



### *The President's Message*

This year celebrates the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Catholicism in Singapore. In celebrating the Catholic faith in Singapore, we also honour those who had given their lives in service of others. Among the many missionaries who came to set up schools here in the 1800s were our first Canossian sisters, who arrived in 1894 to run the school at Middle Road, then known as St Anthony's Girls' School.

We live in a society where financial security is considered necessary for a successful life. How many of us, if born into immense wealth and grandeur, would be willing to give it all up and live among the poor? We have heard of persons, who have undergone tremendous cruelty or injustice, struggling to rebuild their lives again. Is it possible to forgive and live a life that is free from the scars of the past?

These were what two awesome women did two centuries ago!

In 1808, at age 34, St Magdalene left Canossa Palace, her home, to do charitable work in the poorest district of Verona. What she initiated had borne fruit not only in Italy, but all over the world. St Bakhita, born in Sudan around 1869, captured as a slave when she was just a child and held in servitude for more than ten years, held no resentment against her captors. She often professed that if it weren't for her kidnapers, she might never have come to know Christ or His church.

How these two women lived and how they put others before self are exemplars of how to address the many needs even in this era. Not only are our Canossian sisters carrying the torch in living their lives for others, they continue to ignite the same fire in the hearts of many whom they touch. Such was the heart of Mrs Magdalene Lau, a former teacher who passed on earlier this year and to whom we pay tribute in this issue. Featured also are some of our Italian missionary sisters who had come to Singapore in the early 1900s and have stayed on with our Canossian community throughout the years!

Achievements and accomplishments become all the more fruitful when they elevate the human spirit and forge community bonds. This is what our Canossian charism continues to do in the hearts of our students, alumni, teachers and collaborators.

Wishing all of you a Blessed Easter Season.

Cecilia Nathen  
President

## CANOSSIAN'S CONNECTION



**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: Cecilia Nathen  
Vice President: Janelene Leong  
Secretary: Frances Wong  
Asst Secretary: Jasmine Soh  
Treasurer: Faheema Nazhath  
Asst Treasurer: Shirley Ng  
Committee Members:  
Nikki Chua  
Sylvia Chua  
Adeline Lai  
Joan Teo

### **Spiritual Director**

Sr Louisa Lim

## Our Italian Sisters – Where Are They Now?

*It was once commonplace to see Italian sisters teaching and tending to the pastoral needs of students in our Canossian schools. They may no longer be part of our school staff but three of our Italian sisters are still within our Canossian community in Singapore. Who are they?*



**Sr Enrica Perego** was born in 1932 in Carate Brianza, Italy.

She was about twenty years old when she arrived in Singapore and resided at the former St Anthony's Convent at Middle Road.

There, she met fellow Italian Sr Marcellina Fumagalli, who was running the sewing centre.

Among the work she was first assigned was teaching catechism at St Stephen's Church. She was also a former Principal of Magdalene's Kindergarten at Sallim Road. Apart from Singapore, she had served in Johor and Kuala Lumpur as well, as part of her missionary work.

One memorable moment in her life, which Sr Enrica still recalls with much delight, is meeting St Josephine Bakhita in person. Sr Enrica was attending school as well as catechism at a convent in Carate Brianza when Sr Josephine came to the convent for a visit.

Currently, Sr Enrica resides at Canossa Convent, Sallim Road. She spends pastoral time with the students during recess and makes time also to pray for the many needs of others in the community.

**Sr Maria Riva** was born in Vigano, Italy in 1932. As a child, Sr Maria had the joy of meeting St Josephine Bakhita at her hometown.



She left home for formation as religious sister when she was 21 years old. She came to Singapore at age 31 and quickly adapted to life in a new environment.

Her first two years was spent at St Anthony's Convent, mainly to learn the English language.

She then left Singapore to assist with the boarding school at Sacred Heart Convent, Malacca. In 1966 she returned to Singapore.

Over the years, besides teaching the hearing-impaired students at Sallim Road, Sr Maria also taught catechism in the parish and was appointed Superior at the various Canossian convents in Singapore.

At 88 years, she is still fondly remembered by former students for her warm and caring nature. Many would visit her despite having left school quite some time ago and would even bring their families along. Sr Maria Riva currently resides at St Joseph's Convent.



**Sr Maria Casarotti** was born in 1928 in Padova, Italy. Sr Maria joined the Canossians when she was 20 years old.

Later she felt called to be a missionary and spent some time at the missionary novitiate at Vimercate.

