



The Gateway

Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin

June 2009

Fifteenth Issue

Welcome

Brother Felix Sheehan is our Brother of the Month in this issue. To those of us who knew him, he was a kind man and an interesting character.

Since the month of June is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we have included a short reflection, with oriental characteristics.



The other Oriental Touch has to do with very old Chinese fables, which are still told to children today. The Chinese people have their own version of Aesop's fables. Readers may also hear some Lasallian echoes in the moral of the stories.

The heat and humidity has arrived in force. We should not complain, especially when we think back to the days of no air-conditioning either in the residences or in schools. Drip, drip...

The Gateway is going to take a break, at least for the month of July. The editors have convinced themselves that they deserve it. To those of you planning holidays, do have a safe and wonderful time, and we will renew acquaintance on your return.



Brother of the Month

Brother Felix Sheehan 1912-1986



When we look at a photograph of a youthful Brother Felix, we may note how tall he is, as well as his shock of beautiful, curly hair. In some photos we may also detect a twinkle in his eye, and that would be telling.

He was born in County Tipperary, Ireland, and given the baptismal name Denis. During his childhood the family moved to Bruff, County Limerick, and it was here he went to school and grew up. The school was run by the De La Salle Brothers. He was the only boy in a family of six and he remained very attached to his family. From an early age he displayed that lovely mix of good humour and seriousness that stayed with him all his life. Oh yes, he could be serious, but he never took himself too seriously. And that trait carried him far.

The Brothers who taught him at school had a great influence on him and he preferred their way of life to that of the priesthood. Shortly after Christmas 1930 he decided to head for the Brothers' Novitiate in Castletown. The Novitiate at the time was a year of tough spiritual formation. He "survived", took the Brothers' Habit on the 1st February 1931 and the name Brother Felix Lawrence.

A sense of youthful adventure must have been in his bones because soon after the Novitiate, at the age of twenty, he volunteered for the missions in the Far East. His first teaching missionary experience was in Malaysia, first in Taiping and then in Penang, from 1932 to 1936. Teaching all day in the tropical heat was no joke but Felix made the best of it. During school holidays the Brothers would assemble on Penang Hill and Brother Felix was in his element. For recreation he introduced singsong sessions. He had a good singing voice and a wide repertoire of attractive Irish songs.

Just as he was acclimatising to the Malaysian setting he was transferred to Hong Kong which was to be the scene of most of his labours for the rest of his life. He arrived at St Joseph's College on the 8th December 1936 and taught at Matriculation level until war broke out. One of the students at the time was Henry Pang who later became a Brother. He recalls:

“Young Brothers were in the majority and there was enough of them to make two noisy football or basketball teams.” He remembered “their hearty laughter and cheerful way of life” and says this is what first attracted him to the Brothers.

But happy days were soon to end as the dark clouds of war were gathering. The bombs rained down on the 8th December 1941 and by Christmas the Japanese military was in control. They commandeered many schools, including St Joseph’s and La Salle. St Joseph’s, among other things, was used as a military store. Brother Felix and some other Brothers were kindly given refuge for a time by the Jesuit Fathers in Robinson Road.



The Brothers came to the decision that while a few would remain in Hong Kong, the remainder would move to neutral territory where they might also be able to exercise their teaching skills. One migrating group was led by Brother Aimar while Brother Felix, accompanied by Brothers Cassian Brigant and Michael Curtin, led the other. Brother Felix and companions decided to head for China via Macau and set sail for Kwong Chao Wan on an extremely crowded ship, in January 1942. Kwong Chao Wan (a French colony from 1898-1943) was often used as a stopover on an escape route for civilians fleeing Hong Kong and trying to make their way to Free China. There the Brothers soon ran out of money and gladly accepted the offer by a friendly Norwegian ship’s captain of free passage to Haiphong, a port on the Gulf of Tonkin in north Vietnam, where they were warmly received by the Vietnamese and French Brothers.

