



The Holy See

**LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FOURTH CENTENARY
OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE VENERABLE
ENGLISH AND WELSH COLLEGE IN ROME**

To Monsignor George Adam Hay

Rector of the Venerable English and Welsh College in Rome ON THE HAPPY OCCASION of the Thanksgiving Mass being celebrated to mark the Fourth Centenary of the foundation of the Venerable English and Welsh College, I am happy to extend a cordial greeting to you, and through you to the staff, to the students both present and past, to the Sisters, to all who work for the College, and to the members of the Hierarchy of England and Wales who have come to Rome to share in this anniversary. For more than two centuries before Pope Gregory XIII founded the College, the site in Via di Monserrato had housed the English Hospice, which welcomed pilgrims to the See of Peter, and therefore the English and Welsh presence on this spot has continued, with two brief interruptions caused by war, for no less than six hundred and seventeen years. It has been a presence marked by hospitality based upon the love of God. And also after the house was transformed into a house of studies, the institution has continued to reflect that same hospitality: a welcome given to those who, wishing to answer God's call in their hearts, have been sent by their Bishops to the centre of Christendom, in order to prepare for the priesthood and to give themselves entirely to the spiritual good of their brothers and sisters in their native land. In the times of persecution, responding to the divine invitation involved danger and even death. Forty-four of the College's former students witnessed to their faith by shedding their blood. Such days are long past, and the present College is happy to welcome the visits of members of other Christian Communions; such visitors have included, among others, successive Archbishops of Canterbury. As you think about your past history and look with hope and resolve towards the future, I wish you to know that I pray for all of you. I pray especially for those who are now studying for the priesthood, that you may be generous and persevering and may fulfil the hopes placed in you. May your life in Rome ever strengthen you in love of God and faithfulness to the ideals set before you. May the Holy Spirit fill you with zeal, so that all your activities may be inspired by those words of Jesus that form the College's motto: *Ignem veni mittere in terram*. And may all of you who are sharing in this jubilee be confident in the protection of Mary, Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church. May you, who come from a land for so long called her Dowry, always experience her loving care. It is with these sentiments that I send to each of you my Apostolic Blessing. *From the Vatican, 26 September 1979. IOANNES PAULUS PP. II*