

THE GATEWAY



The Gateway

Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin

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Eleventh Issue

Welcome



When Chinese people say they have traveled by bus number 11, they mean they have used their two feet. Taking this bus is surely a good way to keep fit.

In this issue we have tried to walk through the tragic events of February 1945 in De La Salle University, Manila, when 16 Brothers and 21 associates were massacred by Japanese soldiers. It is a story that touches our hearts and souls.

Towards the end of this month we have Ash Wednesday which denotes the beginning of the season of Lent in the Catholic Church. One traditional Lenten practice is the Way of the Cross. Here we offer the Way with oriental illustrations. There is also a poem in keeping with the season.

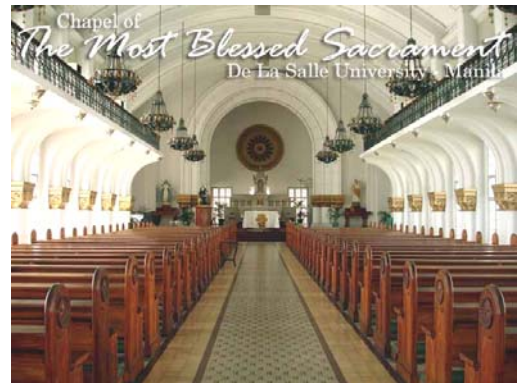


May this season of repentance bring us the blessing of God's forgiveness and the gift of His light.

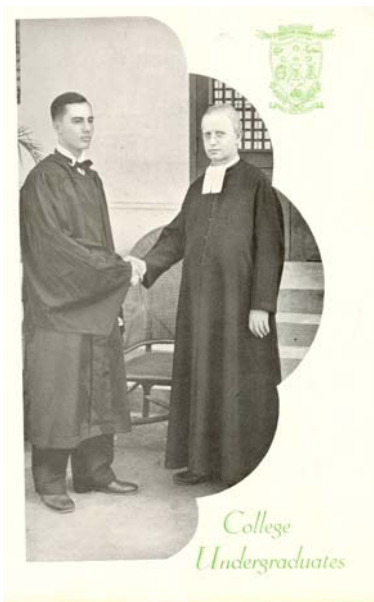


Commemoration of the Massacre of 16 Brothers in Manila

Every year, on the 12th February, we commemorate the massacre of the 16 Brothers and their 25 civilian friends and helpers who were slaughtered at De La Salle College, Manila, in or near the beautiful College chapel. The massacre took place in 1945, a few days before the end of the Pacific War. Salvation from the Japanese occupiers was near at hand, so near and yet so far for those 41 souls.



Japanese forces had entered Manila on the 2nd January 1942 and the American resistance was soon overcome. Japanese troops began to occupy all but a small portion of the De La Salle school building. Only the chapel and a few small rooms were left to the Brothers. The American Brothers were ordered out and ended up in a concentration camp. The remaining Brothers were allowed to continue teaching Filipino children. These Brothers were of German, Irish, Czech and Hungarian nationalities. By February 1945, there were 17 Brothers in the school. With them was a Redemptorist priest, Fr Francis J Cosgrave, an Australian who served as chaplain. In addition there were five Filipino families who had taken refuge in the school to escape the bombing, shelling and shooting which accompanied the battle for the city.



The Americans returned to the Philippines before the end of 1944 and the recapture of Manila was one of their prime objectives. They began to close in on the city in early February 1945. The sounds of battle approaching the city signaled defeat for the Japanese. In panic, anger and frustration, they began to unleash a bloody campaign of killing and wanton destruction. One such was the massacre at De La Salle.

The school Principal at the time was Brother Egbert Xavier Kelly, familiarly known as "Bex". He had already taught in Lasallian schools in Burma and in St Joseph's College Hong Kong. He was a strict disciplinarian and an excellent teacher. As Director and Principal he had added to the school buildings and built a beautiful chapel capable of accommodating the entire school. As the battle for the city raged, some Brothers advised an evacuation of the buildings. Brother Xavier was convinced it would be safer to stay put and, if necessary, "that they should live and die together rather than leave the house and separate".

Little did Brother Xavier know that he would be the first to die. On Wednesday the 7th February 1945, Japanese officers and soldiers, under pretext of a search for guerillas and weapons, arrested Brother Xavier and Judge Jose Carlos. A hooded traitor had pointed them out. They were suspected of helping the guerillas. The soldiers took them to a nearby Japanese Club and they were never seen again. Most likely they were tortured and executed. Their bodies have never been found.

