



## **The Gateway**

**Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin**

**January 2010**

**Twentieth Issue**

## Welcome



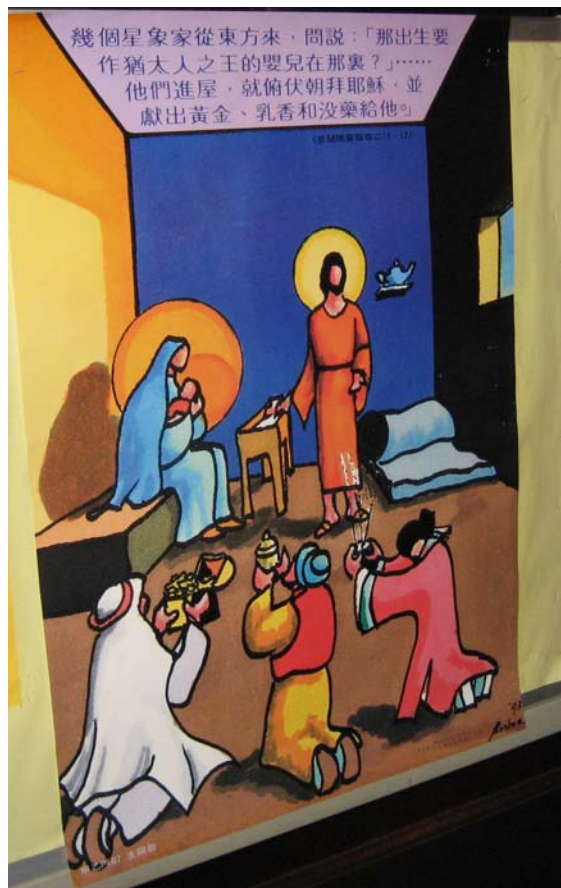
A happy New Year to all our readers. We have the joy of celebrating two New Years here but will leave the second one to the next issue.

Two quiet men feature in this issue, Brothers Mutien-Marie Wiaux and Pius Kelly. They are role models for the “little way” in our spiritual lives.

If you have never tried your hand at writing Chinese characters, now is your chance. Our Oriental Flavour article will help guide your hand. Bon courage!

Some of our schools held Mid-Year examinations before Christmas; others will hold them this month. There are pros and cons in this weighty matter, partly centering on the timing of Inter-School activities.

Since the Wise men came from the East we hope you will find a little wisdom in Gateway 20.



## Brother of the Month Brother Pius Kelly 1911-1981

A film called *The Quiet Man* was produced in 1952, directed by John Ford and starring John Wayne as the quiet man. The film has aged well. If there was ever a quiet man in real life, it was Brother Pius. He was rarely known to shout or even raise his voice.



He was born on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1911 in Crotta, County Kerry,



Ireland, a lovely part of that lovely County. Large families were the norm at the time and Patrick, his baptismal name, was the seventh child of a family of six boys and four girls. He attended the local primary school and is remembered as a quiet, industrious boy. He came from a small hurling area in a predominantly football county. He loved the game and was skilled at it. This may have been a pointer to his future prowess at badminton.

When he was fourteen years old, the school was visited by Brother Anselm, a recruiter for the De La Salle Brothers. In response to his appeal for volunteers, young Patrick offered himself and was accepted. So it was that, on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 1925, he set off for Castletown, County Laois, to begin his Lasallian formation journey. It was his first journey on a train and every time that the train swished under a bridge he would jump from his seat, to the great amusement of his companions.

His year of spiritual formation in the Novitiate began in the summer of 1927. He made the Novitiate seriously and fervently and it stood to him for the rest of his life. There followed two years of studies and then the decision to volunteer for the missions, to what was then called the Far East.

One of his companions relates: "Brother Pius and I started on our first missionary journey together in October 1930. We were accompanied by Brothers Mark O'Connor and Gilbert McKenna who were returning to the East after a short holiday in Ireland". A trip through London and France brought them to Marseilles where they boarded a ship for Rangoon, Burma.

An unpleasant surprise awaited them on board when they were informed by the steward that they would not be able to use their cabin during the day because it was to be occupied by a hive of bees! These belonged to Brother Gilbert McKenna who was taking them to the Lasallian orphanage in Twante. It was dangerous to use the cabin during the day so they were obliged to spend all the time on deck. One of Brother Pius' companions continues: "we could retire to our bunks after the bees had retired for the night but had to be out again by daybreak. We discovered that bees are early risers and a few stings can be more effective than any alarm clock!" Patience began to wear thin and there were veiled threats as to what might happen to the bees and their owner. Fortunately Rangoon was reached without mishap.



