

The

October 2015

gateway



LASALLIAN EAST ASIA DISTRICT



issue

60

HONG KONG LASALLIAN FAMILY BULLETIN

St. John Baptist De La Salle 1651 - 1719
Patron of Teachers

October 2015



(Cover) This wood-carving of St. John Baptist de La Salle with two boys was ordered from a master craftman in the Philippines through the good offices of Brother Andrew Gonzalez FSC. The carving is now a feature in the chapel of La Salle Primary School.

The gateway

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Welcome

It's back to school time and also back to *The Gateway*. In fact, we are celebrating our diamond jubilee with this issue. Please wish us well!

La Salle Primary is our feature school. It is a well-known school in this part of the world. Its founder, Brother Henry Pang, was also well-known in his time, not least because he was the Principal of a boy called Bruce Lee. The school has been redeveloped in recent years and is well worth a visit if you are in town.

With this issue we begin a series of articles on a not too well-known history of the first Lasallian Mission in mainland China. The Mission was an outreach of the Brothers from French-speaking Canada. We are talking about a turbulent period in Chinese history, in the 30's and 40's. We hope you will find the articles of interest and we would be delighted to receive feedback.

We are also bringing back our 'Oriental Flavour' feature. If you want to know more about sushi or like eating it, then this article is for you.

We recall with fondness the memory of Brother Mark Blake who died recently and who spread the good news for many years both in Malaysia and in Hong Kong.

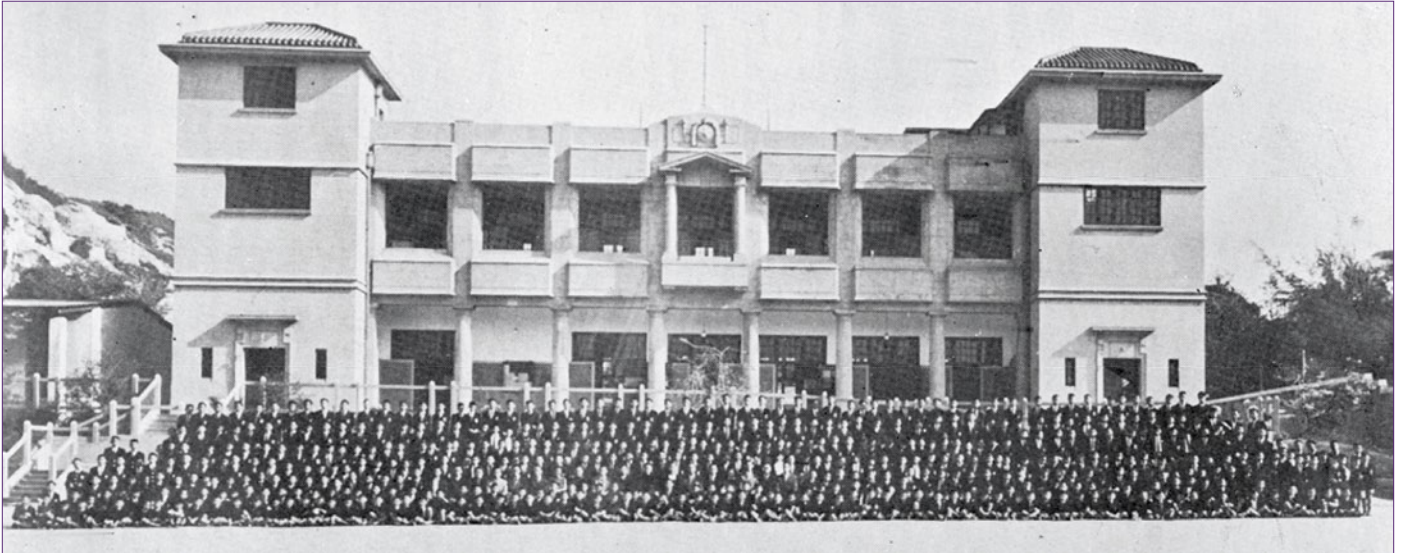
We are fortunate to have the presence of two new Brothers in our midst, Brothers Chris Soosai and Bosco Laga. We welcome them and wish them the very best. ■

