

Shaping lives for service to God and nation

Forming God-loving, gracious and caring learners at St Gabriel's Primary School

Established as part of the St Gabriel's family of schools in 1953 and run by the Brothers of St Gabriel, St Gabriel's Primary School (SGP) follows in the footsteps of its founder, St Louis Marie de Montfort, by giving each child a 'voice' so that they might learn to have a heart for others, through service to God and the nation.

This wisdom of St Louis Marie de Montfort is the cornerstone of SGP, where lessons are designed to cater to the learning needs of every child.

To know and love God

The Montfortian Leadership Programme aims to develop confident, God-centred role models by creating opportunities for Gabrielites to reach out to peers in need of help by, for example, creating study corners where student leaders can help their friends understand challenging concepts taught in class.

In Religious Education (RE) classes, students are inspired by stories from the life of St Louis and reflections on the Word of God. As Xavier Lim, a Primary 6 student recounts, "I enjoy the RE sessions. Sometimes, if we cannot understand the homily in church, the teachers will explain it to us."

The Catholic Club provides spiritual guidance on how to know, love and serve God better. Special Masses are held each term, and weekly sessions include prayer, meditation, hymns and a sharing on a relevant faith topic; fun activities, such as art and craft, help students further appreciate what they have learnt.

Learning journeys to Agape Village and Ren Ci Nursing Home and prayer sessions at the Stations of the Cross in St Joseph's Church (Bukit Timah) are also organised. Nathan Rodrigues, a Primary 6 student, quipped, "This has deepened my understanding of celebrations in the liturgical calendar that I never really gave much thought to before."

It is not just the students who cherish SGP's Catholic ethos. Mrs Sara Liyu Lee Cheng, a senior teacher, says, "One

of the things I appreciate most about being in a Catholic school is that we always start the day with our morning prayers, asking God for his blessings throughout the day. And at the end of each day, the 'Close of the School Day Prayer' is also recited to give thanks to God for the day."

Values-driven programmes

SGP offers many Values-In-Action projects to nurture Gabrielites in reaching out to the last, the least and the lost: "Those whom the world rejects must touch you the most."

Its MCLE (Montfortian Character, Citizenship & Leadership Education) lessons in class, encourage students to step out of their comfort zones and reach out to the community at large by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills. For example, having prepared for a visit to St Luke's Eldercare Centre by brainstorming ways to engage the residents together, Gabrielites chatted with the residents and engaged them in games and activities with ease during the visit. Language barriers were overcome with animated hand gestures and bonds forged so close that, at the end of the visit, both the boys and the elderly residents were reluctant to part ways.

Gabrielites also actively take part in the annual St Gabriel's Foundation Flag Day, when, together with their teachers and parents, the boys reach out to the wider community in various public places to appeal for donations with utmost enthusiasm and commitment.

Sports programmes are also just as values-driven. For example, the Gabrielite Football Academy envisions a holistic development of students with aspirations in taking up football, imparting not only football techniques and leadership skills, but also training in the practice of St Louis Marie de Montfort's values such as sportsmanship even during the most heated and intense moments of a match.



Fr Simon Pereira interacting with SGP students during Mass. Photos: SGP

Many other opportunities are provided for students to live out the school virtues of self-discipline, generosity, perseverance, sincerity, loyalty, orderliness, respect and diligence.

As Ms Tan Xinhui, parent of a P5 student, attests: "The school virtue of perseverance is a good reminder to the boys that they can achieve their personal best in whatever they do as long as they continue to work hard and persevere. Children are very accustomed to instant gratification these days. They need to understand that patience and time are often needed before they see the light at the end of the tunnel."

"Labor omnia vincit"

SGP's school motto means "labour conquers all things". It reminds Gabrielites: "in whatever you do, do your best". Indeed, SGP is a vibrant community of students, teachers and parents who all do their best to live out the virtues of St Louis Marie De Montfort.

Ms Patricia Seng, parent of P1 and P6 students sums it up. "My boys are in a learning environment that strives to follow the footsteps of St Louis Marie de Montfort, whose belief was to 'Love



Who can resist a Gabrielite on Flag Day?

each child as a son of God'. The life of St Louis embracing the poor is often shared with the boys with a call to live out the virtues of generosity, sincerity and loyalty daily in their own lives. As a parent, I am very grateful."

"If we do not risk anything for God, we will never do anything great for Him." May the words of SGP's founding father inspire every Gabrielite, and indeed everyone, to go forth to lead and serve with utmost humility and devotion to God and nation. □

Contributed by St Gabriel's Primary School



The school crest has four quadrants. Clockwise from top-left:

The letters A.M. stand for "Ave Maria" or "Hail Mary" in Latin. St Louis Marie de Montfort believed that wisdom is attained through living a life of gentleness and authenticity, modelled after Our Lady.

The letters D and S with a cross stand for "Dieu Seul" or "God Alone" in French. God alone was the centre of St Louis Marie de Montfort's life. For him, to know all things but not to know God

was to know nothing at all.

The sailing ship at sea symbolises the human experience of constantly weathering the storms of life, but with perseverance and resilience, these storms at sea can be overcome.

The star and the boat represent the star of the sea by which sailors navigate to reach their destination and symbolise the essential values of life which guide us to God, our ultimate destiny in life.

The green olive branches

symbolise peace and prosperity and every Gabrielite's duty to promote peace in the world, and a prosperity which is not merely the generation of wealth but also the integral development of human society.

The school motto "Labor Omnia Vincit" or "labour conquers all things" reminds Gabrielites that with hard work embodied in diligence and perseverance, great achievements are possible. In other words, "Whatever you do, do your best". □