



## **The Gateway**

**Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin**

**September 2011**

**Thirty-third Issue**

## Welcome

Autumn is upon us. Here in Hong Kong we have had almost the driest summer on record, not a single typhoon of any consequence. We are not safe yet but it is unusual to get typhoons in late September.



Associated with autumn is the opening of school which, for our Lasallian schools, was on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. Believe it or not, I think the children were happy to return. “If all the year were playing holidays...” and all that.

Our Brother of the Month goes back quite a way. Yet, some of us came under his tutelage when we were undergoing our Lasallian training and formation. With Brother Matthias, what you saw was what you got, and what we saw was a man of God with a heart of gold.

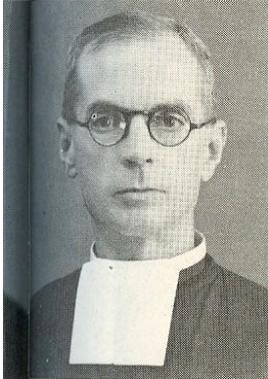
Oriental Flavour takes a look at a distinguished Chinese poet of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), Ma Zhiyuan. One of his poems, “Autumnal Thoughts”, is very highly regarded.

We hope that this issue of The Gateway will bring you up to speed with some of our summer and early autumn activities. The schools are hives of activity even during the holidays. We hope all our young charges will grow in knowledge, wisdom and grace.



## Brother of the Month

### Brother Matthias Linehan 1892-1979



Daniel Linehan and his wife Anne reared twelve children, of whom four were boys. Their home was in the village of Tullylease, Co Cork, Ireland. In the years following the children were to be scattered, some going to Australia, some to the U.S.A. Michael, the future Brother Matthias, was born on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1892. He grew up with his brothers and sisters in a happy and religious atmosphere. He attended the local school. One day, when Michael was in his fourteenth year, a recruiter visited the school and that evening Michael told his mother that he wanted to be a Brother. The parents decided to consult the principal of the school. He advised them to send the boy to the De La Salle Brothers. A letter was sent to the Brother's formation centre at Castletown, Co Laois, and as a result Michael was enrolled in the Juniorate on January 18, 1908.

After a year and a half in the Juniorate, Michael started the Novitiate in June 1909, was clothed in the Lasallian habit in August and given the religious name of Brother Amor Matthias. He was deeply impressed by his formators and throughout his life he never deviated from the Lasallian ideals he learned from them.

On the completion of his novitiate he joined the scholasticate, which was also in Castletown. Here for a year and a half he followed the course of studies that prepared candidates for the King's Scholarship examination. In those years it was the custom for young Brothers to volunteer for the Lasallian missions either in the USA or in the Far East. Brother Matthias volunteered for the East and was accepted. After a brief holiday at home he set sail for Singapore and joined the community of fifteen Brothers at St. Joseph's Institution.

Brother Matthias spent eleven years in Singapore. There he learnt the art of teaching and developed good study habits. He was a conscientious teacher and all his class-work was prepared methodically. "He was a good teacher" writes a Brother who knew him well "He knew what he taught and knew how to impart his knowledge." During his years in Singapore he made his final profession of vows, on December 12<sup>th</sup> 1920.

In June 1923 he was transferred to St. Francis Institution, Malacca, Malaysia. Attached to the school, at the time, was an orphanage. A Brother who was a pupil in St

Francis in those days recalls: “The first time I met Brother Matthias was in 1924. Brother Barnitus was Director and he was Sub-Director. What a splendid pair! Both were lovers of the poor and the orphans and had great sympathy and understanding in regard to them. Brother Matthias taught the Senior Cambridge classes and a very successful and much-loved teacher he was. He was strict and insisted on discipline and hard work but this was tempered with justice and kindness.” This is a refrain that would be heard time and time again.

