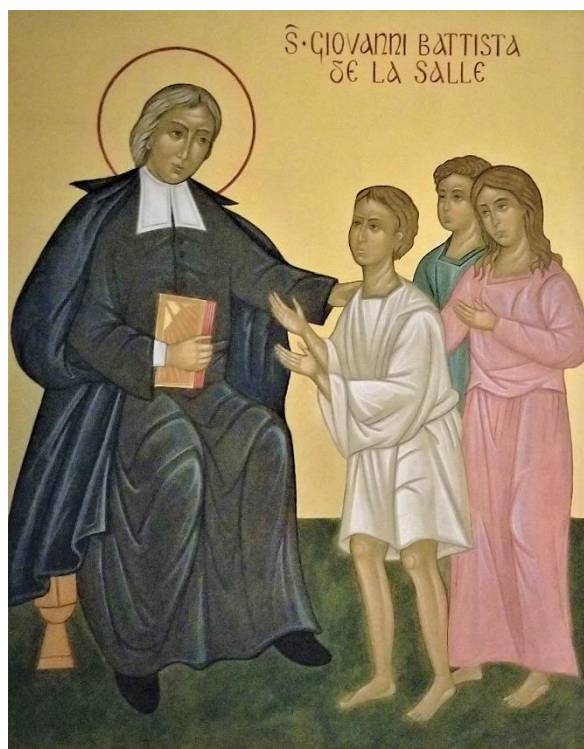


The Gateway



Issue 82
December 2019



This icon of St. La Salle and the children is taken from the Brothers Chapel of the Motherhouse in Rome.

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Paul K.K. Tam

Welcome

The season of peace and goodwill is approaching. In the current troubled times in Hong Kong, peace and goodwill are devoutly to be wished. May the lessons of the child in the manger draw people together, especially those of opposing views.

Because of the social unrest, many regular school activities have been either cancelled or postponed. This means that we do not have as many school updates as usual. Indeed, this would normally be the busiest time of year for sports, music, speech, debating, competitions of all kinds. The students themselves are very keen and have been practising for a long time.

We have an interesting feature article on part of the life story of one of our former teachers, Dr. Walter Wou. He came through risky pre-war conditions in mainland China and managed to reach Paris before eventually ending up in Hong Kong, teaching French at La Salle College.

Welcome to the babe in the manger.
Welcome to the light of day.



From Shanghai to Paris to Hong Kong

Doctor Walter Wou

In this article we publish an interesting account of the life of Dr. Wou, now retired, who reminisced over his life and his happy moments teaching the small but colourful “French Class,” which was a microcosm of the international community at La Salle College, Kowloon.

The editors gratefully acknowledge their debt to the Newsletter of ‘The North American Lasallians’ which originally published this article. Some minor amendments have been made as well as the addition of images.

