

# *The Gateway*



**Issue 94**  
**February 2022**



The picture tells its own story. A beautiful school with beautiful decorations. But where are the students? Schools in Hong Kong are in lockdown since January.

**Issue 94**  
**February 2022**

First published in 2008

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

**Editors**  
Brother Patrick Tierney  
Mr. Paul K.K. Tam

## Welcome

Here is our first issue of The Gateway after celebrating the Chinese New Year. We have moved from the Ox to the Tiger and we can only hope that the tiger's roar will be for victory over the worldwide pandemic.

The pandemic has affected all facets of life in Hong Kong which is still trying to follow the policy of 'dynamic zero infection'. It seems like a far cry from that right now but the people are doing their best to defeat the enemy.

As a short feature article, we return to that visionary man called Brother Aimar. He is perhaps most well-known for the establishment of La Salle College, Kowloon, but we want to show that his vision had begun long before that when he was assigned to St. Joseph's College in 1914. For Brother Aimar, challenges and crises seemed to galvanise him to create opportunities for growth.

Readers will understand that because of the pandemic and the lock-down of schools, our Family Updates are necessarily scarce. We have managed to have a few, and they were very welcome. One very welcome update was the assignment of Brother Edmon Viroomal to Hong Kong. He has been assigned to St. Joseph's College.

We are keenly waiting for the day when classes can resume face to face, and we believe that teachers and students and parents feel the same way.

Keep well. Keep safe. Keep in touch.





## **Trials and Joys of Brother Aimar**



In almost 160 years of Lasallian history in Hong Kong, the Brother who possibly made the greatest impact was Brother Aimar Sauron. He first came among us on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1914, having served in Burma and Singapore. His first assignment in Hong Kong was in St Joseph's College and apart from short periods he was to remain in Hong Kong until after World War 2 broke out. He turned out to be visionary in more ways than one despite challenges and upheavals that would daunt a lesser man.

Let us start with his arrival and taking over as Director at St Joseph's. Hardly a few months had elapsed when the World War 1 deprived him of his Senior Teacher, a great mathematician, a linguist and a musician of talent. Br Aimar himself took over the Mathematics lessons in the Senior Oxford class. Despite his busy schedule, by 1917 he had built twelve additional classrooms, secured the use of a playground for St Joseph's at Happy Valley, purchased a country house in Castle Peak for the Brothers and acquired a building in Chatham Road where a Junior

School was started for the younger boys residing in Kowloon. Purchasing and building became a feature of his vision from there on.



If the loss of his Senior Teacher was his first trial, his second was more tragic. In his school report for 1917 and after recording a number of school successes, Br Aimar had this to say:

“I wish I had nothing else to record. Unfortunately, the unexpected has happened. On the 16<sup>th</sup> July last, the retaining wall which supported the playground collapsed causing the death of six persons as well as material damage to our good neighbours. A solid wall is being built according to the

plan and under the supervision of Mr. F.R.J. Adams. Those improvements and that sad accident have entailed a very heavy expenditure which our resources are quite inadequate to cover.”

Br Aimar's solution this time was to raise fees by 1 dollar a month, obtain a \$6,000 building grant from Government and receive a generous donation of \$12,000 from the widow and sons of the late Mr. Li Shek Pang who was one of the first students of the College in 1875.

