



**The Gateway**

**Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin**

**May 2012**

**Thirty-ninth Issue**

## Welcome



We are just in time to wish all our readers a happy feast of St John Baptist de La Salle which traditionally in our Institute falls on May 15<sup>th</sup>. Thank God this great Saint is well remembered in our schools and educational centres. We know well that without his vision and commitment we would not be where we are.

Month. We will get back on track with the next issue!

Gateway 39 departs somewhat from previous issues by featuring a 'Father' of the Month rather than a 'Brother' of the

We hope you will find 'Oriental Flavour' of interest. It is amazing to find poems composed by Chinese poets reaching back before the dawn of the Christian era. And poems of such freshness too. To balance the poetry we have short moral reflections with, as it were, Chinese characteristics.

It has been a busy time in our Lasallian world, so the number and variety of our 'Family Updates' reflect this.

In this, the month of May, we call on Our Lady to be our guide and protectress.



## Father of the Month

### Father James Lea 1933-1993



Father Lea was born in Dublin, the capital city of Ireland, on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 1933. He was christened James Terence Lea. He received his early primary education in the city. When he was about 10, his father was transferred to another town, Longford, situated in the midlands of Ireland where he continued his primary schooling and finished his five year's secondary school education.

His parents were very fervent Catholics and went to church every day, taking their son together with them. In addition, James' secondary school life was very much influenced by the teaching of the priests as there were no lay teachers in the school. Due to both the religious environment and teachers' influence, James and more than half of his classmates entered the seminary to begin studies for the priesthood after finishing their secondary school studies. He was 17 years old at the time. This type of scenario was not uncommon in Ireland at that time. While he was still a student in Longford, James enrolled in the faculty of Philosophy of University College, Dublin, from where he eventually obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree.

Father Lea's parents were delighted when their son said that he wanted to become a priest. They naturally thought that he would carry out his mission in Ireland. However, in October of 1954 he was sent by his archbishop to the Pontifical Urban University in Rome for theological studies. And that was the kick-start to wider fields. The University's main aim was to train priests and religious as missionaries. While studying, he also served in a parish church and visited the sick on the weekends.



As a student in an international college, Father Lea was in touch with people of over 50 nationalities, including some who were Chinese. He joined the Legion of Mary in the college. Many of the students in the Legion were from China and he became very friendly with them. He also met a seminarian from Hong Kong called Francis Hsu, who later became the first Chinese bishop of Hong Kong. This relationship sparked an interest in Hong Kong and in November of 1957, while still a deacon, he was incardinated into the Hong Kong diocesan clergy. Originally he had hoped to minister in mainland China but he found it was closed to missionaries.

Father Lea was ordained a priest in Rome on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1957 and after the completion of his studies arrived in Hong Kong on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1958. His first task was to learn Cantonese. Normally it took at least two years to get a working knowledge of the language but he was a fast learner and could manage after nine months. He had an Italian priest who taught him Cantonese through Italian! This was no easy task. Cantonese was learned through 'Romanization' - transferring the sounds into alphabetical forms. Father Lea realised that learning a foreign language is a lifelong job and one should 'listen, imitate and repeat.'

After language studies he began his ministry as an associate priest in Rosary Parish, Kowloon. At the same time he took up teaching part-time in the nearby St. Mary's Canossian College. At that time, all the 1<sup>st</sup> Form classes would come together for his lessons. Father Lea recalls: "It was quite a hard job to teach more than 200 pupils at a time. In addition, it was quite difficult to control the study atmosphere in a girls' school as the students were talkative, and moreover, they would feel depressed if they received some small criticism from their teachers. On the other hand, girls usually have a better memory than boys, so they could pay more attention to the lessons."



In 1961, Father Lea joined La Salle College, Kowloon as a full-time teacher and Chaplain. He may have been attracted by the fact that a number of the Brothers in the community there were fellow Irish citizens. He was given a room to the right of the main entrance. The British military had only recently returned the school building to the Brothers. It had

been requisitioned after the war for use as a military hospital. Father Lea recalls: "The old La Salle building was a very homely place and every student had a very strong attachment to the school. The students were studying in a harmonious atmosphere."

