

The Gateway



Issue 78
January 2019



Chinese New Year Decoration at La Salle College

喜報春暉 四海昇平民安泰

歷三百載 喇沙精神薪火傳

Over the past 300 years, the Lasallian spirit has been passed on from one generation to the next; let us happily spread the warmth of Spring and work together to bring about peace and tranquillity in the world.

Issue 78 January 2019

First published in 2008

Published by

The Hong Kong Lasallian Family
18, La Salle Road,
Hong Kong

Concept by

Brother Patrick Tierney
Paul K.K. Tam

Welcome

Gateway 78 comes to you on the run-in to Chinese New Year. The Year of the Pig will be ushered in with fireworks, red packets and new clothes. The homes will have been spring-cleaned and debts paid off. Everything possible is done to ensure a fresh start to the new year and its hoped-for prosperity.

Brother Alphonsus Breen has almost been an institution in our Hong Kong Lasallian world having arrived here just over 60 years ago. He was assigned to Hong Kong and was never changed out. He had an early mission exposure in La Salle College but most of his career was associated with St. Joseph's College and Primary as well as with De La Salle Secondary School, N.T. He was born to eternal life on 5th January, 2019, just a few days shy of his 89th birthday. God rest his gentle soul.

We were delighted to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of final profession of another Hong Kong stalwart, Br Thomas Lavin. There was a celebratory Mass at the Cathedral for all religious jubilarians at which Br Thomas was asked to share. His sharing was well received by the large congregation.

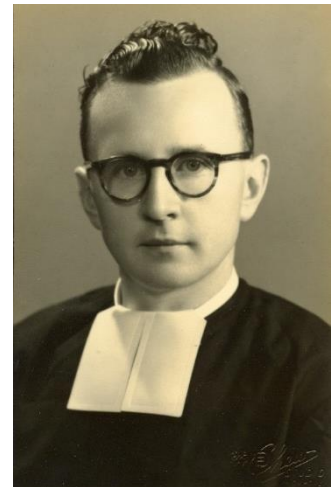
May the Lunar New Year of the Boar be one of peace, joy and happiness for all our readers.



Brother Alphonsus Breen 1930-20

The area in Ireland where Brother Alphonsus was born is known as the “sunny south east.” It receives more sun annually than other parts of the country. Something of that climate must have rubbed off on Brother Alphonsus, for he displayed a sunny temperament all his life. When he smiled, and that was quite often, the sun smiled.

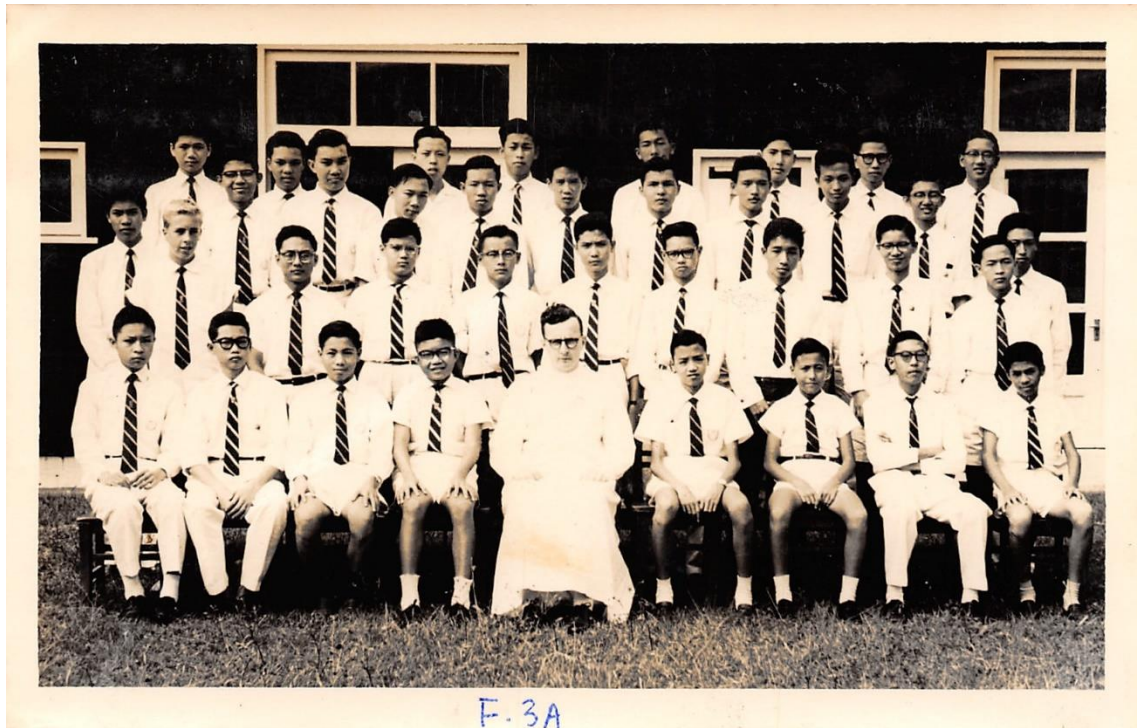
He was born on the 9th January 1930 in Rathangan, Co. Wexford, Ireland. He was given the name Martin in baptism. There were six boys and one girl in the family and Brother Alphonsus was the youngest. One of his brothers, Patrick, became a priest.



