtue in the light of text, character, and performance: how in *Twelfth Night* characters conceal and reveal their true selves; how in *Romeo and Juliet* the play's two lovers aspire towards transcendent love, which both recognises and enhances human beings as divine image-bearers; and how in *King Lear*, the infamous scene of Edgar and Gloucester at the (feigned) Dover cliff is intended not as mere deception or abuse, but as a jointly constructed trust exercise and form of hospice care. VHI Affiliate [Dr Maria Devlin McNair](#) offered responses to Professor Lupton's lectures, with actor Ava Burton reading from the plays. Each session concluded with an open discussion and Q&A.

'Shakespeare's Virtues' is part of a larger Shakespeare initiative, 'Shakespeare and the Common Good?', set up in collaboration with [Shakespeare at Notre Dame](#); an initiative that explores how Shakespeare both succeeds and fails to galvanise shared pursuits of the common good while also recognising the rich opportunities Shakespeare's plays offer us to reflect more deeply on our contemporary world and our lived experiences in it. The Von Hügel Institute is delighted to partner with [New Swan Shakespeare Center](#) as part of this initiative.

To watch the three-part series, click on the button below or visit the Von Hügel Institute's [YouTube Channel](#).

WATCH THE SERIES

## New Associates Join the VHI

This year, several new researchers joined the VHI: [Professor Maria Cimperman, RSCJ](#), [Professor Maura A Ryan](#), [Professor Alain Tschudin](#), and [Professor Paul Weithman](#) (Senior Research Associates); [Dr Caterina Milo](#), [Dr Nancy Michael](#), and [Dr Lorraine McCrary](#) (Research Associates). Their contributions invaluablely enhance both the range and the depth of the interdisciplinary work of the Institute.

## VHI Research Community

To begin our 2024–2025 Research Seminar series, Research Associates Dr Caterina Milo and [Dr Thana de Campos-Rudinsky](#) co-presented on 'Miscarriage: A Hidden Loss', considering from legal and medical perspectives how love, justice, and genuine health care might be better institutionalised for those who experience loss in miscarriage.

As part of a joint collaboration entitled 'Fragility and Flourishing: the AI Initiative at the VHI', Senior Research Associate [Prof Maria Burke](#), Affiliate Members [Dr Gianmarco Contino](#) and [Prof Jonathan Warner](#), and Visiting Scholar [Prof Gill Goulding, CJ](#) organised a workshop on artificial intelligence, considering its significance, implications, and risks from theological, philosophical, economic, and medical perspectives.

In collaboration with St Edmund's Fellow [Dr Anna Gannon, FSA](#), the VHI also hosted London-based iconographer [Dr Irina Bradley](#) for 'The Meaning and Making of Icons', featuring both a viewing of her icon collection and a lecture on the material and theological history of icons.



## Interns from University of Notre Dame Reflect on Experience in Cambridge

For Michaelmas term 2024, Tomasz Harbut and Sarah Kerber joined the Von Hügel Institute as part of the internship programme through Notre Dame London. After a successful term at the VHI, they reflect on their time at St Edmund's College: 'This internship has given me the confidence to embrace challenges that initially seem[ed] daunting [and] shown me the value of taking risks and stepping outside of my comfort zone. I'm truly grateful for my time at the VHI. The experiences I've had and the lessons I've learned will stay with me, shaping all aspects of my future'.

READ THE STORY

## Save the Date

*What difference will synodality make? How can it transform our everyday lives?*

Join the VHI and The Margaret Beaufort Institute for '**Practicing Synodality: Toolkits for Churches, Schools, and Communities**', a collaborative workshop to explore the implications of our call to greater participation in local churches, schools and communities in the light of the multi-year Synod on Synodality, which concluded in October 2024.

In this afternoon workshop, we will begin by reflecting on what happened at the Synod with one of its theologian participants and VHI Senior Research Associate **Sr Prof Maria Cimperman RSCJ**. We will then build a 'toolkit' of synodal best practices and shared wisdom, both in conversation together and informed by a diverse panel of local community members.

Our time together will conclude with our own practice of Conversation in the Spirit, using one of the prime vehicles of discernment at the Synod. By the end of our time together, we hope to better recognise what is calling us in our localities and to ask how this might be lived.

The workshop will take place on Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 1–4pm in The Garden Room at St Edmund's College. Details regarding registration will be forthcoming in the New Year.

## Support the VHI

The Von Hügel Institute for Critical Catholic Inquiry of St Edmund's College, Cambridge, celebrates the richness of Catholic thought and culture. Through our programming, research, and engagement in public discourse, we promote mutual enrichment between the best of the secular academy and the Catholic traditions of theology, philosophy, ethics, arts and sciences.

Support the VHI: <https://bit.ly/3DoHdAY>.



St Edmund's College  
University of Cambridge

[Von Hügel Institute for Critical Catholic Inquiry](#)

St Edmund's College  
Mount Pleasant  
Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB3 0BN  
United Kingdom

You have received this email because you are on our database as either a supporter of the Von Hügel Institute or a Member of St Edmund's College.

We take great care to manage your data responsibly, you can read more in our [data protection statement](#).

If you wish to unsubscribe, email [vhi@st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk](mailto:vhi@st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk).

