

General view of De La Salle College, Kfaryachit.

go together. It is part of culture and nothing can change it. There is no lack of seminarians, but no vocations for us.

On the Delegation of Lebanon level, the Sector Chapter has made recruitment of vocations the top priority. As a consequence, a community for young people in formation has been set up at Beit-Méry and adequate staffing provided. In addition, 2 Brothers have been assigned to vocation work; Ildefonse Khoury and Sami Hatem.

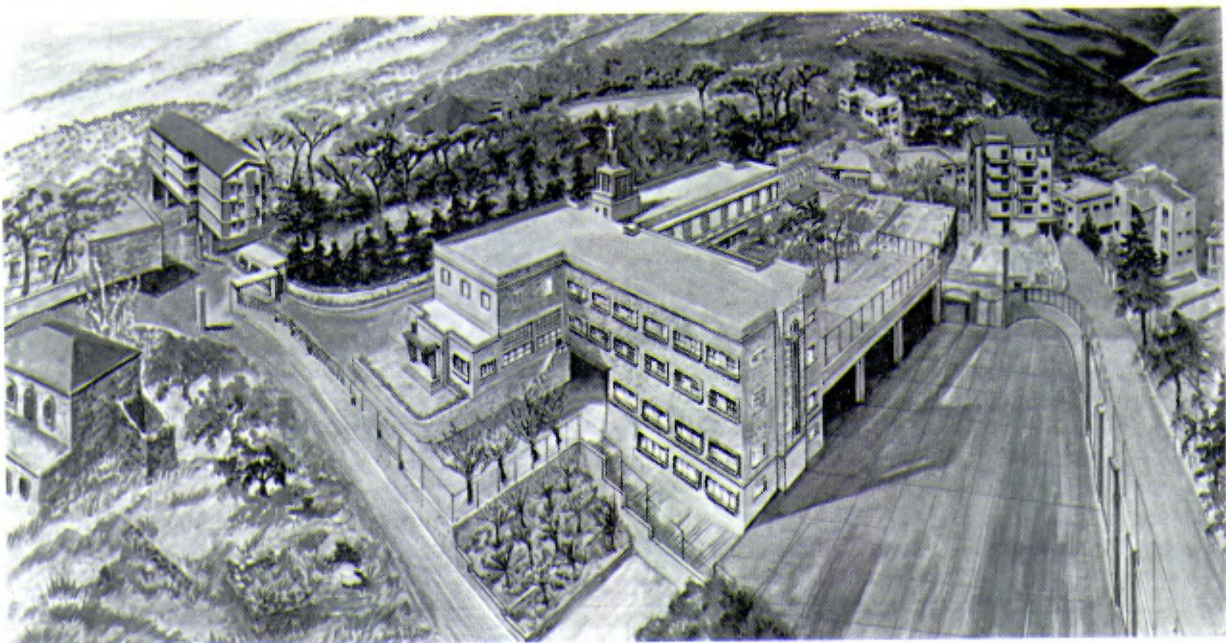
Side by side with recruitment, continuing formation sessions in Lasallian studies and theology have been organised for lay teachers and lay people with posts of responsibility.

Great efforts have been made recently by Br Sami to set up some structures to serve as springboards for further action: monthly recollections, prayer meetings, religious groups like:

- The Friends of de La Salle for the 11-12 year old.
- The Companions of De La Salle for the 13-15 year olds.
- Lasallian Youth for the 16-18 year olds.
- Signum Fidei for adults: teachers, former students, university students.

We hope that our efforts will be blessed by the Lord, and that the educational vocation of the De La Salle Brother will become understood and considered at its true value, so that there will be an influx of vocations and serenity will return to our Institute. And with that wish, we close this article. ●

General view of St Mary's School, Beit Mery.





## 14. DELEGATION OF MYANMAR (BURMA)



### MYANMAR (BURMA)

Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) is a country which is about one-fifth the size of India. It is bounded by Thailand and Laos on the east, China on the north and by India and Pakistan on the west. The population of the country is about 45 million, the vast majority of whom are Buddhist. Catholics make up about one percent of the population. There are two archdioceses and nine dioceses in the country.

### THE INSTITUTE IN MYANMAR

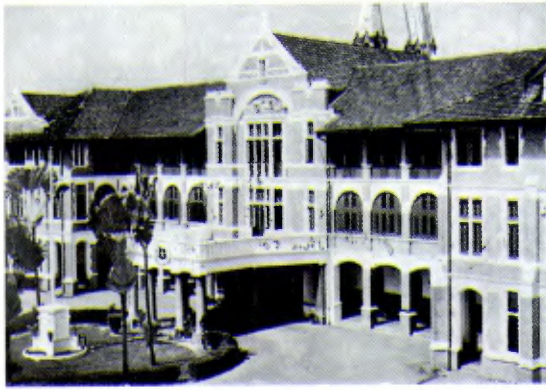
The first Brothers arrived in Burma in the year 1860. Until 1960, Burma was a sub-District of Penang, Malaysia. In 1960, the year of the Centenary of the arrival of the Brothers, Burma was raised to the status of a District, with Brother Peter Mandel as its first Visitor. There were about fifty Brothers in the District at the time, and the following is a brief account of each of the ten schools the Brothers ran in Burma before the Burmese Government nationalised all the private schools in the entire country on 1st April 1965.

#### 1. St. Paul's, Rangoon. (Yangon)

On the 9th September, 1860, Brothers Othmarian, Victor and Louis Edward arrived in Rangoon (now called Yangon) and within three days of their arrival had classes functioning in a small dilapidated building near the bishop's residence next to St. Mary's Cathedral. It was Bishop Paul Ambrose Bigandet who was responsible for the Brothers coming to Burma. His name will forever be commemorated in the memory of St. Paul's, probably the largest and finest school in Burma. It accommodated about four thousand students each year. Brother Valens, Director of St. Paul's from 1871 to 1899, was responsible for the building of St. Paul's after Brothers Othmarian, Philonius, Victor, Saggitaire and Herige Benedict (all former Directors of St. Paul's) had done much of the spadework.

Brother Valens was succeeded by Brother O. Gregory, who brought the school to the front rank especially in public examinations, and extended the school building by the addition of two wings, thus completing the U-shape. Very old Paulians still remember the stern discipline which Brother O. Gregory initiated in St. Paul's and which, though somewhat mitigated to suit modern mentality, continued till 1965 when all private schools in the country were nationalised by the government.





St Paul's College, Rangoon, founded in 1860 and confiscated by the State in 1965: the main entrance.

Even after the second world war, St. Paul's continued producing excellent results in the High School Final and Matriculation Examination each year, many a time scoring the first place. It also excelled in the field of athletics and sports. The school could also boast of a brass band which was the pride of the school.

The post-war Directors of St. Paul's were Brothers Hubert Pilz, Peter Mandel, Felix (Albert Gissler), Edmund John.

## 2. St. Patrick's, Moulmein.

Opened in 1860, St. Patrick's, Moulmein, was the first of the Brothers' schools in Burma. Brothers Philonius, Zeboras, Berchmans, Anthelm Louis, Octavian, Venere and Gabriel succeeded one another as Director of the school from 1860 to 1896. The school was famous for the education it gave, its yearly dramatic performances which were much appreciated by the people of Moulmein, and it also made a name for itself in gymnastics and athletics. Each year the enrollment of students became larger and larger and it became apparent a larger school was needed. The Government decided to vacate the old jail situated next to the school and divided the jail compound into two parts of which the eastern was given to St. Joseph's Convent and the western to St. Patrick's. The school thus came into possession of a full-sized football field and two substantial buildings which were divided into classrooms.

From 1903 to 1925, the school was successively governed by Brothers Basilian, Sylvester, Aimar, Claude, Edward, Gilbert and Dominic. The subsequent Directors were Brothers M. Mark, Victorian, Lucian, Gilbert, R. Mark, Canice and Austin. It was at this time under the directorship of Brother Austin, that the school acquired a splendid concert hall, a fine library and a well-equipped science laboratory. It was also at this time that a fife and drum band was started which later grew into a magnificent brass band. Brother Edmund of Mary replaced Brother Austin as Director and during his short period as Director, organised the Centenary Celebrations in March 1960 before the school closed for the summer holidays. Shortly after the reopening of classes in May 1960, Brother Wilfrid was appointed Director of the school. He was replaced by Brother Gabriel just before the Nationalisation of the schools in 1965.

## 3. St- Peter's, Mandalay.

The first Brothers arrived in Mandalay in 1897. Brother John (Valdebert Jean) was teacher, sub-director and director of the school for the period 1903-1915, and was the great architect of St. Peter's.

During his 18 years' stay in Mandalay, he became known as one of the outstanding educationists in Burma.

Brother Clementian was Director from 1933 to 1948 and again from 1950 to 1956. The school made a name for itself in 1956 when three of its students came out first, second and third in Burma, in the Matriculation Examination held that year.

## 4. De La Salle Orphanage, Twante.

This Institute was founded by Brother Valdebert John in 1921. From the time he took over the directorship of St. Paul's in 1915, he planned to give the poorer Anglo-Indians of those days a theoretical and practical training on an industrial basis. His general desire was to do as much good as he could for the benefit of mankind. It was the interpretation of his love for God and his love for his neighbour in the poor children. It was the first institution of its kind in Burma and as such Brother John has won a niche in the Remembrance Hall Of Fame.

Brother John's scheme included a rubber plantation of some 1800 acres, the returns of which would more than suffice to support a large school population, and the surplus to be used in technical, professional and literary education of promising lads in suitable Institutions in Burma and overseas.

Brother John was entirely lovable and entirely loved by the boys and De La Salle Institute was a HOME for every one. Even till this very day, Brother John is referred to as "Papa" John. History alone will be able to assess the greatness of Brother John in the school he founded. He worked on the axiom that a boy can and should be trusted and this is the keynote of his success among boys.

*"The glory of life is to love, not to be loved;  
To serve, not to be served; to give, not to get;*



The Brothers of the Delegation of Myanmar at the end of the 1988 retreat.



*To be a strong hand in the dark to another in the hour of need;  
To be a cup of strength to any soul in a crisis of weakness;  
This is to know the glory of life."*

Brother John had a very great devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. He passed away on the 15th August, 1942, the feast of Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven. The former students of De La Salle, Twante, celebrated the Golden Anniversary of Papa John's passing away in November 1992, at which Brother Dominic Berardelli, Delegate of Brother Superior to Burma and India, was present for the occasion.

Every year without fail, the former students keep the memory of Papa John alive by having a Memorial Mass offered in his honour in St. Mary's Cathedral, Rangoon, on or about the 15th August. They also make it a point to visit his grave every year during the summer. He is still esteemed and honoured till this very day.

Brother John was succeeded by Brothers Directors Celestyn, Julius, Austin and Raphael.

### 5. St. Albert's, Maymyo.

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This school was opened on July 2, 1945, by Brother Director Clementian. A fortnight later he left for Mandalay and Brother Director Frederick was put in charge of the school. Brother Frederick was responsible for building St. Albert's, with the help of Bishop Faliere and the Brothers' schools in Mandalay and Rangoon. St. Albert's was already making a high reputation for itself when Brother Frederick was succeeded by Brother Director Edmund. Under Brother Edmund, the standard of studies was raised and a high percentage of passes at the Matriculation Examination was attained and many scholarships were won year after year.

Brother Edmund planned and erected a fine boarding department and added a south wing to the school building to accommodate more students. He was succeeded by Brother Director Hubert in 1956, who was later succeeded by Brother Director Julius in 1959 who directed the school till 1965 when all the private schools in the country were nationalised.



Boarders at Maymyo, Myanmar.



Burmese youth in traditional costume.

### 6. St. Joseph's, Loikaw.

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This school was opened in May 1958 and Brother Felix was the first Director. He also supervised the building of the school. The Brothers came to Loikaw at the wish of Bishop Alfredo Lanfranconi who had pleaded with the Superiors in Rome to open a school there. He had the great consolation of blessing the Foundation Stone of the new edifice in 1957, two years before he was called to his heavenly reward for a life-time of selfless devotion to the cause of God and the hill people of Eastern Burma.

