



B-1050 Brussel , Belgium

Namur, 15 July 2015

Dear members of SECIS

I hope you enjoy or shall enjoy the summer holidays.

The annual meeting of SECIS took place in London at the Central London Catholic Chaplaincy, the Newman House, from June 25 to June 27.

We were warmly received and felt at home with the staff and the students.

The **report of the essential part of the meeting**, which has been written by Roberta Canning, national co-ordinator of Catholic Chaplains in Higher Education, is **below**. As you will see, it gives a very good idea of the Pastoral Care in English Universities and their varying contexts. This was our experience on the Friday.

The Saturday morning was devoted to oral reports of the invited participants (Austria, Portugal and Spain) and we concluded by defining a strategy for the near future. It seems indeed essential not to lose the rich experience gathered in Rome at the end of 2014 during the study-meeting organized by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. Our idea is to propose to Cardinal Veglio to set up an international committee for the redaction of the guidelines, which was the final step of this study-meeting. In the meantime, we think about writing some kind of “good practices” for the European Countries where we have our field experience. Contact with CCEE (Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae) will be made by the chairman of SECIS.

My purpose **here** is to give you **a short report of the General Assembly** which took place at the beginning of the meeting, Thursday 25, after the 4pm tea and welcome.

Presents: Fr Juan Jose Andres (Spain), Roberta Canning (England and Wales), Fr Pierre Devos (Belgium), Fr Eduardo Duque (Portugal), Fr Alois Kolbl (Austria), Dr Hermann Weber (Germany) and Sabine Schwartz (England and Wales).

Apologies: Uta Andrée(Germany), Sr Nathalie Becquart (France), Marco Cattaneo (Switzerland), Elke Giacomozzi (Austria), Fr Avin Kunnekkadan (Holland), Jean-Charles van Caloen (Belgium), Edith Weber-Sinner (Luxembourg).

**1-** The history and purpose of SECIS was described to the invited chaplains (Portugal, Spain and Austria) and the report of the General Assembly held in Rome before the study-meeting, the 9 October 2014, was approved.

**2-** The current board elected in July 2010, renewed in July 2013 will complete its term next year except Roberta Canning who joined the team at the occasion of the G.A. of October 2014. The invited chaplains from Portugal and Spain were asked to help the board in finding a representative for their countries. New efforts will be made to have a delegate from France.

**3-** Financial report (see appendix)

– The expenses for 2014 correspond to 4.620,73 euros and the income to 8.123,82 euros due mainly to the sale of shares. Our capital is made of shares (gift from the former Belgian curacy for international students) corresponding to 38.642,05 euros at the end of 2014 and 7.321,22 euros on a current account (ING – Belgium).

-The budget for 2015 takes into account the fact that there is no more rent to be paid for an office. We now pay 100 euros the year for a mailbox located at the same address (Chaussée de Wavre, 205 Brussels Belgium). The membership fees are intended to pay for the accommodation for the meetings of the board and of the general assembly.

Donations/sponsoring are allocated to the SECIS programme EX-CHANGE 2015-2016.

**4-** You will find in attachment the written country reports of England/Wales, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany, Portugal and Belgium. Those of Austria and Switzerland are awaited. Marco Cattaneo shall put them on the website [www.secis.info](http://www.secis.info) (don't confuse this site with the old one [www.secis.org](http://www.secis.org) which is still on the web but no more up to date).

**5- The next SECIS Assembly shall take place in Den Haag (The Netherlands) the 07-09 July 2016.**

Pierre Devos  
Chairman

## *SECIS ASSEMBLY 2015 LONDON 25-27 JUNE*

Report of Roberta Canning

SECIS delegates from Western Europe met at the Central London Catholic Chaplaincy, Newman House, Gower Street, London from June 25 to June 27. They were the SECIS President, Fr Pierre Devos (Belgium) Dr Hermann Weber, (Germany), Fr Alois Kolbl (Austria), Fr Juan Jose Andres (Spain), Fr Eduardo Duque (Portugal), Sabine Schwartz and Roberta Canning (England and Wales). Apologies came from Holland, Switzerland, Luxembourg and France. We stayed at Newman House which is across the road from University College London (UCL). We shared our experience of pastoral care for international students and visited two chaplaincies, the chaplaincy at Kings College, London and the Multi faith Centre at the London School of Economics (LSE).

Four chaplains spoke to the assembly before we visited the two chaplaincies. In England and Wales pastoral care for international students is integrated in Catholic chaplaincy to all students. From our speakers we learned that university chaplains are responsible for pastoral care for large numbers of international students, and that pastoral care includes hospitality; that welcome to a safe and friendly space, offering opportunities for students to form Christian friendships and supporting their mental wellbeing at a potentially stressful time is as important as providing faith formation and development, and the chance to broaden and deepen a life of prayer and biblical reflection. All form part of a welcome into a community of faith centred around the Eucharist.

Father Stephen Wang is Senior University Chaplain in the Archdiocese of Westminster, which includes most of Greater London north of the River Thames as well as the county of Hertfordshire. Fr Stephen coordinates a team of 12 chaplains who are attached to different universities and the constitutive parts of the University of London. He is based at Newman House, which has sixty plus bedrooms, a library, meeting rooms, dining room and a modern chapel. Students who live at the chaplaincy are all Catholic. The make up of students living at the chaplaincy is roughly one third home students, one third international students from outside Europe and one third international students from Europe, many on Erasmus exchanges. The make up of students coming to Mass and chaplaincy activities is very similar.

