



**The Gateway**

**Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin**

**May 2011**

**Thirty-first Issue**

## Welcome



Gateway 31 comes to you in the month of May, the month of Our Lady in Catholic tradition. How appropriate, then, to have Mothers' Day celebrated in the same month.

In Lasallian tradition we associate the month with the feast of St John Baptist de La Salle. On the 15<sup>th</sup> May or thereabouts, our schools celebrate, not only with lunches and dinners, but also with Masses, Prayer Assemblies and Lasallian Art displays. Some schools even celebrate a "Founder's Week." May our holy Founder look kindly on all our works.

This year, May 15<sup>th</sup> has a particular significance in this part of the world. It is the day that the new Lasallian East Asia District (LEAD) was born, a sign of faith and hope in the future. Brother Edmundo Fernandez (Visitor) and Brother Thomas Lavin (Auxiliary Visitor) can be assured of our prayers and best wishes.

We hope there is something for everyone in Gateway 31.

Since our Brother of the Month, Brother Austin de Lemos, lived a long and fruitful life, memories may be stirred in the hearts and

minds of those who knew him. And we hope that our other offerings may stir some memories too.

Oh Mary we crown thee with blossoms today,  
Queen of the Angels, Queen of the May.



## Brother of the Month

Brother Austin de Lemos 1900-1995



Brother Austin was born on the 12th October 1900 in Rangoon, Burma, now called Myanmar. Some snippets from his early life are best told in his own words.

“My father was an engineer on the Burma railways. He died when I was five years old. An uncle took my mother and three sisters into his home. I was in the eleventh standard when, during our annual retreat, I experienced a strong desire to become a religious. At first I wanted to become a Franciscan, but a friend of mine, who was about to join the De La Salle Brothers, persuaded me to join the Novitiate of the Brothers. Six other boys had also made up their minds to join. My dear mother was at the jetty to see me off. My mother and I broke down but God gave both of us his grace to carry out my resolve to be a Brother. I never met my mother again, for she died seven months later.”

Brother Austin, together with eleven companions, joined the De La Salle Brothers as an aspirant on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 1916. They had all been taught by the Brothers in the famed St Paul’s High School, Rangoon. They had to travel to Kuala Lumpur for their initial training. In 1918 they were transferred to Penang where Brother Austin did his Novitiate and took the religious habit on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1921. The Scholasticate years followed until he qualified for classroom teaching in 1924.

A strong, determined spirit was one of his characteristics. Everything he did was done with a will. One way this was shown was his persistent and continuous efforts to control stammering. When stuck while reading aloud, he repeatedly stamped the floor with vigour till he regained his speech. At this early stage, he also displayed a remarkable memory, particularly for the scriptures.

His many years of dedicated service to education began at St. John's Kuala Lumpur in 1924 and from then until 1954 he taught in the Lasallian schools in Penang, Melaka, Taiping, Seremban and Singapore. As one Brother contemporary put it: “I clearly remember the stacks of exercise books that lay piled on his desk, but not for long. The piles diminished visibly as he laboured long and arduously at them.” Throughout his teaching career he paid particular attention to the teaching of catechism and moral education. He prepared these lessons carefully and taught with fervour and sincerity.

He did have one “break” during this time, having been chosen to follow a 9 month Second Novitiate programme in Belgium from 1932 to 1933. There were sixty four



Brothers on the course. As Brother Austin puts it: “The nine months did us a lot of good; heightened and deepened our love for our Lasallian vocation, helped us to see its importance and its grandeur.”



Another less welcome “break” came with the outbreak of World War 11. Brother Austin was in Penang at the time. Since he had a British passport and was pro British in every way, he chaffed at the restrictions brought about by the war. In typical determined fashion he refused to learn Japanese. He preferred to play ‘God save the King’ on his mouth-organ while standing to attention!

