

# The GATEWAY

HONG KONG LASALLIAN FAMILY BULLETIN



***March 2008***

Issue 1 first published in 2008

**Published by**

The Lasallian Family Hong Kong

**Solely distributed by**

The Hong Kong Lasallian Resource Centre  
La Salle College, 18 La Salle Road  
Kowloon, Hong Kong

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# Welcome!

Here comes the *The Gateway*.

By means of this electronic bulletin, our Lasallian Family in Hong Kong will try to open the Gate for you so that you can catch glimpses of our life and times, of our past, present and hoped-for future. We chose *The Gateway* as title because it is rich in both Chinese and Christian tradition. We are also conscious of the fact that our recent General Chapter and District Chapters emphasized the importance of communication within our worldwide Lasallian Family. This is one response to that call.



Our first issue coincides with the beginning of the Year of the Rat, the first of the 12 year cycle of animals of the Chinese Zodiac. Because they are the first, rats are seen as leaders and pioneers. They are regarded as charming, passionate, practical and hardworking. They are the most highly organized and systematic of the 12 signs.

Since it is considered an honour to be born in the Year of the Rat, we think our *Gateway* is off to an auspicious start. We would be delighted if you give us feedback so that we can make improvements, or just let us know that we are being read.

We can be reached at [hklsgateway@gmail.com](mailto:hklsgateway@gmail.com)

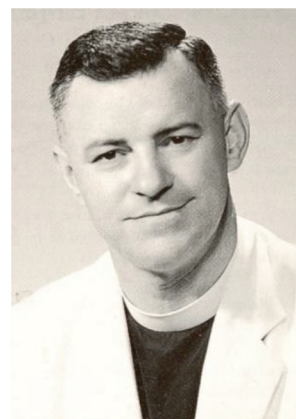
**LET'S OPEN THAT GATE!**

**The Gateway**  
**Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin**  
**March 2008, First Issue**

# Brother of the Month: Brother Brendan Dunne (1914-1998)

We would like to dedicate this first issue of *The Gateway* to the memory of Brother Brendan Dunne on the tenth anniversary of his death.

Joseph Dunne was born in Camp, County Kerry, Ireland on 2nd July 1914, right at the start of World War 1. The little town is located beside a bay which opens out to the vast Atlantic Ocean. The hinterland is dotted with lovely hills and valleys. Joseph was the fifth in a family of eight boys and one girl. The family grew up on a farm.



He attended the local primary school at a turbulent time in Irish history. He retained vivid memories of the reign of the Black and Tans and later the Civil War when violence and terror stalked the land. When a recruiter for the De La Salle Brothers visited the school, Joseph volunteered and the rest, as they say, is history.

In 1928, he joined the De La Salle Brothers and took the Habit in September 1930 followed by the Novitiate year. The following year he was sent to England to further his studies and it was there that he volunteered for the missions. In 1932 a group of six young Brothers and three mission returnees set out for the East from Marseilles. Among them were Brother Cassian Brigant and Brother Felix Sheehan, with both of whom he would later share community in Hong Kong.

On arrival in Penang, Brendan was first posted to St. Xavier's Institution but within months was heading for St. Joseph's College, Hong Kong. He was 19 years old. His first teaching term in Hong Kong was from 1933 to 1936 and Brother Matthias Linehan was the Director, a man for whom he had a high regard. It was a heady time, for the College was celebrating its Diamond Jubilee. Already, two prominent aspects of Brother Brendan's lifestyle were emerging: a determination to make his lessons in class both interesting and understandable, and a love of hiking.

From 1936 to 1941, Brother Brendan was back in Malaysia and taught in St. John's Institution, Kuala Lumpur and in St. Xavier's Institution, Penang. One Brother summed him up as a teacher at this time:

“His students revered him. He put such sparkle into his lessons. He had that twinkle, that almost mischievous smile that put the pupils in a mood to respond. And when he got the right answer he expressed his delight with an expression in Chinese, English or French. He was almost continental in his gestures and facial expressions and could add mimicry that would do justice to Marcel Marceau”.

Meanwhile, in 1941 in Europe, the 2nd World War was already raging. One of Brendan's brothers joined the Allied forces but was sadly killed in action. Brendan rarely spoke about this tragedy but would obviously have felt the sadness keenly.