She came to Singapore in 1957. From there, she moved on to various roles and appointments within as well as out of Singapore. She taught at Sacred Heart Convent in Malacca between 1961 and 1965. Then she went on to England and, until 1971, was engaged with the Novitiate, pastoral work, sacristy and other house duties.

In 1971 she returned to Italy and was at Vimercate till 1974 when she left again for Singapore.

At Canossa Convent, Sallim Road, she was director of the Canossian Sewing Centre for a year. She was then called to be Superior of Sacred Heart Convent, Malacca. In 1979, she joined St Joseph's Convent, which has since been her community and field of apostolate.

Sr Maria Casarotti performed a myriad of roles at St Joseph's Home - spending time to listen to the needs of the residents, feeding those who need aid, sitting patiently with the seriously ill and the dying to offer comfort, coordinating visits by volunteers and even counselling some of these volunteers.

Currently 92 years of age, Sr Maria gives herself in a different yet just as valuable way – offering prayers for the needs of St Joseph's Home as well as those in the society.

### Sr Marcellina Fumagalli and The Sewing Centre - A Close-knit Family

Sr Marcellina Fumagalli was a young novice when she left Italy for Singapore in 1954. Because she had dress-making and other needlework skills, she was soon assigned to assist in the sewing school which was then at St Anthony's Convent in Middle Road.



The young girls who came to learn sewing were those who were unable to go to school for various reasons, such as poverty and lack of family support. Not only did Sr Marcellina help them develop skills for work but also built in them self-confidence and hope for the future.

Among Sr Marcellina's strengths in running the centre was an enterprising spirit. Over the years, she expanded orders by initiating uniform contracts not only with schools, but also with other industries such as Seagate and Philips. Beside uniforms, the sewing centre provided habits and veils for the Canossian sisters as well as vestments and altar cloths for parishes locally and in other missions.

Many of the girls she taught and who worked with her came to regard her as their mother, for she always went out of the way to assist them, and even their families, in their difficulties.

Sr Marcellina returned to the Lord on 1 February 2021.

## ExCo Members Who Have Joined Us For The Term 2020-2022

*2020 had indeed been a challenging year but it did not stop us from getting three new members join the ExCo through virtual nominations and an online AGM!*



**Shirley Ng** is carving out some time from her busy work schedule as a business owner to serve as the Assistant Treasurer of the Association. She is an accomplished accountant and is ably keeping the books for us. Shirley graduated in 1981 from the Middle Road Campus, having spent 10 good years in Primary and Secondary School. She remembers very fondly recess time at the Quadrangle where firm friendships were formed.

Shirley is glad for the opportunity to show support and express her affinity for her alma mater. In fact, this is not Shirley's first act of service for SAC. She had been on the School Management Committee of SAC and Canossa Convent and the ExCo is proud and delighted that she has chosen to continue serving in the Alumni Association.



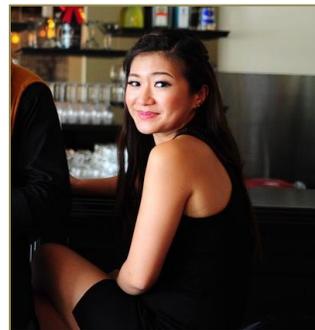
**Adeline Lai** serves as a Committee Member of the ExCo. She graduated in 1986 and spent both her Primary and Secondary school years at the Middle Road campus.

She remembers fondly training with fellow teammates in the Gymnastic School Team with Mr Quah. The chapel is another place that holds a special place in her heart.

"That was where I found peace and calm, even though I was not a Catholic then," recalls Adeline.

She saw on Instagram, the nomination to the ExCo and she felt a calling to give back to her alma mater who through the holistic learning experience, groomed her to be the person that she is today. The connection with fellow alumni brings back great memories.

"I am truly grateful to the Canossian sisters and all the teachers that have made such a significant difference in my life."



**Nikki Chua** is currently the baby in our ExCo, having graduated from the Bedok Campus in 2001. She led a very active life while at school, ranking organizing the Annual Sports Meet highly among her many achievements. Camaraderie was forged with teammates from Netball, Basketball and the Girl Guides who would commit time to help with House banners and other preparatory work.

Nikki has her hands full with family and work commitments but placed her trust in God and answered the call to join the ExCo.

"I'll agree first and leave the rest to God to make it happen and provide. And He did."

She doesn't regret that decision because it has been wonderful to be connected back with the Canossian spirit. Nikki, a Committee Member of the ExCo, hopes to reach out to more SACians of her generation to reconnect again through the Alumni.