On arriving in Burma, Brother Pius was assigned to teach in the large and renowned St Paul's Institution in Rangoon. He was given a class in the middle school. He mentioned later that he was very nervous when first introduced to his pupils. Most of them were Indian Sikhs, big burly fellows sporting turbans and even beards. Fortunately they were quite well behaved and before long he was completely at home with them.

One of the Brothers in the Community at the time was able to sum up Brother Pius rather well. "He was outstanding for his religious spirit, his cheerfulness, his fondness for the rosary and his devotedness to his class. He was rather shy and reticent". A German Brother in the Community had this to say: "I remember how he helped me with my preparation for class, and how it was he who organized our games and our walks. During the summer vacation he never wasted a moment of time allotted for study. He was a most pleasant confrere at recreation".

The pleasant and even tenor of Brother Pius' life in Burma came to an end in 1937 when he was transferred to Malaya and assigned to the Community of St Xavier's Institution, Penang. He had become very attached to Burma and regretted leaving it. One reason for the transfer was probably the threat of TB and when in Penang he was put on a stringent diet of raw eggs. Things were moving along nicely until the swift Japanese invasion and occupation of the country in December 1941. The school buildings were commandeered by the occupying power and the Brothers' Community had to seek refuge in the Novitiate house, some miles away, in Pulau Tikus.



They could no longer teach school. Their time was occupied mainly trying to get enough to eat by cultivating every square yard of the property and by fishing in the nearby sea. It so happened that there was a sizable amount of black and white cloth meant for robes and shirts. As it was feared that the Japanese would seize on this supply it was decided to cut it all up. Brother Pius was nominated assistant tailor and



he was kept busy sewing all the cut-up cloth. All the Brothers' health deteriorated during the war years and, with a TB history, Brother Pius' condition in particular was worrying. Nevertheless he was able to continue his teaching duties when school reopened after the war.

Chapel of St. Joseph's Novitiate, Penang

In 1948 he was appointed sub-director of the flourishing St Michael's Institution, Ipoh. The school was bursting at the seams with 1144 pupils and a staff of 7 Brothers and 22 lay teachers. Those lay teachers remember Brother Pius as quiet, somewhat shy, very much liked by his pupils and fond of games. Under the direction of the Director, Brother Denis Hyland, the school was extended and numbered 1700 pupils by 1952.

Then, in 1955, Brother Pius was appointed Director of St Michael's. The younger teachers in particular took to his style, sharing his interests and enthusiasms. These included games of all kinds, swimming, scouting, air cadets and St John's Ambulance Brigade. The boys developed an astonishing enthusiasm for every kind of game and activity. Every student had to join a school-uniformed group and most were involved in some sport or other. Indeed Brother Pius' name is linked with great successes in swimming and badminton right up to national levels. He himself was a keen swimmer and badminton player.



St. Michael's Institution,  
Ipoh

He was generous by nature and inclination and some took advantage of this to borrow money from him rather too freely. He often helped pupils in financial difficulties. His kindness also tempted some pupils to get up to pranks or to create disciplinary trouble. It was then that the “Pius System” was invoked. When he felt that



a boy had overstepped the mark, the boy was called into the Principal’s Office. Brother Pius would switch on the public address system and give a few good whacks to the errant boy, the echoes of the whacks reverberating around the school. This somewhat innovative method of dealing with youthful offenders eventually got into the newspapers and was called the “Pius System”! In these circumstances the younger teachers would say something like “the whole town is talking about your new idea”, knowing that this would please him.

One of his students at the time recalls: “An exceptionally composed man of few words, Brother Pius is someone I fondly remember. Once a boy was reading a comic, placing it behind his textbook when the teacher was teaching. Brother Pius, during his rounds, saw this. He calmly walked towards the boy from behind and closed the boys’ eyes with both his hands. The boy, thinking the hands belonged to his friend, slapped them. He looked back...and never played that trick again”.

In those years most of the Brothers would make their annual Retreat in the country house on Penang Hill. On one famous occasion Brother Pius appeared clothed in a span-new white robe. One day a Brother was shaving upstairs. Task completed, he threw the basin of dirty water out the window. Brother Pius happened to be passing below and received a dousing, new robe and all. For years afterwards he could not be convinced that it was all an accident.