**The Gateway
Hong Kong
Lasallian Family
Bulletin
October 2015
Sixtieth Issue**

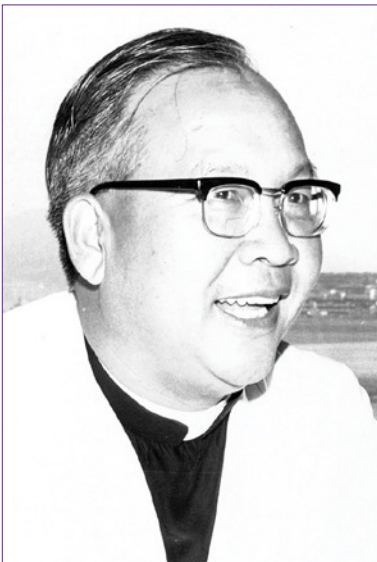


Our Pathways

La Salle Primary School



A wealth of material on La Salle Primary School, Kowloon, Hong Kong, has already been published. For purposes of this article we will concentrate on a few particular aspects of its history which we hope readers will find interesting.



Brother Henry Pang

La Salle Primary School opened its doors in 1957 and gradually built up steam to become a complete entity with students from Primary 1 to Primary 6. It thus became the first fully-fledged Lasallian primary school in Hong Kong. From the beginning, it was regarded as a feeder school to La Salle College.

The school quickly established itself and within a short span of time became extremely popular with parents anxious to enroll their sons. Little has changed in that regard to this day. This begs the question as to the cause of such popularity and that leads us, first and foremost, to the school's first Principal.

Brother Henry Pang was his name. He was aged 37 and in his prime when he was assigned as Principal to the new school. Brother Henry was a dynamic personality. His mind was teeming with ideas about educating the young, some ideas traditional and some avant-garde. He set to work with a will and over the years his name became almost synonymous with the Primary School. Mention Brother Henry and everyone immediately thought of La Salle Primary School.

His traditional ideas stemmed largely from his Lasallian formation. In this regard he was well aware of the importance of good teachers and set about recruiting them. He assembled a fine teaching staff, worked them hard but provided plenty space for leisure and recreation. The staff responded and excellent academic results flowed. The results were so good that some people even thought that, when it came to public examination papers, Brother Henry had

either a magic touch or had insider knowledge! To reinforce the importance of academics, he introduced the practice of having an Annual Speech Day, the very first one held in the summer of 1958, with Brother Felix Sheehan doing the honours.

Then there was the question of religion. While Brother Henry got on well with people of different religions, he ensured that the school was strongly Catholic both in its teaching and practices. The Sacraments were received, daily prayers recited and hymn singing and processions took place. He promoted devotion to the Child Jesus by means of the Arch-confraternity of the Divine Child and erected the appropriate statue. He promoted devotion to Our Lady by regular Rosary prayer and by erecting a grotto to Our Lady in the school grounds. He also had a statue of St. Joseph and the Child, since he was well aware that St. Joseph was the Patron of his Institute. In due course, a statue of St. La Salle was mounted outside the School Hall.



He also knew the value of good discipline in school. Caning was permitted at the time. He used it sparingly, when all fruit failed. Overall, he managed to strike a good balance between healthy respect for authority and a healthy degree of freedom. He allowed students to play freely in the playground and to make natural playground noise. Inside the classroom, however, he expected the students to knuckle down. Parents seemed to be much taken with this approach.

Brother Henry's more creative ideas found expression in a number of ways. For example, he believed in exposing the children to the world of nature. To this end he, at various times, brought in dogs, monkeys,

baby crocodiles, reindeer, birds and erected a large fish aquarium. This practice would probably not go down well in the modern world, so fearful of catching disease, but it all seemed harmless and healthy enough in those days. Brother Henry also set up a 'Nature Room' which was like a museum, packed with preserved specimens of insects, birds and animals.

Another form of 'exposure' deemed important by Brother Henry was cultural exchanges with foreign countries. He brought staff and students and parents on interesting trips to places like Japan, the Philippines and Malaysia. Their hosts were then welcomed back to Hong Kong and home stay arranged. Sounds quite common nowadays, but hardly in those far-off days.



Then there was the staging of annual musicals. He started them right from the first year of the school's operation, believing firmly that the students would learn much from performing on stage. The boys learned to speak clearly, to be confident and innovative. All the old musical favourites had their day— *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*, *Who Killed Cock Robin*, *Cinderella* and *Longbeard*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Noah's Ark*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*, *The Lion King*, *Pirates of the Curry Bean*, *Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs* and a host more. The musical drama tradition has been carried on to this day.

Incentives to good reading, good scouting, good music and excellence in sports all had their place in Brother Henry's scheme of things. So had movies, cartoons and documentaries.

