

Courage to lead, Compassion to Serve

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Inspired by its founding priests, Holy Innocents' High School (HIHS) takes on the charisms of the Catholic priesthood, which is one of service to the local community. This is expressed through the school's vision of a Christ-centred Community with Courage to Lead, Compassion to Serve.

The school adopts the parable of the Good Samaritan to exemplify the school's spirituality. Guided by the example of the Good Samaritan in loving his neighbour, the school seeks to nurture its students to become compassionate and morally upright citizens, committed to serving God and society. This is anchored on the core values of Humility, Integrity, Respect and Love, and shared as the school's motto of Sincerity and Charity.

HIHS has deep connections with the Hougang-Punggol community. Founded in 1892 by Rev. Father Casimir Jean Saleilles, a French missionary priest who served at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, HIHS traces its roots to its humble beginnings as a village school on the church's grounds.

Initially named Tao Nan School before being renamed as Holy Innocents' Boys Chinese School when the school was moved to its current location along Upper Serangoon Road, it provided the children of the farmers and fishermen living in the church's vicinity with a simple education in the Chinese medium until the 1980s.

In 1985, the primary section



Some staff and students of HIHS and HIPS after attending Mass together. Photo: HIHS

was relocated to Lorong Low Koon and served as Holy Innocents' Primary School (HIPS), in order to better serve the new Hougang housing estate. The secondary section continued as a single-session school at its current location. Both schools remain affiliated and are led by Rev. Father Frederick Quek, the Chairman of the School Management Committee and Chaplain.

This notion of service is inculcated through the school's Good Samaritan Programme, which brings together student leadership and Values-in-Action (VIA). Through this programme, students are developed to be servant leaders who are socially responsible and community-spirited.

Leadership and service learning values and skills are taught through lessons and experiences. Guided by their form teachers, each class creates plans to reach out to their community for social

causes identified to reach out to those in need.

Students are also given the opportunity to do outreach to the needy overseas through the annual mission trip to Vietnam, where they will spend time teaching English and Mathematics to the children at a village school.

Also, the Student Leadership Board looks into how student leaders can take up key roles in supporting their teachers and peers. There is the annual Teens Conference, where the student leaders, in partnership with the People's Association Youth Movement (PAYM), empowers student leaders from other schools to plan and implement school-wide events to spread messages of social awareness and activism, by bringing together speakers from different not-for-profit NGOs to inspire active service to the community amongst the participants.

HIHS enables its students

to demonstrate living faith by providing students with the platforms and opportunities to serve. Students have the opportunity to live their faith and to learn to walk with God daily. As prayer is essential in growing towards holiness, daily morning reflections and prayer before morning assembly also set the tone for the rest of the day.

Student leaders also meet immediately after morning assembly for a short prayer, so that, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, they are ready to serve their fellow schoolmates.

During the fortnightly masses held at the school chapel, Catholic students are invited to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. The school's Chaplaincy Team also organises prayer sessions during the year to enable the Catholic students to encounter and experience the Lord in a deeper way. Such encounters, including Stations of the Cross and the washing

of feet paraliturg during the Lenten period, further anchor the students in their identity in Christ.

Integral to this experience of God is the Young Christian Society (YCS) which has been a part and parcel of the fabric of the school for the past forty years. Secondary 1 Catholic students participate weekly in prayer, reflection and sharing sessions over the course of nine months.

In an increasingly complex and noisy world where truths are often perceived to be relative, HIHS remains a safe space for its students who are reminded of the enduring Gospel values that Jesus bequeaths to us.

The teachers and staff of the school are committed and dedicated to growing this Christ-centred community, with the support of a strong alumni that not only gives in kind through donations, but also give of their time and energy through initiatives such as the night study programme for graduating students.

Recognising the immensity of God's love and providence, the Feast of the Holy Innocents is celebrated annually on December 28 as a form of thanksgiving for the year that has passed. The Mass is attended by the staff and students from both HIHS and HIPS. The Mass also serves as a reminder for the school community to align their minds and hearts to Jesus' commandment "love one another, as I have loved you" as they strive to heed the call to be Good Samaritans with the courage to lead and the compassion to serve. □