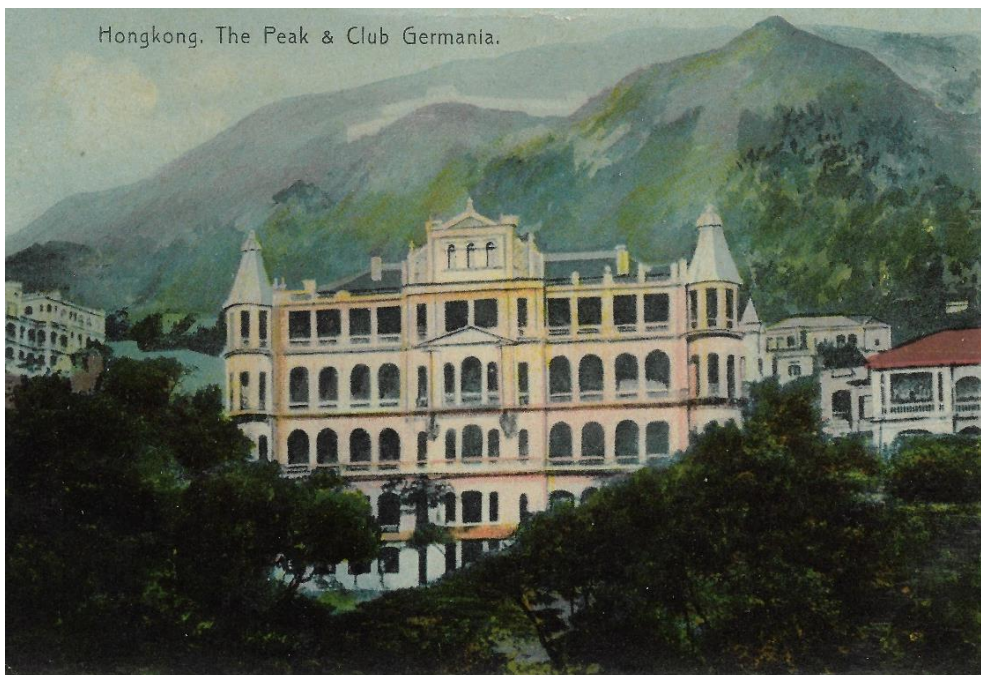
It must have come as a relief to Br Aimar that the Junior School on Chatham Road was doing well. Brother Eusebius was in charge and gained a golden reputation by the great care he took of the boys.

Close upon the heels of the landslip came the earthquake, something extremely rare in Hong Kong. It struck on the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1918 and was particularly severe in the College area. Upon examination by the Municipality, it was decided that the main building was no longer safe for use as a school and it had to be vacated at short notice.

Fortunately, Br Aimar was at the helm. Those who knew him realised that disaster for him was always a source of inspiration. He looked around and his eye fell on the Club Germania on Kennedy Road. The stately Club which had been inaugurated by Prince Heinrich of Prussia, the Kaiser's own brother, was then heavily mortgaged to the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. Thanks mainly to the good offices of Fr. L. Robert, Br Aimar secured the property for \$100,000. He lost no time in making the necessary alterations, and on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1918 St Joseph's College was transferred to Kennedy Road. The Primary classes, however, remained in the new building in Robinson Road, pending the erection of a new block.



The Club Germania was spacious and afforded excellent accommodation for boarders and resident staff, but it was not well adapted to classrooms. Br Aimar swung into action. Early in 1920 construction work started on the north side of the campus to give classroom accommodation to 650 boys. It was officially opened by Governor, Sir Edward Stubbs on September 5<sup>th</sup> 1921.



After a short period in Singapore and after a holiday back in his home country, France, Br Aimar was back again in St Joseph's in early 1923. And he had more building on his mind. He had realised the inconvenience of crossing the playground

from one building to another especially in adverse weather. On top of that he realised the need for science laboratories, a school hall, and a chapel. By 1925 the new block on the west side was completed. Br Aimar's old friend, Governor Stubbs, was back again to open the building on 24<sup>th</sup> October, just a few days before he left Hong Kong for retirement. 1925 also witnessed the Golden Jubilee of the arrival of the Brothers in Hong Kong and Br Aimar must surely have felt joy especially now that St Joseph's had a well-stocked science laboratory, a fine hall and, above all, a permanent chapel.

A different kind of trial surfaced in 1925 in the form of a general strike which brought about a serious economic crisis. The trouble became acute in the second half of June; All schools were reported to have stopped work, having been deserted by the pupils but St Joseph's bravely carried on, in spite of threatening letters and vexations undergone by pupils on their way to school. One danger spot was the grounds of St John's Cathedral; a few boys complained having been struck by unknown assailants issuing from the shrubs nearby. These outrages were reported to the Education Department who advised Br Aimar to advance the holidays by one month.

