



The Gateway

Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin

November 2013

Forty Ninth Issue

Welcome



We are in the month of the Holy Souls. It resonates with the Chinese people who have a long and marvelous tradition of paying respects to their ancestors and who visit the graves at least twice a year. May the souls of our loved ones and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace.

One particular departed soul is that of our Brother of the Month who left us relatively recently after a long and valiant battle with leukaemia. He belonged to the 'old stock' and was straight down the middle in his relations with others.

School-wise, November is the month of Speech and Prize Giving Days, Swimming Galas and Sports Days. This has partly to do with the weather which is usually at its best at this time of year. It is a joy to see the students enjoying these various activities.



There are a lot of Family Updates, which must be a good thing, since they suggest that much good work is going on connected with our schools.

The Blast from the Past goes back to 1934. Some of our readers were around at the time.

We hope 'Ants in my Pants' will give you a good laugh.

Brother of the Month Brother Alphonsus Chee 1928 -2013



'Principal of Principles' declares one.

'A tough cookie' says another.

'Order and discipline' says another.

'A man of steel' says another.

One thing for sure. When it came to learning, Brother Alphonsus never took no for an answer. All pupils could learn; all pupils would learn; and all pupils did learn.

Brother Alphonsus was born in Ipoh, Malaysia in 1928, a famous tin-mining city. He was the sixth child in a family of 5 boys and 5 girls. He started his studies in the prestigious St. Michael's Institution (SMI) run by the De La Salle Brothers.

His studies were interrupted during the War during which time he stayed at the farm of his father in Ipoh. He spent his time planting potatoes and vegetables. After the War, he resumed his studies in St. Michael's.

His Leaving Certificate Report from St. Michael's has the following remarks: "A reliable Prefect, a keen sportsman and one who gave full satisfaction to his teachers by his obedience, diligence and exemplary conduct, and was a source of continual edification to his fellow students." It will not surprise those who knew him that he was diligent and of good conduct, but it will be surprising to learn that he was a good sportsman. In fact, he would later take physical education courses and became a qualified athletics coach.



In January 1948, soon after graduation, he started his teaching career in St. Michael's. He would be termed a 'student teacher' at this stage. While studying and teaching there, he became attracted to the Catholic way of life. He and his family, apart from his father, were converted to the faith. Brother Alphonsus was baptized on the 2nd December 1949 at the age of twenty one. It was not only the Catholic way of life that attracted him. He also became attracted to the Brothers way of life, especially to their regular and harmonious lifestyle. He was impressed by the

devotion, kindness and dedication of the Brothers who taught him. In 1954, rather against the wishes of his father, he asked to join the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

This necessitated a move to Penang for his Novitiate and further scholastic and teacher training. His first teaching assignment as a Brother, in 1957, was in St Xavier's Branch School, Penang, and to this day his former students can remember him very well. The school catered mainly to the less well-off pupils. Right from day one, Brother Alphonsus insisted on hard work and the learning of each topic fully. If success in examinations required relentless drilling then relentless drilling it would be. This is how one of his students at the time puts it:

"I never did the work assigned to the class and never opened the books to read. Each week report card had a string of marks in red and each Monday I had to face Brother Alphonsus. I was a stubborn boy and no amount of scolding by Brother could change my habits. It was a test of patience, and this went on for nearly half a year". That is, until Brother Alphonsus won out!

He would play badminton with the staff and was the teacher-in-charge of the school football team. He was proud of its achievements because it could sometimes even beat teams from its big parent school, St Xavier's.

His superiors were far-seeing enough to realize the importance of academic qualifications and sent him to Sydney to study for a degree. He went to the University of New South Wales in 1963 and obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in 1967, majoring in Pure Mathematics. Then it was back to teaching in Singapore and Malaysia, concentrating mainly on Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry.



The major transfer of his life occurred in 1968 when he was sent to La Salle College, Hong Kong. And, apart from two years, there he remained for the rest of his life. He became the Principal of De La Salle Secondary School, Fanling in 1971. This post probably came too early in his career and, after one year, he returned to regular teaching in La Salle College.

As a teacher, he was serious, meticulous in every detail and did not joke in class. He firmly believed in the necessity of good order and discipline as well as hard work. Students were drilled, and sometimes grilled, until they understood the subject. They might at first have thought he was very strict but when they did well in examinations they saw the whole purpose of the exercise. He also found time for two extra-curricular activities, taking charge of a Legion of Mary Praesidium and becoming teacher-in-charge of the school tennis team.