After attending the local primary school, Martin joined the De La Salle Brothers in 1943 and, after his Novitiate took the habit in 1946, taking the name Alphonsus. He followed the usual course of spiritual and academic formation before being sent to England to attend St. Mary's Teacher Training College at Strawberry Hill, London. This course lasted from 1949 to 1951.

He was then assigned to the missions in the Far East. Together with Brothers Lawrence Blake and Albinus Flaherty, he arrived in Singapore by ship in 1952. His first teaching experience was at St. Patrick's Secondary School and St Joseph's Institution, Singapore, from 1952 to 1958.





He was transferred to Hong Kong in August 1958 and remained in Hong Kong ever since. His first teaching stint was at La Salle College, Kowloon where he experienced life in the temporary premises at Perth Street before moving back to the stately old school building on Boundary Street in 1959. While teaching some English and Religious Studies periods, he specialized in History and got the students to produce fine work in both La Salle and St. Joseph's.

The call to St. Joseph's College came in 1962. An old boy was told this by his father:



“My father told me that during his school days in St. Joseph’s, of all the Brothers whom he knew, Brother Alphonsus was closest to him. Brother Alphonsus was his Form Master for both his lower 6 and upper 6 classes. Besides being the best teacher and Form Master, Brother Alphonsus is also a great friend and a mentor who is extremely understanding and approachable. However, my father said that Brother Alphonsus would probably not be the strictest Principal because he has too much sympathy and understanding for his students. Therefore, to many naughty and mischievous students, Brother Alphonsus was not tough at all because he would not readily punish them. Those students often took advantage of the soft side of his personality.”

After teaching in St Joseph’s until 1969 he was appointed first as Principal of St. Joseph’s Primary School and then of the College. His easy style went down well with staff and students and standards did not in the least suffer. One colleague remembers him standing in the school hall on Report Card day and saying: “The results are not good. They are not good at all. They must improve.” And improve they did.



He had to leave the post in 1974 in order to take over the reins at De La Salle Secondary School, Fanling, in the New Territories. There he had a long reign, until 1993, and he loved the school, the people and the countryside. The surroundings of the community house, with tall trees dominating, was conducive to peace and tranquility. He also felt at home among the country people and the students and never passed up a chance for

celebration. The school was at ease and Br Alphonsus received many visitors. Indeed, some Brothers often stayed the night in the ‘country house.’

Although he had left St. Joseph's he continued as Supervisor of St. Joseph's Primary School, this time with an even longer reign, from 1969 to 2012. He was also instrumental in the establishment of a new Lasallian school, Chong Gene Hang College and was present at the signing of the agreement with the benefactor.

In between all this, he took care of the St. Joseph's College Kindergarten, from 1974 to 2012 and he was also appointed Auxiliary Visitor of the Brothers in Hong Kong and had to attend a number of meetings overseas. Despite all these responsibilities, he kept a pleasant and sanguine temperament.



Brother Patrick Tierney has these memories:

“Brother Alphonsus entered my life in September 1964 when I was first posted to Hong Kong and to St Joseph’s College. From Day 1 it was easy to become his friend, for he was always approachable, available and open-minded. You could confide in him and get very sound advice too.

On the academic front, I admired the way he taught class and inter-acted with his students. He did so without fuss but always managed to get the best out of them. Of course he was good at teaching English but he had a particular passion for History. We used to joke with him, asking whether he was teaching about the Young Turks or the Old Turks!

It was not surprising to the Brothers when Br Alphonsus rose to the rank of Principal and Supervisor of schools. While never shirking responsibility, he generally ruled with a gentle hand, the welfare of staff and students as his top priority.