After only one year in Malacca, Brother Matthias was appointed to the community of St. Xavier’s Institution, Penang. A Brother writes “In December 1924, about a week before Christmas, I arrived in Penang from Singapore. We were just out from England. At the harbour waiting for us were Brother James and Brother Matthias.



We went in a fleet of rickshaws to St. Xavier’s. That evening at supper we were a small group ranging in age from 84 to 19, and yet our conversation involved the whole group. The one who seemed to have the ability to involve everybody was Brother Matthias. Two or three days after our arrival he took ship for Europe and the Second Novitiate, but before going he was called to the home of one of his pupils who was dying, and was able to baptize him then and there.”

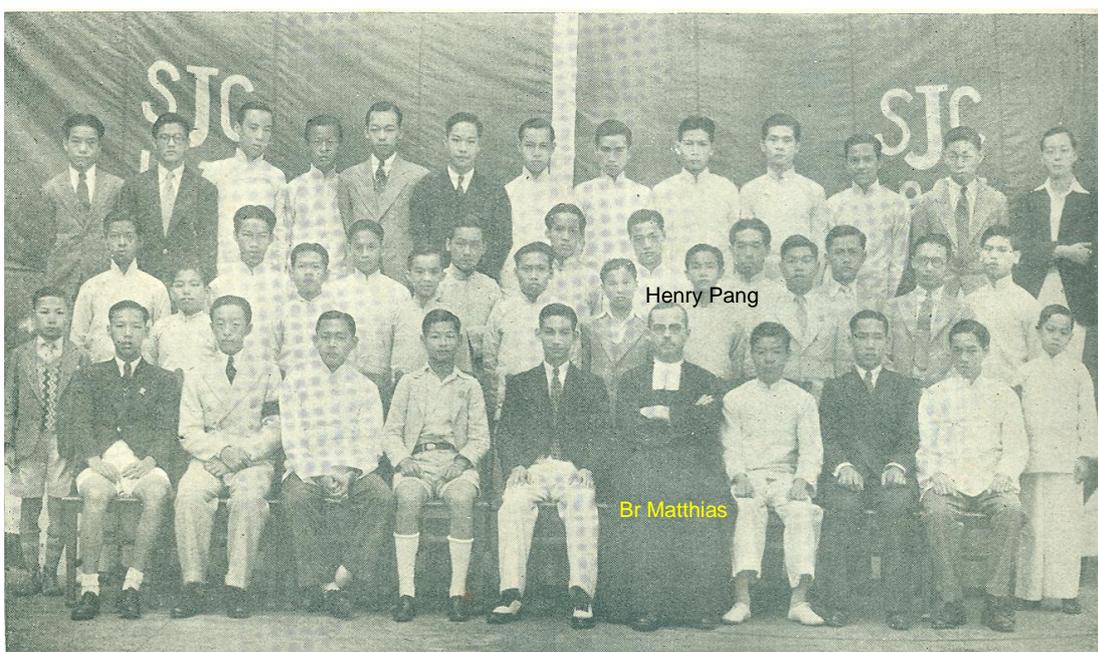
So in 1925 Brother Matthias returned to Ireland and was able to visit his family after an absence of twelve years. After a brief holiday he was sent to Carlsbourg in Belgium to acquire a good spoken knowledge of French in view of making the Second Novitiate. From August 1925 to May 1926 Brother Matthias followed the Second Novitiate programme at Lembecq-lez-Hal. He did so with the calm thoroughness that marked all his life.

After his return to Malaya in 1926, he was appointed again to the staff of St. Xavier’ Penang. A member of the community at that time tells us “He made himself responsible for a good community spirit, joined us in all forms of physical exercises—tennis, swimming, football, athletics, hill-climbing, excursions – he was game for it all. He organized our holidays so that there would be maximum enjoyment. He encouraged study during the holidays and during the weekends and he joined the

younger Brothers for a course in mechanics and typewriting which he had planned. He was always approachable, kind but not weak and he had wonderful commonsense. Sometimes there were setbacks in school by reason of hasty and unwise decisions of those in charge. Without criticizing the latter, Brother Matthias would set about putting things right and re-establishing good relations. When people had to be told unpleasant things, he was the one usually chosen to break the unwelcome tidings, not that he was cold-headed or indifferent, but he believed that people should know the truth, however unpleasant.”

