



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE CHAPLAINCY

LEAP OF FAITH *LUX, VITA, CARITAS*

THE ANGLO-CATHOLIC HERITAGE AND SPIRITUAL ETHOS OF ST JOHN'S COLLEGE 2021

1. WHAT IS THE ANGLICAN CHURCH?

The English Church traces its origin to St Augustine, the first Archbishop of Canterbury in 597. The separation of the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church dates to the English Reformation. The appointment of Thomas Cranmer as the first 'protestant' Archbishop of Canterbury in 1533 and the subsequent *Acts of Supremacy* in 1534 and 1558 finally established the Anglican Church. The early Anglican Church wavered for some time between Roman Catholic and emerging Lutheran and Calvinistic orientations. The growing inclusion of both Catholic and Protestant trends ultimately resulted in the broad theological spectrum characteristic of today's global Anglican Communion. Before his retirement, the Archbishop of the *Anglican Church of Southern Africa*, The Rt Revd Njongonkulu Ndungane, said that: "The Anglican Church [CPSA] is proud of its Catholic and Evangelical traditions."

Today, the Anglican Communion is a global family of churches in 165 countries. The Archbishop of Canterbury is considered the *primus inter pares*, the *first among equals*, but he has no constitutional jurisdiction over any of the 40 independent Anglican provinces around the world. Anglicans are therefore united in filial affection and mutuality of heritage amidst stylistic and theological variation. The Anglican Church in Southern Africa has emerged out of its colonial roots as one of the more progressive expressions of Christianity and is recognised for its liberal policies and inclusive hospitality.

2. WHAT DO ANGLICANS BELIEVE?

Based on this heritage, Anglicans understand that Christians around the world experience, interpret, and express their faith in different ways, and that this tapestry enriches the scope and depth of our collective spirituality. Anglicans retain a 'unity in diversity' by holding three principles in dynamic tension: Scripture, reason, and tradition. In Southern Africa we might add a fourth principle – context. It is therefore given that variability in Scriptural interpretation and theological opinion will emerge. One of the Anglican Church's most renowned figures, William Temple (1881-1944, Archbishop of York and Archbishop of Canterbury), described a special characteristic of Anglicanism as the: "... freedom of intellectual inquiry, whereby the correlation of the Christian revelation and advancing knowledge is constantly effected." Donald Allchin (1930-2010), Anglican priest and theologian, proposes that: "... it is this very openness to others which should be seen as the dominant feature of Anglicanism." This assimilation of advancing knowledge and theological diversity came to be known as the *Via Media*, the middle way, and its open character remains definitive of Anglicanism to this day. The *Anglican Prayer Book* (1989), still used in our Chapels, affirms that we should: "... accommodate, wherever possible, different theological emphases or preferences which exist in our Church." Whatever our theological variety, all Anglicans preserve faith in Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God's saving Love and Grace, and all retain their allegiance to the Anglican Prayer Books, the daily offices, the sacraments, and the traditions of the Church. These allegiances, broadly set out in the Lambeth Quadrilateral, describe a four-point articulation of Anglican belief as follows:

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- a) The understanding that Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation and uniquely reveal the standard of Christian faith.
- b) Fidelity to the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as sufficient for the teaching of Christian faith.
- c) The two Dominical Sacraments, namely Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist.
- d) Apostolic succession in the Historic Episcopate, tracing its origins to the early Churches.

Whilst all Anglicans are expected to adhere to these tenets of faith, their interpretation and application are not doctrinally foreclosed. Emphasis is rather placed on a life of loving service in Christlikeness, personal integrity, and compassionate care for those in need. In our context, this Christlikeness also reaches into the lives of those who have suffered the consequences of historical marginalisation. This principle is particularly relevant to the character of Anglican schools in South Africa who, since the mid-1980s, have welcomed a diversity of students into our communities as a gesture of inclusive Christian hospitality. Our primary injunction, repeated every week during Mass, remains central to our identity: "Jesus said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, you shall love your neighbour as yourself.'" (Matthew 22: 35 - 40, Mark 12: 28 - 34, and Luke 10: 27). Since all people are created in the image and likeness of God, it is our belief that everyone is loved equally by God in the splendour of our variety, and it is our duty to do the same.

