

Spiritan Education Trust



**OUR CHARACTERISTIC SPIRIT AND
MISSION**

THE ETHOS OF SPIRITAN SCHOOLS

EDUCATION IN THE MISSION OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Congregation of the Holy Spirit is an international missionary congregation founded in 1703 by Claude Poullart des Places (1679 – 1709). We also look to Francis Libermann (1802 – 1852) as an important founding figure in the evolving history of the Congregation. Our mission, from the very beginning, has been to seek a Spirit-filled life in the service of the Gospel of Jesus.

By seeking to live a life of **Openness to the Spirit** Spiritans have always understood education to be at the heart of our service to Church and society. As a religious family spread across the world and present in every continent this service of education takes on many forms from University and third level institutions to non-formal education.

Our works of education are varied but they are all born out of a sense of building up a **Community of Concern** for others. At the heart of our schools we wish to foster this sense of community among students, staff, parents and management where the gifts and faith of each person are recognised in their diversity and their richness.

Above all we seek to inspire in the students who have been entrusted to our care to make an **Option for the Marginalised and Economically Poor in society** as

well as a **Commitment to Service** where each person is encouraged to use and share their talents generously to build up a more just society and to practice a life modelled on the values of the Gospel.

For over three hundred years Spiritans have been engaged in mission and service across the globe. We work with people of all faiths and none in a dialogue based on respect and trust knowing that men and women can live, work and learn together in a spirit of mutual respect. We see education as playing a vital role in the development and growth of a democratic society. This is the **Global Vision** that invites us to see beyond the limits of our local frontiers and to cherish the fact that, despite our cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, we share a common human destiny where we live in the shelter of each other.

Claude Poullart des Places was himself a student when he brought together his other companions whose common commitment to Gospel living formed the beginnings of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. As students, they were committed to working and achieving the **Highest of Educational Standards** in the life of their student community and growing in knowledge and awareness of themselves and of God in their own **Personal and Faith Formation**.

SPIRITAN EDUCATION IN IRELAND

This then is the heritage that the first French Spiritans brought to Ireland in 1860. Their aim was to invite young Irish men to join the Spiritan Mission. Recognising that the post-famine Ireland in which they found themselves was also a place of mission these first French priests and brothers began their educational works as a way of transforming lives and society. They brought to Ireland the French model of liberal education which wove together academics, sporting activity and a rich cultural life and blended this with a desire to nourish the Christian faith of the students confided to their care. Attentive to God's Spirit at work in the world and society Spiritan education has been developing over the years to consider not only the changes that have occurred in society but also the evolving reality of our Spiritan family as we seek to work in creative collaboration with our partners in education. Currently the Spiritan mission of education in Ireland is composed of three strands:

- The Centre for Education and Integration of Migrants (CEIM) which is based at the Spiritan Centre for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (SPIRASI) in Dublin;
- The Kimmage Development Studies Centre (KDSC) which is located on our Kimmage campus in West Dublin;
- The Spiritan Education Trust (SET) is the Trust Body of the three primary and seven second level Spiritan schools in Ireland.

The Spiritans were one of the first religious congregations to respond to the 1998 Education Act with the setting up of the Spiritan Education Trust (Formerly known as Des Places Association) as the Patron Body for all Spiritan schools in Ireland. The SET has an important role in supporting Management and the whole school community in their legal obligation of developing and promoting Spiritan ethos which is the characteristic spirit of all Spiritan schools. It is this ethos that informs all activities around the teaching and learning in a Spiritan school.

Known for many years as Holy Ghost Fathers the Irish Spiritans have reverted to their original name which is more inclusive of the reality of the Congregation today which is made up of priests, brothers, sisters and lay men and women who participate in the one Mission of Christ in communion with Him and all people (Spiritans Rule of Life, 11).

Irish Spiritans are proud not only of their contribution to education in Ireland but also of the contribution made by their educational works to the mission of the Congregation in and from Ireland.

The community of Spiritan schools in Ireland hold as a sacred trust the children that have been confided to their care and recognise that they are at the heart of all our educational endeavours. Spiritan schools will be a safe and nurturing environment for each student

where they will be protected and respected as being the primary agents of their own education.

O most holy and adorable Spirit of my Jesus,

Let me hear your gentle voice.

Refresh me with your precious inspiration.

O divine Spirit,

I want to be before you like a light feather,

So, that your breath may carry me where it will

And that I may not offer the least resistance to it.

Francis Libermann C.S.Sp.

THE SOURCES OF OUR EDUCATIONAL ETHOS

The principal source of our educational ethos comes from the lived tradition of the Spiritan missionary family and the be at service to Christ's Gospel per the intuitions and inspirations of our founders Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann.

As a religious Congregation, the Spiritans are governed by a Rule of Life and various assemblies of the Spiritan family. The Spiritan Rule of Life (SRL) lays down principles for establishing and evaluating all Spiritan works and undertakings. These principles included:

Universality: Education for global co-operation and the fulfilment of global human aspirations.

Proclamation: Education proclaiming the spiritual and lived values of God's Kingdom.

Service and Liberation: Education offering service to society and access to empowering knowledge, skills and means of expression to the poor and powerless.

Dialogue: Education for dialogue, fostering respect for people of other religions and cultures, and those of no faith or alienated from Church.

Inculturation: Education for a human community where peace and harmony flourish. Recognising the presence of God's Kingdom in the world and in every culture, including contemporary youth culture.

Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation: Education and advocacy for the respect of Human Rights, the dignity of each person – especially the poor and voiceless. Respect for God’s creation in the environment and the fair and just stewardship of the earth's limited resources.

