



### *The President's message*

### *From my heart to yours...*

Christmas greetings to all fellow Canossians!

In a couple of days, 2019 will close and a new decade opens with 2020. A month after, we will celebrate Chinese New Year, with the year of the Pig ending the lunar calendar's 12-year cycle and reopening with the year of the Rat in a new wheel.

Cycles. We are in endless motion – moving in time. Seasons change. People grow. Some journeys end and new ones begin. Journeys are memorable when we've laughed and cried hard; given and taken willingly; loved and lost deeply. As we grow through the cycles, these journeys become not only memorable but more meaningful. Insights and wisdom come with age!

Within this issue, meet some of your fellow Canossians who have journeyed long and arduous roads. Some roads have led into the dry and hot deserts of Australia, while others were within the walls of SAC, experiencing the love of the Canossian community, in their giving and their receiving. These journeys were all paved with the purpose to make God known and loved, and served tirelessly with much faith, hope and love; touching many lives.

As we move into the new calendar cycle, here's my desire for you, that you'll travel on a road ahead with a clear 2020 vision, guided by the Light with your heart set ablaze with purpose, passion and prosperity; never ever tiring, because love knows no burdens.

Happy new year & Gong Xi Fa Cai from all of us at the Ex-Co and blessing you with Amore Senza Fine (love without end).



**Canossian  
Alumni**

### **Objectives of the Canossian Alumni Association**

i) to strengthen the network of former students of the Canossian schools and to develop a true spirit of loyalty and love for the Alma Mater.

ii) to be a channel of collaboration between the former students, the Canossian schools and the society at large.

### **Executive Committee**

President : Veronica Tan

Vice President : Joan Teo Li Sian

Secretary : Jeraldine Lee

Asst Secretary : Frances Wong

Treasurer : Cecilia Nathan

Asst Treasurer : Martina Wong

Committee Members :

Nazhath Faheema

Janelene Leong

Jasmine Soh

Martha Fernandez

Sylvia Chua

### **Spiritual Director**

Sr Louisa Lim

## SACSS Principals – Footprints that leave more than just a mark. They leave a Legacy.

### HAPPY RETIREMENT!



**Mdm Frances Mak Lai Ying** became Principal at SACSS in 2013. Her invaluable contribution to the school involved various areas of

*improvement, pushing for excellence and working with the School Management Committee to formalize policies and processes. Martina Wong, treasurer SMC/CAA pens her memories and offers a farewell tribute to Mdm Mak on her retirement.*

"Mdm Mak, (whom I shall affectionately refer to as Lai Ying, at her insistence) has certainly left her "mark" in the lives of students, teachers, staff and parents. I remember one of my earlier conversations with Mdm Mak.

She was very direct and candid, and this was evident all her interactions with her staff. She sets high expectations and the team knows exactly what needs to be done and get them done.

Discipline and order aside, we had fun talking about the audit points such as tagging the big iron swing on the lawn and the air con units to keep track of the assets!

There were a few milestones that Lai Ying initiated which brought the Canossian family together from teachers, staff, students, parents, the Alumni and the Sisters. The SACSS Night Festival was one of them. A few of us from the Alumni came together and sang a few songs with the Sisters in the school chapel. I thought we sang beautifully with the acoustic of the chapel - until the choir performed which blew our minds away with their powerful vocals!

Putting the Senza Tempo and Amore Senza Fine publications together; along with various videos to commemorate

the Singapore Bicentennial and our 140 years of education were some of her initiatives and how Lai Ying has left her mark and legacy of her tenure.

Extracting from the forewords from Amore Senza Fine, meaning 'Love Lives On' in Italian – *"it is an apt description of the strong Canossian ethos and charism that have taken firm root in our schools"*; and from Senza Tempo (Timeless), where Lai Ying summarises as *"a product of love, commitment and great effort... possible with God's grace and blessing"* – the 2 publications epitomise how she has brought the School to greater heights and added new dimensions to our ethos and traditions.

