



Durham Catholic District School Board



# Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School

**Motto: Veritas Bonitas  
("Truth and Goodness")**



## **In the Beginning**

The present Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School started in September 1962 as St. Joseph High School (on Simcoe Street North), thanks to the vision and commitment of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Monsignor Paul Dwyer and other Catholic priests in Oshawa who identified the need for the continuation of Catholic education from elementary to secondary school. St. Joseph High School moved locations and became Oshawa Catholic High School (O.C.H.S.) in September 1965. The name was changed to Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School in 1976 in memory of Monsignor Dwyer, who gave generously to the Oshawa community and especially to the development of Catholic education in Oshawa.

## **Monsignor Paul Dwyer's Role in the Creation of the School**

Monsignor Paul Dwyer's role in the development of the first Catholic high

school cannot be stressed enough. It was through his vision that the school became a reality. The first yearbook (1966) was dedicated to him, expressing "sincere thanks for his help and encouragement during these beginning years." His passion, resources and determination laid the foundation for a school where faith would be taught and students could absorb lasting spiritual and moral values.



*Monsignor Dwyer presents diplomas to the class of 1967.*

### **The Sisters of St. Joseph and Their Contributions**

The Sisters of St. Joseph had been an educational presence in Oshawa since 1858. The Sisters taught at three elementary separate schools and played a key spiritual role in the community. The story of Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School cannot be told without detailing the major efforts of the Sisters, who were willing to accept teaching positions at the newly formed St. Joseph High School on Simcoe Street North in 1962.

With the original start-up class of just Grade 9 students, Sister Mary Sheila (principal) and Sister Constance faced the growing pains of the beginning of this new vision for Catholic education in Oshawa. With the assistance of Monsignor Dwyer and the Oshawa Separate School Board, the Sisters work

grew and prospered thanks to support from the community. The Sisters remained at St. Joseph High School for two more years, until Oshawa Catholic High School opened in September 1965.



*Sr. Mary Sheila*  
*Principal, St. Joseph C.H.S., 1962–1965*  
*Principal, Oshawa C.H.S., 1965–1967*

At O.C.H.S., the Sisters of Joseph – Toronto Archdiocese willingly agreed to finance half of the \$1 million construction cost of the school. The local parishes were responsible for the other half. The Sisters functioned as principals, teachers, secretaries, cooks and cleaners. They fully reinvested their salaries into the school to keep it from severe debt, yet it operated at a loss. Still, they remained committed to Catholic education, despite the ongoing challenges they faced. Sr. Mary Sheila wrote, "I wanted the school to be different because it was a Catholic School. I hoped each student would graduate, proud of the school and proud to be a Catholic not because he/she was born so but he/she was convinced from the Christian values learned at home and at school that personal human fulfillment in life could be achieved only by living up to the responsibilities of a committed Catholic."

The Sisters built a new residence adjacent to O.C.H.S. for the increased staff of nuns. It was the Sisters' hope that the high ideals and academic excellence that were implemented and nurtured through the years would continue to motivate all involved at Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School. Sr. Mary Sheila visited the school many times after 1967 and was joyful to "have seen these ideals fostered, encouraged and achieved."

The work of the St. Joseph religious community continued through principals Sister Conrad Lauber (1967–1979) and Sister Anne Schenck (1979–1988), who led the way in Catholic education, especially through the lean years. Their pride in the school and its traditions continued to make the name “Dwyer” synonymous with the pursuit of excellence in academics, art, drama, sports and Christian living.



*Oshawa Catholic High School – front foyer (1965–1966)*



*Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School – front foyer (2011–2012)*

### **St. Joseph High School / Oshawa Catholic High School / Dwyer Catholic High School Grows and Grows**

The school population has expanded rapidly since it first opened. From a staff of two in 1962, Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School currently has a teaching staff of 81, over 25 support staff and an administrative team of

three. The 2011–2012 student population was 1108. The huge increase in the student population in the 1970s necessitated additional facilities. Portables appeared, and relocatables housing eight classrooms were added in the mid-1980s. A major addition was added in the early 1990s, including a tech wing, cafetorium, computer and business classrooms, a fitness centre and a new Library Learning Commons. In the 2000s, further additions included new north wing classrooms, a cosmetology class, a small engine teaching room, and the expansion of classrooms further into the Sisters' former convent.