One of his longer teaching stretches was at St Francis Institution, Melaka, from 1945 to 1953. His old boys have very clear memories of him. His nickname was “Austin Botak”, which can be translated as “The Potter” or more loosely as “Baldy Austin”! He was often observed tenderly stroking his bald head. Some students wondered whether he was of Indian descent or Burmese by race. Brother Austin impressed them by claiming that Afghanistan blood ran through his veins!

In the classroom he was the master in every sense of the word. Learning was a serious business, and especially when it came to religion. All his lessons were meticulously prepared and often accompanied by sketch notes. He would often bring along his jelly printing machine, a forerunner of the duplicating machine. When students questioned him as to how he made this unique machine he would invariably reply: “Sorry, it’s a family secret!” He taught his students to be morally upright and courageous, citing the exemplary lives of many Christians throughout history. He would usually demand learning important scriptural passages by heart. Among his many accomplishments, one in particular used to mesmerise his pupils. He could draw a complete perfect circle on the blackboard, without the aid of compasses.

Another of his talents was in music. He trained a choir to sing in four parts and their public performances drew loud applause and demands for encores. Though usually serious in manner, there was always a glint in the eye. Once, in a foreign land, he was asked to sing a Chinese song. Not knowing any, he immediately improvised by using a tune to the names of his Chinese pupils! His listeners thought he was fluent in Chinese. On social occasions, he would play the harmonica and the Brothers would often ask him

to sing, the Irish Brothers demanding an ancient ditty called “Tim O’Shea”. Brother Austin had an accurate tone and a sweet voice.

Yet another talent was in games, especially in cricket, hockey and football. Although pint-sized, what was lacking in stature was made up for in speed and skill. His favourite trick was selling the dummy, leaving his opponent flat-footed and bemused. Besides playing games himself, he would take a keen interest in class and inter-school games and always expected his teams to win. Everyone in the sports-field knew where his loyalties lay. He was generous, however, after defeat, as long as the players had done their best.

Finally, there is the testimony of a Brother who lived in Community with Austin at this time. “No one doubted his religious spirit or his piety. His piety was simple and deep, centring around the Eucharist and Mary. He was very easy to live with and always lived simply.”

1954 marked the end of what may be considered the first phase of Brother Austin’s teaching career. He was then transferred to Burma, the country of his birth, and was appointed Director in Moulmein from 1954 to 1959 and in Twante from 1959 to 1963. It was while he was in Twante that his legendary dogged defence of human rights was severely tested. He was once approached by local



protection racketeers who demanded protection money to maintain peace and safety at such a troubled time. Brother Austin refused point blank. Not many days after that, however, some Brothers were abducted and held for ransom. Brother Austin refused to pay at first, arguing that it was not just. In the end he was, most reluctantly, forced to yield.

From Twante he was transferred to Rangoon and appointed the Principal of St Paul’s Primary School and, at the same time, Director of the Brothers’ Scholasticate. It was while he was at this work that the nationalisation of all Catholic schools took place. That was in 1965 and it came as a huge shock to all those working in the Catholic missions. And it put an end to the second phase of Brother Austin’s teaching career.

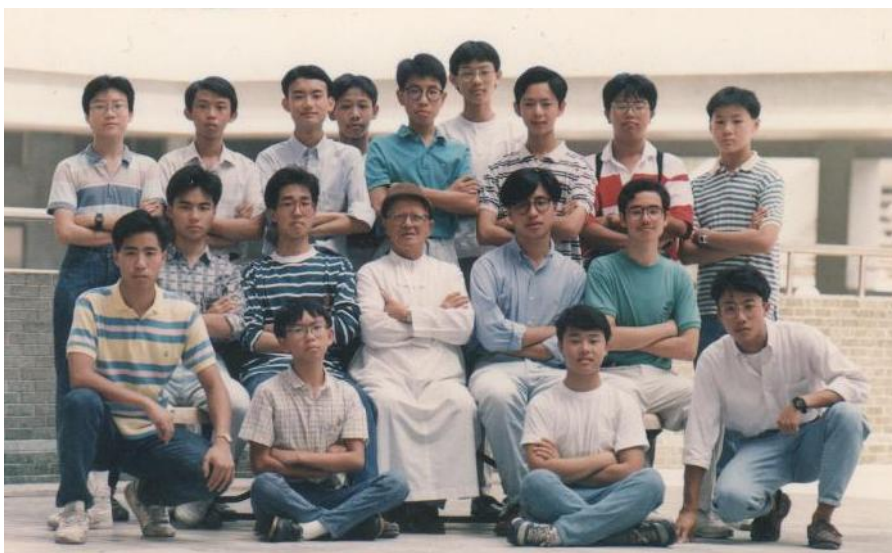
He held on to his British Passport for dear life, although this necessitated his forced departure from Burma. He clung to his British citizenship and believed he could sail

