



C O R R I connections

Inspiring a spirit of excellence, Nurturing a culture of compassion



Celebrating the Canossian Charism

...as a Canossian family coming together to contribute for the good of others



Page 2

UNWAVERING DEVOTION

Sr. Christina:
Spreading God's Love

Page 3

GIVING BACK

Ms. Sharon Yu:
Rooted in the Canossian spirit

Page 4-5

CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

Foundress Day / Investiture 2014

COMPOSING AN ANTHEM

The virtuosity of Mrs. Christine
Kanagarajah

Page 6

IN FAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Monica Menon:
Inspired by the caring and
forgiving culture at SACSS

Page 7

STRENGTHENING THE FAITH

The roles of a member of the Catholic
Activities Council and those of a
Canossian Spirituality Representative

Page 8

FROM THE HEART

Hamper Wrapping:
A spirit of caring and giving



Sr. Christina: Spreading God's Love

St. Magdalene of Canossa, our foundress, is a role model looked upon by many. Sr. Christina, a Canossian alumna, teacher and nun, is one. Sr. Christina is known as one who cares, thinks and translates her thoughts into action. She believes that it is important for Canossian students to know that God is there for them and that He forgives. With this as the impetus, Sr. Christina joined the St Magdalene's order to do her part in spreading God's love to everyone – especially to the children. In this inaugural issue of CORRI Connections, we share her story about how she came to be the person she is today, what inspires her and what made her join the religious order.



“Do you know how much God loves you? God loves you so much that I was ready to leave my country and family in Italy to come and tell you how much God loves you.”

– Sr. Christina recollecting the words, by one of the sisters in the pioneer group that arrived from Italy, which continue to inspire her till today.

Sr. Christina attended school in St. Anthony's Convent in the late 50s. As a student, she enjoyed the stories shared by the sisters during lessons about St. Magdalene and her good deeds. St. Magdalene's determination to help and care for others despite having to deal with her father's death as a 5-year old and subsequently losing her mother when the latter left the family – deeply touched Sr. Christina.

The Canossian Sisters from Italy first arrived in Singapore to spread the Gospel and God's way of life. Sr. Christina recalled vividly how she was inspired by the words of one of the sisters. During a spiritual retreat, 10-year old Christina was asked, "Do you know how much God loves you? God loves you so much that I was ready to leave my country and family in Italy to come and tell you how much God loves you." The statement convinced Sr. Christina to devote her life to telling people how much God loves them.

Becoming a teacher was also Sr. Christina's aspiration. While she was keen in teaching English and History, she also wanted to inculcate values in her students beyond what could be gleaned from books. Sr. Christina's teaching career began with 5 months of relief teaching in primary school followed by another 7 months in St. Anthony's Canossian Secondary School. She went on to join the postulancy in September 1969 and progressed to novitiate in May 1970. Sr. Christina then took her first vow in May 1972.

Sr. Christina's desire to communicate with the younger generation by telling them stories about God and how much he loves them, aligned with her roles as a teacher and a nun. Like the other sisters, Sr. Christina's love for God is perpetuated through service. She cherishes all the wonderful memories from her teaching experiences over the years. From 1977 to 1979, she taught at SAC and then went on to teach at Catholic Junior College from 1980 to 1983. She keeps in contact with many of her former students and is heartened to know that they are all spiritually developed.

Aside from spreading God's love, Sr. Christina leads a simple and meaningful life. She enjoys reading – she is currently reading *Story of Confucius*, listening to music and she plays both the piano and guitar. Sr. Christina also believes that our current generation has the potential to grow stronger amid the changing world. However, she thinks that there is a need to spend more time to reflect and take charge of the change for the better.

By Bernadette Lim Wan Ling (2/5), Faith Gabrielle Mok Ting Ting (2/7), Carole Lim Min (3/2), Canuel Samantha Mendoza (3/7)

Ms. Sharon Yu:

Rooted in the Canossian spirit

Ms. Sharon Yu, the teacher-in-charge of the Catholic Activities Council at St. Anthony's Canossian Secondary School, was a student at SACSS from 1997 to 2000. She returned to her alma mater to teach in 2009. We interviewed Ms. Yu to find out more about her secondary school life, her hopes for the current students at SACSS and how she came to embrace the Catholic faith.

