

## Venerable English College: a significant milestone



(Vatican Radio) Saturday 1st of December is the day the Venerable English College here in Rome remembers the martyrs of England and Wales in a special way.

Throughout 2012 the Venerable English College has been celebrating a significant milestone in the history of English and Welsh Catholicism: six centuries and a half since the founding of an English and Welsh hospice on this site hidden away in the heart of Rome.

Founded in 1362 it is the oldest English institution outside of England. Although the English presence in Rome precedes this by some five centuries with the establishment of the Schola Saxonum alongside the Vatican Hill in the 8th century.

However with the split between Rome and Elizabeth I, it no longer became possible to train priests at home; and so the Hospice became a seminary to prepare young men for the “Mission to England and Wales”.

So this 1st of December some 120 people are expected for Mass on Martyr’s Day . Among them Archbishop Nichols of Westminster who will be principal celebrant. Presiding in choir will be his predecessor, the Archbishop Emeritus of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, Rector of the Venerabile from 1971-77. Other bishops are expected to concelebrate – coming from England and Wales and from the Vatican.

On this same day the College will be honoured by the presence of Their Royal Highnesses 'The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester' representing 'Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II' at this celebration marking the close of the anniversary year. A reminder of the significant contribution made by the Hospice to the British heritage over several centuries; and in particular of the Royal patronage enjoyed by this house in Tudor times.”

A more Vatican related event will take place on Monday 3rd December when bishops, staff and

students of the College will cross the Tiber River and make their way to the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican. There they will be received in Private Audience by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. They will bring with them to the Audience a relic of their proto-martyr, St Ralph Sherwin, for the Holy Father to venerate.

In an effort to find out more about this special anniversary Veronica Scarisbrick spoke to the Rector of the Venerable English College Monsignor Nicholas Hudson

Monsignor Hudson highlights in a special way the legacy of witness come 1570 : ..." when Queen Elizabeth I of England was excommunicated, very quickly it became prohibited in England and Wales to train men for the Catholic priesthood so the continuing Catholic community had to look abroad ...".. This explains he remarks how while the foundation of a hospice on this site in 1362 first brought here many pilgrims , among whom characters as famous as John Milton or the priest hunter Thomas Cromwell, the split with Rome two centuries later soon brought to this house many future martyrs. A spiritual legacy still very much alive today : "...On the first day that students come to the College I take them to see the Martyr's picture ...and the reason for that is that in the first century of the College's existence between 1581 and 1678, forty four of the students from this House were martyred by being hanged, drawn, quartered.."

Whenever news of this reached the house, Monsignor Hudson adds , the community would gather around this picture and sing a 'Te Deum Laudamus' . A powerful moment repeated during anniversary celebrations: "...our thoughts will be reunited ...with those students of the first century who used to intone the very same prayer of praise to God before the very same Martyr's picture..." Listen :

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