

The Gateway



Issue 96
July 2022



It is not every day that one can find an aeroplane in a school campus. La Salle College had this brilliant idea as part of its 90th anniversary celebration. The sky's the limit.

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Welcome

School summer holidays in Hong Kong have been pushed back because of weeks lost to Covid outbreaks. Hence, the students and staff will only have a two week break this year.

While some restrictions remain in force, most notably a 7 nights quarantine, we are delighted that face to face teaching has been the norm for some time and at least some extracurricular activities have taken place.

Our main feature looks briefly at some of the stalwarts of the distant past, lost somewhat in the mists of time. As we can see, they fought the good fight and stayed the course, and we try to walk in their footsteps.

A major celebration this year is that of the 90th anniversary of La Salle College. Much planning and effort have been put into ensuring the anniversary is celebrated with dignity and style. The latest event has been the Thanksgiving Mass held in the Cathedral with Bishop Stephen Chow as chief celebrant. Well-nigh the entire school, staff and students, were able to attend.

Readers of earlier issues may recall that we occasionally included articles under the heading “Oriental Flavour.” We have not had such for quite some time, but we have returned and hope you will appreciate one of the many famous poems of Du Fu, the sentiments of which still resonate today.

Happy summer holidays to all concerned. Do stay safe and well.



They also served

A number of Brothers who served in Hong Kong have been somewhat lost in the mists of time. We have gathered a few of them here, paying our little tribute at this late stage. They went ahead, we follow.

Br Isfrid

Br Isfrid was born in France in 1814 and taught in a number of schools there before he was made Procurator in Paris.

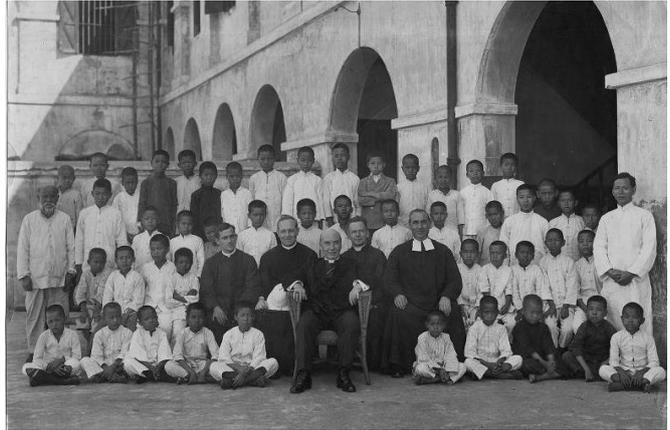
In his early years he was assigned to Lasallian schools in Egypt, Turkey and Syria.

He volunteered at the relatively old age of 61 for the Far East and was assigned as the first Director of the West Point Reformatory in Hong Kong. He was one of the 6 pioneer Brothers who arrived in November 1875.

He remained Director of the Reformatory from 1875 to 1879 before returning to France and taking up his former work as Procurator.

Br Isfrid died in France on the 17th April 1892 at the age of seventy-seven.

Unfortunately, we do not possess a picture of Br Isfrid.



Children and Brothers at West Point Reformatory in the 1890s

Br Benedict Puricelli 1843-1897

Born on the 9th July 1843 in Verghera, Italy, Brother Benedict was given the name Marcellus at baptism.

Br Benedict has the distinction of crossing over from one religious order to another, in this case becoming a De La Salle Brother.

He first joined the Pontifical Foreign Missions Institute (PIME) in Italy on the 20th June 1860. In 1869 he was posted to Hong Kong, arriving on the 30th January.

In 1875, when the De La Salle Brothers arrived in Hong Kong, he was attached to St. Saviour's College and the Reformatory/Orphanage at West Point. He continued working there with the Brothers and soon afterwards he decided to join them. This was in 1876 when Brother Benedict was thirty-three years old.

He took his annual, triennial, and final vows in Hong Kong, while attached to St. Joseph's College. He died on the 24th March 1897 at the age of fifty-four and is buried in Happy Valley, Hong Kong.