Towards the end of 1960, after having serving the normal two terms, Brother Pius was given a rousing send-off, complete with fife and drum. He had steered St Michael’s through hard and good times and could now take a deserved rest back in his home country.

After his holiday with his beloved family in Ireland he was asked to return to Burma, once again to St. Paul's Rangoon. However, in 1963, he was asked to take charge of a new school in Taunggyi. He welcomed the appointment since he had been very fond of Burma and its people from his early years there. But just as things were taking shape a semi-communist group seized the reins of power in a 1963 coup. Brother Pius and six recently arrived Brothers were ordered to leave the country. On April 1<sup>st</sup> 1965, all mission schools were confiscated and nationalized. The Brothers were forbidden to teach and foreign Priests, Brothers and Sisters told to leave the country. It was a second and final sad farewell to Burma for Brother Pius.

Hong Kong provided the refuge and he arrived there on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1964 and was assigned to teach Form 4 in La Salle College. A new Lasallian school situated close to the border with mainland China was being built at the time and after one year in La Salle Brother Pius was posted as one of the four pioneers of the new school and community. The other three Brothers were Felix Sheehan (Director), Hubert Pilz and Paul O'Connell. To this day the four 'Houses' of the school are called after them. Brother Pius was to remain there for the next fifteen years, entering fully into the life of the community and school.

Sports day, with his old friend Brother Hubert



The Brothers managed to create a warm family atmosphere in the school. Most of the students were farmers' sons, many came to school on bicycles and for nearly all it was a first encounter with white-robed missionary teachers. Besides teaching English and Religion, Brother Pius as usual promoted games and sports, and was the advisor of the Red Cross Unit.



Signs of ill health began to appear in the 70's. He had never been very robust and was diagnosed with diabetes in 1973. He rallied and tried to carry on as usual but it was a strain and his ills were compounded by a stroke which affected his speech. Nevertheless he felt strong

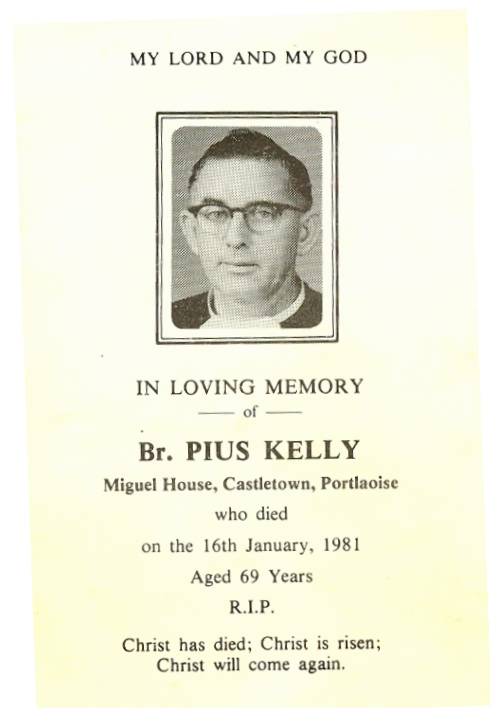
enough to pay a last visit to St Michael's, his old school in Ipoh, Malaysia, and spent three months there. There was a regular stream of visitors to see him. A Brother who was there at the time recalls that he "wept as I led him to the plane on his departure, realizing it would be his last sight of Ipoh where he had been so happy".

In 1979, the Brothers in Hong Kong decided it would be best for Brother Pius to take home leave followed by retirement in Castletown. They knew of his deep affection for his family and he spent the best part of a year in his brother's house which was the old family abode. While there, he celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his taking the religious habit and Mass was said in the house.

In 1980 he was transferred to Miguel House nursing home in Castletown where he received every attention. By this time he was largely confined to a wheelchair. He remained his usual quiet and cheerful self but spoke little because of the effects of the stroke. At the end of the year his condition deteriorated and he had to be hospitalized but soon returned to Miguel House where he died on January 16<sup>th</sup> 1981. He was sixty-nine years of age.

#### Brother Pius' Postings:

St. Paul's Rangoon, Burma	1931-1938
St. Xavier's Penang, Malaysia	1938-1941
St. Joseph's Novitiate, Penang	1942-1945
Home Leave	1946-1947
St. Michael's Ipoh	1948-1960
St. Paul's Rangoon, Burma	1961-1963
St. Theresa's Taunggyi, Burma	1963-1964
La Salle College, Hong Kong	1964-1965
De Salle Secondary School, Hong Kong	1965-1979
Home Leave	1979-1980
Miguel House, Castletown, Ireland	1980-1981





## Family Updates

### Brother Lawrence's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, Brother Lawrence celebrated the big one with aplomb and looked in great shape. With Brothers Alphonsus Chee, Patrick Tierney, Joseph Hung and Michael Phong on hand, the birthday cake got short shrift.