Besides the all-important work in the classroom, extra-curricular activities such as soccer, music, scouting and gardening received encouragement and attention. The school could also boast of a brass band. Brother Felix was succeeded by Brother Joseph in 1960. Brother Charles took over in 1951 and remained as Director until 1965 when the nationalisation of schools took place.

### 7. St Columban's, Myitkyina.

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It was Bishop Usher who requested the Superior of the Brothers to take over the Myitkyina school which belonged to the mission. He did not live to welcome the Brothers when they did arrive. His worthy successor, Bishop John Howe, generously renewed the offer and the conditions of the transfer were agreed upon and approved by the Superior of the Brothers. The school compound, eight acres in area, with all the existing buildings on it, was handed over to the Brothers just as they were, which was a very generous gesture on the part of the Maynooth Missionaries and one for which the Brothers will always be extremely grateful.

St. Columban's thus came under the management of the Brothers on May 27, 1959. The three pioneers were Brothers Urban (Director), Celestyn and Raphael. Brother Gabriel took over the directorship from 1962 till 1965, the year the schools were nationalised.





Myanmar: baptism of a pupil prepared by the Brothers.

### 8. St. Anthony's, Rangoon.

The late Rev. S. Savarimuthu was the last superintendent of St. Anthony's before the Brothers took charge of it in April 1960 with Brother Gabriel as Director. St. Anthony's had been in existence for ninety years before the Brothers took charge of it.

### 9. St. Therese's School, Taunggyi.

This school came under the care of the Brothers in June 1963 with Brother Pius as Director. The Brothers worked in this school for only two years as the nationalisation of private schools took place in 1965.

### 10. St. Therese's School, Rangoon.

This school came under the care of the Brothers in 1963 with Brother Clementian as Director. Brother Peter Mandel took over the directorship from Brother Clementian in 1964. Like all the other private schools, it was nationalised in 1965.

### AFTER THE NATIONALISATION OF SCHOOLS.

When the private schools were nationalised in 1965, the Brothers (foreign as well as local) were forbidden to teach in any government school. For this reason, all our foreign Brothers left the country and returned to their respective Districts, while our local Burmese Brothers had to turn to other forms of the apostolate.

Some Bishops invited the Brothers to teach in the minor seminaries of their respective dioceses, and thus the Brothers found work in Rangoon, Leiktho, Taunggyi and Kengtung. We stopped teaching in the seminary in Rangoon in 1976 as it was moved off to another town. In Leiktho, the Brothers first taught in the minor seminary. Later on they ran an affiliated high school for the sake of the poor students there as the government could not provide teachers for the high

school. (Leiktho being a Catholic village, the government allowed the Brothers to teach there). In 1986, the government was able to provide the teachers for the high school and so the Brothers had to withdraw from Leiktho. The Brothers taught in the minor seminary at Taunggyi till 1982 when we had to withdraw because of lack of personnel. We opened a new community in Chaungtha in 1978 at the request of Bishop Thaug Shwe of Prome. The Catholic village was about to be abandoned as there was a shortage of priests and so we helped the bishop out by opening a community there. The work of the Brothers in Chaungtha was chiefly pastoral. In April 1993, the Brothers withdrew from Chaungtha as the bishop was able to provide a priest for Chaungtha. Besides, we needed to consolidate our Delegation as four of our Brothers were sent abroad for further studies. Besides teaching in the seminaries, the Brothers were also involved in the Young Catholic Students movement, on a national scale. Brother Visitor Gabriel, who succeeded Brother Peter Mandel as Visitor in 1965 took charge of this apostolate and everything was going fine when the archbishop of Rangoon put an end to the apostolate in November 1970, to the surprise of many people. In May 1993 the Brothers undertook the administration of the Catechetical Centre in Lashio.

### THE DELEGATION OF MYANMAR AT THE PRESENT TIME

Brother Leonard Lewis succeeded Brother Gabriel as Visitor in 1978. In 1985, Burma (Myanmar) became a Delegation and Brother Anthony Daniel succeeded Brother Leonard Lewis as President of the Delegation of Myanmar. In October 1990, Brother Leonard was elected as President of the Delegation. When Burma became a Delegation in 1985, Brother Dominic Berardelli was appointed as Delegate to Burma. The Delegation of Myanmar owes much to Brother Dominic Berardelli, who has done so much for the Burmese Brothers.

At present we have six communities or houses in the Delegation.



Br John Johnston, Superior General, with the Brothers of the Delegation of Myanmar.





Rangoon, Myanmar: the Brothers' house.



Delegation of Myanmar 1993-1994:  
postulants with their Director, Br Lawrence Goh.

**1. La Salle Brothers,**

**11 May Kha Road, Yangon (Rangoon).**

This community consists of 3 Brothers and is the home of the "Provincialate" for the Delegation. We have 8 young aspirants with us. They hope to join the Postulancy after they finish the High School.

**2. St. Paul's Community,**

**Bo Aung Kyaw Street, Yangon.**

4 Brothers reside in this community. Their work is chiefly with "The Sower", the only Catholic Monthly in Myanmar. The Brothers also keep 8 university boarders with them.

**3. La Salle Brothers,**

**Circular Road, Maymyo.**

3 Brothers reside in this community (our old juniorate). There are about 50 young boarders with them. These boys come from various parts of the country and attend the local government school. These boys represent many tribes of the country and are Christians, Buddhists, Protestants or Animists. We do hope to get some vocations from among these boys.

**4. La Salle Novitiate,**

**Circular Road, Maymyo.**

This house was officially re-opened on the 5th June, 1993. At the moment we have 5 postulants who will join the novitiate.

**5. La Salle Brothers, Kengtung.**

This community was closed in 1993, but because of the repeated requests of the Bishop one Brother has remained to teach in the minor seminary.

**6. St. Luke's Catechetical Training Centre, Lashio.**

3 Brothers are in this new community which was opened in June 1993. The Brothers came here to take charge of the catechetical centre at the request of the Bishop of Lashio Diocese. At present there are about 50 lay catechist trainees in the centre.

**LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE**

We look with hope towards the future. Now that our postulancy and novitiate have been re-started we can hope for our numbers to grow again. We are altogether 19 Brothers in the Delegation. Four are still abroad, attending courses. We look forward to their return as they will be an added strength to our Delegation.

Our Superiors have always stressed the importance of catechetics for us Brothers in Myanmar. Some Brothers were sent abroad to do catechetical studies. Now that we are responsible for the Catechetical Centre in Lashio, we have greater opportunities to involve ourselves in catechesis. It is also possible for us to get some vocations from among the catechist-trainees, as we are in close contact with them. Our work in Myanmar also provides a good opportunity for youth ministry.

We are doing some formal recruiting in order to get some vocations. This has been quite successful as we now have eight young aspirants in May Kha Road. Those that persevere will be sent to join the postulancy in Maymyo. By God's grace, we do hope that our numbers will grow and the work of the Delegation be strengthened. ●



## 15. DELEGATION OF THE HOLY LAND-JORDAN



### CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

From a religious point of view, the history of the countries included in our Delegation is called sacred history and is well known to many people.

The People of God became the Church through events which took place in Nazareth, Bethlehem and especially Jerusalem, and on the roads that criss-cross our region.

After Pentecost, a Church was born. At the beginning, it was mostly Jewish, but with time and events, the Gentiles gradually became predominant.

It was a courageous Church, with its doctors, its monks and its people. It was not able to steer clear of sectarian divisions and splits occurred, and with them, a decrease in charity.

Islam was able to gain a foothold. Often it was tolerant, with its values of respecting God and helping others. It could be said that "Islam is great". However, like most groups, it had its extremists, and these always create difficulties. And so they did at certain points in history, and Christians became a minority. This led and still leads to conversions to Islam.

Poor, unassuming, massacred more than once, often exploited but clever enough not to be so always, the Christians

have held fast, but are split up into a variety of groups: Orthodox, Syrians, Copts, Armenians, Nestorians, Protestants, etc.

The Catholics are here too with their own groups: Latins, Greeks, Maronites. For each Orthodox group there exists a parallel Catholic one.

Such splits are perhaps less important than one might think. All are Christians and all believe. The rest is history. All the same, with more charity and union there would be greater witness.

In our situation, in the Holy Land, where we represent 2.3% of a population of 5 million, it needs a certain amount of courage to proclaim one's faith in the face of the overwhelming majority of Jews and Muslims.

Another factor is the curse of emigration: when you belong to a minority, life can be hard, and elsewhere there are places which are Christian.

Emigration is not a new factor: it existed already in the 19th century, but it has now speeded up. In 1948, there were 25,000 Christians in Jerusalem. In 1967, they had decreased to 12,000, and in 1992, they numbered only 8,000.

One reason for the presence of the Brothers is to prevent the country in which Christianity was born from becoming simply a museum of Christian history. The Brothers here, together with other religious and lay people, can consolidate the Christian community, enable it to bear witness and be, here as elsewhere, the yeast that leavens the mass.

### THE BROTHERS IN THE HOLY LAND

They have been here since 1876, as part of a wider apostolate in the Near East, covering Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Lebanon and, for a time, Syria.

Why did the Brothers come here? The Holy Land always impresses Christians, and it did not fail to impress the Brothers who came up on pilgrimage from Egypt and realised that the Christians needed their help.

The Brothers came to Jerusalem in 1876 at the request of the Latin Patriarch. The first group of Brothers was led by Br Evagre. He had left the north of France to come and work in Egypt. He was a man who knew how to found schools and to build. As Rigault wrote of him (Vol. 8, p.405): "He developed



a beautiful, strong and supernatural affection for the Orientals". He knew how to make decisions, to pray, to act. As Brother Evagre said one day to the French writer, René Bazin: "If you see only the faults of the people you evangelise, how can you love them? And if you don't love them, how can you do them any good?"

Br Evagre was also a prophet in the country of prophets. He wanted free schools, but also some paying schools, because resources were limited. He and those who advised him wanted also, and as a priority, a teacher training college. This desire eventually became a reality with the Foundation of Bethlehem University. Br Evagre believed in the need for the local recruitment of Brothers and he devoted much of his energy to this work.

He was a prophet who was often listened to. Among those who did so, there was Pope Leo XIII, politicians not known for their religious fervour in their own country, and the French minister, Gambetta, whose favourite words were "Our enemy is clericalism", but who added, when common sense prevailed, "anticlericalism is not for export".

He was a prophet who had his share of opposition. The questions that were raised make us smile nowadays: Is it allowed to mix eastern schismatics with our good little Latins and Catholics? What will happen if Jewish or Muslim pupils join? And so Catholics were not supposed to sit next to those of other faiths, and it would be better if they had separate lessons and playgrounds. Prohibition stopped short at forbidding non-Catholics attending Catholic services "so long as they show proper respect". However, care should be taken not to allow long conversations on the playground between Catholics and non-Catholics. Fortunately, the Brothers made the children play games.

And to think that these objections were supposedly based on a solid theology which the "poor little Brothers" found difficult to grasp.

There were other causes of friction. There was the question of what language to use when teaching catechism. Arabic would have been more suitable, but that would have prevented the majority of Brothers from teaching, because their knowledge of the language was insufficient. And then there was the competition between congregations. Rigault gives a good insight into these, which only goes to prove that history is never boring.

Anyway, enough anecdotes. An enormous amount of good was done in Haifa, Jaffa, Bethlehem and Jerusalem, in particular, which the Dominicans call "castellum Evagri", or as Fr Lagrange called it: "a citadel, or rather a Tabor, on whose summit everything speaks of God and of God who has become a child".

Br Evagre prayed to this divine Child, and established the Archconfraternity of the Divine Child as a means to obtain vocations.