Br Bernard Dunne (1833-1897)

Brother Bernard was born on the 4th December 1833 in Portarlinton, County Laois, Ireland. At that time the De La Salle Brothers had no foundation in Ireland, and it was not until he had reached about the mid-thirties that Brother Bernard entered the Novitiate in Clapham in London. He had been working in a shop in Cork, Ireland when he decided to join up. He took the Habit of the La Salle Brothers on the 18th March 1867.

His first teaching assignments were in Liverpool and London before he was transferred to Hong Kong, to St. Joseph's College which had opened in November 1875. He arrived on the 16th

November 1876 and taught until 1885 and he was an excellent teacher. He was then transferred to Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Although Principal of St. Joseph's for only a year, Brother Bernard's tenure was significant because the school became a Grant-in-Aid school in 1879. This meant that, subject to the results of an examination conducted by her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, a grant would be payable to each student.

The first examination took place in January 1880, conducted by Dr Eitel. Practically the whole Catholic population waited anxiously for the outcome. St. Joseph's came through it with flying colours. Ninety-two percent of the boys passed. Dr. Eitel wrote a glowing report and in the following month the Governor, Sir John Pope Hennessy, presented the prizes and congratulated both the Brothers and their pupils on the splendid results that had been achieved.

Br Bernard was a noted teacher of English Language and Literature and a good essayist. He started the first publication of any school in Hong Kong when a committee produced a small newspaper devoted to essays and other literary compositions.

When Brother Bernard eventually returned to Ireland, he was made sub-director of Novices in Castletown and the Director of the main community there.

Brother Bernard died in Castletown on 9th July 1897 at the age of sixty-four.

Br Ater James Roote

The first Brother to die and be buried in St Michael's Cemetery, Hong Kong, was Br Ater James, commonly called Br James.

Br James was born in Paris of English parents in 1838. The family travelled in Europe and America and James became a Catholic in Cincinnati.

He joined the Novitiate of the De La Salle Brothers in New York in 1861 and his first teaching assignments were in America and Canada. He was then assigned to England, becoming Director in both Manchester and Liverpool. He was later transferred as Director to the first opening of the Brothers in Ireland in a place called Summerhill.

Perhaps there had been a call for volunteers because he volunteered for the East in 1887, becoming the Sub-Director of St. Joseph's College, Hong Kong.

He died suddenly on the 6th January 1888, only seven and a half months after arriving, and at the early age of fifty.

Br Cajetan of Jesus 1881-1964

Br Cajetan made his Novitiate at Nantes, France, in 1897. He seems to have been a bright young man and readily passed the public examinations set by the French government.

His official Institute death notice paints an interesting portrait:

“Of imposing stature and somewhat solemn bearing, Br Cajetan from his earliest years was distinguished by his wit and charm, as well as by a certain independence of manner and speech which remained characteristic of him. Nonetheless he was strongly attached to his vocation, to safeguard which he accepted the great challenge of expatriation”.

The expatriation referred to was the exodus of French Brothers to other parts of the world in 1906 caused by the closure in 1904 of nearly all the schools run by the Brothers in France. Br Cajetan, along with others, embarked on the long voyage to Australia. Great disappointment met them there since, at least for some, their standard of English was deemed inadequate for the task of teaching English-speaking children.

It was not until he reached the District of Penang that Br Cajetan was able to settle down and find scope for his spirit of zeal. His obituary notice indicates his preferred direction when exercising this zeal. “An artist to the soul, he was easily enthused: by beautiful singing, the dignified conduct of religious ceremonies made him live again.”



One aspect of singing that he liked was that of Gregorian Chant, which led to his being appointed chapel master in the Penang Novitiate; he taught the same in the local seminary. He was also responsible for the design of the beautiful Novitiate chapel in Penang. On all major feast days of the church, he saw to it that the singing and the music were well prepared and executed. Brother Austin de Lemos says “the music and the singing were just heavenly”.

However, he was destined to be transferred frequently to different schools of the District right up to the time he was repatriated to France in 1928. This pattern of frequent change may have been due to the needs of the time but may also have had something to do with Br Cajetan’s temperament, since he was inclined to speak rather freely and act rather independently.

We find him in St Joseph’s College Hong Kong about 1920 where he is named Prefect of Boarders. He was transferred from St Joseph’s College, Hong Kong to St Joseph’s Novitiate at Pulau Tikus in 1922.

