



## **The Gateway**

**Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin**

**October 2008**

**Seventh Issue**

## Welcome

The number seven is the operative word. This is our seventh issue of The Gateway and we hope our readers will find a morsel to their taste. The Oriental flavour is still quite strong, not least in that marvelous poem of Tao Chien written so long ago.



On the seventh of October we celebrate the Chung Yeung festival, one of two days in the year when the Chinese people pay respects to their ancestors. Graves are swept and offerings made to the dear departed. It is somewhat akin to All Souls Day or Cemetery Day in the Catholic tradition.

Then we have Shenzhou VII, the Chinese manned spacecraft from which we had the first spacewalk for China. The sleeping dragon is wide awake and leaving a footprint in space. Interestingly enough, the Chinese characters for the craft are 神舟七號 which translates as the Ark of Heaven. The three astronauts, from seventh heaven as it were, are now national heroes. All this after the Sichuan earthquake and the Olympics makes it quite a year for China.



The Chinese have something of a love affair with numbers. Wait till we reach eight!



## Brother of the Month

### Brother Cassian Brigant: (1889-1957)

By all accounts Brother Cassian was a man for all times and all seasons. To paraphrase Kipling, he was a man who could talk with crowds and keep his virtue, could walk with kings yet not lose the common touch. Though gifted with remarkable intellectual and social skills, he was marked by an extraordinary simplicity and could move gracefully with the great and the lowly.



It falls to the lot of the few to serve their native country both as teachers and soldiers, to be wounded in battle, to be offered diplomatic honours, to be enrolled as an Officer of the Academy and a member of the Legion of Honour by the French Government, to be decorated with the O.B.E. by the British Government, to be the official representative of Hong Kong at United Nations' meetings, to be President of the Civic Association and to be a founder member of both the Teachers Association and the Hong Kong Schools Music Association. No wonder Brother Cassian was noted for his exceptional energy and for his exceptional interest in educational and community affairs and for his cheerfulness of spirit. He was not regarded as a workaholic but somehow always seemed to be up and doing, bubbling with energy and enthusiasm.



*With the Consul General of France*

Brother Cassian was born in 1889 in Brittany, France, of devoted Catholic parents, who encouraged him in his intense desire to become a De La Salle Brother. And so in 1905 he journeyed to the island of Guernsey to join the Novitiate and pursue his studies. He was a model of religious zeal and also excelled at his studies, including the mastery of the English language.

He was destined for the missions, and after completing his studies in Ceylon in 1908 he was sent to St Joseph's Singapore for his first teaching assignment. Apart from the war years he was to spend the rest of his life teaching wholeheartedly and becoming

a friend to many. After some years teaching happily in Singapore and Penang however, the call to arms was heard from his native France.

For the four years of that terrible war, Brother Cassian marched and counter-marched over the blood-red fields of Europe acquitting himself bravely and with honour. Out of respect for his status as a religious Brother he was put to work behind the lines, recording troop movements and the numbers alive, dead or missing. He was thus saved from the torment of having to kill another human being. He received two citations for exceptional zeal and bravery in saving many wounded on the battlefield during intensive bombardment. Then came a day in 1918 when the terrible guns fell silent, when the battle flags and tents were rolled away. Brother Cassian packed his bags once again and headed for the East to resume his true vocation. After one year in Singapore he was assigned to Hong Kong which took him as her very own for the rest of his life.

St Joseph's College, Hong Kong, was the first to benefit from Brother Cassian's teaching and other talents. He arrived there on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 1921 and served for eleven years before his transfer to La Salle College, Kowloon in 1932. He was one of the pioneer Brothers at the establishment of La Salle and, apart from a few years during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, would remain there until his death. Since he took such a keen personal interest in his pupils, the old boys of St Joseph's and La Salle remember him fondly.



Community of St. Joseph's College 1921 with Bishop of Amoy

*Back Row L to R: Brothers Augustus de Cruz, unknown, Concord Grady, Cajetan Lhomaille,  
Cassian Brigant, Richard Dolby.*

*Front Row L to R: Brothers Claude Deruaz, Marcian Cullen, unknown, Joseph Robert*



Of course boys will be boys and even though Brother Cassian had the patience of Job they would sometimes put him to the test by going a bit too far. One of his pupils at the time put it this way: “Regardless of our misbehaviour, he was Brother Cassian, and to forgive and forget was one of his greatest attributes. To all of us he was teacher, adviser, friend”. Another pupil had this memory gem: “Once, Brother Cassian, with his hand on my shoulder, said to me, ‘my dear boy, you are certainly marvelous’. I was overjoyed. But later I found out that he loved children so much that he would say the same thing to every child he met! Anyway, those words were really encouraging to a young boy like me”.

