

The Mission of St Joseph's Catholic College



In 2017 Bishop Declan wrote a pastoral letter asking people of the Diocese to reflect with him on the future.

"I would like to invite you to ponder this question: what is it to be the Church for our day and our culture? To be fruitful in our response we need to do this in the light of the Gospel. Two further questions for each one of us to ask is: what is God asking me to be and to do as a member of the Body of Christ, the Church? What is it for me to be a Catholic today?"

As the college celebrates sixty years since the foundation of St Joseph's this document forms part of our response to these questions. It includes reflections from a workshop held in Swindon by Fr Adrian Porter S.J, where Catholic schools were asked to reflect on our vision and mission. Fr Adrian gave a very clear rationale for Jesuit schools:

"Jesuit schools strive to give a first-class education, but they are also places committed to outstanding formation of character, wanting their pupils to develop into well-educated adults who will live good and virtuous lives. Jesuit schools hope that the young people they form, in partnership with parents, will make the most of their God-given gifts and talents and use their education as 'men and women for others' to make the world a better place, especially for the least well off and most socially marginalized".

Although St Joseph's was not founded as a Jesuit school, this vision does resonate with who we are and our goals as an institution. In articulating our own thoughts on our mission, it is important to consider our context in Swindon.

Our Context

The Church has always viewed education as vital to the formation and development of the whole person. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, setting up Catholic schools was a priority at a time when state involvement in education was still limited. Service to those who are amongst the most disadvantaged in our society has also always been central to the mission and ethos of Catholic education.

Many Catholic schools were established to meet the needs of Catholic immigrants from countries such as Ireland, Italy and Poland. In 1958 Swindon had a growing Catholic population and St Joseph's Secondary School was opened for pupils aged 11 to 15 to meet their needs. That mission remains strong and relevant today, especially in Swindon which has continued to see students arrive from new immigrant populations from across the world.

Our Mission

Our mission reflects the distinctive Catholic nature of our community. ***Laus Deo Semper*** is the motto, chosen by the founders of the College. It is a Latin phrase meaning ***Praise God Always***, often put at the end of Jesuit documents. Our students wear it on their blazers and it appears on our letters and signs. To understand the vision and mission of the College we must understand the meaning of these words and the symbols associated with our mission.

Our mission is to praise God by developing students' skills and talents, ensuring that they are the best that they can be in their academic achievements as well as their spiritual, moral and cultural development. We aim to encourage students to praise God always, to contribute to the building up of a Christian community which in turn cares for and values them.

Catholic social doctrine has always tried to find a balance between respect for individual liberty and concern for society, especially the weakest and poorest. Because of this we try to encourage everyone to fulfil their potential for the greater glory of God and the common good.



Our mission reflects the biblical call to praise God through our thoughts, words and actions, found in many scriptural texts. For example, James 2:14-26:

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

It is also found in the teachings of the Church:

“I will suggest a means whereby you can praise God all day long. Whatever you do, do it well, and you have praised God.” — St. Augustine

“Reflect upon the providence and wisdom of God in all created things and praise Him in them all.” – St. Theresa of Avila

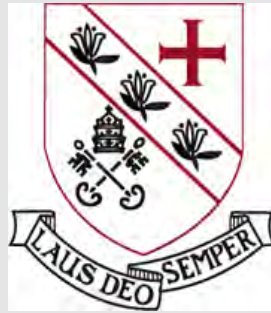
“Love is itself the fulfilment of all our works.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church)

Our Crest

Our crest reflects the identity of the College. The crossed keys are a reference to St Peter and spiritual authority, symbolised by the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Christ promised the keys to St Peter, of whom Jesus said, "On this rock I will build my Church."

The papal tiara above the keys is a crown that was worn by Popes of the Catholic Church from the 8th century to the mid-20th. It was last used by Pope Paul VI in 1963 and since then Popes have used a Bishop's mitre, a tall folding hat. A modern interpretation of the three crowns is that the pope is the Vicar of Christ, who shares in his three-fold office of Priest, Prophet and King, and consequently shares in His work to sanctify, teach and lead others in the faith.

The cross of St. George, a red cross on a white field, was adopted by England in 1190. St. George was a Roman soldier born in what is now Turkey. He was sentenced to death because he would not give up his Christian faith. The three flowers are lilies. In Catholic tradition these flowers are symbols of St. Joseph.



Chaplaincy, Religious Education (R.E) and Collective Worship

The College's Chaplaincy Team works to promote the spiritual development of staff and students at our College through its many forms of outreach. Examples include:

- Every tutor group prepares and attends at least one class mass or liturgy during the year.
- All year groups attend mass or services to mark the beginning of the academic year.
- All year groups attend services to mark Christmas and Easter and are given the opportunity to attend services of Reconciliation during Advent and Lent, in order to prepare themselves for individual confession.
- Daily prayer and reflections.
- There is a weekly opportunity for prayer and reflection in the chapel for staff.
- Social outreach and charitable activities such as CAFOD.