Nothing else is recorded apart from his return to France in 1928. He died at the Nantes District’s House of Retirement at Blain in 1964, aged eighty-two.

Br Louis Gaubert 1844-1919



“Good Brother Louis” was what he was called in Hong Kong and we cannot ask for more than that.

When he entered the Novitiate at Rodez, France in 1860, he was given the name Ivarch Louis but he became known as Br Louis in the English speaking world.

After early studies, Br Louis was soon on his way to the East and soon to the country he grew to love, Vietnam. He was one of the pioneer Brothers in the first period of Vietnamese growth from 1866 to 1883.

Then came the call to move to Hong Kong and take over as Director of St. Joseph’s College. He arrived in Hong Kong on the 15th June 1884 and was Director until his departure in 1889.

St. Joseph’s had already secured a prominent place among the leading educational establishments. In 1884 there were 382 students of whom 90 were Chinese. Br Louis was devoted to his task and followed the motto “Men may come and men may go, but God’s work must go on forever.”

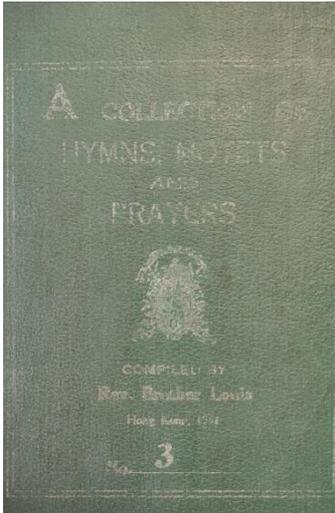
He encouraged the publication of a fortnightly literary journal called “Our Boys”. He also sponsored the foundation of a Library, a Library Club and Debating Society. During his term of office in St. Joseph’s, the Celebration of the Beatification of St. La Salle took place.

But Vietnam was calling again, and Br Louis was posted back there as Director in Saigon. Then in 1896 he was appointed Visitor of Vietnam and was regarded as the second founder of the Vietnam District.

“Good Brother Louis” died on the 17th January 1919 at Hue, Vietnam in his seventy fifth year.

Br Louis Blanchet (1881-1969)

Born in France on the 23rd August, Br Louis entered the Juniorate of the Brothers at Nantes in



1894 and the Novitiate in 1897. He took the habit in 1897 and received the name Defendant. However, later, he went under the family name Louis.

Br Louis belonged to the group of French and Irish Brothers who opened the first Lasallian school in Armidale, Australia, early in 1906.

Shortly afterwards he was transferred to the province of Penang and assigned to the Burmese sector of the District where he taught at Mandalay from 1906 to 1923. In 1924 he was appointed Sub-Director of St. John's Institution, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and later succeeded Brother Stephen Buckley as Director. In 1930 he was transferred to St. Francis' Institution, Melaka, as Director. In 1938 he was transferred to St. Joseph's College, Hong Kong. He was gifted with a fine voice and was choir master wherever he went. In St Joseph's he compiled a beautiful

collection of Hymns, Motets and Prayers in at least three volumes and all in his own hand.

During the War he had to flee to Indo-China (Vietnam). He returned to France in 1947 and continued to teach English and later to receive guests at the Brothers guest house in Paris. His services to the cause of education was recognized when he was knighted "Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur", France's highest honour, on April 15th, 1956.

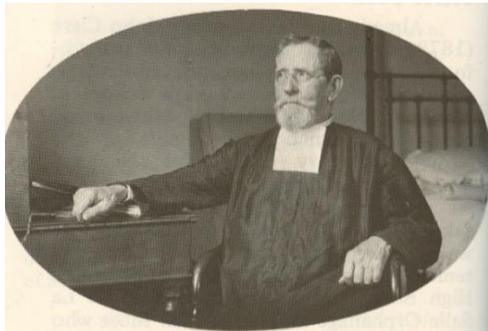
Brother Louis is described thus in his obituary notice:

"His long white beard and his brown bald pate gave him a venerable appearance and one approached him only with respect".

He celebrated his diamond jubilee as a De La Salle Brother in 1958 when he was still hale and hearty despite his having taught for forty-two years in the Far East.

He lived to the ripe old age of 88, dying in France on 8th December, 1969.