In 1927 he suffered very much from eruptions on the skin. He consulted doctors and underwent treatment but nothing seemed to help. It was eventually discovered that the ailment was due simply to the heat of the tropics. Brother Matthias made light of it but the condition would not go away.

At that time the juniorate, novitiate and scholasticate were all located in Pulau Tikus, a secluded spot on the coast some distance from Penang. It was felt that the Juniors in particular needed a more structured programme. Brother Matthias was sent to Pulau Tikus to take charge. The change was immediate: the boys had to dress properly, good manners were emphasised, cleanliness insisted on and a definite and clear timetable drawn up to regulate the Juniors’ day. The next year Brother Matthias was given charge of the Novitiate. After only nine months in this position, however, he was moved to Manila and after a five months’ stay he was sent to St. Joseph’s College, Hong Kong, as Sub-Director. He arrived 21<sup>st</sup> September 1929 and began teaching immediately.



The Director of St Joseph's was the well known Brother Aimar who was just then building the magnificent College that for so many subsequent years was to dominate the skyline of Kowloon. On the completion of the building in 1932 Brother Aimar became the first Director of La Salle College and Brother Matthias replaced him as the head of the community in St. Joseph's.

He was now forty years of age and in the bloom of life. He was to be Director of St. Joseph's College for three years. In all he only spent six years in Hong Kong but his memory is held in benediction there by old boys of those years. One such recalls: "He gave every encouragement to sports during his tenure of office and St. Joseph's achieved laurels and fame in swimming, volley-ball, basket-ball, soccer and athletics. At the same time the college scored notable successes in the academic field, winning many distinctions and honours in the matriculation examinations."



Old soldiers: Br Paul O'Connell (left) and Br Matthias

As late as 1977 still another Old Boy wrote to him. "You remember our First Fridays when we went to the chapel for Benediction. I was the outstanding choirboy and loved to sing the various hymns in Latin! I remember also the Hall where we had so many cowboy films on Saturdays. And I also remember you emptying my pockets bulging with marbles! One episode I will never forget. One day three of us conspired to do no homework that evening. But next day I was the only one who showed up without homework and two of my companions told Brother Xavier that I had gone on strike. I was sent down to your office to explain and you just got out the cane and gave what you considered due to me! Those were the days."

A Brother who came to Hong Kong from Ireland in 1932 pays tribute to Brother Matthias. "I spent two of the happiest years of my life with him in St. Joseph's. He spared no effort in training me for my work. He was strict but kind and fatherly. During the long holidays he organized lessons for the young Brothers in the subjects they had to teach. He himself would give lessons in mathematics and Latin, while Brother Xavier taught us Physics, Brother Hubert Chemistry, Brother Aubert English and Brother Vulbas Joseph French. We had games twice a week and he himself would join in with great gusto.