When he moved to De La Salle Secondary School in the Hong Kong countryside, he felt very much at home. The Brothers community house, surrounded by tall trees and flowers was a daily reminder of home. And the mountains were not far away. He also liked the ways of the people, the naturalness of the students. There was much celebration and enjoyment at staff parties. It was not surprising that he remained in this setting until his retirement.



It was outside the classroom that I most appreciated Br Alphonsus. We found two common pursuits, hiking and playing badminton. I reckon we hiked most of the mountains of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories, sometimes just the two of us and sometimes with other Brothers. He could keep on going and was a pleasant companion on all such hikes.

A day was reached, however, when time must have taken its toll, and he stopped near the foot of yet another mountain and said “this is ridiculous! You go on ahead and I will take my own time.



As for badminton, he was giving me 12 years in age but fought for every point. We would play even in very hot weather and finish in a lather of sweat. Sometimes, after that, we would enjoy a few cool beers!

Brother Alphonsus' character and temperament was attractive. I never saw him getting too excited or losing balance. Rather, he was a rock

of common sense and always loyal to his friends. He could and did talk with all classes of people – the teachers, office staff, janitorial staff, old boys, students and acquaintances. While he could be realistic in his appraisals, I never heard him utter an unkind word about anybody. Rather, he would tend to boost them up.

An unfailing trait of character was generosity. I well remember the days when I was studying at a University in Dublin, Ireland. We did not have much money in our pockets. It was a huge boost when, every so often, a letter and some money arrived from Hong Kong, courtesy of Br Alphonsus. That sure helped to keep the wolf from the door.

One aspect of Br Alphonsus's character was humour. He had his own sense of humour and often gave witty responses to questions. This humorous trait never left him. Even when dealing with government officials, the humour would emerge. One of his long-standing school secretaries recalls:

“As he was not in his office every day there were letters from the Education Department and some needed his signature and attention. Yet, he just let them sit there. I remember at one time he was just about to return to Ireland for summer holiday, I asked him to tidy up his desk and sign those documents before he went away. He simply told Mrs. Lam, the janitor lady, to bring a big basket and he brushed everything on his desk into the basket to dump. I told him there were letters he had to reply but he said if they were important, they would send another one!”

All his life Brother Alphonsus spoke and acted with kindness for others. There is no doubt that he believed strongly in the dictum that a spoonful of honey is worth more than a barrel of vinegar.”

He died peacefully in Ruttonjee Hospital on 5th January 2019, just shy of his 89th birthday.

A Wake was held in the New Hall of St. Joseph's College on the evening of the 17th of January followed by a Requiem Mass celebrated by Rev Father Patrick Sun, with Rev Father William Lo, S.J., concelebrating.

The Funeral Mass was celebrated the following day, also in the New Hall of St. Joseph's College. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Joseph Ha who gave an

inspiring homily on the theme of “Let not your hearts be troubled.” The eulogy was delivered by Brother David Liao who said in part:



“Present with us today are Brother Alphonsus’ nieces from Wexford, Ireland: Mary, the daughter of his blood brother Michael R.I.P. Bridie, the daughter of his blood brother John R.I.P. and her husband James. We thank them for coming and your presence, Lasallians, Josephians and friends, assures them that their uncle, our beloved Brother Alphonsus, had a meaningful and purposeful missionary life, among us in Hong Kong. His caring personality had touched our hearts and changed our lives. Praise be to the Good Lord who sent Brother Alphonsus to journey with us in Hong Kong.

We are naturally sad to see him go but we also thank God that Brother Alphonsus left us quietly and peacefully in the morning of 5th January ... without fuss, without troubling anyone and without a struggle ... very much the person we know of him and in our relationship with him ... a simple, humble and deeply spiritual person.

I first met Brother Alphonsus in Penang in December 1967. He was a rising star then and I was a rookie, a very young Brother just about to begin my teaching career in



January 1968. I got to know him more in the 1970's and 80's when he came over to Malaysia for meetings of the Brothers. Then in the 1990's, I became a regular visitor to Hong Kong. I got to know him more as we walk the many hiking trails all over Hong Kong Island and the New Territories and spent days together in Fanling. He was a great walker and an interesting talker. We walked far and fast to work up a thirst so that the cold beer after the walks soothed and relaxed the strained muscles.

