

The Gateway



Issue 87
October 2020



This statue of Our Lady graces the Chapel of the Brothers at La Salle College, Kowloon. It had been beautifully repainted by Brother Chris Soosai prior to his departure for South Sudan.

Issue 87
October 2020

First published in 2008

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

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Welcome

The new academic year has started with half-day schooling and no extra-curricular activities. It is better than zooming. At least we can see the students face to face and hear the normal sounds of school life. We are all looking forward to full day school, sooner rather than later. Nevertheless, we appreciate this should be done only when health experts believe it is safe to do so.

The wearing of masks is well observed. Staff are becoming experts in identifying the students despite the masks.



It was possible to stage some events while observing social distancing as much as possible. The managers of our eight Lasallian schools attended a seminar on their roles and duties as well as an introduction to the new Security Law. The Lasallian Education Council was also able to meet as was the management committees of our schools.

Chong Gene Hang College is celebrating its Golden Jubilee. In honour of its first principal, our main article features Brother Brendan Dunne who left an indelible impression on the school.

On a lighter note, we were also able to celebrate the birthday of Brother Jude. He is a busy full-time teacher and a strong sportsman.

We are drawing near the end of the month of the Holy Rosary. May our Heavenly Mother show us how to bear the afflictions of the day.

BROTHER BRENDAN DUNNE 1914 - 1998

We are indebted to Br Vincent Corkery for some of the content on Br Brendan's life.

Brother Brendan Dunne comes from Co Kerry in Ireland, close to one of thousands of similar small towns dotting the Irish Landscape, bearing the curious name Camp, located beside a bay which opens out to the vast Atlantic stretching limitlessly to distant horizons to west and north. The surrounding countryside consists of lovely hills and valleys.

Brendan was born 2 July 1914, the fifth in a family of eight boys and one girl. Elsewhere that same month the world was drifting into what came to be known as the great war and later as World War One.



His father Joseph and his mother Mary Griffin kept a comfortable farm. His sister was number four in the family, and there was a close relationship between them which was to become lifelong. She joined the Bons Secours Sisters with the name Sister Pius.

One of his brothers was in the Irish Guards' in the British Army and distinguished himself during World War 11. He was killed in sniper fire in a mopping up operation close to the end of the war.

These were turbulent years in Ireland. Brendan retained vivid memories of the reign of terror of the Black and Tans; there was much violence, bridges were blown up to hinder their movements.

On one particularly tense occasion, it was Brendan's task to yell a warning to an IRA neighbour that a round-up was in progress. The man had time to hide in the hay loft. However, Brendan's father got targeted and was required to report without delay for a major round-up. Deliberately he told the officer he had first to shave; he took his time over it, then invited the officer to share breakfast with him. All these paid dividends later at the round-up centre, when his father was told quietly by the officer to slip away. He arrived home to the immense relief of the whole family. Others were detained for weeks.

More poignantly Brendan remembered late Autumn rushing home from school to help his father load up some sacks of potatoes in the fields and bring them home. On the way homewards with horse and loaded cart they passed a cottage where the man of the house was detained for his IRA activities during the civil war. Going a further hundred yards his father stopped the horse, grabbed a bag of potatoes, told Brendan to carry on home while he returned to the cottage with the loaded sack. Political differences did not prevent an act of kindness.

In 1928 a De La Salle Brother visited the school and spoke of the Brother's vocation and Brendan responded. His formation years with the Brothers were in Castletown, Co. Laois, Ireland and in Inglewood, England. When the time came for taking the Brother's habit, he was given the name Brendan.



After his first vows he proceeded late September 1931 to England for his scholasticate. He was now being trained to serve in England. But this changed with the visit of the US Assistant Superior General, Brother Abban Philip, who spoke of the need for Brothers on the missions. Those opting for the missions were required to write home for parental permission.

A group of six young Brothers was assembled from Ireland and England. Among Brendan's companions were Thomas Dunne, Felix Sheehan, and Kieran Brennan who died during the war in the jungles of Bahau, Malaysia.

Three older Brothers returning to the missions accompanied them to Paris, later to Marseilles where they boarded a French passenger liner heading for Indo-China. These older Brothers included Frenchman Cassian Brigant with whom he would later share community for many years in Hong Kong.

