

Celebration of Education

**"... to some his gift was that they should be
Apostles; to some, Evangelists; to some
Pastors and Teachers;"**

**(Sister Ann Cunningham: Morning Prayer with Religious - St Mary's University
College)**

What a gift is ours as Religious who uphold a tradition of "Formal Catholic Education." Our service here this morning provides an opportunity for our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, to meet with Religious Leaders who have a strong tradition and a rich heritage in "Educational Provision" at all levels - from Primary through to University, as well as a strong tradition in the "Education of Teachers", such as the work of our host today - "St. Mary's Catholic University College" Twickenham. There are two other Catholic Colleges - "Trinity College", Leeds; and "Newman College", Birmingham. "Liverpool Hope" University is a joint Catholic and Anglican University. Today we acknowledge that many other Universities in England and in Wales also have connections with Catholic Education and for this we give thanks and praise.

The great "Teaching Orders" are well represented here today to name but a few: Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, Marian Fathers, Passionists, Presentation Brothers, Redemptorists, Salesians, Jesuits, Vincentians, and Xaverians. Assumption Sisters, Daughters of Mary and Joseph, Faithful Companions of Jesus, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Congregation of Jesus, Sisters of Charity, Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of Notre Dame, Society of the Sacred Heart, the Ursulines.

Our Founders and Foundresses set up institutions particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which have contributed considerably to the quality of an educational heritage enjoyed by the Church in England, Scotland and Wales.

As Religious we have always responded to the needs of Society and have since the time of our Founders and Foundresses, through to the present day, provided education for those most in need, both in Britain and worldwide.

Service to those who are amongst the most disadvantaged and underprivileged in our society has also always been central to the mission of Catholic education and continues to be so today. This provision has often been liberating and has often provided freedom for the oppressed.

To the best of our ability, we have tried to form children, and young women and men who will be ready to take their place in society. For centuries, inspired by our "Founding Spirit", we have tried to form young people, who will make society a better, a more wholesome society because of their presence in it. We have been able to do this because we have had the irreplaceable support of parents, fellow-teachers, the learners themselves and those who form the non-teaching staff of the school, college or university. Each one is an integral part of the formation of the young.

With pride and with gratitude Religious, upholding a rich tradition of "Formal Catholic Education" work in partnership with our Lay Brothers and Sisters, and with confidence entrust the mission of keeping the Charism of each respective institute alive. The mission that we, as Religious entrust to the Laity is both supported and nourished by Religious striving to live a lifestyle of love and selfless service. Together we witness the words of Jesus: **'I am the Resurrection - I have come so that you may have life and have it abundantly'**

Our prayer here today is that dedicated young people of faith will promote, for future generations, the heritage and charism of Religious, and in the words of the motto of one of the Orders represented here today. **"Divine Love is like fire, which will not let itself be shut up, for it is impossible to love God and not to labour to extend his honour"**.