On Sunday the 11th February, the eve of the massacre, Fr Cosgrave said Mass and distributed communion amidst the terrifying shelling of the school and neighbourhood. This was to be their last service. The day ended with more intensive shelling. Fr Cosgrave decided to give the last remaining host to Brother Flavius Leo, the oldest Brother and regarded by all as a holy man. Meanwhile the retreating Japanese soldiers were blazing a trail of destruction and soon De La Salle College would be in their path.

Monday the 12th February, the day of the massacre, dawned. Shortly after lunch, a Japanese officer led a group of 20 soldiers into the building. Their eyes were bloodshot and perhaps some were drunk. As he entered the door, the Japanese officer yelled. A shot was fired, the soldiers charged and the massacre began. Brother Flavius Leo was the first to confront the rampaging soldiers and the first to be bayoneted.



*The mural in St. Joseph's Institution, Singapore, depicting the Manila massacre.
The Filipino artist was Renato Habulan.*

Everyone in sight was now attacked, men, women and children. The soldiers found some Brothers and families in the cellar along with Fr Cosgrave. They were ordered out and bayoneted, their bodies, dead, dying or wounded, all piled up. Others, at the foot of the staircase on the first floor or on the staircase itself were easy targets. Among them was Brother Gerfried. Some Brothers kept shouting that they were Germans. It was in vain.

The rampaging soldiers realized that some people were seeking refuge in the chapel. The soldiers followed them relentlessly, killing and maiming as they drew closer to the chapel. They found a room next to the chapel, ordered all inside to come out and bayoneted them. Inside the room they found a 17 year-old boy, Antonio Cojuangco, sick and shivering in bed. They stabbed him many times in the back. The boy died on the spot.

The soldiers now moved into the chapel where they were at their fiercest. Here some were trying to hide between the pews, others in the confessional box and others at the communion rails. A 6 year-old boy, the son of Judge Carlos, was hiding in the confessional box. When a soldier pulled open the door of the box, the boy ran towards the Brothers. He never made it. The soldier bayoneted the child from behind, lifted him high into the air and hurled the body down to die on the chapel floor. The sole surviving Brother, called Antonius, later recalled and wrote about the attack on himself:

“Now it is my turn...Two Japs came upon me. They are a bit cautious, they think I have a grenade. I make a sign to them indicating I have no weapon with me. Immediately they pounce upon me. One of them gives me a stab in the chest. I fall on my back towards the wall. Then he puts a foot on my chest to pull out the bayonet. Meanwhile the other Jap has given me two stabs in the stomach. I also received five stabs in my right arm.”

After they had completed their gruesome work, the soldiers left the chapel which was now littered with dead and dying bodies and pools of thick blood. Some, however, would survive their wounds and live to tell the tale. One such was



The two survivors

Fr Cosgrave who became so thirsty that he drank the dirty water in the flower vase near the altar. Outside the building, the survivors could hear the soldiers celebrating and drinking. A few times, some soldiers returned to the scene of their crime to gloat over their victims and to check to see if anyone, still alive, needed to be finished off. For the next three days Fr Cosgrave quietly went about giving absolution and administering the last rites to the dying.

On Thursday the 15th February, deliverance came for the survivors. The American troops arrived at the scene. The ordeal of the survivors was over. Of the sixty-eight people who were in the school, forty-one had been massacred including sixteen Brothers.

Initially the bodies were thrown into a mass grave, along with others collected from around the school, totaling ninety-five in all. There they lay until the Brothers and the families involved agreed to exhume the remains in order to have a proper funeral and burial. At the beginning of 1949, therefore, the remains were unearthed. Identification was impossible. They were buried in a plot owned by the Brothers at the La Loma Catholic cemetery. Marble headstones, commemorating each family and the Brothers who died, were erected. In De La Salle College itself, a plaque bearing the names of the Brothers was set on a wall next to the chapel.



In retrospect, the massacre of the 12 German Brothers in particular was tragically ironic. They had been deliberately transferred from Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore for their safety. Since their country was allied with Japan they could reasonably suppose that they would be safe and be in a position to save others. It was not to be.

Here is the list of the Brothers who died in the massacre, as well as their nationalities and ages:



1. Egbert Xavier Kelly, Irish 51
2. Flavius Leo Corcoran, Irish 69
3. Alemond Lucian Biely, Czech, 29
4. Baptist De La Salle Janos Nick, Hungarian 29.
5. Adolf Gebhard Bender, German 31
6. Berthwin Philbert Gelb, German 31
7. Arkadius Maria Spicker,, German 35
8. Friedbert Kuntz, German 30
9. Gerfried Hastreiter, German 33
10. Lambert Kammerling, German 28
11. Mutwald Hengelbrock, German 38
12. Paternus Paul Seipe, German 37
13. Romuald Wegner, German 31
14. Hartmann Kreitner, German 34
15. Maximin Maria Meier, German 32
16. Victorinus Wehle, German 31

Of these 16 Brothers who were massacred, three taught in our Lasallian schools in Hong Kong. They were Brothers Egbert Xavier, Adolf Gebhard and Gerfried Joseph.