He was still in Penang when the Japanese invasion took place 8th December 1941. As with many Brothers, he was now not allowed to teach which he found frustrating. He along with a number of other Brothers decided to try their luck living in a jungle camp at Bahau, known as the 'Fuji Go'. He was a tower of strength in the camp. With his pipe, his black hat, his tall muscular body, his repertoire of stories, his mimicry and unfailing good humour, his company was a tonic in the depressing circumstances. Living and suffering, surviving and dying were commonplace for the next two years. Like most of the others, Brendan succumbed to malaria attacks but bounced back each time, perhaps because he was now thirty and in his prime.



Bahau survivors, Brother Brendan, back row, 2nd from right

After surviving the War, a holiday home was the order of the day and much appreciated by his family. He had not been home for thirteen years. By October 1947 he was back East, this time as a member of the teaching staff at St. Joseph's College, Hong Kong. In 1949 he was appointed Vice Principal with Brother Raphael Egan as Principal. They formed a wonderful partnership and worked very well together to put St. Joseph's back on a firm post-war footing. The Communist take-over in China had resulted in a flood of refugees whose offspring swelled the school population. Many of these students were living from hand to mouth and it was on these that Brother Brendan lavished his care and compassion.

He taught a full day despite his administrative commitments. He was thorough, dedicated and demanding but also considerate, kind and understanding. Many of his old pupils remember how he used to stress the importance of writing a correct sentence and paragraph. If you could write a correct sentence you could write a correct paragraph and thence a correct composition. He would spend a whole lesson teaching just a few sentences. He seemed to know all the common mistakes in English made by Chinese boys. He hammered home the grammar basics. No wonder it was difficult not to get credits or distinctions in his class.

One of his pupils, who would later become a teacher in the College, stresses Brother Brendan's unlimited patience. He would talk with you about your mistakes for hours on end.



He would make you write one fine copy after another until the piece was perfect. It was difficult to win against him in regard to patience, argument or anything else, so that in the end you simply had to submit!

He was also spiritual director of the Star of the Sea Legion of Mary Praesidium, never missing the weekly meeting. In addition, he would instruct boys who wished to become Catholics.



One of his pupils at the time, Charles Kao, was to become the Nobel Laureate for Physics, often regarded as ‘the father of fibre optics’. On a recent visit to his alma mater, Charles recalled how Brother Brendan had a formula whenever he wanted to motivate his students to study hard. He would ‘request’ them to have certain answers ready for him the following day. And “if you fail to answer my question correctly, I shall send you to Queen Mary with my left fist!”

Now, Queen Mary is a government hospital! He always followed this threat with a mischievous smile while he shadow-boxed with left and right jabs. Needless to say, nobody was ever sent to Queen Mary in such circumstances.

When Brother Raphael was transferred to Sabah in 1957 Brother Brendan succeeded him as Principal. Excellent academic standards were maintained and the spiritual life of the school was not overlooked. Brother Peter Phelan was with him at the time and says: “During my ten years in community with him I never knew him to use corporal punishment of any kind. He was well liked by the teachers, and even more by the non-academic staff.” Indeed, he had a prodigious memory for the names of his past pupils and former teachers and had a fund of anecdotes connected with them.

If he had any weakness it was erring on the side of kindness. Teachers would sometimes complain that he treated the naughty boys too leniently. When they were sent to see him in his office, he would sit them down, smoke his pipe, have a chat and give them sweets. No wonder they returned to class, all smiles! Perhaps this was Brendan’s way of letting teachers know that they should find a better way of dealing with naughty students than sending them to see the Headmaster.

As Principal of a leading school in the territory, he embarked on an ambitious project of redevelopment and upgrading. In 1961 the original school building (called the Club Germania) facing Kennedy Road was demolished and a splendid new wing erected within 2 years. In addition a new school hall was erected on the east wing. At the time St. Joseph’s was the envy of many



schools because it could boast of two school halls. Governor Sir Robert Black and Superior General Brother Nicet Joseph officiated at the opening of the new school building and Bishop Bianchi performed the blessing. Brother Nicet paid a special tribute to two stalwarts in the history of St. Joseph's, Bishop Raimondi and Brother Aimar. The new wing remains a monument to Brother Brendan's careful planning and supervision. The top floor became the residence for the Brothers.