GENERAL POST OFFICE  
HONG KONG

8th August, 1925.

Sir,

*I have the honour to express my appreciation of the valuable assistance rendered by the staff and pupils of St. Joseph's College during the strike and to thank you for your placing their services at the disposal of this Department.*

*I may add that the efficiency of the boys was considerably increased by the supervision and instruction of Brother Cassian in whose charge they were and I should be obliged if the enclosed letter could be transmitted to him.*

*I have the honour to be,*

*Sir,*

*Your obedient servant,*

*(Sd.) M. J. Breen*

*Postmaster General.*

*The Rev. Brother Aimar,  
St. Joseph's College,  
Hong Kong.*

Then, on the morning of the last day of June, Br Aimar received an urgent appeal from the government for help in the postal service. Br Cassian was designated to lead a group of 12 boarders to help in the despatch and distribution of the mail. They carried out this task throughout the whole month of July to the great satisfaction of the government and the public. By the 1<sup>st</sup> of August the crisis had subsided.

The strike had other effects because janitors throughout Hong Kong abandoned their duties, most heading for Canton. There was a lively debate in the Colony as to whether they should be taken back. Br Aimar was inclined to take them back and a number of them returned. One old hand who returned was called Ah Toh, the telephone boy and watchman. Day after day he would sit at a table in the little

cabin to the left of the main entrance, reading a Chinese newspaper and smoking a long Chinese pipe. Every so often he would appear at a Brother's or teacher's desk on which he placed a tiny piece of newsprint torn off his newspaper, on which he had scrawled 4 figures. This action would be accompanied by the ritual pronouncement: "Telephone wants see you," delivered in a subterranean voice; when you looked up, he bowed to you and made a dignified exit.

Br Aimar had not taken his eye off further development and construction. That is why he was to be seen walking the hills of Kowloon in the late 1920s. That is why we find him purchasing a 10-acre plot fronting Boundary Street. His vision was focusing on the construction of a Kowloon secondary school. In due course this vision would realise itself in La Salle College, and that's a whole different story. There were more trials and joys awaiting him.



## Family Updates

### Bridging the Gap



Imagine, it has taken all of 54 years. We refer to the ceremony for the taking of final vows in Hong Kong by a Brother of the Christian Schools. The person of the moment was Br Paolo Mata, while the Brother who was involved 54 years ago was Br Patrick Tierney (together with Br Thomas Favier, now deceased).

On top of that, the venue, St Joseph's College, was the same. However, this time, the ceremony took place so fittingly on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, with four priests concelebrating and to a large congregation of the Hong Kong Lasallian Family.

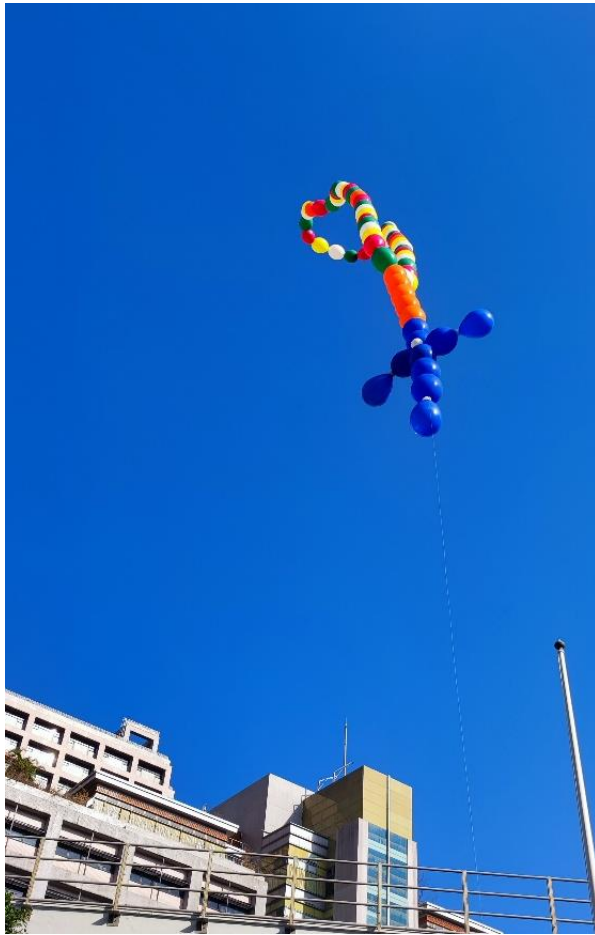
After the blessing of the symbols of profession, the Profession Cross and Ring and Certificate of Appreciation, Br Thomas Lavin approved and received the vows, witnessed by Br Dennis Magbanua and Br Patrick Tierney. Prior to the actual profession, the Charis Choir gave a beautiful rendition of the Litany of the Saints.