Br Michael Noctor (1856-1936)



Born in County Wexford, Ireland on 25th December 1856, we find the future Br Michael entering the Novitiate in New York in 1874 and taking the habit in 1875.

He was forty-four years old when he was posted to the East and had agreed to leave New York on the understanding that the posting would be of short duration. As things turned out he was to spend fourteen years in Singapore, some years in Hong Kong and the

Philippines and even after retiring, returned to spend some time in Singapore.

Brother Michael proved to be a gifted teacher, a competent businessman and a great builder. St. Joseph's and St. Patrick's Singapore as well as De La Salle University Manila can testify to Brother Michael's building acumen.

Brother Michael was transferred to St. Joseph's College Hong Kong where he was Director for just a year (1922-23). He was then recalled to be President of De La Salle University Manila for the second time.

His short sojourn in St. Joseph's is notable for the first ever production of the Green and White School Magazine.

Brother Michael retired back to New York in 1928. Because of his many years out East the Brothers in New York nicknamed him affectionately "China Mike".

He died in Barrytown, New York, on the 9th July 1936 at the age of eighty.

Family Updates

In praise of the Spirit of Service

In small and quiet ways, we are happy to see that more and more members of our Hong Kong Lasallian Family are reaching out and getting involved in the service to the poor and needy. The Sisters of The Missionaries of Charity have been running the 'Home of Love' in the Shamshuipo area for over 30 years, serving the homeless and providing shelter to the needy. Some of our teachers and students regularly give tutorials on Saturdays to children from the poor families nearby. Recently our boy scouts helped the Sisters to improve the conditions of their laundry area and some parents helped in distributing lunch boxes for the homeless.



Raffle Draw

The Hong Kong Lasallian Mission Fund holds an annual raffle to sustain the commitments of the Lasallian Education Council (LEC). In fact, the raffle returns are the chief source of revenue for the good works involved. Despite the pandemic restrictions, our schools and alumni did a wonderful job, and we can look forward to another sustainable year. The Raffle Draw was held on the 20th June 2022 in the 5th floor Conference Room of La Salle College. There were attractive prizes as well as book tokens. Brothers Thomas, Edmond and Patrick drew the initial prizes while Brother Dennis Magbanua did the main honours. A big Thank You to the organizing committee, to all who bought tickets, and hearty congratulations to the winners.



Happy Birthday



Brother Thomas Lavin celebrated his 79th on 16th June but the Community waited for the release of Brother Patrick from quarantine before having the celebration proper. Cake cutting, the birthday song and a refreshing draught was the order of the day. Brother Thomas is thankfully hale and hearty and heavily involved in the celebrations for the 90th anniversary of La Salle College. By right he should have a holiday home, but the quarantine restrictions are very off-putting. The time will come.

In the meantime, Happy Birthday, Brother, and God bless the work.

Thanksgiving and Hope

A joyful Mass of Thanksgiving and Hope was held at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on the 6th July on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of La Salle College. The chief celebrant was Most Reverend Stephen Chow, Bishop of Hong Kong, while there were 7 concelebrants all directly connected with the College. In addition, there were two permanent deacons, one an old boy and one a former teacher. Fortunately, the Cathedral was able to accommodate practically the whole student and teacher population which helped a lot when it came to the singing. The Bishop, in his homily, stressed the reason why we never give up, living as we do in joyful hope, while the Supervisor, Br Thomas Lavin and the Principal, Mr Tong, spoke about the significance of the occasion. After the Mass, souvenirs were presented to the celebrants, deacons, Brothers and to Mr. Nicholas Ng, affiliated member of the Institute. There followed a rousing rendition of the school song. The College looks forward to celebrating its Centenary 10 years hence.



Speech Day at De La Salle

A sign of returning normality was the holding of the Speech Day at De La Salle Secondary School, N.T. on Saturday 9th July 2022. It was a pleasure to see the school Hall full of students and parents. The supervisor and principal gave upbeat reports on the school, with the prospect of larger numbers. The school had also taken every step to take care of its students from across the border who have not been able to attend in person since the outbreak of the pandemic. The Guest of Honour was old



boy, Professor Man Hau Chung, a graduate of 1973. He is Dean of the Faculty of Engineering at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, with a particular strength in laser technology. He advised the students to take out the 'im' from impossible and they will then find their targets much enriched. Above all, he stressed the importance of attitude in life. A humble, positive attitude will take us far and we should never be ashamed of asking for help. The student leaders thanked the school, especially for putting much effort into looking after their welfare.