## Carlene Tan – Being Open To What Life Has To Offer

*Faith in divine providence and a strong belief in herself give Carlene Tan the confidence to navigate life's ups and downs and embrace its possibilities.*

People always love good stories and a Canossian education is helping Carlene Tan to create great ones. The values and habits of mind that were imbibed while in school help Carlene Tan in content creation as well as in working life.



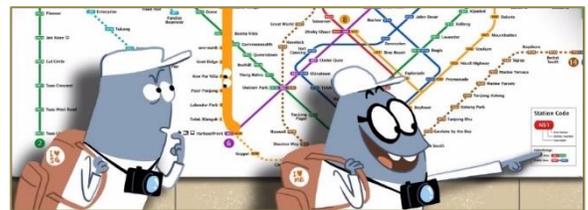
Carlene graduated from SACSS in 1991 and later pursued theatre and film studies in Perth. When she came back to Singapore, it was in the midst of the Asian Financial Crisis and there was difficulty securing employment. She took the first job opportunity that came, which involved theatre.

It was totally unexpected when a friend subsequently suggested that they set up their own animation studio together. Despite being new to the field of animation, Carlene nevertheless jumped at the challenge of producing quality animation and in time had the fortune of working with established corporations such as Disney and Warner.

One such production she was involved in was *Mickey Go Local* by Disney, which showcases Mickey Mouse and his friends experiencing Singaporean and Malaysian culture. The production was nominated for the Asian Academy Creative Awards in 2019.

Working in media is tough and there were many times Carlene wanted to give up. But the values she learnt about resilience and perseverance, as well as her passion for the work, helped her to continue. For every production that is a success, she says, there will also be others that would be a challenge in terms of marketing or ratings.

In 2020, Carlene moved to WarnerMedia Singapore as its new Director of Original Production and Development for its Kids Division in Asia Pacific. She was part of the team that won the Asian Academy Creative Awards in 2020 for *Lamput*, under the section Best Children's Programme. *Lamput* is about a little orange blob which escapes from the lab in which it was created and cleverly avoids capture by using its ability to shape shift.



*Lamput won the Asian Academy Creative Awards 2020 for Best Children's Programme*



*Carlene with the creators of Lamput at the Asian Academy Creative Awards*

For those interested to work in media, Carlene has this advice: You need to be kind to yourself. What you envision in life may not turn out as expected. In whatever you do, continue to hold firm to the values you were taught in school. Opportunities will come and possibilities will show up but you need to keep an open mind in order to be able to see them.

## Launch of Nostalgie Canossiane – The Heritage of our Canossian Education

*Nostalgie Canossiane, the newly refurbished Heritage Gallery at St. Anthony's Canossian Schools, was officially launched on 5 March 2021.*

The wooden doors from the former St Anthony's Convent at Middle Road swung open to a world that transcended space and time. Nostalgie Canossiane is a journey of the Canossian education heritage, which began as early as 1894 when the pioneer Canossian Sisters arrived in Singapore.

Provincial Leader, Sr Christina Yeo, and Superintendent of East 4 Cluster, Mr Justin Arul Pierre, officially opened the gallery with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, followed by a blessing by Father Eugene Lee. The Canossian sisters and the Canossian Alumni Association (CAA) were present at the opening ceremony together with teachers and school management staff.



*A chance to experience the unique tables of the old school*  
Photo courtesy of Nazhath Faheema

The students from St. Anthony's Canossian Primary and Secondary schools gave a special guided tour for the guests. As these student docents explained the different sections of the heritage gallery, alumni members reminisced their school days.

Some alumni members were fascinated by the early uniforms and unique wooden study desks used at the school in Middle Road, while others walked about to learn more about significant events in the past. The gallery not only documents and archives the history of Canossian education, but also retells the lived experiences of Canossian girls from different generations as well as the contributions of those were part of the schools' history.

### ***Foundress Day, Canossian Saints Day, Feast Day... which is correct?***

*Depending on the cohort, some alumni recall celebrating Foundress Day in school while others remember the celebration as Canossian Saints Day. Which is correct?*

*Sr Louisa Lim, Spiritual Director of our Canossian Alumni Association, helps shed some light on this:*

*When the celebration focuses only on St Magdalene, we celebrate it as Foundress Day. However, when the celebration includes St Bakhita, then it is celebrated as Canossian Saints Day. The Canossian sisters celebrate St Magdalene's Feast Day on 8 May but schools normally celebrate it in March because May is the period where school examinations are held.*

*Here are the relevant dates pertaining to our Canossian saints:*

<i>8 February</i>	<i>Feast Day of St Josephine Bakhita</i>
<i>1 March</i>	<i>Birthday of St Magdalene</i>
<i>8 May</i>	<i>Feast Day of St Magdalene</i>

## Tribute – Mrs Magdalene Lau, Former Teacher of SACPS

When former students bid their final goodbye to Mrs Magdalene Lau upon her demise on 31 December 2020, they sang her favourite hymn, 'Mary is our Queen'. Many could still recall that it was Mrs Lau who first taught them the hymn when they were in the Primary School. Many also saw in her a deep faith in God, a faith that was nurtured by the love and care of the Canossian sisters when she was a young girl.



