



The Gateway

Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin

April 2011

Thirtieth Issue

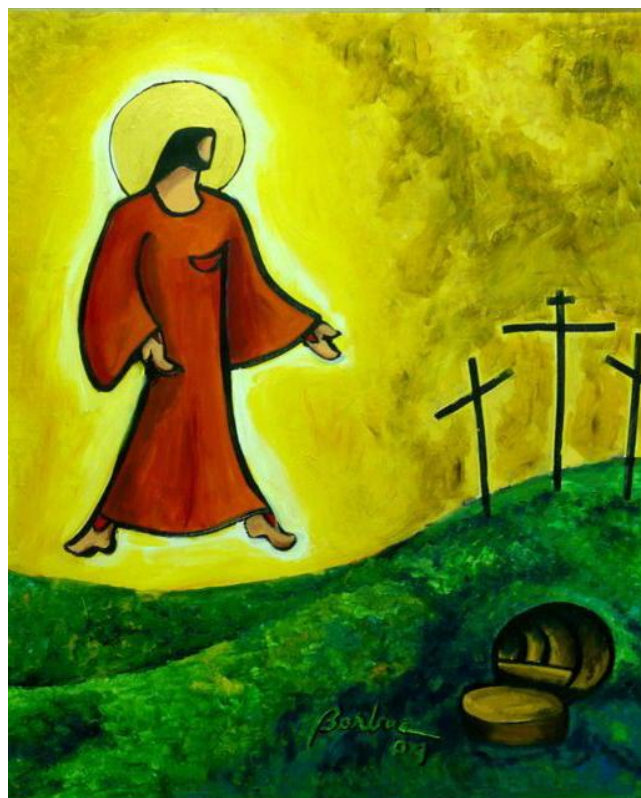
Welcome

It so happens that Gateway 30 is chock-a-block with family updates. Our various schools were buzzing with activity and, in the end, it was a question of what to include and what to omit. But we hope you will get a whiff of the buzz.

Vincent Kozak, our Brother of the Month, spent most of his teaching career in Burma. He loved the country and its people so much that it formed a large part of his conversations. The nationalization of all schools by the government in 1963 as well as the dark cloud of communism over his own native country weighed heavily on him over the years.

Who can forget the terrible devastation wrought by the forces of nature in the last couple of months. We pray for the souls of the deceased and for those still badly affected in New Zealand, Japan, Myanmar and China. Our La Salle Home in Sendai was fortunately spared the worst. We include a reflection by one of our Old Boys which helps to put things in perspective.

Easter greetings to all our readers. May the joy and peace of the risen Christ be yours.



Brother of the Month Brother Vincent Kozak



Brother Vincent Kozak was born on the 8th June 1909 in Oparany, in Bohemia and was baptised Antonin Frantisek Kozak. He died on the 15th June 1990, a week after his 81st birthday. He was born a citizen of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a decade before the birth of modern Czechoslovakia. He always identified closely with his native land, and the long struggle of his people for national identity and freedom, a struggle which reached fulfillment with the overthrow of the Communists just months before he passed away. He was overjoyed at the news.

He decided to join the De La Salle Brothers and did the Novitiate and took the habit on the 14th August 1925 at the age of 16. His novitiate and scholasticate were in his own country and on answering a call for volunteers for the missions, he went to Dover in England to study English. He also studied briefly at Le Mans in France.

Brother Vincent was one of a group which travelled East in 1929. He was posted to Burma, (Myanmar) to St Peter's High School, a well-run boarding and day school in Mandalay. He loved Mandalay, the city of Buddhist monks and pagodas, and seems from the first to have developed a fine rapport with his students. It was a rapport which would characterise him through all his 38 years in Burma.

After 9 years in Mandalay he was transferred to St Patrick's High School, Moulmein, as senior assistant teacher. The affable, kind and understanding Brother Remigius Mark was Director. It is in Moulmein that we find photographs of Brother Vincent, in the full vigour of his youth, with flowing beard, in a very racially diverse community consisting of Karen, Ceylonese, Irish and German. St Patrick's was the oldest Lasallian school in Burma, founded in 1859, just seven years after the Brothers had first arrived in Asia in 1852.



