

Congregation of the Religious of Jesus & Mary

**Jesus & Mary Secondary School
Gortnor Abbey
Educational Philosophy**



APOSTOLIC MISSION STATEMENT

As Religious of Jesus & Mary
We strive by our commitment to Christian Education
And to the challenge of new ministries
Whenever needs emerge
To nurture Gospel values.

Wherever we are
We witness to Claudine's concerns for the young,
And for all people who are powerless
With a special preference for those who are materially poor.

In this way,
We empower people to develop loving relationships,
With God,
With self,
With others,
And with the earth.

In all we do,
We seek to collaborate with groups and individuals,
With whom we share common aims.

PRAISED FOREVER BE JESUS & MARY

In 1987, Sister Sheila warmly welcomed our Educational Philosophy, a Policy document for the Irish Province. This has been of great benefit to all.

Now, six years later, this document has been revised in order to meet today's educational needs. This philosophy will provide a basis for future planning and evaluating our educational ministries. We wish to share it with our lay colleagues, Boards of Management and parents. I would like to thank all those who helped in preparing it.

This year we had the great joy of celebrating the canonisation of our foundress Claudine Thevenet. This document reflects and recaptures the charism and spirit of Saint Claudine. May it inspire and challenge us to renew our commitment to the educational values that Saint Claudine cherished and which form part of the rich heritage she has left us.

“HOW GOOD GOD IS”

Sr. Marie O' Halloran. R.J.M.
Provincial Superior.

31st July 1993.

Claudine Thévenet: *Foundress and Educator.*

Claudine Thevenet, Foundress of the Congregation of Jesus & Mary, was born in Lyons, France, in 1774. She was the second child in a family of seven and was educated at the Benedictine Convent.

Claudine lived through the outrages and excesses of the French Revolution. At the age of 19 she was involved in charitable works caring for the sick, the starving and the wounded of both armies. She experienced the horror of seeing her two brothers shot and clubbed to death. Their last words, “Gladly forgive as we forgive”, whispered to Claudine as they were led out to the place of execution, had a profound effect on the young girl.

In 1794, the reign of terror ended, leaving in its wake thousands of poor and homeless. For the next twenty years Claudine devoted herself to the apostolate among the poor, the ignorant and the orphaned children, it was for this purpose that Claudine and seven companions formed the Association of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary. Pauline Marie Jaricot, who later founded the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, was a member of the Association.

On the advice of Fr. Coindre, her spiritual director, Claudine left home in 1818 to found a religious community and involve herself more fully in the work of education. Five years later Claudine and her companions received the ecclesiastical approval of the Church and consecrated themselves to God by the three vows of religion.

For almost nineteen years Claudine dedicated herself utterly to the interests of her congregation. Her whole life was centred on loving and serving God and leading others to love and serve Him likewise. Her aim was to make Jesus and Mary known and loved by means of a truly Christian education. The numerous trials and difficulties which beset her life, served but to deepen her faith, courage, humility and serenity. However, her robust health was undermined and at the age of 63 she died, repeating the words – “How Good God Is”.

The church in canonising Claudine Thevenet in 1993 acknowledged the calibre of this strong, holy woman and the wisdom that inspired her life’s work of founding the Congregation of Jesus & Mary – a congregation devoted to the Christian education of the young.

Education Philosophy of Saint Claudine

1. Education for Love

Claudine appreciated that the education of a Christian is basically education for love, expressed in loving relationships and in both a personal and communal task to build a “Civilization of Love”. The Gospel is Good News about God who is love and who invites all persons to be his daughters and sons in Christ.

While education in faith was a priority with Claudine she also insisted on the integrated development of the young. She understood and appreciated that young people:

- Grow in a sense of personal worth and feel themselves loved by living life together in an Educational Community:
- Require for their development to be surrounded by a family spirit of warmth and security:
- Need to prepare solidly for the world of work so as to enable them to face the future reality with faith and confidence:
- Respond to a methodology which is characterised by love, patience and forgiveness, and to the guidance of teachers who attend individually and progressively to their development, taking into account their particular talents and circumstances in life:
- Need support and guidance, which if given at the opportune time can help forestall errors of judgement and prevent mistaken choices. It is noteworthy that Claudine recommended teachers to refrain from partialities. She only allowed preference to be shown to the poorest, the most wretched, those with the most faults and the fewest good qualities.

2. Education in Faith

The education of young people in the Christian faith was a ministry which had priority in all the works of Saint Claudine.