Brother Alphonsus Breen, who joined the St. Joseph's community in 1962 recalled: "He was easy to live with, gave us ample freedom and rarely interfered. Ever even-tempered, he never allowed himself to be upset by persons or events. He was sympathetic to the pupils, especially those who got into trouble, and took a personal interest in the poor boy".

In 1969 he was back in Hong Kong, at first as a teacher in La Salle College, but two years later he was appointed the first Principal of Chong Gene Hang College on Hong Kong Island. The school is located in a resettlement and industrial area and it was the first secondary school there. He had to commute every day from St. Joseph's College to Chong Gene Hang, but there was no complaint. At once Brother Brendan got down to business, recruited a young staff and set about creating a warm and homely school climate. He spent eight years in this post and the school soon developed a spirit and identity of its own with a strong sense of belonging among staff and students. Since the school lacked sports facilities, he encouraged cross country running with the result that the school was soon grabbing headlines. Brother Brendan's generosity and largeness of heart was much appreciated by both the school and the local community.



Brother Brendan and the Chong Gene Hang College Staff

At a Speech Day for the school in 1974, we get a glimpse of Brother Brendan's thinking in relation to the school. Addressing the boys directly he said: "Well then, for your own good and for the reputation of the entire school, make sure you behave responsibly, and make it easier for the other boys to behave well too. Always remember you carry the reputation of the school with you wherever you go. You are the School!"

In 1979 he reached retiring age and bade farewell to a school he loved and set fair to flourish.

Retirement saw him giving a hand to unemployed youth at Benburb Base, a Lasallian Centre in London and to a private Catholic school in Sabah. He had a calming effect on these young people undergoing hardship or trial and, if he felt it was justified, would move heaven and earth to help them.



In 1981, he was to return to his second home, St. Joseph's College Hong Kong, where he would live out his final years, keeping in touch with old boys of St. Joseph's and Chong Gene Hang, entertaining visitors and deepening his spiritual life, especially through prayer and a study of the Scriptures. There were no frills in his spiritual diet. The Mass, meditation and the rosary were the mainstays. He was still devoted to hiking and to smoking his pipe. After a good workout on a hot and humid afternoon, he would return dripping with perspiration and enjoy a smoke and a bottle of beer. Other hobbies included doing the daily newspaper cryptic crossword. It was beyond most of us but to Brendan it was a breeze.

During these years he traveled a lot, visiting relatives in England, Ireland and Australia" writes Brother Thomas Favier. He kept in touch with former students and figured prominently at annual reunions. At a recent dinner and dance the Guest of Honour, a leading government official, spoke of how Brendan, back in the 1950's, put him on his feet when things were low for him. As the official resumed his seat midst much applause, Brendan drifted by, gave him a swish of his serviette, and said:" "You talk a lot of nonsense!" His memory for the names and work of old boys was phenomenal.

In the ordinary day to day events of life, Brother Brendan meant many things to many people. To many he was simply a friend, a good friend, because if Brendan became your friend you were a friend for life. To others he was a counselor, gifted with insight and understanding and lending a discerning ear to those who confided in him. To still others he was a rock and a refuge in times of trouble or distress. Brendan, puffing his pipe, usually had a calming effect on people undergoing trials. And he would help them in every possible way.

Some two years before his death he was in hospital for cystectomy. He took some time to adjust but the main trouble came from a weakening of the heart. As he needed more and more care, Brothers Alphonsus Breen and Thomas Favier saw to his daily needs. They arranged for nursing help, doctor's visits and room-cleaning and made sure he was settled for sleep every night.



The story of Brother Brendan's last few days and hours is easily told. For some days he had slowed down a lot and was eating little. Yet, on the evening of the 6th March 1998, a first Friday, he managed to make his way as usual to St. Joseph's Church, for Mass and first Friday devotions. That night, some time after 10 o'clock, Brother Alphonsus went to look in on Brendan and see if he was settled for the night. He found him lying quietly on the floor and, sensing that there was no time to lose, he called an ambulance and a doctor. Brother Brendan, however, passed away peacefully before the ambulance arrived.