We think Brother Felix might not have been too homesick in Vietnam because he soon met some of his old Hong Kong confreres such as Brothers Honorius, Basilian and Wilfrid. They were working in the large Lasallian school in Taberd, Saigon. Without delay Felix got down to the study of French and reached the enviable standard of being allowed to read the Lives of the Saints in the refectory. But the main work assigned to Felix and his English-speaking companions was to teach the English language to the young Vietnamese Brothers and to the students. There was one potentially dark spot on the horizon for Brother Felix. He was admitted to Saigon hospital for a stomach operation and his stomach never forgot it. It was later discovered that he had had an operation for appendix in the 30's in Penang.



With Brother Michael Curtin

The end of war in 1945 brought blessings to many. Brother Felix had not been home to see his family for fourteen years. In 1946 he managed to get on a ship for England and thence to Ireland. He was malaria-ridden, undernourished and pestered with that niggling stomach ailment. His superiors allowed him a good rest at home followed by a degree course at University College Dublin, where he graduated majoring with a B.A. in History.

1949 saw him returning East, doing a short stint in Kuching, East Malaysia, before returning to Hong Kong where he felt most at home. He taught first in St Joseph's College from 1950 to 1955 after which he was asked to go to Rome for the second Novitiate. This does not mean that there was a problem with his making of the "first" Novitiate! Rather, it was a sign that the Superiors were preparing him for greater responsibility. Sure enough, soon after his return in 1956, he was assigned as Director of La Salle College, Kowloon, in succession to Brother Patrick Toner.



St. Joseph's College in the 50s

As the new Director, Brother Felix moved fast. The school at this time was "in exile" in "temporary" wooden huts erected by the British Army. Brother Felix did not let this deter him. He was an energetic headmaster and kept teachers and students on their



The "temporary" wooden huts

toes with frequent class visits and checking of exercise books. He introduced a number of changes during his tenure including the wearing of a mandatory student uniform, the establishment of a new prefect system and student



council and the giving of spiritual talks during assemblies. Nevertheless, it was his battle with the British Army to secure the release of the original La Salle College building that marked him out. It took years of negotiations, delicate and not so delicate, with the matter being brought up regularly in the House of Commons, before Brother Felix could at last take possession of the building. For this

achievement, some people salute the courage, stamina and fighting spirit of the Irishman in him. When he got the bit between his teeth he would not let go too easily.

On the 1st August 1959, the Army finally derequisitioned the building after a ten-year occupation. The official handover took place on the 21st August. What a sight met the eyes of the Brothers! After ten years of military occupation the grand buildings and grounds were in a shambles. Undeterred, Brother Felix set about the rehabilitation work. For a whole year a firm called Hsin Hang did some restoration and a great deal of patchwork. It was all they could do. It was somewhat akin to cosmetic surgery and the building never fully recaptured its



Back home to La Salle College

pristine beauty and grandeur. But school morale was high under Brother Felix and spiritual, academic, sporting, musical and scouting activities kept ticking over nicely. Staff and students were simply glad to be "home".



Scouts on guard

Brother Felix himself had an interesting “take” on the growth of extra-curricular activities, especially since some thought they hindered academic progress. In his Speech Day address of 1963 he had this to say:

“No wonder a despairing teacher intent on getting his class through the syllabus of studies, opined that the device on our school crest, ‘Fides et Opera’, should be translated ‘fiddles and operas’. Yet all this hubbub, not only prevents ‘Jack’ from becoming a dull boy but gives scope to that initiative, sociability and qualities of leadership that distinguish the La Salle boy”.

Mention of Speech Day calls to mind an interesting episode. Students have an uncanny knack of being able to “read” their headmasters and teachers. It was the custom on Speech Days for the Head Boy or Prefect to request the Guest of Honour for a school holiday. The Guest would invariably look to the Principal for a nod of approval. On one memorable occasion, the Head Boy had the extraordinarily creative idea to ask for two holidays! The Guest looked at Brother Felix who, though flabbergasted, had the graciousness to consent. That Head Boy had certainly “read” his headmaster.

