

The Gateway



Issue 93
November 2021



A smiling and colourful image of St. La Salle in the eyes of a Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) Primary School student.

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Welcome

The 93rd issue of 'The Gateway' contains a brief sketch of the life of Brother Lawrence Blake who left us on 5th November for his eternal home. He had been ailing for some time, bed-ridden in St. Teresa's Hospital, and we knew age was against him. Still, the end came quickly and peacefully. Brother Lawrence was a missionary of the old stock, always on hand to do his duty and very dedicated to the human and Christian education of the young. His relatives, mainly in Ireland, had kept in close contact, especially since he was the last in a line of twelve. May the Lord take him into his embrace.

A once in a hundred years celebration took place in St. Joseph's College Chapel on 6th November when a Thanksgiving Mass was held to commemorate the centennial of the Brothers legal status in Hong Kong as an independent legal entity. In fact, we are a corporation sole, a rare status nowadays. Old boy Fr Carlos Cheung said the Mass and afterwards the opportunity was taken to present special awards to long-serving Lasallian Education Council members.

Another Thanksgiving Mass was held in the Hall of La Salle College, this time as a start to its 90th anniversary. Old boy celebrant, Fr Edward Khong, gave an interesting account of his student days, way back in the 1950s.

We are delighted that all our eight schools are operating at near normal levels. Vaccinated students can also take part in lunch and after school activities and this adds greatly to full-day school mode.

We were also glad to resume face to face meetings with our Lasallian Education Council and Principals' Conference. Zoom has its merits but somehow cannot hold a candle to physical presence.

Since this is our final issue for 2021, we wish all our readers everything that is good for Christmas and the New Year!



Br Lawrence Blake

1929-2021



“Ireland is my homeland. It’s so green and beautiful that it’s called the Emerald Isle. It’s a land of fertile plains, rolling mountains, many lakes, beautiful beaches and craggy headlands. I was born into a big family of 12 members.

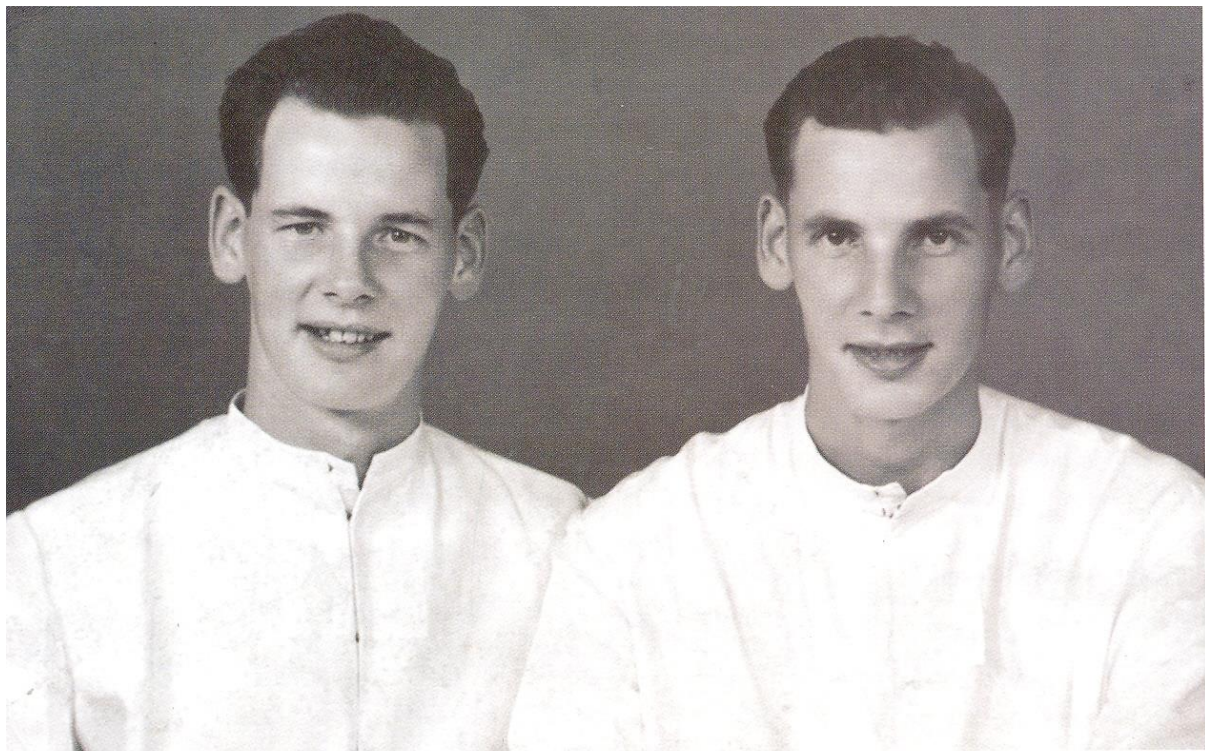
My job is to carry out the work of the De La Salle Brothers who were founded for the education of youth. I joined the Brothers for that purpose and the joy and the satisfaction I have received from this work is deep and rewarding.”