3. WHO WAS ST JOHN, AND HOW DOES HIS NAME SHAPE OUR COMMUNITY?

St. John's College is named after the 'Beloved Disciple' - St John the Apostle. John was a member of Jesus' inner circle of disciples together with James, his brother, and Peter. He is the presumed author of the Gospel according to John, and tradition maintains that he is also the author of the Book of Revelation and the three letters attributed to his name. Beneath traditional beliefs and customs, the history of John is veiled in a rich tapestry of myth and legend. Nevertheless, we can discern characteristics from the New Testament which uniquely epitomise him as the most appropriate patron of our School.

It is believed that James and John were the sons of Zebedee and Salome. Salome was Mary's sister, which means that James and John were Jesus' cousins. This speaks to the affection of family – a cornerstone of our Johannian community. Despite his humble origins as a fisherman, John certainly became a well-educated man in his frequent and authoritative interpretation of Scripture – not unlike the modest beginnings of St John's College. Additionally, as the most philosophically reflective of the four Gospels, John reveals a thoughtful intellect which seeks to distil the deeper meanings behind our common stories – a trait which reflects the academic rigour of St John's College. John also embodies values which speak profoundly to our ethos. For example, John was the only disciple who was courageous enough to stand at the foot of the cross when the other disciples had fled. He could also be trusted with great responsibility – Jesus entrusted his own mother to John's care shortly before he died on the cross (John 19:25-27). He stood up boldly to resist those who would seek to break community rather than build it – it is for good reason that he and his brother James were called the 'sons of thunder' (Mark 3:17). He also understood the importance of servant-leadership. Jesus delegated the responsibility for arranging the Passover meal to John and Peter - a seminal moment which became the central sacrament of the Christian Church (Luke 22:8). He was also a man of prayer. On two intimate occasions Jesus specifically asked John to pray with him, first at the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28) and then at the Mount of Olives (Mark 14:32-33). Most significantly, a strong theme which pervades the Gospel of John is the notion of 'indwelling' as the manifestation of love in community. In John 17:23 Jesus is praying: "I in them and You in me, so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that You sent me and have loved them even as You have loved me." John's emphasis on mutual indwelling, more accurately called 'co-inherence', is the foundation of what we today call Incarnational Spirituality – living the story of Jesus as if it were our own – an approach to Christian faith and life which is so much more powerful than merely believing it. It is for this reason that our Christian values-base is so fundamental to our school character. It therefore comes as no surprise that the eagle would be chosen as John's symbol – the most awe-inspiring and regal of all creatures as it soars towards the heavens. The oft-quoted verse in Isaiah 40:31 rings true: "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary - they will walk and not be faint." John, in 1 John 4:16 said that: "We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love, live in God, and God lives in them." The principles of *Lux*, *Vita*, *Caritas* are most exactly exhibited in St John – the 'Apostle of Love'.

4. ST BENEDICT AND THE MONASTIC FORMATION OF ST JOHNS COLLEGE

Periods of the so-called Middle Ages are often called ‘dark’ – and for good reason. Life in Europe was extremely difficult, and crude governance imposed enormous deprivation, inequality, persecution, violence, and poverty on its people. Benedict of Nursia (480-547) was born into this malaise and provided structured and safe Christian communities (monasteries) in a chaotic world. St Benedict’s Rule, a relatively short and simple instruction-manual, proposed an ordered lifestyle which balanced a daily rhythm of prayer, work, study, and recreation. Benedict’s Rule is a down-to-earth guide to community-building and spiritual growth, and the profound sensibility of his precepts have naturally filtered into many other organisations, like schools.

After St John’s College’s shaky start in 1898, priests and monks of a Benedictine Anglo-Catholic Order, called the Community of the Resurrection, consolidated and expanded the school from 1906 until 1934. This rich monastic heritage still defines the school’s ethos, and its Benedictine rhythm still governs our daily routines. The Community of the Resurrection also recognised the socio-political iniquities of South Africa. St John’s College endeavoured to sensitise our students to those iniquities, and to the need for service to the oppressed through the School Mission at St Cyprian’s, Ekutuleni in Sophiatown, and later at St Nicolas Home, Westbury, among other initiatives. This Christian engagement within our South African context indelibly shaped the values and character of St John’s College. In the post-Apartheid era St John’s College has continued to re-imagine its mission by offering a contextual and progressive education within the Benedictine rhythm of our Anglican heritage. The passage of time and the rapid progression of knowledge have enabled the Chaplaincy of St John’s College to retain these values whilst embodying idioms accessible to 21st Century students. Indeed, our *Anglican Prayer Book* (1989), formed out of the original Prayer Books of 1552 and 1662, endorses that our worship should: “... express itself in a language and form which meets the needs of contemporary people.”