Life was moving along predictable lines when, pretty suddenly, in 1977, he was drawn into a massive project involving the demolition and redevelopment of the original La Salle College building. The Brothers had taken the hard decision that demolition of the much-loved old school was preferable to repairing and/or building an extension. Brother Alphonsus himself puts it this way in an article he entitled 'A Bold

Venture – Crossing the Rubricon':

"There were several options on how best to do it and each had its own merits and demerits. There was even tension between 'sentimentalists' and 'functionalists'. The former would like to preserve the 'Majestic Dome' while the latter was ready to sacrifice it in order to proceed with the best option. The prime determining factor was funding. What followed has become history!"

Brother Alphonsus and Brother Thomas Lavin were detailed by the school principal, Brother Raphael Egan, to look into every detail and to oversee the entire project. They took the assignment very seriously, checked every detail, studied what they did not understand until understanding came and followed up with architects and contractors. Brother Alphonsus pored over drawings and blueprints and examined all furniture and equipment. There was hardly a nut or bolt, a pipe or conduit, a desk or chair that he did not know about. He never sought the limelight but worked tenaciously behind the scenes. He wanted the best for La Salle and got it. The new school building, though lacking the majesty of the dome, was seen by many as the most modern and functional of any school in the region. In fact, many passers-by thought it was a university.



The countless hours of toil and concentration took its toll and there were times when Brother Alphonsus felt that all his efforts were not appreciated. Perhaps this was because he tried to do everything himself and to be on top of everything. Such could be a lonely role. In this situation, a poem by Helen Steiner Rice seems to have sustained him. He had circled the title and underlined a number of lines. The poem is as follows:

Talk It Over With God

You're worried and troubled about everything,
Wondering and fearing what tomorrow will bring,
You long to tell someone, for you feel so alone,
But your friends are all burdened
with cares of their own.

There is only one place and only one Friend
Who is never too busy, and you can always depend
On Him to be waiting, with arms open wide
To hear all the troubles you came to confide . . .
For the heavenly Father will always be there
When you seek Him and find Him
at the altar of prayer.

The next big assignment came with the changing of the guards in September 1984. This time he was asked to be the Principal of La Salle College. The 1980's was a restless time, characterized by the migratory phenomenon caused by the impending return of Hong Kong to China. Teachers came and went. Many preferred the greener pastures of the private sector. Despite the times, the school managed to maintain high academic standards with a number of



pupils achieving the coveted 9A's in the public examinations. Good discipline and order was maintained. La Salle College captured the Overall Championship in the Interschool Athletics Meet for 5 consecutive years. The soccer team, volleyball team, squash team, fencing team and the swimming team dominated the interschool competitions. By 1991, the Omega Rose Bowl, the symbol of overall supremacy in sports, remained the school's prized possession for 17 consecutive years.

Brother Alphonsus paid particular attention to the Catholic life of the school, establishing the Catholic Society and supporting the Legion of Mary. Rosary was said before school in the chapel and the monthly Mass was attended by all Catholic pupils.

As mentioned, he believed in order and discipline. Routine must be adhered to. He accepted no excuses. However, the following little story shows that his bark could be worse than his bite.

In 1988 a Form 7 boy was leaving Hong Kong for the USA. Two boys were 'selected' by their classmates to speak to Brother Alphonsus. "We went to the Principal's Office early in the morning, hands and feet trembling. What we had in mind were: "Why the two of us?" Brother Alphonsus asked why we wanted to speak to him. I answered, 'Master Y is leaving today and ...' Well, I dared not continue but my companion finished my sentence saying, 'and we want to wish him farewell at the airport.' We waited quietly for his answer. After one or two seconds Brother Alphonsus asked quietly, 'What is his departure time?' 'About 3 o'clock and we want to skip the last lesson.' We stood there for another 5 seconds. 'Boys of F.7C can go. Give me the names of the other students who wish to go. You can leave after lunch time.' Well, now I know what the Bible means by 'Ask and you will receive.'"



The two terms as Principal were up in 1990 and Brother Alphonsus retired from the job. As he puts it himself: "I took centre stage without any fanfare in September 1984 and retired in similar fashion in September 1990." Not quite full retirement. There was a further year of teaching at Chong Gene Hang College on Hong Kong Island before he hung up his boots.



While he did not go around smiling all day, you would often see him smiling broadly in the company of old boys. Somehow they had a way of bringing out his human and even humorous side. He often enquired about them and their families and was very pleased when they were doing well. The same went for the school auxiliary staff, the janitors and security personnel with whom he frequently chatted.