Ad Multos Annos.



### Father Justin Lee's first Mass in his Alma Mater



Staff and students of St Joseph's College and Primary Schools welcomed back their former student, Father Justin Lee, who celebrated Mass in the College Chapel on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2009. His parents, relatives and friends also attended.

### Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner

The Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College Lasallian Community celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the school with a very well-attended dinner on the 12<sup>th</sup> December.



## La Salle Primary School Annual Sports Day

Dr Steven Wong, Chairman of La Salle College Parent Teachers Association, did the honours for the Primary School's Sports Day which was held on the College track and field on the 19<sup>th</sup> December.



## Visit of St. Joseph's Institution and Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, Singapore



La Salle College welcomed students and teachers of these two schools towards the end of November. The students followed the regular school schedule and were guests at Speech Day. We hope there will be more visits of this kind in the future.

## Penang District Retreat/Assembly

This year's Brothers' Retreat and Assembly was held in Stella Maris, Penang, from 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> December. Some Lay Lasallians also attended the Assembly.





## Blast from the past, 1909



Although the Brothers arrived in Hong Kong 135 years ago, this is the earliest photo in our possession and it is 100 years old. It shows Brother Christian Lennon, Director of St. Joseph's College, with Father Spada, PIME, together with boarders of the College. The College at that time was located in Robinson Road, close by the Catholic Cathedral.

Brother Christian was Irish American in the sense that he was born in County Monaghan, Ireland on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1852 but migrated when young to the United States. He was posted to St. Joseph's College in 1908 and was to be Director until 1913. Brother Christian left Hong Kong for the United States on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July 1913 and became Director of St. Joseph's Community New York. He passed away on the 8<sup>th</sup> September in 1920 at the age of sixty-eight and is buried in the Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Hawthorne, New York State.

Father John Michael Spada was a priest of the Milan Foreign Mission Society (PIME) and a staunch friend of the Brothers. He was particularly close to Brother Aimar and, in the 1920's, they searched for suitable sites for the future La Salle College and St. Teresa's Church. His long career of almost sixty years in Hong Kong is a record of piety and zeal. He will long be remembered among the Catholics of Hong Kong, and his name blessed by the many who enjoyed his spiritual ministrations and material help from his paternal hand. He passed away in 1950.

## Oriental Flavour

### A First Lesson in Writing Chinese Characters



Here is Brother David Hawke, General Councillor, trying his hand at writing the character for 'tree/wood' in a St Joseph's College Kindergarten boy's workbook. The boy in question is keeping a close watch and I wonder if he is going to give a pass or fail. At least Brother David was willing to have a go. Why not you?



Chinese is the most used language in the world. Officially, Chinese is one language though there are different dialects; no one knows the exact number of dialects being used by the numerous ethnic groups across the country. Many linguists claim that Chinese is actually not one single language, but rather that each dialect is a language in and of itself. They point to the fact that speakers of different dialects can rarely communicate effectively with each other. This indicates that spoken Chinese is actually a set of many related but separate languages.



While spoken dialects vary widely, the written language of all Chinese dialects is the same. In fact, people rarely write in dialect; almost all writing is done in standard Mandarin (the official language) because when dialects are written down, they cannot be easily understood by non-dialect speakers. Written Chinese is not an alphabetic language. The basic units are 'squared characters' called 'zi'. The origin of Chinese characters can be dated back to about 4500 years ago. Each Chinese character has a written form (made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (varying in different contexts). When we speak or write Chinese, we string these 'zi' s together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

According to the US State Department's ranking of language difficulty, Mandarin is one of the toughest languages in the world for an English speaker to master. To read and communicate in modern Chinese, you need to commit about 5000 Chinese characters (their shape, sound and meaning) to memory. In Japanese and Korean, Chinese characters still in use are called 'kanji' and 'hanja' respectively.



