



# Canossian Colleges Alumnae Association Newsletter

6071 Christina Road Richmond, B.C. V7C 2P7  
Website: [www.canossialumnae.org](http://www.canossialumnae.org)

Volume 17, Issue 1  
December 2013

*"Let us pray and God will do the rest."*

St. Magdalene of Canossa

## Spiritual Director's Address

**Sr. Cecilia Cham, FdCC**

Dear Alumnae:

Two important events have taken place this year:

- (I) The "Year of Faith";
- (II) The appointment of Pope Francis.

Pope Benedict XVI declared a special "Year of Faith" which began in October, 2012, the anniversary of the Opening of the Second Vatican Council, and concluded on 24 November, 2013, the Feast of Christ the King.

The "Year of Faith" is to help Catholics all over the world to appreciate the gift of faith, to deepen their relationship with God and to strengthen their commitments to share faith with others. He said that the "Year of Faith" would give "renewed energy to the mission of the whole church, to lead men and women out of the desert towards the place of life and friendship with Christ. It will be a moment of grace and commitment to an even fuller conversion to God, to reinforce our faith in Him and to proclaim Him with joy to the people of our times".

On 13 March, 2013, Francis, born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, became the 266<sup>th</sup> Pope and is currently the Pope of the Catholic Church, having been elected Bishop of Rome. He is, thereby, also the sovereign of Vatican City. Throughout his life, both as an individual and a religious leader, Pope Francis has been known for his humility, his concern for the poor and his commitment to open dialogue as a way to build bridges between people of all backgrounds, beliefs and faiths.

Pope Francis said in one of his homilies: "How many poor people are out there in the world! And what great suffering they have to endure!" The Pope spoke powerfully to each one of us about how materialism captivates our lives and distort our humanity. Pope Francis further emphasized that "a way has to be found to enable everyone to benefit from the fruits of the earth, and not simply to close the gap between the rich and the poor".

Pope Francis has also written about his commitment to open and respectful interfaith dialogue as a way for all parties engaged in that dialogue to learn from one another. Pope Francis blessed the non-believers. He wrote: "we also sensed our closeness to all those men and women who, although not identifying themselves as followers of any religious tradition, they, nonetheless, are searching for truth, goodness and the beauty of God."

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY. May God bless you and your family with peace, love and grace for a wonderful year full of good health and happiness!



## Message from the President

**Carmen Leung**

**SMCC Macau**

Dear Alumnae,

Hope all is well with you. First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for making the time from your busy schedule to attend this annual Christmas Dinner.

This year, as usual, we had different events, such as the Past Board Lunch, Retreat, Feast Day of St. Magdalene of Canossa, AGM and Dinner, Summer Getaway, and tonight's Christmas Dinner. We have also been preparing for the Pilgrimage to Russia next year. During the AGM Dinner, we were able to raise \$800 for the Chihuahua project. We have an increased number of new and lifetime members due to the Membership Drive. Please update us if you have any changes in your contact information. A new Visiting Team has been set up to visit the sick and shut-ins since July this year. Should you know of anyone who needs us to pay a visit, please inform us. In future, we plan to have a singing group to visit the nursing homes during the Mid-Autumn Festival, Christmas/New Year and Chinese New Year.

The funds that we raised for the Chihuahua Project in the past years have helped to upgrade the school facilities with new furniture and a new computer lab with over 25 computers. Our contribution has given the children the dignity and respect that they deserve. During this Christmas Dinner, we will again raise funds for this Project on the Scholarship Program and Playground Renovation. We have put up some photos of the Project at the Reception for your information. On behalf of our Canossian Sisters and the Students, we thank you for your continued support.

Our Canossian Sisters have been in Vancouver for 25 years. To celebrate this milestone, we will offer a mass and organize a dinner on August 16, 2014. More ideas from you would be much appreciated. Our annual Retreat will be held in mid-March 2014. Please mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information.

Our Spiritual Director, Advisors, Board Members and volunteers always strive to better serve our alumnae and the community. May I take this opportunity to thank them all for their hard work and valuable contribution.

Wish you all a Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year!

## Meet our Board of Directors

### 2013-2014 Board of Directors

Spiritual Director	Sr. Cecilia Cham
President	Carmen Tam-Leung
Secretary	Beatrice Yeung
Treasurer	Esther Ng
Membership	Mary Chan
Advisor	Janet Mak
Advisor	Vicky Wong
Advisor	Helen Wong

## Special Announcements

Lenten Retreat

AGM

Summer Picnic

Canossian Sisters 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Christmas Dinner 2014

## Silver Anniversary Dinner (December 8th, 2012) Teresa Au

SMCC

Celebrating at Fisherman's Terrace Restaurant was a change from our usual venue. Members' responses were positive. Their food never failed. There was no more complaint about not being able to find a parking space.

