

A brief summary of The Josephite Educational Ethos.

The Congregation of Josephites has a family of 21 schools spread across three continents. These schools are nearly all different but, bar one, all are co-educational schools. Some schools are fully funded by the State while others are totally reliant on money raised by fees from parents and other non-governmental sources. In addition, some schools are still under the direct jurisdiction and control of the Josephites, while others operate under the direction of lay governance with Head Teachers who are not Josephites. In Belgium (x2) and the RDCongo (x3) Josephite schools still continue to offer the possibility of boarding to secondary age pupils. Despite this wide variety, there is a distinct underpinning ethos in all these schools.

This brief document highlights the primary aspects of the distinctive Josephite Educational Ethos. The Josephite Educational Ethos has four main components:

- All Education must be rooted in Religion
- The Josephite Family Spirit
- Leadership
- Adaptability

1. All Education must be rooted in Religion

Constant van Crombrughe was very insistent that the aim of Josephite education must always be 'to form the true, committed Christian'.

While the Head Teacher at Alost, the Founder made it very clear in '*Le Règlement du Collège d'Alost*' that:

'The goal which one proposes is to cultivate the mind and heart of young people.... the young people admitted here receive a careful and complete education, adapted to all states of life.

It is therefore education's task to form the good man and to prepare him for society; consequently its task is to form in youth both the heart and the mind, to perfect reason and to adorn the imagination'.

For Van Crombrughe, it was absolutely essential to offer a thorough grounding in Christian morals, beliefs, practices and values so that future leaders emanating from his Josephite schools would have the correct priorities and attitudes to help in the task of combating the rise of secularism. This belief in the purpose of education remains just as true today as it was for van Crombrughe in his own days as Head at Alost and as the Founder of the Josephites.

2. The Josephite Family Spirit

'Maintain among the pupils a true family spirit.' wrote Stanislas, the 2nd Superior General of the Josephites.

The Josephite Family Spirit comprises the following eight components:

- ***Politesse***
Politesse and gentle manners make us so attractive to the children.
- ***Douceur***
You should be, without exception, gentle and compassionate.
- **Instruments of Mercy**
God is 'all merciful' and 'all compassionate'.
- **Fatherhood (and Motherhood)**
The Head teacher in his school is to be like a father in his family.
- **Inclusiveness**
Teachers, Pupils, Parents, Former Pupils, Support Staff, Governors.
- **Collaboration**
Be of one mind and heart: *cor unum et anima una*.
- **Hospitality**
All who enter our schools must feel welcome and valued.
- **Pastoral Care and Discipline**
You will patiently put up with their failings so that you will correct them with gentleness. All humiliating correction or punishment is to be avoided.

3. Leadership

'Lead with wisdom' wrote Van Crombrugghe in a letter to the Superior of Holy Trinity College, Leuven (April 1856).

4. Adaptability

The third paragraph of the revised 1981 Constitutions of the Josephites reads:

With his eyes fixed on this model, the Christ of the Gospels, and at the same time spurred on by the ever-changing circumstances and needs which faced him throughout his life, Canon C. G. Van Crombrugghe founded in 1817 **a congregation of religious which he was ever afterwards adapting.**

In a letter to Mr Albert at College Melle (13 February 1839), Van Crombrugghe wrote: 'I am convinced of the necessity of our schools to adapt themselves to the needs of the times.' This willingness to be adaptable was shown at several key moments in the life of van Crombrugghe including the move to College Melle in 1837 that shifted the emphasis to the education and evangelisation of the new ruling classes of Belgium – the commercial and industrial middle classes, the future leaders in society.

For van Crombrugghe, schools should never stand still but must always live within their (financial) resources. Adapting to the needs of the times required a skilful discernment process as not every new educational idea or fad needed to be slavishly followed and implemented.

5. Conclusion

There is now readily available an important collection of education documents pertaining to education based on the Founder. In his Doctoral thesis on the Founder of the Josephites, Guillermo Chavz Garcia identified a number of personal qualities and attributes that van Crombrughe considered essential for teachers in Josephite School. These include:

- Having Prudence
- Showing Individual Care
- Being a Good Father (Mother) model
- Possessing strong self-discipline

The Pedagogical Guide is a collection of items of good practice to be found in Josephite Schools based on the ideas of Constant van Crombrughe. The last of the sayings reads:

Here is the greatest method of education: 'You must love the children by caring tenderly for them and letting them see you are happy to be with them. You must also identify with them, not only in work and study, but in every detail of their school life. But I must add one thing of the greatest importance: To identify with them, you must be of one heart and mind: *cor unum et anima una.*' (Abridged from the 'Pedagogical Guide' Number 129).

Finally, one of the great tasks of a Josephite School is to ensure that **pupils always feel that they are coming home to school.**