

St. Mary's Past Students' Association

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2019

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Passing the Baton -

Farewell Ms. Maria Cheung... Welcome Ms. Helen Au, our new Patron

The 2019-2020 academic year is a special one for St. Mary's Canossian School. It marks the happy retirement of the former Headmistress Ms. Maria Cheung after a splendid 40 years with the school, and a warm welcome to Ms. Helen Au to the SMCS family as the new helmsman. The PSA is grateful that the two ladies have spent a delightful afternoon with us in an interview, during which both shared with us their valuable memories and views.

We were curious to know how Ms. Cheung started her bond with St. Mary's four decades ago. "I think it was God's calling," she said. "I spent my primary school days at Holy Family Canossian School, and I have then been with St. Mary's since Form 1. After getting my teacher's qualification in 1979. I sent almost 100 job applications out, and the only positive reply came from St. Mary's," Ms. Cheung laughed while recalling the moment. "Naturally I joined SMCS, as a teacher for Religious Education and Chinese. Time then flew. In the last 13 years, I served as headmistress of the school. I can't believe I've already spent 40 years on this campus!"



The two headmistresses Ms. Helen Au (left) and Ms. Maria Cheung (right) sharing a moment in the office.



Ms. Cheung is well-loved and will be missed by her students.

During her time at St. Mary's, there are countless remarkable incidents that took place. "I can say that I've witnessed many major milestones of SMCS. Like class schedule. When I first joined, the primary students still attended the morning (Pr. 2, 4 & 6) and afternoon sessions (Pr. 1, 3, 5). Soon afterwards in the early 1980s, shifting was cancelled, and students could elect for either morning or afternoon sessions throughout their six years in school. It was in 2003 that SMCS became a full day school to meet changing needs of the society," Ms. Cheung explained. "Another major development was the implementation of the "Through Train" mode in 2005, which

enabled SMCS students to move on directly to SMCC upon graduation, relieving them from the pressure of competition for Secondary One places," recalled Ms. Cheung. "The establishment of the Incorporated Management Committee in 2013 was also a major step taken to help carrying out the school mission and formulating school policies," she added.

"There are many other fond memories too," Ms. Cheung continued. "For instance, the surprise twin ice lolly event organized by the PSA on 11 Nov 2011 at 11:11am to celebrate the 111th anniversary of St. Mary's! It was the first time that everyone from SMCC and SMCS – alumnae, students, teachers, staff and janitors – joined to celebrate in unison. The primary students are so happy to be called to the playground during class time, and had the opportunity to share a twin ice lolly on the big steps! This is something they still remember even to this day," recalled Ms. Cheung with a smile.

As she is about to turn a new leaf, what does Ms. Cheung want to say to fellow St. Marians? “I came back to school one day in September after my retirement. A Primary 4 girl approached me and made me a promise, ‘I will be a good St. Marian.’ I was so touched by this sense of belonging which is shared among fellow St. Marians, current and past, senior and junior. Let’s all be grateful and keep up the sense of loyalty to St. Mary’s, and stay united as one.”



Everyone at school, SMCC and SMCS, joined the 111th anniversary celebration in the playground and shared twin ice lollies in 2011.

Meanwhile, Ms. Cheung extended a warm welcome to her successor Ms. Helen Au. “I am very grateful to the school sponsoring body’s appointment. Ms. Au is a dedicated educator who has been with Holy Angels Canossian School for 24 years, out of which she has been headmistress for seven years, allowing her to be very familiar with the core educational values of our school. I am sure SMCS will continue to flourish under Ms. Au’s leadership.”

Ms. Au had been listening to our previous conversation attentively, and was touched by Ms. Cheung’s sharing. We were interested to learn about what motivated her to take up the new challenge. “Similar to Ms. Cheung, I believe this is God’s plan. Although I felt hesitant at the outset, I have a strong sense of commitment and feel determined to carry out this mission. With my years of experience in Holy Angels, as well as the support from Ms. Cheung and School Supervisor Sr. Virginia Wong, I am confident that the Canossian spirit will be carried on in St. Mary’s,” explained Ms. Au.