It is not surprising that with all that was going on he became a most popular figure in Hong Kong and

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La Salle Primary became the school of choice. With so many adoring parents chasing after him, Brother Henry needed to keep a straight head.

It was not always a bed of roses for Brother Henry and the school. School extensions had to be overseen in order to cater to demand; long queues of anxious parents hoping for admission of their sons had to be dealt with; hundreds, perhaps thousands, of interviews had to be held; but perhaps his greatest trial came when part of the school's retaining wall collapsed in the rainy weather of June 1966. Six people lost their lives and sixteen were injured. Although a verdict of accidental death was returned, the whole incident weighed heavily on Brother Henry.

But life had to go on and on it went until his retirement as Principal in 1984. He had put all kinds of students through his hands, some that became famous and many who contributed much to society. In retirement, he had leisure to recall people like the famous Bruce Lee as well as the not so famous whose names he could often magically call up. Whatever, it was clear he had bequeathed an enviable legacy— a most sought-after school.

With Brother Henry's retirement, the era of Lasallian lay partner Principals began and continues to this day. They, together with devoted staffs, have all built on the fine early traditions and practices as well as keeping well up with modern educational trends.

The school continued to thrive in the 80's and 90's and facilities were generally above standard. One possible drawback was that it was a bi-sessional school, eighteen classes in the A.M. session and eighteen in the P.M. session— but that was the norm at the time. The format seemed set to continue for many a long day.

Without too much warning, circumstances changed. The Government began to promote whole-day schooling. The Brothers put their thinking caps on and engaged in consultation. It seemed they could either let things drag or bite the bullet and they chose the latter. A vision of the future began to emerge, a redevelopment, in situ, into a 36 class whole-day primary school.



Government agreed to pay for standard costs but any above standard facilities would have to be borne by the sponsoring body. Terms were agreed and a school Redevelopment Committee, chaired by old boy Mr. Michael Chan, J.P., was formed to oversee the entire project. The Redevelopment Committee worked long and tirelessly and construction work commenced on the massive task in August 2000.

The result is what can be seen today. Neither Brother Aimar who bought the land in the 20's nor Brother Henry the school's first Principal could have foreseen such an impressive redevelopment. It is fair to say they would have been pleased because, in their minds and hearts, nothing was too good for the La Salle boys.

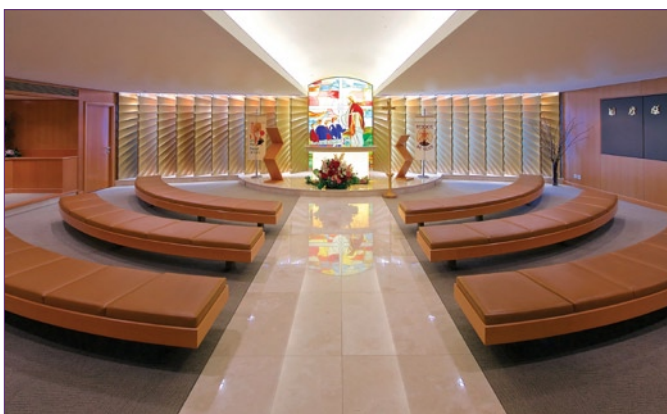
September 2002 witnessed the end of an era, when the two sessions of La Salle Primary School merged as one. On the 25th of September the blessing was performed by Bishop Joseph Zen (now a Cardinal) while Brother Alvaro Rodriguez, Superior General, was welcomed for the official opening on the 25th of January 2003.





The new school building contains many special features. For some, the huge hall cum gymnasium taking up the entire top floor and capable of accommodating the entire school is the crowning glory. Others point to the indoor-heated swimming pool in the bowels of the earth. The outdoor and covered playgrounds are a boon in overcrowded Hong Kong. Perhaps the gem, however, is the school chapel, shining brightly on the fifth floor, a constant reminder, as St. La Salle often says, that we are always and everywhere in the holy presence of God.

Creation of the World which beautifies the frontage of the school. Its vibrant colours seem to mirror the life of the school.



This brings to mind our chief school mural artist. His name is Francisco Borboa and his works have brightened up both the College and Primary. His themes are spiritual. Two of his works hang outside the Primary school Chapel, one of Jesus with the Children and the other of the Parable of the Sower. But his most striking work is the large mural of the

Another artist who has contributed to the life of the school was Brother Joseph McNally. His sculpture, called 'Counsellor II' is mounted in the foyer. It depicts an adult figure, somewhat in the shape of a De La Salle Brother, leaning towards and listening to a young lad. It is a suitable icon for La Salle Primary School which seeks to draw out and nurture those within her care.