1. My Background

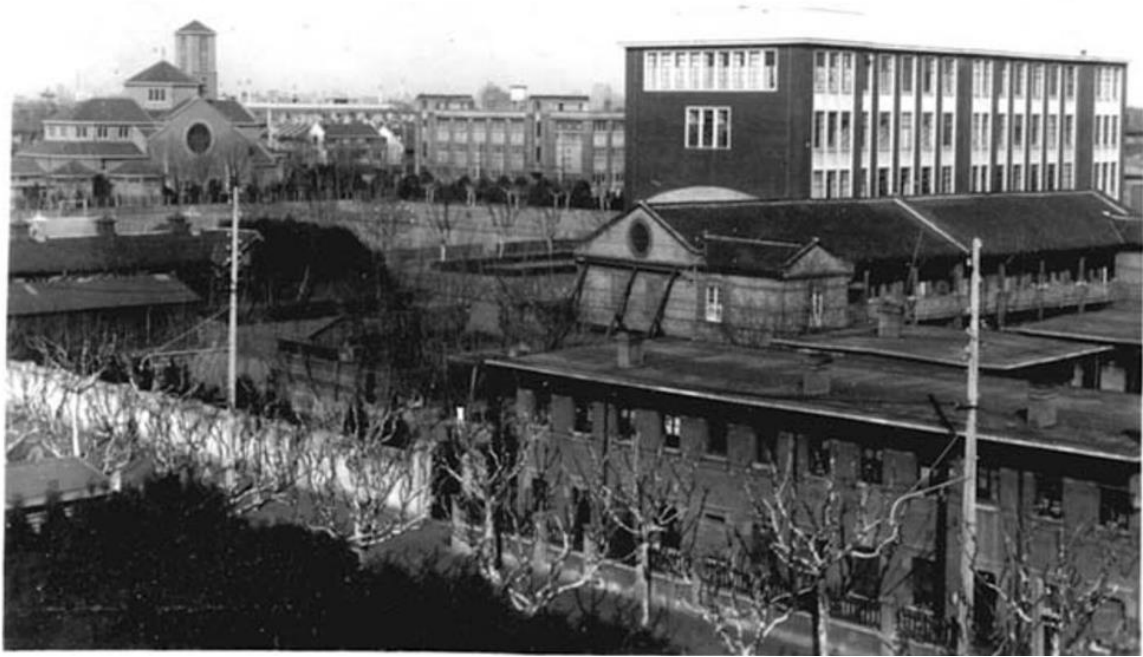


Shanghai in the 30s

I was born in Shanghai in 1930, a time when China was in extreme turmoil. I lived in the French Concession and there I witnessed the cycles of regime changes; from the rule of the French in cohorts with their Vietnamese underlings, to the occupation by the Japanese, the return of the Kuomintang and finally the establishment of the Communist Government.

I finished my senior high school grade 1 (高中一, or the equivalent of Form 4) in 1946. My intention was to join the air force, but was stymied by my stature and age. This instigated me to train in boxing and bodybuilding. These two disciplines improved my health and fostered my self-confidence.

In 1947, I entered Aurora University in Shanghai (震旦大學). Not having completed my senior years of high school, my knowledge of subjects like mathematics and science was poor. My major was Chinese language and literature, with a first minor in French and a second in English. In my final year at Aurora in 1951, my grades were excellent: 98% in French and 87% in English.



Aurora University and St. Peter's Church in Shanghai. (The University was founded by French Jesuits in 1903)

2. First Coming to Hong Kong in 1951

With the help of a Chinese Jesuit who had been my teacher at the *Collège Saint Ignace*, I was admitted into the Sorbonne (Paris University) to read for my doctorate. The French Consulate General in Shanghai no longer issued visas to foreigners. I had to be smuggled to Hong Kong



Sorbonne University, Paris

by way of Macao on board the ferry "Fat Shan" (佛山輪), to enable me to obtain a visa for France. I arrived in Hong Kong with only HK\$2 in my pocket. Fortuitously, I had in my possession a few bespoke suits made by Shanghainese tailors and I pawned them to the thugs for HK\$300. This seeded my "snake money." A further HK\$1,500 was lent to me by the relative of a former classmate. Thus, I was able to acquire a 4th class ticket on a French liner for France.

3. Arriving in France

When I arrived at Marseille, I had only US\$20 left and that was to be my five loafs and two fish. With no other financial resources available, I had to rely on part-time menial jobs to sustain myself for the ensuing six years and three months. From the second year onwards, a modest French government bursary augmented my income.

This impecunious predicament was just the beginning of my ordeal. To my chagrin, I realized that I could not converse in French. This handicap was equally applicable to my English skills, which I discovered on a later visit to England. My immediate remedy was to attend the cinema, one whole day at a time, watching the same film over and over. I was able to understand perhaps 30% of the dialogue the first time round, 60% the second and 80% by the end of the day.

Linguistics aside, real world knowledge was another problem. I was always impressed by my French friends with their vast knowledge over a wide range of subjects. For example, a student in the French language would argue eloquently on social science subjects like politics.

I ascribed my inaptitude to the woefully inadequate curriculum and poor teaching I received at Aurora in Shanghai. But ordeals could often bring out the best in a man, and I strived to overcome my shortcomings. This attribute served me in good stead during my student days in France and also in the later years when I taught at La Salle. My main doctoral thesis at Sorbonne was based on the life and works of a Qing dynasty Chinese scholar (楊州八怪之一,鄭板橋). There were two supplementary dissertations: the romanisation of the Chinese language and a comparative study of Western abstract art and Chinese calligraphy. I worked arduously and received my degree with honours in 1957.