To me, he was a great man living simply but generously in the service of others. To him, being happy and thankful for all that God has placed in his life, was the key to his attitude of accepting everyone and everything, as God's way of leading him to live a meaningful and purposeful religious life. You, all of us present and those unable to come are the people knitted into the fabric of his marvelous life. I am sure he is smiling when on behalf our dear Brother Alphonsus, I say to everyone present, 'Thank you.' And so, we now say good bye to our beloved Brother Alphonsus who had touched our hearts and helped change our lives. He had lived out the words of our Founder St John Baptist de La Salle, 'I adore in all things the will of God in my life.' God bless us all. Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever."

After the funeral Mass, the body was taken to St. Michael's Catholic Cemetery, Happy Valley and laid in the Brother's plot.



Postings of Brother Alphonsus

St. Patrick's School and St. Joseph's Institution (Singapore)	1952-1957	Teaching
La Salle College	1958-1962	Teaching
St. Joseph's College	1962-1969	Teaching
St. Joseph's Primary School	1969-1970	Principal
St. Joseph's College	1970-1974	Principal
De La Salle Secondary School	1974-1993	Principal
Auxiliary Visitor (District of Penang)	1972-1978	
De La Salle Secondary School	1993-2008	Supervisor
St. Joseph's Primary School	1969-2012	Supervisor
St. Joseph's College Kindergarten	1974-2012	Supervisor

"I adore in all things the will of God in my regard."
St. John Baptist de La Salle

Bishop Michael Yeung

Father Michael Yeung was appointed as Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong by Pope Francis in August 2017 to succeed retiring Cardinal John Tong Hon. Some eyebrows were raised at the time because it was already known that Bishop Michael was not in good health.

Born in Shanghai in 1945, he and his family moved to Hong Kong when he was four and he was ordained as a priest in 1978. He was named an auxiliary bishop of Hong Kong in 2014.

He had two masters degrees, in communication and education, and had worked as a lecturer at the Holy Spirit Seminary College in Wong Chuk Hang.



He was, for a long time, President of the Council of Caritas Hong Kong, a vast organisation catering to the neediest and most abandoned in society. Under his leadership, great charitable work was done in the areas of welfare and education.

Bishop Michael always had the courage of his convictions. After the so-called Mong Kok riot in February of 2016, he said in an interview that, rather than condemning anyone, "we are calling for calmness and a clear vision ... on the causes of the clash".

Despite ailing health, he continued to fulfil all his duties right up to the time he had to be admitted to hospital. He died in hospital from liver failure on January 3rd 2019.

Blessing St. Joseph's College Annex at 26 Kennedy Road on 21st November 2018

Family Updates

Family Fun Day

La Salle College celebrates its annual Family Fun Day in the month of December and this year it was held on the 9th December. The weather, though overcast, remained generally kind and did not in the least deter the large number of participants. They came to sample the joyful atmosphere, the food, the games and the musical entertainment. Standards seem to rise every year in all departments. Chinese drums and a Dragon Dance kicked-off proceeding and after the official opening ceremony, everyone moved around at will and the young ones managed to win very respectable prizes. It was a day for the whole family and truly a Fun Day.



Math Wizard



La Salle College has got a big name for Mathematics achievements in Hong Kong. The latest has been the Gold Prize awarded to a Form 6 student, Bai Zhiyuan, in the 2018 Hang Lung Mathematics Awards. The Hang Lung Mathematics Awards are the most prestigious and indeed the most valuable in Hong Kong. Over 90 teams from 60 secondary schools in Hong Kong participated. Valuable cash prizes are awarded to the winner, to the teacher coach and to the winning school. The topic Zhiyuan researched on is “On the Trapezoidal Peg Problem among Convex Curves”. The very name and sound is enough to cause fright! Congratulations to Zhiyuan.

Golden Memories

Every year, the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong celebrates its Priests, Brothers and Sisters Jubilarians. The celebration is always held around the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. This year it was held on the 7th December and Brother Thomas Lavin was among the number. He was celebrating his 50th anniversary of final profession. A number of Brothers and teachers and old boys went along to lend their support. Brother Thomas was also asked to deliver a sharing to the congregation and his sharing was very well received. The celebration was held in the Catholic Cathedral and the chief celebrant was the Bishop, Michael Yeung. Ad Multos Annos Brother Thomas!



