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Francis receives the Pontifical Scots College in Rome on its fourth centenary

Vatican City, 14 April 2016 – This morning in the Consistory Hall Pope Francis received the community of the Pontifical Scots College in Rome on the occasion of the fourth centenary of its transformation into a seminary for priestly formation. This anniversary, as the Pope remarked, is very significant not only for the many years it marks, but even more so as it recalls the fidelity of the sixteen men who, on 10 March 1616, were resolute in their determination to return to Scotland as priests to preach the Gospel, following the martyr St. John Ogilvie.

"The martyrdom of St. John Ogilvie, which was meant to silence the Catholic Faith, was instead an impetus for its promotion and for defending the Church's freedom to remain in communion with the See of Peter", he said. "The 'yes' proclaimed by the sixteen men four hundred years ago was eloquent not simply for their good intentions, but rather because they persevered, and prepared themselves in every way, returning to Scotland to face the hardships that awaited them, even if it meant becoming martyrs themselves. Theirs was a life which sought the joys and peace that Christ alone could offer. Looking out at you today, I can see that, through the grace of God, the martyrdom of St. John and the courage of those sixteen men has borne fruit in your beloved homeland".

"We too are living in a time of martyrdom, and in the midst of a culture so often hostile to the Gospel", continued the Holy Father, exhorting the seminarians to have the same selfless spirit as their predecessors, so that they may "become in this moment a sign to the Scottish people, especially the youth, if you encounter them in their everyday lives, if you reach out to those who are furthest from Christ. Show them, each and every one, that God is always with us and that His mercy endures for ever".

"In this Jubilee of Mercy, I pray that the Lord may grant you the courage and grace to be faithful to His will, by being dedicated to prayer, by loving Jesus, especially in the Holy Eucharist, and by entrusting yourselves to the care of Mary our Mother". "Upon you and all the faithful in Scotland, I willingly impart my apostolic blessing as a pledge of strength and peace in the Lord", he concluded.