Brother Columba R.I.P.



Br. Columba
Form-Master
F 2A

We received news of the passing of former Brother, Columba Tarrant, in Ireland on the 27th June 2022.

Born on 5th November 1928 in Dublin, Ireland, Brother Columba started missionary life in Malaysia in 1951 but was posted to Hong Kong after his degree studies in 1960.

From 1960 to 1971 he taught in St. Joseph's College and from 1971 in Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College.



There are many stories told about Brother Columba. Perhaps one of the more interesting was when he was walking along the school corridor and entered a rowdy class. He decided to make an example of the rowdiest pupil and hauled him out. The pupil concerned happened to be the teacher!

As you can imagine, Brother Columba insisted on good order and discipline in his classes as well as thorough digestion of curriculum material. The fact that he had obtained the Black Belt in karate certainly helped his cause.

Brother Columba was always fair and reliable. May he now rest in the light of God's glory.

Oriental Flavour

A constant rumble of war carts by Du Fu (712-770)

This poem was written in the Tang Dynasty. Though already ruling over a vast territory, the ambitious emperor sent troops to invade the tribes near the north-west and south-west border. The years of large-scale warfare not only brought heavy hardship to the ethnic minorities in the border areas, but also to the people of China in general. The poem uses the words of a young soldier to a passer-by and conveys the people's hatred of war and the suffering it brings. The people are even more miserable because the local officials are still imposing taxes and levies in such circumstances. This is one of the most famous poems where the poet, Du Fu, understands the plight of the people caught up in wars, and expresses his deep sympathy. Unfortunately, the sentiment of Du Fu's poem is still relevant today!



*A constant rumble of war carts,
And never-ending horse whinnies.
Soldiers with bows at their waists.
Fathers and mothers, wives and children
rushing to see them.
In the dust and dirt one cannot see Xianyang
bridge!
Pulling clothes, stamping feet, blocking the
way and weeping.
The sound of weeping rising up to heaven.
Along the wayside a passer-by queries a
soldier.*

*The soldier simply replies, 'we are called up often;
Some of us, at fifteen, were sent north to guard the river;
And now, at forty, we are sent west to farm for the army.
When sent to war, the village chief wrapped our hair in cloth;
Coming back our hair was white, but still we manned the borders.
At the border outpost, the flow of blood fed the ocean waters.
Emperor Wu's desire to conquer more had not yet ceased.
Sir, have you not heard, that in the Han empire there are 200 prefectures east of the
mountains,
And now a thousand villages and ten thousand hamlets are overgrown with briars and thorns.
And even though there are women healthy enough to plough,
The crops planted in the fields are in disorder.
Since the dynasty of Qin, how can a soldier endure such bitter warfare?
Driven on, no different to dogs or chickens, you may say.
But a soldier dare not state his resentment.
For example, this winter at Guanxi,
Soldiers have not yet been relieved,
While county tax officials seek new taxes.
But where will these taxes come from?*

*It's true, I know, to bear a son is bad.
 Bearing a daughter, I can marry her to a neighbour.
 Bearing a son, he will be buried in the midst of a hundred grasses.
 Sir, have you not seen the shores of Lake Qinghai²
 Where white bones lie and no man comes to collect them,
 Where new ghosts are troubled by the cries of the old?
 The sky is grey, it rains, it's wet, and all about, the sound of constant wailing.*

1. Capital of China at the time
2. A big lake near Tibet



《兵車行》杜甫

車麟麟，馬蕭蕭，行人弓箭各在腰。
 爺娘妻子走相送，塵埃不見咸陽橋。
 牽衣頓足攔道哭，哭聲直上乾雲霄。
 道旁過者問行人，行人但雲點行頻。
 或從十五北防河，便至四十西營田。
 去時里正與裏頭，歸來頭白還戍邊。
 邊亭流血成海水，武皇開邊意未已。
 君不聞漢家山東二百州，
 千村萬落生荊杞。
 縱有健婦把鋤犁，禾生隴畝無東西。
 況復秦兵耐苦戰，被驅不異犬與雞。