There are six types of characters. The relatively simple ones are these three types:

**1. Pictographs:** Words formed from something which can be drawn (animal, person, object.)

Word	Symbol	Picture	Explanation
tree	木		a trunk with leaves and roots
hill	山		hills with peaks

**2. Ideographs** are graphical representations of abstract ideas.

Object/Idea	Derived from	Ideograph	Explanation
tree	木	本	literally means 'this particular tree'

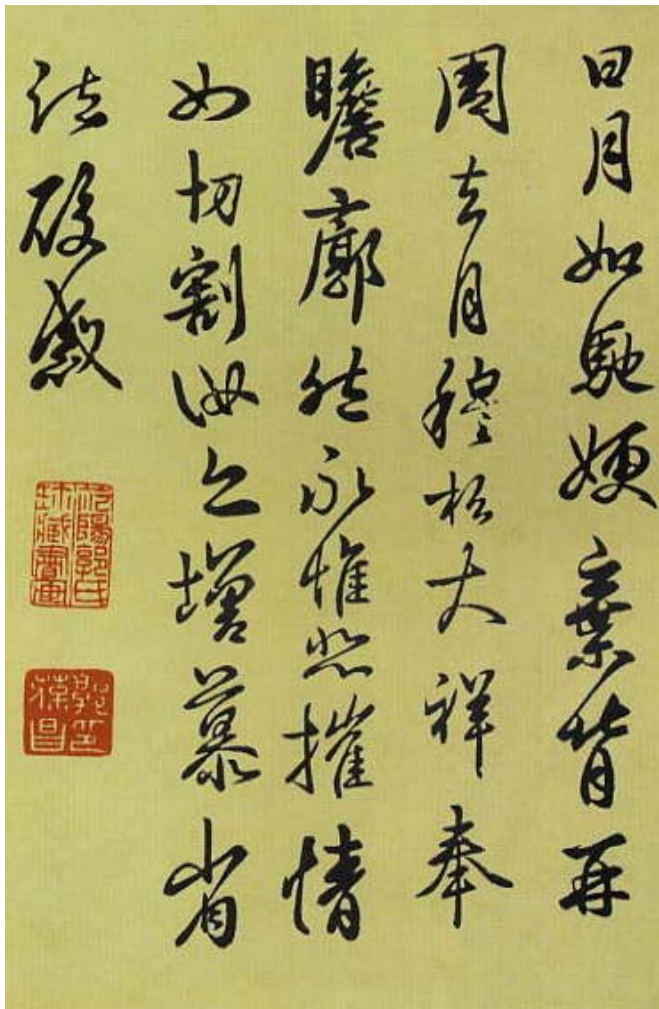
**3. Indicatives:** Words formed to be understood easily after the pictograph and indicative were formed.

Pictograph	Ideograph	Aggregate
木 tree	人 person	休 rest (a person resting against a tree)

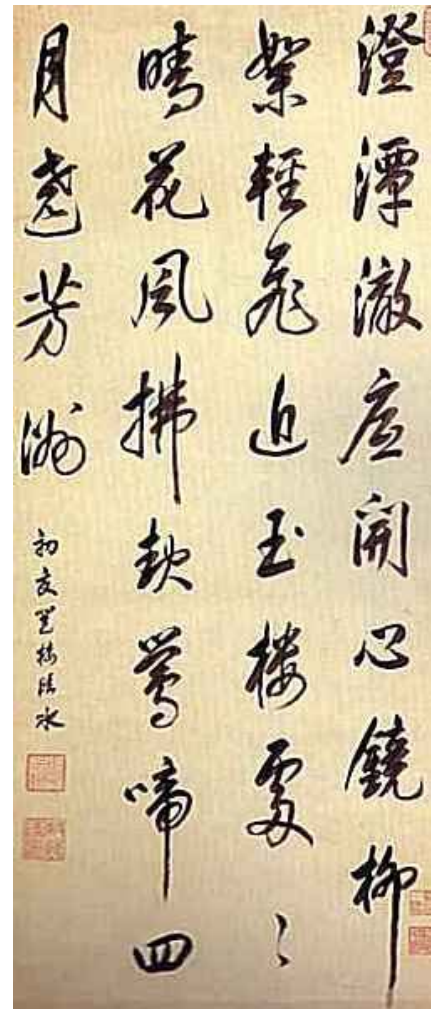
Different characters can be made up of exactly the same strokes. The length of each stroke, the position in relationship to each other, and whether they touch or overlap will determine the meaning of the character. Look at the examples below.

士 soldier	土 soil
刀 knife	力 force

This is perhaps the reason why the kindergarten boy looked so concerned when Brother David was trying very hard to 'draw' the character 'wood' in his workbook. This poor boy will have to force himself to commit thousands of such characters to memory, know how to write them, read them and understand their meaning as well. Scribbling row upon row of Chinese characters is routine homework for him. Some educators argue that learning Chinese characters is a good way to instill discipline and patience. Some might add frustration as well! In any case, Chinese calligraphy is an art in itself and much appreciated by Chinese people.