Newman House is the hub for Catholic students from among the 300,00 studying in Greater London; the nature of London student life and accommodation is that Sunday is a quiet day on most campuses and so chaplains do not arrange Mass on campus on a Sunday. Students attend Mass where they live, or at Westminster Cathedral or they come to Newman House, where the Sunday and daily Eucharist are at the heart of a lively community, with talks for students, opportunities for prayer, faith formation, retreats and pilgrimages. Chaplains are priests and women religious who are appointed by the archdiocese and accredited by their university or college.

Sacramental preparation for Baptism and Confirmation takes place at Newman House and is also provided by the chaplains at the different universities and colleges. The chaplains develop their own programmes with the students, which include Mass on campus, prayer and faith formation activities and a student Catholic society. Fr Stephen provides training for the Catholic society officers. Volunteering is an important part of Catholic student activity; it includes helping at a shelter for the homeless, hearing reading in a primary school and mentoring pupils at another school. Fr Stephen has developed an evangelisation series, *Sycamore* which he has run successfully this year at Newman House and made available on the internet to colleagues across England and Wales. The idea is that students will be able to use the series with friends who are asking questions about Catholic Christianity.

Rev Andrew Willson is the Senior Anglican Chaplain in the Diocese of London and university chaplain at Imperial College in Kensington. He explained that he was appointed to be chaplain for the whole institution so his role is pastoral support for all staff and students. This approach reflects the Anglican understanding that pastoral ministry is for all in the geographical area served by the minister. He does not work with an Anglican society as such, though there is a Catholic society on campus and the Eucharist is not central to his

ministry as the Anglican chaplain. At Imperial College the chaplaincy is seen as a welfare provider and a key contributor to interreligious dialogue and understanding. Among other activities they have an inter faith Five-a-Side football tournament. They also held a poetry reading with poems from different Faiths. Faith groups use the chaplaincy – Catholics meet for Mass and as the Catholic society, several other Christian groups meet as do the Jewish society, Hindus and Buddhists. There is provision for Muslim prayers.

Andrew works with many individuals, helping them to work out where they belong and helping them to find churches and faith contacts. He also leads regular Mindfulness sessions helping students and staff to be still and attentive to the present moment, using his experience of Christian meditation to foster mental wellbeing. This is a ministry offered by Christian chaplains on many university campuses. Andrew commented that the university is a place to meet and care for the lost and the lonely, the troubled and theseekers.

Sister Mary Kenefick is based at Newman House as chaplain to the UCL Catholic Society. For several years she was Catholic Chaplain at London Metropolitan University as well and she moved to Brunel University in Uxbridge two years ago. At Brunel she is based in the Meeting House, a multi faith chaplaincy with a chaplaincy administrator and a coordinating chaplain who is Anglican. She shares an office with the Muslim chaplain. On the campus, Mary is available for every one and goes out to meet staff and students; most of her work is with the Catholic students. Mary arranges Mass on campus and makes sure students know where the local churches are, there are retreats in Advent and Lent, midday prayer in the chaplaincy and there was a programme of guided prayer over two weeks. There is a thriving Catholic society and Mary organises many opportunities to volunteer. The Catholic students help at the local primary school, visit the elderly and help at a service for disabled people who live in the community. There are trips for the students and they are encouraged to attend events for students from other universities.

UCL was founded in 1825 as a secular university which would be open to students from all Christian traditions and to others. At that time only Anglicans could graduate from Oxford and Cambridge. UCL remains very secular. Mary is chaplain to the Catholic students and their Catholic society, which organises talks and pilgrimages and retreats with her. UCL is a leading university and the students from home and overseas tend to be intellectually very able and very motivated.

Sabine Schwartz described her ministry as Catholic Chaplain at Reading University. She works very closely with the Anglican Chaplain. They are based in a small centre on the campus and organise faith events – bible study, prayer, discussions, simple hospitality such as soup lunches. They lead retreats together. Sabine leads specifically Catholic activities as well. There is a weekly Communion service at the chaplaincy and Mass for students at the nearby

student church on Sundays. A priest colleague has just been appointed. Her chaplaincy is noticeable for the very close collaboration between Catholic and Anglican chaplains and her full engagement with the life of the university.

Students with mental health problems often come to the chaplaincy and Sabine teaches meditation and relaxation to help them.

In the afternoon, we visited Kings College London and met the Catholic Chaplain, Fr Joseph Evans. Kings was founded in 1829 as an Anglican University and, although it now admits students of all faiths and none, its chaplaincy remains very strongly Anglican. There is a magnificent chapel and a fine chapel choir. Fr Joe is made very welcome. He celebrates Mass in the chapel once a week, and on that day, he sees students and gives talks about the faith and is part of Catholic society activity. He is at Newman House on another day. He told us that his model of chaplaincy has changed in his time working with students. He began with a focus on sacramental provision and faith formation but has come to understand that hospitality and giving students the opportunity to build strong supportive friendships with other Catholic students is an essential part of chaplaincy as well.

The university chaplaincy organises courses in theology and ethics for which a qualification can be gained; close to a thousand students have opted to follow the course this year and more have attended the lectures.

We then visited the new multi faith chaplaincy at LSE and met the chaplain Fr Jose Sebastiao OP, an Angolan Dominican who came to live at Newman House as a student and was invited to become chaplain at LSE. Jose told us that LSE recognised the need to provide for faith groups and for dialogue and understanding at a time of religious conflict. Close to 80% of students at LSE are international students. They include many Muslim students. Most catholic students are international students as well. He celebrates Mass in a large neutral space. There are no overt religious symbols. One wall is taken up by vibrant stained glass representing the desert as the desert/wilderness is a theme in many world faiths. Fr Jose lives at Newman House and supports the community of faith there. Students from LSE and Kings may attend Sunday Mass at Newman House (a twenty minute walk) or at a church near their accommodation.