



A Tribute to Sr Françoise Lee

Sister Françoise Lee passed away at 77 on 16 August 1986.

Born in 1909, Sister Françoise Lee was the first local Chinese sister to become the Principal of St Nicholas Girls' School. She expanded the secondary section to include classes up to Simplified Normal IV, making St Nicholas a full school providing primary and secondary education. She also promoted bilingual education in Catholic schools in Singapore.

Sister Françoise was more than a principal. She was a steadfast guide, a woman of deep faith, and a protector of the young lives entrusted to her care. In her quiet yet resolute way she carried the responsibility of leadership from 1940 to 1971 with courage, especially in times when that responsibility was not easy.

She led during a period of uncertainty in Singapore, when schools were not only places of learning but also spaces vulnerable to powerful and conflicting influences. At a time when some institutions faced pressures that could mislead the young, Sister Françoise remained watchful and wise. She understood that education was not only about knowledge but about truth, integrity and moral grounding.

Beyond these challenges, Sister Françoise gave her life fully to education. At St Nicholas Girls' School she shaped a community where excellence was pursued with purpose and where compassion was never forgotten. She saw potential in every child and worked quietly and patiently to draw it out.

With firmness and clarity, she guided her students, helping them to grow into young women who could think carefully, act rightly and remain steady in their values. She ensured that they would not be easily swayed or drawn away from what was good and true. In doing so she protected not only a school but generations of young women who would go on to contribute with strength and integrity to society.

Many will remember that Sister Françoise was not a quiet presence when it came to discipline. She had a voice that could carry across a hall, clear, commanding and impossible to ignore. Yet beneath that strength was a heart of gold. Her firmness never came from anger but from care. She spoke loudly when it mattered because she believed deeply in the girls before her, and in the lives they will be called to lead.

Even in correction there was kindness. Even in strictness there was warmth. Her students knew that behind every raised voice was a deep and unwavering concern for their growth and their future. She always had a word of encouragement, a steady presence in times of uncertainty, a gentle reminder to strive for what is good and right. She led not with loud authority alone but with quiet conviction and enduring love.

To her colleagues she was a pillar of wisdom.

To her students she was both a guide and guardian.

To her community she was a woman of unwavering faith and purpose.

Her life was one of service, constant, humble and enduring. Like a lamp kept burning through the night she gave light in times of darkness, never seeking recognition, only seeking to serve.

We honour her legacy, a legacy of courage in uncertain times, of faith in the face of challenge, and of love that shaped countless lives, and the light she has given us, the strength to stand firm in what is right, the wisdom to guide others with compassion and the faith to remain steadfast in all circumstances.

May the generations of St Nicholas Girls' School continue her legacy and carry the light forward!

.