La Salle Primary is approaching its Diamond Jubilee in 2016/17. It will surely continue to sparkle brightly in the years to come. ■

Family Updates

Birthday Celebration

The birthday of the Principal of La Salle College, Brother Steve Hogan, fell on the 6th September. It did not go unnoticed and there were two main celebrations. The first was the school's effort and was held in advance of the day. The two Vice Principals and all the Office staff were in attendance for the cake cutting and eating. The Brothers celebrated on the actual day with another cake. We wish Brother Steve many happy returns of the day.



New Blood



At the start of this academic year on the 1st September we were happy to welcome two new Brothers into our midst. One is Brother Chris Soosai who hails from India. He is currently helping La Salle College in its IT and Religious Studies development. The other is Brother Bosco Laga who comes from Myanmar. He helps out in La Salle Primary school, with an interest in Religious Studies and Visual Arts. Both Brothers will also hopefully help the Lasallian Family in Hong Kong with ongoing formation. The presence of these Brothers has significantly brought down the average age of the Brothers!

Retirement

After 38 years of devoted service in the cause of the Hong Kong Lasallian mission, Ms. Loretta Yu has retired so that she can live in Canada and take care of her mother. Loretta has served the mission in varying capacities, as teacher, school Principal and Supervisor. She spent her entire career in Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) Primary School, seeing it grow from soon after its establishment. The Incorporated Management Committee of the school hosted a farewell lunch for Loretta on the 15th July 2015 at which she was presented with a Lasallian Medallion and Certificate of Appreciation. We wish her a very happy retirement and thank her for her faithfulness all through the years.



Chinese Debating Champions

On Saturday the 29th August the La Salle College Chinese Debating Team won the prestigious 47th Joint School Chinese Debating Competition. The motion was “Freedom is more important than Peace”, and the opposing team was Wa Ying College. This is the 10th time that La Salle College has won this competition and is also the record for any school holder. It is an arduous route to the final and the debaters and coaches deserve much credit. The College expresses gratitude to the parents and old boys who attended and supported the team at the final at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.





Best Design

The Joint School Science Exhibition is an annual event in Hong Kong where students pit their talent for invention, creativity and design. This year's exhibition was held in August and three boys from St. Joseph's College came away with the Best Design Award. Their focus was on smelly shoes! By means of a LED light replacing sunlight they were able to get rid of the germs that cause bad shoe smell. Only budding scientists could think of something like that.

Well done!



Old Boys Football Tournament

This was the 10th anniversary of the Old Boys Football Tournament held at St. Joseph's Primary School. Old Boys of different vintages come together for a morning of physical exercise followed by a lunch where old friends meet and school memories are shared. This year the organisers were pleased to have the presence of Brothers Thomas Favier and Jeffrey Chan. Since the tournament is organized in a cup, plate and bowl format, everyone goes away happy.



Concert of the Old Boys

An annual concert has now become a tradition with the old boys of La Salle College. This year it was entitled “Lasallian Rhapsodies” and it was held in the Tsuen Wan Town Hall on the 13th September. Programme highlights included African Symphony – Van McCoy, arranged by Naohiro Iwai by the wind orchestra, 難忘的潑水節 – 劉文金 by the Chinese orchestra, the Violin Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 22, Movements II & III – Wieniawski and Symphonie Fantastique, Movements IV & V – Berlioz. There was also a pleasing acapella rendition of the Londonderry Air, familiarly called “Danny Boy”. The organisers and participants should take a bow for providing a lovely evening of entertainment.



Visual Arts Exhibition

After a lapse of three years, La Salle Primary School went public again by displaying a range of visual arts at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. The exhibition ran for three days, from the 28th September to the 1st October thereby taking in both the Mid-Autumn and National public holidays. This ensured a large number of visitors who browsed and appreciated student, staff and parent photos, floral blossoms, paper-mache pandas as well as nature and ‘science in art’ paintings. The opening ceremony, on a beautiful sunny afternoon, was on the 28th.



... ONE FAMILY



As Large in Death as in Life Brother Mark RIP

A former teacher at La Salle College from the early 80's to the mid 90's, Brother Mark Blake, died peacefully on the 5th August 2015 in the Brothers' nursing home in Castletown, Co. Laois, Ireland.

