

Pace of life in 21st century increases craving for silence

Monastic life could make surprise comeback in age of Twitter, Pope Francis aide

Pace of life in 21st century increases craving for silence, says Vatican's evangelism chief as he joins British would-be monks and nuns



Monasticism could make an unlikely comeback because of pace of life in the age of Twitter, a leading aide to Pope Francis has suggested.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, head of the Vatican's evangelism department, said the constant presence of modern communications could make the ancient idea of a life of contemplation more attractive to people in the 21st Century than in the past. _

The Archbishop was speaking as he arrived in Birmingham to join hundreds of young British Roman Catholics considering a call to a life as monks, nuns or priests at a weekend retreat to explore their vocation.

It follows signs of a revival of interest in the monastic life in recent years.

The Catholic Church in England and Wales welcomed 62 new members to its religious orders in 2013.

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Although small by historical standards, the figure is more than three times the number admitted to the church's religious houses just a decade ago.

It follows a drive by the church to demystify the image of monasticism which has seen some religious communities invite possible to members to join them on placements to experience life as a monk.

Archbishop Fisichella, who is President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation, said it was clear there is a "search for silence".

"I think that culture today doesn't understand any more the value of silence," he said.

"I'm afraid that people today go far away from silence but without silence we cannot find and encounter ourselves.

"Probably the desire of silence, the desire of spirituality, the desire of a life far away from rumour, from distress from all that society today is giving, probably is one of the deepest desires that people have."

His remarks echo comments by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Rev Justin Welby, last month that the rise of Twitter and other social media sites is threatening to kill off quiet reflection.

Archbishop Fisichella is spending this weekend at the "Invocation 2014" festival at Oscott Seminary in Birmingham.

John Bingham - The Telegraph