The prophet created many things: schools, a juniorate, a novitiate, all built on solid foundations. In 1914, this great pioneer left the scene, the First World War broke out and destroyed everything. After the War, a new start was made. Then there came the Jewish-Arab war in 1948 which created a profound split in the country. Despite this, people kept things going and even extended them. New foundations were made and these we will describe below.

But let us not leave Br Evagre without saying that his prophecy is still relevant for the future: we must find more Brothers here, and we must believe in this with great determination. And since prophecies grow as they go on, let us add that we need also more Lasallians, teachers inspired by the spirit of St La Salle, more people who pray, more members of Signum Fidei. We have a dream: at the present time, in order to survive, we need help in both personnel and funds. Our work here will fully attain its aims when it will be carried out in full by the people of the country, and when it will be able to extend its influence even abroad. At present we need help from afar, "ad-auxilium orientarium", as Leo XIII used to say. And yet, in the first centuries of the Church, missionaries would leave our country, often for the west, and sometimes even for a more distant east.

## JERUSALEM

The central part of the present school was built in 1878. With time, it was extended, and now has an annexe in the north part of the town. A number of times the idea of building something more modern has come up, but political conditions have hardly helped, nor has the lack of resources. Another obstacle at present is the reduced numbers of Brothers.



Jerusalem: front view of the school.



Bethlehem University: the arrival of the Apostolic Delegate, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Mayor of Bethlehem, for a University ceremony.





Bethlehem University: the original building.



Amman: general view of the school.

For 19 years, from 1948 to 1967, our school, situated as it is by the walls of the Old City, was on the frontier of the two Jerusalems. These walls, with all their gates bricked in, constituted a hermetic frontier. Nowadays, one can go freely from one part of Jerusalem to another. Our school is in the Arab sector. The teachers are all Arab, almost equally divided between Christians and Muslims, while in town, Christians are only 1.8% of the population. The Christians are either in communion with Rome or not, and represent a whole range of Christian communities. The original 100 pupils have increased to 1,150. English and Jordanian courses of study are followed, and Arabic, French and English are taught.

The school has always been ecumenical. Formerly, Jews and Arabs studied side by side. For 50 years now, this has been impossible. Now, Muslims come into contact with Christian values, and Christians realise that Muslim values exist. The various Christian groups see that there are more things that unite them than separate them. As far as catechesis and the life of prayer are concerned, all Christians come together.

Our mission in Jerusalem is to be a Christian presence in a non-Christian society, to consolidate the Christian community, to help it, to be a praying Institute bearing witness in the Holy Places.

There are numerous handicaps: politics (there is hope for improvements), our age, especially our reduced numbers. In such circumstances it is difficult to speak of aggiornamento, of modernisation. There is a lack of really new blood.

## BETHLEHEM

From the very start, this was Br Evagre's dream. He put up a fine building here in 1893. In 1894, he built a juniorate here. He added a school in 1903, but it never had many pupils. The greatest number it had was 350. All the same, the school had a reputation for serious work and stability.

One and the same building housed the juniorate, the novitiate, the retired Brothers' quarters and the school. The

chapel was the headquarters of the Archconfraternity of the Divine Child.

In 1973, the University was founded. This gave new prestige to the site. The house of formation was no longer there, the retired Brothers had moved also, and the school had moved to new, functional and spacious premises. The school now has 530 pupils, 60% of whom are Christian. Since 1992, the school has been run by Lasallian lay teachers, who are determined to preserve its Lasallian spirit.

## BETHLEHEM UNIVERSITY

It was founded in 1973. The Holy See was worried at the time by the emigration of Christians, especially of young Christians, and it wanted to help the suffering Palestinians in general. The religious authorities were advised to approach the Brothers. Brother Charles Henry was able to find the necessary staff in the United States. As time went on, the staff became international and a number of new buildings were added.

The statistics speak for themselves: at present there are 9 Brothers and 136 lecturers, including Sisters.

As regards the students, numbers are as follows:

Arts	580
Sciences	314
Administration	314
Nursing	93
Hotel catering	92
Education	215
Physiotherapy	278

**TOTAL. 1,886 students**

For 20 years now, the University has been of great service to the Palestinians: it has offered a human and social formation to students; it has large and modern laboratories; it trains teachers; it makes available a well-stocked library, extensive artistic activities, meetings, social gatherings, etc.



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## AMMAN

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The Brothers came to Amman in 1950 at the request of the old King Abdallah. He knew that his country, surrounded by desert, needed to develop its culture. A number of religious congregations responded to his request. And then the population expanded as refugees flocked to the Kingdom as a result of the 1948 Palestinian crisis.

The Brothers started with a small school on one of the 7 hills of Amman. Three years later, a new and functional school was put up almost in the middle of the desert. The initial objections to the site were soon proved groundless as the town expanded.

Pupils find the place welcoming and comfortable. They understand that a lot of effort is needed if the country is to make progress. At present, the 1,400 pupils are taught by 6 Brothers and 70 lay teachers, belonging to a variety of rites and religions. The school is noted for its family spirit. Christians make up 57% of the school population. This is quite a high percentage, when it is realised that the country is more than 92% Muslim.

The school attaches a lot of importance to catechesis. It is partly an attempt to counteract a "minority complex". By means of the methods used and its stress on youth groups, the school seeks to provide a quality education. There are structures also to help university students. Christian, by their conviction and solidarity, they wish to play a part in the future of their country.

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## NAZARETH

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The Brothers arrived in 1893. For a long time, they provided excellent education. Among their former students, there is the present Patriarch of Jerusalem, Mgr Michel Sabbah, one of his auxiliaries, Mgr Batish, the Vicar General of Amman, Mgr Najjar, the Director of our school in Jaffa, Br Henry. The school at Nazareth has an enviable reputation.

The creation of the State of Israel created problems: there was a lack of Brothers and financial resources, and the population had great problems till it was able to get back on its feet. As a result, the number of pupils decreased and the

Brothers started caring for social and delinquent cases from the Arab minority in Israel. In 1973, the school went over completely to providing this social service. While this was in line with the spirit of the Institute, the local population missed the school.

The present intake consists of young people from various parts of the country: there are young Arabs, sometimes Christians, often Muslims, some Druses and Circassians. There are about 50 of them, all between 13 and 17 years old. Half of them are sent to us by the children's courts. The others are social cases: orphans, abandoned children, children that have to be separated from their parents. On an average, they stay with us for 18 months. During this time, they learn to read and write a little, and they learn a craft: carpentry, blacksmith work, electricity, paving, painting, etc. In the morning there are classes; in the afternoon, workshops and religion lessons according to denominations; in the evening, extra-curricular or recreational activities. At the weekend there is more recreation and family visits, if possible. We try to help these young people to make some sort of progress and to prepare them to return to their families.

70% of our resources come from the Ministry of Social Services, and the rest from international, government or Church organisations.

What we would like to do is to create habits of work, good manners, and a hierarchy of values. To do this we need courage, because, with only a few Brothers to do the work, it is not easy.

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## HAIFA

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A Brothers' school was established here in 1885. It was highly valued by the local population. In the year 1947-48, it had almost 700 pupils. The Jewish-Arab war of 1947-48 caused great problems for it. It had to close in January 1948. In March of the same year, a bomb exploded nearby and seriously damaged the building. The school re-opened in October 1948, but the great number of Arabs was no longer there. The school had to function on a more modest and poor level. The building became progressively uninhabitable, and the school had to move to other premises. In 1965, the point



Nazareth: the Brothers' school.



Nazareth: the woodwork shop.





Nazareth: the town seen from the Brothers' house.  
In the centre, the Basilica of the Annunciation.



Jaffa: the Brothers' school.

was reached when a new building was the only solution. There were difficulties about the title deeds of the property, and the decision was made to close the school. It was difficult to do otherwise, and to find resources and personnel. But in a country where Christians are a minority such a move leads to a loss of hope. Others may try to offer help, but it will be difficult to wipe out the impression caused by the withdrawal on a small Christian community in which the school had lived for so many years. Forward positions are never easy or comfortable to hold, but when they are abandoned, there is a great deal of sorrow.

## JAFFA

The Brothers arrived in Jaffa in 1882. This was the result of the fact that prominent Christians in Jaffa had heard of the good work being done by the Brothers in Jerusalem and had applied both to Rome and to the French government to obtain for them the same advantages.

The Brothers came, built, recruited pupils who were mostly Catholics but also Orthodox. Also, for the Jews it was what they called the time for the first *alyah*, the first modern move up to Jerusalem, and so there were Jewish pupils also. The first Brother Director drowned trying to save a young Jewish pupil of his. There were Muslim pupils also.

The Brothers offered all these pupils a good solid education which included commercial courses which were required in this port town. Lessons in Turkish were available on request.

It was a well run school that was destroyed by the 1914-18 war. The Brothers returned in 1919. Christians, Jews and Muslims continued to mix. The teaching provided now was based more along English lines: it was more appropriate at the time of the British Mandate.

There was another stoppage in 1948. All the Arabs left Jaffa. School started again in October 1948 in the midst of a population that was almost exclusively Jewish. Slowly a religious balance was re-established. In the period 1970-75,

Christians, Jews and Muslims were in equal proportions in the school. At present, the intake is mostly Arab. There are many Muslims, Christians of various rites, and Jews. Pupils are taught Hebrew, French, Arabic and English, and are prepared for a multilingual society. There are 900 boys and girls.

Those early Brothers were brave: the work was difficult and the hours long, and more than once they had to start again from the beginning.

Today the aims remain the same: to help Christians survive even when they are in the minority; and to help the various religious groups to have mutual esteem and respect.

There is a good understanding in the school with its ethnic and religious differences among teachers and pupils. This remains even when the Jews, Muslims and Christians in the school are joined by foreign children brought to the town by parents who are diplomats or are seeking work. When this happens, new pupils have to be integrated into the school without knowing any of the languages used in it.

## CONCLUSION

Our Delegation feels it has an important role. It suffers from the fact that its Brothers are growing old and are decreasing in number. The Superiors have been aware of this situation for some time, and the present Superior General and his Council have asked the Region of Italy to give help. Brave reinforcements have already come and others are expected. However, essentially, the solution must be found within the Delegation. There must be local vocations, motivated teachers must be organised. Efforts have been made; the desires expressed by the Chapter regarding the Lasallian Family are urgent for us, and what is more, call for adaptation and creativity. ●



## 16. DELEGATION OF THAILAND



### THAILAND IN BRIEF

#### GEOGRAPHY:

Thailand has an area of about 514,000 square kilometres, which can be divided into 4 parts:

- the fertile central plain
- the mountainous North
- the semi-arid highland
- the topographically diverse South

#### CLIMATE:

The country has a tropical climate with a high degree of humidity. Average temperature is 30 C., varying from 32.5 C to 23.7 C. There are three seasons: hot (March to May), rainy (June to October) and cool (November to February)

#### POPULATION:

Thailand's population is estimated at 55 million with about 85 per cent of them living in rural areas, 10 percent in Bang-

kok, 5 per cent scattered in other cities and towns. The majority of the labour force is engaged in agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing.

#### ETHNIC COMPOSITION:

The vast majority of the inhabitants identify themselves as Thai. As a racially tolerant people, the Thais, in their history of development, have assimilated largenumbers of Mons, Khmers, Chinese, Burmese, Malays, Laôtians, Vietnamese, Persians and Indians. There are approximately 349,000 hill-tribesmen in the North.

#### LANGUAGE:

Thai is the national and official language. English is the second language which is widely understood in cities, especially among government and business people.

#### RELIGION:

Buddhism is the established religion.

About 95 per cent of the Thai people are Buddhist; 4.05 per cent Muslim; 0.6 per cent Christian; 0.33 per cent adhere to other faiths.

#### CUSTOMS:

Thailand is a Buddhist country where Buddha images are held sacred. Sacrilegious acts are punishable by imprisonment even if committed by foreign visitors.

Thai people hold their King and Queen and the Royal Family in great reverence, and so won't tolerate foreigners talking about them disrespectfully.

