



# CHARTER FOR OUR LADY OF SION SCHOOLS



Notre Dame de Sion  
SCHOOL

## From the Origins to the Present Day

Born into a Jewish family from Strasbourg, Theodore Ratisbonne (1802-1884) encountered Jesus Christ after much searching. He became a priest and, in Scripture, discovered the love of God for his people, Israel. On 20 January 1842, in Rome, during an apparition of Mary in which she did not speak, his brother, Alphonse, received the gift of the Christian faith. Beginning from this event, Theodore founded the Congregation of Sisters of Our Lady of Sion in 1843. From the outset and for the first hundred years, the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion lived their vocation mainly through educational establishments open to all levels of society and all religions: Jews, Muslims, Christians of all denominations. This was unprecedented in Catholic Education at the time. After the “Shoah”, i.e. the systematic extermination of Jews during the 1939-1945 war, and following the “Nostra Aetate” declaration of the Second Vatican council, the congregation became more keenly aware of the calls contained within its charism:

“...to witness in the Church and in the world that God continues to be faithful in his love for the Jewish people and to hasten the fulfilment of the promises concerning the Jews and the Gentiles.” (Constitutions N°2)

While its apostolic commitments have become diversified, education has retained a dominant role in cooperation with committed laity.

## Today

- Faithful to the values supported by the Ratisbonne brothers, Sion schools regard themselves as “spaces of dialogue”.

## On the Spiritual Level

- To affirm and value the richness of differences while respecting human persons and their fundamental rights. This implies that all students are welcomed with their cultural and religious traditions.
- To help Christians become aware of the Jewish origins of their faith in order to foster their discovery of Jesus Christ.
- The catechesis proposes to open each young person to an understanding of and respect for Judaism past and present.
- To offer everyone a biblical culture so as to question together the meaning of life.
- To help each one move beyond appearances and the immediate so as to ponder the mystery of one’s own being, of life, and the mystery we call God.

## On the Education Level

- To encourage openness to learning, not only to ensure success in exams, but above all to situate oneself in the world and in history; to be open to others, overcoming the fear that can come from encountering differences, to understand them, to work against all forms of injustice, discrimination, racism and in particular anti-Semitism.
- To affirm the richness of a multicultural world and recognize, through education, the universality of humankind.
- To emphasise joint projects and exchanges of students and teachers within our family of Sion.
- To remember always : human beings carry with them a personal and collective history. A person cannot build a future without remembering the past and without being reconciled to it.
- To insist on formation which develops an ability to question and to think critically so as to foster discernment in religious and secular spheres.
- To regard each young person as being part of a history that neither begins nor finishes with his/her time at Our Lady of Sion.
- Their past is important. Their future is beyond the plans of educators, parents and teachers. In the present, the adults who accompany them owe them trust, kindness, listening, forgiveness and respect.

Superior General  
Sister Oonah O'SHEA

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