One outstanding trait of Brother Felix was his sympathy for the poor, the needy, the handicapped and all those in straitened circumstances. And so it was that he granted no-cost school quarters to the janitors and no-interest loans to needy teachers. Brother Paul Sun, Superior General of the Disciples of the Sacred Heart, also benefited from Felix’s determination to encourage others. He helped and supported Brother Sun in the setting up of St Joseph’s Anglo-Chinese Primary School in 1958 and later, in 1968, of the Secondary School. Brother Felix sent Brother Anthony Knoll there to teach and to act as adviser and supervisor for three years until the school was on a firm footing.

Another big venture of Brother Felix in his efforts to help the disadvantaged was the successful opening of a new school in the New Territories, close to the China border. This was De La Salle Secondary School, Fanling, which opened its doors in 1965 for boys who would otherwise have little chance of receiving a quality education. The pioneer Community consisted of Brothers Felix, Paul O’Connell and Pius Kelly. Now Brother Felix was by no means a linguist.

However, he was determined to learn Chinese or at least enough to give a speech at the opening of the new school. Brother Henry Pang coached him to perfection. The great day came. Brother Felix started the speech all right, and then, amidst rising expectations, stalled. There was a long silence. Felix then had the presence of mind to bow graciously and sit down to loud applause. When asked later what had happened, he said he had had a total black out!

Brother Felix ran a good, happy school in Fanling. One old boy often recalls how Brother Felix "saved" him as he had been quite naughty. One day Felix had approached him and told him in no uncertain terms how he would end up if he did not mend his ways. That was the turning point for the boy. After completing two terms as Director of De La Salle Secondary, Felix returned to La Salle College and humbly taught as directed until his retirement in 1981. But he was not yet content to hang up his boots and, at the request of an old boy, offered



his services at the Hang Seng College of Commerce. He enjoyed teaching there and helping out with the Debating Society until December 1984.

Friends visiting the Fanling Community

During all this time and despite indifferent health, Brother Felix never lost that twinkle in his eye or the joy of playing a good practical joke. Brother Patrick Tierney recalls visiting La Salle from St Joseph's College. Suddenly he heard someone singing a beautiful Irish song. On turning, there was Brother Felix approaching and apparently in good voice, a bit too good he felt. Sure enough, Brother Felix was found to be carrying a small cassette player behind his back!



With Brothers David Jones and Patrick Tierney

The old stomach complaint was surfacing more and more. However, Brother Felix was not finished yet. In December 1984 he volunteered to go to help the Vietnamese refugees at the Brothers' Centre in Oxford. He was surely remembering the war years when he too was a refugee and had been welcomed and given shelter and work in Vietnam. But his health now deteriorated rapidly. Early in the Summer of 1985 he was diagnosed with stomach cancer. He received the news with resignation. The Brothers in England gave him unstinted care until he decided to return to the Brothers' nursing home in Ireland, called Miguel House. This was in December 1986.

For the last six months of his life he suffered much pain. Pain-killers brought temporary relief. His morale was boosted by the number of visitors, letters, cards, telegrams and flowers he received from all over the world, but especially from Hong Kong. Two of his sisters kept vigil at his bedside. One of them, Sister Joseph Marie, writes:

"I will never forget the care and kindness shown to Felix in Castletown. The constant attention of the nursing sisters to his every need and the devoted care of Brother Pius McCarthy is something we will never forget.

As we said the Rosary, we could see Felix saying the Hail Mary's with us. He looked around at everyone, as if to thank us, then quietly went to God".

Brother Henry Pang writes a lovely epitaph for Brother Felix. He recalled the words of Father James Lea, one time Chaplain of La Salle College, who used to occupy a room at the main entrance of the old College. Father Lea said that "very often, people looking for Brother Felix would come up to knock and when he came to the door they would ask him if he were Brother Felix. He would answer simply, 'I am not. I live down here. But Brother Felix is upstairs'.