It had an enrolment close to 700 at this time, with a wonderful reputation for studies and sports. Boxing had been introduced and very soon the school came tops in inter-school competitions. .

When the Japanese army invaded Burma, Brother Vincent was still at Moulmein. The first bombing took place as the community were sitting down to their 1941 Christmas dinner. Despite growing tension, the community went on to have their annual retreat as usual, and in their spare time started building air-raid shelters. Systematic bombing began on the 7th January, 1942, a couple of days after school had reopened. Since no serious work could be done and as most pupils stayed away, the Brothers suspended school.

Some Brothers left for Twante and some for Mandalay for reasons of safety. Brother Vincent was with the group which left for Twante, some 30 miles south west of Rangoon, and it was there that he spent the next three and a half years of the Japanese Occupation. The immediate focus of military activity was Rangoon where the bombing had greatly intensified.



The De La Salle Institute in Twante, where Brother Vincent spent the war years, was a very special kind of foundation. Located in a large rubber plantation, it was set up as an orphanage in 1921 by Brother John Clerc (1873-1942), who was renowned as one of the kindest and most lovable of men. The Orphanage at Twante was his very imaginative response to the needs

of the time. It provided a practical and varied education for needy young people. The main emphasis was academic, but all were given a choice of interest to pursue ranging from carpentry and metal-work to gardening, poultry and running the rubber estate. Rather appropriately Brother John was called "Papa John" in that he fostered a strong family spirit. Brother Vincent treasured his experience of this world of Twante.

Brother Gilbert McKenna, a contemporary, records the following: "Throughout the war the Brothers at Twante were allowed full freedom to go on with their work as the Japanese saw it was purely a work of charity. It must have been very hard to provide food and clothing for so many. Besides the 150 boys who were entirely dependent on

the Brothers for everything, many people from Rangoon and elsewhere had come to the school for safety. These people had put up little houses on the estate not far from the school."

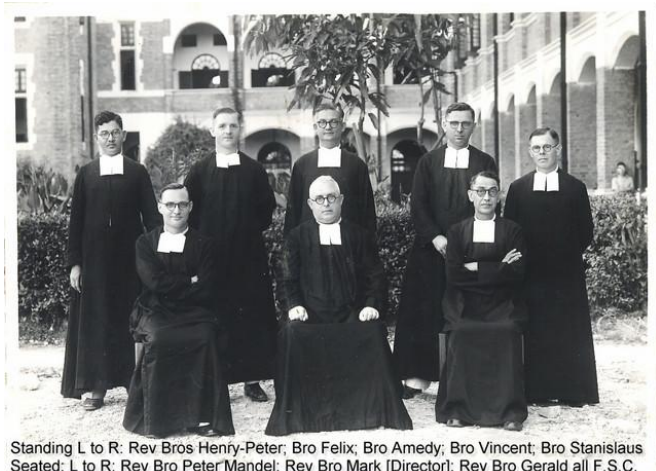
Eventually, with the Japanese surrender, the Moulmein Brothers started planning to return. Means of travel were limited. But Brother Gilbert had set his sights on taking a plane to Moulmein, and as usual persevered till he succeeded. The story was often repeated in later years about how Brother Vincent shivered visibly at the prospect of taking to the skies, and then how, on final touchdown, wondered why people made such a fuss about flying!

School could not reopen till the 22nd October 1945. There was then a great rush of pupils, and many had to be turned away through lack of teachers. There was much scrubbing and cleaning to be done, and painting. Shelters and fox-holes in the playing field had to be filled in. Next year the inspector was able to report that "the school is perfect in all respects."

No doubt Brother Vincent was a key participant in all this reconstruction activity. But there were other matters to be considered. Since he first arrived in 1928 he had not been home to see his family, and during this long interval their respective worlds had seen traumatic change. In 1947 he was able to return to his native Czechoslovakia to spend time with his family but he also got a raw taste of Communist rule. His first hand experience of life lived under the yoke of Communism left harsh memories which he retained for the rest of his life.

He then proceeded to Cambridge for studies, after which, in 1949, it was back to his beloved Burma once more. He served as senior assistant teacher and supervisor in a number of schools including St Paul's, St Anthony's and St Theresa's, all in Rangoon, as well as serving in Maymo, Moulmein and Mandalay. These were exciting and challenging years, when the schools prospered.