On behalf of the Alumni and all whose lives have been touched by Lai Ying, we wish her all of God's choicest blessings as she takes on the next chapter in her journey. Happy and blessed retirement, we will all miss you dearly!" ✦ MW

### HEARTIEST WELCOME!

#### Ms Fiona Koh Tyng Yuann – Principal-Designate

*The Canossian community (especially the Alumni) couldn't be more thrilled than to get news that one of our own has come back to lead the 'flock' – Fiona, an ex-student at CCPS and SACSS has been appointed principal designate to head SACSS from 2020.*

At the start of her career, she taught History at Catholic Junior College. Thereafter, she served two stints at MOE HQ : Personnel Division, Career Development Unit for EAS and Curriculum Planning and Development Division, Humanities Branch. Before this posting back to her alma mater, Fiona spent 6 years in Marsiling Secondary School as their Vice Principal.

Piqued by the intellectual curiosity about Church history, Fiona, a former Protestant, was inspired by Rome Sweet Home, a book by Kimberly and Scott Hahn. She then attended RCIA and subsequently converted to the Catholic faith. Bro Paul Rogers, her former principal at CJC, supported her faith formation by engaging her in the Students' Council and Catholic Activities Wing. Her student experience at SACSS and teaching experiences at CJC provided her opportunities to witness the workings of a Catholic School Leadership and chaplaincy.

Looking back, she declares that she's seen God's hand in her spiritual and professional growth - and in moving forward, we are certain that she continue to be guided by the Spirit to take the school to greater heights.

Via Veritas Vita. ✦



## Sr Bridget Foo - Making God known in the Great Sandy Desert.



*It is hard to imagine petite Sr Bridget Foo working in a hot dry desert of Australia and started a school where aboriginal children were told stories with stones, taught under hot tin sheds at burning temperature and ferried in a school truck. We "hunted" her down to share her 37 years of adventures down under.*

Canossian Students from the 60s & 70s would probably have seen Sr Bridget going around the school grounds, rounding up students to stop playing and go queue up for assembly when the bell rang.

Now at 78, (and not looking a day older than when I last saw her!) she is part of the Care & Concern Committee at the St Maximillian Kolbe Parish in Brisbane.



Educated in St. Anthony's Convent, Sr Bridget counts herself lucky to have had very good and dedicated teachers like the late Mrs Theresa Leong, Mabel De Souza, Sr. Natalia Tasca. "Through them I came to know and love Jesus and our Mother Mary and St. Magdalene of Canossa".

Inspired by the Canossian spirit and charism, she decided to become a nun at 17. She taught at SACPS and in CCPS from 1965 to 1981. She was subsequently transferred to Australia in 1982.

Sr Bridget started working in the Great Sandy Desert with the Aboriginals from the Jaru Tribe, who moved out of the desert to settle in camps on the fringe of Halls

Creek in the East Kimberly of Western Australia. Along with Fr. Kriener Werner, a Palatine Priest from Germany, they took care of the pastoral and spiritual welfare of this community. At that time, about sixty tribal people were baptized into the Catholic Church. "We helped them to cope with the western life-style and taught them simple cooking, sewing and basic hygiene."



Two years later, at the request of an Elder of the Jaru



Tribe, who found that the Aboriginal students could not cope with the State School in town; Sr Bridget, together with Sr Lucy Kert, founded The Warlawurru

Catholic School for these children. Last year, the school celebrated 30 years. One of the students whom they taught 3 decades ago, is now the Chief of the school.

This school was started as a bilingual one – with the tribal Jaru Language and Aboriginal Culture, as well as the English language and Western Culture. They involved the Elders of the tribe and a professional linguist from the CEO (Catholic Education Department from Perth) in teaching the Jaru Language and Culture.



Starting a school from scratch in the desert was tough as the conditions there were extremely harsh, and resource limited. There were no buildings, no desks, no chairs, no books.

"With heat of 50 degrees centigrade, and under the bare sky in the open air, we would start teaching at 6:00am and finish around 11:00am. Can you (also) imagine teaching in tin-shed garages with a 45-degree minimum temperature? There was no air-con but just two fans in each tin-shed!" Sr Bridget recalls.



"During the cooler season, together with some elders of the camp, we would take the school children to the bush and stayed there for a week." There the Elders would pass on their culture to the children. They taught them their cultural dance, the Corroboree and Sacred Ceremonies. The children learned how to hunt for bush tucker (food) and how to survive in the desert."

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*"Our first school 'building' was a bough shed built from the trunks of the gum trees, by the Aboriginal people. After a couple of months, a tin-shed became another school building."*

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Children would learn stories using rocks (below left) and travel in the 'school bus' which is a make-shift truck (below right).