THE SEVEN CORE VALUES OF SPIRITAN ETHOS

Openness to the Spirit:

We are guided by the Holy Spirit in our relationships, choices, behaviours and decisions.

Like Jesus, the Spiritan family seeks to be « led by the Spirit » (Luke 4:1). In this we are following the examples of the Spiritan founders who, in a time when blind obedience was the norm, encouraged Spiritans to be attentive to the Spirit of God at work in their lives and to seek the true freedom of that only the Spirit can bring.

They showed a deep respect for God’s Spirit as he manifests himself in the changing circumstances of life and in the human Spirit which rises to the challenge of living life to the full. In education, this meant responding to the most pressing educational needs of the people of their times. They also respected each one’s personal vocation as a manifestation of the

Spirit's guidance. In the context of education this means respecting everyone's personality and talents.

Libermann's respect for the Spirit at work in peoples and cultures led him to adopt an innovative approach to cross-cultural education. In sharp contrast to the 'assimilation' policy of both Church and State in the colonies of the time, he advocated respect for local cultures in educational and missionary activities.

A Sense of Community

Working together within our local school community and as a community of schools, we value diversity as a gift from God and the foundation for building communities each and every day.

The motto of the Congregation is 'One heart and one soul' (Cor unum et anima una). This motto calls to mind the spirit of the first Christian community in Jerusalem.

Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann expressed their sense of community living with shared prayers, meals, work and a simple lifestyle. In Spiritan schools a *Sense of Community* is nourished and nurtured in all our relationships and activities among the whole school community, thus creating a family spirit and an acceptance of each other.

Option for the Poor

Option for the poor is at the heart of the mission of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit.

Claude Poullard Des Places' renouncing of the possibilities of a brilliant career and money given by his father and decision to live with the poor challenges the values of our surrounding consumer society culture. He wanted his work to be God's work. Attention to the poorest and most abandoned is at the heart of the intuition of both Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann. This is an important criterion for our lifestyle and discerning the works we take on. (*Torre d'Aguilha: Spiritual Renewal of the Congregation*).

Education is a hugely effective means of translating that our decision concern into action. It also includes an awareness of the unjust social and political structures in our world today that keep the poor impoverished and that we can contribute to the elimination of these structures. Libermann had an inclusive approach to education which combined concern for the disadvantaged with openness to the needs of people from all walks of life.

Commitment to Service

Following the examples of Jesus, the gifts and talents that we are blessed with are freely offered in the service of each other and of all the communities we belong to.

Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann were motivated and empowered by their strong sense of service. This is evident by their life's commitment to the development of society in the service of others, especially those who were most in need. At the heart of our Spiritan schools a spirit of *Commitment to Service* is promoted and pursued by all members of the school community. We are encouraged to become involved in organisations and projects devoted to building a better world.

Global Vision

Reflecting the missionary outlook of the Congregation, Spiritan education works for the empowerment of peoples and their liberation from injustice and poverty.

The missionary outlook of the Congregation working all over the world has given it a *Global Vision* which inspires hope for the realisation of one world, united in peace and justice, in the Kingdom of God.

Having a global vision enables us to realise that our local, national and global relationships have implications for and are intrinsically related to each other. We are called to be increasingly aware of our entire human family and thus to meet others with a deepened level of concern, as brothers and sisters.

High Educational Standards

The realisation of each person's human and spiritual potential to strive for excellence in all areas of life is the goal of Spiritan education.

Claude Poullart des Places had a commitment to fostering the full potential of every student. Spiritan schools provide a curriculum that has breadth and depth. This facilitates every student as they gain a complete spectrum of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that are relevant to their life experiences, while engaging them in a dialogue between faith, culture and life.

Personal and Faith Development

The moral, spiritual, intellectual, physical, social and cultural aspects of each student's development is at the heart of the Spiritan vision of Education.

The Congregation of The Holy Spirit inherited from its Founders a respect for the Holy Spirit guiding each *person's development*, as He guided Jesus our teacher and model. Having an openness to faith, working towards a deeper spiritual and faith commitment together with a higher standard of morality is central to the whole-school approach to education in the Spiritan schools.

These core values can be understood as an invitation not only to our students but to every member of the

school community to recognise the Spirit of God present and alive in every human person.

An ethos only becomes reality when it is lived and when it facilitates and encourages growth and transformation in the individual person and the community to which they belong. Our ethos then is an invitation to believe and have faith; to belong and participate; to become and reach one's potential.

How might this be manifested? We believe that the following should be key characteristics of all our Spiritan schools:

- An environment supportive of Christian faith
- Harmonious development of the whole person
- A caring community environment
- Global concerns and the mission of the Church
- High academic standards
- Social and moral development
- Community service and social justice
- Preparation for a career
- Cultural and physical education
- Partnership of parents, teachers and community

In this statement of the ethos of the Spiritan Education Trust, in the context of the tradition of Christian education and Irish educational ethos, we have attempted to articulate the vision, mission and characteristic spirit of Spiritan education.

Our mission as a Spiritan Educational Trust is to proclaim the values of Jesus of Nazareth through the educational experience in our school community. In our schools, we welcome and respect all irrespective of their faith and culture. At the heart of our schools we look to Jesus the Teacher and Jesus the Compassionate One to inform and inspire all our endeavours. We believe passionately that this witness to Jesus Christ is Good News of hope for all humanity. But our witness and our education will only be effective if it is at the service of the Spirit of freedom which renews all things and invites each one of us to seek and pursue the truth of our lives.