This, in Br Lawrence’s own words, is a good summary of what made him tick. There is his love for his country, for his family and for his educational mission in life.

His was a large family, not unusual for the times. It was also a devoted Catholic family, and it came as no great surprise when two of the boys and three of the girls joined the religious life, the two boys joining the De La Salle Brothers and the girls joining different Orders of Sisters. It was not too surprising either, that Br Lawrence and his blood brother, Br Mark, loved their home visits, where they were accommodated in their ancestral home. Their home was high on a hill, surrounded by farmland on which were cattle and horses. Air pollution was unheard of.



Br Lawrence raised his hand when a De La Salle Brother came recruiting to his village school. He was soon to find himself in the formation house of the Order, in another village called Castletown, just about ten miles from his home. He must have influenced his younger brother, Patrick, who joined up a year later.



The first separation from his home country came in 1949, when he was nineteen years old. He had raised his hand again, this time to volunteer for the missions, and so had to go to England to attend a two-year course at the St Mary's Teacher Training College, Strawberry Hill, London. It was there that he developed his lifelong interest in rugby, taking advantage of the fact that the College was close to Twickenham. He had nothing but fond memories of his time at Strawberry Hill and of the Vincentian priests who ran it.

After a holiday home, it was straight to the mission fields which, in his case took him first to Penang, Malaysia. St Xavier's Institution was often the first stopping-off point for missionaries and the school had a great reputation. Br Lawrence settled in well, but it was a time of political tension brought about by Communist insurgency and by roving bandits. Br Lawrence had a close shave with the latter.

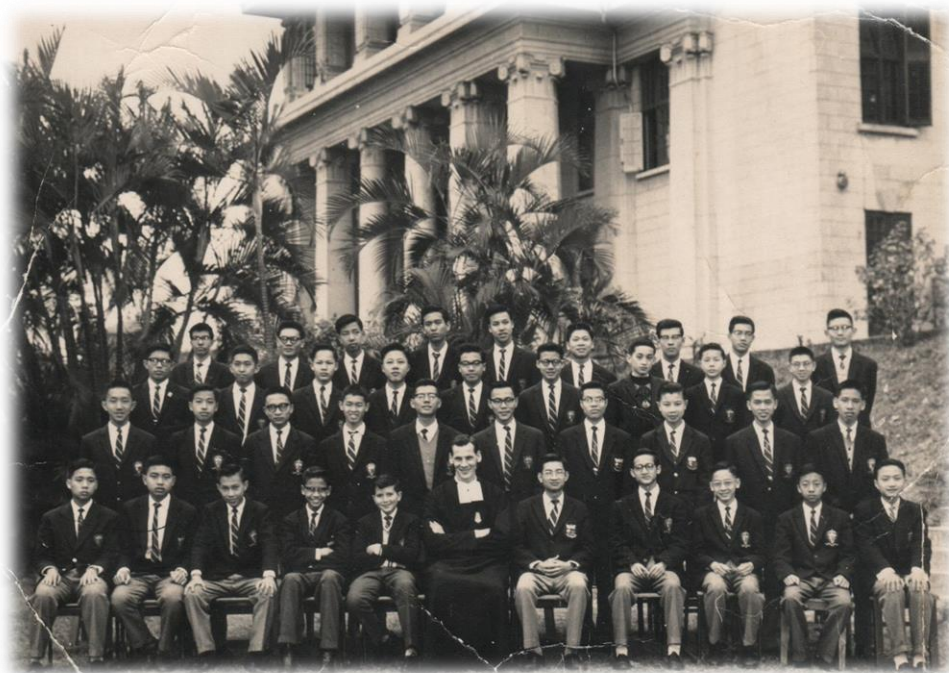
It was the custom of the Brothers to spend weekends at their country house on Penang Hill. One Friday evening, Br Lawrence decided to have a look at the newspapers in the common room. He heard a noise at one of the windows. A face appeared and so did a gun. Br Lawrence raised his hands as warned. Unfortunately, a French Brother had also heard the noise and came out of his room to investigate. When he saw the gunman, he tried to turn and run back to his room, but the gunman shot him before disappearing. The Brother died shortly afterwards.

