

# SJI's Lenten labour with an environmental flavour

**Firmin Lee and Eliza Lim**

As we enter the Easter Octave, students at St Joseph's Institution (SJI) can look back at their Lenten journey with pride and satisfaction at what they have accomplished.

In line with the United Nation's sustainable goals to create a better world and to reduce plastic use and wastage, the school encouraged all students and staff to "fast" and abstain from the use of plastics. They had to bring their own takeaway containers and mugs.

Thus, this SJI Lenten initiative created an opportunity to promote a greater awareness of the environmental needs, using the Pope's encyclical, *Laudato Si'* as its inspiration.

The aim was to give the students an approach to Lent with a different perspective such as:

1. Fast from unnecessary use of materials that are harmful to the environment.
2. Give alms by recycling used products (that are still in good condition) to people who do not have the privilege of using them.
3. To ground everything in prayer.

Jesuit Father Adrian Danker, Principal of SJI, expressed his joy at the effort that went into the Lenten initiative. "I'm glad that our students have put much thought into organising our Lenten initiative this

year, which is focused on the care of our environment, our planet Mother Earth. Through this activity, we hope the students now realise the impact of their little daily actions or lifestyle choices could lead to much environmental harm in the long run, and for our future generations."

He added that because of the COVID-19 outbreak, "It was challenging for many to do the various initiatives planned for. Yet, the unexpected lessons learnt about environmental protection as countries battled the coronavirus helped our students to appreciate the importance of their Lenten efforts to make the world greener and safer."

The three main facets of the initiative were:

1. Secondary students in Years 1-2 to collect old clothes and shoes, which were sent to a recycling company to be recycled and produced into new products.
2. Secondary students in Years 3-4 to collect electronic wastes, as well as usable 3G phones, to be donated to needy families. The school worked with the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) Singapore and Montfort Care to achieve this.
3. IB/JC students in Years 5-6 to design a planter box for plants, which would be cared by each class.

And, on every Friday during the Lent morning prayer, the students



Students after collecting the used clothes and shoes. Photos: Firmin Lee

were invited to spend 20 minutes in silent adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament before starting the day. On Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, reflections of the Station of the Cross were also conducted as part of the morning prayers. This initiative came from the SJI's Chaplaincy Team and started on Ash Wednesday. It concluded at the end of Holy Week.

In previous years the projects involved providing provisions to low-income families of different religious background, where the school partnered with a mosque, Buddhist temple and Hindu temple.

Dinh Cao Tue, a student said the project allowed him and his fellow students to decrease the amount of waste dumped into the environment by having them recycled or donated for reuse. "Many students did their

part either through contribution or coordination, and this has led to a fruitful collection of recyclable electronics and usable phones. Personally, the project has also provided me with a platform to become more outspoken and have more initiative, in order to drive the project forward."

Another student, Kwong Jon, said the project was a fruitful experience, "not just because I was able to immerse myself more into the spirit of Lent by aiding others to donate to those in need and the environment at large, but also because I was able to lead a group of enthusiastic Year 5s (JC students) in this student-initiated project. We also learnt to deal with obstacles such as the COVID-19 situation which had worsened during our project; forcing us to think more thoroughly about a sound collection system." □