I was offered a teaching post at a tertiary institution in Taiwan. By then I was already married and had a young daughter. We were travelling to Taiwan on an Italian liner when my family fell ill. We were off loaded in Hong Kong where we became stranded.

Paris in the 1950's. It always had its own unique culture, and its café culture is but one.



4. Second Time in Hong Kong

I learned through the grapevine that an English school in Hong Kong (La Salle College) was seeking to replace a recently deceased teacher for the French language. He was Brother Cassian Brigant who had been knocked down by a bicycle, and died shortly after. Brother Felix Sheehan was at the helm and he was desperately in search of a teacher of French. His first remark to me at the interview was: "You're sent from Heaven." It's 1958 at the Perth Street campus, and that was to be the cusp of my teaching career at La Salle.

E.D. 7
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DUPLICATE

FORM 7
表格七

(S. 26(2))

EDUCATION ORDINANCE, 1952
一九五二年教育條例

Permit to employ a permitted teacher
准予聘請准用教員許可証

The Supervisor,
學校監督

La Salle College..... School.
Perth St. Kowloon.....

..... 學校
PT/22971/58
(Copy to Tehong-Hong Wou....., the teacher)
(副本請代發給該教員)

Permission is hereby given you to employ Mr. Tehong-Hong Wou.....
茲准予任用 吳仲宏 先生/女士

whose photograph is affixed hereto as a permitted teacher
(其照片附黏於下)

at the above named..... School.
在 學校為准用教員

Limitations (to be inserted)
(所授科目及班級以下列者為限)

French - Form 1-6

Lo Chi Chiu
..... Lo Chi Chiu.....
P. Director of Education.
香港教育司

Hong Kong 6th January..... 19.. 58..
一千九百五十九年一月六日

5. Teaching at La Salle College

Preparing the teaching material for my first year (1958) was extremely hard going, as there were no standard teaching materials. Class sizes ranged from 15 – 25 in Forms 1 to 5, and 2-10 in Form 6. Students were mostly of Portuguese, Indian, American and Eurasian descent. There was also a sprinkle of Chinese. Most had a better command of English than I but their ability in French was very varied. Except for a few from Vietnam, most Form 1 students had no prior exposure to the language and thus their course began with phonetics, whereas those in Form 6 were taught more advanced use of the language as well as literature. My first batch of Form 6 students included Marciano Baptista (who joined the Jesuit order and later headed Wah Yan College, Hong Kong) and Basil Lim (who later became a senior police officer). Throughout the years, results were maintained at very high standards – passing rate in public examinations was 100%; credits and distinctions were not uncommon.

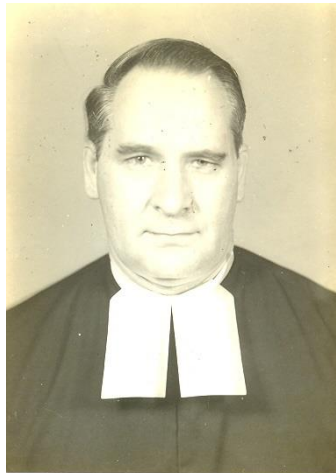


La Sale College Staff at Perth Street in the 50s. Dr. Walter Wou – top row 4th from R

I had had no formal training as a teacher. I derived my teaching method from personal experience. It is my conviction that good teachers have innate qualities that cannot be effectively taught. A good teacher must exude authority that is constantly felt by the students. This is achieved by maintaining persistent eye contact, failing which would invite students to daydream or read out-of-class materials. As a student, I was guilty of both transgressions and thus I painstakingly ensured that none of my students lapsed into inattentiveness.

Discipline in the classroom. Label me a benevolent despot if you wish. I consider the demands I made of my students as fair and reasonable, though I insisted that these must be followed to the letter. For example, failure to hand up assignments automatically elicited punishment. However, errant students were allowed to choose their own poison, which included: writing lines, meeting with the parents or a mild form of corporal punishment involving a smack on the palm. Most students opted for the last mode, humourously dubbing it as “Lucky Strike.” Even now, when I meet up with old students, we enjoy a good laugh over these episodes.