The next assignment for Br Lawrence was to St Patrick's Secondary School, Singapore where he taught from 1954 to 1958. It was probably here that he first developed an interest in playing tennis because the school had tennis courts and some of the Brothers played, and played very well.



St. Patrick's, Singapore 1950s

After that, Br Lawrence had his first taste of Hong Kong when he was posted to La Salle College in 1958. The school year 1958/59 was a momentous one for the College. After 10 years 'in exile' the school moved back to its grand old building on La Salle Road. In 1949 the British army had occupied the building, turning it into a hospital. Much work needed to be done to get the building back in shape for school life.



La Salle College Hong Kong in 60s

A personal note from a former pupil summarises his encounter with Br Lawrence at the time. “I first came under your supervision in 1959/60, at La Salle College. I was in Form 3A. My wife, Julia, has repeatedly heard from me how good a teacher you were. She also heard of the many picnics you organized for us. In particular, she shared my admiration at your ability to sketch the outline of North America on the blackboard, freehand. Commitment and outstanding personal attributes apart, you were genuinely interested in our welfare and development. We were lucky to have been taught by you.”

By this time his prowess at playing tennis was observed. An old boy of 1963 recalls: “I learnt tennis from Bro. Lawrence, who was then my Form 3A Form Master. In the tennis court we were like David and Goliath, both in terms of body-size and skills. Unfortunately, David was never able to beat the Goliath! I still remember that I was very happy at my first success in serving the ball and being able to strike the ball when it came back. Then I was immediately devastated when I found that my racquet flew away with the ball! Did I hate Bro. Lawrence? No! He had given me a good lesson for life. Strive for success and smile at success but never get too contented. There is always room for improvement.”



Indeed, the old boys of that time remained extraordinarily attached to their teacher and regularly visited him, especially when hospitalized. They brought pictures of their time in school and Br Lawrence amazed them with the sharpness of his memory. They also managed to get him out of hospital for breaks, especially on his birthdays.

In 1963 it was time to take a home break followed by a B.A. degree course in University College, Dublin. Although Economics was one of his subjects, he never lost his love for Geography. Whenever geographical direction was a conversational topic, he would be caught up in it. Latitude and longitude were a breeze and he seemed to have a photographic memory for the outlines of any country. And could draw them freehand too. Sometimes he used to speak about the Rift Valley in Kenya, and it was all new to us.

Degree in hand, he returned for a short term of two years to La Salle Hong Kong. One notable achievement at the time was obtained outside the classroom. He had taken up the tennis coach duties and the school magazine of the time had this to say: "The College will always remember him as an outstanding conscientious teacher and an expert tennis coach who brought tennis in the school to a high standard of skill and was the architect of our overwhelming victory in the Inter-Schools tennis Championship this year."

In 1968 Sabah came calling. Br Lawrence was to spend the next seven years there, teaching in La Salle School, Kota Kinabalu. It was a much quieter place compared with Hong Kong and he grew to love it, to love the people and his students. Some of his former pupils came back years afterwards to visit him in Hong Kong. And on the news of his death, they were immediately in contact, ensuring that a suitable flower wreath was sent.



A visit to La Salle School, Sabah in 2016

Back to Hong Kong, then, in 1975 and he was to remain there for the rest of his life. He must have set a record in Hong Kong because of the five Lasallian secondary schools there, he taught or was Principal and/or Supervisor in four. He began by teaching at St Joseph's College, a four-year term from 1975 to 1979. Thereafter, it was to be Principalship and/or Supervisorship, first of Chong Gene Hang College and then of Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College.