Generally Thai women are conservative. So don't touch them without their consent.

Dress properly when entering a Buddhist temple. Take your shoes off before going inside the hall of worship. Ladies must not on any account touch a Buddhist monk, give to or receive things directly from him.

Avoid placing your feet on the table while sitting, or crossing your legs in company, for you may point your foot at someone, who'll be offended.

Entering a Thai house, you're expected to remove your shoes.



## LA SALLE COLLEGE, BANGKOK 1

The Brothers had always the desire to have a school in the Capital of Thailand. Several attempts failed, but providentially, in 1961, the Brothers of Saint Gabriel offered us a piece of land in Bangkok.

Located on the outskirts of the Metropolis, this large property was in the middle of rice fields and marshlands, flooded nearly all the year round. One can guess the efforts and the pains of the pioneers: Br. Joseph Mertz, the builder, and Br. Michael Fievet, the first Director.

On May 17, 1963, La Salle School opened its classes for 350 students with a staff of 4 Brothers and 11 teachers.

Recently, on May 1, 1993, the late Br. Cyprien Tran-van-Thien, the 1st Vietnamese Visitor of the District of Saigon, on his way to Vietnam, stopped at LSC which belonged to that District until 1985. He wrote to a friend: "You cannot imagine the transformation of the place and the school..."



La Salle School, Chantaburi: La Salle House for pupils.

A large road now replaces the bumpy small lane, along which buildings and stores featured like mushrooms after a rain. Several shops have taken "LASALLE" as the name of their businesses, Delasalle Offices, Lasalle English and French Courses, Lasalle Pawn Shop, Lasalle Gas, Lasalle Pharmacy, Lasalle Coffee, etc. Even the drivers of Motorbike taxis wear a jacket with the name Lasalle on their back. We cannot do anything about it because of the official name of the road. At least they have made the name LA SALLE better known to the Thai people.

Today (1993) LSC has 4 large buildings each 3 to 4 storeys high where 3600 students study under the care of 4 Brothers, 7 La Salle Sisters and 150 teachers, from the kindergarten to the preuniversity classes. A large Gym-Hall, the roof of which bears the name LA SALLE COLLEGE in big letters, is visible from afar to guide prospective visitors to the right destination.

Br. Stephen Kan Wongchiree, the 1st Thai President of the Delegation of Thailand, has effected many improvements for the college: covered gangways link the different buildings, an improvement much appreciated during the rainy season; extension of the parking lots; trees and flowers...give the campus a permanent atmosphere of youthful freshness and vitality.

## LA SALLE COLLEGE, BANGKOK 2

The landmark in the court of honour is the statue to Saint John Baptist de La Salle erected on an elevated esplanade.

It was to the credit of Sister Mary Chindahandamrong, SSC, to have insistently asked Br. Joseph Vankhoi, then AV of the Sub-District, to have a statue of the Holy Founder on the school grounds.

Professor Wirac Isawas of the Silpakorn University of Arts of Thailand, cast the statue in 1983-84. Instead of facing the gate, welcoming the visitors, the Saint smiles on his children during their studies, prayers and play.

From several models collected from abroad, we chose the one of De La Salle-Zobel, Manila, which corresponds best to our aim: Saint John Baptist de La Salle with a boy and a girl. LSC has admitted girls since 1978.

The statue was blessed by H. Em. Cardinal Michai Kitbunchu, Archbishop of Bangkok, and inaugurated by Most Reverend Brother Superior Pablo Basterrechea on January 15, 1985. The clay model was later used as model to cast duplicates for the other FSC schools in Thailand.

On his 3m high pedestal, the Saint daily receives "wai" the Thai salutation of students, parents, visitors. He also hears their prayers and supplications. Bouquets of flowers at the foot of the pedestal, garlands and festoons dangling from his right outstretched arm, are often the ex-voto offerings of those whose wishes have been heard.

The lucky visitor who arrives in the early morning may witness another kind of "ex-voto". This consists of a dance performed by the recipient of the favour received, usually a lady, with the singing of her companions in front of the statue. Many people, especially among our teachers, students and parents, regard SJBS as a Saint of "great supernatural power."

From the view-point of charitable work, LSC Bangkok has 300 out of 3600 students receiving full scholarships. Several more get free text books and free daily lunch as well.

For some time, a La Salle Clinic had been operating twice a week for the benefit of the people living around the college, giving free medical consultation and medicine at low cost, but it did not last long. In the eyes of the people, what does not cost has not much value!

La Salle College Bangkok houses the headquarters of the Delegation and a Juniorate of some 20 young men and boys, preparing themselves as postulants while studying at La Salle College.

## CATHOLICS IN OUR SCHOOLS.

- 1) La Salle Chotiravi, Nakhon-Sawan:  
60 Catholics / 4000 students. 1.50%
- 2) La Salle Chantaburi:  
120 Catholics / 1500 students. 8.00%
- 3) La Salle College, Bangkok:  
165 Catholics / 3600 students. 4.58%

TOTAL: 4000 + 1500 + 3600 = 9,100 students.  
60 + 120 + 165 = 345 Catholics, 3.79%

The harvest is abundant, but the workers are so few!



Thailand as a developing Delegation needs Brothers and wishes to continue receiving Missionary Brothers.

(Proposition 40: Missionary Brothers, Acts of the 1st Chapter of the Delegation of Thailand, January 1, 1992)

## THE LASALLIAN SISTERS

This report would be incomplete if we forgot to make mention of the Lasallian Sisters, close co-workers of the Brothers at La Salle College, Bangkok.

Founded in 1966 by Brother Bernard Levantam, under the patronage of the District of Saigon, the Congregation of the Lasallian Sisters has been approved by the Archbishop of Saigon as a Congregation of Diocesan Right.

At the South-East Asian Visitors Conference in Malaysia, June 1973, Br. Joseph Vankhoi, new Auxiliary Visitor for Thailand, obtained from Br. Michael Jacques, then Assistant General for Asia, with the unanimous support of the other Visitors, permission to get the services of the Lasallian Sisters for his new Sub-District.

On November 11, 1973, five Thai young women flew to Saigon, Maithon to make their novitiate. They came back to Bangkok at the beginning of 1975, just before the fall of Saigon. Since then, they have been helping the Brothers running La Salle College, Bangkok.

Their Community consists of 5 perpetually and 2 temporarily professed members. One of them is still studying at the university. Two young candidates are making their canonical novitiate at the Canossian Novitiate in Singapore (1991-1993). They regularly receive instruction on Lasallian spirituality given by a Brother of St. Patrick's Community.

The Sisters have their own independent La Salle Nursery, housed just opposite to La Salle College, taking care of 60-70 babies 1-2 years old; and in the LSC campus, a kindergarten with an enrolment of 650 youngsters 3-5 years old, including a boarding department for about 60 girls.

The Headquarters of the Lasallian Sisters Congregation are at Maithon-Saigon. The Community there is made up of 5 Sisters with Perpetual Vows and 2 with Temporary Vows, three novices, four postulants and 2 aspirants.

A 3rd Community at San Jose, California USA, has 4 sisters with perpetual vows and 2 novices.

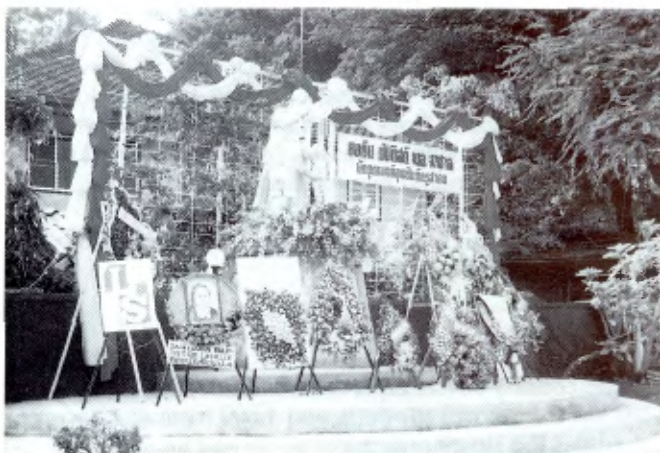
May the Good Lord bless this new branch of the Lasallian tree (Cf. Lasalliana, N° 22, Art. 66, Lasallian Family) and make it grow with the time and prosper with His grace. ●



View of La Salle College, Chotivari.



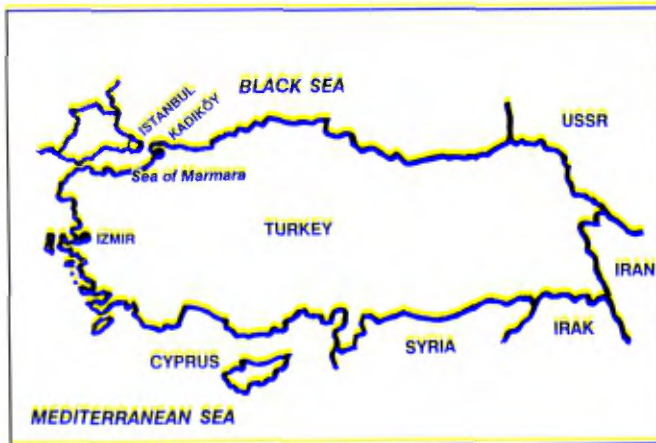
La Salle College, Chotivari: the computer room.



La Salle College, Chotivari:  
flower display in front of the Founder's statue.



## 17. DELEGATION OF TURKEY



### 1. Turkey

Up till 1922, Turkey was the Ottoman Empire. Since then it has been a republic. As an empire it followed on from the Byzantine Empire which was put out of its agony by the fall of Constantinople on May 29th 1453. Like its predecessor, and possibly even longer, the Ottoman Empire dominated the Mediterranean from Algeria to Sicily. For 3 centuries it made western Europe tremble. Mustafa Kemal, known as Atatürk, wisely limited his ambitions to the present frontiers and saved the country after the disasters of the 1914-18 War. For the first time in its history, the Turkish people became the Turkish nation.

#### Geography

The country covers an area measuring 780,000 sq.km. It is 700 km from north to south, and 1,800 from east to west. It straddles the Bosphorus in the north and the Dardanelles in the south, the two straights which separate Europe from Asia. It would like to be considered European, but most of it lies in Asia.

With the fall of communism in eastern Europe, its strategic and economic importance in the region has increased enormously and has put it into competition with Iran. It has common frontiers with Greece, Bulgaria, the former USSR (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan), Iran, Iraq and Syria. Just to mention these countries is enough to recall many of the problems of the region.

#### Resources

The population, numbering 58 million, is young and dynamic. This can be seen from the rapid expansion of towns, the roads crowded with lorries, thriving agriculture producing crops grown in temperate, Mediterranean and tropical climates, and a thriving industry that is diversifying. For 10 years now, the political climate has been stable. The country tries to be democratic, in spite of the increasingly violent disturbances on the part of a considerable Kurd minority (20% of the population).

Language is an important factor, for Turkish is spoken also in the Muslim republics of the former USSR. Because of this, Turkey tries to exercise a leadership role among its new sister republics. It adopted the Roman alphabet 65 years ago.

