

**ST PETER CLAVER PRIMARY SCHOOL in Kroonstad** opened its doors to its first pupils in 1916, under the leadership of Sr Andrina Ledwick, assisted by Sr Mary Theresa Dawkins, both of whom were among the first Sisters of Notre Dame to work in South Africa. In the years to come school leadership was at different times in the hands of Sisters of Notre Dame, Brendan Dalton, Alphonse Byrne, Mary McLeish and Veronica Chapman. In January 1976, Mr Michael Mosobela took over as the first lay principal. Today Mr Mosobela's great-grand-daughter is in the school.

The first 55 years of St Peter Claver Primary's history were in 'B' Location, Marabastad. After decades of requesting the municipality for a larger piece of ground on which to build the classrooms needed to accommodate its more than a thousand pupils, in 1971 a new school was built with funds donated by the British Province of the Sisters of Notre Dame. The school's 'Great Trek' from Marabastad to Constantia, on the western side of Maokeng, took place with the help of Fr Lewis Ballink, and friends of the Sisters, Mr De Sousa and Mr Dalleu.

During its first 55 years St Peter Claver Primary was staffed by dedicated lay teachers whose work was always the subject of very positive reports from the Inspectors of Education. Sr Alphonse Byrne, a fluent Sesotho speaker, required only the best from her teachers. She produced in the '50s the first Sesotho text books for the first years of schooling.

Mr Mosobela was Principal for 20 years. He was succeeded by Sr Dorothy Castles who led the school in its expansion to include Grades 8 and 9, thus becoming an Intermediate School. In 2002 former student Mrs Florence Radebe was appointed Principal. During her time as Principal, the primary school acquired 9 new classrooms for its Foundation phase, a grassed playing field for sports activities, a 'container' Econo-kitchen for providing meals for the neediest learners each day, and a double story block with six new classrooms.

In the early 1980s the Sisters of Notre Dame sought to share the direction and leadership of the school with a Governing Body, made up of concerned members of the community, educationalists, and parents. In time the Board of Governors registered the school as a PBO and an NPO. While the Sisters of Notre Dame remain the legal owners of the site and plant, the business of the school is in the hands of the Board of Governors, details of which are available on another page of this website.

Various Sisters of Notre Dame at different times assisted staff member with their own academic and professional development, accompanying several through under-graduate studies. Sr Veronica Chapman opened the library, the only school library in the township, to pupils from other schools on Saturdays, to enable them to share the library resources the school had been able to acquire.

Often in its first 9 decades parents asked the Sisters to take the school up to Grade 12. This dream became a reality in 2010. Mrs Zunelle De Ru was appointed Head of School from November 2010, and 2011 saw the first Grade 10 class take its place, still on the primary school site. Plans were put in place to raise funds to build the class and other rooms required by a fully operative and functional High School when a fortuitous set of circumstances made it possible for the High School section to move up to the Old Convent site, on the eastern side of Kroonstad, in the suburb now known as Jordania.

## **ST PETER CLAVER HIGH SCHOOL**

In January 2012 Grades 9, 10 and 11 moved from Maokeng into refurbished sections of the Old Notre Dame Convent on the east of the town. Mrs De Ru was accompanied by a staff of 9 educators, who were able to offer a limited curriculum on a site that had been a flourishing primary and secondary school from 1907 – 1972, run by the S.

Prof Jonathon Jansen was the guest of honour at the official opening on 2 February 1990, which date marked the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Religious Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame, in Amiens, France.

The first Grade 12 class, made of 52 learners, most of whom have been pupils at the school since Grade 1 will write the 2013 Matriculation exams of the Free State Education Department. Negotiations are currently underway to switch to the Matriculation examination of the Independent Examinations Board mainly for educational reasons, and because the approach of the IEB fits more easily with the educational ethos of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

In its short history, St Peter High learners have excelled themselves in singing, athletics, soccer, the Kroonstad Eisteddfod, and have offered a regular outreach service into the local community. A Rotary Interact Club provides learners with the opportunity to develop leadership skills and fosters in the learners the ethos of service to those less fortunate than themselves.

The High School, situated on a magnificent site overlooking both the town to the west and the Valsch River to the south, is visible to all travellers driving along the N1 highway.

Together with its primary school in Maokeng, it strives to offer all its learners an EDUCATION FOR LIFE.