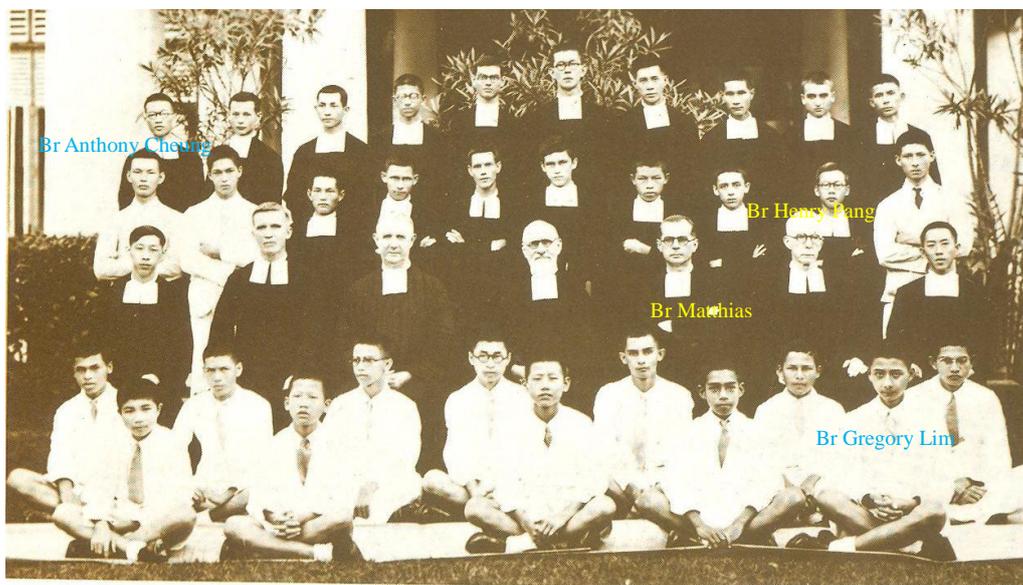
He was deeply religious and his regularity at all chapel exercises was exemplary. He loved prayer, the Mass, Our Lady and St La Salle.”

He also had a great love for the poor. Quite a large number of pupils were exempted from paying school fees or had them substantially reduced. Really deserving cases had their midday meal free in the school canteen. Every year he had a collection among pupils for the Home for the Aged run by the Little Sisters of the Poor. Contributions were in the form of clothing, food and cash. The class that collected most was given a half-day to take the goods to the Home and distribute them. For many years, the Old Boys’ Association, in which he took a deep interest, continued this laudable custom around the Feast of St. Joseph.

In 1936 Brother Matthias returned to Malaya and was appointed Director of St. Xavier’s Institution, Penang.

A Brother writes “The Brothers of St. Xavier’s, many of them new arrivals from Ireland, Germany and Canada, were delighted at the appointment of Brother Matthias. He brought an atmosphere of humanity, happiness and freedom to the community. Games received a new impetus and he himself joined in.”

After only two years as the head of St. Xavier’s, to the despair of the community, Brother Matthias was appointed Director of the Novitiate in Pulau Tikus, and thereafter was sent to fill a number of posts until recalled to Penang again at the end of 1941. The fact is that the Visitor, Brother James, had great confidence in Brother Matthias and in view of the imminent danger of a Japanese invasion he wanted to have him close by.



ST JOSEPH'S NOVITIATE — Juniors, Postulants, Novices  
and Scholastics, Staff PENANG — 20 May 1940

The four war years that followed were dangerous and difficult for the Brothers. Brothers of British nationality were imprisoned. Irish and local Brothers were for the most part allowed to remain in their communities and if they taught school at all it had to be in Japanese. A lot of the Brothers suffered from hunger and malnutrition. The schools in the main were taken over by the occupying troops. St. Xavier's was occupied during all the years of Japanese rule and the community there had to seek refuge in Pulau Tikus.

Brother Matthias was put in charge of the novices and then in charge of the scholastics, and indeed the whole personnel. Every piece of arable ground was cultivated to produce food. Brother James Dooley, in his homily at the funeral Mass for Brother Matthias summed up his role during those difficult years: "The Japanese occupation of Malaya was a particularly difficult time for Brother Matthias. He was responsible for the formation of a group of young men, who, owing to the war situation, could not be promoted to the next stage of their religious and pedagogical formation nor could they be transferred elsewhere. There was an acute shortage of food and clothing. There was the obligatory study of the Japanese language without adequate teachers or text-books. Hardest of all, frequent interrogations, harassment, searches by the ever-suspicious authorities and the worrying uncertainty as to what would be the outcome of the occupation. But Brother Matthias lived through those nightmare years in his calm, unruffled and prayerful way. Only those close to him knew what the calm and confidence he inspired cost him!"