長者雖有問，役夫敢申恨？
 且如今年冬，未休關西卒。
 縣官急索租，租稅從何出？
 信知生男惡，反是生女好。
 生女猶得嫁比鄰，
 生男埋沒隨百草。
 君不見青海頭，
 古來白骨無人收。
 新鬼煩冤舊鬼哭，
 天陰雨濕聲啾啾。

Continued Relevance of St. La Salle



Educators nowadays are all concerned with, if not worried about, the uncertainties they are facing. The world is changing radically and rapidly in so many aspects that they find it hard to focus on ways to equip their students to meet the challenges they will be facing in the 21st century. Lasallian educators, with the grace of a very rich legacy from St. La Salle and early Brothers, work very hard to ensure the vitality, relevance and sustainability of the Lasallian mission in education worldwide. To do so, Lasallian educators need to be innovative, proactive and zealous, ever responding to the changing needs of the young, especially the disadvantaged.

Before the arrival of the Brothers in 1852 to Singapore and Penang, Father Beurel had taken the step of marketing his new St. Joseph's Institution by advertising via a prospectus in *The Singapore Free Press* that the new school is "a school where all boys would be welcome, regardless of their religion or race and would be taught a balanced curriculum....at all times, the Masters will most carefully watch over the morals of the whole, whatever their religious persuasion may be." This is still a guiding light in Lasallian educational centres. In 1949, when the Brothers were given permission to establish 'La Salle Gakuen' in Kagoshima, Japan, Br Marcel Petit wished to prove to the people there that 'religion was not an obstacle to academic superiority and excellent moral training that the school would provide to their students.'

On a plaque in La Salle Primary School Hong Kong, Brother Henry Pang, the founding Principal, reflected that,

"In the schools that they conduct in Hong Kong, the Christian Brothers strive for the fusion of the two great cultures which represent the best of the East and the West in the persons of two great and eminent Educators, Confucius and St. La Salle. They meet in Christ, Teacher of the Teachers."

After years of hard work of the Brothers and their lay partners, Lasallian schools have gained the trust and recognition from the societies they are serving. Indeed, the mutual respect towards local culture and religions, and the simple dedication of providing quality education to their younger generation, especially to the poor and needy, have long been seen as the charismatic characteristics of Lasallian Education.

Over the last 3 centuries, similar stories can be told of nearly every Lasallian presence in the world. However, it will be too good to believe that this harmonious appropriation process will forever prosper without the continuous effort, guided by the spirit of faith, zeal and community, to review, evaluate and formulate appropriate pedagogies and dialogues to meet the challenges and uncertainties we are facing in a world in turmoil.

Like all great man, St. La Salle was not only a man of his time, he was also ahead of his time, both in his religious insights and in his teaching pedagogy. No wonder his movement has spread throughout the world.

St. La Salle was most progressive in his thinking. Many steps which he took and which were

considered to be revolutionary changes, have now come to be accepted and are taken as normal practice. He saw the vital importance of teaching not just as a profession, but as a vocation. Through his *Meditations* and *Letters to the Brothers*, he equipped them with the 'Faith' to answer the call to 'discover Jesus under the poor rags of the children' entrusted to their care and to achieve this with the spirit of community. This call now is shared by men and women of diverse background in religions and culture.

Lasallian educators are proactive and innovative in responding to the rapidly changing world. They have crossed borders to reach out to all, especially the poor and disadvantaged. The provision of human and Christian education is no longer limited to formal school settings, but also includes outreach projects, learning centres, homes for dropouts, etc. This is part of our rich Lasallian legacy.

It is true that educators today, especially frontline teachers, are suffering heavy stress from school workload, insufficient funding, demanding expectation from public and parents, inflexible educational policies, demotivated students, political and economic uncertainties in the society. St. La Salle and his teachers faced similar problems in their schools and the health of many Brothers was badly affected. So, if one enters the teaching profession without commitment, it makes no difference whether he is a teacher in a small rural school or a professor in a big University, he may encounter stress and setbacks from time to time. To survive in this profession, teachers have to set for themselves a higher goal and not forget why they have chosen this profession.