By Wang Xizhi 王羲之(303-361), his works have been studied by generations of students and used as examples to learn and practice the art of calligraphy.

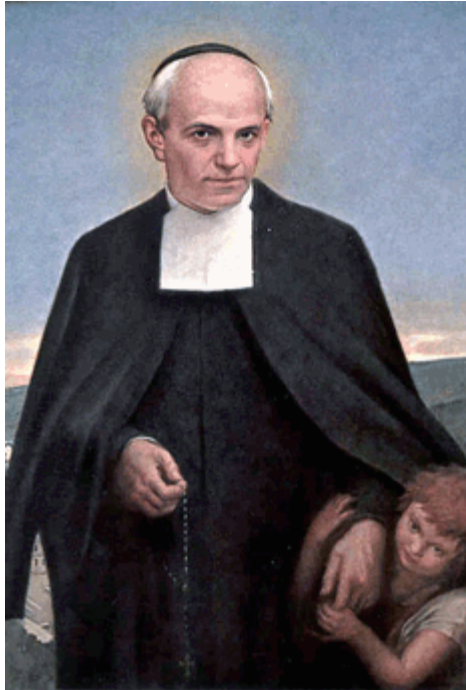


Even the Emperor, Kangxi 康熙, of the Qing Dynasty (1645-1722), learnt the art well.

## Lasallian Saints and Blessed

**Saint Mutien-Marie Wiaux**

**1841-1917**



Louis Wiaux, the third of six children, was born on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1841, in a small village of French-speaking Belgium. His father was a blacksmith, while his mother helped to run a small cafe in part of the family home. The children were brought up in a Catholic atmosphere, each day ending with the family rosary. Louis proved neither physically nor emotionally suited to his father's trade; he was convinced that the Lord was calling him to a different way of life. No sooner had he met the Brothers in a nearby school than he determined to enter the novitiate at Namur. After two years, teaching elementary classes in Chimay and Brussels, Brother Mutien was assigned to the boarding school at Malonne where he would spend

the rest of his fifty-eight years as a teacher and school prefect.

He did not find it at all easy to cope with the demands of both teaching and prefecting. By nature kind and gentle, class management was at first a strain until an older Brother took him under his wing and trained him to teach art and music. He learned how to play the harmonium and pipe organ and taught the flute, double bass, tuba and piano as well as taking his place in the school band and orchestra. Indeed, one of his nicknames was "Brother Harmonium". Eventually, Brother Mutien became not only an effective teacher, a vigilant prefect in the school yard, and a catechist in the nearby parish, but a tremendous influence on the students by his patience and evident piety. A typical testimony states: "We liked him for his kindness and devotedness and for his evident holiness which radiated from his entire person. He was always encouraging and never impatient with us."

He was known to spend whatever time he could before the tabernacle in the chapel or at the grotto of Our Lady. He would begin his day at 4.30am by kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament and then attending Mass at 6.00am. Among the Brothers, it was said that he had never been seen violating even the smallest points in their Rule. One Brother noted that "no matter in what circumstances you met Brother Mutien, he always had the same welcoming smile, the same expression of joy and simplicity."

While supervising the students he carried a rosary in his hands and prayed constantly. Students referred to him as “ the Brother who is always praying.” The rosary beads was his constant companion.

After his death at Malonne, his fame began to spread through Belgium, where many miracles were attributed to him. His relics may be venerated in Malonne at the shrine built in his honour after his canonization. At his canonization, Pope John Paul II declared that Brother Mutien “has all the greatness of the humble”.

Brother Mutien may be regarded as a model for the many educators who have never been in administration or high position but who always try to touch the hearts of the children entrusted to their care.

Born at Mellet, Belgium March 20, 1841

Entered the novitiate April 7, 1856

Died January 30, 1917

Beatified by Pope Paul VI, October 30, 1977

Canonized by Pope John Paul II, December 10, 1989

Feast Day, 30<sup>th</sup> January.

## Prayer

Lord our God, may the life and witness of Brother Mutien Marie inspire us to live more faithfully your call to walk in your presence and grow in holiness. Lead us to delight in the life you bring through all the circumstances in which you place us and with the people you entrust to us. Lead us to discover the simplicity of the gospel and be credible witnesses of your love, through Christ our Lord. Amen.



**St Mutien-Marie, pray for us.**