

## Papal visit to England and Scotland 16-19<sup>th</sup> September 2010 (part 2)



*Notre confrère Aidan Peter a eu l'honneur d'animer  
une rencontre du pape avec le monde des jeunes.  
Le pape a rencontré au St Mary's University College  
2500 élèves, dont une vingtaine de St George's.  
Voici un reportage  
d'un participant enthousiaste et enthousiasmant.*

We were blessed in England to have the first State Visit of the Pope last weekend. This is the first State visit of a Pope to our shores at the invitation of the Queen since the English reformation 400 years ago. The Pope was welcomed by the Queen in Edinburgh, Scotland he went on to celebrate Mass in Glasgow. The Pope's message was essentially two-fold. To the young, who he met on Friday his question was, "What kind of person do you want to be?" Later in the day in Westminster Hall, the historic cradle of parliamentary democracy, his message to the Government and parliament was "What kind of society do you want to be?" On the Saturday he celebrated Mass at Westminster Cathedral, visited an old folk's home and in the evening there was a Vigil in Hyde Park attended by 80,000 people which culminated with adoration and Benediction. The next day the high point of the visit was the first ever Beatification on UK soil. Cardinal John Henry Newman possibly the most influential 19<sup>th</sup> century theologian was proclaimed blessed. A wonderful gift to the Church and our nation.



*Some of my parish pilgrims off to see the Pope*

On the Friday morning the Holy Father concentrated on meeting educators and young people. I had been asked by the Bishops' Conference Liturgy Department to animate the Morning Prayer for Religious involved in Education. Having got up at the unholy hour of 4.30am to get to St Mary's University College by 6.45am to be passed through the very tight security we started our morning prayer at 9am! Three hundred religious celebrated a very prayerful morning prayer with added reflections on religious life. I was leading the congregation of Provincials, Abbots, Abbesses and Educators through the liturgy. Fr Martin was attending for us CJs. The Holy Father joined us at the end of the Morning Prayer and gave us a very encouraging talk about our invaluable and continuing influence on Catholic Education. Because of my role in the event I had a front row seat, I was right in the front row only four metres away. The Pope then lead prayers and blessed us. After the final hymn, I descended from my podium and as the Holy Father passed by I bowed and he gave me a blessing. I felt very honoured and humbled.

The Holy Father then joined over 2500 young school children for an assembly. Amongst them were twenty pupils from St George's along with some younger children from my parish school. They were all filled with joy and really happy to have seen him and taken part. The media had been telling us for weeks that this Papal visit would be controversial and reveal a pope out of touch with the people. They could not have been more wrong. The Pope was cheered to the skies by huge crowds and the young were out in great numbers listening to him. He seemed to have a great affinity with the young. At times it was like a pop star was meeting his fans!

Fr Aidan Peter CJ



*Me with the Pope mobile  
(I look like his chauffeur!)*



*Fr Martin and me  
outside St Mary's University Chapel*