With great joy I have heard that the Congregatio Jesu is bringing the 400 years’ jubilee of its foundation to a solemn conclusion in the General Chapter taking place during these weeks in Loyola. On this occasion I assure you and all the Sisters of the Congregatio Jesu of my particular spiritual closeness, and offer you my most cordial wishes and blessings.

In a time characterised by great changes and the loss of traditional faith your foundress, the reverend servant of God, Mary Ward, sought new ways of coming to Christ. She recognized that she could only find him in the Church, when she was obedient to the Church. With courage and determination she looked for ways of fulfilling the Lord’s command “Go out to the whole world and proclaim the gospel to all creation” (Mk 16: 15). She wanted to use every opportunity for service and every apostolic ministry to bring Christ’s message to all areas of human life and to all places “to which he himself wanted to go” (Lk 10: 1). Following her mystical experiences in the years 1609 till 1611, Mary Ward also, as a prophetic woman, opened up a new way of working for women, an apostolic form of religious life for women in the Church, which was later to bear so much fruit. But at the same time she was a deeply spiritual woman, who lived out of strong faith and deep rootedness in God. Unswerving trust that God would make use of her “as pleased him best” and that “this would be for his honour” enabled her to bear misunderstandings, reproaches and rejection, yes even to bear with patience and inner composure the destruction for the time being of her life’s work. Her candour, as well as her exemplary obedience to the successor of Peter and her loyalty to the Church, form together a message which is constantly - especially at the present time – significant for the Church.

One of your foundress’s wishes was, according to the model of St. Ignatius of Loyola’s Constitutions, to entrust the nature and manner of mission for God’s Kingdom to the successor of Peter by a special vow. This vow of particular obedience to the Pope “circa missiones” makes it clear that universal mission is the heart and centre of the charism of the Congregatio Jesu. This readiness and availability is a precious gift for the Church, through which the congregation supports the universal service of the Bishop of Rome, the guarantor of unity, and at the same time seeks suitable means to present anew to the people of today the lasting truth of Christ’s Gospel. It was Mary Ward’s concern to give to the Church people who would contribute to “the defence and propagation of the faith” and “the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine”. From that time the passion for a holistic education and a comprehensive formation of the person has characterised Mary Ward’s spiritual daughters. In the challenges of today they are called to carry this tradition forward with enthusiasm, to walk new paths with prophetic freedom and wise discernment, and as consecrated women to dare to venture out to the front line of mission. The
wide horizons of evangelization, and the need to bear witness to the gospel message to all, demands from the Congregatio Jesu a rich and multifaceted apostolic activity. Many are still waiting to come to know Jesus, the only Saviour of humanity.

According to Mary Ward’s saying, that the foundation “would never come to pass without a miracle”, may the Sisters of the Congregatio Jesu cherish great reverence and respect for the gift of God’s grace that has taken shape in the bosom of the Church, and live their vocation in a way that is ‘constant, efficacious and loving”, and in their various spheres of service take their part in the universal mission of the Church for the wellbeing and salvation of people. With this prayerful wish I extend my apostolic blessing to you, reverend General Superior, and to the General Congregation in Loyola, as well as to all the Sisters of the Congregatio Jesus and to those united with you.

From the Vatican on 3rd October 2011

Benedict XVI