The restaurant was packed with alumnae, teachers and friends. People were greeting each other happily, catching up and re-discovering long lost friendship. With 230 guests, one can imagine the kind of hustle and bustle. The atmosphere was exciting, vibrant, cheerful and, of course, loud!!

We were honoured by the presence of Rev. Msgr Stephen Jensen, Vicar General of Archdiocese of Vancouver, and now Bishop of Prince George, Sr. Elisa Grignoli from Sacramento, USA, Fr. John Horgan, Fr. Paul Chu, Fr. Francis Chang, Fr. Dominic Qin, and Fr. Vincent Nguyen from Vancouver.



There was no un-ending addresses or talks, neither was there any performance, but the evening went on smoothly and happily based on charity, fellowship and membership. On the note of charity, \$3000 were raised from selling raffle tickets and silent auction. Valuable prizes, from generous donation, attracted people's desire to get the prize, which in turn increased the sale of tickets. There were echos of "I want the abalone". ..... "I want the iPad"..... "I want the free trip".....etc, etc.

Among the winners were Sr. Cecilia Cham, Fr. Paul Chu, Pauline Mak, (notoriously famous for sweeping off lots of prizes), and Betty Leung (past VP) and Gigi Lau (past Director of Membership) who together won the iPad Mini. They had to face the problem of sharing the prize. There were over 30 happy winners. Congratulations.

With decreasing immigrants from Hong Kong and Macau, and with the passing of time, our membership profile is not very impressive. Most of the active members are not getting any younger. A membership drive over dinner created some good positive response. Let's keep up this spirit.

Overall, it was a most memorable and successful evening. On behalf of everyone present, I would like to salute the organizing committee, the board members and Sr. Cecilia Cham for their hard work and dedication. God bless you all.

## 2013 Luncheon for Past Board Members

Beatrice Yeung

CC

I have been a part of the Canossian Colleges Alumnae Board for two years now.

This is my second year being involved in preparing the past board lunch. Last year's experience taught me that many of our board members prefer not to eat anything too oily and salty. Thus, I prepared a menu for this year's lunch with the approval of every board member.

On January 26 at 11:30 a.m., I picked up the food from food court, and was back at the church by 11:45 a.m. so the food would be fresh for our guests; with 15 minutes to spare before our guests arrived at noon.

We hosted 20 past board members and we also invited Sr. Cham and Fr. Chu.



I hoped that everyone enjoyed the cuisine and the dessert I selected. Lunch was over by 1:30 pm.

With another successful lunch under our belt, the goal for us is to attract even more previous board members to come back and share their experiences with us in the coming years.

## CCAA Lenten Retreat, 2013

**Teresa Au**

**SMCC**

“Staying and walking through the desert with Jesus Christ. ”

The Annual Retreat was held on March 16<sup>th</sup> in Richmond. It was attended by over 30 members and friends. Our Spiritual Director was Fr. Hien Nguyen who is involved with Campus Ministry and Student Life in Corpus Christi and St. Mark's College. He is also Assistant Pastor of St. John The Apostle Parish. Prior to that he studied at Gregorian Pontifical University in Rome and completed a licentiate degree in Theology with a specialization in Spirituality.

The retreat began with Morning Mass followed by a light breakfast, when members had an opportunity to meet each other and register.

Father delivered three interesting sessions of discussion and comment.

How can we approach God in this society of ours?

How to get rid of the obstacles in our relationship with God?

How to achieve different levels of prayer?

In the last session, Fr. Hien shared his personal journey, walking through life with Jesus and working towards his vocation. Everyone present was intrigued by the dramatic and difficult life that Father experienced in Vietnam, eventually finding his way to Canada and the priesthood. The day ended with the Sacrament of Reconciliation and personal prayer. It was a very fulfilling day and everybody left the retreat enriched and fulfilled.



## Feast Day Celebration of St. Magdalena of Canossa

**Yvette Pereira**

**CC India**

It was a bright and beautiful day on 4th of May, full of sunshine and cheer, which heralded the feast of St. Magdalena of Canossa!

Before Mass, all the lay Canossians and Canossian Alumnae assembled, holding bouquets of flowers - the fairest and the rarest, in a long procession, moved slowly to honour and crown Our Blessed Mother "Queen of the May," accompanied by a melodious chorus of voices praising and singing hymns to Our Lady.

This was followed by a devout recitation of the Rosary!

The Mass was concelebrated by Rev. Fr. Paul Chu, Rev. Fr. Francis Chang, and Rev. Fr. Aubrey Fernandes.

In his homily, Fr. Paul stressed the need to die to self, and elaborated on the virtue of Humility, he also emphasized the need for an increase in Vocations. The solemn service was well-attended, and a packed congregation participated with full reverence and devotion.

