

26 January 2014 • 131



January Visits. I did three visits this January: a pastoral visit to the LEAD Novices and canonical visits to the communities in Singapore and Hong Kong.

I dropped by the Novitiate on January 6 and 7 interviewing 10 novices from LEAD. The Sectors of Myanmar and the Philippines both have 4 novices and the Sector of Thailand has 2. The interviews were spread out in two days and took place in the quiet setting of the Memorial Cloister. The novices are on their 8th month of their canonical year and will finish in May 2014. They are set to have their First Vows soon after that. The following are the LEAD novices:

Josaphat Ai Saw Hung Htoo, Quilino Quiti, Stephen Zeim Thu, Thomas Gaw Lu, Edmon Viroomal, John David Ong, Rado Mercado, Ranier Guillergan, Benedict Panomworachai and John Khasochan. Together with them are 2 novices from Sri Lanka, Roshan Abeykoon and Sathiya Gnanakkone, one from India, Ponsingh Anthony Clarence, and one from Papua New Guinea, Thomas Waburi. My gratitude to Novice Master, Br. Vincent Keating for arranging and organising the visit.

I flew to Singapore on the 11th to visit the two communities at St. Patrick's School and St. Joseph's Institution. I



was able to interview six Brothers at St. Pat's namely: Br. Nicholas Seet (Director), Br. Collin Wee, Br. Gregory Lim, Br. Alphonso Danai, Br. David Hawke and Br. John Pill. Nicholas is the only one working at the school teaching Religious Education and doing part time administrative work. He is a big support to the Principal, Mr. Adolphus Tan. Br. Collin continues to head Hope House, a center for young adult offenders. Collin is ably assisted by an excellent staff. Br. Danai from the Sector of Thailand is studying at La Salle College of the Arts. He is taking up animation. Brs. David and John work in the PARC office. Br. Gregory who is retired recently celebrated his Platinum Jubilee.

While in St. Pat's I attended the PARC Services Commission headed by Br. John Pill. In attendance were James Camden and Steve Byrne from ANZPPNG, Fritzie de Vera from LEAD and Br. John Fernando from India but working in Singapore.

The 13th and 14th were spent with the SJI Brothers. Br. Paul Ho is the Sector Leader and also the President of SJI (Independent). Working with him is Br. Jason Blaikie, Director of the community,

and Br. Kennedy, a Brother from the Delegation of India teaching Tamil. Working at St. Joseph's Institution International is Br. George Van Grieken, President. He is assisted by Br. Arian Lopez and by Br. John Fernando. Rounding up the community is Br. Dominic Chong who works in St. Joseph's Primary (formerly St. Michael's). An interesting note is that the campus where the Brothers residence sits on in Malcom Park is being renovated thus the school is located in a different campus and the Brothers now have to travel everyday. Renovations should be finished in two and half years. I ended the visit with a dinner for the two communities in an Indian restaurant.



January 20, 21 and 22 were spent in the two communities of Hong Kong. The visit informally began with a visit on the 19th (Sunday) to St. Joseph College for their Open House. Br. Richie and I dropped by in the morning as guests and parents were slowly filling up the grounds. On January 20, Monday, I took the train to SJC to interview three Brothers: Br. Thomas Favier, Br. Alphonsus Breen and Br. Jeffrey Chan. Br. Thomas is the Director of the Community and the Supervisor of the school. Br. Alphonsus Breen is supervisor of St. Joseph Primary but has a less hectic schedule. Br. Jeffrey teaches full time at SJC although he continues to move around the different Lasallian Schools in Hong Kong.

On the 21st I interviewed Br. Patrick Tierney, Sector Leader and Director of the community. Pat is also the Supervisor of the La Salle College and La Salle Primary. Br. Steve Hogan, on loan from ANZPPNG, is Principal of La Salle College and is tasked with the daily running of the school as well as ensuring that LSC continues to lead the way in educational and pedagogical innovations in Hong Kong. Br. Steve is also LEAD's Director of Mission. Br. Lawrence Blake is retired but is very much part of the community. Br. Hyacinth Fitzgerald is also retired and now resides in a retirement home for religious and is cared for professionally. Rounding out the community are Br. Thomas Lavin, Auxiliary Visitor and Br. Richie Yap, LEAD Administrator.

