

Helping students find their purpose in life the Franciscan way

Spotlight on Hai Sing Catholic School

Hai Sing Catholic School was founded in 1959 by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) and Franciscan values guide the school in student development. "Ad Veritatem per Caritatem" is the motto of all FMM schools worldwide. Translated, this means "To Truth (God) through Charity" and it reminds us that every person is a child of God, that they have innate dignity and a purpose for being; to seek our true purpose, which must occur through works that are at the same time meaningful to the self and consequential for the world beyond the self.

The HAI Spirit, which focuses on doing small things with great love, inspires the many things we do in our daily lives to bring joy to others, and to give our own lives meaning and purpose. These can take the form of giving emotional support to classmates who are feeling down, supporting friends during stressful times, being buddies with classmates who may have difficulty walking following an injury or simply by keeping the classroom neat and tidy.

In fact, students have been complimented by the public for doing such seemingly small things which go a long way in living the values imbibed within them. One example is a group of boys who escorted an elderly lady who was still in the midst of crossing the road when the red man came on. Another is a girl who returned a mobile phone she found at the bus interchange.

Every act of kindness and compassion lifts the spirit of the person doing it and

at the same time, passes on this HAI Spirit to those whose lives are touched by these small acts of love given freely and generously.

To truth

Hai Sing Catholic School strives to help students to discover their own purpose and mission in life. All graduating students participate in the school's signature Student Mission Seminar. The mission seminar is led by the Catholic Fellowship team, which comprises Catholic teachers and Catholic student leaders. Students are put through a series of interactive activities and reflections to help them learn about themselves, their strengths and talents and areas for improvement. Yoanna, a secondary four student reflected: "I appreciate the Student Mission Seminar as it led me to reflect on my own mission in life – what does God wish for me to do with my life. I also value my friends and accept myself for who I am and who I can be."

Through charity

Besides the seminar, students begin to reflect on their purpose and mission through opportunities to serve others. One such programme, known as the WonderKids programme, reaches out to young latchkey primary school pupils in the blocks surrounding our school. Our Catholic students bring joy to these young pupils in the afternoons after



Hai Sing Catholic students spending time with the elderly. Photos: HAI SING CATHOLIC SCHOOL

school through fun activities. With the guidance of the Catholic teachers, these young and lively pupils have learned to make ice cream, create their own kites and fly them in the school field.

Stewardship of creation

Saint Francis of Assisi is the patron saint for ecology – he loved all of God's Creation. To imbue students' appreciation and care for our natural environment, FMM Sister Bernadetha, our school chaplain, initiated a garden for students to grow vegetables. This garden which now has a variety of vegetables such as long beans, spinach, ladies' fingers and herbs, is now aptly named the Garden of Peace. Students enjoy getting their hands dirtied with soil, planting seedlings, watering the rows of vegetables, and most of all, harvesting the product of their labour.

The Garden of Peace is now an attraction in the school, a curious sight of vegetables growing on the ground or hanging in the air from vines, uncommon among urbanites like us. Indeed, for those who have helped till the ground or water the plants, working among these vegetables can be a meditative and calming experience. Students who may be restless after school without a sense

of purpose, are given the opportunity to work with teachers in tending to the plants.

Embracing diversity and living spiritually

St Francis also embraced diversity and was friends with people from different lands. This is a value, which we aim to imbue in our students too. Our students experience a wealth of activities that call upon various talents from everyone, whether these are skills in brewing a nice cup of coffee, or skills in culinary services. Some students enjoy creating robots while others prefer playing the ukulele. Students become aware that each of us has our own unique identity with different gifts and abilities and we begin to understand and accept the many friends that we have in school.

Each school year begins with students from the main religions in Singapore, reciting their own special prayers at the morning assembly. Hence, a student representative from the Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist and Catholic faiths will gather together with each taking turns to say their prayer. Each one then lights a candle symbolising that every faith is a light to show the way forward. □ Submitted by HAI SING CATHOLIC SCHOOL



Playing soccer with children from a school in Cambodia.



Students at the Garden of Peace where they work with teachers in tending to the plants.