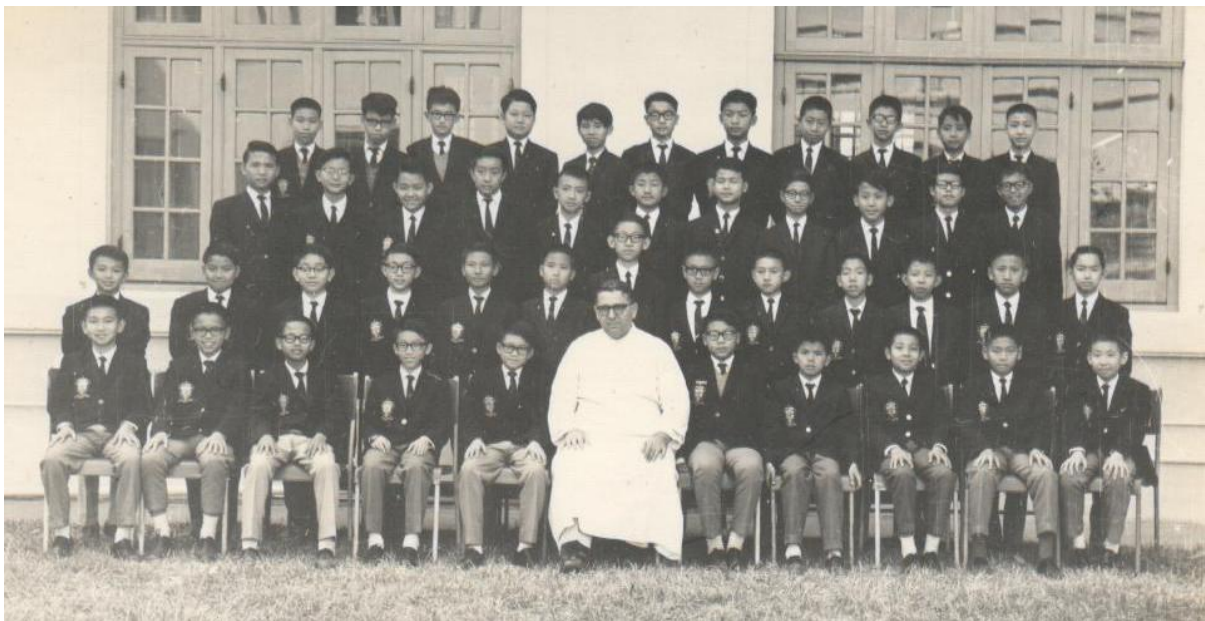
Then came the body-blow. In 1963, and with no advance notice, the Ne Win government nationalised all mission schools. The Brothers were required to relinquish their posts and their living quarters, and all assets were confiscated. Only the property at Ady



Standing L to R: Rev Bros Henry-Peter; Bro Felix; Bro Amedy; Bro Vincent; Bro Stanislaus
Seated: L to R: Rev Bro Peter Mandel; Rev Bro Mark [Director]; Rev Bro Gerald all F.S.C.

Road in Rangoon escaped. There followed a time of great trauma, which deeply affected Brother Vincent, as well as his confreres.

Finally in 1966 all non-citizens were obliged to leave the country. Brother Vincent had held a British passport since 1939. A number of Brothers were affected, including Brother Vincent, Brother Hubert Pilz and Brother Austin de Lemos, who all found hospitality and work in Hong Kong. Brother Vincent took the opportunity to return to his native Czechoslovakia to visit his family and assess conditions under communist rule ten years after the brutal suppression of the 1956 Prague Spring. What he saw confirmed him in his anti communist stance.



At La Salle College in Kowloon he was happy to resume school work again in October 1966. He arrived just in time to fill a vacancy created by the transfer of Brother Anthony Cheung to Malaysia. He taught English and Religious Studies mainly in the lower forms. Two of his students at the time have this to say: "He is well remembered for his strong affection towards his students and his tender loving care for them". And again "I fondly remember Brother Vincent for his liking to meet with the students, and also for his liking to pinch their tummies". He himself had a pretty substantial tummy at the time!

