

Education Conference of Mary-Ward-Schools Rome 19 – 24 October 2008



Education with Mary Ward - for the Church and the World

180 teachers, sisters and lay people, from 18 nations, are going to reflect on the special profile the Mary Ward schools have in common.

That is the goal of a conference in Rome from October 19 to October 24, 2008. The people attending the conference come from Germany, Austria, England, Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungaria, Romania, Jerusalem, India, Nepal, Corea, Zimbabwe, Argentina, Chile and Brazil. The conference has been initiated by the Mary Ward Sisters, the Congregatio Jesu with its Generalate in Rome. In 2009 the Mary Ward Sisters are celebrating the 400th anniversary of the foundation of their Institute. The Congregation has a long tradition of education. Today, at a time when schools are struggling for a meaningful moral concept and an attractive profile, the educators at Mary Ward schools believe in Mary Ward's spirituality as an important foundation of Christian education.

Rome has been chosen as venue of the conference in order to renew the awareness of the roots of our faith and to share the sense of Christian community. You will experience that mutual understanding will develop among teachers from different nations and cultures and that discussing vital professional issues will enrich your work at school and will certainly broaden your horizons. A network of friends has grown, which will be kept alive and will support us in various ways.

The Church does appreciate and support the educational work of the Congregatio Jesu. This becomes evident by the fact that the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, is especially addressing the Congregatio Jesu during his General Audience in St Peter's Square on Wednesday, October 22nd, by the fact that Zenon Cardinal Grocholewski, the Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, has agreed to be the patron of our conference, and last but not least, by the fact that Bishop McKeown, the Bishops of Ireland Education Spokesman, is delivering the keynote speech at our conference.

Our Superior General, Sister Mechthild Meckl CJ, is attending the conference. She is welcoming the conference members and is looking forward to talking to them personally. General Vicar Sister Frances Orchard CJ, the former headmistress of St Mary's School Ascot, and Father Klaus Mertes SJ, the chairman of the Canisius-Kolleg in Berlin and expert on Jesuit pedagogy, are giving keynote speeches on education based on the spirituality of Mary Ward and Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

The three conference languages will be English, German and Spanish. We have been able to find translators among the conference members. There will be enough room for discussions, teamwork and private talks, which will surely enrich everybody attending the conference, sisters and lay people. Celebrating the Eucharist together – for example in the the Christian Catacombs of Rome or in Campo Santo – or an evening of prayer in the church of Saint Egidio in Trastevere will deepen or sense of community.

Last but not least it will be a cheerful social event, and there will be a great farewell party on the last evening – for example with various traditional dances. Happiness and a sense of humour are important characteristics of Christian pedagogy. "Show yourself at all times glad and joyful, for God loves a cheerful giver." (Mary Ward)

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