In 1946 a new Visitor, Brother Barnitus, was appointed to succeed Brother James. Brother Matthias was asked to be Director of St. John's Institution, Kuala Lumpur. He remained there for two years, greatly liked and respected by the Brothers, lay teachers and boys.

By 1948 the skin-trouble from which Brother Matthias had suffered so uncomplainingly for years, became so aggravated that he begged to be sent to a cold climate. He was sent back to Ireland and there, after some weeks at home, he was appointed to teach in the scholasticate. From 1949 to 1951 he was in charge of the young Brothers studying in the training college in Belfast. His heart was still in the East, however, and in 1951, he returned to Malaya and spent the next two years as Director of the scholasticate in Pulau Tikis. A scholastic at that time tells us "Just before the end of the novitiate we were told that Brother Matthias was going to be our Director in the scholasticate. We also heard from some of his former novices that he was very strict and punished all mistakes. This frightened us a good deal. So when we went to the scholasticate we were on our best behaviour, but as time passed we

began to realize that our Director was not at all the kind of man he had been painted. We found him very kind and gentlemanly. When he did have to reprimand us it was always in a calm and gentle way with a smile on his face.”

Brother Matthias’ skin trouble, which had almost disappeared during his stay in Ireland, now returned as virulently as ever, so there was nothing for it but to return to Europe for good. And so it was that, at the age of sixty-one, he left the East where he had laboured so successfully for forty years. On his return



he was appointed Director of the scholasticate in Strawberry Hill, London. This was a hostel for the young Brothers following the teacher-training course in St. Mary’s Training College, Twickenham. There was a mixture of English and Irish scholastics.

“At last we have a Director for Strawberry Hill” Brother Gilbert, the Visitor, exclaimed some time later. “With Brother Matthias,” said one of the scholastics “we know where we are twenty-four hours of the day”. “He trusted us” said another scholastic of those days. “He was himself a transparently honest and sincere person. His goodness might be taken advantage of from time to time but there was never on his part any bitterness. His gentleness and kindness always worked in the end. And he was a genuinely holy man.” His Sub-Director of those days tells us “I regard him as a saintly, gentle Director. He seemed to be always in close union with Our Lord. His visits to the Blessed Sacrament were frequent and prolonged and he rarely returned from town without some flowers for the altar. When he entered the chapel, after genuflecting to the Blessed Sacrament he would always make a respectful bow to the statue of the Most Blessed Virgin.”

He was truly a good religious – a man of deep calm and quiet piety. He had an air of recollection and of absorption in the matter of things spiritual that was inspiring. His piety was not so much something he taught in conferences or lectures, but something one can see from his gentleness, his silence and his thoughtfulness. He never complained. He was very close to our Holy Founder in that he saw in all things the will of God and accepted them as such.

Upon the transfer of the scholastics from Twickenham to De La Salle Training College, Hopwood Hall, Brother Matthias was appointed Sub-Director of the novitiate in Castletown. He taught Christian Doctrine, French and English to the novices. His

notebooks are full of information on the meaning and pronunciation of English words and he took great pains with the reading of the novices. "Good diction was of the utmost importance for future teachers," he maintained, so he gave elocution lessons.

One of his novices recalls:

"Brother Matthias was my sub-director of Novices in 1958/59. He was the first to introduce us to the literary grandeur of figures of speech and we learned about such exotic figures as alliteration, oxymoron and hyperbole....together with examples of usage. Two of his spiritual exhortations remain with me. He would frequently say 'all for God' and remind us that we were 'fools for Christ's sake'."