As he passed the 60 mark, there were feelings of insecurity with approaching retirement. He began to think about options for old age. It was not possible to return to his native land, and indeed returning to any country in central or northern Europe would mean a change of climate which he could not face at his age. At one stage he set his hopes on joining the Mother House community in Rome but this was not

viable. In due course, thanks to an understanding Director, Brother Raphael, and confreres who were kindly and caring, he grew to be grateful for Hong Kong and to identify fully with its life and aspirations. And in Hong Kong he stayed.

After seven years on the staff of La Salle College he came to retire. He was to live for another seventeen years. He continued to take classes in religion, sell religious books and articles, and the Catholic weekly newspaper, and persevered with his hobby of making rosaries, often in response to personal requests. His rosaries were sturdy, made to last. He also continued his work as sacristan, an important assignment which involved much time and labour. He took pride in keeping the chapel clean and tidy and well decorated, and during the vocation novena the statue of the Divine Infant of Prague was enthroned in the chapel. In 1975 he celebrated his Golden Jubilee as a Brother; in 1984 he attended the canonization of Brother Miguel in Rome and in 1985 he celebrated his Diamond Jubilee.



His personal world continued to revolve around Burma, his first love, and the Communists, his prime hate. His conversation was always full of Burma and the good old days. His love for Burma was shown in practical ways. He kept up

correspondence with friends, many his former students, especially in North and North East Burma. He made up parcels of clothing and sent along papers and magazines as well. And of course he sent his sturdy rosaries.

The Communists were another matter altogether. He loved his native Czechoslovakia dearly and could not forgive the Communists for the suffering and humiliation which they had brought on his people, people he knew and loved, including members of his own family. His frequent recitation of the rosary was chiefly for the final defeat of communism.

He followed the extraordinary drama in Eastern Europe in the closing months of 1989 with joy and open glee. The years of painful waiting and hoping were being finally vindicated. His last months were brightened by the political changes which took place in Eastern Europe and especially in his native land. At last, following the fall of the atheistic government of Prague, Brother Vincent was very happy, happy that religious persecution, more or less open, had come to an end. He relished the thought that now Christians finally and openly could practise their faith without any fear!

He usually enjoyed robust health, liked his food and relished the occasional celebration. Brothers from Malaysia occasionally brought along jars of his favourite salt-fish pickle and blachang. When curry was being served and receiving favourable comments, he was prone to remark: "That's not real curry" His idea of a picnic was a trip to the Brothers' country house near De La Salle Secondary School. There he would appreciate the natural surroundings and enjoy a meal. Towards the end, in the late 80's and early 1990, his health began to give trouble and he had to spend periods in hospital. His pain and discomfort appeared to come from a pancreas malfunctioning.

He felt the separation from community and longed to be with his confreres. His conversation was still of Burma and the old days. He would sound pessimistic at times but, as Brother Anthony McNamara said so aptly: "He was a most amusing pessimist" In fact over the years few contributed such a wealth and variety of jokes to Brother Anthony Cheung for the magazine entitled "The Young Lasallian".

On Thursday the 7th June, the eve of his 81st birthday, he came to the dining room shortly before noon where it was noticed that his hands were trembling violently. All he could take was a little 7-Up and this with very unsteady hands and a clear look of weariness and exhaustion. He was taken immediately by ambulance to the nearby St. Teresa's Hospital where he was diagnosed with prostate cancer.



The following day, his birthday, old pupils and friends came visiting. Two days later he went into a coma and four days passed without his appearing to recover consciousness. He gave the impression that he

was not in pain. On the 15th June at 4.00 am the Brothers were informed by phone that the end was near. Within minutes three Brothers were at his bedside, but already he had breathed his last. He had received the sacrament of the sick earlier in the week. As the body was prepared for burial, the Brothers respected his ardent wish to be dressed in the traditional black robe and white rabat.

Owing to intervening public holidays the funeral was delayed to Wednesday morning the 20th June. In compliance with his expressed wish, a tuft of his mother's hair and a flask of soil of his native land were deposited in the coffin. Then the remains were borne to St Teresa's Parish Church for the funeral mass. No fewer than 12 priests concelebrated and numerous friends and acquaintances were present, as well as several Brothers and Sisters. The cortege then took the road to the Catholic cemetery in Happy Valley, Hong Kong Island. The Chaplain from La Salle College, Father James Lea, gave the last blessing before the coffin was lowered into the grave.

