

A stylized landscape illustration featuring rolling green hills in various shades of green, a brown path, a green tree, a purple flower, and an orange butterfly. The sky is composed of horizontal bands of light blue and white. A red bird is flying in the upper left.

Catholic School Teachers' Day 2023

Response to the Musical “Mission of the Shepherd”

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Why do we have a musical this year?

- Supervisor Lee Kim Wah believes that having similar programmes repeatedly is not ideal for the Catholic school teachers who come all the way to AsiaWorld-Expo, Chek Lap Kok, Tung Chung, from their schools or homes to participate in the triennial Catholic School Teachers' Day. Therefore, he hopes to include some new elements or new programmes every time so that **the teachers feel that the trip to Tung Chung is rewarding and meaningful.**
- In fact, it is the same situation as our lesson preparation. Teachers will constantly consider what students will gain or learn from our lessons, and how to make students learn in a more effective manner and in a pleasant learning atmosphere.



Why do we include the element of mahjong in the prelude?

- When introducing the script, Supervisor Lee proposed to use “playing mahjong” in the prelude.
- The organizing committee thought that using the idea of playing mahjong on Catholic School Teachers’ Day might not be appropriate or it might be misleading. If the story plot requires to mention a game, how about playing “Bridge” instead? Playing “Monopoly” or playing “Aeroplane Chess”?
- Supervisor Lee responded, “**You shouldn’t be living in the clouds!** Don’t you know that playing mahjong is a common social activity for college students!”



Why do we include the element of mahjong in the prelude?

- It seemed to be a wake-up call for me, and a Bible verse immediately appeared in my mind and that is “**I know my sheep and my sheep know me.**” (Jn 10:14)
- We as teachers, do we really know our students? As principals, do we really know our teachers?
- Our students like playing video games, anime, surfing the Internet, dancing K-pop, and live streaming on YouTube Channel.
- How much do we know about their daily life? If we don't know, how should they be guided? **If we know, is it enough just to ‘say no’?**



“Those little kids are out of control!” - Candice

- School work is indeed not as “simple” as it used to be. Whether it is the environment outside the school, the daily operation of the school, or the performance of students and the expectations of parents, it seems that it is becoming more and more complicated, more and more complex, and more and more “uncontrollable”. **But our original intention of “wanting to be a teacher at the outset” has never changed.**
- As Candy said, “I think as a good teacher, I should not just force my students, but **to journey with them all the way regardless of applause or booing.**”
- Therefore, no matter how the environment changes, it is our original intention to walk with our students for a brighter future.



“I don't know when love has become so complicated?” - Candy

- Johnny sir said, “As a teacher in a Catholic school, you should not only ‘teach’, but taking care of our students as a shepherd.”
- In fact, the theory is very simple, but why did Candy say, “When has love become so complicated?”
- **Let's think about what love is.** Does it mean accompanying children to grow up healthily? Or does it mean that we have to train children to be competitive and win at the starting line?
- If even we teachers can't grasp the essence of education, the road ahead will become more and more complicated and difficult, and we may even lose our direction.



“I don't know when love has become so complicated?” - Candy

- We, educators, must always keep a clear mind and never “do anything for the sake of doing it”.
- We must be clear about the benefits that each school policy will bring to students. Whether the ideas are proposed by experts or front-line teachers, **those policies that can help our students grow are effective policies for our respective school contexts.**



“I don't want to go to heaven with only Auntie JoJo accompanying me!” – Man Man

- It is an indisputable fact that teachers are extremely busy with their work, and sometimes it is difficult to strike a balance among work, professional development, family, and social life at the same time.
- As school administrators, when a teacher's performance does not match with our expectations, or when he refuses certain job duties, we would easily fall into a fallacy. We might intuitively think that the teacher is lazy or unwilling to take up responsibility, and **we might not take the initiative to find out more about it.**



“I don't want to go to heaven with only Auntie JoJo accompanying me!” – Man Man

- Let me share a true incident here as an example. Once, a teacher came to see me and said, “I don't want to be a Form 1 class teacher.” I asked him for the reason and he told me that apart from teaching lessons, he had to accompany students during lunch break, and to be on duty, he didn't even have time for lunch. I said to him, “The division of labor in school is very fair, transparent and just. Everyone has been doing this for so many years. What's the problem?”