Brother Egbert Xavier (William Kelly) was born on 4th March 1894 in County Wicklow, Ireland.

After he finished his novitiate he volunteered to work in the foreign mission field of the Far East and left for the District of Penang in 1911. The same year, he was assigned to the newly established De La Salle College in Manila. In 1929, he was selected to



Brother Xavier with his community in Manila

join the second novitiate in the Brothers' motherhouse in Lembecq-lez-Hal in Belgium.

He returned to the Orient in 1930 to teach in Rangoon for three years and then St. Joseph's College in Hong Kong for another three years. In 1935, he returned to Manila and was appointed Director until his ultimately death in 1945.

On 7th February 1945, the Japanese soldiers separated Brother Xavier from his community. They later killed him under circumstances never fully known and his body was never recovered.

Brother Gerfried Joseph (Joseph Hastrieter) was born on 23 August 1912 in Furth-in-Walden, Germany. After his initial formation, he requested to be sent on the missions and was posted first to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in order to obtain additional instruction and practice in English. Intelligent and devoted to duty, he made rapid progress in preparing himself for the work of a religious educator.

La Salle College, Hong Kong was the first institution to benefit from the youthful ardor of his zeal. He arrived in Hong Kong on 25th April 1933 and was placed in Class 2A and 3B. Though quite versatile, his favourite branch of learning was Physics, at which he excelled.



Brother Gerfried with his students in La Salle College, Hong Kong

One of his pupils, Mr. Henry Lau, who later became a teacher in La Salle College has this to say, "Brother Gerfried was my Form Master. In class, he seldom smiled, and had no time for diversion of any kind. Hence his was a solid lesson."

With the early rumbles of War in 1939, Brother Gerfried was transferred to Manila, where he continued his work as a mentor of Physical science.

Brother Gerfried was bayoneted by the Japanese soldiers on 12th February 1945, lingered several hours, and died with the consolation of the last rites administered by the Chaplain.

He died in the thirty-third year of his life, the thirteenth of his religious life, and the seventh of his perpetual profession.

Brother Adolphus was born on the 12th May 1914 in Herdorg in the German Rhineland. He joined the Brothers' Juniorate in 1928 and entered the Novitiate in 1932.

After further studies he indicated a strong desire to work in the foreign missions so he was sent to the District of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to learn English. After a short but fruitful stay he was posted to St. Joseph's College Hong Kong arriving on the 4th September 1935. Brother Adolphus was put in charge of Class 8A.

In November 1939 he was transferred to La Salle College, Kowloon, and this time was in charge of Class 4A.

Though rather frail and weak in body he never complained and loved to be in the classroom. He was also a fine religious young man, always seeking to grow in holiness.

By a cruel twist of fate, the War necessitated his transfer to Manila where he continued to labour zealously until his death in 1945.

He died at the hands of the Japanese soldiers on 12th February 1945 in the thirty-first year of his life.



Brother Adolf with his students in St. Joseph's College in 1935

May their souls, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Amen.

Lasallian Saints/Blessed



On February the 9th, the Lasallian Family celebrates the Feast of Saint Miguel Febres Cordero. He is sometimes referred to as the scholar saint.

Brother Miguel was a native of Ecuador. He was taught by the De La Salle Christian Brothers, and decided to join their order. His parents opposed his desires at first, but then relented and allowed him to follow his heart.

As a De La Salle Brother he was an outstanding teacher, both in his dedication and his skill. He never lost his temper with his students and, although he taught the same subjects year after year, he never stopped trying to find better, more interesting ways to present the material. "I must look for every possible way of making the lessons agreeable and pleasant for the pupils," he said. One Brother remarked that his classes were a joy to his pupils. He wrote a number of textbooks, some of which were adopted by the government for use throughout Ecuador. The other Brothers remembered him for his cheerfulness and religious devotion. "The heart is rich when it is content," he wrote, "and it is always content when its desires are fixed on God." He was known as the smiling Brother with the twinkling eyes. Brother Miguel himself said, "Always work cheerfully for the Lord."



In 1905 he was sent to Europe to translate texts from French into Spanish. Five years later he caught a cold, which developed into pneumonia. He died on February 9 and was buried in Spain. During the Spanish Civil War, his grave was uncovered and his body was found to be intact. The Ecuadorian government brought his body home, and he was reburied in Quito. Since that time, many miracles have been attributed to his prayers.