Passing through the Suez Canal., the boat made for the port of Djibouti along the coast of east Africa. At Colombo they were warmly received by the Director of St Benedict's College described by Brendan as a great man.

Arriving at last in Penang, Brendan found himself posted to St Xavier's Institution, a well-known school in Malaysia. St Xavier's was a large mixed community of Brothers.

His initial stay at St Xavier's appears to have been brief, as we find him teaching at St Joseph's College in Hong Kong in 1933. Here his Director was Brother Mathias Linehan, a man he always held in special regard. Brother Mathias' personality compensated in large measure for the strict timetable and the arduous teaching schedule. Recreation was limited to walks and volleyball. Brendan became an avid hiker.



After three years he returned to Penang in 1936. A year later he was transferred to St John's Institution, Kuala Lumpur, only to return once more to Penang in 1938. Brendan, even at this early stage, showed distinct signs of independent thinking which did not always sit well with those in authority!

Brother Philip, a close friend, speaks of Brendan as a teacher:

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

WAR YEARS

Brendan was still at SXI in Penang when the Japanese invasion took place 8 December 1941. The Brothers, as was usual during holidays, were on Mount Sacred Heart, Penang Hill, and were alerted to events only when Japanese dive bombers and fighters attacked the Butterworth airbase 8.30 that morning, doing extensive damage. From Mount Sacred Heart they had a perfect view of the action across the narrow stretch of water below.

In subsequent days there were bombing raids on Penang island as well, which they could observe from their vantage point. When they were directed to return to town, the Brothers' Quarters at St Xavier's having been seriously damaged by the bombing, they found accommodation in the novitiate at Pulau Tikus.

The novitiate building at Pulau Tikus became crowded and living conditions became progressively difficult. The Brothers from St Xavier's were no longer allowed to teach. Some joined in the cultivation of vegetables and fruit trees to supplement the meagre diet.

News was received in late 1943 that the Bishop and Catholics in Singapore had accepted a Japanese plan to evacuate the Catholic Community in Singapore to a jungle settlement in Negri Sembilan. Brendan at last saw a chance for some involvement, and early 1944 he made his way to Bahau to join the Brothers from Singapore.

Brother Philip Callaghan was there:



Bahau survivors:
Back row from L: Brothers Remegius, Brendan, Philip, Patricius, Alban
Front row from L: Brothers Herman (2nd), William (4th)

“Brother Brendan joined the 22 other Brothers in the camp at Bahau known as Fuji Go. The camp was planned by the Japanese but their planning took no account of the need to clear the land of felled trees, to provide safe clean water, to construct approach roads, the availability of livable accommodation for the thousands who came from Singapore, not to mention protection from the malarial ridden swamps.

Living and suffering, surviving and dying were commonplace for the next two years. Brendan played an enormous part in the struggle for survival. He was a pillar of strength and good sense when the camp was hit by malaria, malnutrition and tapioca bloom when very many died.

With his pipe, smoking *Java grass* or paw-paw leaves, his black velour hat, his tall muscular body, his repertoire of stories, his mimicry and unfailing good humour - his company was a tonic, especially in times of depression, when he was at his best.”

Before there was any question of planting crops and vegetables for their food they had to attend to road-making, bridge-building, path-finding, drainage, site-clearing, hut-construction, cooking, store-keeping, transport.

Brendan was now 30 and in his prime, and his leadership was readily accepted in these various tasks. He was one of the recurring victims when malaria hit the colony, but thankfully like most of his companions he survived these repeated debilitating bouts. He was much affected when two young Irish Brothers succumbed to cerebral malaria: Brother Christian and Brother Kieran. He had nursed them both to the last.

JAPANESE SURRENDER

The end did eventually come, contact was made with the approaching Allied forces, food and medical supplies arrived which the Brothers helped administer, and the cloud of gloom and despondency slowly lifted.

In his account of these developments, Brother Director Joseph Brophy saw a personal duty to return to Singapore with all possible haste to take charge of the interests of the Brothers at Joseph's Institution, in view of growing chaos and looting while awaiting the arrival of the Allied forces.

Brother Brendan was among the three he selected to join him on the journey. Because of their timely action in saving the school from the rage of looting then afoot, the Brothers were soon poised for a return to normal school life. And this despite their very poor state of health and the total lack of furniture, books and other essentials.