through any country with a British Passport in tow. This was not to be the case and from 1965 to 1977 he shuttled between Malaysia and Singapore. He then spent the year 1974-1975 in Vietnam prior to its fall to the Vietcong. He spent much of his time there at La Salle, Nhatrang, teaching the young aspirants to the Brothers. When the political situation got bad he was brought to Saigon. The Brothers were able to get him a seat on a plane that was taking out evacuees from the beleaguered city. He landed in Singapore but was refused entry and eventually he obtained refuge in Malaysia.

Brother Austin's 'retirement' years were first spent mainly in Malaysia (1966-1977) and then in La Salle College, Kowloon, Hong Kong (1977-1995). Retirement is hardly the appropriate word for Brother Austin, because even up to a few months before his death, he had continued to teach and tutor students. Indeed, he expected to live a long life. He applied for a new passport at the age of 90 and complained that it would expire in only 10 years!

Many images spring to mind when recalling Brother Austin's life of retirement in La Salle College, Kowloon.

Austin the religious Brother: He was a man of prayer; "knocking sparks off the Blessed Sacrament" as one Brother put it. He was devoted to the daily religious exercises, particularly devoted to Mary, the Mother of God and therefore to the rosary. He was also a staunch spiritual director of the Legion of Mary Praesidium, Our Lady of Fatima. Br Austin seemed to pray with a direct line, uttering numerous pious ejaculations and he expected answers to prayer and must have got them. And then there was his devotion to the Saints, such that he often amazed people with his detailed knowledge of each Saint. Any hint, however, that he himself might be a holy man would be dismissed categorically.



Austin the teacher: Although officially retired he did not know the meaning of the word and therefore continued to teach in the spirit of faith and zeal as long as his physical and mental energies allowed. He taught mainly in La

Salle Primary School, teaching English and even some French but paying much attention to the teaching of religion. He would also tutor boys of both the Primary and College in his spare time. He was a versatile teacher, equally at home with English, French, Geography, Religion and so on. He taught with authority, expecting good order and of course getting it. Yet his type of discipline was always tempered with great kindness, which attracted students to him. He never gave up on a student no matter how slow the learning process and would conclude his lessons with a human and spiritual reflection, suited to the student's age and maturity.

Austin the chess-player: He would light up at the mention of chess and especially on "chess days". Prior to the encounter, he seemed to gird his loins for battle and would give 100% concentration to the task. He played to win and might occasionally request the opponent to allow him take back a move he had already made! He kept a tally of his victories against John Lam, a pupil of Brother Austin back in 1949 in Malaysia and who came faithfully to play with him every week. Needless to say, Brother Austin usually had the edge on John but he could never rest on his oars.



Austin's love for England: England could do little wrong, be it in politics, sports, what have you. Living in a Community with a number of Irishmen made for some delightful banter. The Irish would rag Brother Austin no end with every scandalous story they could find about England.

One good Brother regularly wondered if England would ever learn how to play cricket! He took the banter in good part, saying he understood the Irish temperament! But he didn't budge an inch!