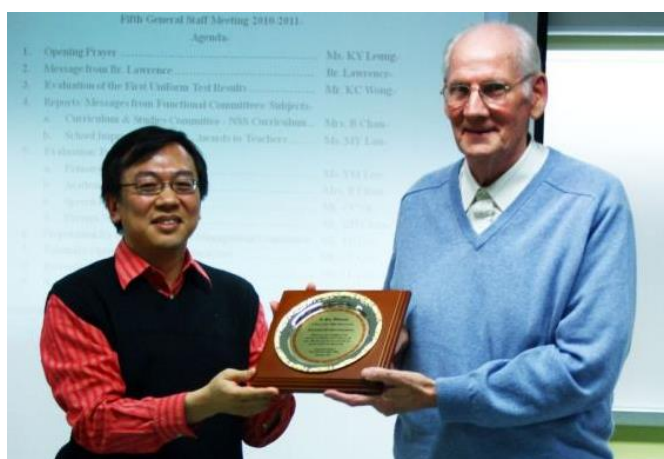
As Principal of Chong Gene Hang College from 1979 to 1987, he was probably at his prime. He liked everything about this assignment. First, since he was living in St Joseph's College, he had to commute to school each day. And since he loved driving, this suited him greatly. Mind you, he was inclined to drive pretty fast. It was not a good idea to talk to him while driving. He could get distracted and take a wrong turn. This happened on a famous occasion when he was

driving his brother to the airport and ended up in Tuen Mun, many miles away!

Br Lawrence was not stinting in his praise of the teachers at Chong Gene Hang College. He wrote: “I have not come across anywhere more devoted, tolerant and hardworking teachers. I am greatly edified by the amount of time, energy and patience they give to their students. Many sacrifice their lunch break to help the students as well as helping them before and after school.” The staff and students knew what he thought and responded in kind. The result was a happy and harmonious school.



The final stage of his active educational career was approaching when he was assigned as Principal to Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College in 1991, following the retirement of Brother Eugene Sharkey. Here he continued to spread his never-changing beliefs in the traditional virtues of punctuality, preparation of lessons and homework. He always insisted on good discipline but was fair in its application. It was plain to see that the school and classroom were of supreme importance. They were holy ground. Even after retiring as Principal in 1995, he remained on as Supervisor of the school until 2010.



Passing the supervisorship of CSK to Mr. Chris Lau in 2010

One outstanding aspect of his life as a teacher and principal was his fine memory. Somehow or other he could remember the faces and names of countless students and staff, even those way back in the 50s and 60s. He would pore over old pictures of former staff and students and could often remember not only their names but also their work careers. He had the good habit of listing the names at the back of photos, making it much easier for identification. In this regard, school magazines were precious to him. He saved them all and studied them all.

When it came to his spiritual life, he kept to the true and trusted. He never wanted to miss Mass and even when wheelchair bound, he would head off for the local parish church, accompanied by two Legion of Mary members. Those two ladies had to be quick on their feet! He also wanted regular Confession, or the Sacrament of Reconciliation and had a special love for the Mother of God. His favourite spiritual booklet is called ‘The Magnificat.’ While traditional in the practice of his religion, he was liberal with compassion and understanding of other religions and of their adherents.

Before ill-health began to creep up on him, Br Lawrence spent many happy years of retirement in La Salle College. Gradually a weakening of the heart and high blood pressure came to the fore and he succumbed to a stroke which paralysed him in the left leg. From then on, he was wheelchair bound and required nursing care. The care was provided by Alice Leung who had

previously looked after Brother Herman. Alice took her work seriously and made sure Br Lawrence took the prescribed medicine and also helped him to exercise slowly along the corridor.



The time came, however, when he could not stand or get out of bed, and he had to go to St Teresa's Hospital. Others might have faded away quickly but not Br Lawrence and he was to spend a good three years laid up in the hospital. As one doctor put it: "You are a top fighter." Alice continued to take care of him while at weekends a lady called Ah Bo came to help. In hospital he received visits from the Brothers and from former pupils and continued to amaze with mental alertness and almost photographic memory. Besides former staff and students, he could remember the names, positions and abilities of the Irish football and rugby teams, and those of other countries too.

The call from the hospital came on the 5th November 2021. Br Lawrence was fading fast. In the company of some Brothers, Legion of Mary members, his carer Alice and a former student, he slipped away quietly and peacefully. The funeral Mass was held in St Teresa's Church on 12th November, celebrated by Fr Dominic Lui and Marciano Baptista, former pupils, followed by burial in the Brothers plot in St Michael's Cemetery, Happy Valley. La Salle College was able to provide an online broadcast of the Mass which was especially appreciated by his family, by former pupils and by those living overseas.

The school motto of La Salle College is 'Fides et Opera'. Br Lawrence leaves behind a legacy of faith and good works.