Seen here (below) is a Pentecost Celebration in the bush with the tribe. "We camped there for 3 days. On the night before Pentecost the men would chant in their language calling the Holy Spirit to come to us. The deep silence of the bush, the millions of stars in clear sky and



the men's chanting put us in a spirit of deep prayer."

In 1990, Sr Bridget left the Desert for Adelaide to work among another

group of Aboriginals known as the Stolen Generation.

These Aboriginals have lost their culture and language, being of mixed race. They were taken away from their pure Aboriginal mothers and sent to boarding schools in the big cities of Adelaide, Sydney, Perth, and Melbourne.



These days, Sr Bridget is kept occupied with pastoral work at the St Maximillian Kolbe parish in Brisbane and spends her days visiting the housebound, the sick, the elderly and does hospital visitations. Her committee organizes Masses and Communion Services for the Catholic Residents for two retirement homes.

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*"Life is never dull for me. I love the people here and I enjoy the work I do."*

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While Sr Bridget confesses that she misses her family and returns to Singapore once in 3 years, she declares that she doesn't miss much of the local food.

St Magdalene, in her writings, states that she was prepared to go anywhere and do anything so that God may be known and loved.

Sr Bridget answered that call 4 decades ago - commissioned to make God known in the Sandy Deserts of Australia. ✠



## Mrs Dawn Tan – This is Home, where her Heart is.

*Having spent 40 years in SACPS, Mrs Dawn Tan shares about her second home here and how things have changed (and not changed) for her as a teacher.*

### **Tell us a little about yourself and your life:**

I am in my early sixties and have been at SACPS for forty years. I am a Buddhist, but I learned about the Catholic faith from the Sisters. I follow the Eucharistic celebrations in school, and I believe all religions teaches us to be good citizens of the world.

### **How did you end up as a teacher at SACPS and what subject did you teach?**

I left my banking job wanting to seek a more meaningful vocation. After I graduated from Institute of Education, and began teaching in several schools, first in a boys' school and later in a co-ed school before I was finally posted to SACPS in March 1979.



I have taught all the six levels including the EM3 and the Foundation class. I am currently teaching Mathematics in P3 and P4 and I

manage the Tae Kwon Do CCA.

### **What makes SACPS so special for you?**

My first experience with humility and compassion came in the form of Mrs Theresa Leong, a kind lady who met me outside the 'fortress-like building' at 111 Middle Road, and she opened the door for me.

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*"The Canossian values here have guided and helped me to teach from the heart."*

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Perhaps it is Providence that led me to this school which I consider "my second home". It strengthened the foundation of the values of love and compassion which I've been inculcated with since young.

In 2003, I had one of the darkest times in my life. That was when my dad and my husband passed on within a few months of each other. This was the year which I was very grateful to my school for giving the support and strength to move on.



### **You've been teaching at SACPS for 40 years, what do you observe today that's different (or same) from the earlier days?**

Students today have many distractions from various sources – handphones, mobile tablets, i-pads, etc. They are actively engaged in social media. They are well travelled and well informed of the latest news and trends. They are vocal with their thoughts and many enjoy class discussions. But certain things are not much different.

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*"...there are also those who are children of circumstances. Those girls will need a lot of affirmation and love."*

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Classroom lessons nowadays adopt a multi-media approach to arouse the spark for deeper learning and to motivate students in their quest for knowledge. The pedagogies that are used cater to the different needs and interest of the learners. Students need to learn social skills and that will facilitate effective group work.

The use of IT is very prevalent now as compared to the whiteboard and OHP (of the earlier days). Students go online to view and access their assignments and use their IT skills to do researches for their projects.

### **What would be a message to your former students?**

Develop self-awareness to find the purpose in your life. Continue to inspire others with your charity, humility and forgiveness. ☩

## Alumnae Rebecca Kee – Nurtured by the Nuns

*"When I kissed the Teacher", a song by Swedish group ABBA was recorded in 1976. Two years after their release, a bold move by this goody-two-shoes, to kiss the only male teacher in SACSS made history! Till today, we wonder if her 1978 record had been broken.*



Never would anyone imagine doing something as shocking as what Rebecca Kee did on Teachers' Day on the year of her graduation. Tasked with presenting (the late) Mr SK Quah with a bouquet, she walked up to him, handed him the flowers and gave him a peck on his cheek. Stunned – both him, and the school - all froze silent for a couple of seconds, and then to a roar of thunderous applause and laughter around the quadrangle in SAC Middle Road.

