



JPIC Report - Loreto South Africa

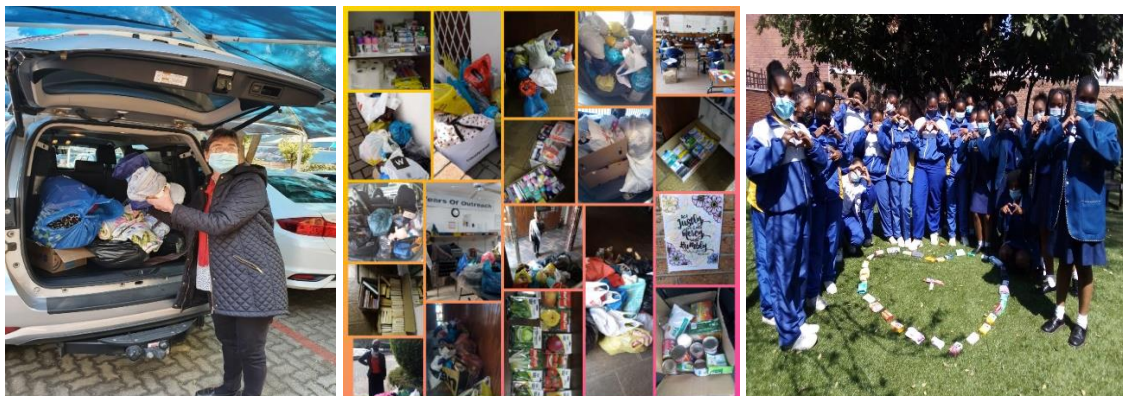
(Loreto Primary School, Strand = LPS, Loreto Convent School, Nana Sita Street = LCS, Loreto School Queenswood = LSQ)

Cornel West said, “Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.” The global pandemic has highlighted many areas of inequality in South Africa. This has challenged Loreto schools to respond to issues of justice in innovative ways.

With lockdown restrictions and Covid-19 protocols to consider, many usual projects, such as participation in soup kitchens and visiting disadvantaged communities and animal shelters with our learners, cannot take place at this time. However, this has not prevented our schools from showing what love looks like in public.

Learning to care for others is an innate part of our ethos. Each Loreto school supports several projects. Collecting of items such as toiletries, second-hand clothing items, blankets, stationery, school bags and basic foodstuffs, seeds, garden equipment, gas for cooking, cooking utensils as well as PPE and Christmas presents is a regular practice, benefitting, amongst others, charity organisations such as Paul Jungnickel Home for people with varying disabilities, CHOC Childhood Cancer Foundation, Angels Wings Foundation, Plastic View, Pure Hope School, Wollies Animal Shelter, Animal Welfare Society in Gordon’s Bay, Winterveldt Outreach, Louis Botha Children’s Home, Sunlit Garden’s Children’s home and underprivileged children living in Macassar and Sir Lowry’s Pass Village.

Mary Ward Associates, Cape Town, known as Mary Ward Open Circle (MWOC) and Loreto Primary School, Strand, work together to raise awareness and to help alleviate some of the suffering experienced by underprivileged communities. Using technology and the internet they reach a wide audience in order to obtain donations for various projects such as the “Christmas in July” and “Under His Wings” projects.



Learners are also encouraged to contribute to the Lenten Appeal. Together with generous donations from Balbriggan, Ireland, and the contributions of various other donors, Loreto schools have been able to financially support many organisations and the Catholic Bishop’s Conference in their work with the poor and disadvantaged.

Loreto learners and parents are adept at warming hearts and bodies with their knitting skills and several projects have ensured that babies at Mater Domini home have received beanies and booties and Zandvleit Old Age Home has received beanies, bed socks, gloves and blankets. Knitted squares have been joined together to make wonderfully warm and creative blankets for the underprivileged.



While pandemic restrictions prevented many from attending MWOC workshops to create sleeping bags for the homeless, several volunteers made sleeping bags at home. Included this winter with each sleeping bag were a beanie and a pair of gloves. These were sent to the Street People Centre, Thomas House and to St Paul's Parish outer station, Villiersdorp for distribution to the homeless.

During July, learners were encouraged to participate in the 67 minutes for Madiba campaign, either with time, treasure or talents. LCS did a big charity drive to convert their minutes into items to make up toiletry packs for a needy community. Learners from all schools were called upon to reflect on issues in South Africa and to pray more fervently, especially after the violence and looting that took place just prior to Madiba Day. The focus was on how to create the world we want to live in.