Another change in La Salle was the increase in employment of lady teachers. "This was a good policy as some ladies were excellent teachers and, more important, lady teachers often maintained a closer relationship with the students, especially the younger boys."

In the early days of teaching, Father Lea was very strict and he would regularly fail students in Biblical Knowledge, even by one mark. He also instituted a unique form of

class discipline. For a first offence, a student would have to stand on his chair. However, for a more serious offence the student would have to stand on the desk! This strategy had the desired effect since it could prove somewhat unnerving to the offender when the Principal, Brother Casimir Husarik, passed by on his rounds.

It did not take long for the students to get used to Father Lea's teaching style and everyone settled to the task. There was never any need to use the cane. He never raised his voice in class. His command of the English language was impeccable. He had a way with words, big and small. He could and did walk into any classroom at any level in the school, without a textbook or note of any kind, and deliver an interesting and informative lesson. He would sometimes tell jokes and comprehending them could be an English language exercise in itself.



His first stint in La Salle was from 1961 to 1966 after which he was transferred to parish work for a period of 3 years. He returned as teacher and chaplain to La Salle in 1969 and remained until his death. As time went on, the co-ordination of the Ethics panel seemed to naturally devolve upon him. In public

exam classes he would sometimes tolerate sleepy students, knowing that they had been burning the midnight oil. He would not fail them in Ethics as long as they were able to write out the main prayers properly.

Every first Friday he celebrated Mass in the large Hall of the school, attended by all the Catholic pupils as well as those who wished to attend, so there would be something in the region of 400 in the congregation. To attend such Masses was an experience. Father Lea said the Mass with devotion. His talks to the boys during these Masses were excellent and pupils ranging from Form 1 to Form 7 got something out of them. He had a vast array of stories and statistics in his armoury and he could make the telling of these both entertaining and inspiring.

Occasionally Father Lea displayed a stubborn streak. On one famous occasion the government inspectors were inspecting teachers and classes in the school. Lo and behold, when one inspector went to observe Father Lea's class he was refused entry

on the grounds that he was not qualified in either theology or philosophy! One wonders what would be the result if this scenario were to be played out today!

Outside the classroom he was always available for a chat. He had a fund of witty jokes and a hearty laugh making him an ideal conversationalist. As a young priest he had a good number of people going to his room for advice, among them some young ladies. He took precautions against any possible temptation by keeping his room door ajar. He regarded this as necessary, as practical prudence. Because his room was located near the main entrance, he was sometimes mistaken for the Principal and he enjoyed setting the record straight. He would say “I live downstairs but Brother X lives upstairs.”



The student editors of the college annual magazine, “The Lasallite”, held a couple of interviews with Father Lea. When they asked him about the life of a teacher he had this to say: “I enjoy teaching very much. It is a wonderful art to be able to communicate with others and to tell them the things that they don’t know yet. It is also a wonderful way of learning about life. I learn a lot from my students. I learn, for example, what they think of their teachers, about the church and religion and their attitude towards life. Teaching gives me a deep insight into life.”



Since the majority of students and people in Hong Kong were not Catholics, the students asked him if he thought these non-Catholics were not religiously-minded. He responded: “No, I think that the people here are naturally very religious. They practise the virtues of kindness, cheerfulness, hope and faith to name but a few. They believe in themselves and in their children.”

Besides teaching, Father Lea took up another important post in 1970 when he began a long ministry as Chaplain at the nearby Hong Kong Kai Tak International Airport. He would celebrate Masses on Sundays. Together with the air-crews, Father Lea also arranged meetings with the Catholics at the airport. Moreover, he tried to help people who had difficulties finding their luggage or who had lost their passports. He was also chaplain to the Royal Air Force.

One of his main lifetime commitments was to the Legion of Mary. He became spiritual director to the school's 'Our Lady of the Redeemer' praesidium and to many senior praesidia and to the Junior Curia. When necessary, he gave the talk or "allocutio" in Cantonese. A particular innovation was his establishment of a Legion Praesidium at the airport, aptly named 'Our Lady of the Sky.'

An interesting hobby of Father Lea was playing the Chinese game of mah-jong. Small stakes would sometimes be wagered. By all accounts he played quite a good game and he no doubt improved his knowledge of colloquial Cantonese at those sessions.