*Sr. Conrad at an O.C.H.S. assembly (September 1967)*



*The new O.C.H.S. gym, with students still wearing the St. Joseph blazers (May 1966)*

**St. Joseph High School** on Simcoe Street North, built adjacent to the back of the elementary school, was sponsored and financed by the Oshawa Separate School Board and St. Gregory's Parish. The new addition consisted of five large classrooms, a typing room, a gymnasium and a science laboratory. The physical education program was provided by the Oshawa Youth Centre. This building was to house the new high school for two years, but delays resulted in a third year being spent at the site. A portable was added to hold the Grade 11 class, since they were not be funded by the Board and could not be housed within the Grade 9 and 10 school. Those students paid a tuition fee of \$100.

**Oshawa Catholic High School** on Rossland and Stevenson Roads, opened in September 1965 to over 200 students; two classes of Grade 9s, two of Grade 10s, two of Grade 11s, and one class of Grade 12s. O.C.H.S. opened as a totally private school. The sisters were instructed that the name must be changed, since there was already a St. Joseph School in Oshawa (even though it was an elementary school). The Sisters agreed to a name change. There were no government grants, so the cost of the \$1.1 million new school was split between the Sisters of St. Joseph – Toronto Archdiocese and the Oshawa parishes.

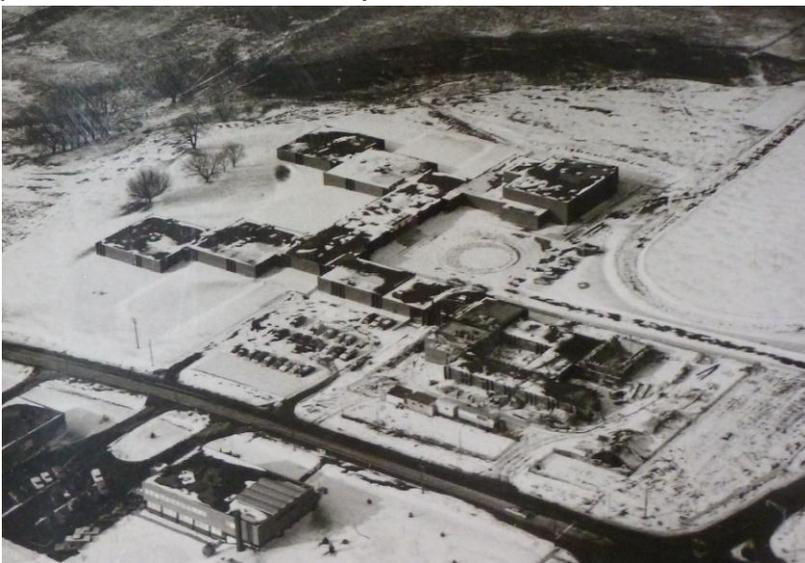
The two well-equipped senior science labs, chemistry and physics, were a joy

to teachers as well as to students, and the Juniors had their own lab in their west wing. Science and geography equipment, library books, audiovisual aids and gym apparatus were all immediate needs. The student fee of \$200, paid by all students in Grades 9 to 12, was meagre financial coverage. Only because of regular generous contributions to the new school made by Monsignor Dwyer were the Sisters able to meet the salaries of the lay teachers on staff. A generous financial donation was made by Colonel R.S. McLaughlin for the purchase of band musical instruments in the late 1960s.

The design of Oshawa Catholic High School evolved principally from the site; the building was constructed at the highest elevation, overlooking sloping terrain cut by a valley and a creek. The facilities were kept to one storey, but distributed at several levels of terrain. The school comprised a centre block and four wings – two wings contained 13 classrooms and three laboratories in clusters of four rooms; the other two wings housed the gymnasium, cafeteria and kitchen.

