Infant Jesus Board of Management

Message from Ms Vivienne Lim, Chairperson, CHIJ Board of Management

This year marks the 170th anniversary of the CHIJ mission in Singapore. As we celebrate this milestone, we reflect on a legacy that began with the visionary Blessed Nicolas Barre. His dream was simple yet profound: to provide an education rooted in love and faith, empowering girls to discover and harness their unique gifts. This dream was embraced by Mother Mathilde Raclot, a trailblazer whose journey across seas and cultures reshaped the future of education in Asia. In the mid-19th century, the idea of female education was not just revolutionary; it was practically unheard of in many parts of the world. Yet, Mother Mathilde, inspired by the teachings of Fr Nicolas Barre and fueled by an unyielding passion, saw education not just as a right but as a transformational force for good.

She arrived in Singapore in 1854 with Mother St Appollinaire, Mother St Gaetan and Sr St Gregory Connolly, all filled with hearts full of faith and hope, and hands ready to work. Within 10 days of arriving in Singapore, they founded the first Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus school in Singapore. Very soon after, they also opened an orphanage next door to care for children who were being abandoned at their gates. With their audacious dream, girls who would have been overlooked by society were instead uplifted by knowledge. They were taught to read and write, to think critically, and to challenge the boundaries set before them. Her vision was clear: empower women, and you transform society.

Today, we stand as beneficiaries of the first IJ Sisters' courage and foresight. With the continued zeal, passion and commitment of the many successive IJ Sisters, dedicated school leaders, educators, staff, alumnae, and the support of the government, the IJ Community has grown to encompass 11 CHIJ schools all over Singapore, having educated more than 200,000 girls in Singapore, many of whom have gone on to make an impact in the lives of many others in society, in the workplace, and at home with their families.

As we celebrate this significant anniversary, let us remember the responsibility that accompanies this legacy that began 170 years ago. It is upon us to continue the mission of Mother Mathilde Raclot, to expand the horizons she set, and to ensure that every girl who dreams of a better future can reach for the stars. As we look to the future, let us renew our commitment to the IJ dream. Let us continue to be beacons of hope, agents of change, messengers of peace, using our gifts to make a difference in the world. In the spirit of Mother Mathilde, whose pioneering efforts bridged cultures and communities across continents, we too are called to be architects of peace and unity. Today, as we reflect on her legacy, let us embrace our role as bridge builders – not only in grand gestures on world stages but in the quiet corners of our daily lives.

At home, let peace begin with understanding and patience across the dinner table, as we nurture bonds that fortify against life's divides. In schools, let us teach and exemplify compassion and cooperation, building pathways of respect among diverse student bodies. At work, let us foster environments of inclusivity and mutual respect, where different perspectives converge to create innovative solutions. And in our global village, let our actions reflect a commitment to a world where peace prevails over conflict, where bridges of dialogue and understanding stand stronger than walls of division. As Mother Mathilde extended her hand across oceans, may we extend ours across the street and across the aisle, championing a world that she envisioned – a world united in its diversity, and may we do so in fidelity to our motto of being "*Simple in Virtue, Steadfast in Duty*".

May God continue to bless CHIJ Our Lady Queen of Peace, her leaders, teachers and students, always.

Yours in Christ

Ms Vivienne Lim
Chairperson
CHIJ Board of Management