Postings of Brother Lawrence

1949-1951	St Mary's Training College, Strawberry Hill, London
1951-1954	St Xavier's Institution, Penang
1954-1958	St Patrick's, Katong, Singapore
1958-1963	La Salle College, Kowloon, Hong Kong
1964-1966	UCD, Dublin
1966-1968	La Salle College, Kowloon, Hong Kong
1968-1975	La Salle School, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah
1975-1979	St Joseph's College, Hong Kong
1979-1987	Chong Gene Hang College Hong Kong, as Principal and Supervisor
1987-2008	Chong Gene Hang College Hong Kong, as Supervisor
1991- 1995	Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College as Principal
1995 -2010	Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College as Supervisor
2010	Retired at La Salle College



Family Updates

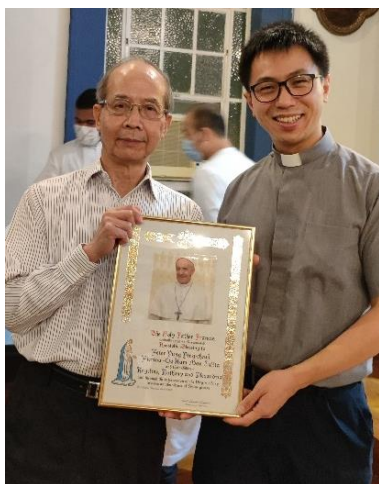
Centennial Remembrance



A special Mass of thanksgiving commemorating the centenary of the establishment of the legal entity of the De La Salle Brothers in Hong Kong was held on the 6th November 2021 in the school chapel of St. Joseph's College. A large gathering of the Hong Kong Lasallian Family attended.

Although the Brothers arrived in 1875, it took 46 years for them to become a separate legal entity. Up to that time, we were a Catholic Mission school, under the auspices of the Bishop. As of 4th November 1921, the Brothers became a legal entity under the title 'The Director in Hong Kong of St. Joseph's College.' In this way, we had to stand on our own feet as it were. It also indicated that the Brothers were fully committed to educational development in Hong Kong. The legal title was also given as a 'Corporation Sole' and our legal advisers assure us that today it is a rare and privileged status.

The man who brought this all about was none other than Brother Aimar Sauron, who played a significant role in the development of Lasallian education in Hong Kong.



Brother Patrick has officially handed over the legal status to Brother Dennis Magbanua and we wish him well in his new role.

At the end of the Mass, there was a special ceremony awarding medallions of the Founder to three of the early members of the Hong Kong Lasallian Education Council (LEC). They are Mr. Nicholas Ng, Mr. Lester Huang and Mr. Chris Lau.

Finally, the celebrant priest, Father Carlos Cheung, had a pleasant surprise for his school day Primary Principal Mr. YC Yung. Since Father Carlos had just returned from Rome, he brought along a special blessing from the Pope to Mr. Yung and his family.

The 90th

La Salle College started off its 90th anniversary celebrations with a Thanksgiving Mass held in the school hall. All Catholic students as well as members of the Incorporated Management Committee attended. The Supervisor, Br Thomas Lavin, reminded participants of the rich history and heritage of the school and how we should not forget to pray and give thanks for all the Brothers, teachers, present and past students and parents.

Two old boy priests were the celebrants. Fr Edward Khong contrasted his days in the wooden shacks at Perth Street with the beautiful campus that can be enjoyed today. He also stressed the deep meaning of the school badge, particularly the symbol of the star at the top and the Latin motto of Fides et Opera at the base.

Fr Dominic Lui prayed for blessed and laid hands on the new members of the Executive Committee of the Catholic Society. Principal, Mr Tong, gave a short address followed by the presenting of pins to the Catholic Society members.

Finally, after the recessional hymn, the new Student Association cabinet led the singing of the school song. The Hall was colourfully lit with the addition of the newly purchased LED screen and with stained-glass type drawings of the life of St La Salle adorning the side walls.