“The major features included the physical separation of Grade 9 and 10 (paid for by the Board) from Grade 11, 12, 13 (the private school.) This was made possible by separate wings for classrooms (ie. junior and senior wings). The availability of large acreage made a single-storey school economically possible. The gym occupied part of the only large flat area of land on the property. Limited economic resources largely dictated the type of construction, and exposed cedar ceilings in all rooms lent a natural environment, and also offered economies.”

—*John B. Parkin Associates, Architects and Engineers, Don Mills (aerial picture of the school site)*



**The New School**“To the student who had attended St. Joseph’s High in the

1964–1965 school year, the new building seemed like the Taj Mahal. The new office beside the front entrance seemed to have acres and acres of space when one recalled the cramped quarters of last year. And no longer must we crouch behind the elementary school or be reluctantly silent so as not to disturb the 'grade school.' The halls seemed to be miles and miles long with hardly any steps to climb tediously. Outside, the green grass stretched almost as far as the eye could see, or at least it seemed to. Everything seemed to be so much bigger and better than at what was now referred to as 'the old school.'"

—*Nellie Ten Haaf (Grade 12 – 1966 Yearbook)*

The new school was a totally private school for the first two years. However, tuition had been a detriment to enrolment (203 students in 1964–1965 to 230 students in 1965–1966 and 233 students in 1966–1967). In the third year (1967–1968), the Separate School Board assumed some responsibility for the Grade 9 and 10 students, and growth was stimulated (from 286 students in 1967–1968 up to 345 students in 1968–1969). Still, the grant of \$300 per student in these two grades did not cover the salaries of the lay teachers. The students in the senior grades (11, 12 and 13), now the private school, paid their \$200 fee as formerly, yet financial problems remained. The Sisters of St. Joseph, Oshawa, supplemented the tuition fees with more than \$30,000 in order to meet the cost of operations, maintenance and salaries. This set-up remained in place, with minor tuition increases, until full provincial funding in 1984.

A December 1984 letter from the Sisters of St. Joseph General Superior to School Board Director Dr. Lagroix stated, "The Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto has made the decision that when the extension of the Separate School system is completed and public funds are made available for the Senior Grades, we will relinquish the operation of the private sectors of our school, Paul Dwyer Catholic High School in Oshawa with the expectation that the Durham Regional Roman Catholic Separate School (RCSS) Board will assume that operation of the private sectors of our responsibility... You have our congratulations and our best wishes at this dramatic turn of events in the history of our Separate Schools." This ended the direct involvement of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the Catholic high school system.

## **Looking Back over Five Decades**

### **The 1960s**

St. Joseph High School began with Grade 9 in September 1962 and was relocated and renamed Oshawa Catholic High School in September 1965,

housing Grades 9 to 12.

The first class graduated in June 1966. Most of the class advanced to Grade 13. They were the first and last class of this school to write departmental Grade 13 examinations, as the government discontinued such examinations in 1967. Staffing concerns arose for the small first class of 20 Grade 13 students in 1966–1967. Through a special arrangement with the Oshawa Board of Education, Grade 13 Catholic students started their day travelling to O’Neill Collegiate for chemistry before school, then back to O.C.H.S. for English, French, Geography, History and Latin before crossing the road to McLaughlin H.S. for Biology after school.



*O.C.H.S. Grade 12s, still wearing the St. Joseph uniform (spring 1966)*



*O.C.H.S.'s first football team, formed in 1964 (Yearbook 1966)*

Everyone passed their exams, two thirds achieved first class honours, and

one student was offered an Ontario scholarship. Several others received university scholarships. The academic status of the school was firmly established, largely due to the efforts of Sr. Mary Sheila. A full Grade 13 program was offered in 1969.

The students had wanted uniforms at St. Joseph High School; they were approved in the second year of operation. They became an integral part of the disciplined life of a Catholic high school.



