

Hong Kong Catholic Works of Mercy

(Ninth in a Series)

“Those Who Run in A Race . . .”

By Richard Core

World famous athletic coaches have mentioned that the majority of the cleverest athletes are youngsters located in large cities from “the other side of the railroad tracks.”

In competitive events, their agile minds and rugged, wiry bodies seem to exert greater efforts. They know the meaning of want. Whenever the opportunity presents itself to compete with boys and girls from families in more comfortable circumstances, they are apt to outstrip their social betters by a wide margin.

Sixty four little poor girls in the general area of St. Margaret's Church at Happy Valley not long ago demonstrated their prowess when pitted against a few hundred other children during an athletic meet at a Government field in Causeway Bay.

Champion!



The girls form one of the clubs for girls under the direction of Father John Pittavino on Broadway Road which was formed in January, 1947.

Radiating an inescapable buoyancy and charm, these girls are from poor families living in squatters' huts behind the Tiger Balm shrine, Tai Hang village, shacks on the roofs of buildings in Wanchai, or from little makeshift homes in the foothills behind Blue Pool road in Happy Valley.

Miss Cecilia M. Fok is their teacher. They attend daily classes in groups of two. The monthly salary of the group-teacher is made possible by funds allocated by the Boys and Girls' Club association for poor children in the Colony.

The three R's are taught, a bit of sewing, drawing and games. Prior to November 13 last year authoritative opinion was expressed that more emphasis could be placed on volley-ball, ping-pong, basketball and the like.

We Challenge All Comers



It takes a vast amount of psychology, it was argued, to occupy restless, young minds. Competitive games are a recognized way to accomplish this.

However, the observer who thought that St. Margaret's Club was not emphasizing athletics, hardly expected to see the lightning performances registered by these girls in the scheduled inter-club athletic meet for poor-children last November.

Chan Wai-lan, 13, left no doubt in anybody's mind of her fleet-footed superiority in the 100 metre race. The senior and junior potato-race saw Chan Yam-mooi and Poon Kan-lok respectively, crossing the finish line in first place for dear old St. Margaret's.

Victors in the volley-ball tournament were 20 girls of St. Margaret's Club. The senior ping-pong tournament witnessed a little orphan girl named Ny Kuk-ching sweeping first place, with her defeated opponent in the finals being a fellow club-member also of St. Margaret's. She was again Chan Wai-lan, who only proved she isn't quite as good in paddling a ball in table-tennis as in showing her girl friends how to cover the 100 metres.

Ho Wak-ying the eleven-year-old daughter of a humble street-cleaner held up the prestige of the Club by capturing first place in the junior table-tennis final.

It is not to be thought, however, that St. Margaret's Club

youngsters are eager to become Catholics and participate in Church services, many fathers and mothers, Miss Fok finds, are so deeply superstitious that they strongly oppose their children receiving anything more than the material aid and benefits which the Church has to offer.

But real benefits are to be had for other parties in a club like St. Margaret's. It has often been observed by the medical profession that a great number of persons with more money and idleness than common-sense and self-reliant enterprize, would do well to offset their real or imaginary ills by interesting themselves in people.

Some take to chasing a golf-ball over hill and dale; others to

Poised



chasing down their neighbour's reputation over club-house scotch and soda. Hundreds of the Colony's Catholics of ample means could profitably help themselves and others by assuming active roles as teachers and guides in poor children's clubs like St. Margaret's.

An interest in people cures grudges, shows one how to live with others, breeds toleration, cuts down self pity and self concern. It could absorb one's personal temporal worries or troubles; it helps in loving God better.

“Brethren, do you not know that those who run in a race, all indeed run, but one receives the prize?” St. Paul reminded the inhabitants of Corinth.

The poor children's club at St. Margaret's is a reminder in Hong Kong that the contest in mercifully helping others is open to all, and all indeed are assured of a prize.

It is the “imperishable crown” of God's grace, leading unto immortality.

“WE BELIEVE IN THE SUBLIME DOCTRINE OF THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST: FOR HE IS THE MYSTICAL VINE AND WE ARE THE BRANCHES. HE THE HEAD AND WE THE MEMBERS.”

This CREDO binds us, while it is setting us free, as His children alone are free. It binds us with the bonds of a great love. That of God. For it makes us part of Him. Now He and we are one. And we and all the other members of His Mystical Body are one too. And that means their sorrows are our sorrows. Their joys our joys. Their needs ours to fill. Their sins ours to atone. Their just fight are ours to fight. It means that selfishness cannot have any place in our lives. That the zeal of our Father's House is eating us up. That our lives are lived in Christ, for Christ, by Christ and through Christ. And that we cannot rest until the whole world is restored in Him, and His inheritance returned to Him.

(Catherine de Hueck Doherty writing in the “Catholic Interracialist”)

St. Margaret's Church



has taken a sharp about-face, de-emphasizing the importance of schooling in favour of Games. Classes continue as usual each day; it just happens the girls are cracker-jacks in the field of athletics.

St. Margaret's Church is responsible for the neat uniforms the girls wear and certain Catholics help the Parish to supply the means of transportation when the 64 children are frequently taken on all-day picnic excursions to one of the nearby beaches.

Miss Fok makes it a weekly practise to visit the homes of as many children as possible. These aren't homes in the generally accepted sense of the word. It is hardly true to say that a child has a real home if both parents necessarily are out most of the day working in order to feed hungry mouths and to make ends meet.

There are only 15 girls in the Club who are Catholics. Several others are under instruction for baptism. Though many of the

Tug O' War