Growing compassionate learners is a fruit of our various religious education programmes. Regular discussions, prayer, meditation and focus on works of mercy in our current climate inculcates the Gospel value of love for God and neighbour. What can a typical 11-year-old do to change the world? Grade 5 and 6 learners made cards for seniors to help brighten their day, showing that you don't need to do lavish things or spend enormous amounts of money to bring joy. Each one of us can play a part in creating a better world for all.



As faith-based schools we are privileged to have prayer as a powerful tool in our communities. This year the three South African Loretos shared a common prayer for our Inter- Loreto day on the 13th of August, with all learners participating in their own classes at the same time. We also unified in praying a novena for the situation in Afghanistan.

We have been privileged, despite number restrictions, to celebrate Masses in small groups, and at LSQ we have even streamed Mass to our classrooms. Prayers are often offered for the needs and intentions of all three Loreto schools in South Africa and indeed, for our wider network. We are also joined in prayer for the furthering of the cause for Sainthood of Mary Ward.

The SACBC invited us to join in the celebration of the Season of Creation, the annual celebration that takes place from September 1st, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, until October 4th, the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, Patron Saint of Ecology. The focus is the care for our earth or as Pope Francis says in his encyclical Laudato Si- Care for our Common Home. Assemblies, prayers, Mass and class lessons such as ecology e.g. Micro habitat (school field) focus on creating awareness and understanding that “I CAN make a positive difference to my world.”

As part of this initiative LSQ did a tree planting ceremony on 1st September. A meditation was given to all teachers to help the learners reflect on all that this time of pandemic has taken from us. Each one of us has experienced loss. For some it is the life-changing loss of a significant person, but there are other less noticeable, but deep losses too.

The idea behind the meditation was to allow any feelings of loss to be dealt with in a healthy way. Writing or drawing feelings, names, thoughts in a prayerful atmosphere makes those feelings real and tangible and then by placing the papers into a box to be buried with our Memory tree in the memorial garden on Arbor Day, we show our faith in the resurrection and know that we have hope that these losses, though significant, will not hold us back from growing and living our lives in the hope and love of Christ.



Grade 10 learners at LCS worked on developing Spekboom seedlings, using recycled containers. These were then sold to other pupils in the school so that they could plant their trees at home. Spekboom trees improve the quality of air that we breathe and help to fight air pollution.



Bottle tops and bread tags are collected in both provinces and recycled through programmes that exchange wheelchairs for the plastic recycling.

Eco-bricks created out of 2L Coke bottles containing 600g of non-absorbent recycling material are made by LPS children. The eco-bricks are being used to build part of the Education Centre at the Helderberg Nature Reserve, Somerset West. This is also an ongoing project in Pretoria.

Learners are also encouraged to support animal shelters and to learn about taking care of animals and the environment.

International Day of the Girl Child will be celebrated on Monday, 11 October. Age-appropriate activities and lessons are already being covered to create awareness around Gender Equality and Gender Based Violence.

The CIE "Leave your Print" Fundraising Campaign is held this year on the 15th October. By donating R5, Loreto children will come to school on that day wearing footwear of their choice. The money raised is to be used by CIE to assist less fortunate schools.

Discussion and activities on the Sustainable Development Goals are covered in lesson plans wherever possible to raise awareness. These goals are also displayed where possible (on bulletin boards and worksheets) from time to time as these themes are covered.

Thanks to the IBVM UN NGO group, we have received the Child Labour Toolkit which contains information that is very useful, especially in our Grade 6 programmes, in Social Sciences (Geography specifically) regarding child labour in the mining industry. This augments what our learning programmes already cover regarding children who are deprived of schooling because they either are sent away to work on cocoa bean farms or work with their families to eke out a living in various dangerous occupations. At primary school level, it is important to raise awareness of these issues to grow learners who are responsible consumers in the future.

Mary Ward said that we are called by God to a vocation of love. How blessed we are in South Africa to be able to live out that vocation. Love is what we do, not simply something we believe. Love sees the pain, suffering, or need of a friend, neighbour, or even an enemy, and does something practical and concrete about it. May we continue to do all that we do for the greater glory of God.

