

## Georgetown Preparatory School Agency History



### Mission and Initial Founding:

*"Georgetown Academy was the result of one man's vision: John Carroll, the first bishop of Baltimore. Carroll regarded the school as critical to the future of the Catholic Church in the United States" (Ochs 1989; 5)*

*"On this academy is built all my hope of permanency and success to our Holy Religion in the United States." (quoted in Ochs; 8)*

According to the historian of Georgetown Prep, Steve Ochs (also a teacher there), there were a number of fundamental recurring themes in the history of the school, but:

*"Most importantly, the Jesuits of Georgetown regarded the Christian formation of students as their primary mission. Knowledge and skills, although important, were approached as a means to an end: the knowledge and love of god."*

Carroll is a believer in the separation of Church and state, and in the concept of religious pluralism (denominational). He welcomed the task of creating a Church with no government subsidies or government ties. He is convinced that educating Catholics will be the key to the success of the Catholic Church in the U.S. He envisioned schools to "seed the ground" of the faith among the youth, and to create future clergy.

Prior to 1854 there was little distinction made between the secondary school and the college at Georgetown College. Evidently the age differences were becoming a concern due to the "unruly" behavior of the "big boys" as compared to the "small boys". However total separation was not possible at the time because financially there were many more students below the college level than at the college level. It was not until the 1890's that a clear distinction emerged between the two when Georgetown sought accreditation as a University.

By 1910 Georgetown Prep was fully recognizable as a separate institution, but it was not until the 1920's that the preparatory was moved to where it exists now in Montgomery County and eventually, by 1927, it was fully separated from Georgetown University with its own Jesuit community in charge.

Both the College and the Prep, from the beginning always accepted students from any religion. In 1798 non-Catholics were provided with a separate boarding house so that they would not have to take part in the religious activities of the Catholics. It should be kept in mind that although the original Georgetown Academy was staffed by ex-Jesuits, and followed the Jesuit teaching methods, until 1806 it was not, due to the repression of the Jesuits, technically a Jesuit school. Nonetheless, it was founded by the then Bishop John Carroll and the Corporation of Catholic Gentlemen, a group composed of the American diocesan clergy, ninety-five percent of which were ex-Jesuits.

#### **Milestones:**

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1634      | First three Jesuits come to the American English colonies.                                                                                                                                                      |
| 1735      | John Carroll is born in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. He attends a Jesuit school in 1747.                                                                                                                           |
| 1753-1761 | Carroll enters Jesuit English novitiate after receiving his Jesuit education in Flanders. In 1761 he is ordained in Belgium. Returns to Maryland in 1774.                                                       |
| 1773      | Society of Jesus is suppressed by Pope Clement XIV.                                                                                                                                                             |
| 1775      | American Revolution begins.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 1776      | Fr. Carroll accompanies Benjamin Franklin on an unsuccessful trip to Canada to encourage support for the revolution.                                                                                            |
| 1784      | Rome organizes the Catholic Church in America (the U.S.), into a distinct body with Fr. Carroll at its head. Most of the priests assigned to work with him are also ex-Jesuits.                                 |
| 1788      | Construction of the Academy begins.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 1789      | Rome creates first American Bishopric in Baltimore with Rev. Carroll as its Bishop.                                                                                                                             |
| 1791      | Rev. Robert Plunkett (becomes first president of Georgetown College, and the first student is William Gaston (1778-1884) who went on to become a U.S. congressman and supreme court justice for North Carolina. |

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| March 1, 1815 | Congress grants Georgetown College a university charter and the right to grant university degrees.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 1816          | College conveyed to the Society of Jesus. Fr. John Anthony Grassi, an Italian Jesuit, resolves conflicts between American and European Jesuits and reverses the deep slump in enrollment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 1850          | The most serious (but not the only) student riot resulting from the expulsion of a student. 60 students left after smashing windows and cutting mattresses.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 1851-1852     | Official separation of "senior" students from younger ones.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 1861-1865     | The Civil War nearly ruins the College. The Prep was instrumental in its survival.<br>In 1859 the enrollment was: 73 (Prep); 131 (Junior); and 89 (Senior).<br>By 1866 it was reversed: 173 (Prep); 49 (Junior); 41 (Senior).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 1888          | "Devotional Catholicism" develops in the U.S. All students are required to attend Mass (previously, non-Catholics could go to study after prayers).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 1890          | For the first time the school catalogue lists Preparatory classes separately. The Prep also emerges as a powerful force in regional athletic teams, including football, which has continued into the present.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 1919          | Georgetown Preparatory is relocated to a site near Garrett Park in Montgomery County, Maryland (its present location). The school served to meet several demands; a school in the country, away from the distractions of the city where young students could concentrate on their studies better; a superior preparatory school for young Catholics in general that would prepare them for Jesuit colleges and other Catholic colleges as well.                    |
| 1920          | Georgetown University transfers financial responsibility of the Prep. All the finances of the New Prep are to be handled independently by the Prep itself.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 1925          | Georgetown University makes a \$63,442.34 claim for loan and interest on the construction of the Prep. Rev. Emmet at first agreed to a reduced interest (6% to 3%), and expressed surprise that the debt existed. However, he reversed himself later and claimed that the Preparatory had generated surplus income to the University for years and that furthermore it had been a part of the University at the time of construction, therefore there was no debt. |
| 1927          | Case is referred to Rome where the ruling is in favor of Georgetown Prep. Georgetown Prep becomes legally incorporated in the State of Maryland, independent of the Georgetown College. It is now a house within the                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

