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St. Xavier's 160th and St. Michael's Institution's 100th. (Br. Vincent Corkery FSC). 2012 is a jubilee year for two of Malaysia's best known Lasallian Schools: St Xavier's Institution [SXI] in Penang [1852-2012], and St Michael's Institution [SMI] in Ipoh [1912-2012].

For about half a century St Xavier's was the only Lasallian school in Malaysia. It would seem that the thrust was towards setting up schools in Burma and in India, and later Sri Lanka. Brothers at St Xavier's came from a diversity of countries, notably from France and Ireland, but also from Australia, Hong Kong, Burma, India, Canada, USA, Sri Lanka and Singapore.

St. Xavier's came to be ranked among the most prestigious schools, not just as regards distinctive architecture, but more especially because of academic excellence, and successes on the playing field. The SXI boarding department included students from far and wide, notably from Thailand and Borneo.

The original SXI building was destroyed during the Japanese war. When peace was restored in 1945, the school reopened without delay, and classes were housed in temporary shacks along the periphery of the playing field. It would be six years before a new building became available. These six years when the school functioned under the most challenging conditions mark the years of glory for SXI, as it led the way for academic results, cultural events, games etc.

Sixty years after 1852 St Michael's Institution, Ipoh, was founded in December 1912. Ipoh was the heart of a rapidly developing tin-mining region. The shortage of Brothers meant that for its first ten years, SMI was managed by the French parish priest, Fr J. B. Coppin, while the Brothers paid regular inspection visits. The classes were conducted in make-shift classrooms and suitable staffing was an ongoing problem.

The school did manage to develop however and by 1920 it was decided that the Brothers should take over direct management. A first consideration was the erection of a suitable building. Frenchman Br Vernier Augustus became director January 1921. With his passion for architecture he set about designing a new building, the first stage of which was completed by 1922. Other stages would follow, until the entire façade was completed 30 years later in 1952. St Michael's remains one of the outstanding landmarks of Ipoh, and its popularity has been long established.

During the Japanese Occupation 1941-1945 the SMI building was requisitioned by the Japanese to house government offices. The post-war years saw rapid recovery, proud years for the Brothers. People remembered how they had remained behind to share the uncertainties and deprivations of the Japanese Occupation. The school was soon in full swing once more and attained excellent standards in short time.

The decline in the number of Brothers became acute in the final decades of the century. Both SXI and SMI are headed by lay principals today. However the Lasallian spirit continues, thanks in large measure to the strong Lasallian culture of each school, where the values of Faith, Service and Community are deeply rooted.

Fraternally,

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La Salle Green Hills