“I don't want to go to heaven with only Auntie JoJo accompanying me!” – Man Man

- After the conversation, I decided to check the teacher's timetable, and found that he had classes before and after lunch for quite a number of days a week, and his duty roaster prepared by the Discipline Team so happened to fall on those days that he had classes before and after lunch. As a result, he could only have lunch in late afternoons on such days.
- At that moment, I realized that **when many reasonable systems intersect with one another, the result may sometimes be unreasonable.**



“I know my sheep, and my sheep know me.” (Jn 10:14)

- **The principals need to know the teachers, and the teachers need to know the principals as well.**
- Once, I had to handle a case when a teacher complained about the principal. After learning about the teacher's views on the principal, I asked the teacher if there was anything about the principal that he appreciated or if there was anything that he wanted to tell the principal. He said, “The principal is very hardworking. He usually leaves office very late. I am worried that he might have car accidents when he drives home at night. Besides, having takeaways for three meals a day is not healthy. He has lost a lot of weight since he took up principalship.”
- I asked him, “Have you ever tried to tell the principal what you think about him?” I believe all of you would know the answer that he didn't.



“I know my sheep, and my sheep know me.” (Jn 10:14)

- When I shared this experience with Supervisor Lee, he laughed out loud. He said that he had made similar mistake when he was the principal. He said, “I think the teachers in my school are doing very well, but I’m not used to praising them publicly. Instead, I often said, “Mr. Chan, you are late today”, “Ms. Li, you were late for class again yesterday”, “Mr. Cheung, you are late in submitting examination papers”
- Well, from this we should realise that **it is not necessary to buy services for building team spirit in school. Team spirit could be established by extending compliments and gratitude to each other.**



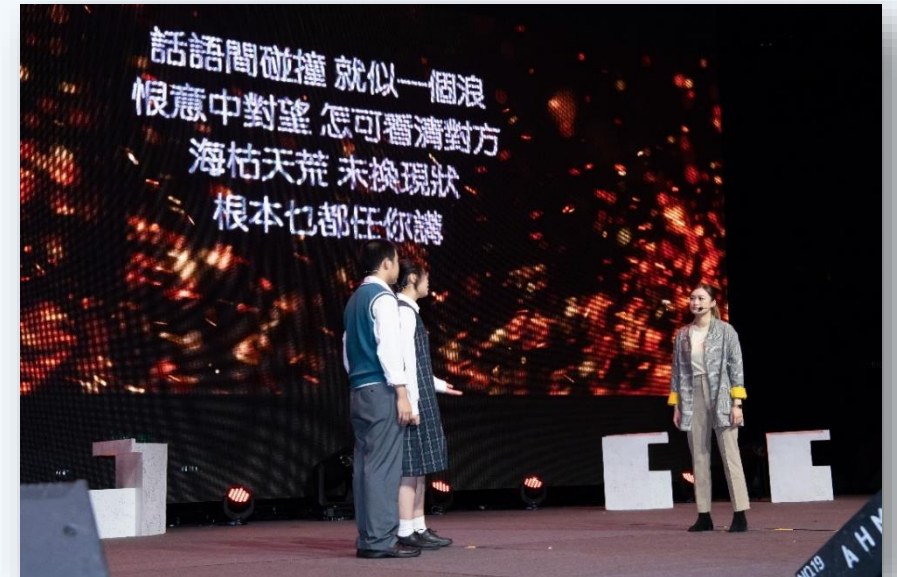
“Actually, when I first met him, he was a teacher who cared about his students!” - Pauline

- We do not have the intention to compare experienced teachers with young teachers, but would like to draw your attention to how teachers can always maintain the original heart and enthusiasm when they first became teachers.
- **Every Catholic school is a testimony of a kingdom of heaven on earth.** The campus should be full of love and care. Everyone is united, supporting each other, embracing common ideals and working hard towards the shared vision.
- However, if the school culture or the atmosphere on school campus is constantly frustrating the original intentions of aspiring teachers, making them gradually lose confidence and enthusiasm in students, schools, and even education, it is an issue that we, especially the school leaders, should address.



“Why don't we investigate if the principal is a relative of the service provider of the tuck shop?” – Yeung Chi Fai

- Although this line is only designed for creating a dramatic effect, in real life, **a lot of conjecture can be caused by not understanding the rationale of the school policies from conception to execution.** Such misunderstanding of the teachers, students or parents may accelerate into complaints.
- Therefore, taking the tuck shop in the musical as an example, if the tendering process is open and transparent, with clear explanations, participation and advice from various stakeholders, taking the interests of students as the top priority, having a sound monitoring system, and timely review, etc., the suggestion of changing the service provider of the tuck shop by 90% of the students will not be given.