I subscribed to the Chinese saying “四兩撥千斤”(“*Leveraging*” in modern parlance) whereas I shunned “一分耕耘一分收穫” (“*An ounce of your harvest is a result of an ounce of what you sow*”). I put the former axiom into practice by motivating students to search for knowledge. My role was to provide the guidance. I insisted on students preparing ahead for their classes. I would only teach them when they encountered problems that they could not resolve by themselves. I readily admitted to not knowing an answer whenever such situations arose. Thereafter, I would seek the proper solution for them. I strongly believed that spoon-feeding was self-defeating and would only fail to educate.



In 1965, Brother Casimir Husarik was installed as the principal. I was required to take over the Form 7 French class, which he had hitherto taught. It was a race against time, as there were only less than eight months remaining to the A-Level Examinations. My conclusion was that the best strategy forward was to first instill the necessary confidence students must have in themselves as well as in me. I reminded them that I was a good teacher and that invariably they will do well under my tutorage - “名師出高徒” (“A Famous Teacher Breeds Good Students”). Secondly, in the event that they achieved a distinction in the examination, they would most certainly gain entrance to university. This in turn should be seen as a key to future success in life. Thereafter, I devoted my time to teaching them studying methods and left them to do the actual studying themselves. Of the four students who sat

for the examination, two received distinctions and the other two good passes. Brother Casimir was astounded and enquired how I was able to produce such results in such short span of time, whereas it had always eluded him.

6. My Success Formula?

To my mind, a teacher is charged with two indisputable duties: to impart knowledge and to help students pass examinations. Both aims are not necessarily congruent. The act of acquiring knowledge is a lifetime preoccupation; whereas sitting for an examination only spans a fleeting moment. In preparing students for examinations, I pointed out the important parts of the curriculum that they must be conversant with. I constantly made them aware that they alone were the authors of their success. When it came to teaching literature in the higher forms, I helped them develop a framework that essentially enabled them to systematically analyze their own work. I discouraged learning by rote. In my later years, I advised younger teachers against spoon-feeding and promoted the viewpoint that students should be made to teach themselves. Christian education exhorts that one should “love and care” for one’s students. I espoused this virtue whole-heartedly, as I have both received and given in such spirit. I benefited from the advice given by a former teacher in Shanghai, a Communist party member who was a very famous writer. In view of my undesirable family background (my father was a factory owner and thus deemed a capitalist) he urged me to go overseas. This would not have been possible had it not been for the magnanimous assistance bestowed by the previously mentioned Chinese Jesuit teacher. Although he was inapt at teaching, he had a great heart. I always strived to repay such kindness by helping students in need.

7. Dividends at La Salle College

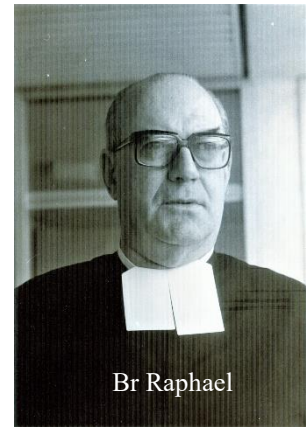
I also learnt much from the Christian Brothers. It was evident that students showed more respect to them than to lay teachers. The reason lay deeper than the fact that they wore habits. It was a natural response to the love and care the Brothers genuinely felt for the students as well as their devotion to the vocation. Lay teachers often lacked such total dedication as, among other things, they had their own families to look after. The difference was further magnified as some teachers merely viewed teaching as a job.



