

School's thanksgiving Mass at Westminster Cathedral

OVER 1,000 current students and nearly 700 guests including present and past staff, parents, governors, past pupils and friends attended Mass at Westminster Cathedral last week to mark the 140th anniversary of one of London's most successful comprehensive schools, Coloma.

The congregation gathered for a Mass of thanksgiving celebrated by Fr Robert Hamilton, Superior General of the Josephites, the 'brother' congregation of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph who founded Coloma in 1869.

During the opening hymn, symbols representing the history and work of Coloma were presented and a globe represented the international dimension of both the school and its founders.

The school has just been awarded the International Schools Award and the Daughters of Mary and Joseph have earlier this month launched a new primary school in Uganda which will also be called Coloma.

Lacrosse sticks characterised the school's continued success in sports and a violin symbolised the outstanding musical achievements made by so many of the school's pupils.

The Very Rev Canon Van Crombrughe, one of the greatest Belgian educationalists of his time, founded the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph in Belgium in 1817.

At the order's Golden Jubilee in 1867, it was announced that a convent was to be opened in England. On June 17, 1869, three nuns arrived to take up residence in a small house; Poplar Villa in Wellesley Road, Croydon. A little later, the school opened with one pupil. Two years later, a larger property was found in Tavistock Road to accommodate the ever-increasing pupil population, and the school was named Coloma.

For 140 years, the Coloma story has continued to be one of successful expansion, sharing the message and aspirations of its founder.

The students and staff today, as much as the Sisters who started the school so long ago, continue to live out the school motto in all that they do: "To Work is to Pray".