Upcoming events:

1. Talent Academy March-May 2022
2. Torch Relay "To Run Into the Future", 12 March 2022
3. Virtual Open Day 19-20 March 2022
4. Guinness Record Breaking Attempt March 2022
5. Education Symposium 16 April 2022
6. Anniversary Concert and Gala Dinner May 2022
7. Sports Carnival June 2022
8. Closing Mass July 2022

Principals' Conference

There was a number of 'firsts' associated with this meeting. It usually takes place at La Salle College but this time it was held in the salubrious surroundings of De La Salle Secondary School, Fanling, a school near the border with mainland China. Moreover, it was the first meeting chaired by Br Denis Magbanua in his capacity as legal head of the Brothers in Hong Kong. Then, after the meeting, the principals were escorted next door to the Brothers country house and gardens. It was their first time having a look at the renovated house and landscaped grounds. Another first was a walk around the garden, a mini pilgrimage because large Stations of the Cross have been erected at the base of the garden.



A Number of Firsts



The Hong Kong Lasallian Education Council (LEC) held its most recent meeting on the 3rd November 2021. It was the first time holding the meeting at De La Salle Secondary School, with nature abounding. It was also the first time for a live zoom message and interaction with our Visitor, Br Armin, who thanked the Council for its great work but also challenged it towards future endeavours. Meeting over, members then proceeded on a tour of the Brothers country house and property, adjacent to the school. Here, Br Dennis Magbanua introduced recent renovations and told the story of our acquisition of the Stations of the Cross. It was time for a well-deserved lunch after all that.

Marathon Man



An old boy of La Salle College, Mr Thomas Wong, has been a marathon runner since 2004. Marathon running is in his blood. Some of us thought he would start giving up as time wore on. Not a bit of it. Despite the fact that he is now over 60, Thomas still took part in the most recent Hong Kong Marathon of 24th October and completed the full distance. This was his 15th full Marathon. He exemplifies the never-say-die spirit. As he himself often says, he will soldier on. Keep it up, Thomas, and may many be inspired by your example.

Round the Island

St. Joseph's College Green & White Swimathon took place on Saturday 13 November 2021, during which 60+ old boys of different generations, former and current teachers, and students from SJC and St. Joseph's Primary School took turns to swim around the Hong Kong Island, raising funds for the College's redevelopment project. Together they made a Guinness Record of round the Hong Kong island in 8 hours and 30 minutes.



Birthdays

We celebrated the birthday of Brother Jude on the 10th October with the usual cutting of the cake and singing of the birthday song. The elder statesmen among us consider Br Jude as a ‘young one’ but he might have something to say about that. Since he is an avid sportsman, he is waiting more or less patiently for the regular resumption of sports training and competitions. Happy Birthday Br Jude and many happy returns.

We celebrated Br Mikey’s Birthday recently with cake and song on 20th November, a day before his birthday. Br Mikey is a relatively ‘young’ Brother and is actively involved with Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College and Primary School. One of his hobbies is growing vegetables and it is beginning to bear fruit, to mix the metaphor a bit. Another interesting hobby is visiting as many heritage sites as possible in Hong Kong, as well as all the churches. He has accumulated much knowledge in these areas. Ad multos annos.



Lasallians in Olympics



Five Lasallians who took part in Olympic competitions came back to their alma mater to share their experience as professional athletes representing Hong Kong in the Olympics. They were Mr Ronnie Wong (70), represented the Hong Kong Swimming Team in 1968 and 1972, Mr Vincent Wong (07), represented the Hong Kong Badminton Team in 2012, Mr Reginald Lee (12), represented the Hong Kong Badminton Team in 2016, Mr Lam Siu-hang (15), represented the Hong Kong Table-tennis Team in Tokyo 2020, and Mr Ryan Choi (15), represented the Hong Kong Fencing Team in Tokyo 2020. They shared

their invaluable insights about the perseverance needed to be a professional athlete, and how they were nurtured when they were in La Salle College.

Speech Days



The highlight of the academic year, Speech Day, was held at La Salle College on Friday 19th November for the Class of 2020/2021. The Guest of Honour was Mr Pau Shiu Hung, Chairman of the La Salle Foundation. The Supervisor, Brother Thomas Lavin, welcomed Mr Pau and gave a brief resume of his life, noting that he had been the Director of Architectural Services in Hong Kong and not forgetting his passion for Scouting. Indeed, he was at one time Chief Scout Commissioner.

The Class of 2021 was commended on their excellent achievements despite the adversities posed by the pandemic. The Student of the Year award went to Yeung Lok Tim, Marcus. In his speech, Mr Pau took us on an interesting journey, from when he entered La Salle in 1953 up to the present day. By means of school building pictures, projected on the screen, he was able to emphasise how important space was to the Brothers involved in the construction.