The next few weeks were hectic with thousands of children milling around seeking admission. The rush, for education was on. The Brothers, long overdue for home leave, got down to teaching without further ado, and it was only after a year or two that they were able to have a holiday.

The homecoming to Ireland was dramatic for their families, who had no word of whether they were even alive all through the long years of Japanese occupation. Brother Brendan returned to spend some weeks with his family in Camp, his first home visit after a lapse of thirteen years.

ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE, HONG KONG



With Br Raphael and students

and became the special object of Brendan's concern and compassion.

By October 1947 he was back as a member of the teaching staff at St Joseph's College in Hong Kong where the genial and revered Brother John Lynam was Director. Two years later in 1949 he was appointed Sub-Director. When Brother John was succeeded by Brother Raphael Egan, a memorable partnership developed: Raphael as Director and Brendan as Sub-Director.

Life was busy and difficult because of the rebuilding and restructuring after the years of Japanese occupation. Many students were overage. The Communist take-over in China resulted in a flood of refugees who further inflated the student population at St Joseph's. These in most cases arrived penniless

and became the special object of Brendan's concern and compassion. Later as Director he had a discreet scheme by which they were given food coupons for the school cafeteria, which ensured they got a meal without undue attention or embarrassment. They dearly appreciated this help, but even more Brendan's particular regard for them.

These were years when he was perhaps at his best. He had more teaching periods than the average, and yet his students remember him as being very thorough, dedicated and demanding, but at the same time considerate, kind and understanding. He also ran a Legion of Mary group,

never missing the weekly meeting. It *was* through the Legion very often that he came into contact with students wishing to be baptised. He found time to instruct them himself and when ready he would introduce them to the parish priest.

Brother Peter Phelan remembers joining the community in 1954 as a young man of 20. It *was* Brendan, then the Sub Director, who guided his first endeavours, sharing the wisdom from his own experiences and giving sound advice and encouragement.

In September 1957 he succeeded Br Raphael as Director. Br Peter Phelan recalls:

During my ten years in community with him I never knew him to use corporal punishment of any kind. He was very well liked by the teachers, and even more by the non-academic staff.

In 1961 he undertook an ambitious project to redevelop the school and upgrade its facilities. Over a period of two years the work was completed. Writing in the 1963 school magazine, he says:



The past two years which saw the demolition of Club Germania and the erection of the new building have been particularly trying for us all. Noise, dust, lack of accommodation and the division of the lower classes into two sessions have caused much hardship to pupils, teachers and parents alike. It is our earnest hope that all this will prove to be merely growing

pains and that the facilities offered by the new building will redound to the spiritual, cultural, intellectual and physical betterment of each boy of St Joseph's College.

I wish to record my very sincere thanks to all who so generously contributed towards the cost of the new building ... to the donors of \$50,000.00 and to the little boy who apologetically handed in his Chinese New Year saving of \$10.00. This spirit of generosity and loyalty has been a very great encouragement and leaves us humbly proud of the great tradition that has been built up at St Joseph's College since 1875.

It was in 1962 when the work *was* nearing completion that Brother Alphonsus Breen joined the community from Singapore. He recalls Brother Brendan:

He was easy to live with, gave us ample freedom and rarely interfered. Ever even-tempered, he never allowed himself to be upset by persons or events, and least of all by superiors making their customary visits.

He would do what he saw as sensible and right, and what others might think to the contrary never entered his mind.

He was sympathetic to the pupils, especially those who got into trouble and took a personal interest in the welfare of the poor boy. He spent much time advising and counselling difficult

cases and kept them in the school if at all possible. Many such showed their appreciation in later years.



Br Brendan with Ah Yiu, a faithful caretaker of St. Joseph's College, and his family at the old Kai Tak Airport when Ah Yiu's son, Bonaventure was going to the USA for studies. Bonaventure later became a teacher at Chong Gene Hang College with Br Brendan as his Principal.

In those days, his attention and time were given mainly to building the new St Joseph's College and Brothers' Quarters. Fund raising went on for some years as money was scarce and grants were meagre. This building still remains a monument to his careful planning and supervision,

In the summer of 1964 as he was about to set out for Hong Kong as a young Brother, Brother Patrick Tierney was assured by a visiting Brother that in Hong Kong he would have a "kind and liberal" Director in the person of Brother Brendan. In the event it was not to be, as Brendan was just completing his term as Director; but the description was apt.