Special mention was made of the messages sent by Br Armin Luistro, Visitor of the LEAD District and by Br Larry Humphries, President of St Joseph's International school in Singapore. Above all, the family of Br Paolo was thanked and we were happy that family members could follow the whole ceremony online.

We implore the blessings of our Heavenly Father and of St La Salle on Br Paolo as he begins a new chapter in his journey as a Brother of the Christian Schools.



## Jubilee Open Day



Chong Gene Hang College is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and its most recent function was a Jubilee Open Day on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021. The sun shone amid cool breezes.

First off there was a prayer service attended by all the guests and students. This was followed by a gathering around the statue of St La Salle where balloons, in the shape of a Rosary, were released into the blue sky.

The more formal ceremony took place in the school hall where, among other aspects, the main donors were recognised. One of the highlights of the programme was a Lion Dance. The lions and drummers led the guests to the naming of a special wing in honour of the mother of Mr Wong Mo Ting, former Supervisor of De La Salle Secondary School and to the refurbished physical fitness room, courtesy of former teacher and manager, Mr John Kwan.

Chong Gene Hang College never forgets its roots and honours especially the school donor, Mr Chong, and its first Principal, Br

Brendan. May the school continue to shine bright.





## Welcome Br Edmon Viroomal FSC



Brother Edmon Viroomal is a Filipino whose recent assignment was in De La Salle Lipa in the Philippines. Before joining the Brothers, he was a high school (secondary) English teacher in De La Salle Santiago Zobel School in Manila, Philippines. His students loved him because of his creative and fun way of holding his classes.

Br Emong, as he is fondly called, arrived in Hong Kong on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and is now residing in St. Joseph's College to form a community with Brothers Dennis, Jeffrey and Paolo. In the next few months, he will complete his Parmenie Programme, a special discernment period for Brothers preparing to pronounce their final (perpetual) vows.

In the meantime, Br Emong will visit different Lasallian schools in Hong Kong to observe classes and meet with staff and students. He will be going around the city too to get to know the local culture. He will also be attending a language class in Cantonese. So if you see him around, do teach him a word or two in Cantonese so he can expand his vocabularies.

Welcome to Hong Kong Br Emong!

## Hong Kong Sector Assembly



The Brothers of Hong Kong held their Assembly on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2021. Brothers Armin, Visitor and Br David Liao are members of the Sector and were able to attend via Zoom. We were also happy that Br Antonio joined us.

We kicked off with an inspirational address by Br Armin. Besides encouraging us in our various endeavours, he challenged us to think outside the box, not to be content with maintaining the status quo, to look towards the peripheries. He stressed that the Lasallian mission is

expanding all the time and we can be part of it.

All attending Brothers then had their say. The latest arrivals shared their first impressions of Hong Kong and of their mission here. They are spread over a number of schools and thus have the opportunity of broadening their vision. The older heads much appreciated the advent of younger Brothers, a sign of hope for the future. All agreed there was much work to be done both inside and outside our schools.

Br David Liao brought us up to speed with developments in Malaysia and with his own mission views, while Br Antonio shared some views which give food for thought.