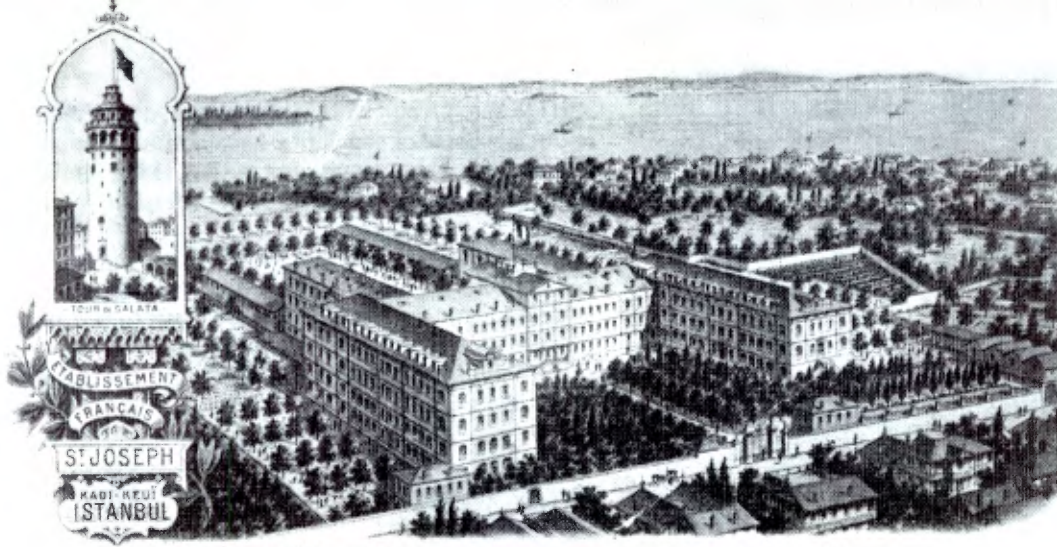
Turkey's potential as a tourist country is enormous and is being increasingly exploited. Turkey is the cradle of famous ancient peoples like the Hittites. It was a permanent battlefield for other civilisations as famous as the Persians, the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans. There exist innumerable historical remains, but only a few sites have been properly exploited. There is the incomparable town of Cappadocia, one of the cradles of Christianity, in its unique volcanic setting. And as regards the origins of Christianity, in Turkey are to be found Antioch, Ephesus, Smyrna, the area covered by St Paul's journeys, the Galatians (descended from the Gauls - Asterix and all that!)

And there are kilometres of beaches on the Mediterranean and the Aegean and modern seaside resorts.

#### Its problems

- Its population is growing too fast and is absorbing the benefits of economic growth.
- As a nation half-way between the highly developed countries and those of the Third World, it suffers from the lack of





St Joseph's College, Kadikoy, Istanbul, run by the Brothers. A drawing of the school dating from about 1920.

*COLLÈGE SAINT JOSEPH, dirigé par les Frères des Ecoles Chrétiennes*

consideration on the part of the former, in particular of the European Union, which it wishes to join.

- An annual rate of inflation of 70% enables the country to equip itself, but imposes an increasingly heavy burden on the working classes. Some figures show that 15% of the population are unemployed. In many cases, people are saved from hunger by cleaning shoes or selling telephone tokens or bus tickets, etc.
- The Kurd movement disturbs internal political life, and economic life in the east of the country.
- The Islamic movement, still a minority politically, is consolidating its position and placing its people in administrative posts. Only the army seems to have kept itself free from its influence. However, in the Middle East, a spectacular about-face can never be excluded.

In conclusion, it's good to live in Turkey.

## 2. The Institute in Turkey

### 1. A brief history

The Brothers' first contact with the Ottoman Empire was at Smyrna, now Izmir, in 1841, in response to a request by the Lazarists to take over their primary school. The increase in the number of pupils and difficult relations with the disciples of St Vincent de Paul led the Brothers to strike out on their own and open schools in various parts of this important port, whose population was mainly Christian.

The following year, Brothers established themselves in Constantinople. They opened schools in various parts of the capital. One of these was the important St Joseph's School at Kadikoy, on the Asian shore. In 1923, it had 824 pupils, 402 of whom were boarders.

In response to requests by Armenian religious authorities, the Brothers opened schools at Trapezous and Erzurum in 1881. After pressure from Rome, a school was opened in Angora (Ankara) in 1892. It was a time of expansion.

And yet, in all these schools the same problems arose. The first Brothers to arrive led a very precarious existence: promised financial help was slow to come, the premises were dilapidated, school furniture and other furniture reduced to a bare minimum. In addition, relations were difficult with other religious or with bishops who were supercilious and very jealous of their authority. There were also natural catas-

trophes: fires destroyed houses built mainly of wood, and earthquakes flattened those built of stone. One is struck by the heroic response of these Brothers, who had to cope with often atrocious conditions.

The last years of the 19th century and the first ten of the 20th were a period of rapid expansion. In 1914, the First World War broke out and the Ottoman Empire sided with the Germans. Our schools were closed and in many cases ransacked. The Brothers left. When hostilities ended, they returned, repaired the damage, and started teaching again. The fire in Izmir in 1922 destroyed all our schools in the town.

The Ottoman Empire was liberal in its attitude to foreign schools. The nationalistic Turkish Republic was less so. It passed a series of measures which affected the schools: dress was secularised, foreigners were forbidden to run primary schools, etc. After this legislation only 3 Brothers' schools survived: St Joseph's in Izmir and Kadikoy, and St Michael's in Istanbul. Another problem was the decrease in the number of Brothers. Providence provided a respite by sending Brothers from Bulgaria. After that, however, the numbers continued to fall. In 1933, there were 5 Brothers in Istanbul and 2 in Izmir.

These houses remain under the sponsorship of the Brothers and are staffed by local people. France provides some teachers seconded from State schools and young soldiers replacing their military service by teaching. The schools are run by lay people. There are not even any Brothers teaching in certain schools like St Joseph's in Izmir and St Michael's in Istanbul.

All this means that the future is not a rosy one.

(Br Jean Marie Lallement)

### 2. Why remain in Turkey?

At a time when relations with non-Christian religions, and in particular with Islam, are becoming increasingly important;

when wars that continue to rage in the world often have a religious dimension that destroys relations between nations;

when the awakening of a violent Islamic fundamentalism threatens to create an obsession with holy war;

because Turkey is a link between Europe and Asia, between Europe and the Arab world;

we cannot abandon our mission in Turkey.

The increasing age of our Brothers and the lack of local vocations threaten to deprive Turkey, a country that pro-





St Joseph's College, Istanbul:  
gathering of former students to commemorate  
the 50th anniversary of leaving the school (1943-1993).

duced such Fathers of the Church as St Basil, St Gregory of Nyssa, St Gregory Nazianzen and St John Chrysostom, of the presence of the Church, that is, of the possibility of greater contact with others.

There is a great difference in the mentality of Turks who have studied at foreign schools and those who have not. The former are much more understanding and balanced in their views about, for example, the events taking place at present in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a former Turkish territory.

### 3. Educational mission and the Lasallian Family

At the beginning of the 20th century, a third of the population within the present frontiers of Turkey was Christian. History took its course, and now the Christian population numbers only 100,000 (0.17%) out of a population of 58 million. Also, the Brothers no longer control the school intake. This explains why there are only a handful of Christians in the average school population of 650 in our establishments.

The Brothers work for and with the Muslims, and provide campus ministry for a variety of Christians. Although they are bound to maintain a neutral position regarding religion, the Brothers have a free hand where teaching is concerned within an administrative framework that is, however, somewhat

meddlesome. Their work is all the more disinterested as, from a human point of view, they have almost no chance of ever seeing any of the young people they teach joining them, to share their ideals and make a total gift of themselves to God and to children.

And so the Brothers work side by side with their male and female colleagues, who have a different religious faith and a different culture. From this daily experience, human and working relations are built up, as are fraternity, trust and cooperation, which nothing disturbs except the usual problems inherent in all groups of people.

The pupils behave like pupils the world over. The only difference is that, even if they know there are Brothers there, they no longer know the specific nature of their life, because there are so few of them.

In response to the call of the 42nd General Chapter inviting us to consider our lay colleagues as our partners, the Brothers have to make themselves better known so as to be able to help their colleagues share in the charism of St John Baptist de La Salle.

### 4. Plans for the future

What is the future of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Turkey? The way ahead seems to be planned: since 1985, the 6 French Catholic schools run by congregations have formed an association. The schools in this association are the 3 sponsored by the Brothers and the three schools run respectively by the Lazarists, the Daughters of Charity and the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion. The aim of this association is to ensure that the establishments continue to function despite the successive disappearance of religious as principals, by the recruitment of lay heads in France, who will guarantee to maintain the aims of our schools. Thanks to help from the French government, the salaries of these lay heads can be assured without excessive difficulty. This is an important factor, since our schools are funded 100% by the parents of pupils.

The arrangement arrived at between the Association and the French government makes it possible to recruit dynamic young headmasters. It remains simply for the superiors of the Association to choose their headmasters and help them run the school they are responsible for.

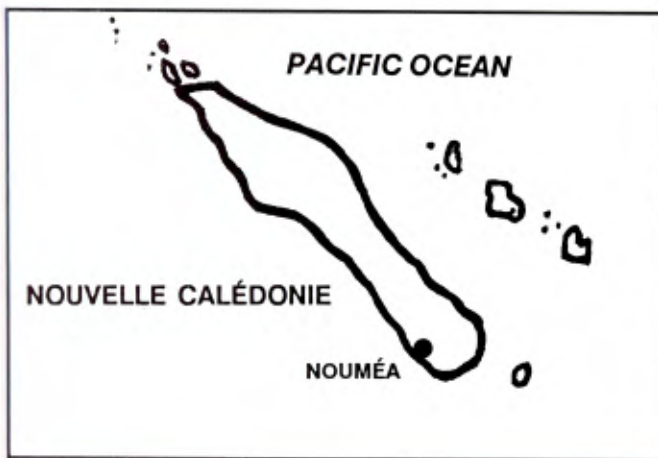
More than 400 young people leave the Association schools each year to take up places in university. These former students form a core group in the country, which is trained to have an open mind about the world outside of Islam. Often they occupy important posts in the diplomatic service, in business and politics. They have had an indirect contact with the Church and can judge at their true value the stereotyped caricatures of Christians put out by the mass media. It is not therefore a matter of indifference whether the Brothers stay or not in Turkey. ●



St Joseph's College, Istanbul:  
former students  
and their wives at a meeting.



## 18. SECTOR OF NEW CALEDONIA



New Caledonia, a French Overseas Territory, is a group of Melanesian islands in the South Pacific, 1,500 kilometres from Australia and 20,000 kilometres from France. Its total area is about 19,100 sq. km. and it has overall a multiracial population of 164,200 inhabitants.

In January 1980, at the request of the Territory religious authorities, 4 Vietnamese Brothers arrived on the Island, and in March of the same year, took charge of a newly established school at Thio.

In 1981, two more Brothers arrived and, in the years that followed, two others. A second community was established at Robinson, near Nouméa, the capital of the Territory. This second community enabled the Brothers to work in other establishments belonging to the Diocesan Catholic Education Council. In 1983, a juniorate was built on this property to accommodate 5 youngsters who were considering joining the Brothers. This attempt at local recruitment did not produce the desired results, but this second group centre provided a place for bringing people together, exercising some influence, and providing facilities for extra-curricular and pastoral activities in the Nouméa area. It was also a house of formation for future vocations.

The activities of the Brothers were not restricted to educational establishments. In Nouméa, the Brothers helped out in the Vietnamese parish, running cultural clubs for their fellow countrymen as well as courses in religion and psychology.

In Thio, from 1986 onwards, the Brothers directed their efforts towards other forms of the apostolate. In 1988, with the help of international charitable aid organisations, they built the CAAL youth centre. The aim of the Centre was to provide the young people of Thio with leisure activities, offer them initial vocational training, and encourage them to be self-confident and creative when they took their place in society.

In 1990, by a decree of the High Commissioner of the Territory, the CAAL centre was officially set up as a body offering further education courses. It runs computer courses for priests, women religious, teachers, business people, the administrative staff of the mining centre, public services staff, as well as young people looking for work. It has an agreement with the Territory authorities to set up a music studio for young people, and to contribute to the cultural growth of the population by creating and managing a mobile municipal library serving, not only the Centre at Thio, but also the more isolated tribes of the Commune.

Despite the somewhat uncertain political situation - there is due to be a referendum in 1998 to decide the political future of the Territory - our Brothers wish to continue their work of evangelisation in this country, whatever the outcome of this public consultation. We came to New Caledonia in search of a rallying point, and we have found a promising field of apostolate and a welcoming country of adoption. ●

**Br Paul Le Cù**



The group of Brothers from New Caledonia.