Brother Austin De Lemos had this to say in his homily for the funeral mass:

"For 62 years he laboured with patience and understanding, imparting knowledge of God's truth and love to thousands of youth, forming their hearts and minds. No wonder he won their hearts. No wonder his memory remains ever green in Burma and Kowloon among the many whose lives he touched. All because he walked with fidelity in the footsteps of Jesus, who had spoken long ago to his youthful heart: COME! FOLLOW ME!"

Curriculum Vitae

Novitiate: 1925

Scholasticate: 1926-1927

Final Vows: 1938

Burma: 1928-1966: Teaching

La Salle College, Kowloon: 1966-1973, Teaching

La Salle College, Kowloon: 1973-1990, Retired



**PRAY FOR THE SOUL
of**

Brother Vincent (A.F. Kozak)

born: June 8, 1909

died : June 15, 1990

in the 65th year of
his Religious Life

R. I. P.

OMEGA Series



Bro: Vincent.
Roma 24/8/90.

Family Updates

Kings of Track and Field



It has taken all of 7 years to assuage the hunger and thirst of the La Salle College boys to win back the Inter-School Athletics crown from their arch rivals. Victory, when it came, was all the sweeter, and Wanchai Stadium erupted in a sea of red and white.

The supporters cheered themselves hoarse. Brothers, teachers, old boys and parents emerged from every corner to stand side by side with the athletes. Thousands more watched from afar, courtesy of Campus TV live broadcast. The victory was a moment to savour and indeed neither athletes nor supporters wanted to leave the scene of battle. Well done to all who helped make the impossible possible.

New School Building and Campus

St Joseph's Anglo-Chinese School has had a close connection with the Brothers since its foundation 53 years ago. Its founder, Brother Paul Sun, was an Affiliated member of the Brother's Institute while Brothers Anthony Knoll, Felix Sheehan and Henry Pang actively helped out in the early years of the school. On the 19th March 2011 St Joseph's Anglo-Chinese school held an Opening and Blessing Ceremony for its brand new building and campus. In the entrance foyer, in pride of place, is a fine sculpture of Brother Paul Sun. May his spirit of love and generosity continue to flourish in the school.



Visiting Brother



Brother Kieran O'Callaghan, from the District of Great Britain, paid us a visit from the 16th to the 20th of March. His nephew works in Shanghai and indeed he has a number of other relatives in this part of the world. Now that he has got a taste of the Orient, he may be tempted to return some day! He was particularly happy to celebrate St Patrick's Day here, his father, after all, hailing from Co Cork.

40 Tree Rings

Chong Gene Hang College is well known for its fine tradition in Art and Design. As part of its 40th Anniversary celebrations, an Art Exhibition was held in the Hong Kong Central Library from the 18th to the 21st March 2011. The exhibition included paintings, photographs, multi-media, sculptures and fashion design and both alumni and students exhibited.

The theme of the exhibition was '40 Rings' and very colourful rings they were. The school will surely continue to plant, nurture and yield much artistic talent in the future.



APLEC Plenary Meeting

The most recent plenary APLEC meeting was held on the 26th March 2011. The opening prayer and power-point presentation focused on all those affected by recent natural disasters.

We were happy to welcome back Bro John D'Cruz who has been mentoring some of our teachers in Lasallian Formation programmes. He also gave a presentation at the meeting.

All members of APLEC Hong Kong make special efforts to promote the human and spiritual education of the students in their schools.



Primary Schools Football Tournament

This tournament, organized by La Salle Primary School Parent-Teacher Association, has become an annual affair. The competing schools are St Joseph's, La Salle, Wah Yan and Diocesan Boys. This year, the spoils were shared between Wah Yan who won the Junior section and St Joseph's who won the Senior. But indeed the competition is arranged such that all competitors managed to get a prize. Players, teachers and parents enjoyed the tournament which took place in glorious sunshine.