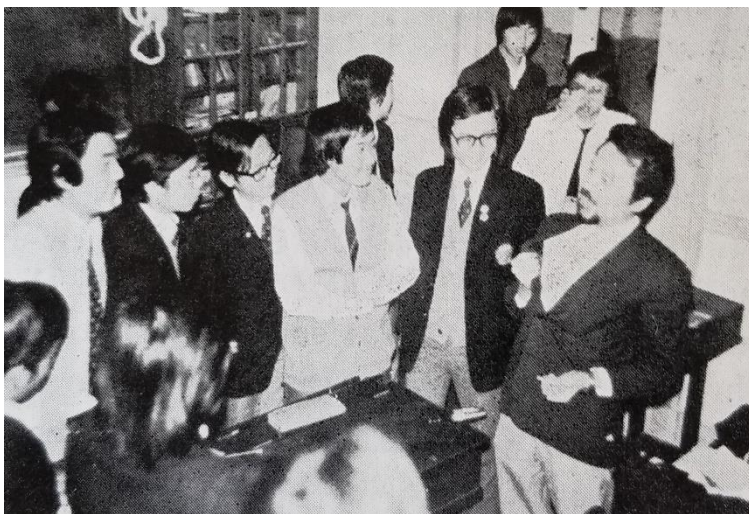
Br Felix

Both Brothers Felix and Raphael were well versed in the art of job delegation. They were excellent administrators as well as leaders. Brother Felix was upright, stern and strict. He would patrol his beat three times daily. Brother Raphael was a wise man, and he was concerned with only the macro issues. So long as you were popular with the students and got good results, he would allow you a free hand. He did not have to leave his office to realize what was happening in the school. I emulated these qualities when I became principal of Yu Chun Keung Memorial College in the 1980s.

I derived much job satisfaction teaching French at La Salle, though towards the end of my tenure, I was offered a number of other challenges. Brother Raphael invited me to lead the debate team, comprising Victor Tung, Peter Barnes, Michael Marçal and Ricky Rozario. We were placed first in the inter-school competition. Brother Raphael was very pleased by the result and treated us to dinner at a Shatin restaurant. He presented me with a new challenge. He wished to test if I could employ my method of continuity, teaching a language that I was not totally proficient at - I was to teach English to a class throughout five years. After two years this experiment came to an abrupt end, as in 1975 I left La Salle for Yu Chun Keung Memorial College, where I was headmaster for the following 21 years.



Br Raphael



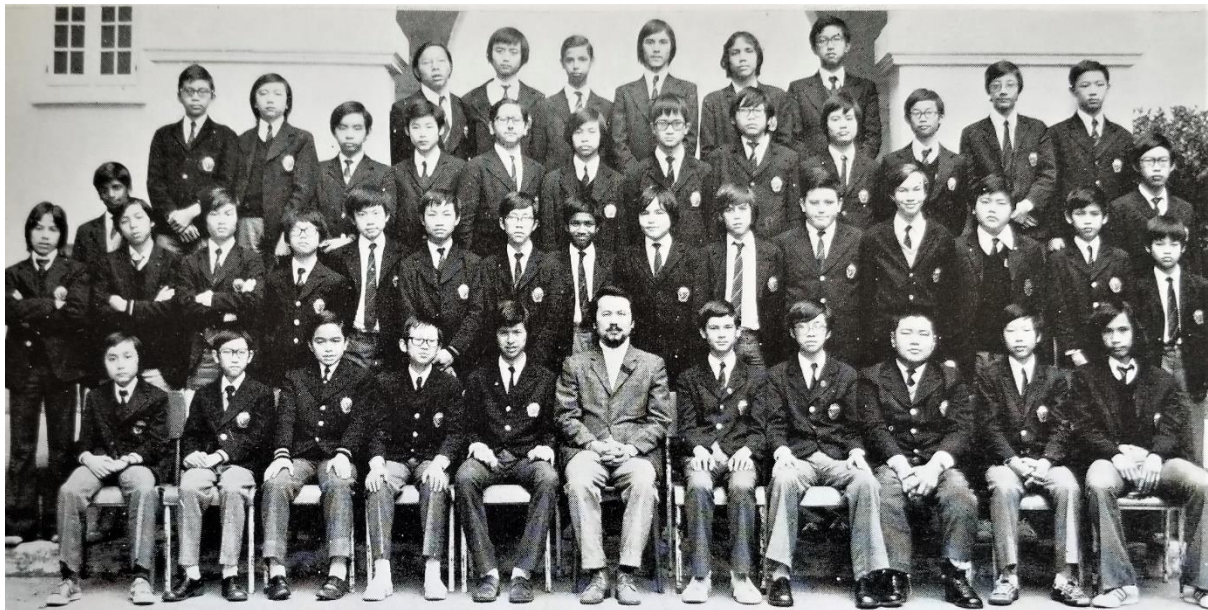
My assessment of La Salle students is that they were relatively outspoken and had more critical thinking skills. French class students were privileged by the size, which allowed more interactions with the teacher. Some of the students were rowdy, but nevertheless they were all a joy to teach. The cream of the crop was of course outstanding, but even the seemingly less brilliant ones possessed potentials; all they required was more coaxing. After

a long career in education, I am thoroughly convinced that each and every student, if taught by the proper method, will become an upright and useful citizen.