## 19. I.S.F.A. (Institute of Spiritual Formation of Asia) ITS ORIGIN AND MISSION



### 1. THE HISTORY OF I.S.F.A.

In 1989 there was a pressing need in the Indian FSC Delegation to have a one year program in religious studies for seven of their fourth year scholastics. No such programs that would suit the needs of these young Indian Brothers was available at that time in India. The Delegate of India (Brother Dominic Berardelli) and the President of India (Brother Joseph Fernando) asked the Visitor of Colombo (Brother Emmanuel Nicholas) if the Colombo District would care to joint venture a special program in religious studies for spiritual formation. This program would be especially for the young Brothers of India and the Brothers of the Colombo District.

The two sectors of the Institute (India and Shri Lanka) decided to begin a special kind of program in Colombo to fill the religious studies/spiritual formation needs of the two sectors. The Delegate and President of India and the Visitor of Colombo requested Brother Baptist Croos and Brother Bill Garvey to formulate and implement such a special program. As far as Bill Garvey was concerned, this was in line with his role as Regional Director of Formation in the PARC Region. The plan of the program was one that Brother Bill Garvey had drawn up in a special paper while he was studying formative spirituality at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

India and Colombo further decided that the implemented program would be not only for De La Salle Brothers of India and Shri Lanka but open to the entire Church of Asia. The name given to the program was Institute of Spiritual Formation of Asia (ISFA). The program received the blessings of the Archbishop of Colombo.

The ISFA program from the outset was affiliated with De La Salle University of Manila, Philippines. The program gives M.A.'s in Spiritual Formation and various kinds of certificates. The M.A.'s are from De La Salle University of Manila; the Certificates are from ISFA/De La Salle University, Manila. De La Salle University of Manila has been most gracious in its granting an affiliation status to ISFA.

As the outset, India and Colombo appointed Brother Baptist Croos and Brother Bill Garvey as Co-Directors of the program. Twenty religious studies/formation experts, mostly from Shri Lanka, comprised the faculty of the program.

### 2. THE OBJECTIVES OF ISFA

The objectives of ISFA are the following:

- 1) to help prepare formation personnel for religious life, seminaries;
- 2) and/or to provide foundational background for persons in Religious Education and all other ministers;
- 3) to help equip formators to teach various courses in scripture, liturgy, theology, psychology, spirituality, Lasallian studies in novitiates, scholasticates, etc;
- 4) and/or to provide a renewal experience for religious, priests, or persons of the secular life.

This program is based in many ways on formative spirituality, a spirituality which stresses a formational as well as an informational approach to spiritual training, since the objective of the degree or program of ISFA / De La Salle University of Manila is to train persons for spiritual formation ministry (including catechesis as a spiritual formation ministry) or to provide a renewal experience, the courses of the program are highly reflective. The courses consist of lectures/discussions, assigned and recommended readings, re-





Delegates from the PARC Region  
with the students and teachers of ISFA.

reflection papers, and much time for reflection/prayer regarding the topics/themes of the program. A short project is done at the end of the degree program (or the program as a full Certificate program): to make up a plan of implementing this M.A. or full Certificate in one's life and ministry ahead.

There is an emphasis in the program as much as possible on Lasallian spirituality (the spirituality of St. John Baptist de La Salle, Patron of All Teachers) and Christian indigenization / inculturation / interfaith dialog.

A student who completes the full program of ISFA academically fulfils the academic requirements of 16 one semester (15 weeks) courses, each course consisting of 45 class hours. So far ISFA has graduated 14 students with M.A. degrees (from De La Salle University, Manila): 7 Indian De La Salle Brothers, 3 Shri Lankan De La Salle Brothers, 1 Thai De La Salle Brother, 2 religious Sisters, and 1 diocesan priest.

### 3. ISFA AT THE MOMENT

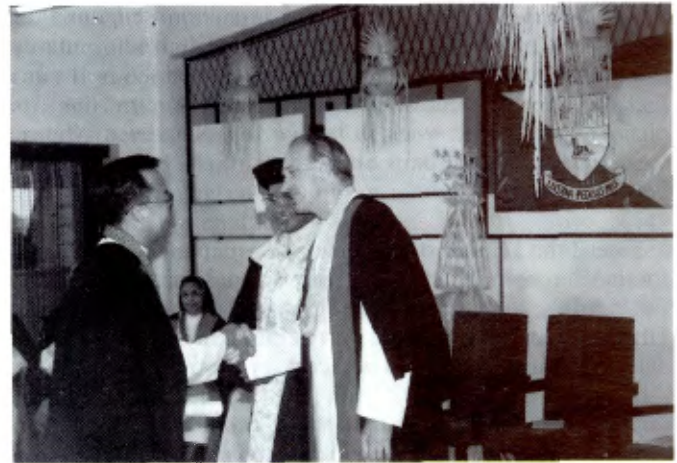
Beginning with 1992, ISFA became a special project of the Colombo District; the Indian Delegation no longer remained as a sponsor.

Since 1991, the ISFA program has progressed and stabilized as a recognized institution of learning and spiritual formation both in Shri Lanka and in the Asian/ Pacific region. Between 1990 and 1993 students from eight Asian nations have followed courses at ISFA (students from Shri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Korea, Japan; also one student from Kenya, Africa; one student from Ireland; and one student from the U.S.).

Under the Visitorship of Brother Clement Fernando, Visitor of Colombo, ISFA has continued to develop. Brother Baptist Croos has been sent to De La Salle University, Manila, and has returned with his Doctorate in Religious Education Spirituality. Brother Baptist Croos, FSC, and Brother Bill Garvey, FSC, both with doctorates from De La Salle University, Manila, will be Co-Directors of ISFA until Brother Joseph Michael, FSC, returns from De La Salle, Manila, with his Doctorate in Religious Education Spirituality. When Brother Joseph Michael returns from De La Salle University, Manila, ISFA will be administered jointly by two Shri Lankan Brothers with Doctorates in Religious Education Spirituality.

During the time of ISFA's existence so far (August of 1990 to December of 1993), ISFA has served the FSC Institute, the Church of Shri Lanka, and the Churches of Asia in the following ways: 43 one semester courses have been provided by ISFA. 317 students have taken ISFA courses (49 De La Salle Brothers and 268 non-De La Salle Brothers). 962 courses have been taken by ISFA students (350 courses by De La Salle Brothers and 612 courses by non-De La Salle Brothers). Of these 962 courses taken by ISFA students, 350 have been taken by De La Salle Brothers; 410 by religious sisters; 48 by members of the laity; 80 by priests; 58 by non-FSC religious brothers; 16 by seminarians. Also of these 962 courses taken by ISFA students, 736 have been taken by Shri Lankan students and 226 courses by non-Shri Lankan students. 4257 volumes have been borrowed from the ISFA library by ISFA students. ISFA has also provided 15 thirty day directed retreats for the ISFA students.

Students from Africa and other areas of the world are cordially welcome to follow the ISFA program or individual courses. ●



ISFA: Graduation Day: Br John Johnston and teaching staff during the ceremony.



## 20. AN OVERVIEW OF INITIAL FORMATION IN THE PARC REGION

The PARC Region, with its approximately 550 Brothers, thwarts any attempt at oversimplification or homogenization. Stretching across the 9 time zones from New Zealand to Pakistan and the thousands of kilometers between its northern outpost, Japan's Hakodate community, and New Zealand's New Plymouth community in the south, PARC is a world of vast distances and of enormous cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. Surrounded by Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, and Islam, our Brothers very often live and work in countries where less than 2% of the population is Christian. This is the diverse reality in which initial formation to our Institute occurs.

### Faced with Significant Challenges

PARC comprises 5 Districts, 3 Sub-Districts, and 4 Delegations. Many of these sectors are blessed with a proportionately significant number of excellent candidates. While these small units foster a sense of identity and belonging among the membership and promote local initiatives and governance, identifying and freeing vocation promotion and initial formation personnel often proves to be impossible. Some sectors such as Hong Kong, Penang, and Japan suffer from aging personnel; others like India have difficulty finding mature Brothers to accompany the temporary professed in the first years of apostolic ministry; still others like Papua New Guinea and Singapore work to bridge the difference between younger local candidates and the more often older foreign Brother.

Five of the 12 sectors of the Region presently lack adequate financial resources to cover the cost of initial formation. Fortunately, through SECOLI grants, the Institute's Sharing Fund, and generosity on the part of the Districts of the Region itself, the assistance which is necessary continues to be found.

Economic hardship, ethnic strife, occasional religious intolerance, and civil war involving family and friends are unfortunately no stranger to our younger Brothers and their formators. Finding schools in which our candidates can do

their tertiary studies in Christian theology and catechetics is practically impossible in 4 or 5 sectors. At least 2 sectors have difficulty getting the young Brother accepted for matriculation in a local university, which only a minuscule percentage of the population has the possibility of attending; and so off campus programs of tutorial studies done in the houses of formation are all that is available as professional and academic preparation for candidates. For these reasons, the Visitors of PARC at their January 1994 meeting agreed to explore the possibility of opening an international House of Studies.

The English language is the primary medium of communication within the Region. However, candidates coming from Thailand, Papua New Guinea, Japan, Shri Lanka, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, Vietnam, and, to a certain extent, the Philippines require much work in acquiring mastery of an Institute international language during the formative years. While some translation of key Institute documents has been undertaken in local languages, an inability to read and speak English (and French in Vietnam) often leaves the young Brother isolated from the rest of the Institute and unable to pursue the study of the Christian faith and of Institute life and history.



Halgashena, Shri Lanka: The PARC Region inter-District novitiate.



## Inter-District Interdependence and Cooperation

In addition to those sectors which are more financially well-off assisting those with the greatest needs, the sectors of the Region remain committed to inter-District sharing of personnel and collaboration for initial formation. From time to time, Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan have collaborated in a joint postulancy program. A couple of years ago, Thailand and Singapore also sent their postulants to this postulancy. The Philippines has occasionally hosted Brothers from Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia into both its novitiate and its scholasticate. About every 2 years, all the sectors of the Region cooperate in conducting a month-long retreat program to prepare the temporary professed for final vows. The La Salle Sisters (SSC) from Thailand have participated in this program. Plans are currently underway for a 3 month Asian renewal program, to be called "Sadhana La Salle," to be conducted in 1996.

However, the Asian Inter-District Novitiate located in Halgashena, Sri Lanka, is probably the greatest witness to interdependence and cooperation. It was founded by the PARC Region in January 1990 to offer a Lasallian novitiate formation in English for the Districts or Delegations of PARC which wish to make use of it or which are unable to fulfil the conditions within their own sector for a properly constituted novitiate. This is now the two-year novitiate for the novices from Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Pakistan. Its staff is presently made up of Brothers from Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand. On-the-spot training of future formators is provided by the experienced Brothers on the staff. While there are currently only 7 novices in Halgashena, it is projected that 12 to 15 young men will arrive from sector postulancies at the novitiate in January 1995.

### Training of Formation Personnel

De La Salle University (Manila, Philippines), the Institute of Spiritual Formation of Asia (Colombo, Sri Lanka), and the Formation Training Institute (Our Lady of Peace Guidance



PARC: Meeting for formators in the Philippines, December 1990.

Center, Manila, Philippines) help in the preparation and training of formation personnel. Since May 1992, 13 of the Region's vocation and formation personnel have also been participating in a 3 year Formation Training Program conducted in Asia by the Institute's Formation Secretariat. Committed to attending 3 four week sessions (May 1992, December 1993, and May 1995), the Formation Secretariat makes on-site visitations between sessions to support and assist the participants in their formation ministry.