He was exiled from Hong Kong for four years during the Japanese occupation and had to flee to Indo-China where he was warmly welcomed by the Brothers and students. He returned on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1946 and immediately set about the arduous task of getting La Salle College back on track after the devastation of the war years. As he puts it himself “We went ahead at once with the task of putting things in order. Everything was in a lamentable condition”. On top of that he now found himself in the unexpected position of being both teacher and Principal. He was a happy man when he was able to relinquish the Principal’s post in 1947. Yet another “exile” awaited him in 1949. Just when everything was taking shape, the College was requisitioned as a military hospital by the British Army and teachers and pupils had to move to less than salubrious surroundings. Brother Cassian took it in his stride but fought tooth and nail to get the College back, which took all of ten years. He was not to see the day.



The staff of La Salle College in 1947

*The Brothers in the front row, from L to R, are Raphael Egan, Wilfrid More, Patrick Toner, Cassian Brigant and Herman Fenton.*

Hong Kong and Brother Cassian fell in love with each other. He seemed to be present at every educational meeting. Whether it was a meeting of the Teachers' Association, or the British Council, or the Sino-British Association, or the Schools Music Association, or some special meeting called to discuss a particular matter relating to education, it was almost certain that Brother Cassian would be there and taking much interest. We even find him giving talks to the prisoners in Stanley prison, believe it or not on the subject of Chinese History. His love of scholarship included a close study of the Chinese language, in particular how the characters originated. He also played an active role in the development of Scouting in Hong Kong and became Assistant Commissioner. In recognition of his services, Lord Rowallan, Chief World Scout, decorated him with the Silver Acorn in 1954.



*Brothers Cassian(left) and Cronan in scout regalia*

Brother Cassian loved to write, from well-documented class notes and lectures to such varied subjects as Automation, Hamlet the Taoist, Acupuncture, St Augustine's City of God, the Geography of Hong Kong and the intricacies of written Chinese. There was no Google or Yahoo to make life easier. He also kept a diary, now a precious primary source for research.



*At an Automation Exhibition*

Many people also believe he supplied the melody and wrote the lyrics of the school song of La Salle College. Moreover, instead of recording troop movements and statistics, he was now able to record the details of pupils' baptisms, first holy communions and confirmations, something much more to his taste.



*A true son of La Salle*

If Brother Cassian was frequently seen at educational meetings, he was also frequently seen in the chapel, at the community prayers and at Mass. From his diary we see the great concern he had for the spiritual welfare of his students. Here is an excerpt: "While we neglect none of the children sent to us by God, and we make religious instruction available to all, we frequently remind our Catholics of their serious duty to influence their non-Catholic companions by their good example. We must not lose sight of the fact that the Catholic school is the only direct way by which the Gospel can reach the hearts of the masses".

As in so many other spheres, Brother Cassian was a model religious Brother. He showed this not only in his regular prayer life but also in his practice of Christian virtues. His interest in public life and affairs never came between him and his yearning for a close relationship with God. Whether in private or in public, he somehow managed “to be all things to all men”, always generous, sympathetic, selfless and sincere, a messenger of hope. He liked people. Not just people in the abstract but the person who happened to be sitting next to him, or the person who served his meal. He had a word and smile for everybody and especially for the students and teachers of St Joseph’s and La Salle. He never forgot his old students.

Nobody could have predicted how suddenly, simply, but tragically, Brother Cassian’s life would be cut short. On Monday 28<sup>th</sup> October 1957, while returning from class, he was knocked down by a young lad riding a bicycle but made no mention of it. Later that evening he was not feeling well at all and had to be rushed to St Paul’s Hospital. The doctors, including some of his former students, fought hard to save his life. The struggle lasted a mere few days and at 5.00pm on the 31<sup>st</sup> October, surrounded by his Brothers from St Joseph’s and La Salle, he breathed his last. The large and representative funeral was presided over by an old friend, Bishop Lawrence Bianchi. Brother Cassian was laid to rest in the Brothers’ burial plot in Happy Valley.

In 2006, La Salle College, already a large campus, opened two new wings. They were fittingly dedicated to the first two Principals of the College, so now we have the Brother Aimar and Brother Cassian Wings. These two stalwarts gave of their best to spread the Lasallian form of Christian education to thousands of children.



*The Brother Cassian Wing at the end of the pool*

We will leave the last word to two of Brother Cassians’ students:

To one “there was always a twinkle in his knowing eyes and a peculiar look of bliss discerning his noble features. He had been guided by the light. That light enkindled in him a love by which he lived and of which he died, having given nothing but love to God alone and having resolved to save a multitude of souls that they might love God for eternity.”

