



Daughters of Mary and Joseph – The Beginning



Aalst is a busy market town in the heart of Flemish speaking Belgium. In 1817, after a period of economic chaos and crop failure in the countryside around, the people were hit by famine. Starving children roamed the streets searching for food. A young 28 year old priest, Constant van Crombrugghe, was principal of the boys' College in the town. Very concerned at the situation and with the help of an older single lady, Colette de Brandt, he invited the women who worked as domestics in the college to live as a religious community. Together they set up a lace-making factory in order to assist the destitute girls. The lace was sold and the girls kept the proceeds to buy food for their families. As well as working with the girls, the Sisters gave them a basic education including religious instruction. The latter was, at the time, expressly forbidden because Belgium was under Dutch Rule. These were the beginnings of the Religious Congregation known as the Daughters of Mary and Joseph.

In 1867, at the celebrations commemorating the Golden Jubilee of the foundation of the Institute, it was announced that a convent was to be opened in England. On 17th June 1869 three nuns arrived to take up residence in a small house, Poplar Villa in Wellesley Road, Croydon. Less than 3 months later the Sisters opened a school with one pupil, later moving to a larger property in Tavistock Road Croydon, naming the building Coloma. . It was at this point that the name Coloma came into being.

The name owes its origins to the Spanish Count of Santa Coloma, former owner of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph's property in Malines in Belgium, which is named after his estate in Spain.

You can visit the Daughters of Mary and Joseph at their website at .
<http://www.daughtersofmaryandjoseph.org/index.php?page=3>