So how did she feel during the first month in St. Mary’s? “I am very impressed by the love shown by our students,” Ms. Au said. “During lunch break one day, a Primary 2 student held my arm and asked whether I have adapted to the new school life! I find it very heart-warming that our students are so caring and humble, learning from the role model of the Holy Mother,” she recalled with a smile.



Ms. Helen Au looks forward to meeting St. Marians old and new.

“I’m happy to say that I am no stranger to St. Mary’s. In the past seven years when I was Headmistress of Holy Angels, I have worked closely with managers of both SMCS and SMCC to ensure a smooth operation of the “Through Train” policy. I’ve always felt a strong rapport with St. Marians,” Ms. Au disclosed.

When asked what her priorities are in the first semester, Ms. Au shared her view. “Integration is the key. I’d like to make use of this initial period to reach out and familiarize myself with the school’s key stakeholders, such as the teaching staff, students, parents, alumnae etc. I am very grateful that my first year coincides with the school’s 120th anniversary celebration. I can take this special occasion to meet with different people who are associated with the school.”

We are thankful to Ms. Cheung and Ms. Au for taking their time to talk to us. Their sharing enlightened us on the commitment and dedication of the Canossian educator. May God bless them in their upcoming paths, and make the true Canossian spirit continue to shine and prosper.

Mentorship Programme 2018-19

The 2018-19 academic year marks the 16th anniversary of our Mentorship Programme. This year, we attempted to adjust the Programme in a few areas for trial. Two tiers of activities were introduced: Tier 1 was career focused, while Tier 2 was aimed at personal growth. For both tiers, students were required to submit an application for participation. This enabled better resource planning and ensure that only the interested students would take part in the various activities. Moreover, the meeting time was changed from the afternoon to the morning, allowing more time for mentor-mentee interaction and engagement.



A mentor sharing advice with her mentees about work and life.

The kick-off meeting for the Tier 1 programme was held on 10 November 2018 which was the first time the mentors and mentees met to acquaint with each other. Groups were formed based on career interests, enabling natural exchange of ideas. We

had the pleasure to have 58 mentees who joined, and 28 alumnae to participate as mentors and helpers. The second gathering was held on 16 March 2019, which started with all mentees attending a plenary session on University Admission. Afterwards, the mentees split to participate in career seminars relating to the fields of Advertising, Banking & Finance, Business Consultation, Engineering & IT, Journalism and Medicine, giving them exposure to more than one field. The gathering ended with a debriefing session for the students to reflect on their learnings. We were happy to see that some groups carried on with heart-to-heart chats over lunch!



Career seminars provided opportunity for mentees to learn about a job from a practitioner.

After the kick-off meeting in November, 28 students also applied to join the Tier 2 programme, in which one or two mentees were being paired with a mentor for support on personal growth, and they arranged meetings on a needs-basis at their mutual convenience. 15 mentors took part in this tier of service.

The Mentorship Programme for 2019-2020 will commence in November. More adjustments will be made to the format to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness. Once again, we would like to extend our gratitude to our alumnae mentors, our Patron Ms Janet Wong, programme advisor Ms. Amelia Tsang, all teachers especially Mrs. Queenie Mui and Ms. Eliza Wong, and other supporting staff at school who have joined hands to make the Mentorship Programme a success!



Girls united in one heart!

Ms. Heidi Lee, Theatrical Producer

Some of us who are fans of stage performances may have seen in recent months the production of “Matteo Ricci The Musical” in Hong Kong. Did you know that one of our alumna, Ms. Heidi Lee, is producer of the successful stage performance?

Conceived by Rev. Giovanni Giampietro (恩保德神父) and directed by veteran television artist Mr. Damian Lau (劉松仁先生), the story tells of how the Italian Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci overcame cultural differences and finally succeeded in achieving his missionary work in China during the 16th century. However, neither Rev. Giampietro nor Mr. Lau was experienced in the field of stage performance. Ms. Heidi Lee was invited to help them orchestrate the production and marketing of the show.



A warm hello from Heidi.

Although not a Catholic herself, Heidi was deeply moved by the great passion of the working team. She also found the life of Matteo Ricci very meaningful. “Rev. Giampietro is already in his eighties, and it has been his dream to introduce the life and work of Matteo Ricci to the younger generations. Mr. Damian Lau, with his rich experience in acting, has also been meticulous in planning out his vision of the performance. I was immediately attracted to the project, as it presented me with an opportunity to make use of my experience to create something that is different from the usual commercial productions that I’m all too familiar with,” shared Heidi enthusiastically, who joined the Matteo Ricci team in 2017.