The Assembly forms part of our sector conversation as we prepare for our General Chapter in 2022 and District Chapter in 2023. We continue to have dreams and hopes, for the needs are great.

### **Mr. Peter Chan King Luen RIP**



Mr. Chan King Luen, Peter, passed away on 16th of January 2022. The funeral was held on 30th January at the Hong Kong Funeral Parlour.

Peter was the benefactor for both Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College and Primary School. In return for a substantial donation, the school were named after his father. On the Brothers' side, he dealt mainly with Brother Herman Fenton.

Besides helping these two Lasallian schools, he also gave a donation towards the building of an extra wing to our Lasallian St. Francis' Institution in Malacca.

Peter was also very active in establishing numerous schools in mainland China.

May his soul rest in peace!

## La Salle Primary School Music Awards

A welcome family updates has been the success of the La Salle Primary School Spring Orchestra and Chinese Orchestra. At the most recent Hong Kong Music Interflows, the school's spring orchestra came away with the gold award, against very strong competition. The School's Chinese orchestra came away with the silver award. Congratulations to the school, the instructors and to the participants!





## Welcome Back

The community of St. Joseph's Institution International Malaysia (SJIIM) welcomed Brother Patrick Tierney into its midst for most of the month of January 2022.

He had been present when the campus was just a formation site, present again when the new school was blessed by Archbishop Murphy Pakiam, and again on a flying visit with some Lasallian educators from Hong Kong. But this was his first long-term stay.

The SJIIM community had not seen a Brother for quite some time and went out of their way to ensure a big welcome back. This applied to the school's professional administration and staff, to the friendly students and to the enthusiastic parents.

Brother Patrick was fortunate to have had meetings with the administration, with staff members, with Catholic staff and parents and other parent support groups. He was also fortunate to be able to attend school assemblies and to be part of staff interviewing process.

A particular pleasure was the greeting of students at drop-off and pick-up times. It was admirable how the staff on duty knew the names of the students. Pastoral care in action.

The Lasallian East Asia District (LEAD) is working hard to bring back the guiding hand of the Brothers in the operation and running of the school. After Brother Patrick's departure, Brother Felipe will be next and he will oversee the transition of principalship of the school, since the existing principal is due to retire.



## How can we Lasallians reach out to help the children really in need of education amidst the impact of the pandemic?



Yusuf (false name), a Pakistani boy living in Hong Kong, is a cheerful and diligent boy. His dream is to enter a well-run secondary school and get a steady job in the future to help his family. Like many children from ethnic minorities, he lives in a rented subdivided room in the poorest area in Kowloon. As he is from a low-income family, he cannot attend private international schools and thus has to study in a free government school, where he does not have enough support to cope with the local curriculum, especially when it comes to the study of Chinese. Volunteers from the Hong Kong Lasallian Education Outreach have given him tuition in centres like Home of Love, Caritas and sometimes even in MacDonald's.