Sr. Beatrice thanked one and all, and invited all to join in the Reception in the Parish hall.



Our thanks to the Lay Canossians for the lavish and colourful spread and the beautiful cake and variety of refreshments which they organized so meticulously. Everyone joined in the spirit of this joyous occasion, the meeting and greeting, the love, cheer and laughter filled the atmosphere all around, which helped make it a very memorable event.

Our heartfelt gratitude go to our dear Sr. Cecilia and Sr. Beatrice for their untiring efforts and dedication to make this event a happy and joyous one.

May the Good Lord shower His blessings on them and help them to carry on their mission of evangelizing according to His will!

And finally on behalf on all present, let me say just two little words which are meant to reveal. A warm grateful feeling that's ever so real.

THANK YOU!



## Praise to the Lord Alumnae - AGM Dinner 2013

Ivy Lee

SHCC

Praise to the Lord, we had another successful Annual General Meeting on May 4, 2013 which also marked the Feast Day of St. Magdalene of Canossa. The day kicked off with Mass celebrated by Fr. Paul Chu with full congregational attendance at Canadian Martyrs Church in Richmond. Following the Mass was a reception arranged and prepared by the committee, lay Canossians and volunteers. The food was always delicious and yummy. In the evening, more than 80 people, including alumnae, guests and families congregated in the Kirin Restaurant for the celebration. Led by our Spiritual Director Sr. Cecilia Cham, we sang "In Verona" in great enthusiasm.



dinners with excuses due to my unsociable behavior. Now that I am at retirement age, my feelings for such events were rather on the opposite side. There was a sense of thankfulness and joy every time I took part in these dinners. I was at awe in the way God had put us together. I looked around and was amazed to find that everybody came from all sorts of background, equipped with different gifts and talents. It was like a jigsaw puzzle that each piece would fit into its designated slot to make the picture complete.

Throughout the evening, I could feel a tremendous energy level with laughter and giggles ringing through the air. Among it all was the sound of surprise and excitement when the numbers of raffle tickets were drawn and called. Some even had to jump up several times with multiple wins. In the course of dinner, I was able to sit among a few friends whom I had close friendship with. Some were mere acquaintances. I even got to know a couple of new faces, learning to remember their names too. I had to confess that a decade of years ago, I had tried to avoid or skip AGM

Last but not the least, I take this opportunity to send my salute to my fellow alumnae especially to the present Chairperson, Carmen Tam, her board members, lay Canossians and all the volunteers who worked so tirelessly throughout the year. Reading through the President's report, I couldn't help but to be filled with admiration. They've accomplished so much, always putting our retreat on the agenda, summer outings for families, Christmas Dinners, AGM meetings and at the same time fund raising for Missionaries. Keep it up for a job well done!

## Summer Getaway – Grotto, Portland [August 3-5, 2013]

Mary Chan

SHCC

Organizing this year's summer getaway was not easy.

At first we had just around 20 participants; I was discouraged and had on several occasions wanted to give up organizing this event. However, taking into consideration the enthusiasm and support of some alumnae, I persevered and decided to continue organizing the trip. I prayed and prayed and prayed, and with the help of one of my friends, Dorothy Chung, who is also an alumna, we were able to increase the number of participants to 47 a few days before the trip.

Other problems arose due to the late confirmation of a number of participants, and also because of the long weekend. Hotel rooms in Portland were very tight, and we also had difficulty in finding a bigger coach. With the help from another alumna, Carmen Ho, who managed to find us shelter in Portland on the first night, we were on our way. Also, just 12 hrs before our trip, Carmen was able to find a Chinese-speaking driver and a nicer, bigger and more comfortable coach for us. Thank you Carmen and also thanks to God for all these fortunate events.



We started our journey at 6am on August 3, and although the wait at the border was three hours long, everything went smoothly. After lunch, we visited an old German village, Mt. Angel, City of Bells, where a clock tower plays music four times a day. Even though the time we visited was not the scheduled time for music playing, the tour guide made a special arrangement with the owner and we were able to hear the music and see various statues representing the town pop out of the clock tower. Afterwards, we rushed to Woodburn for crazy shopping. Next morning, we visited Rose Garden and the Grotto, where we also attended mass. Even the non-catholic participants came along and attended the mass for blessing. We then went to see Multnomah Fall, little Washington and that night, we stayed in the best hotel in Olympia. On the last day, we visited Bremerton, Port Gable, Poulsbo and Duty Free Shop for some last-minute tax-free shopping.

Thanks to everyone who participated, without which this trip would not have been such a huge success.

Thanks to God for a very good tour guide, James. We played games, we sang, we shared, we had so much fun, and lots of laughter. Thanks James.