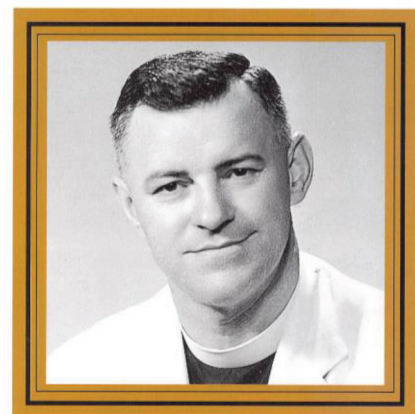
The funeral mass was held on the 18th March in Christ the King Chapel with Bishop John Tong as chief celebrant. There was a large attendance of former staff and students, government officials and religious. St. Joseph's College scouts provided a guard of honour. Present too were two nieces, Kathleen and Mary, from Australia as well as Mary's husband. Brother Patrick Tierney gave the homily. Brother Brendan was laid to rest in the De La Salle Brothers' plot in St. Michael's Cemetery, Happy Valley.

Brother Philip Callaghan, a companion of the pre-war and war years, wrote a poem in tribute, one verse of which goes as follows:

"There will be a void, not a voiceless void;  
Vibrant voices shall recall your legend  
Speaking praise of your friendliness and loyalty;  
How you evangelized relaying the truth;  
Were counselor and guide for bewildered youth".

Or this one from Brother Patricius;  
"Yours was no lingering demise  
Nor slow drift to decay  
Death flung its portals sudden wide  
As you sped from Life away  
You folded up like to a flower  
At evening's dimming light  
You turned from Time's darkling hours  
And bade the world good night  
You went upon your pilgrim path  
And gave to death the nod  
Then star-ward sped from our dark sphere  
Into the arms of God

When news of his death spread, a number of his former pupils send messages of sympathy. Some of their messages strike a chord. "Bro. Brendan lifted me up when I was low." "He gave me his helping hand during my difficult times and he never looked down on me because of my old clothes." "I believe Bro. Brendan was born



**In Loving Memory of  
Rev. Brother  
Brendan Dunne RIP**

July 2, 1914 — March 6, 1998

## **March 2008**

as my Guardian Angel.” “What a wonderful aura unfeigned kindness gives to a face. Charity and courtesy can be faked – kindness can’t.”

At the back of Brother Brendan’s memorial card is a touching tribute from one of his former students entitled “I will remember”. It goes:

You had a way with things

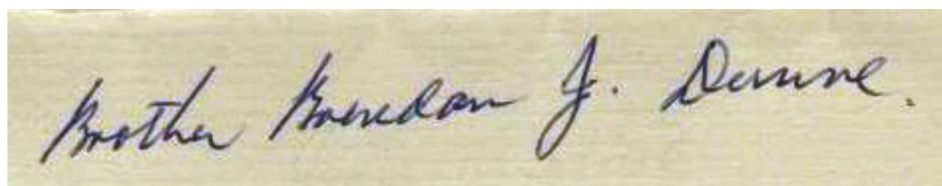
The class will never forget you

Neither will I.

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### **Postings of Brother Brendan:**

Castletown, Co Laois, Ireland	Juniorate	1928 - 1930
Castletown, Co Laois, Ireland	Novitiate	1930 - 1931
Castletown, Co Laois, Ireland	Scholasticate	1931 - 1932
St. Joseph’s College, Hong Kong	Teaching	1932 - 1935
St. Xavier’s Institution, Penang, Malaysia	Teaching	1936
St. John’s Institution, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Teaching	1936 - 1937
St. Xavier’s Institution, Penang, Malaysia	Teaching	1938 - 1941
Bahau Jungle, Malaysia	War Years	1942 - 1945
Ireland	Home Leave	1946 - 1947
St. Joseph’s College, Hong Kong	Director	1947 - 1957
La Salle School, Kota Kinabalu	Director	1964 - 1968
La Salle College, Kowloon, Hong Kong	Teaching	1960 - 1970
Chong Gene Hang College, Hong Kong	Principal	1970 - 1979
St. Joseph’s College, Hong Kong	Retired	1979 - 1998



Brother Brendan J. Devane.