Heidi (fourth from left) with members of the crew and Mr. Damian Lau (third from right).

“I’m extremely pleased to have the chance to be part of this production. We are constantly re-energized with new ideas to reach out to more people through different channels,” said Heidi. “I find this to be very satisfying. We spread the message of love, patience, understanding and hope,” she said. “These are values that are extremely important in a dividing world,” she added.

Heidi’s bond with the world of performing arts budded when she was in Form 1. “I participated in the house-base drama ‘The Christmas Carol’ at that time. I helped in the props section, and saw my seniors planned and executed interesting ideas. It was an eye-opening experience,” said Heidi. “I was thrilled to know that we won the contest that year, and I can still remember the details up to this day!” she laughed.

The path was not exactly smooth for Heidi as she pursued her studies, but she finally managed to set her goal. Upon graduating from Form 5, she spent two years studying graphic design, and finally got admitted into the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts. Having majored in sound design in her diploma course, she later realized that it was not her call. “I figured that I prefer to work with people more than machines,” she giggled. “Therefore, I switched over to stage management in my degree course, and learnt to understand productions from a broader perspective. I also enjoyed bringing art to people, enabling them to be inspired. Hence I took a course in arts administration for this reason,” Heidi explained. “I wanted to become a professional art administrator that is recognized by the industry,” she added, recalling the decision she made more than two decades ago.

Since then, Heidi had had the opportunity to work at leading art institutions in Hong Kong such as the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre and the Hong Kong Dance Company, organizing and producing hundreds of shows directed by local and overseas artists. She was recruited by the Li Ka Shing



Heidi (centre) cheering with the Matteo Ricci team and Rev. Giampietro (third from left) after a successful performance.

Foundation as Executive Director at the Cheung Kong School of Art and Design in Shantou, Guangdong, in 2010, and eight years later became the Director of Arts and Cultural Development in STU Sports Park for the Foundation. “It was a very treasurable experience for me. I got to mingle with enthusiastic young people in China who were very eager to learn from the leading professionals that I lined up to share their experience. I felt that I was creating a community of young adults who are able to appreciate arts and performance in China at a new level,” said Heidi with pride.

“I had the opportunity to initiate the Shantou University Arts Season project, which provided art lovers the opportunity to enjoy three to four performances twice a

year during spring and autumn. We simply utilized the university hall at that time, with capacity of around a thousand people. I was very encouraged because we always had a full house,” Heidi recalled. “Then came the completion of the university’s new stadium which could house 1,000 to 6,000 people.

I took this opportunity to launch the New Wave Arts Festival, which allowed me to line up renowned performing groups from around the world and within China. It was a blast that again attracted full house!” shared Heidi with a content smile. “I spent a total of eight and a half years in Shantou, and I’m pleased that a generation of young people are being inspired by arts. A platform has been established for them to have exchange of ideas with Hong Kong, and also allowing them to learn how to work professionally with partners from around the world,” she added.



Heidi with a group of artists she invited from Poland for the New Wave Arts Festival.

And this was the time when Heidi decided that she wanted to return to Hong Kong to find another challenge. “I had a strong feeling that one chapter has been completed, and I just needed to move on. Apparently God has a plan for me, and I came across the production team of ‘Matteo Ricci The Musical’,” Heidi said.

“Things are coming to a full circle. Though I’m not a Catholic, I came from a Catholic school, and was inspired by a drama production when I was in Form 1. I managed to follow my interest in my studies and my career, equipping me with important skills and precious networks. I am all prepared now for the opportunity to orchestrate a show to spread the message of God. Not to mention that I’m sharing this story again with fellow St. Marians...what a miracle this is!” she said excitedly.

“I sincerely thank my Alma Mater for instilling important values in us. One of that is decency. This is crucial for a good leader, who should demonstrate fairness and integrity all the time. I felt this in my heart all the years. God is in my heart, and the fire is still burning,” she said gratefully. “May we all hold fast to these values and keep the Canossian spirit glowing,” she added. Yes, we all agree. Live St. Mary’s ever more!