*Gym class in 1969*



*The Daffodil Queen of 1964 crowns the 1965 Queen*



*St. Joseph Junior Boys basketball team, COSSA 1965*

In the 1960s, St. Joseph High School and O.C.H.S. had many teams that went on to win championships, despite facing opponents from much larger and more experienced schools.

### **Junior Group of Theresians**

St. Joseph High School started this first junior group "young women supporting women with gospel values" in Canada in 1964. It continued for many years at O.C.H.S.



The Sisters of St. Joseph played a major role in setting the highest of standards, both academically and personally. Students remember choir and band instructor Mr. Hebert Gentry, who donated his time at St. Joseph High School. and then became head of the music department at O.C.H.S. starting in 1966, until he retired at age 84 in 1976.



### *The Sisters of St. Joseph at O.C.H.S. (June 1966)*

Both schools flourished in the 1960s, creating many opportunities for students to develop pride in their Catholic school through a wide variety of sports (basketball, hockey, volleyball, football, curling, ping pong...), clubs (drama, library, Theresians, school band, choir, students council, yearbook), and many ongoing activities (the Daffodil Teas, Grade 9 initiation, Kangaroo Court, Camera Day, Christmas plays, graduation, trips, toboggan parties on the school hill, pep rallies, debaters with pro-con debates in Toronto, exams in the senior wing corridors, talent shows, the first school play, *Oedipus Rex*, entertaining many parishes with their drama, girls COSSA basketball...) and many parts of daily life at O.C.H.S., all of which helped develop a strong sense of community and school spirit.

### **The 1970s**

Sr. Conrad Lauber became the principal in 1967 and became synonymous with Oshawa Catholic High School until her departure in 1979. She always seemed to have a smile, and was known to be firm, yet fair to all students.

The early 1970s saw many changes at O.C.H.S., including six onsite portables. The senior grades were still private and there was a mounting deficit each year. In 1976–1977, the Sisters' community had to pour \$250,000 into the school to keep it operational. Fundraising was a big part of each year. The Vega car raffle, chocolate bar sales, and sledgehammer a car for \$2 a hit were just a few of the yearly traditions. The gym scoreboard, and then bleachers, were a result of these efforts. The huge Walk for Paul Dwyer event in 1978 raised \$56,000. Along with the Dwyer Carnivals in the late 1970s, these events were great morale boosters for the 550 families at the school.