Brother Matthias followed the exodus of the novitiate to Faithlegg in 1970 and to Loughrea in 1972. On the closure of the novitiate in Loughrea in 1974, Brother Matthias, now over eighty years of age decided to call it a day! He was transferred to Miguel House in Castletown, where he was to spend the last years of his life. His Director of that time tells us "In punctuality,

regular observance, obedience to authority, he was faultless. Never once did I hear him utter a complaint. On the contrary he was at a loss how to express his gratitude to the Sisters and staff in Miguel House and to the District which had provided such a comfortable residence for the old Brothers. He had always the Rosary beads in his hand. He suffered considerably from ill health but never spoke of it. The Sisters and doctor had to find out for themselves for whenever he was asked how he felt he would invariably reply 'fine'!

In his last years, now in his mid-eighties, he grew progressively weaker, but for as long as he could he came to the dining room for meals and followed all the chapel exercises. Not until the very end did he have to stay in bed. He quietly breathed his last on August 16, 1979.

## Postings of Brother Matthias

Castletown, Ireland	Juniorate,	1908
	Novitiate,	1908-1909
	Scholasticate	1909-1911
St. Joseph's Institution, Singapore	Teaching	1912-1923
St. Francis Institution, Malacca, Malaysia	Teaching	1923
St. Xavier's Institution, Penang, Malaysia		1924
Lembecq-lez-Hal, Belgium	Second Novitiate	1925-1926
St. Xavier's Institution, Penang, Malaysia	Teaching	1926
Pulau Tikus, Penang, Malaysia	Novitiate Staff	1927
St. Joseph's College, Hong Kong	Sub-Director	1929-1932
St. Joseph's College, Hong Kong	Director	1932-1936
St. Xavier's Institution, Penang, Malaysia	Director	1936
Pulau Tikus, Penang, Malaysia	Director of Novitiate	1938-1946
St. John's Institution, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	Director	1946-1949
Training College, Belfast, N Ireland	Teaching	1949-1951
Pulau Tikis, Penang, Malaysia	Director of Scholasticate	1951-1953
Strawberry Hill, London, England	Director of Scholasticate	1953-1958
Castletown, Co. Laois, Ireland	Sub-Director Novitiate	1958-1970
Faithlegg, Co. Waterford, Ireland	Novitiate Staff	1970-1972
Loughrea, Co. Galway, Ireland	Novitiate Staff	1972-1974
Miguel House, Castletown	Retired	1974-1979



*Yours most respectfully,  
Brother Matthias.*

## Family Updates

### Birthdays

Two Brothers celebrated their birthdays since our last issue. First off, on the 12<sup>th</sup> August, was Bro Alphonsus Chee who is now a few years over the span of years for those who are 'strong'. Next up, on the 6<sup>th</sup> September, was Bro Steve who reached the golden age of fifty. We wish these Brothers good luck, good health and God's blessings in the years ahead.



### La Salle College 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

The year-long celebration was officially inaugurated on the 9<sup>th</sup> September with the Opening Masses in the school hall. Old boys, Fathers Edward Khong and Dominic Lui, were the celebrants. In his homily Fr Edward took a trip down memory lane while Fr Dominic elaborated on the 4 stages of happiness. The Masses were a fitting way to begin the anniversary celebrations. We will keep you updated on major future events.



## La Salle Primary Swimming Gala

The annual gala was held on the 24<sup>th</sup> September at the 50 metre pool of La Salle College. The weather held good and participants and spectators enjoyed the spectacle. The highlight of the gala, as usual, was the Invitation Relay. Six schools take part, including our 3 Lasallian Primary Schools of St Joseph's, Chan Sui Ki and La Salle.



## Lasallian Education Council (LEC) with LEAD Leadership

On the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2011 the members of the Hong Kong Lasallian Education Council (HKLEC) had the pleasure of a sharing with Brother Edmundo Fernandez, Visitor, and Brother Thomas Lavin, Auxiliary Visitor, of the Lasallian East Asia District (LEAD). After introductions, there was a fruitful sharing on matters pertaining to the Lasallian vision and mission both in Hong Kong and in the wider LEAD District. Brother Visitor also invited all members to the official opening of the LEAD Provincialate in Hong Kong on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011.