As a member of the Brothers Community, we could be certain that Brother Alphonsus would always be where he was supposed to be, be it in the chapel for prayer or in the dining room for meals. He followed a regular and predictable timetable. Brother Patrick has this to say:

“Since I was living in the next room for twenty three years, I knew I could set my watch by him. In fact there was hardly any need for a watch. He would rise early and, after ablutions, head for the chapel. If he were not around we would ask questions. I don’t know how he spoke with God, but every day he would be at his place in chapel. He took his religion seriously and loved the Mass and the Rosary. His special devotion was to our Lady and the Legion of Mary therefore appealed to him.”



On the personal preference side, Brother Alphonsus was never seen to take soup, eat dessert or sing a song. He felt that all sweet stuff was not good for the health. As for singing, we don’t know if he had a note in his head. In leisure time, he very much liked to read Catholic magazines and newspapers and spent time emailing.

The first indications that his health was not so good came a good many years ago when we learned that he had contracted a form of leukaemia. He got good medication for it but developed a hard, raking cough which took a lot out of him. He fought his condition long and hard but had to be hospitalized every so often, received occasional blood transfusions and gradually began to physically weaken.

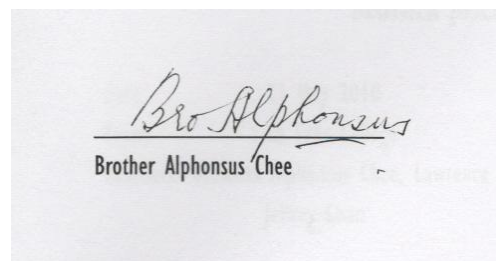
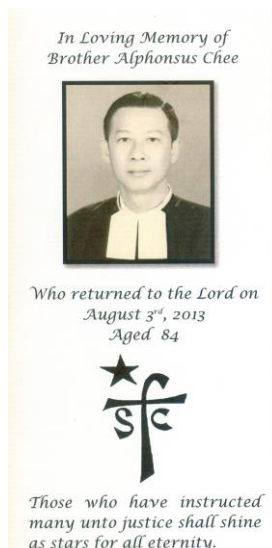
In early June of 2013, his doctor indicated that Brother Alphonsus was declining fairly rapidly, because his major organs were weakening. He was in and out of hospital a number of times. He disliked staying too long in the hospital and returned to his Community room as quickly as possible. The final hospitalization, this time in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, came on the night of the 3rd August 2013 when he passed to his Maker.



The funeral Mass and burial were held over to enable relatives to assemble and arrive in Hong Kong. Eleven of them were able to make the trip from Malaysia, including a nephew and a niece. The last rites were held on the 13th August with funeral Mass in St Teresa’s Church followed by burial in St Michael’s Cemetery, Happy Valley. Despite heavy rainfall, there was a large turnout of the Hong Kong Lasallian Family. Fr. Marciano Baptista, S.J., an old boy, was the chief celebrant and Brother Patrick Tierney delivered the eulogy.

Postings of Brother Alphonsus Chee

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|---|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| St. Michael's Institution, Ipoh, Malaysia | Teaching | 1948-1954 |
| St. Joseph's Training College, Penang, Malaysia | Novitiate and Scholasticate | 1954-1957 |
| St. Xavier's Institution, Penang, Malaysia | Teaching | 1957-1962 |
| University of New South Wales, Australia | Degree | 1963-1966 |
| St. Patrick's School, Singapore | Teaching | 1967 (Jan – April) |
| St. George's Institution, Taiping,, Malaysia | Teaching | 1967-1968 |
| St. Joseph's Training College, Penang, Malaysia | Teaching | 1968 (May-Aug) |
| La Salle College, Kowloon, Hong Kong | Teaching | 1968-1971 |
| De La Salle Secondary School, NT, Hong Kong | Principal | 1971-1972 |
| La Salle College, Kowloon, Hong Kong | Teaching | 1972-1984 |
| La Salle College, Kowloon, Hong Kong | Principal | 1984-1990 |
| Chong Gene Hang College, Hong Kong | Teaching | 1991-1992 |
| La Salle College, Kowloon, Hong Kong | Retired | 1992-2013 |



Family Updates

Most Beautiful Rural Teacher



At a ceremony in Beijing on the night of 10th September 2013, Brother David Liao received the “Most Beautiful Rural Teachers” national award. Liao Le Nian of Changjiao Village, Dabu County, received the prestigious national award from his student Lee Zhan Tao, who this year qualified to enter Medical College at Beijing University.