Austin's love for his family: He would send his family members parcels, wrote most regularly and spoke lovingly of them all. He really looked forward to his visits to India and also looked forward to all the letters and cards he received from the family. Towards the end, when he could not read their letters or write to them, he asked for help. And when the letters were read out to him, he cried. The very mention of a relative was enough to bring tears to his eyes. Quite simply, he loved his family very much.

Other noticeable characteristics of Br Austin were that he never failed to say thank you for any favour or recognition or help; that he was proud of being a De La Salle Brother and wore the robe almost everywhere and that he could remember and relate incidents,





names and stories of yesteryear, which were all fresh in his mind. He was also dead set against waste of any kind, food, paper, clothes. 'Waste not, Want not' was his motto.

From October 1995 there was a very noticeable decline in Br Austin's health and he became bed ridden and had to make use of a wheel chair. He asked at first for

hospitalization but after two weeks he wanted home. So he saw the rest of the time out in his room until a few days before his death.

Anita, a Filipina nurse, took care of him during the day and a night nurse was employed from the local St. Teresa's hospital. The Brothers paid frequent visits to his room, though these were not made easy because Br Austin was shouting loudly at this stage – shouting out prayers of longing for God as well as requests for help. He also suffered for a while from scruples.

A few days before his death he stopped eating and drinking so on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December, he was brought back to St. Teresa's Hospital. There he was made comfortable. He could not speak but followed visitors with his eyes. On the 13<sup>th</sup> he could not open his eyes, though he was breathing normally. However, he had a lot of phlegm. He died peacefully at about five in the morning of the 14<sup>th</sup> December. He had written to a Brother friend a few years previously: "Now the Evening has arrived, and our dear Lord will soon summon us and say, 'Come and receive your wages.'"

At the funeral Mass eulogy the large congregation was reminded that "Brother Austin witnessed events of world shaking importance including two World Wars and he lived through huge changes of society and of thought. Through them all, he remained himself, true to his vocation and to his life values."

Brother Austin's life was a fine illustration of the spirit of the Institute he joined, the spirit of faith and zeal. In the spirit of faith, he always sought to do God's will and to see everybody and everything with the eyes of faith. In the spirit of zeal for the instruction of children, he taught with efficiency and enthusiasm and regarded the teaching profession with pride.



Here is a prayer which he typed on the back of a picture of the sacred Heart:

“May each morning be for me a new day with possibilities of love, of a smile for all, a new force to welcome with a ‘Yes, my God,’ to all that you will or permit today. May your holy will always be the joy of my heart.”

May his kind gentle soul rest in peace.

### Brother Austin’s Postings

St. John’s Institution, Kuala Lumpur	Teaching	1924-1930
St. Xavier’s Institution, Penang	Teaching	1930-1932
St. Francis Institution, Malacca	Teaching	1933-1935
St. Joseph’s Institution, Singapore	Teaching	1935-1937
St. John’s Institution, Kuala Lumpur	Teaching	1937-1938
St. George’s Institution, Taiping	Teaching	1938-1939
St. Paul’s Institution, Seremban	Teaching	1939-1940
St. John’s Institution, Kuala Lumpur	Teaching	1940-1941
St. Xavier’s Institution, Penang	Teaching	1941-1942
St. Paul’s Institution, Seremban	Sub-Director	1942-1945
St. Francis Institution, Malacca	Sub-Director	1945-1953
St. Patrick’s School, Moulmein	Director	1954-1959
La Salle Orphanage, Twante	Director	1959-1963
Scholasticate/St. Paul’s Primary, Rangoon	Director	1963-1965
St. Francis Institution, Malacca	Teaching	1966-1967
La Salle School, Klang	Teaching	1967-1969
La Salle Provincialate, Petaling Jaya	Teaching	1970-1974
La Salle, Nhatrang, Vietnam	Teaching	1974-1975
St. Joseph’s Training College, Penang	Teaching	1976-1977
La Salle College/Primary, Kowloon	Teaching	1977-1995