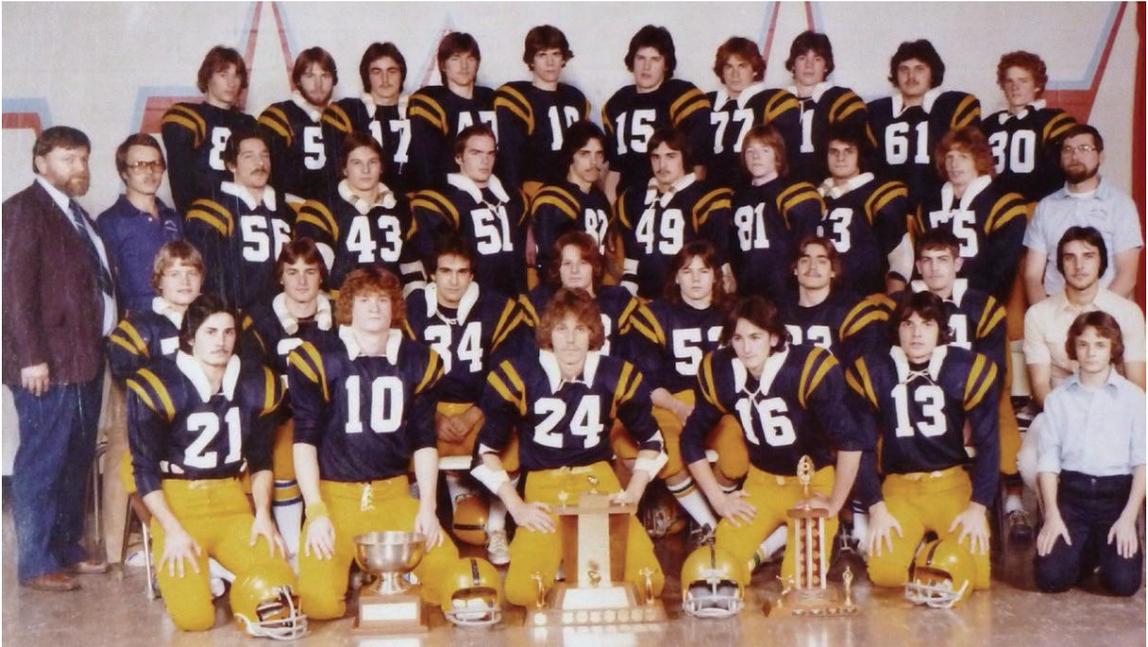


*Sr. Conrad leads the Walk for Paul Dwyer in May 1978.*

Students of the 1970s recall the outdoor ice rink, where the Library Learning Commons is now located, and the tennis courts, which are now the student parking area. Other memories of that era included Carnival King and Queen each year; the Gong Show; many clubs, including a Pollution Club; dances; sports banquets; coffee houses; Masses and classes held outside; the Cross Canada Fitness Runs; and the many LOSSA and COSSA championships throughout the decade. Many athletes and teams even qualified for OFSSA.



*Junior Girls basketball team (September 1973)*



*Paul Dwyer Saints – 1978 football champions*



*Holding Mass outdoors behind the front foyer (June 1975)*

### **Uniforms at Oshawa Catholic High School and Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School**

“When I arrived at the new school for Grade 9 in September 1965, the dress code [for girls] was a white blouse, any skirt and a navy blazer. The boys wore grey pants, white shirt, any tie and a blazer. We were asked to pick the favourite of five kilts, which became the official school kilt. It was good quality back then! In P.E. the girls wore ‘skirts’ with white panels. Junior Girls teams put masking tape numbers on them to play games. The Senior Girls teams had uniforms sewn by a mother. The boys’ team uniforms were purchased. By the late ‘60s, anything would go with the kilt. In the ‘70s, strict uniforms were a deterrent to enrolment so they were even more lenient.”

—Debbie (Micheli) Pankhurst, Class of ‘69, and OCHS/Dwyer Teacher, 1975–present

The fashions of the 1970s were evident in what students wore to school. Shag haircuts, platform shoes, bellbottoms, vests and ponchos were an essential part of the O.C.H.S. student wardrobe. Long white dresses continued for the girls at graduation, while the boys sported tuxedos, some in baby blue.



*"Casual" '70s uniforms*

The Drama Club presented its first musical production, *Bye Bye Birdie*, in 1974; that yearly tradition has continued, with over 40 productions involving many students and staff.

The most significant event of the decade occurred in 1976, with the death of Monsignor Dwyer. In September 1976, the school opened as Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School in recognition of his contribution to Catholic education in Oshawa. To commemorate the school's name change, a tree was planted in the front circle of the school and was blessed by Bishop Fulton.

### **The 1980s**

The third principal, Sr. Anne Schenck (1979–1988) carried on the high ideals and academic excellence already established at Monsignor Paul Dwyer C.H.S. In the early 1980s, the school was again rebuilt and rebricked. Huge growth in the school population saw two relocatables attached to the main building outside the front foyer to help house the 1,200 students and 67 staff members in the mid-1980s. In 1987, two additions were built, adding more classrooms, locker space and washrooms. Still, there was a small village of portables to the north and south of the school. The graduating class of 1980 was the first to complete all its high school years under the school's new name. The class of 1983 started a new tradition of wearing graduation gowns.

September 1981 saw the end of Terry Fox's run across Canada. Dwyer raised \$1,200 that fall to support cancer research. School spirit continued on through fundraisers for the school and for charity.