School Drama 2019

“The Mystic Shoemaker”

We probably have never imagined how our wardrobe would look like if we all were to wear odd shoes instead of matching pairs every day! Such was one of the oddities for the people featured in the original musical play “The Mystic Shoemaker”, brought to us during the week of 27 April to 4 May 2019. The audience was led through an inspiring journey through which realization was reached that traditions and new ideas could co-exist creating a better world for all.



Meanwhile, as we begin to celebrate the 120th anniversary of our Alma Mater, Mr. Oliver promised us a new play written especially for the meaningful occasion! Titled “Under a Banner – Voices of St. Mary’s”, the play will include anecdotes about our school life, with contributions from students and teachers, past and present. Thank you Mr. Oliver. We are all looking forward to an interesting show in 2020!

Marians in Faith

On 11 May 2019, Marians in Faith had the honor to invite Father Cheung Lok Tin to deliver a sharing session on “How to Lead People to Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation?”

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the most unique and beautiful aspects of Catholicism. Jesus Christ, in His abundant love and mercy, established the Sacrament of Confession, so that we as sinners can obtain forgiveness for our sins and reconcile with God and the Church. If people have not been to Confession for a while, the Church is pleased to welcome them back, and invites them to participate in this engaging sacrament of healing. The critical requirement for a good confession is to have the intention of returning to God with your whole heart, and to acknowledge your sins with true sorrow before the Priest. People who grow in holiness have stronger sense of sin and crucial need for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. They have realized the key to handing over their burdens to Christ through the Sacrament of Confession, so they can be freed to serve Him with love and energy.



Members with Father Cheung Lok Tin (centre).

“Marians in Faith” is a self-initiated Catholic group aimed at strengthening SMCC alumnae’s faith in God. Please visit their Facebook Page at <http://www.facebook.com/MariansInFaith> for more details.

120th Anniversary of our Alma Mater



The year 2020 marks the 120th anniversary of our Alma Mater! Various performances are being lined up to mark the occasion, including the School Drama in April (dates to be confirmed), and the 120th Anniversary Concert at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre on **29 June 2020 (Mon)**.



Last but not least, the PSA will also be hosting the St. Mary's 120th Anniversary Dinner to wrap up the celebrative year on **28 November 2020 (Sat)**. Please mark your diaries for the time being, especially for those who are residing overseas. Further information will be available in the next issue of our newsletter scheduled for March 2020.

Happy Retirement

Two teachers celebrated their retirement at the close of 2018-19 academic year – Ms. Kenny Chan of SMCC and Ms. Maria Cheung of SMCS.

Ms. Kenny Chan came to St. Mary's in 1996 as teacher in Chinese language and culture. Later on, she also became advisor to the Discipline Prefects, as well as the Chinese Speech and Debate Club. Ms. Chan is well liked by students and colleagues during her two decades of service, and we are glad to know that she is retiring to start another new stage in life.



Ms. Kenny Chan, SMCC



Ms. Maria Cheung, SMCS

Ms. Maria Cheung, headmistress of SMCS, and one of the Patrons of SMPSA since 2006, joined St. Mary's in 1979 as a teacher for Religious Education and Chinese language. She is also a past student of St. Mary's in her secondary school years. After spending over four decades at 162 Austin Road, Ms. Cheung will take a relaxing break, and then re-engage herself in some other meaningful projects. Our special thanks to Ms. Cheung for her unfailing support to the SMPSA during the past 13 years!

On behalf of all past students, we wish Ms. Chan and Ms. Cheung all the best while turning a new page. May God bestow on both of them good health and lots of happiness in the years to come!

Alumnae Day 2019 Activities

Owing to the recent social conditions in Hong Kong and the uncertainties in transportation, we regret to inform members that the Alumnae Day activities this year, originally planned for 30 November (Sat), have been cancelled. Meanwhile, we congratulate our Alma Mater on her 120th anniversary, and look forward to joining the celebrative activities in the coming year.

Prayer of St. Francis

Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace

Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there is hatred let me bring your love,
Where there is injury your pardon Lord,
And where there's doubt true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace,
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope,
Where there is darkness, only light,
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

O Master grant that I may never seek,
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving of ourselves that we receive.
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