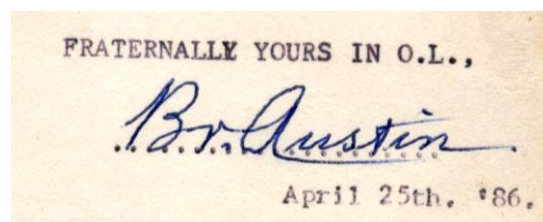
### MY LORD AND MY GOD



Pray for the Repose of Soul of  
**Brother Austin de Lemos, F.S.C.**

Born in Burma on 12th Oct., 1900  
 Died in Kowloon on 14th Dec., 1995

Those who have instructed many unto  
 justice shall shine as stars for all eternity.



## **Lasallian East Asia District (LEAD)**

The traditional Institute Feast of the Founder, 15<sup>th</sup> May, was chosen as the day to inaugurate our new District comprising the Lasallian Family and Mission in seven countries. The countries are Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Myanmar, Japan, Thailand and Hong Kong, China. The inauguration ceremony, presided over by Bishop Nicholas Chia of Singapore and Brother Thomas Johnson, Vicar General, took place at St Joseph's Institution, Singapore, where the first 6 Brothers to Asia landed in 1852.

The Brother Visitor of the new District is Brother Edmundo Fernandez, familiarly called Brother Dodo, who hails from the Philippines while the Auxiliary Visitor is Brother Thomas Lavin who hails from Ireland but has spent much of his life in the East. The Brother Bursar is Brother Jose Dell Coss, a Mexican Brother who is Principal of La Salle School, Kagoshima, Japan.

All involved with the Lasallian mission in the seven countries will surely pray for the well-being of the new District. There is a reservoir of richness of culture and resources that can be tapped into and shared. The scope of the new District broadens our horizons for the promotion of brotherhood and sisterhood in the world.

The Brothers residence at La Salle College, Hong Kong, has been chosen as the headquarters of the new District. It will normally be referred to as the District Provincialate, where the Visitor and Auxiliary Visitor will be based. The establishment of the Provincialate here is indeed an honour and a privilege for the Lasallian Family in Hong Kong and we will surely play our part. We extend a warm welcome to Brothers Dodo and Thomas and to all who will be arriving on District matters.



## Family Updates:

### Christian Brothers Schools Exchange Programme

Four of our secondary schools took part in this exchange from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> April 2011. The opening ceremony was held in Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College while the closing ceremony took place at the De La Salle Secondary School. A barbecue lunch was followed by a short talk delivered by Brother Jeffrey Chan while a teacher adviser, Mr. Peter Leung, gave a power-point presentation as a form of reflection.



### Christian Brothers Schools Leadership Camp



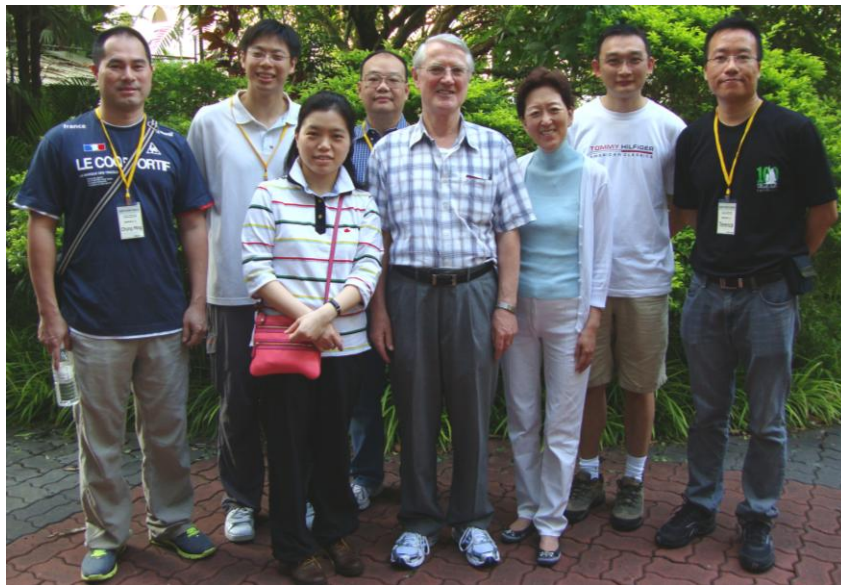
The Camp was organized by the Hong Kong Lasallian Youth Movement (HKLYM). It was held in Cheung Chau, from 30 April to 1 May. Altogether, there were 56 participants and organizers from four of our secondary schools. 3 teachers, together with Brother Jeffrey Chan, helped to oversee the running of the camp.