Q: What are the differences you see in the education of students today compared to when you were a Canossian student?

Students these days are much more privileged as they get to use modern facilities like the visualiser and laptops. Things were very different back then, for instance, instead of the visualiser, overhead projectors that required the preparation of transparencies were used to facilitate presentations. All notes then were handwritten unlike the printed notes available today.

Q: What were some of your most memorable moments as a Canossian student?

As a member of the Girl Guides, I recall attending the outdoor camps that were packed with challenging activities. Preparing for the President's Guides Award was another memorable experience that allowed us to stretch our capabilities and discover our strengths. The support and opportunities provided by the teachers throughout were priceless.

Being a member of the Prefectorial Board I recall planning for the Teachers' Day celebration. We stayed back till late and worked with the teachers to ensure that all went well during the event. We really appreciated and enjoyed the bonding during the process that it remains etched in my mind.

Q: What motivated you to return to teach in your alma mater?

I am deeply rooted in the Canossian spirit and have a strong affinity for the school. For all that the school has given me, I just want to give back.



Q: What are the qualities that a true Canossian should possess?

She should be prayerful and God-centred – someone who believes in the Gospel values and not worldly values. When she joins the working world, she should carry forth these values as a true Canossian who can make a difference. She should also be able to look beyond the first impression, learn to give people chances and be life-giving to make the world a better place.

Q: How did you come about embracing Catholicism as your faith and why?

I had a very Catholic-like upbringing and attended a Catholic school throughout my schooling years. I completed my primary education in Canossa Convent, moved to St. Anthony's Convent for my secondary education and completed my post secondary at Catholic Junior College. The Canossian sisters had a pivotal role in nurturing my faith in Catholicism.

Q: What is most fulfilling about being a Catholic educator in a Catholic school?

I appreciate being able to share my faith with those around me and when I see Christ in the people around me, my faith as a Catholic also deepens. I feel privileged to see how teenagers have grown over the years and seeing how God works his little miracles. Most importantly through these experiences, I get to deepen my faith in Catholicism. In fact, I learnt some of life's greatest lessons from my students.

Q: What are some of your aspirations for the current group of SACSS girls?

The girls need to remember that they are always in God's presence. When we pray, we are reminded to be hopeful and to always remember that God will answer our prayers about what is best for us. I would also like our students to be grateful, hopeful and cheerful in all that they do. If they can be as such, they will look at life very differently.

By Brittany Sim Jia Xuan (2/5), Koh Wei Ting (2/7), Stephanie Tan Gek Chuen (3/3), Chow Yi-Ning Cabrini (3/7), Gay Xin Ning, Prudence (3/8)



C E L E B R A T I N G T H E S P I R I T O F L O V E

Foundress Day/Investiture 2014

The spirit of St. Magdalene constantly inspires us to be committed – respecting the dignity of each person especially the disadvantaged, compassionate – ready to walk the extra mile and yet cheerful – encouraging and being supportive to all in need. St Magdalene was known for having great insight and wisdom of heart. She often reminds us that there is no greater good than that of making God known and hence, she encouraged the formation of the spirit of praying. Today, these doctrines are embraced in many of the Canossian schools and organisations around the world and Foundress Day to honour St. Magdalene of Canossa is celebrated each year.

Students and teachers at St. Anthony's Canossian Secondary gathered to celebrate the joyous event on Friday, 28 February with our 120th Anniversary theme, Carità: A Life Built on Love.