# Family News

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## Christian Brothers Schools Sports Association

This annual athletic meet for our secondary schools was held on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February in Wanchai Stadium. We enjoyed a relatively mild and sunny day.

## Visit of a delegation of the Malaysian Federation of Lasallian Students Associations (MFOLSA)

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, the 17 member delegation, led by Ms Ho Chee Kit, President of the Malaysian Federation of Lasallian Associations, was welcomed by our Alumni representatives who hosted a dinner in their honour.

## Asia Pacific Lasallian Educators Congress (APLEC) 2008

Hong Kong will host this Congress from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2008. The theme is: ***Lasallian Values in Education: Challenges to Youth in Asia Pacific Today***

## Visit of the Penang District Director of Formation

We were happy to welcome Brother John D'Cruz from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, in his capacity as Director of Formation and thank him for his interesting and enlightening presentations and sharing.

# School Highlights

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## **St. Joseph's College**

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February, the College Open Day attracted a large attendance, among whom were teachers and students from its sister school in Beijing, Number 8 High School.

## **La Salle College**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of February, the College welcomed teachers and students from the Shanghai Foreign Language School on an exchange programme. The students stayed in our parents' homes and they attended regular classes.

## **La Salle Primary School**

The school is celebrating its golden jubilee and has named its school library after its founder, Brother Henry Pang.

## **St. Joseph's Primary School**

This bi-sessional school is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and at the same time is preparing for whole-day operation.

## **De La Salle Secondary School**

This year the school has gone co-ed, which has made quite a difference to the learning atmosphere!

## **Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College**

To keep abreast with the rapid development of information technology, the school has issued each student with a Smart Card.

## **Chong Gene Hang College**

Mr. Li Siu Wah was appointed the new Principal after the retirement of Mr. Ho Kong Hin, who has served the school almost from its beginning.

## **Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) Primary School**

The official Opening and Blessing of the new school building by Cardinal Joseph Zen was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 2008.

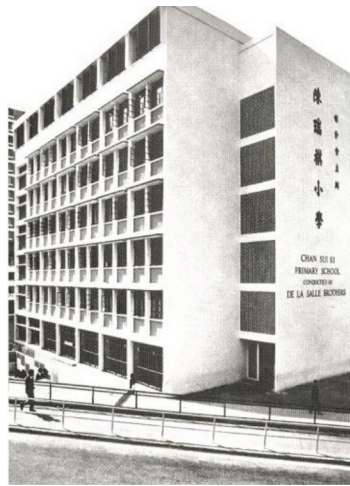
# A Special Celebration

On the 12th of January 2008 the Lasallian Family in Hong Kong came together to celebrate the opening of new premises for Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) Primary School.

The occasion was graced by the presence of Cardinal Joseph Zen who performed the Opening Ceremony and the Blessing.

The school was first established in 1973 and was located in a low-cost housing estate. Its first Principal was Brother Herman Fenton.

