



# Charting new pathways, serving with love

St Anthony's Canossian Secondary School (SACSS) has marked 140 years of education serving not only those who are poor financially, but also those who are marginalised and poor in spirit. Since 1989, the school has welcomed students with hearing loss, not just from the Canossian School for the Hearing Impaired but from elsewhere too, living out its foundress St Magdalene of Canossa's charism of inclusion so that every girl is given an opportunity to belong, believe in herself and become a Canossian woman of influence by achieving her fullest potential.

## "Charity is the fire that ever spreads out"

SAC Blaze, the school's signature charity event which began in 2015, encourages Secondary 3 students to research and adopt a voluntary organisation that supports a particular cause. Through the running of fundraising carnivals, these students advocate causes they believe in and raise funds to support some of the lesser-known organisations. In 2019, the SAC Blaze carnival raised more than \$13,000, supporting organisations such as the Samaritans of Singapore and the Cerebral Palsy Alliance.

However, Covid-19 brought the traditional carnival plans to a grinding halt. With large-scale events no longer viable, the planning team had to re-envision how students could continue advocating causes and encourage their peers to support them.

Hence, in 2020, SAC Blaze sought to fill the digital space with kindness and a call to do good to lift up those who have fallen or are suffering.

## "Grow and walk with the times"

While we harness the digital age and promote connectivity and digital literacy, it is equally necessary to calibrate the technological advancements with the

ill-effects. Pope Francis, in his latest social encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*, calls for us to re-examine our reliance on digital relationships, which have the appearance of sociability, yet insidiously promotes individualism and narcissism. In a season where physical contact is limited, people both young and old have looked towards social media as a source of comfort.

Through running various social media campaigns, our Secondary 3 students took to the digital space. The girls took time to research on the organisation they had chosen to support, and conducted Zoom meetings with the staff concerned to find out how they could better meet their needs.

One class adopted mental wellness as their cause and supported Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) by advocating a destigmatisation of mental illness. They rallied the school to join SOS' #HOWRU Virtual Walkathon and garnered more than one million steps from schoolmates and teachers who pledged to walk alongside those in distress. Another class worked with BABES, to raise awareness about teenage pregnancies, and collected donations of milk powder and diapers to support those in need.

## "Education is the formation of the heart"

The digital age has made it more critical to build community to foster human connectivity. SACSS has done this through strong teacher-student conferencing, weekly reflections and our Values Education lessons where students and staff are invited to ponder and put into action the call to love gratuitously.

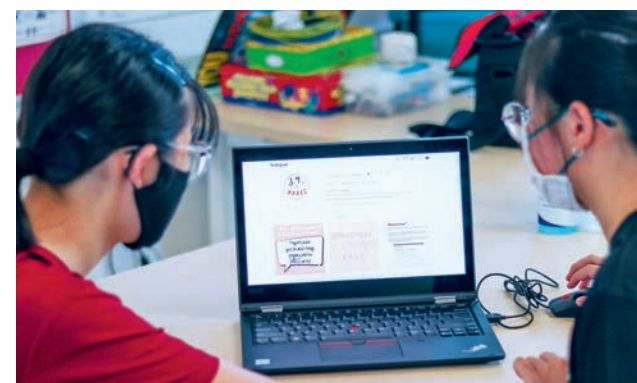
However, faith formation in SACSS is not limited to daily prayers, weekly meetings, or seasonal Masses. Hand in hand with the teaching of our faith is the consistent living out of the faith by calling our students and teachers to go out and serve the poor. Charity is

interwoven into the school's culture and present in all our signature programmes.

Besides SAC Blaze, our students are encouraged to embrace what Pope Francis calls the "hidden exiles" in our society that include persons with disability. SACSS supports the Special Olympics by organising weekly sports sessions for children with special needs. To celebrate Foundress Day, SACSS students came together as a class to create "Stay Strong" packs to bring cheer to the elderly residents living in rental flats, when senior activity centres were all closed as part of Singapore's measures to battle Covid-19.

In her educational plans, our foundress, St Magdalene of Canossa, emphasised the formation of the heart of the young girls under our charge, encouraging them to love the poorest around them unselfishly. Her words are remembered always and anew as SACSS continues to keep the flame of charity and fraternity alive by nurturing in each student faith, charity, humility and forgiveness. □

Contributed by St Anthony's Canossian Secondary School



Students creating an Instagram group to advocate causes online.



Assembling "Stay Strong" packages for Foundress Day (pre-Circuit Breaker).



Collecting milk powder and diapers for distribution in support of their cause.

Photos: St Anthony's Canossian Secondary School