The celebratory mass to commemorate Foundress Day, led by Father Terence Kesavan, was exceptionally inspiring. During the homily, Father Kesavan used a tennis ball as a metaphor for kindness and love that can be shared amongst us all. Father Kesavan rationalised that before each tennis game, the umpire declares the score to be "love-all" and it is after making the proclamation that the ball can be passed



from one end of the court to the opposite end by the players. Drawing from the analogy, Father Kesavan urged us to love all and pass our love from one person to the next. Every little deed we do will create an impact, making our school a more welcoming place to be in. Giving and receiving love are meritorious acts that brighten up anyone's day. Before Mass ended, the tongue-in-cheek tennis ball theory was revisited by our principal, Mdm. Mak Lai Ying, who suggested acquiring tennis balls and passing them around the school to perpetuate the spirit of love.



The virtuosity of Mrs. Christine Kanagarajah



Mrs. Christine Kanagarajah taught in SAC for 42 years before retiring in 2000. Over the years, she played a significant role in nurturing the school's Performing Arts skills, and was in charge of the many performing arts groups – such as the school choir, dance group and band. Mrs. Kanagarajah brought out the musicality in each student through her enriching music lessons and cultivated the rich choral and dance traditions – where school celebrations came alive with spirited performances at 111 Middle Road.

Mrs. Kanagarajah was the guest of honour at this year's Canossian Awards Day. She kept the audience captivated with her recollection of the time she spent in SAC during her address.

We had the privilege of interviewing Mrs. Kanagarajah after the awards ceremony. She noted that the current campus is sprawling and that she misses the presence of nuns – recalling how the nuns used to be teachers back in the Middle Road campus. Back then, she was the only music teacher and hence, was tasked with working on the music of the school song. She recalled how she would start working on the song after marking her books. The song took some time, probably a few weeks to compose. She wanted the school song to be an anthem with a strong beat. Her eyes glimmered with excitement and nostalgia as she reminisced about the time in the Middle Road campus. Mrs. Kanagarajah recalled proudly that they were the top 8 schools for choir, and were often called upon to perform the campaign jingles for the road safety, health and the courtesy campaigns. When visiting choirs arrive, the school choir would be picked to welcome the visitors at the airport. She wrapped up the interview with these encouraging words for the students – “Go out and let your light shine for all the world to see.”

By Victoria Ann Tan Su Yan (2/5), Tamara Tan Su En (2/6),
Natasha Juliana Oei Su Qin (3/6), Ow Hui Sian Esther (3/7)



Held in conjunction with Foundress Day, the Student Council Investiture followed after the mass. The solemn event marked the passing of the reigns of student leadership by the Secondary 4 student leaders to the new batch of student leaders from Secondary 3.

The ceremonious pinning of badges onto the collars of the juniors by their seniors was heart-warming. The outgoing Executive Council then presented the incoming council members with lit candles in recognition of the new light guiding the school.

Outgoing Head Girl, Ysabel Tan (4/8), thanked her teachers, fellow student leaders and the student body for giving her the opportunity to serve during her speech before handing over the leadership to the newly appointed leaders.

The new team of student leaders were voted and approved by teachers and students alike. Germaine Teh (3/7), the newly appointed Head Girl exudes humility and sincerity. In her



heartwarming maiden speech, she promised to make the year a memorable one for all and to put in her best whilst ensuring that the student body is well taken care of. With that, the school looks forward to working with the new student leaders in the Executive Council, the student councillors and the CCA leaders to make a difference at SACSS.



By Nur Sarah Bte Abdul Wahid (2/5), Gonzales Frances May De Guzman (2/6),
Caitlyn Rita Sim (3/6), Nadzirah 'Aisyah Bte Mohamad Azali (3/7), Farzana Bte Suhaimi (3/8)



Mrs. Monica Menon: Inspired by the caring and forgiving culture at SACSS

We interviewed Mrs. Monica Menon, the school's Special Projects Officer, on 26 Feb 2014 to find out what made her join SACSS.



Mrs Menon, her mum and her elder daughter will be going on the Canossian Learning Journey to Italy to trace the steps of St. Magdalene of Canossa. With all three generations going on the LJ, Mrs Menon is looking forward to immersing herself in the spirituality and learning more about Catholicism.