In his later experience of Brendan, Patrick recalls:

"He somehow conveyed an aura of authority tempered with understanding. He constantly used a pipe but spent more time at the ritual of preparation than actually smoking! He could hold at will a Chinese audience of teachers, pupils, old boys etc as he waxed eloquent on a range of topics. He had a prodigious memory for his past pupils and teachers and could tell stories of school life with amazing accuracy and detail. He empathised with those in need, those suffering injustice, and was ever ready to help discreetly, even visit a friend in prison. He liked people to be straightforward, to tell the truth."

In 1964, having completed his term as Director of St. Joseph's College, he went on home leave, after which he was posted to Sabah, to La Salle School in Kinabalu, once more as Sub-Director to Brother Raphael as Director.

CHONG GENE HANG COLLEGE

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, in 1969 preparations were under way for a new secondary school in Chaiwan for less privileged students. Mr. Chong Gene Hang, a migrant from mainland China, who had made a fair amount of money in the States with his laundry business, approached the education authorities in Hong Kong with an offer to build a school for the less privileged.

The Brothers were invited to take over the project. It was the first secondary school to be set

up in the Chaiwan district and Brendan became first principal. He commuted every school day from St. Joseph's, a distance of about 15 kilometres. At once he got down to business and recruited a young staff, and deliberately set about creating a warm and homely school climate with a stress on friendly relations between staff and students. The staff and students did not let him down.

From the start he strongly supported a spirit of service and allowed activities such as scouting, the Red Cross, art, drama, sports and music to thrive. Right from the start he also supported the publication of a school magazine, entitled "The Chaiwan Pioneer" a reference to the fact that the school was the first secondary school in the district.

At this stage he was like a grandfatherly figure as he strolled around the school or entertained staff and students in his office. They all recall this aspect of his reign, especially how he would treat any boys sent to him for disciplining. Brendan would talk volumes with them, give them candies and occasionally even a drop of beer! Those were the days.



Brother Alphonsus Breen reflects: "This was for him a new venture and a new challenge when he could choose the very first teachers and accept the earliest pupils. He spent eight years in this post and under his guidance this new school soon developed a spirit and identity of its own and a strong sense of belonging among both staff and students."

He put an emphasis on physical education. The school lacked sports facilities, so he encouraged cross country runs, with the result that the school was soon grabbing headlines.

Hill trekking was a time-honoured tradition among the Brothers in Hong Kong. Brendan himself was ever a champion walker, setting off at dawn on day-long treks over the hills and returning late evening.

In 1979 he reached the retiring age of 65. In his typical unflamboyant way he bade farewell to a school now well and truly set for ongoing achievement and service.

RETIREMENT

Retirement saw him visiting his family and relatives as well as keeping in touch with former students. He had two particular hobbies. One was completing the cryptic crossword each day. We struggled with it. To Brendan it was a breeze. The other was a study of the origins of Chinese characters. He would explain how beautifully logical they were.

Brother Alphonsus Breen writes:

"For as long as his health was good, he was ever ready to oblige and happy to share gifts and presents received from his old boys. His lifestyle was simple and predictable and he would decline invitations in favour of the ordinary fare of the community. He spent lots of time in personal prayer and Bible reading, and the Mass and rosary were a daily priority for him.

Some two years before his death he was in hospital for cystectomy. It took him a while to adjust but it gradually became less of a problem. It appears he had a fairly serious heart condition, and it was this that in the end led to his death.”

As his care needs increased, Brothers Alphonsus Breen and Thomas Favier saw to his daily needs. They arranged for nursing help, doctor's visits, cleaning of his room, and made sure he was settled for sleep every night.

THE END

Brother Brendan passed away peacefully on Friday 6 March 1998. For some days before he had been gradually weakening. His movements and especially his walking had become much slower. Yet he kept to his usual routine and on that same Friday evening he went to St Joseph's Church for the rosary and first Friday mass.

On entering his bedroom about 10.30pm Brothers Alphonsus Breen and Thomas Favier could see from his appearance and breathing that he needed medical attention. He was still conscious at this time. They called for an ambulance and the doctor. The ambulance arrived within minutes, but not before he had passed away, probably from a heart attack as was later certified by the doctor.