The other declares “My gratitude to Bro. Cassian is everlasting because he gave me hope and completely changed my life. He opened the door when I knocked.”



## Oriental Flavour

### Tao Chien (Tao Yuan-ming) Poet of Reclusion

Tao Yuan-ming (365-427), also known as Tao Chien, was a great poet of the Jin Dynasty.

He served in a series of minor posts in the government, but his sister's death, as well as disgust at the corruption and infighting of the Jin Court, prompted his resignation, convincing him that life was too short to compromise on principles. As he put it himself, he would not "*bow like a servant in return for five bushels of grain*". The 'five bushels of grain' refers to the salary of a low-ranking official. Instead, he preferred to become a recluse in the Chinese manner, retiring to the countryside with his family, away from the 'rat race'. As a poet he projects warmth and humanity and praises the virtues of rustic living. He lived in retirement in the countryside for his last 22 years.



### *Returning to My Fields and Garden*



Young, I was always free of common feeling.  
It was in my nature to love the hills and mountains.  
Mindlessly I was caught in the dust-filled trap.  
Waking up, thirty years had gone.  
The caged bird wants the old trees and air.  
Fish in their pool miss the ancient stream.  
I plough the earth at the edge of South Moor.

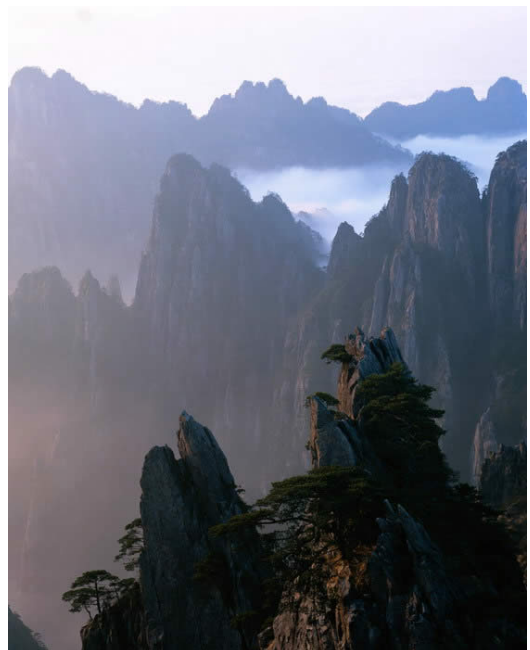




Keeping life simple, return to my plot and garden.  
 My place is hardly more than a few fields.  
 My house has eight or nine small rooms.  
 Elm-trees and Willows shade the back.  
 Plum-trees and Peach-trees reach the door.  
 Misted, misted the distant village.  
 Drifting, the soft swirls of smoke.  
 Somewhere a dog barks deep in the winding lanes.  
 A cockerel crows from the top of the mulberry tree.  
 No heat and dust behind my closed doors.  
 My bare rooms are filled with space and silence.  
 Too long a prisoner, captive in a cage,  
 Now I can get back again to Nature.

### 歸園田居

少無適俗韻	性本愛丘山
誤落塵網中	一去三十年
羈鳥戀舊林	池魚思故淵
開荒南野際	守拙歸園田
方宅十餘畝	草屋八九間
榆柳蔭後簷	桃李羅堂前
曖曖遠人村	依依墟里煙
狗吠深巷中	雞鳴桑樹巔
戶庭無塵雜	虛室有餘閑
久在樊籠裡	復得返自然



## Family News

### *Month of October*

The month of the Holy Rosary. Thank God the saying of the Rosary and devotion to our Lady have not lost their lustre even in our very modern world.

Some of our students love saying the Rosary and settle into it naturally. They also like talking to Our Lady as can be seen in the picture. In this way, as the Legion of Mary handbook would have it, the Person of our Lord is once again seen and served by Mary his Mother.



### *Brother Rory Higgins Visit*

We had the pleasure of welcoming Brother Rory, Director of the PARC Regional Novitiate, for a few days. Here he is, on the right, visiting Chan Sui Ki (La Salle ) Primary School.



### **APLEC 7 Preparations**

We are heading into the home straight for the Asia-Pacific Lasallian Educators' Congress (APLEC 7). The Coordinator and Preparatory Committee are kept busy. We expect about 115 delegates from the Asia Pacific region. They will reflect and share on our Lasallian values and the challenges they pose to youth today.



## Swimming Season

September/October are the months for school Swimming Galas because the weather is still warm. The young ones of St Joseph's and La Salle Primary schools appear to be enjoying this occasion.