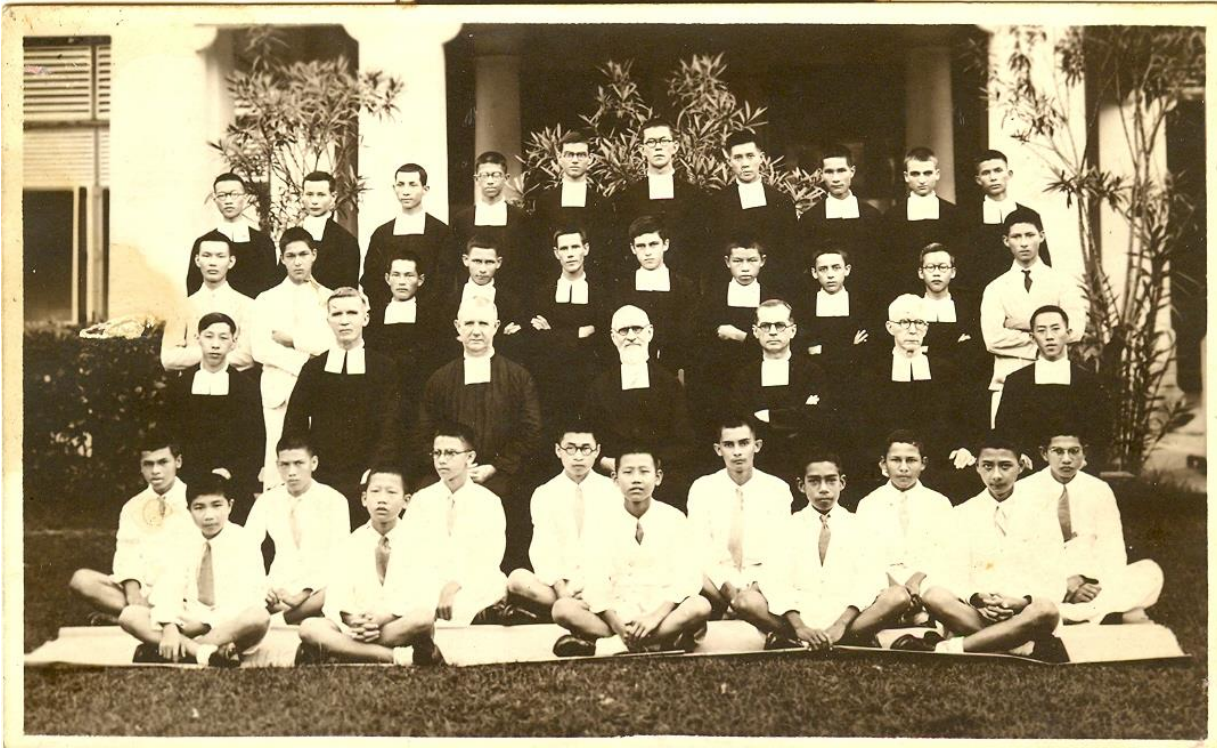
Since 2020, schools in Hong Kong, as well as social service centres that provided venues for volunteers to teach children in need, were locked down from time to time. Regular lessons with children that we used to serve were disrupted seriously. The volunteers have tried to switch to online lessons, if at all possible. However, we soon found out we had gradually lost contact with many of the children, including Yusuf. The volunteers, however, continue to serve the few who still want help, mainly by smartphones....WhatsApp lessons!

We believe the same kind of experience, may be even worse, can be found in our worldwide Lasallian educational works. There are children who seem to be forgotten and abandoned. According to a recent report from the World Bank, even before Coronavirus disease 2019 hit, the world was already experiencing a learning crisis. 258 million primary and secondary school age children and youth were out of school. Many children who were in school were learning very little: 53% of all ten-year-old children in low and middle-income countries were experiencing learning poverty, which could reach 70% as a result of the long school closures and the relative ineffectiveness of remote learning. The research also stated that children from low-income households, children with disabilities, and girls were less likely to access remote learning due to limited availability of electricity, connectivity, devices, accessible technologies as well as discrimination and social and gender norms.

This global education crisis is definitely worse than we thought. Today, our Lasallian educational works are present in 80 countries with more than 1 million pupils and with half of them at risk of social and educational exclusion in the most fragile countries. St. La Salle wants us to provide a human and Christian education to the youth, especially to the most marginalized and needy. We are not going to back down from the challenge we are facing. We must act fast to reach out, no matter how small the steps we take!



## Blast from the past



This picture really is a blast from the past, taken in the very early 1940s. It was taken in the St. Joseph's Novitiate of the Brothers in Penang, Malaysia.

