

October 29th Diocesan Memorial of the Blessed Martyrs of Douai College

The English College at Douai was established by William Allen, afterwards Cardinal, on Michaelmas Day, 29th September, 1568. It offered an opportunity to form clergy for England in accordance with the system laid down by the Council of Trent.

Originally it was intended as a college home for exiles from England, a place where they could continue their studies in a way no longer possible for Catholics at the English Universities. In time Allen recognised its potential as a place for training clergy ready for the return to England when 'the new religion' had run its course. The new priests however proved unwilling to wait for that event and quickly Douai College found itself dedicated very largely to the training of the missionary priests.

Between 1577, the date of the martyrdom of St Cuthbert Mayne, the College's first martyr, and 1680, the date of the execution of Thomas Thwing, the College's last martyr, one hundred and fifty three College members, priests and laymen, secular and religious, met with a martyr's death.

The College was suppressed in 1793, and the collegians imprisoned for thirteen months at Doullens, Picardy. They were released in November 1794, returning to Douai for only a few months before obtaining permission to return to England. They found their first refuge at Old Hall Green, Ware, and dedicated the new work of the College to St Edmund on his feast day, November 16th, 1793.

In 1975, Allen Hall Seminary moved from Old Hall Green to Chelsea where it occupies part of the site of St. Thomas More's Great House, uniting the tradition of the College of Missionaries and Martyrs with that of the pre-Reformation Church and her traditions.

Entrance Antiphon

The salvation of the just comes from the Lord. He is their strength in time of need.

Opening Prayer

Fill us, Lord
with that Spirit
which fired the heart of the Douai martyrs,
that we might love what they loved
and put into practice what they taught.
*We make our prayer through Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.*

Prayer over the gifts

Lord, accept the gifts of your people,
who honour the suffering and death
of the martyrs of Douai College.
As the eucharist gave them strength in persecution
may it keep us faithful in our every trial.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Communion Antiphon

Whoever loses their life for my sake and the gospel, says the Lord,
will save it.

Prayer after Communion

Lord,
we eat the bread from heaven
and become one body in Christ.
Never let us be separated from his love
and, through the example of your martyrs
may all who glory in the name of Christian
come to serve you in the unity of faith.
Grant this through Christ our Lord.