She recounted that it was at the end of 2009 that she had just left one of the premier girls' secondary school where she was the HOD of the English Language & Literature Department. Mrs. Menon was asked by the then Principal at SACSS if she would like to take on the role of managing the EL programmes at SACSS. As she has always wanted to work in a mission school, she agreed to give it a try. As the school's Special Projects Officer, she wore many hats that included producing the school's publications and publicity collaterals as well as organising the Creative Arts Week and overseeing the procurement of the Principal's Book Prize and media resources for the school's library.

Even though Mrs. Menon is a Hindu, she has always had a high regard for the work of the mission schools in Singapore. She observed that the girls schooled in a mission school environment tended to be more eloquent and are instilled with strong values.

Coincidentally, Mrs. Menon's mother-in-law was schooled in SAC before the war and her mother attends the Novena sessions that attract thousands of worshippers to the church at Thomson Road every Saturday even though she too is not Catholic.

Mrs. Menon added that she could draw similarities between Mother Mary whom Catholics revere with the mother-like Goddess honoured by the Hindus. She also observed that the teachings preached are similar in many ways. As such, Mrs. Menon associated her joining the Catholic school as being in a familiar spiritual environment.

Mrs. Menon also observed that a deep sense of generosity and empathy permeate through all levels and is practised both by the students and staff at SACSS. The compelling caring and forgiving culture, she noted, allows the school community to grow and become better people and should continue to be nurtured. She finds the peaceful and quiet ambience that pervades throughout the campus conducive for teaching and learning to be effected. Mrs. Menon can also appreciate the presence of nuns whom she feels strengthens the faith and reinforces the Canossian spirit at SACSS.

Mrs. Menon summed up the interview with this advice...

“ No environment is permanent, however, with every challenge you face – look at it as an opportunity to grow, never see it as hardship, but an opportunity to become better. ”

By Danielle Cecilia Espinili De Leon (2/5), Tricia Chin Shan Min (2/7), Charmaine Tan Hui Qi (3/6), Elizabeth Lee Xinyi (3/7), Ling Xiao Hui Abigail (3/8)

The roles of a member of the Catholic Activities Council and those of a Canossian Spirituality Representative

SACSS, being a Canossian and Catholic school, offers the Catholic students roles to develop and strengthen their faith, deepen their knowledge of the school's culture, be imbued with the moral values and learn to apply them in daily lives. The school's Catholic Activities Council (CAC) members take charge of Mass and Morning Prayers while a Canossian Spirituality Representative (CSR) body is made up of a student representative from each class.

CAC is made up of four different ministries namely – the Music, Sacristan, Lector and Communication Ministry. CAC members ensure that Catholic related activities such as Mass and Morning Prayers are run smoothly.

CSRs are in charge of ensuring that the Catholic students are present and punctual during mass and at other Catholic events, such as the Alpha Mission which is much like a catechism session.

Cabrini Chow from 3/7, shares with us the responsibilities of a CAC Member at SACSS:

What are some of the responsibilities you have as a CAC member?

Cabrini: I have to make sure that things are in order during Morning Prayer and Mass, and that everyone is performing their assigned duty well.

What difficulties have you encountered as a CAC member?

Cabrini: Trying to get things done on time and making sure everyone understands what they are supposed to know. Sometimes some students are hard to reach or communicate with, so I have to find other ways to contact them. Other times, some students are unaware of whether or not they are meant to do prayer duty – I will have to step in to clarify matters. CAC members are always on standby to attend to any surprises that may arise.

What do you think makes the role performed by CAC members important?

Cabrini: Their roles are important as they spread the Catholic faith and live the Canossian spirit. The Canossian spirit is kindled by students and is passed on from one cohort to another.

Who inspires you to continue being a passionate Catholic in the CAC?

Cabrini: God inspires me to perpetuate the Catholic faith and continue the legacy of being kind and loving Catholics in a Canossian school.

Next, Samantha Alves (2/6) who is the CSR of her class, provides insights into the role of a CSR.

