A.M.D.G

THE ALBERTO HURTADO PROGRAMME

CLONGOWES FOUNDATION
Established in 2007, the Alberto Hurtado Programme (AHP), is a bursary scheme inspired by the desire to remove barriers to the unique educational experience that a seven-day boarding school can offer.

The programme aims to provide up to seven bursary places each academic year to children coming from circumstances that otherwise would preclude them from attending Clongowes. There are currently forty-three bursary students in a total school population of 448. Thirty-two AHP students have graduated from the College. All thirty-two have proceeded onto third-level education. These boys come from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and most have attended primary schools in areas with designated disadvantage status (DEIS) where rates of progression to third-level education approximate 2%. The impact of the programme has been significant and positive.

**ALBERTO HURTADO**

Alberto Hurtado was a Chilean Jesuit priest, a lawyer and a social worker, who established a foundation to care for children in need of food, shelter and education. He was canonised on October 23, 2005, by Pope Benedict XVI.

As a child, impoverished by the untimely death of his father, Alberto was offered the opportunity to attend a prestigious Jesuit school in Santiago. He went on to study Law before deciding to join the Society of Jesus. After his studies and his ordination Fr. Hurtado SJ dedicated the rest of his life to helping the disadvantaged and especially in helping young people to access education as a way of escaping from poverty.

**Clongowes Wood College**

Clongowes is part of the rich tradition of Jesuit education that dates back to the early years of the order in the 16th Century. Prior to the establishment of Clongowes young Irish Catholics were educated abroad in such schools as the English Jesuit College at St Omer, the Collège Petit at Poitiers (viewed as the Irish St Omer), founded in 1674, Douai, where Daniel O’Connell was educated, and more latterly Stonyhurst College in Lancashire, the successor school to St Omer and founded in 1794. It was against this Continental backdrop that Clongowes opened in 1814 with its rules and structure modelled on those of Stonyhurst and St Omer before it. “It was the hope of the Jesuits that those whose social position or calling brought them into contact with the protestantising forces, and later secularising forces, of the age would have their minds well trained in the truths of their religion, thus providing a bulwark for the preservation, if not the propagation, of the faith.” ¹ The need to educate those who would be in a position to shape the course of a country on the cusp of Catholic Emancipation (the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed in 1829),

“"To you young people I especially entrust the task of restoring solidarity to the heart of human culture… We have to learn to be on the side of the poor; not just indulge in rhetoric about the poor! Let us go out and meet them, look into their eyes and listen to them.”

- Pope Francis

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was seen to be best served by the opening of a boarding school. Thus while Daniel O’Connell had to be sent abroad to receive his Catholic education his sons, Maurice and Morgan, were amongst Clongowes’ early pupils.

It was not surprising that the huge industrial, political and socio-economic changes of the late 19th Century required a response from the Catholic Church. The response was Pope Leo XIII’s seminal encyclical, Rerum Novarum (“of revolutionary change”), in 1891. This first of the social encyclicals is widely seen as the start of modern Catholic thinking and teaching on social matters. The Church’s social teaching continued to evolve through the course of the 20th century as the start of modern Catholic thinking and teaching on social matters. The Church’s social teaching continued to evolve through the course of the 20th century and arguably reached a new clarity with the election of Pope Francis. From today’s vantage point it is hard to envisage an integral Catholic education which is not intellectually and spiritually committed to the work of justice in society.

Throughout its more than two hundred year history, Clongowes consciously has sought to educate young men of competence, conscience and compassion, young men who seek to make a difference in their local communities and at the national and European level. At the same time the commitment to an all-boys, 7-day boarding school that provides a Jesuit education necessitates a high, though not exceptional, level of fees. Typically then the pool of potential pupils is drawn from a restricted, socio-economic strata of society and one that may not be always religiously committed. Thus the kind of truly Catholic education referred to above, and as championed by Pope Francis, provides a challenge for us.

The AHP programme is a response to this challenge. Socio-economic barriers contradict the Gospel rooted in its commitment to social justice. These barriers not merely exclude those with less financial resources, their educational ambition and aptitude notwithstanding, but they also can also hinder those from a more privileged background from fulfilling their Christian vocation as ‘men for others’.

Independence from financial constraints liberates the School to select pupils with evident aptitude for the kind of integral Jesuit education to which we aspire. This financial independence will allow the College to be an open and vibrant place where divisions are transcendence, while remaining consistent to its foundation and traditions, to the benefit of all. Such a school, to be truly itself, must of necessity be open and inclusive as indicated.

Clongowes seeks to remain a faith school that does justice, that is open to the world and to the growth of the individual. Benefitting from the best of current practices in teaching and with an open, inquisitive mind our pupils can develop to their full potential. The AHP makes an indispensable contribution to the development of Clongowes as an authentically Jesuit school. With these benefits comes an economic demand, one that is greater by virtue of our commitment to being a 7-day, boarding school.