Brother Mark was one of a family of twelve and in 1945 he followed the example of his older brother, Lawrence, into the De La Salle Brothers. After spiritual formation, he went on to do teacher training studies in England before being sent to Malaysia in 1952.



Fifty five was the retiring age for teachers in Malaysia at the time. Brother Mark did not want to retire and was gladly accepted into La Salle College, Kowloon, where he taught with verve and competence for another 10 years.

Besides his school work, what perhaps most endeared him to the students was his athletic ability, especially in the field of athletics. Both in Malaysia and in Hong Kong he coached successful teams, especially in the art of discus throwing. He continued to coach even in retirement.



His other love was hiking and he would often head off and climb Lion Rock mountain and return as fresh as when he set out. He was like a mountain goat.

His health, however, gradually deteriorated and in 1994 he returned to Ireland where he received excellent nursing care. He was called to the Lord on the 5th August 2015 and the funeral was held on the 7th. There was a large attendance and Hong Kong was represented by Brother Patrick who happened to be on home leave.

The Brothers and the wider Lasallian Family in Hong Kong miss Brother Mark's presence and his wit. May he rest in the light of the Lord.

A Lasallian Mission in a Forgotten Land

The Story of the First Foundation of De La Salle Brothers in China 1936–1948

Introduction:

The story began like all Lasallian Missions throughout the world. The Christian Brothers, with their dedication and expertise in the education of youth and in the management of schools, have always been in great demand by Church authorities to help run their local seminaries and diocesan schools.

In October 1936, at the request of Church authorities, a community of three Brothers from the District of Montreal, Canada, was sent to Moukden, (Shenyang 瀋陽) by their superior. They had no knowledge of the fate awaiting them there.

With strong faith and zeal, they started the first foundation of De La Salle Brothers in China in a place where there was guerilla warfare and where a larger war loomed. Despite the adverse situation and uncertain future and within the short period of 12 years, between 1936–1948, 13 Brothers were sent to China. Of these, nine were interned during the war and one died in a concentration camp.

Despite all this, the Brothers did not take flight and, after the war, four more Brothers were sent to Beijing with a view to opening a new mission there. Unfortunately, all had to 'run for their own safety' and had to find ways of leaving China in 1948, before the Communists took over the country.

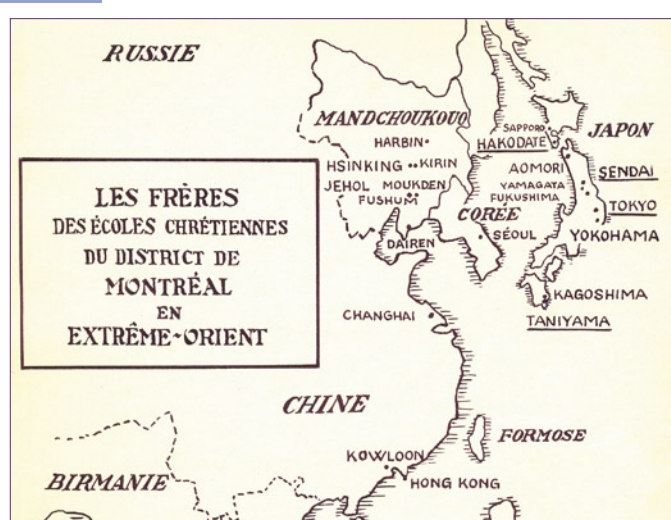
The following series of articles are based on the letters written by the Brothers involved in this China Mission to the Brothers superiors in Rome. Actually some of the letters never reached the recipients in time. Brother Patrick Tierney unearthed

them from the Motherhouse Archives and Brother Vincent Corkery helped in translating the letters from French to English.

We will remember these Brothers in our prayers for their effort and courage in the spreading of the good news in this immense country, so ancient and so new. May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed, rest in peace.

The Place:

Manchuria: Area in NE China, including Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang Provinces.



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Liaoning's fine harbours were long coveted by Russia and Japan for their strategic positions. Japan acquired the Liaoning peninsula after the first Sino-Japanese War in 1895, but was forced by Russia, Germany and France to return it to China that same year.

After the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), Japan replaced Russia as the dominant foreign power in the area.

Despite Japanese cabinet opposition and a pledge before the League of Nations to withdraw, the Japanese army gradually completed the occupation of Manchuria and proclaimed the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932. To develop Manchukuo as a war base, the Japanese expanded industry and railroads in the area. The Japanese military kept strict control of the administration and fought a continuing guerilla war with native resistance groups.