Mrs Lau, who was born in 1933, was given shelter, together with her family, by the Canossian sisters during the war. Even after the war, the sisters continued to care for her needs. She was particularly touched by the concern showed by Sr Magdalene Tan, who was instrumental to her conversion into the Catholic faith. Mrs Magdalene Lau went on to Teacher's Training College after completing her secondary education at St Anthony's Convent. She was then posted to St Anthony's Convent Primary School where she taught over thirty years, right up to her retirement.

She showered the same care and concern for her pupils which she had received from the nuns. Tan Ting Ling, who graduated from the secondary school in the 1970s, shared that she could at any time confide in Mrs Lau her problems at school and at home. When Mrs Lau heard of her family's financial difficulties, she was quick to assure her and arrange for food coupons for her meals at the tuckshop.

Not only did Mrs Lau teach in the school, she also taught catechism to children at the Church of Saints Peter and Paul. It wasn't surprising that she was the natural choice as godmother for a number of former students who decided to become Catholic when they were older.

Alumna Cindy Yeo Gek Choo, who graduated in 1982 from the secondary school, credits Mrs Lau for teaching them how to be 'ladylike' as well as prayerful in their daily lives. Cindy was in her early twenties when she decided to become a Catholic and approached Mrs Lau to be godmother during her baptism.

Another alumna who became Mrs Lau's god-daughter was Aileen Tan, who graduated in 1988. Aileen, who is a teacher, became a Catholic while in junior college. She recalled the time she was about to complete her teacher training and felt disappointed that the primary school had no teaching vacancy. Just before her posting, however, the school informed her of a vacancy because a teacher was retiring. The teacher she was replacing turned out to be her godmother!

"Mrs Lau was always generous and motherly," Aileen said. "She was the first person to introduce me to the faith, when I was in just Primary One. Even when she was no longer my teacher, I would still remember her birthday each year and look out for her so that I can wish her."

Like Aileen, many others saw a selfless and dedicated teacher in Mrs Magdalene Lau. She was true to her vocation and in her service for God. She was in every way a model Canossian.



*At her 60th wedding anniversary in 2017*

Once a Canossian, always a Canossian.

## Spotlight on our Youth Members

*We caught up with two of our SACSS graduates of 2020 to see how they were doing.*

### **St Magdalene Awardee, Makayan Gwen Ashley Gravador**

Gwen had to cope with quite a number of changes when she moved on to junior college. One of them was having to transit from an environment filled with familiar faces to one where she had to start making friends again, which now included boys!

Another is longer school hours. The day at Catholic Junior College starts at 8:40am and may end as late as 7:00pm on CCA days. Time management becomes even more critical especially since Ashley intends to be involved in the Student Council. Having to handle a rigorous curriculum that involves Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics and Economics could be daunting. Gwen, however, feels that the habits of mind she acquired at SACSS will put her in good stead for overcoming these challenges.

She hopes to move on to Nanyang Technological Institute after junior college and major in Mathematical and Computer Sciences. She wants to follow her parents' footsteps of becoming data analysts after getting her degree.



### **St Bakhita Awardee, Christeena Peter Francis**



Memories of SACSS are still fresh in Christeena's mind. She remembers fondly the bonding moments during form teacher time and activities such as the Night Festival, where students could catch that rare moment of seeing their teachers perform on stage.

At the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) College Central Christeena has to be more independent, by taking charge of her own time management and study schedules. Her course, Information Technology, is challenging and she has to put in more hours of study. However, the goal of moving on to Polytechnic after ITE and then to university spurs Christeena to continue and not give up.

To relax, she either meets up with some of her former SACSS classmates, who are also in ITE, or goes cycling at Bedok Reservoir with her brother.

Because of the care and support she received while at SACSS, Christeena now contributes back by volunteering with the school. Earlier this year, she and another ex-pupil helped organize bonding activities for hearing-impaired students at SACSS and share with them about time management. It was a fulfilling experience and she intends to continue helping out at SACSS whenever she can.

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*Canossians United on Facebook & Canossian Alumni Association on Instagram*

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