*Sr. Anne, Sr. Conrad, and Sr. Mary Sheila*

The spring musicals were always a huge endeavour and a big hit. Dwyer's athletes continued to excel at winning, showcasing the Saints' many talents. Students remember that popular items in the 1980s included big hair, big glasses, designer jeans, Rubik's cubes, leg warmers, shoulder pads and Nikes. Major school happenings included Teen Ranch, "Hug-a-Buddy," travelling to see Pope John Paul II at Downsview, dance-a-thons, Christmas assemblies, the band performing at Expo '86 in Vancouver and riding in the school van.



*Dwyer with the relocatables and many portables in the mid-1980s. In the foreground, students wearing the school colours spell out the name of their sports teams, "Saints."*

The event of the decade impacting Catholic education in Ontario was announced in May 1984. Full funding for Ontario Catholic secondary schools meant no more tuition (which at the time was \$400+ per year) and no more paying for books in Grades 11, 12 and 13.

The 25th anniversary of the school in 1987 saw a huge turnout of former O.C.H.S. and Dwyer staff and alumni attending the reunion events held in May 1988. School tours, a Mass and a dinner dance were just some of the festivities enjoyed.

It was somehow ironic that the 25-year reunion of O.C.H.S. and Monsignor Paul Dwyer C.H.S. coincided with the departure of the Sisters of St. Joseph as administrators.

It was, as it is said, the end of an era.



*Jack Cole: Teacher, 1965–1969, and Vice-Principal, 1969–1987*

### **The 1990s**

The first lay principal at Monsignor Paul Dwyer C.H.S. was John Brown, who had previously been a vice-principal at the school. In the early 1990s, major construction was the new norm for the school. Students and teachers worked through many challenges (such as no staff room or gym for a year) and eagerly looked forward to the modern version of the “old” Dwyer. The construction was worth the wait, resulting in bigger hallways, more classrooms and new facilities like a drama room, a music room, tech labs and auto rooms, a cafetorium and a resource centre.

John Vesters and Marilyn LeBrun led the school through the end of the 1990s with their calm leadership and commitment to high standards. Their wisdom and support were evident in the continued achievements of Dwyer students.



*Girls Basketball – champions with no gym (fall 1993)*

The political protest against Bill 160 in the fall of 1997 saw Dwyer staff join 126,000 Ontario teachers walking the picket lines, along with many students and parents. Again, in the fall of 1998, a strike against financial cuts to education directly impacted the school populace. In true Dwyer style, challenges were met and handled effectively.

In the 1990s, the school community faced numerous personal challenges, during which they came together to support each other as a family. The successes of the school continued in sports, drama, academics and giving to others at home and abroad. "Through the Dwyer halls laughter will always echo. Friendships are a part of Dwyer life. That is the true Dwyer Spirit – that none of us are ever alone. The compassion and caring of a friend is the love that carries us through five turbulent years of high school." (Heritage '97)



*The "new" version of Monsignor Paul Dwyer C.H.S. in the mid-1990s*

### **The 2000s to the Present**

Principal Marilyn LeBrun continued the school's leadership, followed by Bianca Cervoni, Gloria Kramp and Joe D'Amico, who faced many changes throughout the first decade of the 21st century. The fifth year in the Ontario secondary school system had existed for 82 years, first as Grade 13, then as Ontario Academic Credit (O.A.C.) beginning in 1984. In the fall of 2003, O.A.C. courses were eliminated, making high school four years instead of five. However, many students opted to take a fifth year of high school, known colloquially as the "victory lap."

This decade saw the school community develop further in the fields of technology and the arts. Sports, travel, media, alternate programs, service and leadership opportunities were abundant for students.

Currently, teachers are meeting the modern challenges of the students' technology-rich environment and how to best use SmartBoards, PowerPoint, podcasts, websites, cell phones, tablets, laptops, et cetera, in daily learning experiences.

Monsignor Dwyer would be amazed.

### **School Crest**

The sword is the symbol of St. Paul, patron of Monsignor Dwyer. The sword is

also found in the Dwyer family crest. The shepherd's staff is symbolic of Monsignor Dwyer's 50 years as a priest shepherding his flock. The blades of wheat represent the wheat of Christ, the bread of the Eucharist, a symbol of sacrifice and unity. The crest was originally designed in June 1965, and redesigned in 1977 after the renaming of the school.



*Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School crest*



*St. Joseph High School crest*



*Oshawa Catholic High School crest*

## School Colours – Gold/Blue/White

Gold is St. Joseph's colour – patron of the Sisters and the first school's name. It is also the papal colour, chosen because the school's opening coincided with the convening of Vatican II. Blue and white represent Our Lady, since she is in charge of the spiritual formation of each student.

## John XXIII's Papal Slippers Are Bequeathed to Dwyer C.H.S.

"Monsignor Dwyer studied Canon Law at the Vatican in Rome at the Pontifical Gregorian University, and one of his fellow colleagues was Angelo Roncalli, with whom he developed a lifelong friendship. Roncalli went on to become the Patriarch of Venice and later Pope John XXIII. I believe that Monsignor Dwyer may have even shared a room with Roncalli at one point. He called him by his diminutive name, 'Pepi,' so you know that it was more than a casual acquaintance."

—Ken Bodnar, Class of '73



The Papal Slippers sit proudly in the front foyer of Monsignor Paul Dwyer C.H.S.

## Our Patron



*Monsignor Paul Dwyer*

Monsignor Paul Dwyer was a priest for 53 years and pastor of St. Gregory's Parish for 24 years. In 1962, he worked with the Oshawa Separate School Board to open St. Joseph High School. Before the school outgrew its location, he was already assisting the Sisters of St. Joseph in establishing the new school, Oshawa Catholic High School, at the corner of Rossland and Stevenson Roads. His vision for Catholic education was ongoing.

He took on many practical roles during the early years, including giving great financial assistance. He assumed the cost of the Grade 11 portable at St. Joseph's when construction of O.C.H.S. was delayed by a year. He obtained 27 acres of land for the new school. Using his powers of gentle persuasion, through friendship with his neighbor, Col. R.S. McLaughlin, funds were donated to purchase instruments so that O.C.H.S. could have a band. The \$10,000 cheque from Col. McLaughlin arrived in May 1966.

Monsignor Dwyer's contributions were vast and varied. He was a highly visible presence at the original school, St. Joseph High School, as he was the parish priest at St. Gregory's. He participated in graduations at O.C.H.S., conferring diplomas to the graduates. His last visit to O.C.H.S. was for the 1975 June graduation, when he told the graduates, "My dream has come true, thank God." A few months later, Monsignor Dwyer died. The Sisters of St. Joseph

originally wanted the new school named after him in 1964, but out of humility he would not accept the honour, saying, "Not in my lifetime." Oshawa Catholic High School became an interim title. The Sisters had to wait another 12 years to name the school after their first choice.

### **School Prayer**

O Holy Spirit, source of truth and grace,  
fill our hearts and enkindle in them  
the fire of Your love,  
love for Jesus that we may follow His way,  
love for our world  
that we may strive to keep it safe and peaceful,  
love for our church  
that we may make it an instrument of peace and compassion,  
and love for our school  
that we may make it Your servant in this world.

Spirit of God, Creator of life,  
help us to appreciate the precious gift of life.  
Strengthen us in our efforts  
to support and protect life  
from conception to natural death.

Spirit of God, we ask Your blessing  
on each one of us at Dwyer today,  
that whatever we say or do be for Your greater glory.

Spirit of God, source of all blessings,  
protect us from all harm during this day.  
Give us courage and strength  
to meet whatever challenges come our way.

We make this prayer through Christ our Friend and Brother.  
Amen.

### **Principals**

Sr. Mary Sheila (1964–1967)  
St. Conrad Lauber (1967–1979)  
St. Anne Schenk (1979–1988)  
John Brown (1988–1991)  
John Vesters (1991–1997)

Marilyn LeBrun (1997–2002)

Bianca Cervoni (2003–2007)

Gloria Kramp (2007–2009)

Joe D'Amico (2009–present)

*Contributor:*

*Maureen Moloney, Class of '77 and Dwyer teacher (1993–present)*