



Living out the Year of Mercy

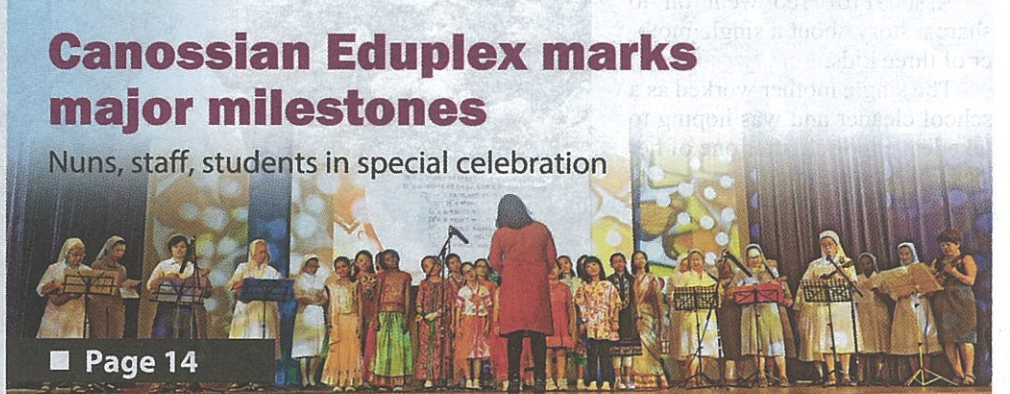
SJI students reach out to needy families



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Canossian Eduplex marks major milestones

Nuns, staff, students in special celebration



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Highlighting the realities of poverty in Singapore

The Social Mission Conference discussed ways Catholics can reach out to the poor



SMC 2016 'Witness to Mercy, Bearer of Compassion'

Mr Laurence Lien (far left), the conference moderator, with panellists at the Aug 13 Social Mission Conference: (from left) Assoc Prof Teo You Yenn, Mr Zainal Bin Sapari, Dr Christopher Cheok and Mr Jonathan Chang.

By Jared Ng

Assisting low-wage workers, helping single parents find work-life harmony and supporting caregivers. These were some of the topics discussed during the Aug 13 Social Mission Conference organised by Caritas Singapore.

The biennial event, which began in 2008, aimed to deepen Catholics' understanding of the Church's social mission in reaching out to the marginalised.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, president of Caritas Internationalis and Archbishop of Manila was the keynote speaker of the conference held at Catholic Junior College.

The 600 participants were encouraged to reflect on the theme, Witness to Mercy, Bearer of Compassion.

Archbishop William Goh, in his opening address, said, "Caregivers need to grow in faith and human integrity if they truly want to help others."

He also highlighted the difference between humanitarian work and Christian charity.

"Christian charity is motivated by a love for God, motivated beyond humanitarian concern. All who wish to be involved in this charity must therefore extend the same love of God to others."

Realities of poverty

The conference speakers then came up one by one to speak on issues and challenges faced by the poor.

Mr Zainal Bin Sapari, Assistant Secretary-General of National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), spoke about the need to help low-wage workers and to reduce the income gap between them and those earning average incomes.

"Employers of low-wage workers are cutting corners and using unfair contract terms to take advantage of their vulnerable situation.



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle urged participants to 'see, hear and touch the wounds of others.'

"For fear of losing their jobs, the workers are often afraid to raise the matter," said Mr Zainal.

To offer a solution to the problem, he introduced an NTUC initiative called U Care Centre, a one-stop centre dedicated to promoting the welfare of low-wage workers in Singapore.

Mr Zainal said that the centre, which opened in November 2013, provides "workers with guidance over work-related issues and opportunities."

Assoc Prof Teo You Yenn from the Division of Sociology at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) addressed the poor work-life balance of single-parent and low-income families.

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Service to country, heart for the people



Mr S. R. Nathan (1924-2016). Photo: The ISTANA

His Grace Archbishop William Goh and the faithful of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore are saddened to learn of the passing of former President S. R. Nathan last night (Aug 22).