Mr Pau is currently chairing a fund-raising drive on the occasion of the school's 90th anniversary. He appealed strongly to the audience for support so that quality education can be maintained and strengthened in La Salle.

The Speech Day for La Salle Primary was held on the 26th November 2021. Since most primary school students are not vaccinated, the school hall was restricted to prize winners only. However, the whole school and the parents of the prize winners were able to watch the proceedings by means of online broadcast.

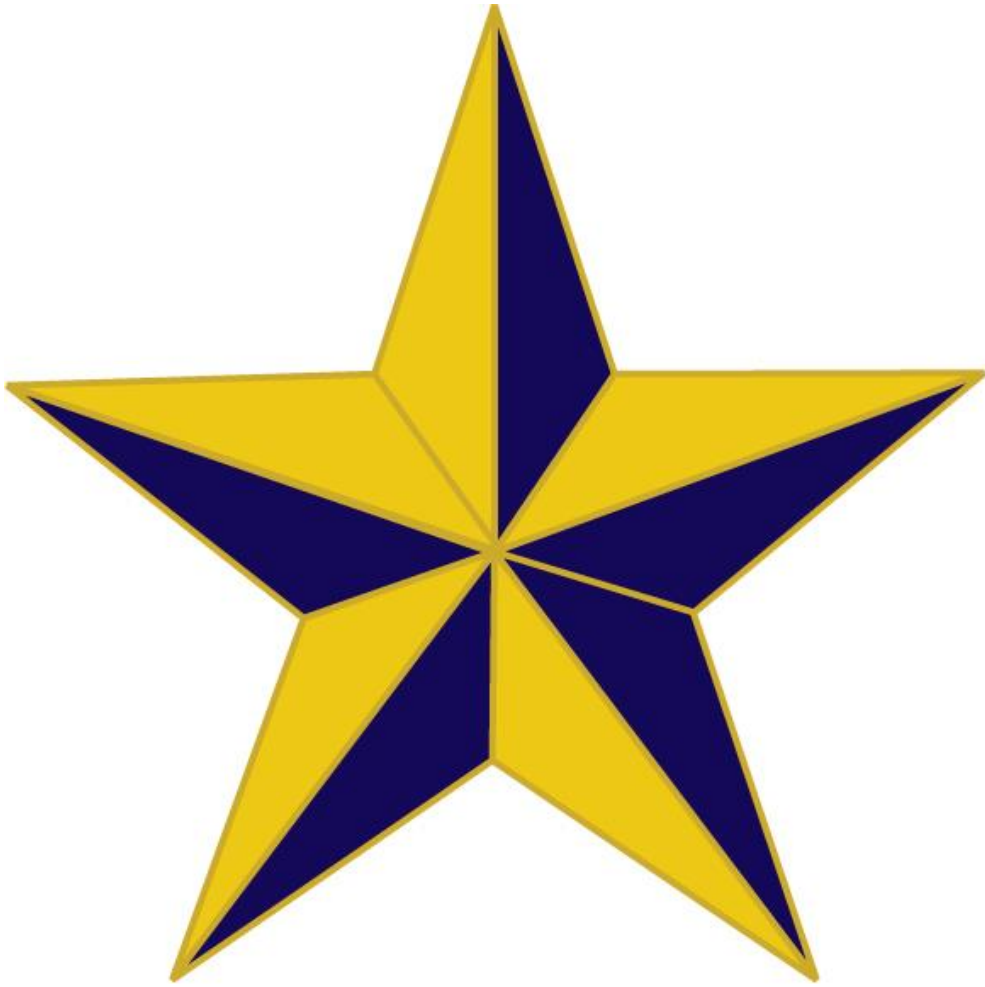
The guest of honour was Mrs. Elizabeth Pau, former teacher and Principal of the school. By means of four short stories, she showed the importance of values in life, values like following the rules, honesty and integrity.



Cemetery Visit



Twenty-six Form 4 students visited the St. Michael's Catholic Cemetery, Happy Valley on 9th November, 2021 together with Br. Mikey, Ms. Ivy Choy and Mr. KY Kiang as a part of Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College's Life Education program. Our volunteer cemetery receptionists of the day - Joseph, Thomas and Teresa – shared with the boys the history of the Cemetery, the life stories of some notable people, and their personal experiences. Students were impressed when they visited the graves of our late Lasallian Brothers. Students were also led to reflect upon the meaning of life. Br. Mikey led the closing prayer in the Cemetery Chapel.



Great Things Are Possible



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