Brother David, is a Malaysian, whose ancestral home is in Guangdong Province, Meizhou State, Dabu

County. In 1999 he retired and in 2002 returned to his home village to begin voluntary teaching activities. He also invited volunteers from overseas to assist him. He has, through a university fees subsidy programme, enabled more than 20 local village students to attend university and he has also organized and funded community development projects such as cementing village roads, improving drainage and reopening abandoned farm land.

The nines have it

Brother Hyacinth suffers from quite severe Alheimers disease. He is resident in the unit for the elderly in St Teresa’s Hospital. His memory is pretty well gone though sometimes he can surprise us. He was always a muscular man and his handshake is still strong. Sunday the 29th of September was his birthday. Besides his name and home address, his birthday is one fact he can still remember, perhaps because it is composed of so many 9’s... 29/9/1929. We wish Brother Hyacinth a happy birthday and many happy returns of the day.



Swimming Galas

It's swimming gala season. Schools take advantage of the warm weather to sharpen up their swimmers. Some of them will be scrutinized for potential inter-school material. But for the vast majority, the Galas are just pleasant days out and they enjoy themselves. In fact some parents become more excited than the children! Swimmers from our various schools were also in action at invitation relays. On top of all that, the major Inter-School competition has been held. St Joseph's College swimmers were C Grade champions while La Salle came second. With winter approaching, swimmers will soon be heading for heated pools.



Football Fiesta

Old boy stars of St. Joseph's College and La Salle College from as far back as the 60's and right up to modern times gathered at La Salle College field on the day after Mid-Autumn for a friendly football get-together. Brothers Thomas Lavin and Patrick Tierney, school coaches of years gone by, also lined out and gave their best in the first half before handing over to younger legs. The best that can be said is that no goal was scored while they were on the field of play! Many of the old old boys still showed flashes of former glory. Young and old enjoyed the occasion immensely and also enjoyed supper afterwards.



Love Post Day



Hongkong Post ran its "Love Post Day" on October 9 for the 10th year to celebrate the pleasures of letter-writing. "Love Post Day" is an initiative in support of World Post Day, an annual event to commemorate the establishment of the Universal Postal Union on October 9, 1874.

"Show your appreciation to your loved ones on 'Love Post Day' with a handwritten message, and let Hongkong Post be your messenger," said the Postmaster General, Mrs. Jessie Ting.

Students at Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) Primary School took up the invitation.

Lasallian Education Council

The Council meets regularly to discuss educational matters of import and to give counsel to schools. The latest meeting was on the 26th October 2013 and opened with a thoughtful power-point presentation on "Peace is Possible", following guidelines of our Superior General. Then the Council tackled such matters as school Incorporated Management Committees, the Hong Kong Lasallian Mission Fund, the Hong Kong Lasallian Family Coordinator and the members Terms of Office. For the record, Ms. Nikki Chan has been appointed the Lasallian Family Coordinator and we all wish her well. The Council also holds a quarterly lunch gathering in rotation with our school authorities. The most recent was with St Joseph's College and Primary School.



Bauhinia Award

In Hong Kong scouting circles, the Golden Bauhinia Award is much coveted by cub scouts. It is the highest award that can be achieved at that level. The award involves outdoor and adventure challenges, teamwork and leadership testing. The awards are given out annually at a parade rally. The year just past saw thirteen La Salle Primary boys capture the award. It is the first time in the school's history for so many to receive the award at one time. Congratulations all round.



Interring of Bones

It was appropriate that on the 2nd November, the Feast of the Holy Souls, a ceremony for the interring of the bones of two Brothers recently exhumed was held. Brother Thomas Favier kindly organized a simple ceremony presided over by the Vicar General, Father Michael Yeung. It was held at the plot of the Brothers, adjacent to the Chapel at the Happy Valley St Michael's Catholic Cemetery. During the ceremony, the remains of Brother Brendan Dunne, the Principal of St. Joseph's College from 1958-1964 and Brother Austin De Lemos, who served at La Salle College during the 1980's and 90's, were placed in the vault which is part of the Brother's grave plot. A fair number of Old Boys were present to pay tribute to the Brothers buried there.