There was a concelebrated Mass on 18 March in the Christ the King Chapel at Causeway Bay. The chief celebrant was Bishop John Tong assisted by several diocesan and religious priests.

The large congregation included many of his former students, principals and staffs of the Lasallian schools in Hong Kong, top government officials, several religious, including his own confreres, and present students; and the scouts provided a guard of honour. Present too all the way from Australia were two nieces Kathleen and Mary, as well as Mary's husband.

As Mass began Bishop John Tong spoke warmly of Brendan's life-long dedication to youth. Brother Patrick Tierney gave the homily. Afterwards, burial took place in St. Michael's Cemetery, Happy Valley.

Many tributes were paid to Br Brendan after his death. This one, by Br Thomas Favier and by a former student will suffice.

“Br Brendan was in no way arrogant or petty. He was much too big for that. In fact he was kindly and even-tempered and always fair. In argument he would state his case clearly and logically – and then he would smoke his pipe! He never sought popularity or fame yet he was highly respected by all. He possessed an inner wisdom, an inner calm and confidence that was inescapable. His very face was calm and kindly.” An old friend had this to say of Brendan: “What a wonderful aura unfeigned kindness gives to a face. Charity and courtesy can be faked; kindness can't.”



Family Updates

A First



For the first time in the history of our Hong Kong Lasallian Family, managers from our eight schools came together on the 19th September for a training programme. The programme was held in the Hall of La Salle College and there was a large turnout of about 90 participants.

The event was blessed by the Brothers and coordinated by St. Joseph's Primary School. The chief presenter was Ms Asha Sharma, a partner in a very reputable law firm and herself a manager of St. Joseph's Primary School. Indeed, her family has been closely associated with us

over the years, her father having been a long-standing teacher at St. Joseph's College.

Ms Sharma gave a splendid overview of 'School-Based Governance' of 'Handling Complaints' and of 'Case Studies.' The roles and responsibilities of school managers were clearly outlined as well as the most important documents for reference.



At the end of the session, a short timeslot was given to Lester Huang, our Lasallian Family legal adviser, for a presentation on the hot topic of the recently promulgated National Security Law.

Overall, the presentations gave us much food for thought and follow-up action. A very useful 'first' for Hong Kong.



Top Award

Lo Yuk Ming, Dennis, an old boy of St. Joseph's College, has come away with the prestigious 2021 Breakthrough Prize for Life Sciences. The prize is in recognition of a spectacular ground-breaking achievement in support of scientists working on the biggest and most fundamental questions. The prize is intended to help recipients gain freedom from financial constraints, to focus fully on the world of ideas and to inspire the next generation of researchers.

The citation for Dennis reads as follows: "For discovering that foetal DNA is present in maternal blood and can be used for the prenatal testing of trisomy 21 and other genetic disorders."



Dennis was a top student when in school and he has kept up his connection with his alma mater to this day. He is a loyal St. Joseph's College boy and often expresses his gratitude to the school for the education he received.

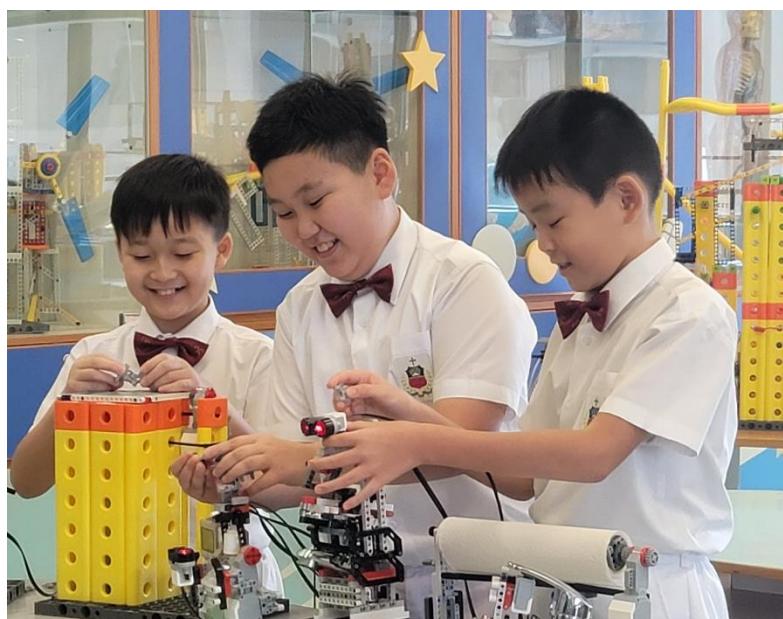
Hong Kong Lasallian Educational Outreach (LEO)