In the 80's, I ran into a student whom I had taught in the 60's, near the Peninsula Hotel. He is now a very prominent member of the legal profession. Upon seeing me, he said: "*Bonjour Monsieur!* You're one of the few teachers I can still remember and respect. May I have the honour to give these to you?" Thereupon, he proffered the half a dozen cakes he was carrying. The cakes added a few pounds to my weight, but more importantly, it was most gratifying to know that all my toil was not in vain. It was a crowning moment in a glorious chapter in my career.

8. At Yu Chun Keung Memorial College

I tried hard to replicate the same teaching method and philosophy employed at La Salle College. The teachers were provided with a set of aims and objectives, but were otherwise given a free hand to teach as they thought fit. Advice was available but only when it was sought. Students were encouraged to debate and required to address the school on stage. Community service was mandatory. At first some parents resisted this liberal approach. Also, it was difficult to convince hidebound members of the teaching staff. The fact that some students came from more traditional families did not help matters. The result fell short of that at La Salle. Nevertheless, I enjoyed my years as Headmaster.



FORM 2A

(Left to Right)

4th Row: Chung Sze Man; Chan Kwok Chuen; Gaggino Roy; Reis Phillip; Law Stephen; Ting Wai Cheong.
 3rd Row: Soo Gerald; Komala Felix; Loh Lorenzo; Wou Ming Lai; Budhnani Rajendra; Lie Ken Jie; Leung Chi Ming; Lu Yu Cheung; Cheung Kwok Wai; Ho Wai Leuk; Tse Wah Yuen; Chen Kuang Kuo.
 2nd Row: Reyes Giovanni; Pinto Manuel; Rodrigues Francis; Chan Kin Shing; Wong Man Ka; Koon Ching Kong; Yang Guang; Lau Yu Ngong; Sousa Richard; Miller Mark; Silva Ricky; Wrobel Paul; McSmith Ronald; Ng Peter; Yeung Chi Yan; Wou Ming Tching.
 1st Row: Kwok Ho Yee; Wong Yung Hou; Ismail Christopher; Pei Po Hui; Ozorio Antonio; Dr. Walter T.H. Wou (Form-master); Ellis Arthur; Lau Yu Kwan; So Wan Hang; Cheng Tin Sik; Ribeiro John.

Dr. Wou with F.2A in 1975, his last year at La Salle College

Family Updates

Benedictine



We received some good news that an old boy of La Salle Primary School has joined the Benedictines in Canada on 1st September 2019. His name was Ricardo Roca, now known as Brother Paschasius. Besides English, he also speaks Cantonese and serves the monastic community as its tailor, gardener, mechanic, cook, infirmarian and guest-master – a very useful addition indeed. The Benedictine monks charism is to seek God through prayer, manual labour and communal living. We wish Brother Paschasius the very best in his vocation.

Ave Maria

Probably for the first time in its history, De La Salle Secondary School organised a Marian Procession on its campus on October 24, 2019. Two special guests were invited for the occasion, Brothers Antonio Cubillas and Dennis Magbanua. The statue of Our Lady was brought in procession around the school hall with a large number of respectful students in attendance. Personal prayer intentions were written on small sheets of paper and offered during the ceremony. A diocesan priest led the prayers and procession.



Lasallian Education Council



At its recent plenary meeting on the 12th October 2019 the Council heard reports from the Lasallian Mission Fund and were brought up to date on the new Brothers who are now working in Hong Kong. The latest school statistics were tabled and there was a discussion on the latest position regarding the vitality of our schools. After many years of devoted service, the Supervisor of De La Salle Secondary School, Mr. Wong Mo Ting, is retiring and he was presented with a Lasallian souvenir. We wish him good

health and happiness for many years to come.

