
THE TABLET

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Letter from Rome

British Ambassador to the Holy See Francis Campbell is one of the most dynamic members of the diplomatic corps assigned to the Vatican. It doesn't hurt that he is a relative youngster for the post (fortyish) and is the Crown's first Catholic envoy to the Pope since the Reformation. Mr Campbell studied at the prestigious Catholic University of Louvain and is known to be a serious believer. He's also known to be a serious diplomat. So it's no wonder the Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas has asked him to be part of its "Oasis in the City" series and lecture next Tuesday on "Faith and Foreign Policy".

Two weeks earlier American liturgist and musician Fr Michael Joncas spoke about the "musical elements in the Pauline writings". **The Lay Centre is one of the "unsung heroes" amid the thousands of church organisations in Rome** that are trying to make a contribution to education, cultural and religious dialogue and charitable works. It was founded in 1986 and continues to be run by American lay theologian Donna Orsuto, a professor at the Gregorian University. Currently there are some 17 lay people from different parts of the world who are members. Eleven of them live at the residence in a villa behind the Irish College near St John Lateran.

The others live at the sprawling generalate of the Passionists on the Celio Hill overlooking the Colosseum. The centre is designed for lay people who are studying at one of the pontifical universities or academies in the Eternal City and it includes a community life of daily prayer and family-style meals. The Lay Centre sponsors several lectures and other programmes each month through the academic year and a variety of summer programmes, too. Check their website for more information – www.laycentre.org

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