Full-scale war between China and Japan started in 1937. In 1941, the Japanese army arrested all foreigners in the area and most of them were interned in Siping until the Japanese surrendered in 1945.

Civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists continued in the area until 1948 when the Communists took permanent control of the place and ordered all foreigners to leave.

The first community: 1936–1948

Moukden: Shenyang 瀋陽, capital of the Liaoning Province

The second community: 1941–1948

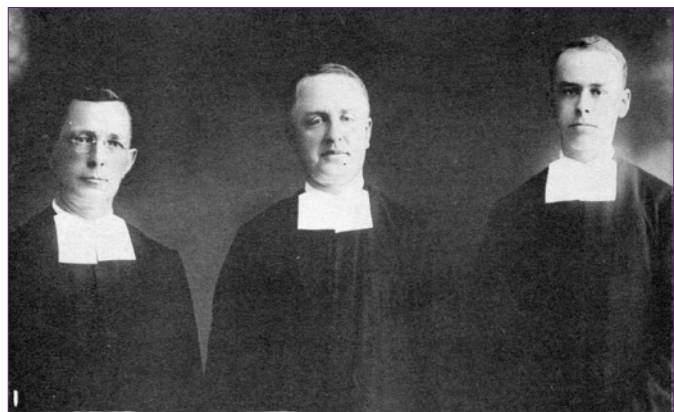
Kirin: Jilin 吉林, major city in Jilin Province

Szupingkai: Siping 四平, city in Jilin Province, the Brothers were kept in the concentration camp there during the war. (1942–1945)



The First Community

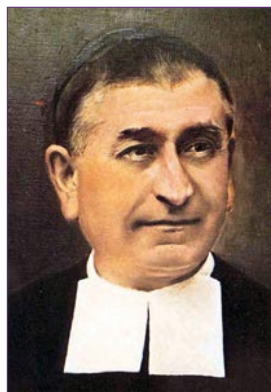
Brothers Modestus-Leopold, Marie-Liguori (Director) and Melchiade-Barthelemy



What follows is the translation into English from the original French documents/letters concerning this Lasallian Mission to Northeastern China.

Part 1

A New Foundation at Moukden, Manchoukuo, China 1935



Brother Adrien

His Excellency, Monsignor Michel Blois, MEP, Vicar Apostolic of Moukden, Manchuria, wrote to Brother Adrien, Superior General in 1933 requesting Brothers for his city. That same year Brother Martial-Paulin, retiring Visitor of Montreal, Canada, was delegated by Brother Superior to make the canonical visitation to the Brothers' community in Hakodate, Japan, to examine on the spot the possibilities of a foundation at Moukden.

In the Autumn of 1935, Brother Nivard Josephus, the new Brother Visitor of the District of Montreal, having made the visitation of the community at Hakodate and also proceeded to Moukden to check out everything with his customary wisdom and good sense. His report, like that of Brother Martial-Paulin was favourable. Consequently it was decided to go ahead with the foundation, fixed for the following year.

Brother Marie-Liguori, already a missionary in Japan for some four years, was appointed Director of the new community. Brothers Modestus-Leopold and Melchiade-Barthelemy, both from the District of Montreal joined him. These two Brothers left Montreal on the 13th September 1936, embarked at Vancouver on the 19th of the same month and arrived at Yokohama, Japan on the 3rd October, feast of St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus, patroness of the junior seminary at Moukden.

Brother Daniel had come from Hakodate to meet them and with his skilled direction they proceeded to Sendai where Brother Director Marie-Liguori came to meet them. And thus was formed the community of Moukden.

The Moukden community set out for their destination travelling in stages with stops in Tokyo, Kobe and at Dairen where they completed the formalities required to enter and stay at Manchuria. They arrived in Moukden, the field of their future apostolate, on the 16th October 1936. Father J. Sage, superior of the junior seminary of St. Theresa and Father P. Peckels, vice-procurator of the mission, were waiting for them at the railway station. The Fathers rented some cars to take them directly to the bishop's palace.

Monsignor Michel Blois, together with the Cathedral clergy and the priests attached to the junior seminary were waiting for them under the porch of the main entrance. In the adjoining cloister the seminarians were assembled, all anxious to see and greet the new workers of the mission, destined specially to assist with their education and formation.