Brother Miguel was beatified on the 30th of October 1977 and canonized on the 21st of October 1984.

Oriental Flavour

The Way of The Cross – with Chinese characteristics



(1) Jesus in agony in the Garden of Olives



(2) Jesus is betrayed by Judas and abandoned by his disciples



(3) Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin



(4) Jesus is denied by Peter



(5) Jesus is judged by Pilate



(6) Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns



(7) The Cross is placed upon Jesus' shoulders



(8) Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene to carry the Cross



(9) Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem



(10) Jesus is crucified



(11) Jesus promises his Kingdom to the Good Thief



(12) The Mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple at the foot of the Cross



(13) Jesus dies on the cross



(14) Jesus is taken down from the Cross and placed in the tomb

40th Anniversary of Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College

Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College opened its doors on the 3rd September 1969 with Brother Herman Fenton at the helm and an enrollment of 931 students and 34 teachers.

In 1965, Brother Herman had already started an evening school in La Salle College, Kowloon, to cater for the poor students in the neighbourhood. The students of this evening school formed the nucleus of the new Chan Sui Ki College.



The first Brother's Community consisted of Herman Fenton (Director), Eugene Sharkey, Cronan Curran and Paul Hackett.

Brother Eugene took over as school Principal in 1970 and inaugurated a long reign of 21 years.

The school is named after Mr. Chan Sui Ki, a man who contributed generously to worthy causes and who helped the poor and needy not only in Hong Kong but also in China, Macao and Vietnam. He built houses and hospitals and schools for the poor. His family decided to build a school bearing his name, to be run by a reputable educational body. They would contribute HK\$ 500,000 towards the cost. The Chan family still generously supports both Chan Sui Ki College and Primary schools.



The 40th Anniversary celebrations kicked off on the 7th of February with an Opening Ceremony. The Guest of Honour was Brother Patrick Tierney, Director of Lasallian Schools in Hong Kong. He had this to say about the founder of the school,

“Although we are sorry he cannot be

with us today, we thank God that Brother Herman is still alive and still keenly interested in the affairs of the College. In fact he holds the distinction of having founded 3 schools in all: La Salle Evening School, Chan Sui Ki(La Salle) College and Chan Sui Ki(La Salle) Primary School.”

After the ceremony, the school hosted two open days. The school was gaily decorated for the occasion and abuzz with eager students and visitors.

Later in the year there will be a Variety Show and a Family Fun Day. The school will round off its 40th Anniversary celebrations with a Grand Dinner in December.



Christian Brothers Schools Sports Association

This Association was established in 1974 in order to bring together our Lasallian schools in Hong Kong in friendly sporting endeavour. The 16th of February was overcast and somewhat humid, but this did not dampen the enthusiasm of the athletes.

Dr. K. I. Law, Chairperson of La Salle College Parent Teacher Association, was the guest of honour.



The twin athletes from De La Salle Secondary school are well supported.

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
Xavier Kelly	1931-1936	07-02-1945	Philippines
Adolphus Bender	1935-1939	12-02-1945	Philippines
Gerfried Hastreiter	1033-1939	12-02-1945	Philippines
Aubert Cooper	1916 -	15-02-1951	Ireland
Benilde Henri	1875 – (West Point Reformatory)	10-02-1909	Italy
Dorosheé Le Meur	1889-1912	04-02-1913	USA
Henry Dubois	1882-1885	10-02-1909	Italy
Irénée Roua	1910-1913	13-02-1945	France
James O'Connor	1923 -	04-02-1925	England



Bishop Lawrence Bianchi, was made an affiliated member of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in 1969. He was Bishop of Hong Kong from 1951 to 1969. Affiliation was bestowed upon Bishop Bianchi in gratitude for the help and encouragement he gave to the Brothers at all times. He passed away on 13th of February 1983.



The Lenten Season

This year, February the 25th, in the Catholic Church tradition, marks the beginning of the Lenten season of fast and abstinence. The first day of this season is called Ash Wednesday. The mark of ashes on the forehead indicates that we are but dust and to dust we shall return. In this way, we are reminded that our lives on earth are a pilgrimage and that we are made for life eternal. The ashes also remind us that there is more to life than the hectic pursuit of material goods.



Thou art but dust

Couldn't fathom I was like the dust
that grayed and blackened the streets,
that grimed the shop windows and
trespassed in my house,

until I attended an exhumation
of the remains of old friends,
and there it was--
the dust

The three traditional Lenten practices are
Praying,
Fasting,
Almsgiving

We are warned not to perform these religious
duties in order to be seen and praised by
others. As far as possible, we are to perform
them quietly and privately.

"And your Father, who sees what you do in
private, will reward you."

