

## British woman appointed by Pope to head Pontifical Academy



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Francis has appointed Lady Margaret Scotford Archer as president of a group of scholars dedicated to studying issues in the social sciences in order to offer reflection and advice to the leadership of the Church.

According to an April 12 press release from the Holy See, “the Holy Father has named the most illustrious Professor Lady Margaret Scotford Archer President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.”

The new president was born in Grenoside, U.K., and holds a Ph.D. from the University of London. She is currently a professor at l'Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland. Previously she taught for many years at the University of Warwick in Great Britain.

In her biographical page on the website of the Pontifical Academy, Lady Archer describes her research in the “area of philosophy and social science” as concerned with “how to theorise the interplay between society, culture, structure and its human agents and to explain how their interaction leads to an elaboration of all three elements.”

The social scientist has published numerous articles and books exploring various aspects of sociology,

including a study of how “human reflexivity serves to mediate between our personal concerns and our structural conditioning.”

She is a leading theorist in the critical realist tradition and was a founding member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences when it was established by Pope John Paul II in 1994.

This group of 20-40 scholars meets at least twice a year to study and reflect on various issues within the social, economic, political, and juridical sciences and their relevance to Catholic social teaching. Topics include human rights, religious freedom, and globalization.

The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences “organizes conferences and workshops on specific themes, promotes scientific surveys and research, helps institutions and private individuals to execute them, publishes the results of its own consultations and issues publications of a scientific nature,” explains the group’s website.

Lady Archer was also the first woman to be president of the International Sociological Association from 1986-1990, and belongs to the U.K.’s National Academy of Academics, Learned Societies and Practitioners in the Social Sciences.

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