## Brother David Liao Honoured

Congratulations to Brother David on being conferred with the honorary title '**Dabu County Moral Example – Exemplary Comrade** 大埔县道德楷模' in recognition of his outstanding educational contribution in China. His La Salle Study Centre has become a byword for educational excellence, much to the satisfaction of students, parents, volunteers and government officials.





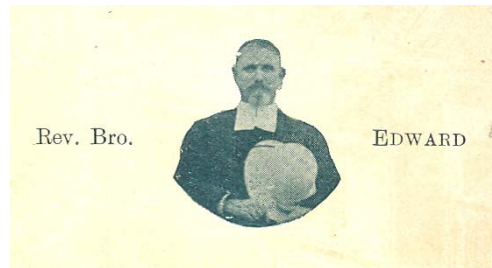
## In Remembrance

**We pray for the repose of the souls of our departed Brothers**

Our Brothers	Service Periods in Hong Kong	Date of Death	Place of Burial
Aibert Marie Virobayre	1897-1901	21-10-1905	Singapore
Cassian Brigant	1921-1957	30-10-1957	Hong Kong
Cornelius Nulty	1900-	14-10-1971	Malaysia
Edward Lynam	1886-	29-10-1945	Malaysia
Fursey Conlan	1889-1890	21-10-1898	Ireland
Lewis McGiverin	1934-	11-10-1938	USA
Richard Dolby	1915-1926 1932-1933	20-10-1974	Burma
Sebastian Lim	1931-1939	08-10-1969	Malaysia



Brother Cassian Brigant



Brother Edward Lynam



Brother Richard Dolby



Brother Sebastian Lim



## Justice in the Classroom

*A Reflection by Brother Henry Pang*

Christ warned his disciples that their justice should exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, those living handbooks of social injustice. To teachers, his injunction is especially meaningful, since justice, that virtue by which we give all people their due, is essential for success in any educational system.

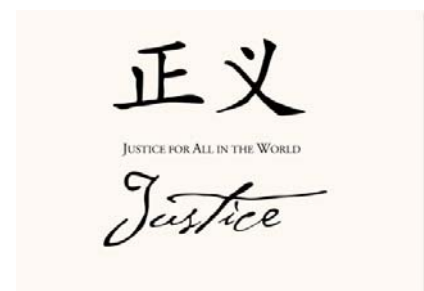
Pupils are quick to sense and slow to forgive a teacher who violates the rules of fair play. An inborn sense of justice seems to exist in most pupils and with it they weigh the teacher in the balance. They may overlook one who is poorly prepared or naturally ungifted but will raise a loud cry when they see or sense injustice in the classroom.

Ninety percent of the problems regarding justice has to do with how a teacher establishes order in the classroom. There must be order. Discipline is one of the means to bring it about but do not confuse the one with the other. Order is not necessarily discipline, or discipline order.

Ideally, discipline should be self-discipline guided by the wise teacher, not an imposed discipline enforced like an army sergeant- major. Pupils must be led by rewards and corrections but unless both are inspired by justice, discipline will never hold.



Relations between teacher and student must be based on mutual respect. "See that you do not despise one of these little ones: for I tell you, their angels in heaven always behold the face of my Father in heaven."



Pupils can and will get on your nerves with their jumping about and talkativeness but they are human beings to be revered and loved, not stones to be pounded into shape and arranged.

Justice demands that teachers do not go in for name-calling, derision, ridicule and sarcasm. A sarcastic or wounding word will be remembered with bitterness all through life.

Pupils have a right to self-respect and the respect of their classmates. This right also extends to their good name among staff members. You have no right to engage in gossip with other teachers about students' failures or to violate their privacy with those who have no right to know.

Respect for pupils, in justice, will also require that a teacher deal courteously with them. Don't overdo it, but pupils do appreciate a teacher's courtesy.

In justice, every teacher owes pupils an impartial service without consideration for ability or social status or character. Poor, rich or weak pupils are just as deserving as brilliant pupils.

Naturally some pupils will attract more than others, but they must be treated in the same way. "Teachers' pets" are rapidly discovered and the class will be soon divided between pets and others, walling off the teacher. It is professional suicide to show partiality.

One of the fundamental virtues in building a better world is the virtue of Justice. All human beings have rights such as the right to life, true liberty, etc. Justice is the moral virtue which inclines and supports the will towards giving everyone their due.

This is summed up in the Ten Commandments. The first three refer to the rights of God, the other seven to our neighbour. The scriptures' highest praise is "he was a just man". I should like to emphasize the importance of justice in the teaching profession.



*Saint Joseph*

***St. Joseph, our well beloved patron,  
Pray for us.***