Brother Henry Pang adds: "If I had to write the epitaph of Brother Felix today, I would simply say, 'BRO FELIX IS NOT HERE. HE IS UPSTAIRS'.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bro Felix'. The signature is stylized and cursive, with the first part being a large, looped 'B' and 'F'.

Au Revoir Brother Vincent

Brother Vincent Byrne came to Hong Kong in 1995. He was on post-retirement leave and had just spent five months in Australia, familiarizing himself with the educational scene there. His teaching career till then had been confined to his native Ireland. He had become aware that teachers of English were much in demand on mainland China as it sought to build its economy on the basis of an open-door policy.



Right to Left: Brothers Vincent, Alphonsus Breen and Mark Blake relaxing in the Brothers' country house in Fanling

Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, a non-commercial company called, AITECE Ltd (Association for International Teaching and Curriculum Exchange Ltd), had been set up in 1988 by some concerned business people and interested groups to aid China mainly by supplying teachers of English. Brother Vincent was invited to take a job for one semester and agreed.

The Brothers Community at La Salle College welcomed Vincent as a guest and it was convenient as a base for his work in China. For almost ten years, until 2004, he taught in various universities in South China, refreshed by holiday periods in Hong Kong. He returned to Ireland briefly in 2004 but then accepted an invitation to work in a more supervisory role with AITECE, helping teachers destined for China as well as those already teaching there.

This month, June 2009, he returns to Ireland enriched by his experiences. Throughout all these years Brother Vincent has been a much- appreciated member of the Brothers Community of La Salle College. We will miss his cheerful presence, his fund of stories and jokes and, by no means least, the lovely cakes and sundry sweets he supplied for the table.

Au Revoir, Brother Vincent. May the road rise to meet you and may the sun shine warm upon your face.

Family Updates

Priests/Brothers/Seminarians Day

On the 28th of May we celebrated the Dragon Boat Festival. This is a public holiday in Hong Kong. On this day, by tradition, the Catholic Church gathers together its clergy and religious for some formation, information, and social interaction.

This year the event was held at La Salle College. Cardinal Joseph Zen, Bishop John Tong and the three Vicars General graced the occasion with their presence.



Carlos, a young old boy seminarian from St. Joseph's College, enjoyed the gathering

Preparing Leaders for the Lasallian Mission in PARC

We will be sending six teachers to this programme which will be held in the Philippines from July the 4th to 13th 2009. Brother Mark Murphy is the programme director.



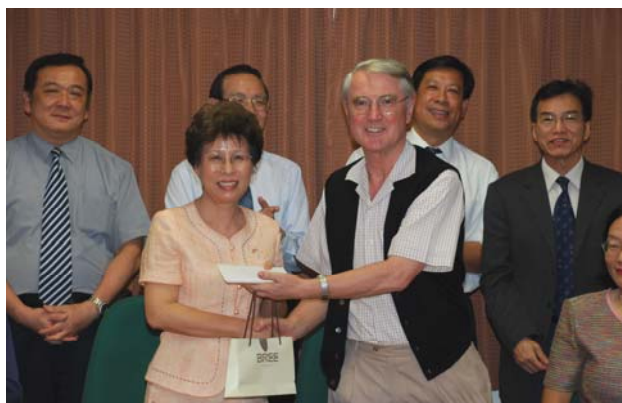
Back row, L to R, Wallace Wong of Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College and Terrence Poon of De La Salle Secondary School, N.T.

Front row, L to R, Brother Patrick, Mandy Catlin of La Salle Primary School, Hesione Leung of La Salle College and Alice Lau of Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) Primary School.

Edith Loong of La Salle College will also attend as a member of the Board.

Lasallian Principals' Conference

The latest conference of the Hong Kong Lasallian School Principals was held on 11th of June 2009. This conference helps to enhance communication and to strengthen our Lasallian Vision and Mission. We also bade farewell to Loretta Yu, Principal of Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) Primary School, who will be retiring in August.