In the 1980's, Brother Henry Pang was suffering from a basket of diseases. He used to look forward to Father Lea's 15 minutes daily visit before the school bell for the start of classes. Father Lea could well sympathise with Brother Henry because both suffered from diabetes.

Father Lea grew into a robust, somewhat chubby figure. He cut a very solid force as full back in the staff friendly football games against St Joseph's College staff. When in his fifties, however, he was diagnosed with diabetes. He did not always take the necessary care. He was particularly partial to sweet stuff, ice cream an especial culprit. Because of the disease and his weight, he did, however, take the precaution of using a walking stick. He was also exempted from walking up the school stairways with his classes and took the lift instead.



Tragedy struck suddenly. Father Lea liked to drive to and from school. He was aware that feeling in his legs was of poor quality because of the effects of diabetes. One day, at lunch break, on a regular drive down La Salle Road, he knocked down a pupil crossing the road. The boy died as a result of injuries sustained. The incident affected Father Lea deeply and, to a certain extent, he was not the same man

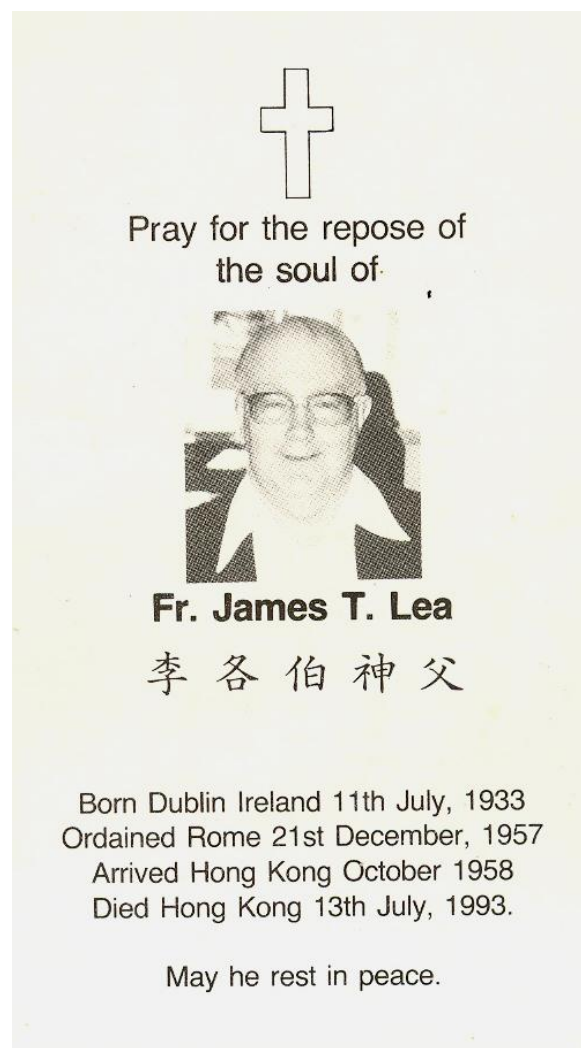
again.

In 1993, he was admitted to hospital for a heart irregularity and to be fitted with a pacemaker. It was thought to be a routine procedure. Indeed it seemed to be so and Father Lea himself felt so upbeat he left the hospital on the 11<sup>th</sup> July to celebrate his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in his apartment. Perhaps he had left the hospital too soon and celebrated too well. Without any warning, he suffered a massive heart attack in the

early hours of the 13<sup>th</sup> July. In the previous December he had applied to the Education Department for a year's teaching extension. This was normally a formality. It seemed that the Lord had other plans.

His funeral Mass was held on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July at St Margaret's Church in Happy Valley. Cardinal Wu was the main celebrant assisted by 50 concelebrating priests. His co-worker at the airport, Father Patrick O'Regan, paid fitting tribute in his eulogy. After the Mass, burial took place at the Catholic cemetery in Happy Valley.