Ninety-Nine

We believe the oldest living Lasallian alumnus in Hong Kong is Arnaldo D'Oliveira Sales, familiarly known as 'Sonny.' He was among the first group to move from St Joseph's Primary School to La Salle College in 1932. Sonny celebrated his ninety-ninth birthday recently. On the 11th January, a large representative body gathered in his hospital room to wish him the best. The gathering included relatives, Brother Patrick, some La Salle College Old Boys, representatives of the Hong Kong Olympic Association and representatives of the hospital. A prayer was said, the school song sung and the birthday cake cut. Sonny is not able to speak but showed he was following proceedings by opening his eyes and nodding every so often. God willing, we all look forward to celebrating the big one next year.



Badminton Kingpins

The La Salle College Badminton teams have been performing at a very high level for a number of years. The U20 and U16 teams continued the trend this year with hard-fought final victories. The U20 players called on all their experience to eventually run out 3 – 1 winners. The U16 final went down to the wire. The teams were tied at 2 apiece. In the final game the score was tied at 20 all before the La Salle player pulled ahead. The large number of supporters were treated to a nail-biting finish. The players, coach, teachers-in-charge and supporters were naturally overjoyed.



Claiming the Basketball Crown

On 27th January, 2019, Chong Gene Hang College had the satisfaction of beating highly-fancied opponents, the Diocesan Boys School (DBS), to lift the Jing Ying title for the first time since 2002. They were close to the championship of this Interschool Elite Tournament in basketball in the last two years. “We were trounced by DBS last year, so it is an honour to take revenge on them,” said Bobby Yip, the MVP of the game. With a comprehensive training programme and close bonding of team members, their victory was very convincing, as they ran out winners on a score of 76 to 49. Well done Gene Hang Boys!



CBSSA 2019



You would be forgiven for thinking that you were in the middle of summer despite the fact that we were in the middle of winter. The occasion was the annual Christian Brothers Schools Sports Association athletic meet which was held on the 29th January 2019 in Wanchai Stadium. The sun shone from a cloudless sky and there was a little nip in the air, ideal for the athletes. The ideal weather might have

something to do with it because a number of records were broken. The Principal of De La Salle Secondary School, N.T., was the Guest of Honour, and in his speech he drew upon a local sports celebrity, a cyclist, for inspiration. At the end of the meet, the athletes from all our five secondary schools came together for a photograph.

Green & White Day 2019

The annual Green & White Day of St. Joseph's College is now well established and this year was held on the 27th January 2019. Besides the usual games and adventures on the old campus, the occasion was marked with the opening of the newly-acquired premises at 26 Kennedy Road as well as the blessing of a newly-arrived sculpture of St. John Baptist de La Salle. The Guest of Honour for the day was Professor Dennis Lo Yuk Ming, a prominent old boy and the Associate Dean (Research) of the Faculty of Medicine of the Chinese University Hong Kong.



La Salle Primary Carnival

The annual Carnival at La Salle Primary School generates much colour and excitement. The stalls are beautifully decorated, the games are creative, interesting and challenging, the prizes are attractive and the food is nourishing. I doubt if any young participant goes away empty-handed. Instead, they could be seen happily making their way home clutching prizes of varied sizes.



APLEC 10

The next Asia Pacific Lasallian Educators Conference (APLEC) will be held in Melbourne, Australia from 13th to 17th April 2019. The theme is in line with that of the Tercentenary, namely "Educating for life: One Heart, One Commitment, One Life". As usual, our Hong Kong Lasallian Family will be well represented with two delegates per school and representatives from the Hong Kong Lasallian Education Council (LEC).



Overseas Volunteer Service in Thailand

By Jackie Yu

The service trip was conducted on 3rd January to 20th January 2019 in Sangkhlaburi, Thailand.

I was responsible for teaching three classes in La Salle Bamboo School on week days and there is usually no school in the weekend. School begins every day with morning assembly where students pray, meditate and show respect to St. John Baptist de La Salle before the lesson starts. The first class starts from 9am to 10am, followed by a 30-minute break. Then the second class commences and it lasts for an hour. The afternoon class is from 1pm to 2pm, followed by a long break until dismissal at 3pm. Students often stay at the classroom to complete their homework during the longer break time.



The students in the morning classes are relatively older, ranging from seven years old to thirteen years old while the students in the afternoon class are smaller. Reasonably, the standard of the morning classes is higher thus more advanced materials are prepared for them. For my duties, I had to teach basic English and Calculation with the students.