5. THE ANGLO-CATHOLIC ETHOS OF ST JOHN’S COLLEGE

The Anglo-Catholic character of St John’s College is rooted in the liturgical style and socio-political perspectives of our founding fathers - the Benedictine monks and priests of the Community of the Resurrection. Consequently, the nature of our worship is couched in so-called High Church customs whilst embracing African expressions and idioms. Our students respect and value this tradition and view our Chapel as the foundation of our corporate identity. The Christian virtue implicit in this spirituality therefore embraces an ethic of service to our local community. The lived values of *Lux, Vita, Caritas* imbedded in this heritage lie at the heart of our personality and they are affirmed daily in our routines of prayer, song, and weekly Mass. The Memorial Chapel therefore lies at the physical and symbolic heart of the school and, regardless of our various religious affiliations, serves as an affirming, loving, and ‘holding’ space where all are welcomed to congregate in accordance with our shared values.

6. TRANSFORMATION, DIVERSITY, AND BELONGING

Over the years, many people associated with St John’s College unequivocally and bravely opposed apartheid. We remember, among others, Fr Trevor Huddleston, Dean Yates, Bishop Ambrose Reeves, Hugh Lewin, Fr Aelred Stubbs, and of course, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu. Nevertheless, we acknowledge and regret that St John’s College’s response to the discrimination and inequality inherent in pre-1994 South African society was inadequate. Today, we are no longer restrained by the socio-political stereotypes which characterised that era. Inasmuch as our Anglican roots remain the cornerstone of our corporate identity, we speak today of a vocation for all our students which points to an ethic of social justice, equality, inclusion, and belonging. Moreover, the St John’s College community of today represents a spectrum of ethnic, cultural, ideological, identity, and religious diversity. The nature of our current demographic celebrates this diversity by sustaining the centrality of personal faith alongside the freedom of intellectual inquiry. This methodology synchronises with the school’s academic orientation and, as such, invites open participation within a pastoral context. In essence, the foundation of our Anglican ethos rests on an unprescribed values-based Christian spirituality.


In accordance with our transformational initiatives, St John’s College and its Chaplaincy will not accommodate any overt or implied discrimination, judgement, or prejudice on the grounds of ethnicity, race, culture, language, religion, gender, sexual identity or orientation, or any other kind of identity stereotyping. Our Christian values of community and service – God’s *Light, Life, and Love*, expressed in our Anglican ethos, compel us to apply all reasonable measures to remove hindrances to the full and free spiritual development of our students and staff, and indeed the whole St John’s community.

7. THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHAPLAINCY

Within the context of the above, St John's College sustains a comprehensive Christian practice as the foundation of its primary character as a church school. The Chaplains are licenced by the Bishop and contractually employed by the school to sustain and develop this ethos. In so doing, they perform various tasks associated with the conduct of daily Chapel services, the facilitation of variously named divinity classes, the provision of pastoral care and support for both staff and students, collaboration with transformation and diversity initiatives, and they represent the Anglican Church on the various Executive bodies of the school in the construction of its vision and the realisation of its mission.


The Chaplains therefore straddle the tensile space between the preservation of the school's Anglo-Catholic heritage, and our emergence into the future as we face the challenges and opportunities of 21st Century education in South Africa. This bridging between church, school, and the modern world is mediated through our Benedictine rhythm by providing safe structures wherein our students are free to explore and develop their own spiritual identity. The diversity of our current community requires that the Chaplains, together with the Executive bodies of the school and the Council will ensure the full inclusion and belonging of every member of our community. Ultimately, it is the Chaplaincy's responsibility to love and serve the community of St John's College as Christ has loved us – unconditionally.

*We are made for goodness. We are made for love. We are made for friendliness.
We are made for togetherness. We are made for all of the beautiful things that you and I know.
We are made to tell the world that there are no outsiders.
All are welcome: black, white, red, yellow, rich, poor, educated, not educated,
male, female, gay, straight, all, all, all.
We all belong to this family, this human family, God's family.*
Desmond Tutu



The Rt Revd Dr Steve Moreo
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Signed 1 June 2021



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