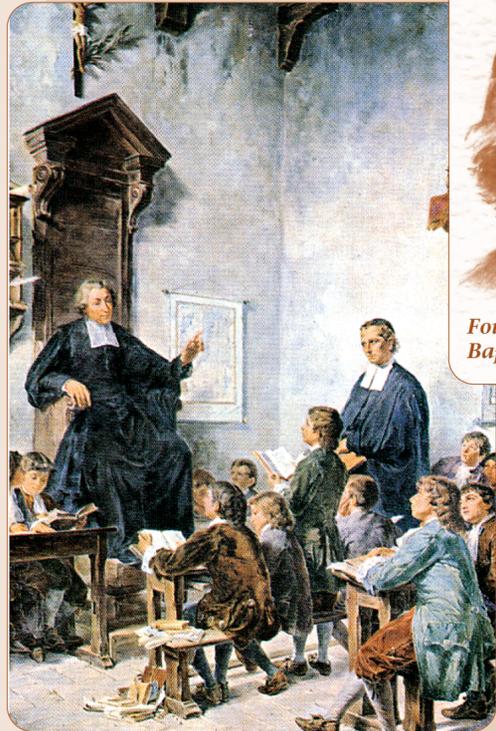


FOUNDATIONS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

De La Salle Brothers



Founder Jean Baptiste De La Salle

A painting by Mariani of De La Salle teaching, held by the Vatican Museum. Picture courtesy of 'For Youth and the Poor' by Peter Donovan

The following information is taken from the book, 'For Youth and the Poor: The De La Salle Brothers in Australia, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand 1906 – 2000' by Peter Donovan.

By their own admittance, the De La Salle Brothers (formally known as Brothers of the Christian Schools) were relatively late arriving in Australia, though not through lack of trying.

While the Brothers' permanent Australian foundation dates back to 1906, they had previously attempted to establish a foothold in Australia in 1865 when Brothers Botthian and Amphian left from Singapore bound for Perth. Personality conflicts and other difficulties, including a lack of funds and human resources, saw the Brothers leave again by the end of 1866.

Thirteen years later, in 1879, a request for Brothers from Matthew Quinn, the first Bishop of Bathurst, appeared favourable.

Meanwhile, a rapid expansion of the De La Salle Brothers throughout English-speaking countries in Asia was taking place. By 1870, the Brothers were established in Penang, Singapore, Sri Lanka, India, Burma and Hong Kong.

The language barriers associated with such establishments were initially extremely difficult for the predominantly French-speaking congregation. The need to find native English-speaking Brothers was growing. However, it was not until 1880 and the foundation of communities in Ireland, the greatest source of vocations at that time, that the need was comprehensively addressed.

Around this time, requests from Western Australia were particularly attractive. While requests for Brothers to staff schools in Perth and Fremantle were received in 1881, 1887 and 1889, permanent foundation for the Brothers in Western Australia would not occur for more than half a century.

Lasting introduction

It was in fact Sydney where the Brothers would find their lasting introduction to Australia under the insistence of Sydney's Cardinal Patrick Francis Moran.

On 31 May 1905, Anthony Jerome Flood, accompanied by Brothers Divitien-Henri and Didyme, left for Australia from Marseilles. They arrived in Sydney 42 days later, where they stayed with the Marist Fathers, before travelling to Armidale on 3 August 1905. They resided with Bishop O'Connor until their residence adjoining the college was ready. They occupied the residence on 5 October 1905.

Meanwhile, the five Irish Brothers who had been selected for Australia were joined by seven French Brothers. Together, the group departed Liverpool on 17 November 1905 on board the steamer, *Runic*. The party disembarked in Sydney on 6 January 1906, thus commencing the permanent Australian foundation.

A challenging period

The years 1906–1911 proved very challenging for the Brothers, who were seeking to expand their foundation in the face of much opposition. The situation ultimately led to the withdrawal from Australia of the French Brothers, leaving the small contingent of Irish Brothers who set about enhancing the reputation of the Institute – a somewhat unenviable and difficult task.

In 1909, St Peter's School in Surrey Hills opened under the administration of three additional Irish Brothers. Thirteen years later, under the guidance of Brother Patrick Cawley (Provincial), the Institute entered a second expansion phase. Assuming control of St Ignatius' School in Richmond, Victoria, in 1926, the Brothers then either opened new schools or administered schools in quick succession in Haberfield (1927), Dubbo (1927), Orange (1928), Bathurst (1929), Roma, Qld (1932) and Marrickville (1932).

