



# Catholic Education in The Bahamas

**In remembrance of: Priests, Sisters, Principals, teachers and all persons responsible for the education of countless number of Bahamian Citizens within our Bahamian Catholic Schools.**

Catholics in the Bahamas had good reason to celebrate in 1887. The Ayde-Currans had successfully petitioned Archbishop Michael Augustine Corrigan of New York to appoint a resident priest. As a result, Rev. Charles George O'Keefe was asked to go to the Bahamas. In that same year Ayde-Currans and Fr. O'Keefe led the drive to acquire a site for, and to build St. Francis Xavier Church. On November 7, 1886, Fr. J.A. Ryan of New York offered the first Mass in the newly completed St. Francis Church, the first Catholic Church in the Bahamas. On Sunday, February 13, 1887, Archbishop Corrigan dedicated the church, administering the Sacrament of Confirmation for the first time in the Bahamas.

Over the years, the relationship with New York, and the clergy and laity from the New England states made many valuable donations to the Bahamas mission.

Having assumed responsibility for the mission, Archbishop Corrigan began an active search for religious to take up residence in the Bahamas, with little success initially. In 1889, in an inspired move, he approached Mother Ambrosia Sweeney of the Convent of Mount St. Vincent-on-Hudson to send a group of sisters to Nassau to begin a social and educational mission here.

The first to arrive were Sisters Dolores Van Rensselea, as superior, Teresa Alacoque Nagle, Casilda Saunders, Mercedes Donovan and Maria Corsini Gallagher. They were accompanied by Mother Ambrosia herself, and Sisters Irene Gonzaga Batell, Maria Dodge and three other women, who came to assist the Sisters. Sailing aboard the SS Santiago, they arrived in Nassau on October 28, 1889.

**Taken from: From the Void to the Wonderful  
By: Patricia Glington-Meicholas**

After arriving on October 28, 1889 the Sisters lost no time, and began **St. Francis School** on **November 4, 1889**. During the summer of **1893**, the Sisters organized a sewing class “out East” and eventually it developed into “an every day school” in what is now **Sacred Heart Parish**. St. Francis Xavier and Sacred Heart Schools were the only parochial schools in Nassau for 30 years. During that time, children from Grants Town and Bain Town trudged miles each day to attend one of these schools. In 1926 the school of Our Lady, Help of All Souls, was opened in Grants Town by Sr. Carmita Maria and Sr. Mary Rosella.

### **Catholic Schools in The Commonwealth of the Bahamas 1889 – to present**

St. Francis Xavier School, West Street, New Providence 1889 – 1979

St. Francis Xavier Academy/Xavier Academy, West Hill Street, New Providence 1890 - 1955

St. Vincent Academy, Harbour Island 1922 - 1944

Our Lady of the Holy Souls, New Providence 1926

Saints Peter and Paul, New Providence 1928 - 1932

St. Joseph School, Boyd Road, New Providence 1932 – 1979

St. Anselm School, Fox Hill, New Providence 1933 – 1973

St. Benedict School, Harbour Island 1944 – 1979

Holy Name School, Bailey Town, Bimini 1943 - 2010

St. Bede School, Sutton Street, New Providence 1945

St. Augustine’s College, Bernard Road, New Providence, 1947

St. Thomas More School, Maderia Street, New Providence 1953

Xavier College/Xavier Lower School, West Bay Street, New Providence 1955

St. Cecilia School, Coconut Grove, New Providence, 1956

Holy Redeemer School, Cat Island, 1956 – 1968

Aquinas College, Madeira Street, New Providence 1957

St. Vincent de Paul School, Hunter, Grand Bahama 1957 - 2010

Mary, Star of the Sea School, Freeport, Grand Bahama 1960

St. Anne School, Rock Sound, Eleuthera 1960 - 2010

St. Francis de Sales School, Marsh Harbour, Abaco 1964

Grand Bahama Catholic High School, Freeport, Grand Bahama 1966

Saints Francis & Joseph School, Boyd Road, New Providence 1979

Every Child Counts, Marsh Harbour, Abaco 1997

As the journey in Catholic education continues we will endeavour to produce graduates who are Christian leaders, academically capable, centered and well-rounded, loving, healthy, financially adept, environmentally conscious and life-long learners.