

Aquinas Catholic College welcomes Cardinal Marengo

Cardinal Georgio Marengo, the Apostolic Prefect of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, recently visited the UK as a guest of Missio, the Pope's charity for world mission. In a week of engagements around England, he received a very welcome on 4 February, at Aquinas Catholic Sixth Form College in Stockport.

Mission in Mongolia

In a short introductory talk to around 60 students, including a small group which joined from St James' Catholic High School, college staff and governors. Cardinal Marengo spoke of the often-unique challenges of being a missionary in Mongolia, and of shepherding a tiny Catholic community of just 1,450 people. He explained how he began his ministry in Mongolia in 2003, and spent the first 14 years in a remote area of this vast country – the world's 18th largest, but with a tiny population of only 3.4 million people.

In this harsh climate, where communities are small and separated by huge areas of land, he established a small church and began his first social projects. Today, 23 years later, he has helped to establish nine parishes, and his social projects include kindergartens, technical schools, walk-in clinics, care homes for the elderly, homeless centres, and a centre for young people with disabilities. Each of these serve all members of the community, regardless of background or belief.

Thoughtful answers

The Cardinal then led a Q&A session with the students, in which he gave warm and open responses to thought-provoking questions from the students, which ranged across topics from vocation, doubts and prayer, to what transport he would choose to use if he became Pope!

St James' chaplain, Mrs Terese McGeough shared:

'It was a very special afternoon - so lovely to listen to the Cardinal talk about his experiences of missionary work, starting with nothing, and hear his advice about how to pray. His words were both comforting and inspirational. I could tell that our pupils were excited to hear Cardinal Marengo's story and we all felt privileged to have been invited. It meant a lot to us.'

Aquinas Chaplain, Mrs Laetitia Sibeh added,

'It was a privilege to welcome Cardinal Marengo into our college and to hear all about the great missionary work being done under his leadership for the people of Mongolia.'

Taking action to support people who are less privileged has remained one of the main foci for Aquinas Chaplaincy over the last few years, and it was absolutely inspiring to hear about the Cardinal's experiences, perseverance through challenges, and the positive impact that his missionary work is having on the people he serves, bringing them hope. His words have encouraged us to double our effort in living out our own mission, providing others reasons for living and hoping.'

As the event concluded, Cardinal Marengo remarked on how attentive and engaged the students had been; and before saying good bye, he blessed all gathered – in Mongolian!

Inspiring the future Church

Our final words however, must go to Year 12 student Louisa, who with words that encourage us all, shared:

'Meeting the Cardinal was an amazing opportunity. It was really interesting to hear what he had to say about his experiences in Mongolia and the last conclave. I found his talk was very inspirational and I now feel I will want to do some missionary work in the future.

Overall, I'm so glad I got the chance to meet him, we all gained so much from it.'

We are very grateful to Aquinas College for hosting Cardinal Marengo and for the hospitality they provided to all who attended. It was a wonderful event that will no doubt leave a lasting impression on all gathered.