Overall, it is an amazing experience to be in Thailand and I am very glad throughout the entire volunteering period. The students are lovely and active while the teachers and Brothers are helpful. Language barrier is one of the major challenges during my teaching. Since the students in the Bamboo School are from different tribal groups namely Mon, Karen, Burmese etc. and I do not know Thai, sometimes I had difficulty in communicating with them. Fortunately, we managed to

understand each other with simple English and hand gestures. For some abstract or complicated concepts, I would check how to say them in Thai through Google Translate in advance. The preparation for lessons did help a lot.

During my stay at La Salle Sangkhlaburi, Ms. Nikki Chan, coordinator of Hong Kong Lasallian Family, often contacted me to make sure I was happy and comfortable with my stay. I consulted her on the class content and teaching materials and she gave me a lot of advice.

The reason why I decided to spend my time in La Salle Sangkhlaburi because I went to La Salle Study Centre in Meizhou when I was Secondary 5 and I found the teaching experience extraordinarily memorable. That's why I asked Ms. Nikki Chan if it is possible to do overseas volunteer work in Bamboo School because I would like to contribute back to La Salle after graduating from La Salle College.

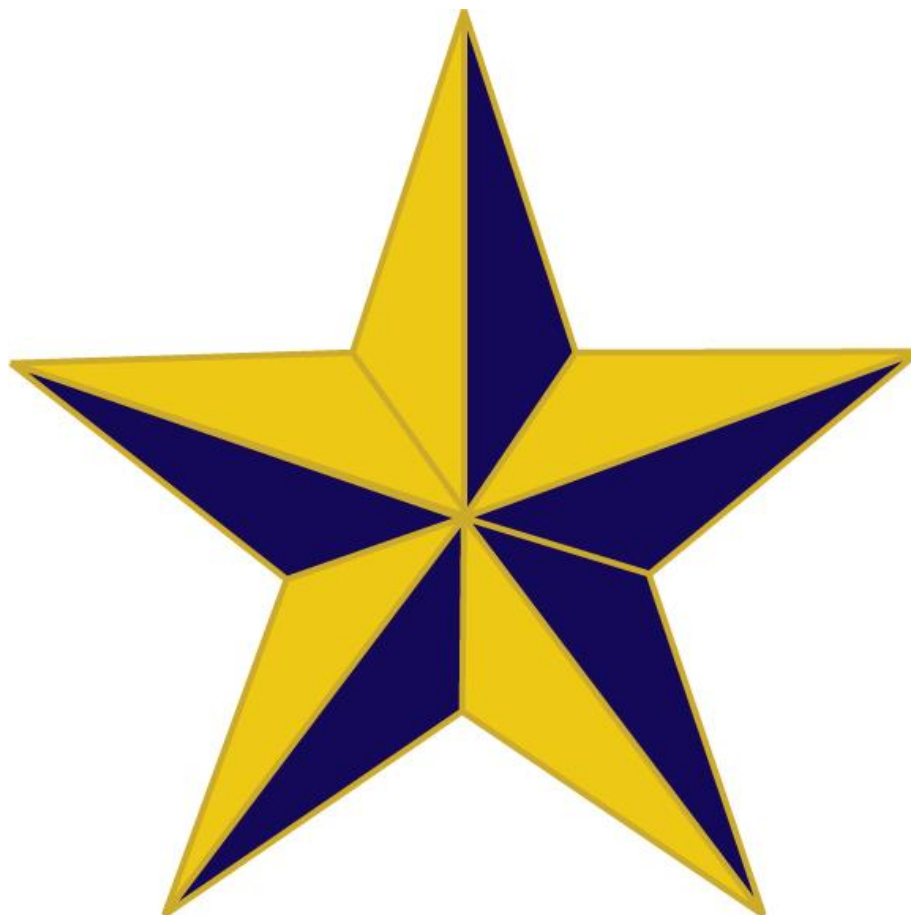


I will definitely recommend this service trip to my friends because it is a rewarding experience that we can use what we learn to serve the disadvantaged in the world. The program is very well-organized and I may consider joining it again in the future if I have a chance. Special thanks to Ms. Nikki Chan and the Brothers for organizing such meaningful activity for an old boy of La Salle College.

I was touched when the teachers and students in the Bamboo School gave me flowers and cards during the assembly on my last day of teaching. They said thank you to me and hugged me one by one. It is very nice of them to do this and I look forward to my next visit in La Salle Sangkhlaburi again in the near future. I sincerely hope that more volunteers will involve in the mission to serve

the last, the lost and the least in the world with our Lasallian spirit of faith, zeal and community.





We are one, and we are many.....