Thanks also to God for our photographer, Frank, who took pictures for us for the whole trip. Thanks Frank.

If you want to share our memory, joy and happiness, you can visit <http://www.canossianalumnae.org/events.html>, or if you want to order a CD, you can either email: [canossian.alumnae@gmail.com](mailto:canossian.alumnae@gmail.com) or call me at 604-649-3889.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Carmen Ho and Dorothy Chung for their support in organizing this trip and especially to Carmen Ho for her unceasing encouragement.

## Becoming a Catholic at St. Mary's and Answering God's Call

Resela A. (Shum) Wong-Sing

SMCC

I was baptized in Form 3. I don't know why. All I could remember was that many of my classmates were getting baptized and they were all in the nun's good books (she was our Form teacher). That was my perception as a 15 year old. Who doesn't want to be a teacher's pet? I wanted to score "brownie points" too. I remember attending Sunday Mass regularly but I hardly went to the dreaded confession. I saw my friend become a novitiate at the Canossian convent and wanted to join too. I squelched at the thought though. So you see my faith was built on sandy ground.

*"Everyone who listens to these words of Mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined."* – Matthew 7:26, 27

After graduation when I went to Canada for further studies, I joined my friends at the University of Windsor and proclaimed myself agnostic. After all it was the '60's, the era of "sit-in's" and demonstrations against the Vietnam War. Being a Catholic was definitely NOT cool.

However God sent me Joe who was a regular Mass goer. We were married in 1970 in the Catholic Church. We raised three children in the Catholic Faith superficially – the "straw house" phase of my faith. You see I only attended Mass as a "Sunday visitor". I had no conviction. It was just a routine, something I had to do as a Catholic so I won't commit mortal sin. Subsequently only one of our three children still kept his faith – Aaron, the one who has cerebral palsy. In fact Aaron was one of the instruments for my reconversion.

Raising a child with disabilities was no easy task. The years growing up in a convent school laid the foundation. During those formative years I learnt to be resilient to the demanding curriculum and strict discipline of the Canossian nuns. I learnt to be a leader when I was appointed Class Prefect and House Captain of the College. Most of all I learnt to be joyful in daily life.

However my Faith was buried somewhere. My final reconversion didn't happen till 2003 when I had surgery for liver cancer. My then pastor, now Bishop Richard Gagnon of Victoria, BC, Canada began the process of my reconversion. He conferred the Sacrament of Anointing on me before I went in for surgery. My anxiety was all washed away and peace was bestowed upon me – there was also an ethereal feeling that is hard to describe.

In 2004 I attended the International Eucharistic Congress in Guadalajara, Mexico. This trip plus the pilgrimage was organized by Aaron who has been volunteering building houses for the poor there. After witnessing the strong faith of the Mexicans, I was on fire!

I was not sure what the good Lord has installed for me. How He would like me to serve Him. I thought I was "home free" when Aaron graduated from university and worked for the Federal Gov't in Ottawa. He now lives independently. That was MY plan.

***"God always surprises us, He bursts our categories, He wreaks havoc with our plans. And He tells us: Trust Me, do not be afraid, let yourself be surprised, leave yourself behind and follow me!"***

Pope Francis' Homily at Mass for Marian Day, October 13, 2013.





However God has His own plan for me. My husband, Joe, was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2006, a year after my pilgrimage to Italy and France. The main purpose of the pilgrimage was to visit the Canossian Convent's Mother House in Verona, where St. Magdalene of Canossa founded the Canossian Daughters of Charity mission. We also visited St. Bakhita's resting place.

"Now I have to look forward to pushing a wheelchair again?" I asked God with anguish.

God works in mysterious ways indeed. We cannot second guess Him. He has been showering me with challenges throughout my life. How do I accept them? – in obedience by God's grace. One obvious example was from the Canossian nuns at Mary's. I have always marveled at their vow of obedience and the sacrifice they made for the love of God and their joyful answer to God's call. This exemplifies Our Lady's "fiat" to God's call.

My having to give up my profession of social worker (with MSW degree) to stay home to raise a child with disabilities and two other children, and now looking after my husband IS my vocation – to be a joyful witness to God's bountiful love and mercy.

However God also blesses me with two beautiful grand daughters and a third on the way.

*"... the mystery of the Body of Christ is that with each of our singular faithful response of 'yes' leads to a whole new range of blessings and opportunities."* Rev. Msgr. Mark Hagemoen, Bishop Elect of the Diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith, NWT, Canada.

I pray that I have the grace of humility to acknowledge my weaknesses and trust that The Holy Spirit will guide me in every step of my way.

I praise and thank Him!

*"If He asks much from you, it is because He knows you can give much."*

Bl. Pope John Paul II

*"God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission."*

Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman



*From the Board of Directors*