

# THE HISTORY OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



## Centred in Christ

The risen Christ - summoning, inviting and challenging us today - is the centre of Catholic education and our source and inspiration.

As Catholic schools we are pilgrims on a journey. We are conscious of our present human condition and are aware always of our failures, imperfections and contradictions; even so, we see the vision beyond our present reality and strive to offer an experience of things as they can and ought to be. We strive to be an outward-looking community permeated by the Gospel spirit of love and freedom.

Catholic schools do not provide education for society as it is, but for society as it should be, as envisioned in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God. We have something that society needs, not that society wants. It follows that a Catholic school cannot be anything but an agent of transformation. We are oriented toward what may be, rather than toward what is. This is the great adventure of Catholic education.

While providing a sound academic education, a Catholic school gives learners opportunities to explore the answers which faith provides for the questions of life, and for them to encounter the love and mercy of God. It suggests a way to live life in friendship with God and in harmony with others. Faced with the pressures of our consumerist, competitive and materialist society, and bombarded with messages about what counts as success, they will go through life empowered by Gospel values of sharing, simplicity, service, littleness, magnanimity and solidarity, and with a sense of purpose: to open the way for the kingdom of God.

## Founded to serve the poor

Originally, most Catholic schools were established to serve the poor. A host of far-seeing and faith-filled men and women established schools to respond to the needs of the socially and economically disadvantaged. These schools had their origin in a deep concern for the education of children and young people left to their own devices and deprived of any form of schooling.



The France of Jean Baptiste De la Salle's time (1651-1719) was engaged in incessant foreign and internal wars. The peasants frequently had no bread. The plunder of their crops was followed by famine and ruin. De la Salle founded his institute to answer to their needs and conditions.



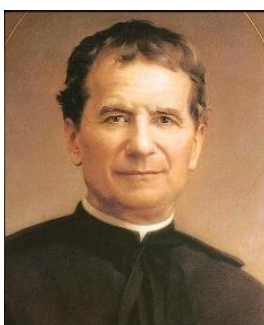
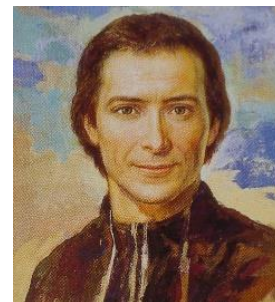
In the upheaval of the French Revolution, Julie Billiart (1751-1816) founded the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur with the mission of proclaiming God's goodness and saving girls from life on the streets. She opened free schools for poor girls, and day schools for middle-class girls and academies for the wealthy, both of which supported the free schools.

Catherine McAuley (1778-1841), moved by the neglect, disease, hunger, ignorance and despair she saw in the slums of Dublin, used the fortune she inherited to serve the poor. She established the Sisters of Mercy, who cared for working girls, orphans and poor children.



Edmund Rice (1762-1844), a successful businessman, was amazed at the poverty and the homeless young boys running about the streets of Waterford in Ireland. He sold his business and started a school, and soon realised that all the needs of the children, not just their education, had to be tended to. Gathering about him a few men who shared his vision, Edmund Rice and the Christian Brothers began what seemed to others the impossible task of educating Ireland's poor.

In post-Revolution France, education had collapsed, especially in the remote mountainous regions. Marcellin Champagnat (1789-1840), recognising the need of thousands of young people suffering human and spiritual abandonment, founded the Marist Brothers to make Jesus known and loved among the young, particularly those who were most neglected.



The condition of the children confined in the prisons of Turin in Italy, where they were abandoned to the most evil influences, made such an indelible impression on John Bosco (1815-1888) that he resolved to devote his life to the rescue of these outcasts. He established institutes for homeless boys and taught them trades, and created the Salesians to assist him.

<b>Congregations who founded or were associated with schools in Gauteng</b>	
Assumption Sisters	Assumption Convent, Malvern Assumption Convent Primary School, Pretoria North Maryvale College, Maryvale
Christian Brothers	Christian Brothers College, Boksburg Christian Brothers College, Mt Edmund Veritas College, Springs
Companions of St Angela	St Angela's Primary School, Dobsonville
De La Salle Brothers	De La Salle Holy Cross College, Victory Park La Salle College, Roodepoort
Kingwilliams Town Dominican Sisters	Dominican School, Belgravia St Vincent's School for the Deaf, Rosebank Veritas College, Springs St Peter Claver Primary, Soweto (associated)
Newcastle Dominican Sisters	St Catherine's School, Germiston St Columba's Primary School, Benoni St Dominic's School, Boksburg Emaromeni Primary School, Benoni (associated)
Cabra Dominican Sisters	Dominican School for the Deaf, Hammanskraal Sancta Maria Junior School, Vamderbijlpark St Catherine's Convent, Florida St Paulus Primary School, Pretoria
Holy Cross Sisters	De La Salle Holy Cross College, Victory Park Immaculata Secondary School, Soweto Lourdes Primary School, Soweto
Holy Family Sisters	Holy Family College, Parktown St Theresa's Convent School, Coronationville St John Berchman's Primary School, Orlando (associated)
Holy Rosary Sisters	Holy Rosary School, Edenvale Assumpta Primary School, Sharpeville (associated) St Gemma's Primary School, Tembisa (associated)
Loreto Sisters	Loreto Convent School, Pretoria Loreto School Queenswood
Marist Brothers	Marist Brothers' Linnmeyer Sacred Heart College, Observatory St David's Marist Inanda
Maronite Catholic Mission of South Africa	Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite School, Mulbarton
Notre Dame Sisters	St Martin de Porres, Soweto (associated)
Oblates of Mary Immaculate	St Benedict's College, Bedfordview
Salesian Fathers and Brothers	Michael Rua School, Walkerville
Salesian Sisters	Laura Vicuna Education Centre, Ennerdale Mary Help of Christian's School, Turffontein West
Sisters of Mercy	Iona Convent School, Pretoria Mayfair Convent, Mayfair McAuley House School, Parktown West Morekolodi Primary, Mmakau St Matthew's Primary School, Soweto St Matthew's Secondary School, Soweto St Teresa's School, Craighall Park and Rosebank Tsogo Secondary School, Mmakau
Ursuline Sisters	Brescia House School, Bryanston St Ursula's School, Krugersdorp

## The age of the laity

Prior to the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), most Catholic schools were staffed and led by members of religious teaching congregations. The Second Vatican Council (1962–65) marked a watershed in the history of the Catholic Church. Its purpose was the spiritual renewal of the church and the reconsideration of the position of the church in the modern world. One significant development of Vatican II was its elaboration of the dignity of the laity and their role in the mission of the Church. Vatican II called for the apostolate of the laity to be broadened and intensified. In the last half of the twentieth century, lay people have increasingly taken important roles in the running of dioceses, parishes, church institutions and organisations. In Catholic schools too, lay people have taken over governing, managing and teaching roles. They are co-workers in the Church's evangelising mission. Mission is first and foremost the work of the Holy Spirit, who calls forth and renews all of creation. The call to the Church is to share in the work of the Spirit in bringing to fruition our daily prayer: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Schools are to be instruments of transformation and social justice bearing the message of hope, building community and serving all people.