"And now", said the Monsignor, "put on your religious habits so that these young people may see you from the start in your official habit." They opened their luggage and soon were wearing their white robes and rabats. Their robes, however, badly needed pressing, but that did not seem to matter just now. At this point the seminarians were already in the chapel for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. "Come", said His Excellency, "receive the blessing of God. You were placed in front because today you are being honoured, in fact this ceremony is taking place on your account."

Then in his fatherly goodness the Monsignor invited the Brothers to retire to sleep ahead of the usual time. Having greeted His Excellency and the clergy present, each retired feeling very moved by all the delicate attentions they had received, fully confident of the success of a mission which was beginning so auspiciously.

The Brothers stayed on in the Bishop's palace for four days during which His Excellency and the priests surrounded them with utmost solicitude. On the 20th October they took possession of a comfortable house which the seminary had purchased for them. The two-storey premises provided ample accommodation and was warm and well-lit, with modern toilet facilities.



III. COMMUNAUTES RELIGIEUSES

1. Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes (Montréal Canada)

Petit Séminaire Shenyang 瀋陽天主教小修院

Œuvres : Collaborateurs au petit séminaire.

Personnel : Frère **Liguori** Supérieur. Frères étrangers : 2.

2. Soeurs de la Providence de Portieux (France)

A.—Maison-Mère des Vierges indigènes du St Cœur de Marie.

Shenyang 瀋陽大西關熱鬧一街不通行胡同女修道院

Personnel : Soeurs Elisabeth Muller 梅 Supérieure régionale

Florence Blaison Assistante

'Petit Séminaire St Therese' Most seminarians at the time understood French, and could express themselves very well in the language. The Brothers, however, realized the importance of learning the native language. For this purpose they began to follow a course in Chinese which commenced on the 23rd October. Soon courses in Japanese were also made available. On the 30th October the Brothers began their educational ministry with the junior seminarians, accompanying them in recreation and for a start teaching them Catechism, French and Arithmetic. Prayer, study and teaching filled up the programme for the day, which passed all too quickly. ■

Oriental Flavour

The Sushi Etiquettes

When Obama last visited Japan, he was served 'nigiri' (hand-rolled) sushi at a small 10-seater restaurant in Roppongi, Tokyo. The restaurant, Sukiyabashi Jiro, has recently ranked with Michelin 3 stars. There is no menu. The chef decides what is best for the day, including the price and the food. The usual course costs about USD \$300 to \$350 and the customers are to finish their meal within 15 to 30 minutes, as all the seats are booked for at least a month in advance.



You must finish what is put on the plate in front of you immediately, by hand of course, as the chef will have the second sushi rolling in his hand while you are still munching the one in your mouth. That leaves you no time to drink sake and chat with your friends. After the course, the customers will be asked to move to a corner table for a piece of melon so as to give room for the next group of customers.

It is true that the chef treats 'his' job as an art. So far and perhaps in the near future we do not expect to have any female chefs in high-ranked sushi restaurants in Japan. To the chef, sushi is much much more than putting a piece of raw fish meat on top of a rectangular block of vinegared sticky rice.

The chef takes pride in deciding the serving order, the temperature of the fish and the rice roll, the amount of soy sauce, wasabi to be added. As the chef treats his job with high respect, he expects his customers to do the same. He would think it an insult if the customers ask for extra soy sauce or wasabi, or just eat the fish and leave the rice roll behind...

Despite the unprepossessing service and the not over-friendly chef, eating sushi in restaurants of this level is definitely a status symbol, as most Japanese themselves cannot afford to eat there. So if you are invited to Yukiabashi Jiro, do not panic for there are lots of 'experts' in the western world who list their great rules of eating sushi. You can easily google all the dos and donts. Perhaps Obama did not do his homework and it was reported that he had only finished half of his course when time was up!





Strange as it may sound, sushi did not originate in Japan. In around the fourth century BC, southeast Asians, especially along the Mekong River region, discovered that when cooked rice begins to ferment, the fish packed in it will be preserved. They also learned that the fish could be made to last longer in vinegar. The technique arrived in Japan about 600 AD. In the western part of Japan today, people still like to eat this kind of 'nare' sushi.

However, the sushi that people around the world now eat has its roots in the late Edo period. Hand-rolled sushi began as a street food, fast food for the working class. It began at a street food stall in the city of Edo, now Tokyo, in 1824. The stall's owner, Yohei Hanaya, was the first person to shape vinegared rice with his hands and then immediately crowned the rice roll with a slice of raw fish, caught from the Tokyo Bay, as his impatient customers could not bother waiting for the traditional sushi pressing in a box. Hanaya's innovation was so popular that hand-rolled sushi stalls soon outnumbered most other food outlets in Tokyo. People compare Hanaya to the Earl of Sandwich, who made sandwich a handy food for westerners.