My gratitude to the two Sector Leaders, Br. Paul Ho and Br. Pat Tierney and to all the community directors for the organisation and all the arrangements.

Prayers Requested. Mr. Sulpicio Melecio Mejias, the father of Br. Rey Mejias FSC passed away last 21 February at the age of seventy (70) years old. Let us remember them and their loved ones in our prayers.

“Come and See” 2014. The “Come and See” program of the Sector of Myanmar is the pool from which they get their vocations. It is the first step of their formation program and the venue is in Kalaw. This year they were able to bring together twelve (12) young men. The Brothers recruit the boys mostly from their own villages although some are recommended by priests in parishes far from any of the villages where the Brothers come from. It is a nine-month program consisting of catechetical studies, computer and english courses. After the “Come and See” some of the young men move into the Sector's Aspirancy program (live in) in Maymyo. Director of the program is Br. Moris Thar Gyi and assisted by Br. Hillary and Br. Philip Thein Oo. The “Come and See”

program for 2014 opened with a welcome message from Myanmar Sector Leader Br. Lawrence Goh. This was followed by a prayer service of commitment and a welcome dinner.





Discernment Retreat. Every year, the Philippine Sector Vocations Coordinator organises a Discernment Retreat for Aspirants who are qualified to apply for the Postulancy Program. Aspirant Michael Nino Ramirez of Dasmariñas shares his experience of the retreat in the following article:

“The cold breeze of the foothills of Tagaytay welcomed the young men from different parts of the country as they arrived for the discerners’ retreat at Shambala in Silang, Cavite last 17- 19 January 2014. The place was a quiet, serene getaway for the 15 discerners who are considering the vocation of the De La Salle Brothers in the near future. Present during the 3-day event and coming from their respective Lasallian communities were Aljay Martinez, Ivan Karlo Umali, Paolo Ferrer (Lipa); Chuck Magno, Bryan Joe Valencia, Michael Niño Ramirez (Dasmariñas); Junnel Camingawan, Nico Mariano, Kevin Nieto, Earl Ganuelas, Nico Ordoñez, Domingo Copeng III, Patrick Dalmacio (Manila); and Raymond Verana (Bagac). The spiritual direction was given by Br. Vincent Fernandez FSC (Postulancy Director) and was assisted by Br. Kenneth Martinez FSC (DLSL President) and Br. Alex Diaz FSC (Philippine Vocations Promoter).

“The 3-day program was inspired by JRR Tolkien’s story, “The Hobbit”, where the lead character gained a new level of maturity, competence and wisdom when he accepted the challenge of leaving his comfort zone at the threshold of another life journey. Silence was observed during the intervals of the thematic group sharing. This gave them an opportunity to have enough time to contemplate, reflect and pray in the light of the gospel. They took advantage of the serenity of the place where proximity to nature was at its best and being one with God was greatly possible. The venue was indeed aptly named after a mythical eastern Himalayan kingdom of tranquility and happiness.



“To promote the spirit of family and fun, the discerners were grouped to take turns in doing dining hall tasks. They were also distributed among the different authentic indigenous Cordilleran huts serving as their accommodation for the duration of the retreat. On their last night, dinner was served in a boodle fight manner as a symbol of unity, brotherhood and equality. It was followed by a community gathering by the bonfire and a showcase of talent per hut was held. All groups were encouraged to derive their performances from the bible and to dress up like biblical characters as they entered the green house of Shambala.