### An Overview of Individual Sectors

#### Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea:

With a total of 174 Brothers in the 3 sectors of Australia (135 Brothers), New Zealand (14 Brothers), and Papua New Guinea (25 Brothers), the District of Australia has 3 temporary professed from Australia, 1 temporary professed from New Zealand, and 6 temporary professed from Papua New Guinea. There are 8 novices and 7 pre-novitiate residents living in 2 separate communities in Bomana, Papua New Guinea.

#### Sri Lanka and Pakistan:

The District of Colombo comprises the 70 Brothers in Sri Lanka and the 14 Brothers in the Sub-District of Pakistan. In Sri Lanka, there are 12 temporary professed. Three resident aspirants live in community in Colombo, as they prepare to begin their postulancy in April 1994. Of the 14 Brothers in the Sub-District of Pakistan, 4 are temporary professed. There are 13 resident aspirants living in Faisalabad, 5 of whom will begin their postulancy in September 1994.

#### India:

Of the 38 Brothers in the Delegation, 12 are temporary professed. There are 3 novices at the inter-District novitiate in Halgashena, Sri Lanka. Five of the 11 resident aspirants in the community in Madurai will begin their postulancy in June 1994. There are 19 juniors (13 to 17 years old) living with the community in Mangalagiri.



Miguel Arul Thentral House, India: young residents.



### Japan:

Seven of the 19 Brothers in the Delegation of Japan are Japanese. There is one postulant at the community in Hino (Tokyo). In April 1994, he will begin his novitiate in the same community.

### Myanmar:

There are 19 Brothers and 5 postulants in the Delegation. The postulants will begin their novitiate in Maymyo in April 1994.

### Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Singapore:

The District of Penang comprises the 3 sectors of Malaysia (52 Brothers), the Sub-District of Hong Kong (18 Brothers), and the Sub-District of Singapore (19 Brothers). There are 2 temporary professed in East Malaysia, 2 temporary professed in Singapore, and 2 novices (1 from Malaysia and 1 from Singapore) at the inter-District novitiate in Halgashena, Shri Lanka.

### Philippines:

Of the 51 Brothers in the District, 12 are temporary professed. There are 2 novices and 3 postulants living in the same community in Lipa City. In the Philippines, there are also 3 La Salle Sisters (HGS); of these, 1 is in temporary vows. There is one postulant and there are 2 resident aspirants living in the Sisters' community in Greenhills.

### Thailand:

Nine of the 13 Brothers of the Delegation are Thais; of these, 4 are in temporary vows. There are 2 novices at the inter-District novitiate in Halgashena, Shri Lanka, and 2 postulants living in 2 different apostolic communities in Thailand. There are 13 juniors (13 to 17 years old) living with the community in Bangna. In Thailand, there are also 9 La Salle Sisters (SSC); of these, 2 are in temporary vows. Two novices are at the Canossian Sisters novitiate in Singapore, and 3 resident aspirants live in the community in Bangna, Thailand.



Vietnam, December 8th 1992:  
the Auxiliary Visitor gives the religious habit  
to a young postulant.

### Vietnam:

There are 102 Vietnamese Brothers; 66 live in Vietnam and 36 live elsewhere (the 5 Brothers in New Caledonia form a community of the District of France). In Vietnam, there are 12 temporary professed, 6 novices, and 16 postulants in the District. The headquarters of the approximately 45 La Salle Sisters (SSC), who are also in Thailand and in California, is in Vietnam.

### A Witness to Cooperation, Respect, and Mutual Sharing

While each individual sector of this vast and diverse Region of the Institute is so markedly different from its neighbors, it is the large numbers of young people, the public nature of religion, and the warmth and friendliness of the people that they have in common. While some countries are obviously enjoying greater prosperity than others, it is often the growing gaps and alienations among peoples which are striking. It is within this context and from this perspective that formation to the life and work of a De La Salle Brother finds special meaning in the Pacific Asia Region. The Institute continues to give concrete and unambiguous witness to the priority of the educational needs of the young and the poor as it helps foster the values of cooperation, respect, and mutual sharing among the different populations presently being served. ●



Vietnam: group of postulants and novices.

Brother William Mann  
Institute Secretary of Formation



## 21. MISCELLANEOUS

### MR. JOHN ACKBAR and the annual old boys dinner

Mr. John Ackbar, former President of the St. Joseph's College, Hong Kong, Old Boys Association, never missed the old boys annual dinner. He would arrive an hour or so before the function and drop in at the office for a chat. During the course of conversation, he would dip into his pocket and produce a faded, much creased sheet of paper which he would solemnly unfold and place on the desk.

"Read that, Brother," he would say, "Read that," and I would read it as many Brothers and lay teachers had done before me. The paper stated in substance, Saint Joseph's College, Hong Kong, Examination Awards. This Certificate is awarded to ... JOHN ACKBAR (Class \_\_\_\_ ) for attaining **FIRST PLACE** in the College Religious Knowledge Examination: (Date: the 1920s)

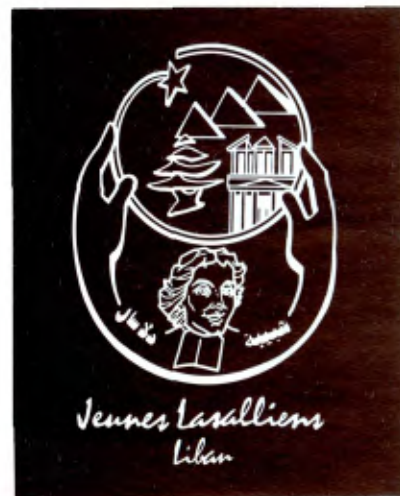
"See that Brother!" he would enthuse, "Saint Joseph's College, a school conducted by the Christian Brothers - our name in Hong Kong at the time - the 1960s - awarded **FIRST PRIZE** in Religious Knowledge to me - JOHN ACKBAR - a Muslim. To the eternal credit of the Brothers they did not consider my religion a reason for not awarding me first prize in Catholic Religious Knowledge - and I can remember most of it still. The Brothers have a great, wide and universal view of education. They instruct all who come to them, they respect their race, culture and religion. Is it any wonder their schools have spread all over the world? I am proud of my old school and its teachers and I regard this Certificate, now more than forty years old, as one of my most treasured possessions."

During the Dinner, John Ackbar would produce his Certificate again and again. He would show it around among his friends, some of them as old as himself. They would recall those long gone days together and raise a toast to the memory of those Brothers and lay teachers whose names they would always hold in affection, gratitude and respect. (BJD)

### THE JIGSAW OF GRACE The Story of Chan Kong Hon

A French missionary (Missions Etrangères de Paris) once told some Brothers that they should always be very proud of their apostolate in school where - "You work among boys and young men of many different religions, races and cultures. They never forget you. I have met them in business, in mining and in the plantations. They bring up their families and few among them die without expressing a wish to see a priest." And maybe, Chan Kong Hon's story would have a bearing on what the missionary said.

My class broke up for the end of the school year in December 1941. War had already broken out and Japanese forces were already advancing down the country on to Singapore. Some of us had all too easily swallowed British war propaganda and we believed that the "Nips" would soon be hurled back into the sea and we would all meet again for the next school year in January 1942. As it turned out, four long years were to pass before we would assemble again. The carefree boys who had left us to enjoy a long Christmas holiday returned, serious young men with stories of hunger, pain, torture and death.



The badge of  
the Lasallian  
Youth groups in  
Lebanon.



Chan Kong Hon was a Buddhist by religion, a good average student in a class of forty. He eventually found work in a Japanese factory to help his parents and to avoid conscription into the Japanese army. At the end of the war, he was rushed to the local hospital, such as it was at the time, weak and wasted and suffering from peritonitis. A Brother visiting the hospital, found him in an open ward with his father, expressionless, sitting bolt upright beside him. The father was torn between love for his dying son and the age-old Chinese belief that it was a son's filial duty to establish himself well in life and to support his parents in their declining years. "Little talking! No prayers!" the father said addressing the Brother who, after a word with Chan, returned to the school and asked the boys to pray for a very special intention.

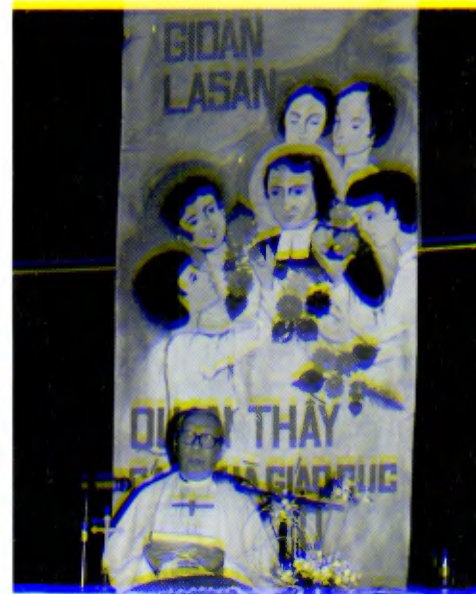
During this very time, a Catholic woman living in another part of the town, discovered on checking her accounts that she had not paid for cards Chan had sold her the previous Christmas. She called at his home to pay the bill only to be told by his mother that her boy was very seriously ill in hospital. On her way in to visit him, she was met by a Muslim nurse who told her a young man was dying in the hospital and that he wanted to be a Catholic. Now this was unusual in many ways. Few Muslim girls became nurses because their religion forbade women to make any physical contact with any man, other than their husband and immediate family members, and to handle a corpse, which nurses would be called upon to do, rendered them unclean... and of course, it was an unusual message coming from a Muslim.

The visiting woman found Chan alone and very, very low. She knew he was dying and that he was anxious and agitated even. She prayed with him and encouraged him. Then she soaked a piece of cotton wool in water and drew it across Chan's forehead saying "I baptise you, Michael" (the name he had whispered to her) in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. She waited till Chan had dozed off, slipped quietly from the ward and returned home. It was only then that she realised that she had not consulted the boy's parents about the baptism and that Michael, now a Catholic, would have to receive Christian burial. She contacted the Brothers who told her about the father's injunction that there be no prayers. However, the local priest said, "Let the Buddhist funeral ceremonies go ahead. I will bless Michael's grave later on and I will contact his parents too."



A picture of St John Baptist de La Salle by Nakamori, a student at Hakodate, Japan.

Drawings of St John Baptist de La Salle by Vietnamese children to mark the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the Brothers in Vietnam.



When a Brother visited the hospital next morning, Chan Kong Hon was dead. The father was there again - a broken man. When the Brother offered his condolences, the father replied, "Thank you Brother... Kong Hon was a great, great son to me. Now I am devastated because I denied him his last wish. He wanted to die a Christian and I forbade it... now he is gone from me for ever." Then the Brother told him the beautiful story of his son's baptism.

The parents were greatly consoled and great too was the "face" they themselves and their son received when a large body of students from the school attended Mass for the repose of Michael's soul and then accompanied his remains to the local Catholic cemetery.

And so the jigsaw of grace fell into place as it always does. Chan, a non-Christian, had come to a Catholic school. He had attended religious knowledge classes, except for 'doctrinal' classes in preparation for the reception of the Sacraments. His father's early objection to "prayers" - the apparent chance action of a woman going to his house to pay a bill - then baptising him "Michael" as a result of information received from a Muslim nurse - the resignation of his parents in spite of their irreparable loss - and the glorious entrance into heaven of Michael Chan Kong Hon at the age of twenty years.

(BJD)

## HONG KONG

A young Brother Director (at the time!) of St Joseph's, Hong Kong, tells the story of an elderly Chinese who came into his office, leading a very small boy by the hand. "Brother Director," the elderly Chinese said, "before you were born, I was a pupil in this school when Br... was Director. He received me, and my brother, even though we could pay nothing, and because of my education I was able to find a good job. I sent my own sons to this school, and they in turn have sent their sons. Now, I bring you my great-grandson to enrol him in this school. All these years we have attended religion lessons but there was never any pressure on us to become Christians. For us moreover, in our family, such a thing was



not possible. But now I bring you this young one, and you will make him become a Christian because we have seen that you Brothers live what you have been teaching your pupils since this school was first opened."