She credits that bold action to having classmates who bought and threw stink bombs, placed itching powder on certain teachers' chair and pulled off all sorts of practical jokes they could think of. "You bloom where you are planted!" Rebecca laughingly confesses.

Those were the memories of this former student at CCPS and SACSS, teacher and mother of six. As an educator and family life advocate now, she gives parenting talks, trains trainers and mentors young couples at St Anne's Church with her husband, Vincent. They are also active as catechists in the local Catholic community. Rebecca was recently invited to run a workshop on the "5 Languages of Love" at our AGM two years ago.



Rebecca's mum, a non-Catholic then, believed in the discipline of the nuns, and putting her only child in a single-gender school was a priority. So, to ensure Rebecca got a place at CCPS, mum queued outside the gates along Sallim Road at 4am on the day of the P1 registration.

Back then, some girls were given a 'double promotion'. Rebecca was one of them. She spent the first half of the year in Primary 1, and the second half in Primary 2.

Rebecca reflected that throughout her life, she was always blessed to have had Canossian Sisters journey with her – at many junctures. She appreciates the strong foundation they have built in her, making her who she is today – A Child of God, Wife of One, Mother of Six.

Recalling in a chronicle sequence, Rebecca appreciatively recollects her sentimental journey being nurtured by the nuns.

At CCPS, Sr Theresa Chua was her principal, and Sr Frances often accompanied her after school to wait for mum. In SACSS, Srs Cecily Pavri and Christina Yeo, both trainee teachers then, had taught her science and literature respectively. Sr Margaret Syn was her form teacher in sec 2 and a counsellor, who helped apply for her bursary and free textbooks. She recalls memories of religious education classes with "the big, strong, friendly Sr Mary S, caring Sr Christine Santhou and sprightly Sr Calista", her Principal at SACSS.

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*"I got to know of a kind and helpful man, Jesus. I always remember the picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The smile. The love. His kind eyes. I (learned to) become a grateful person and find it easy to pass on goodness and kindness to all."*

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At Catholic Junior College, she was reunited with Sr Christina, who was a GP teacher there, and got to know Sr Rosalia - older sister of Sr Chris. Being the President of the St Vincent de Paul Society at CJC, Sr Janet Wang became her Spiritual Director. In the years to come, when she started as a teacher at SACPS, Sr Angela Ng, Principal, became her boss; while, Srs Geraldine Lim, Josephine Sim, Louisa Lim and Margaret Goh became her colleagues (along with Mr Quah who often, in amusement and bafflement, questioned her why she did what she did when she was a teen!)



Her faith formation through the Canossian education and those days of bible stories, holy pictures and hymns of prophets, took root and finally began to bloom. In 1985, in her first year as a teacher at SACPS, Rebecca got baptized and confirmed as a Catholic.

In 1993, Rebecca had chance to go to Colorado to be trained and certified to run the Rainbows Programme (a peer support programme for children from single-parent homes). She had a chance to volunteer alongside Sr Margaret Syn, who led the 'Beginning Experience' at the Ang Mo Kio HELP FSC. She then began to train facilitators for Rainbow. With Sr Priscilla Ahin, they implemented Rainbow at SAC, and subsequently brought it to Holy Innocent's Primary School (HIPS), a Catholic school she requested a transfer to, due to the proximity to her new home in Serangoon.

When Rebecca was teaching at HIPS, the Canossians were, literally, a stone's throw away at the Canossian Formation House at Lorong Low Koon. There she got exposed to Sr Jane's strong, therapeutic hands at the Canossian Wellness Centre and during those years, her Canossian connection deepened with Sr Enrica, Sr Lily, Sr Magdalene and Sr Doreen.

Her experience volunteering with the Canossians abroad in 2010 with the Magdalene Myanmar Mission had her coming full circle to reconnect with Srs Janet and Angela along with Sr Jacqueline Chin. In addition, she also got to know Srs Marilyn Lim and Geraldine Tan.

Ask this mother how she manages to raise her six children, she attests to the strong Canossian values she has been imbibed with, along with this quote from the bible.