This is the fifth year that our Hong Kong Lasallian Educational Outreach team helps out in a programme providing support to students from newly arrived and low-income families. Most of the families live in partitioned rooms in the East Kowloon area. Because of their low standard of English, the students find difficulty in gaining admission to main-stream schools and their chance of getting into universities is very limited. Every Friday, our volunteers teach them English at Caritas Centre in Ngau Tau Kok. Our programme was largely affected by the Covid-19 last year. With the closure of schools as well as the Caritas Centre, we could not continue our service through online lessons, for most of the students have no lap top or iPad and their living environment is not supportive. We thank God for the opportunity that we are now given for face to face lessons. We also thank Brothers Dennis and Jude for their encouragement.



Young Inventors Help Resolve COVID-19 Crisis

Computational thinking has an ever-increasing significance in the technological world and has become a core skill for students to master in order to thrive in the 21st century. Young inventors, Law Hoi Wai, Tsoi Man Hin and Tong Yu from Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) Primary School, formed a team called ‘Smart Home Pandemic Fighter’ and proved their computational competence in the Coolthink@JC Competition 2020 by becoming the champions in the App Inventor Group. The Competition attracted almost 100 teams of students from local primary schools. The boys from Chan Sui Ki Primary developed an App that can help to remind people to stay vigilant against the Covid virus even at home. This major award is a recognition of the school’s effort in promoting STEM education.



LEC Plenary

The Hong Kong Lasallian Education Council (LEC) held a plenary meeting on the 10th October at La Salle College. There was a full attendance, apart from Mr. Larry Leung, who has to remain in Singapore because of Covid 19 travel restrictions. The Council were happy to greet a new member in the person of Mr. Alan Li Siu Wah. Indeed, Alan is well known to all because he has just retired as Principal of Chong Gene College. A highlight of the meeting was a presentation by the recently retired Principal of St. Joseph's College, Mr. Perrick Ching, on the projected long-term vision for the school. It is an ambitious and challenging project and the Council will support in any way it can.



Mr. Alan Li



Mr. Perrick Ching

Record-breaking Turnout

On the 16th October 2020, La Salle College witnessed a huge turnout of old boys to vote in two elections. One was for their representative in the College Management Committee and the other was the AGM to elect a new President and cabinet of the Old Boys Association. Part of the reason for the large turnout was the fact that there was a choice in both cases. In the event, Mr. Kennon Tam was elected to the Management Committee while Mr. Kent Lau and his cabinet took over the running of the Old Boys Association. The Association must be one of the largest in the Lasallian world and does much good for society and for the College and Primary School. A vote of thanks is also due to the outgoing President, Mr. Herman Bo and his cabinet. We wish the new cabinet every success.



Birthday Blessings



On the 10th October the Brothers at La Salle College celebrated the birthday of Brother Jude in traditional style, that is with cake, candles and singing. Brother Jude is an integral part of the life of the community and of the school. He has been a gift to us from the Brothers of India to whom we are very grateful. Brother is strongly hoping for a return to normality in school life so that he can play a part in its sports

programme. We are sure that is his birthday wish. Happy Birthday Brother Jude!

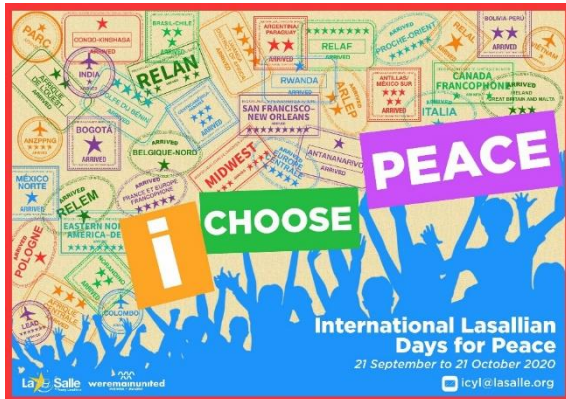
Courtesy Visit

On Wednesday, 28th October 2020, Miss Jennie Wen and Miss Cecilia Tang paid a courtesy visit to the Brothers. Both teachers had served the Lasallian Mission over the years and did marvelous jobs as the Hong Kong Asia Pacific Lasallian Educators (APLEC) secretaries. Now happily retired, they find time to do some voluntary work and keep mentally and physically fit.