R.E is a compulsory subject for all key stages and follows a programme of study in line with the Bishops Directory for Catholic Education. The curriculum time and status given to RE is a statement of our commitment to our core purpose. We also have our daily assemblies and acts of worship where we aim to support students in promoting their spiritual, moral and cultural development.

Our Patron St. Joseph the Worker



In the Bible, St. Joseph is described as a “just” man, meaning that he was completely open to God. St. Joseph has two feast days on the liturgical calendar. The first is March 19th for St Joseph, the Husband of Mary. The second is May 1st for St. Joseph the Worker. Our College is dedicated to the feast of St Joseph, the Worker.

It reminds us of the role of St. Joseph as a carpenter and teacher of Jesus, and in that role, the value of the human person and the work that he or she is engaged in. Like St. Joseph, we praise God always through the work we do.

An important tradition in the College is that we end many of our prayers with the prayer to St. Joseph asking him to “Pray for Us.”

Catholic schools are of course about more than signs and symbols of Catholicity. Every room may have a crucifix, but it is the people who make a place what it truly is.

Roles and Responsibilities in our Mission

Parents

Catholic schools are provided to assist Catholic parents in their duty of educating their children. Therefore, parents have the chief responsibility to guide and nurture their children.

Governors

Governors of our schools, and in particular foundation governors, have a responsibility to ensure that the school is conducted in accordance with the Clifton Diocesan Trust Deed. In addition to all the legal responsibilities of the governing body foundation, governors are appointed specifically to ensure:

- That the Catholic character of the school is preserved.
- That the religious education curriculum is in accordance with the bishop's policy for his diocese, based on the Bishops' Conference Curriculum Directory.

Staff

College staff are in a unique position of influence in relation to the young people in our care and must act in a way that models the highest possible standards for all the students within the College. Each member of staff has an individual responsibility to maintain their reputation and the reputation of the College.

The distinctiveness of the College should be lived out through the care and respect we show for each other. Everyone who works in St Joseph's can make a beneficial contribution to its mission, regardless of their own faith.

Students

How is education in St Joseph's different for our students to any other secondary school in Swindon? There are all of the same expectations in terms of Ofsted and legal compliances. What is particular for our students in St Joseph's is that religious formation is an important part of a student's education, giving them the opportunity to encounter God in prayer, reflection and worship, in study of the Catholic Christian faith and other faiths and in the service of others.

This is not just about what is learnt in RE lessons, neither is it indoctrination. It is a part of the experience that students have. It is articulated in collective worship, through the pastoral system and in everyday encounters which challenge our students to consider life from the perspective of faith and develops their understanding of working in a faith-based community.

The qualities of character and virtues we seek to develop in our students are rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ, but they are also fundamental human values which are shared by people of all faiths and backgrounds. For students at St Joseph's, *Laus Deo Semper* helps us to express the values that we should search for by asking how we can praise God through what we say and do?

This is the question which underpins all our work. We praise God through doing our best and being the best, we can be. It has always been a focus in the College to encourage students to fulfil their potential. We hope that during their time in the college students will develop into people of hope and that they will go out into the wider world prepared to face the challenges of modern life. That they will have developed core values and principles to help guide their decisions for the future.



Our Mission

Questions for Reflection

Questions for Parents

How can you work with the College to support the education and formation of your child?

Do you discuss with you child the reasons why you choose St Joseph's?

Do you encourage your child to participate in the broader learning opportunities in the College?

Questions for Governors

To what extent do students contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life of the College?

How well do students achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education?

How well do students respond to and participate in the school's Collective Worship?

How well do leaders promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life of the College and plan and implement improvements to outcomes for pupils.

Questions for Staff

Do you feel you play a part in the mission of the college?

Did your induction training give you a good understanding of working in a Catholic college?

Do you know who can support you if you are unsure about issues regarding the mission of the college?

Questions for Students

Can you explain the meaning of the College crest?

Can you explain the meaning of the school motto *Laus Deo Semper*?

Do you play an active part in collective worship?

Can you explain what is different about being in a Catholic school?

Reflection

During the mass for all those involved in Catholic education held at the Cathedral in Clifton, one of our students read the following.

“All of us are called to bring all that we are, our strengths and our weaknesses, to following Christ and witnessing to his love. You will be for many people the only Gospel they will encounter. Let us commit ourselves now to be people of prayer, open to the promptings of the spirit, so that we will see the image of God in those around us; let us pray that we will allow ourselves to be transformed by the grace of God so that we may touch the hearts of those we encounter.

So I ask of you now?

Will you accept willingly the difficulties and challenges placed before you trusting in God’s strength rather than your own?

Will you witness by your lives to the presence of Christ among us?

Will you try to be a people of hope?”