Known to come from humble beginnings himself, President Nathan was always known to have a heart for the less privileged in society. He himself started work as a seaman welfare officer and a medical social worker.

During his term of office he founded the President's Challenge which consolidated many charity projects and those already under his name and patronage. Since 2000, the President's Challenge has disbursed funds to more than 800 registered beneficiaries.

The late President Nathan was also a strong proponent of interreligious harmony. He was the first Patron of Singapore's Inter-religious Organisation (IRO), holding the office since 2012 until the time of his passing.

Catholics also fondly remember the presence of both Mr and Mrs Nathan at the Episcopal Ordination of Archbishop Emeritus Nicholas Chia in October 2001.

The first couple then, also met Pope St John Paul II, in a private visit to the Vatican in 2002.

For his more than 50 years of service to the country and the people of Singapore, we bid Mr Nathan - rest in peace. We the Catholic Church in Singapore send our prayers and heartfelt condolences to Mrs Nathan, her children and grandchildren.

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SJI students put mercy into practice with various initiatives

St Joseph's Institution (SJI) students took part in various projects throughout 2016 to reach out to the marginalised in society and also deepen their understanding of mercy.

On Aug 6, Sec 2 Catholic boys set out on a pilgrimage of the five Holy Doors in the archdiocese. The activity was part of the school's Religious, Moral and Social Education (RMSE) programme to coincide with the Year of Mercy.

Accompanying them on the pilgrimage were school chaplain Friar Michael D'Cruz and seven other Franciscans in formation.

The first stop was the Church of Divine Mercy where the friars conducted a paralyrurgy based on the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

At the Church of the Sacred Heart, the boys learnt about St Margaret Mary Alacoque and the image of the Sacred Heart.

The pilgrimage then moved on to the Church of the Holy Cross in Clementi where the friars shared about the meaning of bearing the crosses in one's life.

Over at the Church of St Vincent de Paul, the friars shared the story of St Vincent de Paul, a French priest who was known for helping the poor. The pilgrimage ended at the Church of the Risen Christ.

During Lent this year, Sec 1 to 4 students embarked on different service projects aimed at raising awareness about the plight faced by the needy.

Newly inducted Sec1 students distributed grocery supplies to

27 needy Muslims staying at the nearby Sin Ming Industrial Estate.

Eight classes of Sec 4 boys were also tasked to present an "SJI Lenten Gift" to help meet the needs of one-room flat dwellers in Toa Payoh Lorong 6. The majority of the boys rendered their services by cleaning these homes and providing daily essentials.

One of the classes made a trip to a family's home during the school holidays. They divided themselves into smaller groups to paint the living room and bedroom, fix the wall fan, water pipe, ceiling light and metal door. The students also contributed some funds to buy provisions for the family.

The SJI scouts also organised an outreach project on March 3 to the workers renovating the SJI Malcolm Road campus. The initiative commemorated 105 years of scouting in SJI.

More than 60 boys from the SJI Scouts and National Police Cadet Corps (NPCC) Unit embarked on a hike from SJI (Bishan) to SJI (Malcolm Road), where they bought snacks and drinks to have tea with about 140 workers.

Tan Yi Long, SJI NPCC Station Inspector shared, "The interaction with the workers carried a very special meaning to everyone. During the hike, many of the boys struggled under the hot sun. This activity made us realise that no matter how hard the hike was, it could never compare with the workers' struggles, waking up as early as 5am to come to work, carrying heavy construction mate-



SJI students posing for a photo with Fr Stephen Yim, parish priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart. The students made pilgrimages to all five Holy Doors in the archdiocese as part of a programme to deepen their understanding of mercy.



Students painting the home of a needy family living in Toa Payoh.



SJI scouts had tea with migrant workers who are renovating SJI's Malcolm Road campus.

rials for more than 12 hours every day."

SJI teachers have also made an effort to incorporate the theme of

mercy and compassion in their academic curriculum. As part of the school's Learning Week in July, the boys presented English poems

and six-word essays, wrote creative stories in their mother-tongue languages, and painted artworks, all based on the theme of mercy. □

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