"And Jesus answered, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.' The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments." Matthew 22:37-40

Rebecca centres her family around a scheme of growth, based on the acronym SPIES. "To be at our best

- Spiritually (love God with our soul),
- Physically (as you love yourself),
- Intellectually (with all your mind),
- Emotionally (with all your heart) and
- Socially (love your neighbour)."



She believes that having a strong sense of self-identity, marrying a spouse of the same faith, coming up with a family motto, vision, mission and verses to revisit as a family and having a community to lean on is important.

Her children grow up with daily prayers, weekly masses, bi-monthly family meetings, termly one-on-one dates, half yearly friendship days where they could invite and play host to their friends. They come together for yearly family retreats in various venues and are encouraged to go for milestone retreats such as Awaken, Treasure, as well as attend World Youth Day Rallies and pilgrimages.

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*"With faith as our basis of the hierarchy, followed by family, fellowship, fitness, finance and finally fun right at the top of the pyramid."*

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Now that her children are mostly grown, they have already made plans to get involved in missions abroad.

It clearly seems that Rebecca holds a couple of 'records' that will go undefeated. One for having journeyed with the largest number of Canossian sisters through her life (without being one!); and the other – for not having anyone else kiss that teacher!✠

## Upcoming events. Register soon!

### Coffee, Tea and Bake with home-economics teacher, Mrs MaryAnn Joseph.

To commemorate St Bakhita's Feast day, we're having a special baking lesson back in the Home Econs room at SACSS, Bedok!

What are we baking? We're not saying. Just come and be surprised!

**Date : 15<sup>th</sup> February 2020 (Saturday)**

**Time : 9am – 12pm**

**Fee : \$25** (but additional contribution welcome as donations)



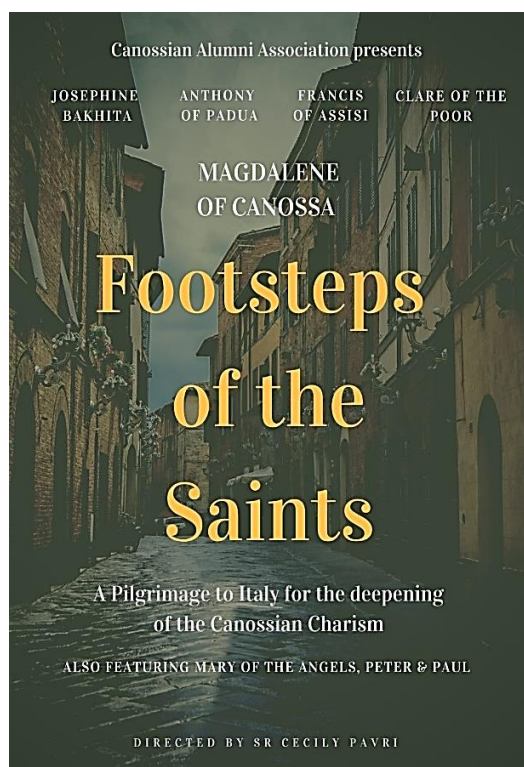
Email your interest with full name and contact number to :

[canossian.membership@gmail.com](mailto:canossian.membership@gmail.com)

and transfer via Paynow through the QR Code sent to you.

Bring your old school apron if you still have them!

*Back by Popular Demand!* **ACLJ 2020 - Canossian Learning Journey**  
(4<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020)



Visit the palace where Magdalene lived, see where Bakhita cooked and cleaned, retreat to places where St Francis experienced spiritual miracles, be inspired by the stories of St Anthony and marvel at the art which saved the Church.

Above all these, spend time in prayer and journey in the footsteps of the saints, share with fellow Alumni and the Canossian family to deepen the charism and spirituality. You'll also get a chance to experience staying at our Convent – the Canossian International Headquarters in Ottavia, Rome.

Cities covered : Milan, Verona, Schio, Padua, Assisi and Rome.

Submit your interest with **your full name and contact number** to the following email address for a registration form.

[aclj.steps@gmail.com](mailto:aclj.steps@gmail.com)

**Registration closes : 20<sup>th</sup> Feb 2020.**

**Payments to be made by 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020.**

This pilgrimage is **limited to maximum 30pax**; open to Alumni (& family) and friends of Canossa, but no children below 12 years.

**Estimated cost \$3,000\*\*. Excludes airfare.**

\*\* This figure is indicative. Actual fee will be confirmed upon registration, confirmation of itinerary and final bookings.

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