Society of Jesus so the status of Rector, rather than Superior is granted to its head.

1929

All legal ties between Georgetown University and Georgetown Prep are severed. This occurs under the direction of the Very Reverend Thomas A. Emmet, S.J., when in 1923 he became both the headmaster of the Prep and also the first Superior of the Jesuit community there.

### **Agency Financial History:**

The school was not interested in providing financials of any kind. In fact, there seems to have been some kind of “crisis” in progress over the past year (although judging by the newly built gymnasium/indoor track field and Olympic size pool, it would have been hard to guess). Nonetheless, the history and the interviews make clear that although the school was originally, technically not Jesuit, the school has always been, and continues to be, primarily funded by Jesuits, by tuition costs, and then eventually included funding by alumni associations, fundraising, and private donations. At this point fundraising is an essential economic source of the school's survival and growth, if not the primary source.

### **Changes in sponsorship:**

There have been two changes in the sponsorship/institutional relationship. The first was the break with Georgetown University, a change that, as the history of each institution has shown, was in the best interests of both. However, this change was not really a change in sponsorship as such; it was a Jesuit decision to divide the institution and administrate each one separately. Both remained fully Jesuit.

The second is perhaps one that is in progress, and was revealed (or deduced) only through the interviews. The decline in the ranks of the Jesuits is leading to an increasingly assertive role on the part of the alumni and other Catholic laymen. But what is interesting about this transition, is that it contributes to our understanding of how we might define the concept of the “faith community”.

As I have suggested elsewhere, in the case of the Catholic Orders, the “faith community”, or congregation, that is relevant to any sponsored institution is actually the Order itself. The body of the Order is, in the end, what the particular institution is responsible to and not the Catholic body in

general. As the history of Catholicism (and especially the Jesuits) has amply demonstrated, the objectives and conceptualizations of Catholicism held by different Orders through the centuries have often come into serious conflict with the Catholic body in general, and with certain Popes in particular.

However, as an Order such as the present day Jesuits declines in numbers, a vacuum is created within the sponsored institution that must be filled (as we have seen occur in many other Catholic institutions sponsored by religious Orders). Whatever fills that vacuum then becomes, by default, the “faith community”, whoever, or whatever, that might be.

In the case of Georgetown Preparatory School, that vacuum is being filled predominantly by alumni. It is the alumni of the school that are increasingly occupying positions in the key administrative staff and even the teaching staff. Furthermore, it is now the rather vast network (a network that has been steadily growing for over a century) of alumni and their families that provide the most substantial percentage of the school’s financial solvency (through tuition and donations directly, and through fundraising indirectly). Increasingly, what must be considered as constituting the faith community sponsoring Georgetown Prep seems to be transferring from the Jesuits to the alumni. At this point it is only an informal transition, the land and buildings are technically owned by the Catholic Church and only administered by the Jesuits. However, if this process continues, it would be interesting to see how it unfolds.

### **Relationship with the Bishop/Diocese**

The relationship of the Jesuits to the Archdiocese is one of equals. Georgetown Preparatory, like Georgetown University, does not fall under any jurisdiction of the Archdiocese. The school is still held by the Jesuits and as such they are only responsible to the Jesuit Provincial, who in return is responsible directly to Rome.



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University of Maryland, Department of Anthropology, 1111 Woods Hall, College Park, MD 20742

Phone: 301.405.7121 Email: [faithandorganizations@anth.umd.edu](mailto:faithandorganizations@anth.umd.edu)