Farewell to David

David has been Vice-Principal of Chong Gene Hang College for many years. He has also been the webmaster of our Hong Kong Lasallian Family Website. He has now reached retirement age and attended his final School Management Committee meeting on the 5th of June. We wish David the very best in all his future endeavours.



Lasallian Education Council

At its last meeting on June the 13th 2009, the Council stressed the importance of Lasallian formation for school managers, teachers, alumni and parents. To this end, members decided to establish a Hong Kong Lasallian Formation Fund with the specific objects of promoting religious formation and leadership training in the traditions of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The fund will be under the sole control and ownership of the Area Director in Hong Kong and will be tax exempt.



Oriental Flavour

Teaching Children

Zeng Zi was a Chinese philosopher and a student of Confucius and lived from BC 505 to BC 435.

One day his wife had to go to the market in a hurry. Her son followed on her heels, crying.

"Listen to me," she coaxed her son. "Go on home. When I return, I will slaughter a pig for dinner."

When his wife returned home, Zeng Zi went to the pigsty to pick a pig for slaughter. His wife hurried after him, saying, "Don't take my words seriously. I was just humouring our son."

Zeng Zi quickly drew his wife aside. "We must keep our word, even to children," he said to his wife. "Children are like a piece of blank paper. They learn everything from their parents and imitate what they see and hear. If you lie to your son now, he will learn that lying is acceptable. Once you lie to him, he will never trust you again. This is not the way to teach children."

Having said that, he slaughtered a pig for dinner.

Moral of the story: Children learn by word and example.

Lasallian Echoes:

Your way of life should be a model for your students because they ought to find in you the virtues they should practise. (Meditation for Sundays and Feasts)



曾子杀彘

曾子妻之市，其子随之而泣。其母曰：“女(同“汝”)还，顾反，为女杀彘(猪)。”妻适市反，曾子欲捕彘杀之。妻止之曰：“特与婴儿戏耳。”曾子曰：“婴儿非与戏也。婴儿非有知也，待父母而学者也，听父母之教。今子欺之，是教子欺也。母欺子，子而不信其母，非所以成教也。”(韩非子)

Giving the seedlings a hand

Mencius, 372-289 BC, was the most famous disciple of Confucius. Here is one of his stories.

It is said that a short-tempered farmer in the Song Dynasty was very anxious that his rice crop grow up quickly. He was thinking about this day and night. But the crop was growing much slower than he expected.

One day, he thought of a solution. He pulled up the seedlings a few inches, one by one, and came home exhausted.

Even though he was very tired he felt very happy and told his son that the crop did in fact 'grow' higher.

His son hurried to the fields to have a look and found that all the seedlings had shrivelled up.

Moral of the story: Allow the children to grow at their own pace and time.



Lasallian Echoes:

Be convinced of what St. Paul says, that you plant and water the seed but it is God who makes it grow.

揠苗助長

宋人有閔其苗之不長而揠之者，芒芒然歸，謂其人曰：「今日病矣！予助苗長矣！」其子趨而往視之，苗則槁矣。《孟子·公孫丑上》



The Sacred Heart of Jesus

The Catholic Church dedicates the month of June to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This devotion is one of the most popular in the church. The image of the Sacred Heart is meant to remind us of the infinite and unconditional love of Jesus for us.



I have read a story recently about a boy who was asked by his religion teacher what he thought about God. The boy said: "I bet it's very hard for him to love everybody in the whole world. There are only four people in my family and I can never do it".

The Chinese character for love is quite beautiful. The top stroke symbolizes family and marriage. The middle stroke is your heart while the stroke at the bottom are your friends. We are therefore reminded to love our family, spouse and friends with all our heart

愛 = 心 + 家 + 友

Love

Heart

Family

Friend

In our Lasallian world we are also familiar with the images of love, especially love for our vocation as teachers and love for our students. St La Salle often asks us to "touch the hearts of your pupils". And our prayer invocation is **"Live Jesus in our hearts"**.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, fount of love and mercy, pray for us.