A well organised catechesis which integrates all aspects of Christian education finds expression, not only in formal ways, but also in informal ones. To foster mature faith, it is necessary that young people are helped to:

- Relate personally to Christ
- Reflect on their lives
- Express concern and compassion for others
- Develop a critical sense based on Christian values
- Grow in a sense of social responsibility
- Make decisions based on Gospel values

Within the educational community, faith is nourished by prayer, reflection on the Gospel message and the celebration of the liturgy. Religious education classes continue to be valued as essential periods within the school timetable and the place of Retreats – in whatever form- continues to be ensured.

Responsibility for handing on a living faith belongs to the united community of Family, School and Parish.

3. Discipline: Personal Growth in Responsibility

The educational philosophy of St. Claudine, based on love, demands the active and trusting participation of young people in their own development, in sharing and in taking responsibility.

- Within the school context a climate conducive to learning is fostered by good order and organisations which promote security and respect for others.
- Teachers, pupils and parents become active promoters of a disciplined way of life when they co-operate in implementing the agreed code of discipline, in this way pupils in their turn become leaders and educators both now and in the world of tomorrow.

Educational Community

The Educational Community which integrates teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and pupils is the unifying force which brings all educational aims and processes to life. Consequently the Educational Community undertakes to live out within itself the values it seeks to transmit so that its work and its presence become a credible witness to society. The community affords to all its members an opportunity for responsible collaboration in the educational task:

- The sisters of Jesus & Mary who form part of the Educational Community, undertake to maintain the Catholic identity of the school within the charism of St. Claudine Thevenet. All members of the Board of Management and staff members share in the charism and philosophy of the foundress by their close collaboration in the work of Christian education.
- Open and sincere dialogue and the sharing of ideals contribute to the creation of an environment for young people that is full of the spirit of the Gospel.
- A quality of availability not limited to teaching assignments only forms part of the professional task and helps pupils grow strong in freedom and develop as integrated persons.
- The teaching staff maintain a high standard of professional competence by the pursuit of in-service training and other appropriate courses.
- Pastoral care personnel maintain an important position within the school staff while committed to the welfare of all pupils they have a special care for the weaker more needy young people.
- Regular communication with parents informs them of the progress and development of their children while also assisting the teachers in the performance of their task.
- The Educational Community maintains close contact with the local Church and with the Pastoral Plan of the Diocese. It both promotes and participates in community building activities.

Young People

We in the Educational Community recognise that young people are the hope of tomorrow and a powerful force for renewal in the Church and in the World.

So as to learn about them and from them we seek to know their values, their culture, their hopes and aspirations.

Young People

- Desire to be radical
- Question society as it surrounds them
- Have a great capacity for self-giving
- Search for the truth
- Search for the Absolute

To these challenges we seek to respond with the truth about Christ and about his vision of human life lived in this world.

As committed followers of Christ our young people become the architects of a new world when they reject all forms of:

Violence

Exploitation

Social Injustice and Oppression

They strive to build a better world for all peoples by means of the Christian values of:

Sharing

Reconciliation

Solidarity

Respect for Life

The Catholic School

It is in the Catholic School that the work of evangelization and communion become a reality through the quality of education the pupils receive and by the witness of life lived there. Here also young people from all social classes can be reached and with the collaboration of parents be inculcated in the principles that should govern their adult lives in a society for which they will be responsible. By its attentiveness to the individual, openness to the world and focus on Gospel values the education offered integrates and enriches the personality of the young person. It develops the personality at the human, religious and social levels as well at the level of preparation for commitment and responsibility:

- Young people are educated to perceive the human dignity of each person, appreciate different cultures and to treat all persons as equal.
- They develop good interpersonal relationships which promote self-esteem, mutual respect, trust and dialogue.
- Good habits of work and study are developed in a spirit of personal responsibility and service to others.

It is the responsibility of the Jesus & Mary School to ensure that:

- Enrolment policies are just and non-exclusive recognising the right of the Principal to make decisions within this area.
- Regardless of academic ability each child is given the opportunity to achieve his/her full potential. This opportunity cannot be curtailed by streaming policies.
- The importance of extra-curricular activities continues to be recognised through the maintenance of a balance between academic and the non-academic throughout the school timetable.

In short the educational process is orientated in such a way as to make young people more aware of the world and its needs while enabling them to face the future with confidence .

Criteria for Future Planning and Evaluation in Jesus & Mary Schools

Within the Educational Community it is essential that the following primary values continue to be transmitted:

- Justice
- Preferential Option for Poor People
- Prayer and Worship
- Loving relationships
- Empowerment
- Collaboration

These values are fundamental for the world of today and are open to the perspectives of tomorrow. They are the criteria through which we continue to evaluate our Educational Apostolate. They provide a framework within which all future planning takes place.

Thus we work to promote the Kingdom of God among the men and women of our time.

Saint Claudine Thevenet R.J.M
Foundress 1774-1837

Canonised in Rome on 21st March 1993