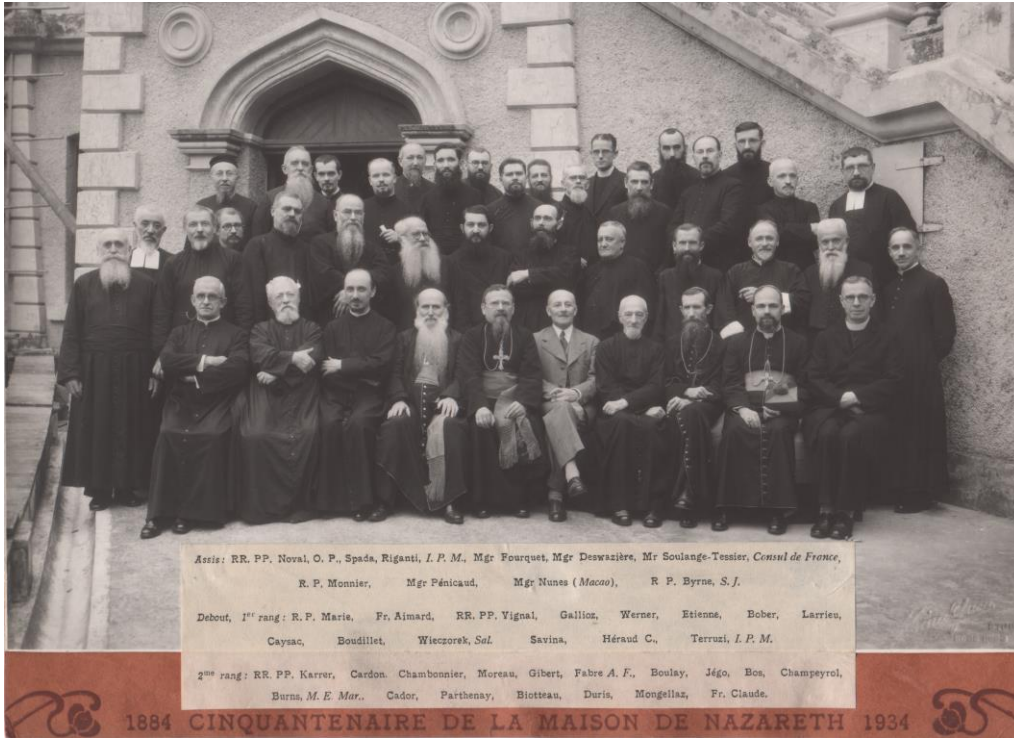
CBS Leadership Camp



The Opening Ceremony of the annual CBS Leadership Camp was held on the 12th October 2013. This camp was organized by the Hong Kong Lasallian Volunteers and it attracted a fine turn-out. With the aims of serving the needy, sharing faith and community and giving formation presentations and workshops, the Camp moved to a successful conclusion on the 13th October. The overall emphasis is to promote Lasallian leadership through learning and serving. The participants are the hope of the future.



Blast from the Past



Nazareth House building dates back to 1861 when a wealthy Scottish trader named Douglas Lapraik built Douglas Castle as his place of residence. The Priests of the French Foreign Mission took over the building in 1884 and renamed it Nazareth House. They converted it into a printing works, called the Nazareth Printing Press. It produced works in up to 28 languages, including works on the scriptures.



After the War, the priests found the building and its works difficult to maintain and, in 1954, sold it off to the University of Hong Kong. It became a Hall of Residence for university students and was simply called, University Hall. The Hall still stands to this day.

In the picture, mainly of a gathering of priests, there are two Brothers, none other than the great visionary Brother Aimar who had just founded La Salle College and Brother Claude who was teaching at St. Joseph's College at the time. The occasion is the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Nazareth House.

Ants in my Pants

By Brother Patrick Tierney

It was around the time of the Mid-Autumn festival and I had to go to a foreign country for an assembly of colleagues.

After reaching our destination we were assigned our rooms and I looked forward to a good night's rest. I hastened to bed.

At some stage during the night I felt a tickling somewhere in the lower regions and I began scratching. This did not solve the problem. In fact it got worse, a lot worse. I was becoming unbearably itchy.

I leapt out of bed to see what was causing the problem. I let my pyjamas fall. To my horror, all around my private parts was a host of ants, scurrying this way and that. My pyjamas was alive with them also. I began flailing at them to little avail. I got a towel and began swishing, batting and belting them, dancing about in my morning glory. If there were a candid camera about, I think viewers would have thought I was jumping about like a madman.

It took an age before I was satisfied that I had got the last one. There was no point going back to bed. I suspected that more ants could well be lurking there. The following night I was given another room but it was difficult to fall asleep, to get the ants out of my mind. I didn't feel secure until I was in the air, winging my way back to Hong Kong.

Those ants had had a rare good feed for Mid-Autumn.