Father Lea used to remind his pupils to remember and practise the School Motto 'Fides et Opera' which means faith and good deeds. As he put it: "Faith is belief in the invisible and requires trust in each other and in God. We must not be suspicious or paranoid. We must always give each other the benefit of the doubt. Good deeds will help us to repair the mistakes we make. With this motto and the school spirit, La Salle will surely become something more!" The 'something more' refers to a line in the La Salle school song, a song treasured by its students and old boys.





## Postings of Father James Lea

Longford, Ireland	Minor Seminary	1946-1953
Rome, Italy	Major Seminary	1954-1957
Rome, Italy	Ordination	21 <sup>st</sup> December 1957
Cheung Chau, Hong Kong	House of Studies	1958-1960
Rosary Church, Hong Kong	Vicar Cooperator	1960-1961
La Salle College, Hong Kong	Teaching and Chaplain	1962-1966
Mother of Good Counsel Church, Hong Kong	Assistant Parish Priest	1968
Christ the Worker's Chapel, Hong Kong	Assistant Parish Priest	1969
La Salle College, Hong Kong	Teaching and Chaplain	1970-1993
Hong Kong Kai Tak Airport	Sacred Heart Chapel (R.A.F.Chapel)	1970 - 1993



## Family Updates

### APLEC Plenary Meeting

An Asia Pacific Lasallian Educators' Conference (APLEC) plenary meeting was held on the 21<sup>st</sup> April at La Salle College. There were reports on our finances, Lasallian youth and on APLEC 8 as well as a vocation presentation by Brother Jeffrey Chan. The idea of building up a library of Lasallian songs and hymns as well as inspirational songs



was also discussed. A particular highlight at this meeting was the presentation of appreciation certificates to 4 members who will be retiring. They have contributed much to the Lasallian mission in Hong Kong. The next plenary meeting has been scheduled for the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

### Family Fun Day



On the 22<sup>nd</sup> April it was the turn of St Joseph's Primary School to open its doors for a Family Fun Day. The occasion was blessed with sunshine.

The Theme this year was "Practising Josephians." The Guest of Honour was Mr. Peter Choy, Chairperson of the College Parent Teacher Association. In his address, he recalled that he was in

the very first graduating group from St Joseph's Primary at its existing location.

The day was enjoyed by all, especially since there were so many prizes and gifts, including free fruit from Sunkist!

## 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Walkathon

The skies cleared. The sun shone. This was a real bonus in the midst of generally unsettled weather. As part of the ongoing celebrations to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of La Salle College, a Walkathon was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April in the beautiful surroundings of Tai Tam country-park. Nearly all participants had to be bussed. Principal, Brother Steve, kicked off the proceedings for a crowd of over 800 jolly walkers. The entire programme went off very smoothly thanks to the hard work of the organizing committee.



## Christian Brothers' Schools Exchange Programme 2012

Every year selected students from our secondary schools have an exchange programme. This year the Opening Ceremony was held on the 21<sup>st</sup> April in the Hall of Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College in the presence of principals, teachers, the organizing committee and the exchange students concerned. The students introduced their respective schools and Brother Jeffrey gave an interesting formation presentation. For one week the students will be assigned to different Lasallian schools and will write up a project at the end.



## “No Laughing-This is Serious”



Such was the title of the comedy musical drama jointly produced by Chong Gene Hang College and Islamic Kasim Tuet Memorial College on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 2012. The writer of the script and the director was Mr. Stuart Mead, the native-english teacher at Chong Gene Hang. The

College has quite a long tradition of drama productions. The drama included mystery, crime, anger, kung fu, confusion, friendship, surprises, misunderstanding, romance, music, singing and lots of jokes. The student actors and actresses entered wholeheartedly into the spirit of the drama and engaged the audience to the end. This kind of activity is a very welcome relief from the day to day routine of school life.

## Lasallian Women’s Symposium



For the first time in the history of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, a Lasallian Women’s Symposium was held from the 29<sup>th</sup> April to 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2012 in the Redemptorist Centre, Pattaya, Thailand. This was an initiative of the Pacific Asia Regional Conference (PARC), chaired by Brother David Hawke.

A main objective of the Symposium was to recognize, enhance and strengthen the position of Lasallian women in the wider Lasallian mission. Such was the interest taken in this new initiative that it was graced with the presence of the Superior General, Brother Alvaro. Hong Kong was very well represented by Mrs. Loretta Yu, Mrs. Millie Tam and Mrs. Emily Leung, while Brother Thomas Lavin was also in attendance.