The old



The new



A Warm Welcome for the Cardinal



School Founder, Brother Herman, aged 94, greets the Cardinal

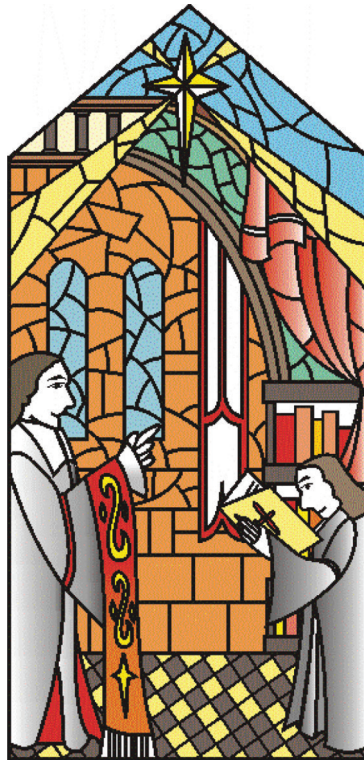


A Colourful Opening

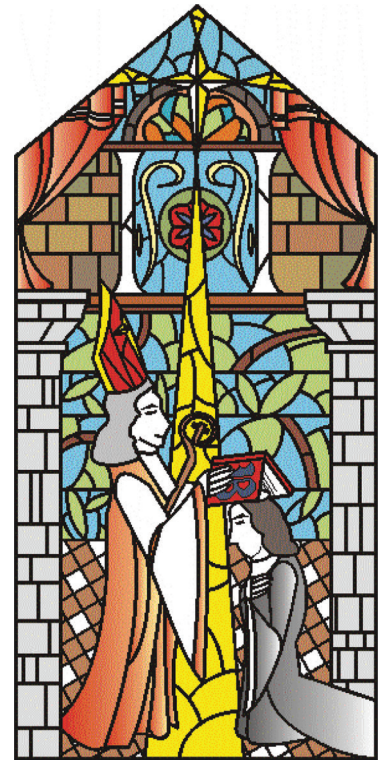
# St. La Salle in Art



A Child is born  
Praise the Lord!



Preparing for  
the Priesthood



Ordination in  
Reims Cathedral



Reaching out  
to the lost



Meeting the  
Catalyst Adrian Nyel



A Sign of Hope





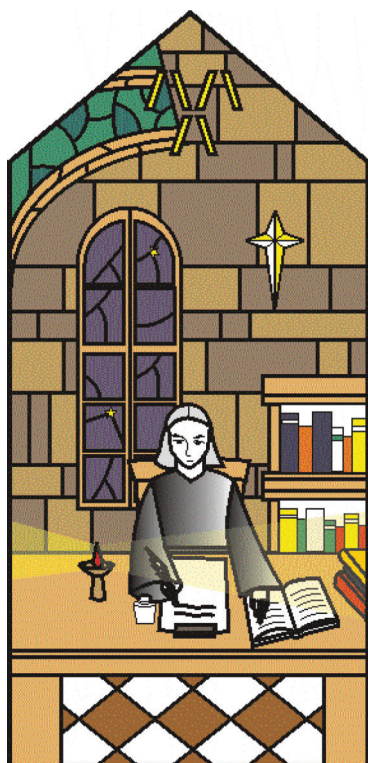
Young men join the Brotherhood



Lasallian Schools Flourish



Meeting Sister Louise  
"Return to your Brothers"



Our Lasallian  
Written Legacy



"I adore in all things  
the will of God for me"



Our Heavenly Protector

# Lasallian Reflection:

— by Frankie Jim (An Old Boy)

I came from a non-Catholic family and I was never a good student academically. Most of the Brothers in the old days were not as easy as today's, so whenever a Brother passed by, I was scared and shied away – I was so lacking in confidence. One day in my junior secondary grade, I had a chance to serve in a Home for the Aged as a volunteer helper. I enjoyed the volunteer work, for it gave me a sense of success that I have never experienced before. After several visits, I was invited to join the Bible study group for non-Catholic students organized by the Legion of Mary. My parents did not support me in this venture, for they believed I should put more effort and time on my study rather than wasting it on extra-curricula activities. However, I struggled to continue as I found meaning in my life through Bible study and volunteer work. About two years later, I was baptized and became the first and the only Catholic in the family. My parents who had never been supportive were there, however, to witness the ceremony.

La Salle gave me opportunity to know God. He always gives me answers and strength when I encounter difficulties and disappointment in my life. I could have failed many times without my faith in God. La Salle has given me the greatest gift of all.

At mass one Sunday, when I was struggling whether to disclose this piece of my personal story I turn to God again. My puzzle was once again answered when I heard the choir singing the recessional hymn:

**“That’s how it is with God’s love.**

**Once you’ve experienced it,  
you spread his love to everyone;  
you want to pass it on.”**

# Take a break

## Excuse Notes from parents

1. My son is under a doctor's care and should not take P.E. today. Please excuse him.
2. Sally won't be in school a week from Friday. We have to attend her funeral.
3. Dear school: Please excuse Roland being absent on January 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and also 33.
4. Please excuse Jennifer for missing school yesterday. We forgot to get the Sunday paper off the porch, and when we found it Monday, we thought it was Sunday.

**Happy Easter to all our readers!**



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