

Praefatio Dominae Fundatricis

Universis Sanctae Matris Ecclesiae filiis praesentem paginam inspecturis Elizabeth de Burgo domina de Clare salutem et memoriam rei gestae. Experientia, quae rerum omnium est magistra, edocet manifeste quod in omni gradu tam ecclesiastico quam civili non mediocriter proficit scientia literarum: quae dum a multis multipliciter inquiritur, in universitate (in qua vigere dignoscitur studium generale) perfectius invenitur. Quae etiam cum inventa fuerit ipsius auditores qui ejus dulcedinem gustaverunt emittit aptos et idoneos in ecclesia Dei et republica juxta suorum meritorum exigentiam gradus varios ascensuros. Cupientes igitur, hoc consideratione inductae, ad augmentum cultus divini reiue publicae commodum et profectum, hujusmodi scientiam, quae (morsu pestilentiae sublata multitudine hominum) hominibus lamentabiliter deficere jam incipit, in quantum nobis Deus dedit propagare, ad Universitatem Cantabrigiae Eliensi dioecesi, in qua est congregatio studentium, convertimus oculos mentis nostrae, et aulam inibi existentem. Aulam Universitatis communiter hactenus nominatam, quae de nostra fundatione jam existit, et quam domum de Clare et non aliter volumus perpetuis temporibus nuncupari, in facultatibus de bonis nostris a Deo datis et in numero studentium fecimus ampliari, ut pretiosa scientiae margarita ab eis studio et doctrina in dicta universitate inventa et etiam acquisita non sub modio lateat sed ulterius divulgetur lucemque praebeat divulgata iis qui ambulant in semitis ignorantiae tenebrosis: et ut scholares in dicta domo nostra antea commorantes sub firmioris pacis tutela et concordiae commodo valeant studio liberius indulgere, quaedam statuta et ordinationes de consilio peritorium fecimus infra scripta perpetuis temporibus duratura.

Preamble to the Statutes of the Foundress, 1359

Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare, to all children of Holy Mother Church who read these words: greeting and remembrance of our deed! Experience, the universal guide, plainly shows that learning is no mean advantage in every rank of life, ecclesiastical or civil. Though many people seek it in many ways, it is best acquired in a recognised university community; and when its pupils have acquired it and tasted its sweets, it sends them out well qualified to rise according to their merits to different ranks in church and state. But so many men have been swept away by the ravages of the plague that learning has lately suffered a sad decline in numbers. We, therefore, desiring to assist true religion and to further the public good by promoting learning so far as God has put it in our power to do so, have turned our attention to the University of Cambridge in the diocese of Ely, where there is a body of students. Our purpose is that through their study and teaching at the university they should discover and acquire the precious pearl of learning, so that it does not stay hidden under a bushel but is displayed abroad to enlighten those who walk in the dark paths of ignorance. And to enable the scholars residing in our said college to live in harmony under the protection of a firm discipline and so enjoy greater freedom to study, we have with the advice of experts made certain statutes and ordinances, set out below to stand in perpetuity.