## Mobile Learning Education Symposium

A major highlight of the year-long celebrations of La Salle College's 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was the Mobile Learning Education Symposium held in the College on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Principal, Brother Steve, and a committee of staff, alumni and parents, worked long and hard to bring the event to a successful conclusion. The use of IT in the teaching and learning process was the general focus and this very current trend drew upwards of 700 participants, including quite a number from overseas. Presenters and keynote speakers were of high calibre. All in all, cutting-edge stuff.



## 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Dinner

The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of La Salle College came to a colourful close on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2012 at the Convention and Exhibition Centre with a Gala Dinner. The dinner was organized by a committee of the Old Boys' Association and they left no stone



unturned to ensure that all went well. The Guests of Honour for the occasion were the teacher and past president old boy octogenarians. Indeed some of them were nonagenarians and were still sprightly of mind and body. One enforced absentee because of ill health was former old boy president, Mr. Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales, AFSC, and whose representative was presented with the UMAEL Outstanding Global Lasallian award on Mr. Sales' behalf. This award is for his contribution to nation building and to the Lasallian mission. Good conversation, good entertainment and good food made the occasion memorable for all.

## Oriental Flavour

How amazing that, recently, one of the very old classical Chinese poems appeared in a local newspaper in the far West of Ireland! The poem in question is 'The Cry of the Ospreys' or 關關雎鳩 in Chinese. It turns out that the writer of the newspaper article was a former teacher and headmaster and has a number of books to his name.

'The Cry of the Ospreys' is taken from the Shijing, (Book of Songs), collection dating back to about 1000 BCE. This treasury of traditional songs is the oldest collection of poems in world literature. It was said that all Shijing poems could be sung as songs. Confucius commented on the poem saying that "there is joy without wantonness and sorrow without self-injury."



*'Fair, fair,' cry the ospreys  
On the island in the river.  
Lovely is this noble lady,  
Fit bride for our lord.*

*In patches grows the water mallow:  
To left and right one must seek it.  
Shy was this noble lady;  
Day and night he sought her.*

*Sought her and could not get her;  
Day and night he grieved.  
Long thoughts, oh, long unhappy  
thoughts,  
Now on his back, now tossing on to  
his side.*

*In patches grow the water mallow;  
To left and right one must gather it.  
Shy is this noble lady;  
With bells and drums we hearten*



The poem expresses the age-old longing for the possession of the beautiful in life. The difficulty or impossibility of possessing such beauty gives the poem its delicate tension. The poem has had many different interpretations down through the centuries. It is popularly viewed as the search for a good fair maiden by a young nobleman. Virtually every Chinese student used to memorise this traditional wedding song.

## Moral Reflection

### Giving Up Halfway

## 半途而废，半途而罢

During the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220AD), a young man named Le Yangzi went to the capital to study, with the hope that he would pass the exam and qualify as an official.

After studying for one year, Le Yangzi returned home.

His wife was curious, "Why did you come home halfway?"

"Studying is really tough. I miss home so much," explained Le Yangzi.

The wife went to the weaving machine and said, "I've spent days and nights weaving this cloth. I weaved it stitch by stitch. If I cut the cloth halfway, all my previous effort is wasted."



"So it is with study. You should be acquiring new knowledge each day, and improve your behaviour gradually. What's the difference between your decision and my cutting this cloth halfway?"

Le Yangzi was touched by the words of his wife. He went off again and returned home only after completing his studies seven years later.

*Moral of the Story:*

*Whatever you do, determination and persistence is the key to success. Giving up halfway, only means that all your earlier efforts are wasted.*

*So, keep going. Refrain from 'giving up halfway'!*

## Looking out of my Window



Spring has come with  
the spider trees a blooming,  
adorning the roadside  
in cream-white blossoms profuse,  
good-fortune announcing.

The crowns bloom forth  
in sweet abandon  
For a riotous month;  
till the rains weigh them down  
to carpet the earth.

Such spring glories bear the strains  
of wedding canopies and bridal trains.