The aim of the camp was to create an opportunity for the students from the various Lasallian schools to come together to interact with one another through games and talks. At the same time, participants were taught some leadership skills so as to prepare them to take on leadership roles in future. The students experienced a strong sense of bonding and realized that though they came from different Lasallian schools, they all shared in the same Lasallian Spirit – Many Stars, One La Salle!



## Lasallian Formation Programme, Ipoh

The final module of the Penang District two-year formation programme took place from the 29<sup>th</sup> of April to 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2011 at La Salle Centre, Ipoh, Malaysia. The theme of this module was 'Characteristics of Lasallian Education/Educators' as well as Lasallian Formation Methodology. A group of 6 teachers from our schools have completed the 2 year course and have received their diplomas. They are now in a position to be Lasallian formators themselves. Brother John D'Cruz and his back-up team deserve much credit for seeing the programme through successfully.



## Visit of La Salle Green Hills Grade School

Teachers of La Salle Green Hills Grade School, Manila, recently brought a group of their student-council members to Hong Kong for a leadership training programme. They paid a visit to La Salle College on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2011 and were warmly greeted by the College Principal, Brother Steve Hogan. Gifts were exchanged and the guests taken on a school tour by members of the College Student Association.





## Mr. Chow Shek Fai RIP

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 2011, Mr. Chow Shek Fai, former teacher and Principal at De La Salle Secondary School, collapsed and died while playing in a football match. He was competing in a football tournament hosted by the Education Bureau in Ho Man Tin. Teachers tried in vain to resuscitate him on the pitch. Mr. Chow was then rushed to Queen Elizabeth Hospital where he was certified dead.



Mr. Chow joined De La Salle Secondary School in 1975 and was Principal from 1993 to 2004. As teacher and Principal at De La Salle, Mr. Chow believed in close interaction with his students. He loved sports and would regularly play football with the students. He also taught them martial arts.

## Honouring the Founder

Many of our schools organize various activities in honour of the Feast of our Founder. Masses and prayer services were held while one primary school held a ceremony to remember Brothers who had passed away.



## Why do children have to be so sad?

In an unprecedented TV appearance, broadcast on Good Friday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Pope Benedict XVI answered questions posed by Christians and non-Christians about global conflicts, interreligious relations and human suffering.

The first and most moving questions came from a 7-year-old Japanese girl who lost friends in the recent earthquake and tsunami and who said:

"I am very frightened because the house where I felt safe really shook a lot and many children my age have died. I cannot go to play in the park. I want to know: why do I have to be so afraid? Why do children have to be so sad?" said seven-year-old Elena.

Benedict admitted: "I also have the same questions: why is it this way? Why do you have to suffer so much while others live in ease?"

"And we do not have the answers, but we know that Jesus suffered as you do, an innocent, and that the true God who is revealed in Jesus is by your side."

In his response the pope assured the girl that one day she would understand better that "this suffering was not empty, it wasn't in vain, but behind it was a good plan, a plan of love. It is not chance."

He said he had the same questions about why some people suffer so much while others live in ease.

"Be assured, we are with you, with all the Japanese children who are suffering. We want to help you with our prayers, with our actions, and you can be sure that God will help you," he said.

Whether Elena was satisfied with that answer was unclear. But the studio audience gave the Pope a hearty round of applause.