“Sunday was the final day and the retreat was capped with the Holy Mass. The discerners and the accompanying De La Salle Brothers hiked from the venue to the community chapel. Then, the final session took place where everyone was encouraged to share about their whole retreat experience. The discerners shared their reflections on their life challenges, God’s providence and guidance, threshold and crossroads, letting go and, from the majority, the idea of surrender. To conclude the discerners’ retreat, the Brothers present gave words of advice and invited all the participants to the next level: the postulancy. As part of tradition, they were asked to submit their application letters on the 14th of February which fortunately coincides with the LEAD Senior Brothers Assembly and Valentine’s Day.” *(Aspirant Michael Nino Ramirez)*

Christian Brothers Schools Association (CBSA) Athletics Meet 2013-14. “Wednesday, January 22, students from the five Christian Brothers Schools (Lasallian Schools) in Hong Kong held their annual CBSA Athletics Meet at Wan Chai. About 300 athletes gathered at 8:00am in the freezing cold but sunny morning. A family atmosphere was aptly described by the guest of Honour, Dr Raymond SO, Director of Elite Training Science & Technology, from the Hong Kong Sports Institute.

“The CBSA schools are: St. Joseph’s College, Chong Gene Hang College, Chan Siu Ki (La Salle) College, De La Salle Secondary School, and La Salle College.” (<http://web.lasalle.edu.hk>)

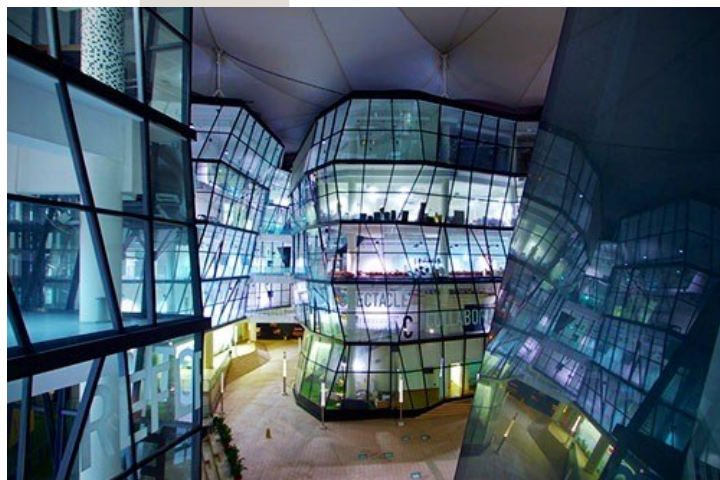


Best Art Schools in the World.

Spear's, a European multi-award-winning wealth management and luxury lifestyle magazine, recently ranked LASALLE College of the Arts as one of the best art schools across the globe. Below is an excerpt from the article of Aoife Moriarty:

“A partner institution of Goldsmiths in London, LASALLE has become one of the leading arts institutions in Asia since it was founded three decades ago.

“The Singapore-based college offers diplomas, graduate and postgraduate degrees in disciplines including fine arts, design, film, media arts, fashion, theatre and dance.



“The institution's philosophy is to reflect 'the collaborative and interactive nature' of contemporary art practice. This forward-thinking approach has made it the first in Asia to provide numerous programmes, including an MA in Art Therapy and the first MA in Asian Art History that focuses on Contemporary art.

“LASALLE's campus includes theatres, studios and ensemble spaces to accommodate a broad spectrum of artistic needs. Throughout the year, respected artists and designers are invited to lecture on campus. Visitors to the college over the years have included artists Frank Stella and Terence O'Connell, film producer Lord David Puttnam, theatre director Robert Wilson and fashion designer Mark Eley.” You can read

the full article at: <http://www.spearswms.com/news/best-art-school-in-the-world/#.UuHPWvYRUy6>

Last Dec 2013, the LASALLE Faculty of Design participated in the Community Chest Christmas ChariTrees Fundraising project at Marina Bay. Students from the LASALLE College of the Arts designed the “Story Trees” and were lit up from 15 November to 27 December. More than SG\$380,000 was raised for Community Chest through this project. *(Mr. Venka Purushothaman)*

Fraternally,

Br. Edmundo L. Fernandez FSC
Hong Kong