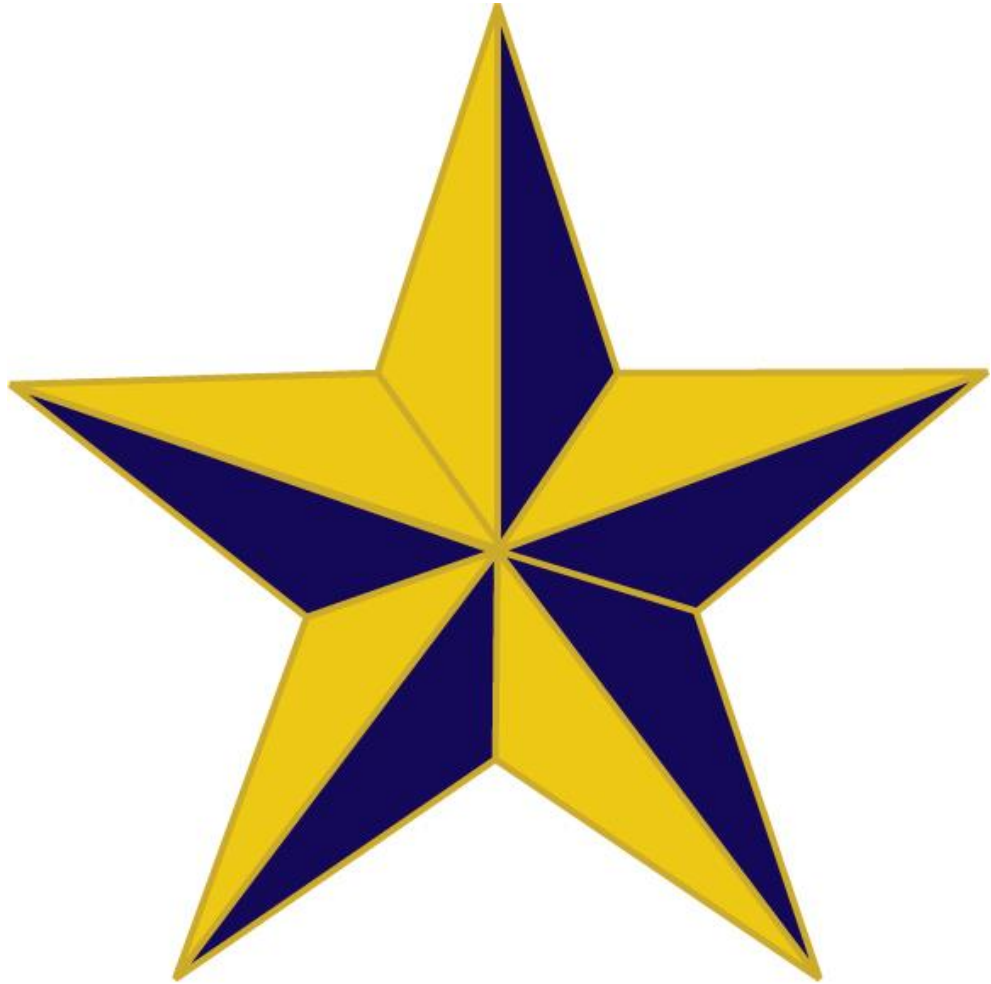
There are quite a number of Hong Kong connections here.

- a. Two of those shown were former Principals of La Salle Primary School.
- b. One was a former Director/Principal of St. Joseph's College.
- c. One taught in SJC and was present for its Diamond Jubilee.
- d. One was a former conductor of the orchestras at La Salle College and Primary School.
- e. One had the Library of the old La Salle Primary named after him.

Those were the days!

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Brother Gregory Lim, 2<sup>nd</sup> from right, 1<sup>st</sup> row and Brother Henry Pang, 2<sup>nd</sup> from right, 3<sup>rd</sup> row.</li><li>b. Brother Matthias Linehan, 3<sup>rd</sup> from right, 2<sup>nd</sup> row.</li><li>c. Brother John Climacus, 1<sup>st</sup> from left, 2<sup>nd</sup> row.</li><li>d. Brother Anthony Cheung, 1<sup>st</sup> from left, 4<sup>th</sup> row.</li><li>e. Brother Sebastian Lim, 1<sup>st</sup> from right, 2<sup>nd</sup> row.</li></ol> |
|--|





Great Things Are Possible



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