Back to School



## Oriental Flavour

Autumnal Thoughts by Ma Zhiyuan (1250–1321) of the Yuan Dynasty

枯藤老樹昏鴉

*A withered vine, an ancient tree, crows at dusk,*

小橋流水人家

*A little bridge, a flowing stream, some huts,*

古道西風瘦馬

*An old road, wind out of the west, an emaciated horse,*

夕陽西下，斷腸人在天涯

*A heart-broken man on the horizon at sunset.*



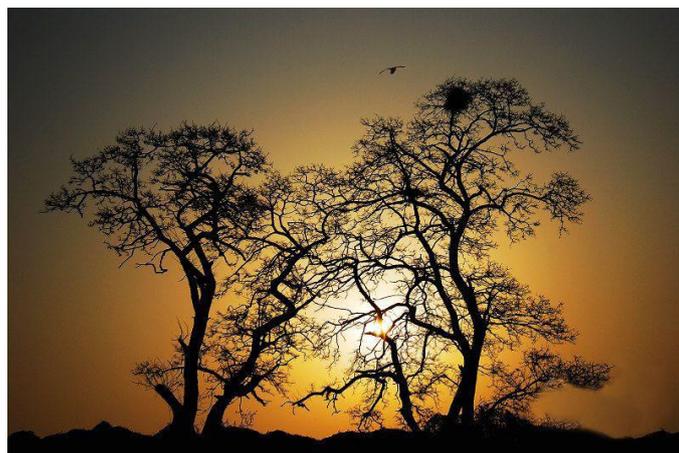
When people talk about Chinese literature, they often mention three literary forms and their three golden ages: Tang, Song, and Yuan.

‘Autumn Thoughts’ is a famous Yuan poem written by Ma Zhiyuan. Ma was a great Chinese poet and celebrated playwright. His work mainly reflected the rural life, countryside scenery as well as other pastoral themes.

In Chinese literary history, “Autumn Thoughts” is often regarded as one of the most distinguished poems, vividly depicting the melancholy mood of Autumn.

Unusually, this poem is mainly made up of a series of nouns and their modifiers.

Together they present a picture of a lonely, sad traveler in a desolate strange place, far from home, not knowing what is waiting for him and not sure of his own future. Such were the poet’s autumnal thoughts.





As has been customary in the last few years, we are calling on all Lasallians to spread the word that starting on September 21<sup>st</sup> and ending on October 21<sup>st</sup> 2011 we will be fostering peace in our world through prayer, study and action.

Our Superior General, Brother Alvaro Rodriguez, sends out the call.

“In a society corrupted by violence, marked by social inequality, plagued with social imbalance and wounded by all kinds of "crises" we are hoping that you, the young, will provide a bold proclamation that says to all of us that "we still need to give peace a chance.

In keeping with the World Youth Day that gathered together so many young people and Lasallians in Madrid, I invite you not to be frightened, to risk your lives for a noble cause, and not to be intimidated by situations that our world is going through.

We should pray individually and as a group so that the Lord and Master of peace in our hearts pours out in harmony, solidarity and peaceful living among all people in the world and that he sow the seeds of peace in places where the roots of evil, wars and violence are impeding concord and stable peace.”

### **Lasallian Prayer for Peace**

We pray to You, Lord, God of life and God of those who hope!

Listen to our prayer for the whole world, for peace among all peoples, for prosperity in all lands.

We pray to You that evil may be overcome and that all wars may end.

We pray to You especially for the members of our Lasallian Family, who suffer from war, injustice and intolerance, and for the children and young people who are poor and neglected.

We pray too, God, for peace in *our* lives; in our towns, in our schools, in our families and in our own hearts.

We pray for a peace that the world cannot give us.

We pray for a peace that will make us whole and transform us into ambassadors of justice for Your sake.

Lord, give us Your peace!

Amen.