Readers, Leaders

A major development at De La Salle Secondary School was the opening of their new Library on the 10th October 2019. Professor Lui Tai Lok, JP, of the Education University of Hong Kong was Guest of Honour and there was a large gathering of staff, students, parents, old boys and Brothers. The blessing of the new Library was performed by Rev. Fernando Montes Ledesma, local parish priest. With the slogan “Today, a Reader, Tomorrow, a Leader” the school aims to promote extensive reading among its students. There is a pleasant atmosphere in the new Library and it is user-friendly.



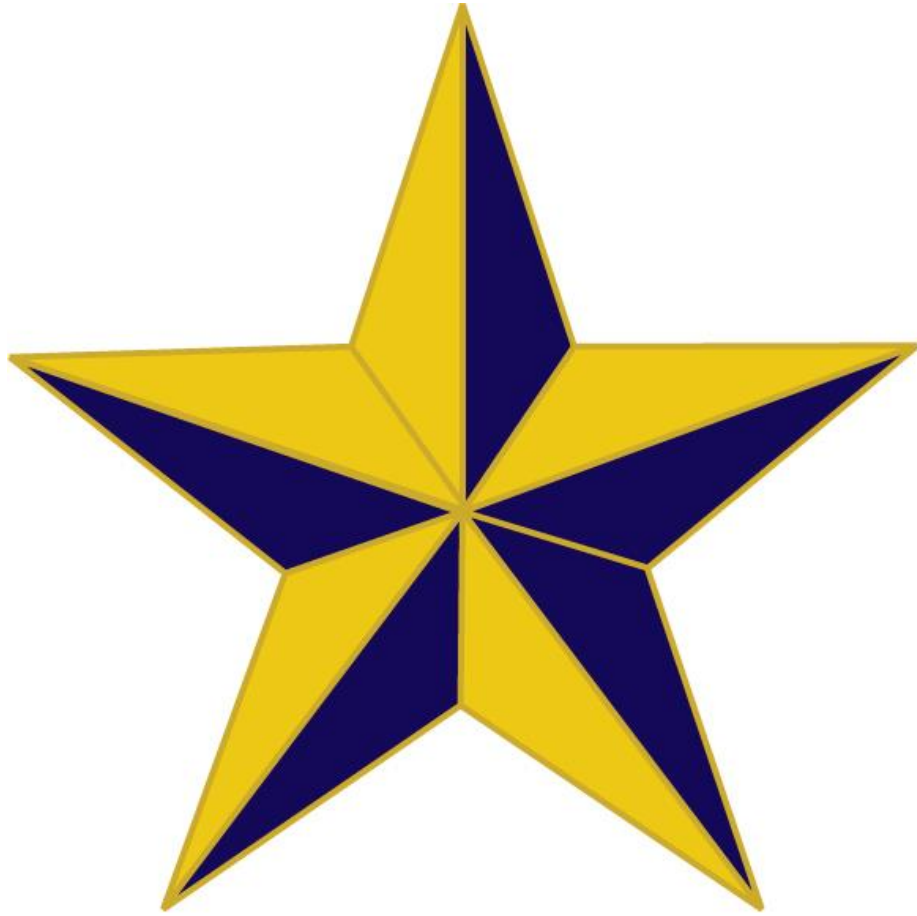
Four in One

Brother Jude was first, his birthday falling on the 10th October; then Brother Mikey's came along on the 21st November. At lunch, there was the singing of the birthday song as the cakes were cut and later enjoyed. Still in their 30s, Brother Jude is a strong, fit and skilled sportsman, while Brother Mikey likes exploring and delving into Chinese language and culture. We wish them many years of good health to come.

Although Brother Lawrence's birthday does not fall until the 1st of December, advantage was taken of the visit by his relatives for an early celebration. The relatives, Michael, Mary and Michelle Downey, attended a birthday party for Brother Lawrence hosted by old boys of La Salle College. Brother Lawrence is not in his 30s but has reached the ripe old age of 90!

Finally, Brother Patrick's Birthday came along. Well into the 70s he thinks he is in the middle of nowhere but is happy to be alive and kicking.





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