A new mission

Even as they continued to be forced to withdraw from schools, the Brothers continued to seek new means of fulfilling their founder's mission.

In 1984, they embarked on a new missionary endeavour among the Kukatja people and the community of Balgo Hills, located on the northern fringe of the Western Desert, 800 kilometres north east of Alice Springs.

The Brothers' interest in Balgo dated back to 1975, when Brother Leo Scollen visited the community. Near the end of 1983, the Brothers and the Sisters of Mercy signed a three-year agreement to cooperate in the staffing of Luurnpa Catholic School. Three Brothers and two Sisters would begin the new venture at the start of 1984 under the Principalship of Brother Leo.

The first year was particularly difficult, with issues such as discipline, inexperience, overcrowding and the need for some 'unconventional' teaching practices, all contributing to the situation.

A major challenge was the need to establish a bi-lingual program that would ensure that the students could participate to their fullest potential. To help meet this need, community elders sat on the School Board while adults from the community were present in the classrooms to assist with communication between the teachers and students. As an extension of their work in the school, the Brothers also became involved with the St John's Adult Education Centre.

Destination Derby

In order to provide a measure of support for the community at Balgo, and to help strengthen the struggling Holy Rosary School at Derby, the Brothers agreed to administer Holy Rosary until such a time that it was functioning successfully.

Under the Principalship of Brother Gerald Barrett, four Brothers joined the staff for the start of the 1989 school year. The Brothers remained at the school until the end of 1996, when they withdrew from the community.

La Salle College Viveash – 2006



Official opening of La Salle College by Archbishop Prendiville, Redmond Prendiville, 7 February 1954

In addition to their work in Australia, the De La Salle Brothers were also involved in education in both New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. The Institute also played a leading hand in the establishment of the Australian Capital Territory's Australian Catholic University.

The Institute today

In 2006, Luurnpa Catholic School at Balgo Hills continued under the Principalship of Brother Bernard Cooper.

Luurnpa continues to make significant progress in the area of inculturation through the Walkala Centre that produces high quality school materials in the local Kukatja language – one of only 25 Aboriginal languages still prominently spoken in Australia.

The school staff also works in close collaboration with the Kutjungka Church Leaders, as together they strive to understand and celebrate the presence of God in the land.

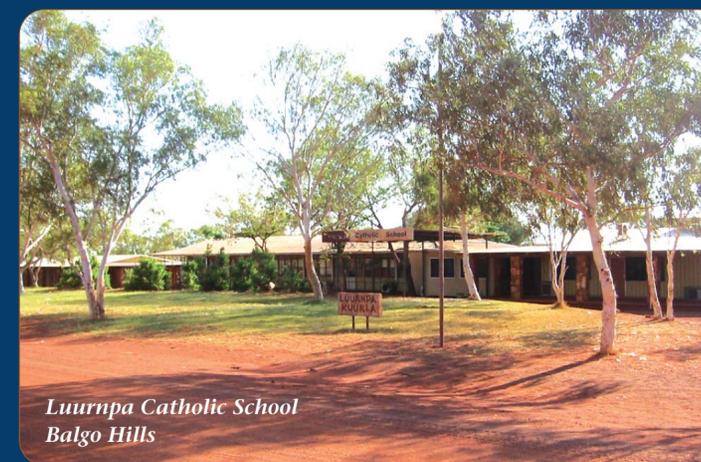
In 2005, Luurnpa Catholic School was presented with an Award of Excellence in Catholic Aboriginal Education in recognition of its ongoing efforts to provide those skills which will allow students maximum flexibility in their lives.

THE WA CONNECTION

It was not until 1954 that the De La Salle Brothers established a presence in Western Australia with the opening of De La Salle College in Midland Junction.

Brothers Columban McDonald (Director), Gregory Kennedy and Matthias Collins, oversaw the operation of the College that was officially opened and blessed by Archbishop Prendiville on 7 February 1954. School commenced the following day with an enrolment of 53 students. In 1965, the possibility of withdrawing the Brothers from the College was raised but not acted upon. By 1970, enrolments had grown to 272 and four Brothers remained on staff, along with four lay staff members.

By the end of 1971, however, diminishing resources prompted the withdrawal that had been suggested six years earlier. The College reopened in 1972 and was renamed La Salle College. In 1974 it became fully coeducational, under the first lay Principal, Jan Jolley, a former De La Salle Brother.



Luurnpa Catholic School Balgo Hills

