

MCS Foundation Chairperson's Speech for the Opening Ceremony of the Exhibition

“Habits and Haberdashery: Uncovering History and Heritage in the Hidden Attic”

Mr So (Chairman of the Antiquities Advisory Board), Mr. Chang (Commissioner for Heritage), Dr Chan (Trustee Chairman of the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust), Ms Siu (Executive Secretary, Antiquities and Monuments Office), Sister Marilu, distinguished guests,

Good afternoon. On behalf of the Maryknoll Convent School Foundation Limited which is the School Sponsoring Body of the Maryknoll Convent School, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the Antiquities and Monuments Office, the Antiquities Advisory Board and the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust for your staunch support without which we would not be able to stage this Exhibition so smoothly.

The theme of our Exhibition is “Habits and Haberdashery : Uncovering History and Heritage in the Hidden Attic”, and it is indeed a blessing for us to have discovered, quite unknowingly, the heritage of an embroidery and sewing workshop at the Convent. As students, we were not allowed into the Convent which was the living quarters of the Sisters and hence was always a place of mystique for us. When the Convent Building was handed over to us as School Sponsoring Body, we then carried out necessary structural inspections and only when we removed the false ceiling did we discover an attic which was hidden for some 50 years. The conserved artefacts on display today were treasures found inside the attic. I was also at the site and was totally overwhelmed when the range of artefacts were uncovered from the attic; this is no doubt a huge blessing for us all.

The Maryknoll Sisters is the first United States based Catholic congregation of women, founded a hundred years ago, dedicated to foreign mission work. Reflecting their spirit of independence, courage and resilience, the Sisters have embarked on a distant missionary journey eastwards to Hong Kong. True to their spirit of service, the Maryknoll Sisters will go where they are needed. We have always held close to these virtues of “Nobleness enkindles nobleness” and “Service above self” as our core principles and values in providing education services. At a time when individualism may prevail under current social environment, we feel it is most important to cultivate amongst our students the values of positive thinking and perseverance, consideration and thoughtfulness for others, as well as the readiness to serve the community.

Our School, including the Convent, is rich in architectural merits and one of the very few historic monument schools in Hong Kong. We are blessed to have the tireless support of over 300 dedicated volunteers in helping us with conservation of the artefacts now on display at the Exhibition. However, as for the Convent Building itself, it still needs to be restored and revitalised.



The Maryknoll Convent School will be reaching its Centennial in 2025. This Exhibition has been timely in helping us walk down memory lane, while revealing to us the many heart-warming stories of how the Sisters have provided quality education for all. It offers an excellent opportunity for us to help strengthen our students' spirit of service to the community, and enhance their understanding of conservation and revitalisation. We would also hope to better utilise the Convent Building, with its unique value both to School and to the community of Hong Kong, through conserving and revitalising it into a multipurpose venue for teaching and learning, and for opening it to the public where feasible.

As a Government aided school, we are always mindful that revitalising a historic monument will carry with it immense challenges whether in terms of the human or financial resources involved. We hope, with our heart, and our passion on education and conservation, we will receive the support needed from the community, the conservation bodies, students, teachers and alumni, as well as Government policy bureaux and departments, so that we will have sufficient resources to be able to restore and revitalise the Convent Building, a heritage monument, and breathe new life, new stories and new value into it, and transform it from a building steeped in history, to a building creating the future.

Thank you, and with gratitude.