“Why does ‘truth’ have to succumb to complaints?” – Ma Chiu

- Before leaving the stage in Scene 4, Pauline said, “It's because I have persisted, that's why I'm so tired!”
- Whether you like it or not, agree or disagree, many young people would think, “I have different opinions but was neglected by the adults” or “Why do you always disagree with me?” They may have the feelings of not being accepted or thoughts alike.
- Just like ChatGPT, whether you like it or not, whether you decide to use it or not, artificial intelligence is being constantly improved and developed rapidly. **Instead of avoiding and ignoring it, we should understand it, learn it, and make good use of it.**



“Why does ‘truth’ have to succumb to complaints?” – Ma Chiu

- On different occasions, Bishop Stephen Chow has shared with us the importance of **“unity in diversity, seeking common ground while reserving differences”**. He believes that the way to accompany and listen to young people is not necessarily agreeing with them, but to empathize, understand and put yourself in their situation.
- He has also mentioned the significance of having “dialogues”, but “if everyone sticks to his own opinion” would not be considered as a dialogue. Therefore, just as Paul said, “You feel that you are absolutely correct, and is it really good if you don’t want to listen to other people’s opinions?”



“This is always my home!” - Johnny

- The “Emigration trend” has caused the loss of talents in the teaching profession.
- It is an issue that we would not like to mention but have to encounter. On one hand, we respect everyone's choice, but on the other hand, if we have chosen to stay, we may have to reflect on what we could do to further improve and think about **what we could do to make our school a warmer family, and a place where teachers would like to linger.**
- In fact, apart from emigration, there are also early retirement or change of career among the resigned teachers.



“Synodality”

- Facing the complex and ever-changing educational environment, we could hardly explain clearly the problems we face in the education sector with just a few words or a musical, nor list solutions one by one.
- Let’s reflect together now. Why did we choose to be teachers in the first place? Why did we apply and accept a senior post? Why do we want to be a vice-principal? Why do we want to be a principal? What keeps up our passion in teaching? What are the causes of frustration that demotivate us to teach?
- **The more we understand ourselves, the more we can find a direction for ourselves to strive on.**
- Our ability in changing the education environment is limited, but to make our schools actualize the presence of the kingdom of heaven, each of us has a role to play and a part to contribute.

“Synodality”

- The Catholic Church today encourages us to adopt the spirit of “Synodality” to face our work and solve the problems we encounter.
- The method is very simple, that is, “**empathetic listening**” and “**intentional speaking**”.
- When we listen to someone, we have to listen carefully and understand what is being said, try to put ourselves in the shoes of the other person, and interpret its deep meaning from the perspective of the other person, and try not to intervene and find reasons to refute. When it is time for us to speak, speak from the bottom of our heart, “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’, and your ‘No’ be ‘No’.” (Mt 5:37) Don't speak distorted words or arrogant words just because we want to save face and be competitive.
- If we are brothers and sisters who have faith, we can pray during the discussion and ask the Holy Spirit to lead us through the entire conversation process so as to achieve a win-win result and let everyone benefit from the discussion process.

Upholding the Five Core Values of Catholic Education

- We have to admit that it is not easy to find a consensus solution to solve the problems encountered by the school. However, if we take the five core values as the major principles for solving the problems, it will be easier for us to sort out how to solve the problems, and will help us accentuate the characteristics of a Catholic school.
- **Truth:** The “Truth” we believe and quote is not based on “I think it is true”, nor “it is written in the book”, nor “everyone says so”, but **“Your word is truth” (Jn 17:17)**, an inspiration from the Word of God. By following the Truth, we can be consecrated as partners of God’s mission of love and life through education.
- **Justice:** In addition to the general act of upholding justice so that everyone can enjoy the rights and benefits that are due to him, we need to pay special attention to the weakest teachers and students, because **“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Mt 25:40)**

Upholding the Five Core Values of Catholic Education

- **Love:** In addition to the expression of love described by universal values, we must imitate Jesus Christ, **“To love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us”**. (Mt 5:44)
- **Life:** **“God created man in the image of himself.”** (Gn 1:27) Each person is distinguished and unique. In the school, the safety, interests and healthy growth of students will always be given top priority.
- **Family:** **“What God has united, man must not divide.”** (Mt 19:6) We believe that a healthy family is the foundation of a good society. Therefore, the school needs to establish a good partnership with parents, strengthen home-school cooperation, strive for consensus, and work together to cultivate children's growth.

Conclusion

- The musical was the concerted effort of teachers and students from many Diocesan, Religious, and Caritas Primary and Secondary schools. They spent a lot of time after work and school, including rehearsing and working in the evenings and on Saturdays and Sundays to make the musical a success. Their time and effort are highly appreciated and deserve another round of warm applause.
- We would like to give even stronger applause to thank Dr. Sin Chun Tung Terence, the Playwright and Director; Mr. Stoa Lau, the composer and music director; and Mr. Cheung Fei Fan, the Lyricist.
- Finally, I wish all of us will respond to the theme of the musical in the days to come, and continue to **“respond to God’s call, stick to the roles of shepherds, and create hope for your own life and the life of the new generation”**.



May God bless you all!