## Love to Share



Students of Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) Primary School recently visited a home for the elderly. The old people welcomed the young into their lives and there was fruitful mutual sharing.

Afterwards, the students tried to reflect on their experience. Here are some of their reflections.

Relatives and voluntary workers need to visit the elderly who are living alone more often. I hope we can share God's love with them.

Primary 1E: Luk Pak Ho

獨居老人需要更臻懇和義工的  
探訪，希望我們可將天主  
的信仰帶給他們。



To make the elderly who live alone happy was so simple. Just a few minutes with them brought them joy because they knew that they were not abandoned.

Primary 3 C: Yeung Ching Yee

原來我們只要付出少許時間去探訪  
長者，他們就會很喜樂。我看見他  
臉上充滿着感恩的表情，因為他  
受到社會上有人關心自己。

I visited a woman who was happy and optimistic. She had her own plans. She has confidence in God and is willing to follow the insights of God.

Primary 5 E: Ko Chun Wing

我所探訪的獨居老人是一個婆婆。我覺得她比起我以前  
探訪的獨居老人開朗。她做事很有計劃，而且信任天主的引領。

I have visited the elderly several times. Even though each visit lasted for only about ten minutes, I was moved by their loneliness. I learnt that I should spend more time with my elderly family members because I could bring them peace and joy.

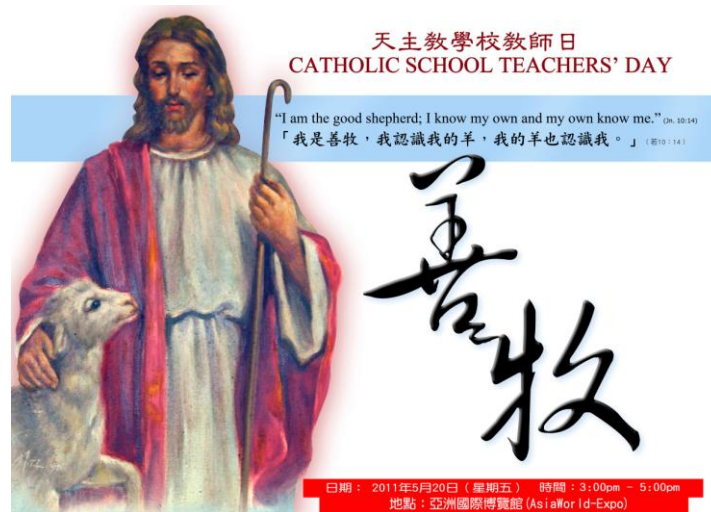
Primary 6C: Fung Cheuk Hin

我已參與這項活動數次了。雖然每次探訪的時間  
只得十分鐘，但已讓我深深體會到獨居長者的孤  
單，也讓我明白到我們應多陪伴年老的親人，令他們的  
心裏充滿着平安和喜樂。





## Catholic School Teachers' Day



Every year there is a gathering of teachers from Catholic schools in Hong Kong. A staggering 278 schools and over 10,000 teachers come under this umbrella. The event is organized by the Catholic Board of Education and this year it was held at Asia World Expo on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2011. The Theme was: “I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me.” (Jn. 10:14)

The gathering was pleased to welcome the participation of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Mr. Donald Tsang, himself a Catholic. The Bishop, John Tong, and the Vicars General were in attendance.

A procession, prayers, a key-note speech, scriptural reading and student performances took up most of the 2 hour programme.

Bishop John Tong had this to say in his written message for the occasion: “Dear teachers, let us joyfully recognize Christ the Good Shepherd in every one of our students, fulfill our duties without complaint despite hardships and criticisms, and commit ourselves in word and deed to the noble mission of educating the young.”

His words echo those of our Founder:

“Recognize Jesus beneath the poor rags of the children whom you have to instruct.”

And again:

“Consider Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd of the Gospel who seeks the lost sheep, places it upon his shoulders, and carries it back to restore it to the fold. Since you are taking his place, look upon yourself as obliged to do the same thing.”