We Choose Peace: Prayers for Peace from our students

Some of our F1 students composed these lovely prayers for peace.



Dear Lord, I pray to you for peace in the world. There's a lack of peace in this world. Lord, you made us human beings but we have envy inside us. Envy has made us savage and this is the reason for war. I hope all wars may end and a white dove will fly above us. This is the sign of peace. Please don't let the devil in our hearts misguide us. I hope you will hear our prayer. Amen.

I know there is lack of peace in people's hearts. Sometimes there is a lack of peace in mine. I pray for more of Your peace to fill our homes. I pray that Your peace would fill our hearts. Help us who want peace and remove the anger, the resentment in the hearts of those who are angry and seek to be peaceful in every situation in Jesus' name.

Dear God, I pray for peace in the world. I know that there are still many wars and there is Covid-19 now. I implore that you can protect all of us from the wars and Covid-19. Please bless those who are ill to recover soon, those who died to rest in peace, and those who have lost their loved ones the courage to live on.

St. John Baptist de La Salle pray for us.

Let us pray for the peace of the world. May all who war over disputes negotiate with one another and solve their problems. May the nuclear weapons, which can kill thousands, cease to exist. Let us also hope that riots and protests in towns and cities die down soon.

God, let us rest in Your creation happily forever.

Dear God, we pray to you, for our families, for wars to vanish, for everyone's peace. Give us your peace and justice, for our sake, and for those who are poor and suffering from war, from starvation, and for those who are being discriminated against and neglected. In our hearts, we sincerely pray to you, your Lord, for peace and justice. Show pity for those who are suffering and let there be peace, Lord.

Lord, give us your peace and justice! Amen.

Almighty God, we bless you for our lives, we give you praise for the abundant mercy and grace we receive. We thank you for your faithfulness even though we are not that faithful to you. Lord Jesus, we ask you to give us all peace in our mind, body, soul, and spirit. We want you to heal and remove everything that is causing stress, grief, and sorrow in our lives. Please guide our paths through life and make our enemies be at peace with us. Let your peace reign in our family, at our place of work, businesses and everything we lay our hands on. Let your angels of peace go ahead of us when we go out and stay by our side when we return. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Open Letter of a 107-year-old

Saturday 17 October, 2020

www.meathchronicle.ie €2.90 (€2)

'Look up and smile even if you have your mask on'

LOUISE WALSH

ONE of Ireland's oldest residents has written a public letter of hope, ahead of her 107th birthday, urging people to take care of each other during the current pandemic. Nancy Stewart has survived two World Wars, the War of Independence and the 1918 flu pandemic and has been cocooning since March at her home in Clonard where she has lived for the last 43 years. She admits that she is feeling isolated from the regular crowds that usually visit her home and is too afraid to venture out because of Covid-19.

WISDOM Inspirational great grandmother Nancy Stewart pens heart-warming letter of hope ahead of her 107th birthday

Visitors to her home are now severely restricted to carers, medics and some family members, all of whom have to sanitise stringently and wear masks at all times. Nancy turns 107 this Friday, 16th October and continues to surround her family with her resilience and positivity. She has just recovered from a chronic chest infection, from which loved ones feared she would not recover. Now in a heart-warming open letter Nancy has sent her love and prayers to all with the firm belief that there is light at the end of this Covid-19 tunnel. "We are in a very difficult time at the moment in our country, in our lives and in our world. But I reach out to you in this letter to offer you hope, faith and belief that everything

will be ok in the end. "We are in another stage of this battle against the virus but we will get through this. Like everything I've been through since the day I was born in 1913, no matter how bad things have got, I'm the living proof that we can survive and in years to come, this will just be a distant memory. "We must mind ourselves but we must also mind all those around us. Look up and smile even if you have your mask on. "We are not here to live for ourselves but to live for each other." **READ NANCY'S FULL LETTER ON PAGE 62**



My name is Nancy Stewart and I was born on the 16th of October 1913. This weekend I turn 107 years of age.