For unknown reasons, the Edo hand-rolled sushi gradually developed into a fashionable and expensive genre of dining. At a sushi restaurant, the master sushi chef has so much authority that customers are forced to follow his rules. It is a strange, unique space where customer's requests may be completely rejected.

It was not until 1958, that a small sushi restaurant owner, called Yoshiaki Shiraishi, who had problems staffing his small sushi restaurant and had difficulties managing the restaurant by himself, began the conveyor belt sushi system, after watching beer bottles on a conveyor belt in a brewery. His idea proved to be a great success.

Conveyor belt sushi restaurants are often frequented by value-minded consumers and those who may not have time for a leisurely meal. They are popular among foreigners and families with children too. For foreigners, no Japanese language skills are needed to read a menu or to order, and there is no danger of leftover food for small eaters or remaining appetite for big eaters due to the endless supply of small portions. Nowadays, conveyor-belt and budget oriented sushi restaurants can be found nearly all over the world and more and more people can enjoy sushi in their own affordable way.

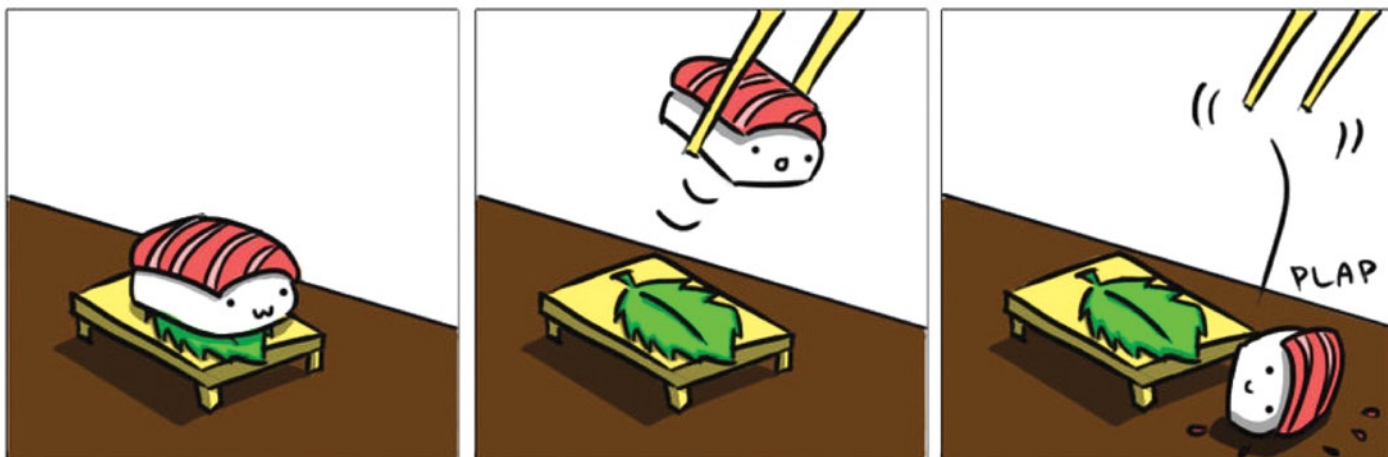


When it comes to sushi, we can see how times have changed. Westerners, who used to believe that eating raw fish is a barbaric custom requiring no culinary skill, and the Chinese, who would never eat anything uncooked, have become enthusiastic sushi fans.

Though some critics argue that California rolls in the USA and the artificial crab meat sushi in Bangkok are not authentic sushi, many countries have actually invented their own delicacy and sushi culture.

While the Japanese chefs would approve sushi with sautéed foie gras or caviar with balsamic or sherry vinegar in the rice, they should not disapprove other local varieties such as sausage or pizza rolls served in some Asian cities. After all, the most expensive sushi in Japan, the otoro sushi (the fatty belly-meat of Bluefin tuna), was cat-food in the west until 1950.

In the opinion of the editor, the rules for eating sushi should not be too strict so that taking French fries from a conveyor belt sushi restaurant or mixing wasabi and soy sauce into a soup to suit one's taste should be quite acceptable. Of course, if you are being treated in Sukiyabashi Jiro, you should be more than happy to follow their sushi etiquettes. ■





www.lasalle.org.hk

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