Mass for the Deceased

A Mass in memory of deceased Lasallians of La Salle College was held in the College chapel on the afternoon of the 9th April 2011. Old boy, Fr Lionel Xavier, O.P., was the celebrant and he was delighted to return 'home' after so many years. He gave an inspiring homily on the meaning of death and life which aptly illustrated the lines in the school song:

*"She will have us ever minding,
That above is our true home."*

After the Mass, all were invited to tea in the Old Boys' Room.



Family Fun Day

The annual Family Fun Day of St Joseph's Primary School was held on the 10th April 2010. The school's Parent-Teacher Association was the organizer. In keeping with the day's theme, "Sunshine Josephians", the sun shone from a sky of blue. Indeed, all those who attended seemed to possess a sunny disposition and there was laughter and smiles all round. Of course the quantity and quality of the prizes helped. A lovely day for the whole family.



A Red-Letter Day

Dr the Honourable David K.P.Li, Pro-Chancellor of the University of Hong Kong (HKU), conferred honorary degrees upon seven outstanding individuals at the 184th Congregation held on March 22nd at Loke Yew Hall of the University.

It was a memorable day for the Lasallian Family in Hong Kong since 5 out of the 7 are old boys of our schools. They are:



Charles Kuen KAO
St. Joseph's College
Doctor of Science



John Cho Chak CHAN
La Salle College
Doctor of Social Sciences



John Chi Yan LEONG
St. Joseph's College
Doctor of Science



Jack Chak Kwong SO
La Salle College
Doctor of Social Sciences



Christopher Wai Chee CHENG
St. Joseph's College
Doctor of Social Sciences

Honorary Degrees are awarded to individuals in recognition of their distinguished service and commitment to the University, the community, and to academia. They are also conferred on those who have made valuable intellectual, social and cultural contributions to society and to the world.

La Salle Home, Sendai, Japan



It may come as a surprise to some that the Lasallian Family in Japan run a welfare Home for children ranging from 4 to 18 years of age. In all there are usually about 80 children. As of 2004, girls as well as boys were accepted into the Home.

Although the De La Salle Brothers first arrived in Japan in 1932, La Salle Home was in fact the first Lasallian mission there after World War II. At the beginning it was a haven for war orphans, but little by little, with the general economic recovery, it started receiving boys from dysfunctional families. These included children of single parents or whose mothers were too ill to take care of them or who found themselves in an environment not at all suitable to family upbringing.

La Salle Home's vision and mission is to give these children the warmth and love that is missing in their homes.

As far as possible, the children attend regular kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. Indeed, it is around this time of the year that they enjoy their graduation ceremonies and receive recognition of their hard work.



La Salle Home has fared relatively well after the recent earthquakes and tsunami. This is partly attributable to the fact that it is located on a little hill. Of course there was a lack of essential supplies for a time but no loss of life. The Brothers, staff and children thank God every day for their safety.

As Brother Rodrigo, the Director of the Home, puts it: "Little by little life is coming back to 'close to normal' for us though we know that there are thousands of families which are really far from that possibility. We, together in prayer, ask our Loving God for their needs while being thankful for his blessings upon us."

Reflection

Perhaps Love

While reflecting a bit recently, about the flooding in Australia, the earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand, and the tsunami that hit Japan, I think of how hollow and futile life can be when people have a false belief in continuity and permanence. All things are impermanent!



Our lives are monotonous, petty and repetitive, and in the workplace you and I have to reply to emails, attend meetings, business lunches etc.

The pace of life is so hectic and maybe we find ourselves slaves of chasing after more and more material goods, more and more things, more and more comforts, so that sometimes we don't know what we are doing.

What am I doing with my life? We sometimes ask ourselves this question.

Do we spend part of our time every day helping people?

We should think about this and fill in our monotonous, routine life, transforming it into a meaningful and fulfilling life.

A thirst for love for one another and a passionate desire to see world conditions improve, is what keeps me going.

'Perhaps Love' is all we need.

***All merciful and compassionate Father,
look kindly upon your suffering children.
We pray for those who recently lost their lives
in disasters in New Zealand, Japan, China and Myanmar.
Open our minds and touch our hearts,
that we may do whatever is in our power to help those who are suffering
and to bring them hope and comfort.
We ask all this through Christ our Lord,
Amen.***