



## CONFERENCE *of* RELIGIOUS

England & Wales

### **Pope Benedict XVI prays with the Religious of England Wales and Scotland**

250 Religious will be the first to welcome the Holy Father to England at St. Mary's Chapel in Twickenham on Friday. Representatives from all the member congregations of the Conference of Religious, which is the association established to unite the major religious superiors in collaborative initiatives especially those with a particular charism in education will gather in the chapel at St. Mary's University College, Twickenham, London to pray with the Holy Father.

The prayer service will celebrate the place of Religious in the Church, most particularly, the major contribution made by Religious to Catholic education over the years. There are 365 leaders belonging to the Conferences of Religious England, Wales and Scotland. In England and Wales the leaders represent over 1,400 Religious houses, Assumption Sisters, Benedictines, Sisters of Charity, Dominicans, Daughters of Mary and Joseph, Franciscans, Faithful Companions of Jesus, the Society of the Sacred Heart, Sisters of Mercy, the De La Salle Brothers, the Ursulines, to name but a few of the Orders at the Service. Many of the members have themselves been actively associated with the 2,300 Catholic Schools/Colleges as both directors and teachers.

Sr. Jane Livesey CJ whose order founded by Mary Ward celebrated their 150th anniversary last year believes that it is a distinctive mark of recognition of the contribution of the religious to education that the Holy Father is praying with the leaders as the very first engagement of his visit to England.

The Jesuits have been educating young people from the British Isles since 1953 when they opened a school in northern France for the children of recusant families. They now focus on educating "men and women of faith who are men and women for others", young people who will in their future lives bring the light of the Gospel to bear on public life, with a particular regard for the interests of those to whom Jesus gave first place in his ministry, the poor and the marginalised. Fr. Michael Holman leader of the Jesuits is bringing 20 aspiring members of his Society along to St. Mary's.

Sr. Sheila Moloney DMJ former Senior Manager now Trustee of Coloma Convent Girls' School an outstanding Catholic Comprehensive School in Croydon says that the Daughters of Mary and Joseph have been involved in education in England since 1869. They have taught in Primary and Secondary schools and also ran Coloma College of Education up until 1978.

This historic visit aims to strengthen faith and the understanding of inter-faith in its widest sense within our society. The service for Religious is part of a themed day on education and inter-faith dialogue, it is followed by the "Big Assembly" with 4,000 students and meetings with inter-faith Church Leaders, echoing the theme "cor ad cor loquitur" (heart speaking to heart)

Many might be surprised to discover that the Religious of today are working in a variety of different ministries; education to advocacy, anti-abuse initiatives, anti-trafficking, bereavement support, care of the young, those with special needs, refugees and travellers the elderly and dying. Prison visitation, Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation initiatives, missionary work worldwide, spiritual guidance, vocations and religious formation of aspiring religious. They are also responsible for the running of 60 Care Homes and are actively engaged in numerous social welfare schemes both professionally and as volunteers. Expressing dedicated service to the defence and promotion of the dignity of the human person.

The Holy Father is sure to receive a very warm welcome from the religious of the United Kingdom. Through their Conference they regard it as a pleasure and a privilege to welcome the world leader.