## THAILAND

The Brothers' school at Bangna in Bangkok, where our Brothers work alongside the Lasallian Sisters of Vietnam, has over 2000 pupils, the majority of them Buddhist. In front of the school but somewhat to one side of the main school entrance, stands a statue, copied from the one in Alabang in the Philippines, showing John Baptist de La Salle with his hands on the shoulders of a small boy and a small girl. On any morning of the week, hundreds of the pupils, and many teachers as well, make a small diversion to pass in front of the statue, pause a moment with joined hands on the forehead, and then bow reverently, before continuing to their classrooms. This note of reverence and respect is accorded because John Baptist de La Salle is seen by the Buddhists as an "enlightened" man who gave away his riches in order to devote himself to the plight of the poor.

Before Christmas each year, the Christian pupils present an Advent play to which parents and friends, including the



monks from the nearby Buddhist monastery, are invited. A few years ago, the Buddhist "Abbot" and one of his Councilors called on the Brother Director. The monks were just finishing their new monastery and pagoda and, as a sign of their esteem for the Christian school where the children were being taught, asked Brother Director's permission for the new pagoda to be known as Pagoda La Salle - which it is!

## WHO CAN PLUMB THE DEPTHS OF THE HUMAN HEART!

Everyone knows what happened to Catholic schools during the 1975 revolution in Vietnam: they were all confiscated by the State and handed over to revolutionary communists.

It was Thursday and, as usual, we were organising a day of communist work for the pupils of the school. I was at the time a "teacher" (in Vietnamese "Giao Viên") and I would often go in the Honda with the headmaster to visit the pupils' work camp. The headmaster was from the south, but had been trained in communist ideology in the north, and then had been sent as headmaster to this school in Saigon. On the way from the school to the camp, he suddenly whispered to me:

*"Mr N. (Anh N.), I know that you are a religious and that you belong to a congregation of religious educators. Try not to stray from the path you have chosen. Your vocation as a teacher is beautiful. Everyone knows the value of the human education given by the Brothers. Don't listen to what I say during meetings. It's all politics, and you know that politics is illusory and often misleading".*

It was a surprise and a revelation for me. It was also a mark of confidence in religious, who never report on those they work with. I kept quiet because I wasn't sure of the sincerity of my companion. We always got on well with each other. It was only when he died that I was able to say that what he said about the Brothers was sincere.

As we read in Ecclesiastes (3, 1-7, 8-17):

"There is a season for everything...

A time for keeping silent,

A time for speaking....

A time for war

A time for peace...

A time for every occupation under heaven

I would add also:

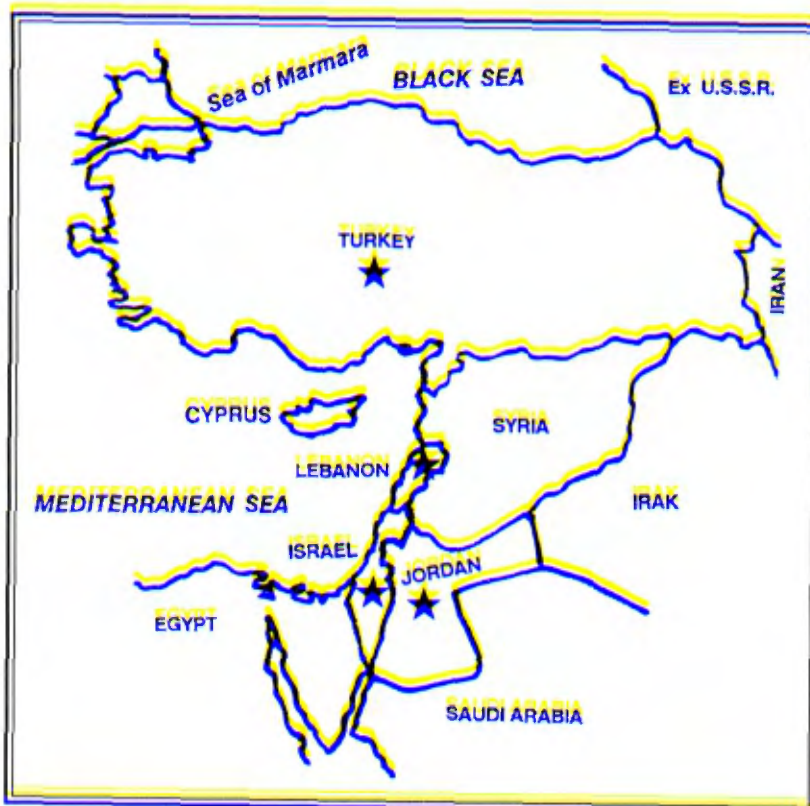
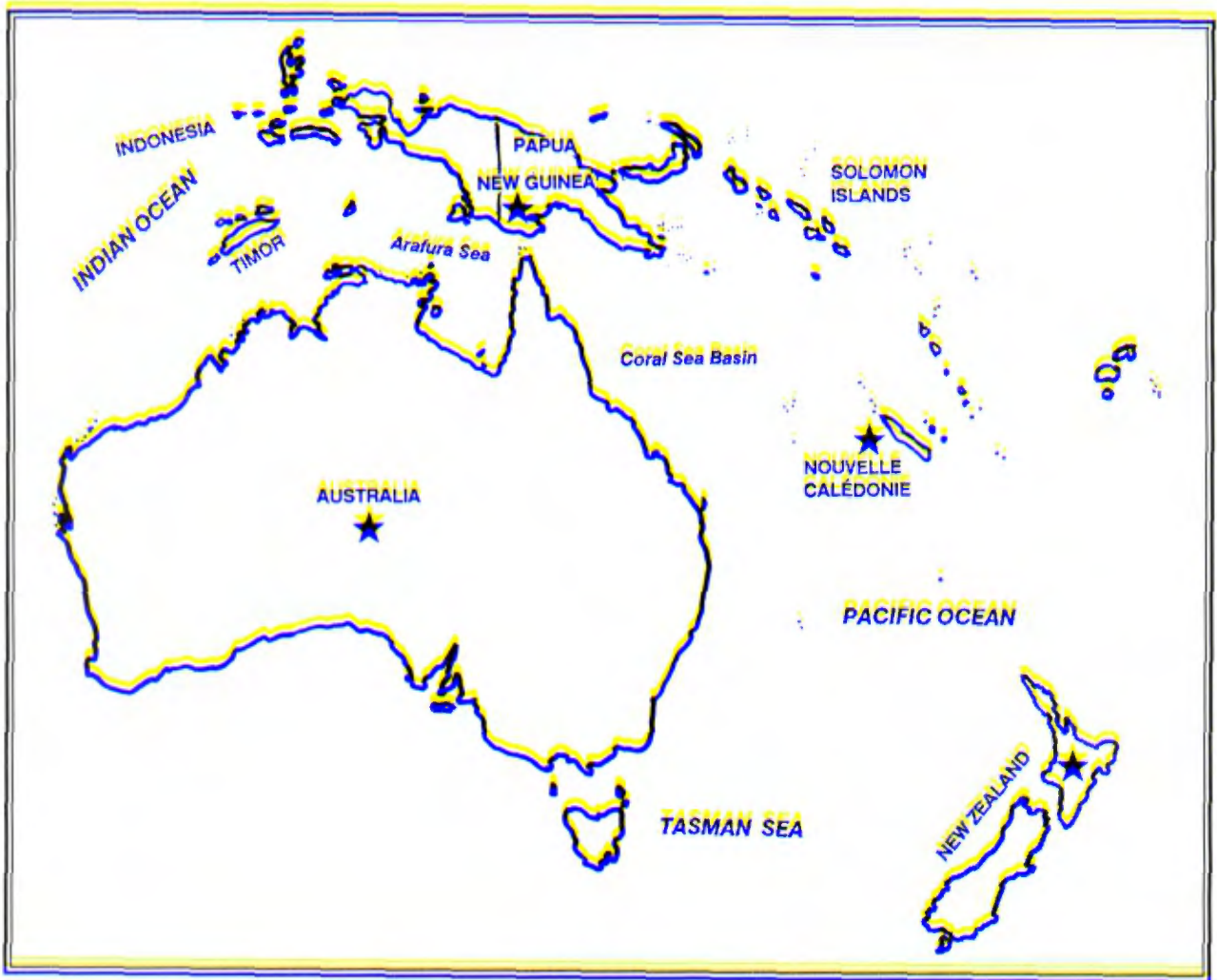
"A time to publicise things

And a time to say the truth

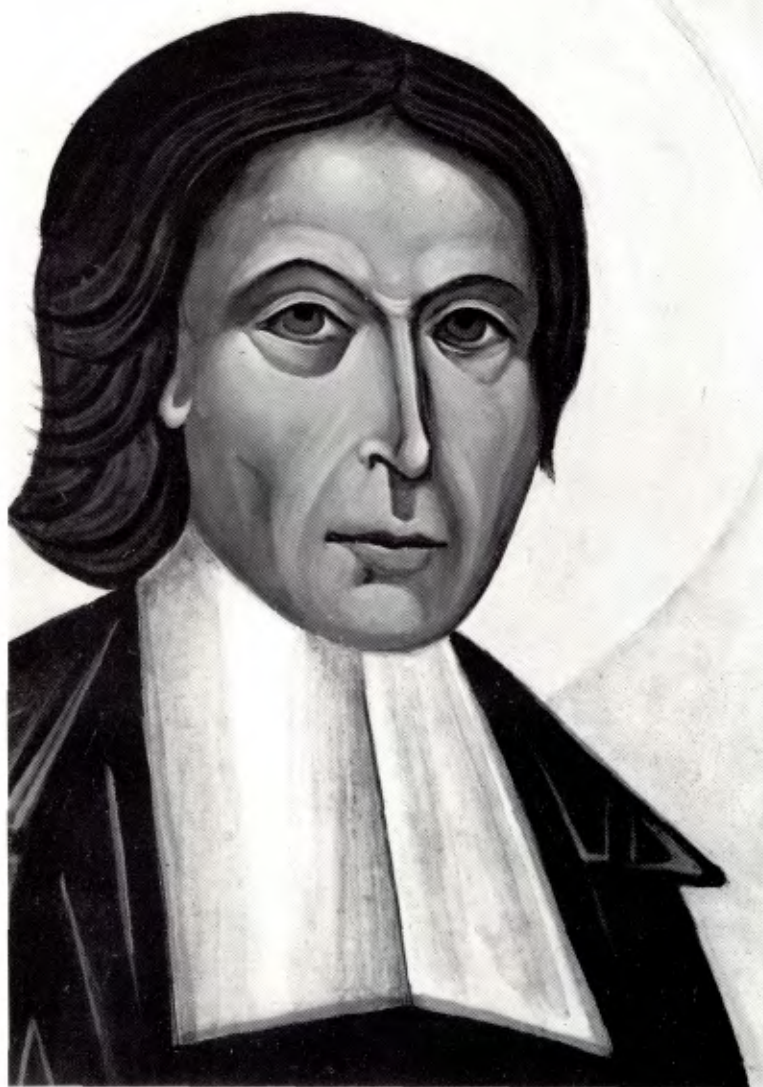
to people you trust" •

A Vietnamese Brother









This portrait, reproduced in color on the cover, was created by Brother Pierre Le Doré, community of Saint Briec, District of France.

The icon was painted in 1984 during a course in icon-painting techniques taught by the eminent iconographer, Madame Elisabeth Ossoline.

The techniques of the Byzantine style stretching the canvas over wood, coating the canvas with seven foundation layers, and painting the image in egg tempera were scrupulously followed.

The varnish was not applied until the painting had completely dried, that is, one year after the final stroke of the brush.

Upon the advice of the iconographer, the inscription uses the contemporary French alphabet.





**THERE IS  
HOPE  
YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

**NANBAN**

**MADURAI, S. INDIA**

Poster from Nanban,  
Madurai, India,  
created by a student there.