St. La Salle, with his strong faith in Jesus, did not turn away from the difficulties in managing his free schools. Instead, he was forever seeking ways to lead his teachers to soldier on. He believed that it is only through collaborative effort of the teachers working, studying and living in a community, that they can fulfil their mission of educating the poor and needy in a more efficient way. So, he founded communities of Brothers. To provide a good system, a clear administration framework and the upkeep of morale he compiled the *Conduct of the Christian School*. His *Meditations* and *Letters to the Brothers* provide spiritual support. He encouraged the Brothers to see their work as a vocation, a divine call from God. This is the spirit that the Brothers are passing on to their lay partners today.

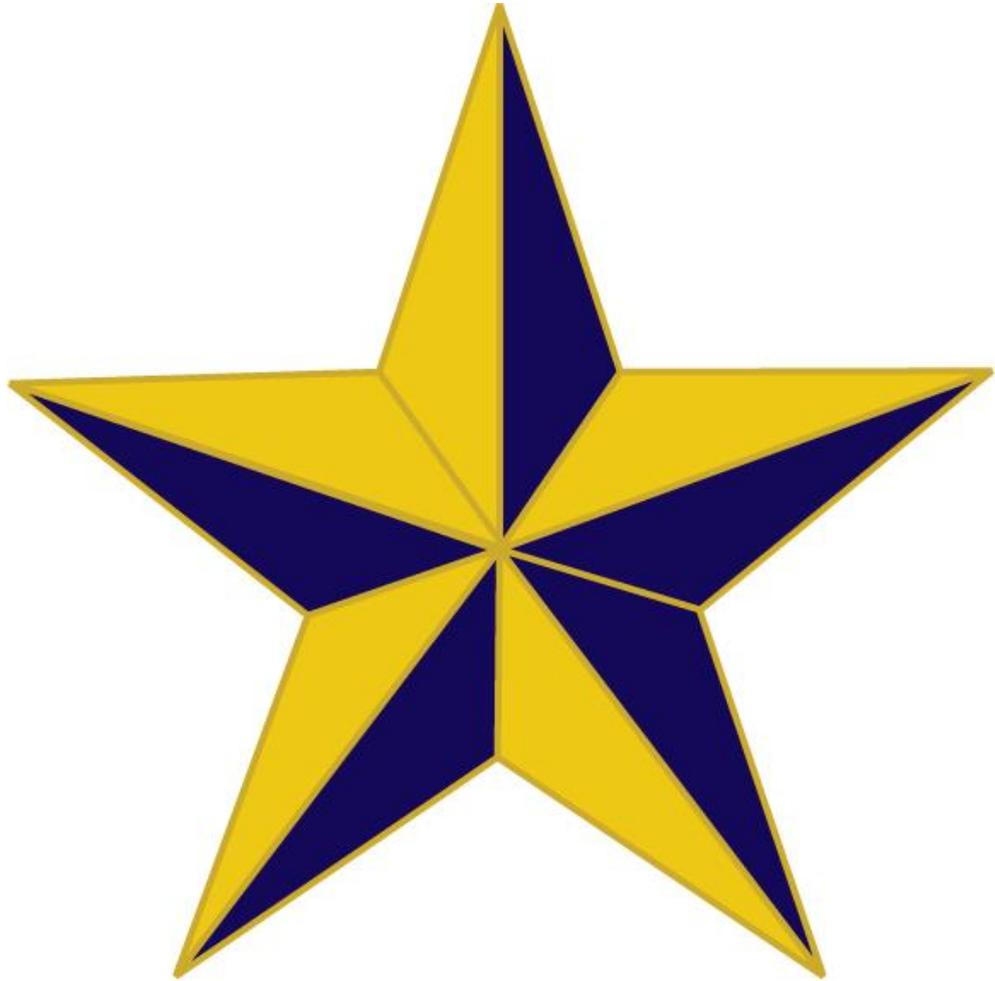
Pope Francis delivers a similar message of encouragement to the young:

'I am dreaming not just about groups that sit under trees and discuss it. Nothing else will change the world but people who with Jesus devote themselves to it, who with him go to the margins and right into the middle of the dirt. Go into politics, too, and fight for justice and human dignity, especially for the poorest of the poor.'

We should always remember the wonderful message from Jesus "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40).

Let us keep our hands firmly on the plough.





Great Things Are Possible



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