**WHY THE ALBERTO HURTADO PROGRAMME?**

When the Design Team was in the process of establishing the bursary programme, in 2005-6, there was a clear intention to avoid any association with the notion of charity or worse still, access. These words imply that the College is engaged in helping the disadvantaged and allowing them access to ‘our world’. The objective of the AHP was, and remains, to offer opportunity to boys who might otherwise not fulfil their potential because of socio-economic disadvantage. There is also a clear understanding that the programme aims to transform the College by making it a more socially diverse community, one that better reflects the world that we live in. In the ten years since the first AHP students arrived, this transformation has become apparent in a number of ways:

- a greater appreciation that disadvantage does not equate to a lack of intelligence or lack of a work ethic.
- confirmation that the Jesuit ethos that animates Clongowes is not an empty concept and the parents who subscribe to that ethos are capable of participating in it through their actions.
- a community that now appreciates diversity in all its forms.
- a deepened awareness of justice issues and the challenges faced by those in communities of disadvantage.

Clongowes Wood College is a better living and learning environment for all as a result of the AHP students enrolled.

**CASE HISTORIES**

For every AHP student there is a remarkable story of challenge and resilience. While it is important to respect the privacy of the students on bursary, it is possible to provide some detail without compromising it. The following names are fictional:

**JAMES**

James comes from a village in rural Ireland. His mother is an assistant in a nursing home. His father was an unemployed labourer at the time. The national school from which he came could not believe that one of their boys was offered a place in such a prestigious school. The Principal told me that the whole community had received a boost because of James’s offer. In her eyes, a tiny community in rural Ireland had been put on the map by its association with Clongowes. Eight years later, James is studying Biomedical Science in UCD and is thriving. His father is back in work and they receive some financial support from the Jesuit Community to help fund James’s costs in Dublin.

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2 The Pope was educated at the Jesuit school in Vitebo and then the Collegio Romano.
The St. Aloysius Award is given each year to that boy who exhibits courage and determination.

John and his widowed mother were living in a dark, dingy two-bed apartment in a disadvantaged part of Dublin. She had a history of drug and alcohol-related problems and was entirely incapable of looking after her very bright son. His ambition and appetite for escape from a grim world and the prospect of experiencing an uninspiring secondary education were apparent to us when we visited. John was not the most obedient or easily-managed student during his six years. However, it was remarkable that he avoided significant sanction and engaged well academically. His mother underwent a transformation in that she now had hope in her life. Her demeanour and appearance brightened considerably and she engaged well with the school. John achieved 490 points in his Leaving Certificate and was offered a place in a prestigious university.

Oscar and Pirlo’s parents are immigrants and both work as cleaners. They are very hard-working people and committed to providing a future for their two boys. Although they received bursaries for their two sons they were adamant that they wanted to contribute what little they could to the Foundation’s fundraising programme. Their sons have the same work ethic as their parents. Oscar went to study Engineering. Pirlo was awarded the St. Aloysius Award in his final year and is now also studying Engineering.

When David was in Elements, he was diagnosed with cancer. His six years in Clongowes were a constant battle with ill-health and he displayed an extraordinary resilience and determination to make it through. Idolised by his Year group, by the time he got to Rhetoric, there was no need to survey students or staff on the recipient of the St. Aloysius Award for that year; it was a foregone conclusion. David is now studying Arts in UCD and his health is currently stable.

Mario is originally from South America. He achieved the best results of any Clongowes student in the Junior Certificate exams and in the process achieved one of the highest marks of any student in the country in Maths and Science and the highest mark in the country in Classics. He continues to accumulate achievements as he progresses through the school.

Now in its eleventh year, the AHP is an essential part of the fabric of Clongowes life. The students integrate seamlessly and the parents exhibit a pride that the College is able to provide a diversified learning community to the benefit of all. The success of the programme has attracted the interest of many third-level institutions and social entrepreneurs who appreciate the difficulty of making such a bursary programme work as well as it does.

The AHP would not have been possible were it not for the financial and moral support of traditional Clongowes families who showed the true spirit of Jesuit education by opening the gates of what had been an exclusive community, confident that those with responsibility for managing the programme would ensure that it delivered what it promised.

The greatest challenge, indeed the only challenge of note, is the funding of the programme. It has come this far due to the financial support from the Society of Jesus and some substantial contributions from a relatively small number of Old Clongownians. The Clongowes Wood College Foundation aims to create an AHP Endowment Fund the income from which would fund the AHP on a sustainable basis. Already an old Clongownikian has earmarked a significant contribution to launch this Endowment and other past pupils have left meaningful legacies. To succeed, however, the Endowment will need more contributions.

The St. Aloysius Award is given each year to that boy who exhibits courage and determination in his personal and communal life.
“Throughout its more than two hundred year history Clongowes consciously has sought to educate young men of competence, conscience and compassion, young men who seek to make a difference in their local communities and at the national and European level.”