



[www.studentcross.org.uk](http://www.studentcross.org.uk)

## **PRESS RELEASE**

*March 2016* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **300 pilgrims to walk over 800 miles to ancient shrine for Easter Britain's oldest annual pilgrimage, Student Cross, gears up for 2016**

Nearly 300 pilgrims from across the country are setting off to walk the Student Cross pilgrimage to the shrine to the Virgin Mary in Walsingham, Norfolk to celebrate Easter.

Ten groups of pilgrims will participate in the pilgrimage, now in its 68th year. Between them they will walk over 800 miles, carrying eleven crosses before arriving in Walsingham on Good Friday. Their intention is to spend the week in prayer, acting as a very public reminder of the true meaning of Easter.

Following in the footsteps of pilgrims who have visited this shrine for over 950 years, these modern day pilgrims will rely on the hospitality of different churches along their routes, staying in church halls and being fed by local parishioners as they make their way to the ancient site of pilgrimage.

#### **Sarah Browncross, National Director of Student Cross for 2016 said:**

"Christ's living, dying and rising again is as important and as relevant to us now as it was to His first followers. Carrying a cross to Walsingham is a powerful symbol of our own faith and of that shown by the people we meet along the way"

Student Cross was founded in 1948 by a group of young students, who walked the first year as an act of penance for World War Two. Since then the pilgrimage has grown, and is now made up of ten groups or 'Legs', which now include three Legs for families as well as the traditional groups made up primarily of young adults.

#### **Sarah added:**

"Pilgrimage combines many of the elements of a retreat and a walking holiday. With the basic requirements of food and shelter met, we are freed from the everyday pressures of work or study, and able to relax into friendships old and new, while enjoying the beauty of the countryside that we are privileged to walk through while reassessing our relationship with God.

"One of the most touching things about the journey is meeting those that help us on our way. Their generosity – both practical and spiritual – is what makes our walk possible, and being welcomed by familiar faces who value our presence as a key part of their Easter preparations is a genuinely humbling experience.

"However many times a pilgrim joins us, they will find some fresh meaning in their journey some new experience. Although we are only together for a short period of time each year, the experience

reaches far beyond that and for many people is genuinely life-changing. Although Student Cross only lasts ten days, the experience stays with us throughout the year.”

## **ENDS**

For more information please contact Sarah Browncross, National Director, at [co-ordinator@studentcross.org.uk](mailto:co-ordinator@studentcross.org.uk) or on 07886298574.

It is possible to arrange interviews, photocalls and filming opportunities with pilgrims during the week. Please contact Sarah to do this.

## **Notes to editors**

Further information about Student Cross may be found on our website: [www.studentcross.org.uk](http://www.studentcross.org.uk).

You can follow the pilgrimage on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/studentcross> or using the hashtag #sx2016

Student Cross is the longest running annual pilgrimage in Britain. Established in 1948, it is walked by students, graduates and families.

Walsingham has been a destination of pilgrimage since the Middle Ages and, until the Reformation, was one of the biggest pilgrimage sites in the world.

This year we will be made up of 10 groups ('Legs') who walk to Walsingham to meet and celebrate the Easter weekend. Each leg carries a large wooden cross as a visible witness to their Christian faith.

Five of the Legs walk an average of 120 miles over Holy Week. A sixth group starts on the Wednesday and a seventh Leg just walks on Good Friday. Additionally, there are three Legs for families, which meet for a week of activities and short walks in Norfolk; the newest Leg is one aimed at teenagers and their parents who will be walking from Monday, covering shorter distances.

Christians of all denominations walk Student Cross, as well as people who would not call themselves Christian but who are also searching for spiritual meaning in their lives. Most groups have a majority of Catholic walkers. Despite the name, Student Cross attracts people from all walks of life, aged from 0 to 80. Many of them have walked Student Cross before and have chosen to return again and again.

Bursaries are available to help needy (unwaged & low waged) pilgrims walk with Student Cross. These are provided by our registered charity, the Student Cross Association.