I lost my husband in a car crash in 1989 and lost my twin daughters Margaret in 2007 to motor neurone and Anne in 2010 to utter heartbreak of losing her sister.

We are in another stage of this battle against the virus, but we will get through this.

Like everything I've been through since the day I was born in 1913, no matter how bad things have got, I'm the living proof that we can survive and in years to come, this will just be a distant memory.

I have been in lockdown in my house since March, alongside my granddaughter Louise and even though it has been a tough time, we have got through it together.

We drink tea. We say prayers. We bake. We laugh. We make phone calls. I can even video call lots of my family and friends and am making new friends every day that God gives me on this earth.

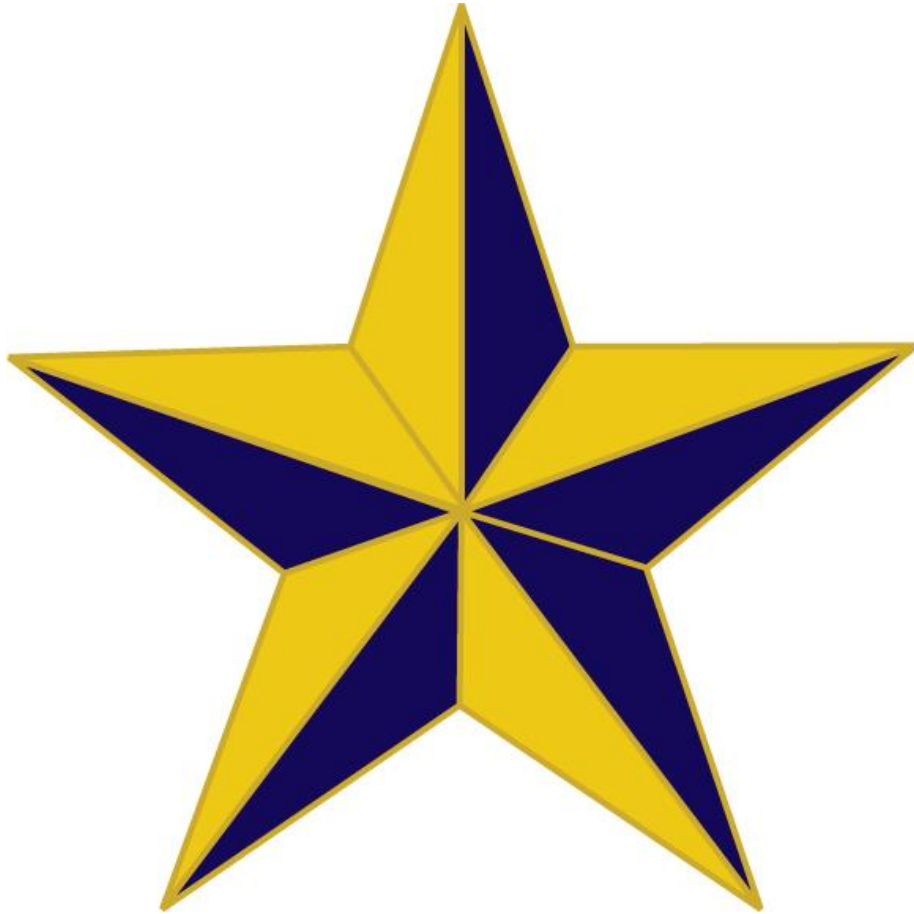
And that's a very important thing to say. If you are feeling low, make sure to try call someone or even go for a walk. I also ask God to help me if I'm feeling low. This is a hard time for everyone but please make sure you keep yourself well and wear your mask. If you keep healthy, your mind will stay healthy too.

Keep talking to one another. All my life I have always believed in chatting and drinking tea and saying a prayer or a decade of the rosary and it has got me through. This is our moment to keep our faith and to keep believing that everything will turn out ok.

We must try to make sure we leave nobody behind and also that we don't lose sight of each other. This is a moment for humanity to step forward to take care of the other. We must mind ourselves, but we must also mind all those around us. Look up and smile even if you have your mask on.

Your eyes will smile and that might be all someone needs to keep going. No good deed ever goes unnoticed so try your best to keep being good. We are not here to live for ourselves but to live for each other.

It only takes a small candle to take away the dark and in each of us, we can be that light in the world.



Great Things Are Possible



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