

Young adults learn about the Church's social mission

The Caritas Singapore Young Adults (CYA) Committee had an eventful 2015. It was the group's busiest year yet, packed with volunteering and formation events, and it is looking forward to reaching out to more Catholic young adults in 2016.

This group of working Catholic young adult volunteers got together in 2012 to find ways to respond to God's call to serve the poor. Since its first awareness-raising activity in early 2013, the CYA has grown from 43 to more than 180 members.

The CYA has a core group of nine and three sub-committees: Outreach and Communications, Formation, and Volunteer Management. Its mission is to support Caritas Singapore in integrating faith and social responsibility among Catholic young adults through four main thrusts: Educating, Inspiring, Facilitating; and Training and Developing.

One of the highlights of its activities in 2015 was the biennial awareness event on September 5, 2015 in the newly opened Agape Village. Organised in partnership with the various Catholic charities, the event helped participants understand the plight of the poor and marginalised in Singapore and what the Catholic community is doing to reach out to them as a response to God's call to service. More than 60 young adults from 20 parishes joined the CYA to reflect on how to live the Catholic social mission today.

The CYA also worked with the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ACMI), Morning Star Community Services and the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) to take interested young adults to participate in events such as the Bread Basket Run, a Christmas party for the children and Ration Day respectively.

In the Bread Basket Run, provisions were bought and packed into goodie bags, which were distributed to foreign workers at their dormitory. The activity gave volunteers an opportunity to meet foreign workers and reflect on the hard work and sacrifices of these migrant workers who help build the infrastructure of our country.

The CYA's Creed on the Street quarterly forum on social issues such as poverty and the environment with a Christian perspective, welcomed many new faces in 2015. Each session drew about 20 young adults, with the CYA facilitating the discussion and providing insights on the chosen subject from a Catholic perspective.

The topics covered through 2015 were: "Meritocracy - a level playing field for the poor?"; "Social Welfare versus Individual Responsibility" and "Exploitation of the Earth - a Cause of Human Suffering". Participants shared their views, knowledge and concerns and were eager to learn the Church view of these matters, and to put into action the ideas tossed up during the sessions.

Another CYA activity was a workshop, The Spirituality of Work, held at the Church of the Holy Family. More than 50 young adults came together to share and reflect on how they live their faith at the workplace. Parish priest Father Patrick Goh welcomed everyone before Father David Garcia, OP spoke on the spirituality of work and the basic principles drawn from the Catholic social teachings, before the participants

More working people are aware of the needs of the poor and marginalised in Singapore, thanks to a three-year-old group that organises awareness-raising sessions and activities for young adults.



Caritas Singapore Young Adults worked with the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ACMI) to distribute goodie bags of provisions to foreign workers at their dormitory. Volunteers had an opportunity to meet and speak with the migrant workers, and a chance to reflect on sacrifices of the men who help build Singapore's infrastructure.

The discussions organised by Caritas Singapore Young Adults brings young people together to learn how to turn the Church's social teachings into action in their daily lives and at the workplace too.



discussed the challenges faced at the workplace and how to be more courageous in living out their faith while at work.

Can you give more than a cash donation?

Thinking about the year gone by, CYA committee members drew inspiration from the story of the Widow's Mite. In *Mark 12: 41-44*, Jesus compared rich people putting large sums into the treasury with the poor widow who put in two small coins and said: "Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

Mark Tang, 26, a market analyst, said: "It is a timely reminder that we should give generously and not just from our surplus. Donating money may seem to fulfil our social mission, but perhaps Jesus is calling us to give of our time and talents from a sincere heart to God, trusting that He will use

our gifts to bring His love especially to those in need."

Alan Lim, 35, a lead software architect, said: "As working people, many of us are challenged to balance the numerous demands on our time, as well as our various commitments. From young, we have been making our monetary contributions during Charities Week. It was an item to be checked off during Lent, and then life went on. However, there was a stirring in our hearts to do more than be content with the annual cash donations. We came together as a group of like-minded individuals and formed the CYA, wanting to know more about how our Catholic faith approached the less fortunate in Singapore."

Hannah Lee, a 30-year-old mother of two young boys, said: "When we first started serving in the CYA, we often felt clueless - we had little experience in volunteer management and did not know the Catholic social doctrine in depth. All we had were two small coins: faith and an open mind. In time we learnt that the amount we give matters less than the act of surrender

and trust in God that He will provide. We have experienced the Holy Spirit guiding and inspiring us in our journey and have been touched by the various encounters with other young adults throughout the various events."

CYA committee members said they hope to have the same disposition as the poor widow, to have strong faith in the Lord when they reach out to young adults about the Church's social mission by providing volunteering opportunities or formation sessions.

Michelle Lee, a 30-year-old scientist, believes that giving from a relationship with Christ is important, so that the people the group reaches out to also encounter Jesus. "We have begun by offering our two small coins, it may not be all that we have but we are grateful we have started. Will you join us?"

If you are aged between 21-35 years, have an interest in the Catholic social mission and would like to join CYA in its activities, contact youngadults@caritas-singapore.org and join our Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CaritasYA/>

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- MARK TANG,
A MEMBER OF THE
CYA CORE TEAM