What makes a CSR so important in the class?

Samantha: As SACSS is both a Canossian and a Catholic school – the Canossian values become the common bond that we share with our classmates who may not be Catholic. I also have the task of ensuring that every Catholic student from my class is present during mass.

What changes can you make as a CSR?

Samantha: I can spread the teachings of Jesus and other Saints to better the way we lead our lives. For example, God teaches us to be thankful for our blessings, abide by the Ten Commandments and live a more meaningful and truthful life while, St. Bakhita teaches us to be forgiving towards one another. All this is relevant and applicable especially when there are misunderstandings and when such situations arise, the best thing to do is just to forgive and forget, and move on.

How has being a CSR deepened your understanding of the value of other-centredness?

Samantha: Being a CSR has helped me understand the importance of reaching out to others based on the guidance of the Canossian values.

In essence, both Cabrini and Samantha believe that being a CAC member and a CSR allow us to spread love and kindness as Catholics and uphold the Canossian spirit regardless of our faiths. We also learn to, in the words of Father Terence Kesavan, "Love all."



“As a non-Catholic I am very comfortable being part of the Catholic events such as masses because it is inclusive and allows me to learn more about the faith. I feel that having a CSR in the class committee is important to help the rest of us understand the significance of some of these Catholic events so that we may appreciate them better.”

Chloe Cheng Yi Ting (3/1)

By Nicole Caitlin New (2/5), Elise Wee Yoon Ting (2/6), Kyla Beatrice P Evangelista (3/6), Louise Camille Cabuhat Magadia (3/7), Snyder Julia Francesca Corpus (3/7)



Hamper Wrapping: A spirit of caring and giving



28 February marked a day of many notable events, one of them being the hamper wrapping activity organised by the school as part of the Foundress Day celebrations. This exemplifies the Canossian way of life and celebrate this year's school theme, Carità: A life built on love. The whole school participated in this act of love, along with the Sisters, who contributed with their generosity.

The students brought items such as canned food, instant noodles and other necessities and the Sisters donated the essentials such as sugar, oil and rice to every class to help us to fill the hampers for the low-income families living around Chai Chee and goodie bags for foreign workers. When deciding on the appropriateness of the items to include, the students had to consider the needs of the families – thereby, allowing them to display other-centredness and to empathise with the needy. It was heartening to witness the students working together as a class to assemble the hampers and goodie bags.

Here are what the students felt about the experience:

"I felt that the gift hamper wrapping activity was a meaningful one – allowing the entire class to strengthen bonds, warmed one's heart knowing that the efforts were going towards a good cause and brought out the true meaning of values in action (VIA)."

– Channon Tan (2/5)

"The activity was purposeful and everyone was passionate about their efforts. There were surprises such as being short of baskets to hold the excess food items. The students thought out of the box and solved the problem by converting empty A4 boxes into gift boxes to hold the items inside. In the course of doing this, the students exhibited camaraderie and innovation."

– Caitlyn Rita Sim (3/6)

With the hampers and goodie bags ready, it was over to the teachers and the sisters to bring the gifts to the respective locations to distribute. Upon reaching the apartment blocks, the teachers and the sisters carried the hampers and walked through the dimly lit and cramped corridors to reach the recipients. The gratifying reception from the families receiving the hampers overwhelmed the teachers. To the latter, it was a simple act on their part while the hampers meant so much more to the beneficiaries. The experience had a humbling effect on the teachers as reflected below...

"This activity alone does not represent Carità fully because in order to build a life on love, one would have to live a life of love..."

– Ms. Caleen Goh

"The hamper wrapping activity made us grateful for our living conditions and the things we are able to afford. What was more important was the fact that we considered the needs of others. Being kind is important but it is equally important to ensure that the help rendered is meaningful."

– Mr. Dineshkumar

By Victoria Lee Leyi (2/5), Clare Faustina Sabai (2/7), Min Kwok (3/6), Ryan Farizza Bte Sazali (3/7), Cheryl Pek Xin Yi (3/8)

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