

# *Outstanding Paulian Award 2015*

## *Bro. Felix James Donohue*

Bro. Director, St. Paul's Institution, Seremban

1 January 1970 to 12 February 1975

Bro. Felix James Donohue was born in Ireland. He was sent to England for further his education when he was 17.

Describing how he became a brother, he says "I was invited to do so. I did not attend a La Salle School but one day when I was around 14 years of age, a Brother visited our school and spoke to my age group about the life and work of the Brothers. He then invited those interested to join the Brothers' Junior Training College where we would have the opportunity to learn more about the Brothers and their work. I was mildly interested but did not really intend applying until I was persuaded to do so by a fellow student."

From that point onwards, touched by God's Grace, he felt a growing attraction to the way of life espoused by the Brothers and after two years decided to join the novitiate undergoing a period of intense spiritual training and formation. Fourteen months later, he was convinced that God was calling him to dedicate his life to the work of education established by St. John Baptist De La Salle. The rest is history (e-lasallian network).

Brother Felix arrived in Penang in 1952, and was attached to St Xavier's, a Christian Brothers school. In 1970 he was appointed as Principal/Director of St. Paul's Institution. His leadership, though short was marked by outstanding achievements for the school both in academic performance and almost every co-curricular activity producing outstanding scholars, leaders and sporting heroes.

For the first time in history, girls were enrolled in Form IV and in Form VI. The renovation of the school office and the school Reference Library was carried out. He was honoured with the PJK award in 1973. In 1975, he was transferred to La Salle P.J. as Bro. Director.

In the time of Rev. Bro. J. Felix Donahue (1970-75), two major developments took place and the seeds of a third were sown. The first was the establishment of Sixth Form Science Classes in 1970; then the arrival of the first female Paulians in 1971. The former was significant not only to SPI but also the state of Negeri Sembilan as SPI continuously produced outstanding success in terms of academic achievement in the HSC and later the STPM.



The admission of female students did nothing to weaken SPI Secondary's examination performances, which remained as impressive as ever. Indeed, the school's 1973 High School Certificate results placed it first in the state and in 1975 SPI Secondary's HSC high-flyers outscored every other school in Malaysia. This success continues to the present day. The enrolment of female Paulians also had long term implications none more significant than requiring the Old Boys Association to change its name to Old Paulians' Association, as the long tradition of an exclusively-male student body ended.

By 1975 the secondary school's enrolment stood at 1,300

and once more space was scarce. Before he left SPI, Bro. Felix, put in place plans for a new block with three science laboratories, 12 classrooms and a canteen was envisioned, with a price tag of \$400,000. This project was completed by his replacement the late Bro. James Macken.

Bro. Felix had several trademarks. Firstly, he was never seen in school without his white cassock. He also cut a stern figure that held a firm belief that respect should always be given when and where it was due. The hallmark of his leadership was discipline, devotion and determination and with time these characteristics were exhibited by students and teachers alike. Discretions were rarely tolerated and often dealt with immediately with the aim of correcting wrongs and building the desired attitude and goals.

His students and teachers greatly admired and respected Bro Felix because he represented all that is good about Lasallian education. He epitomised leadership by example and exemplified complete understanding of education and compassion. His philosophy of education was built around the belief that children learn by example of their teachers and this he ensured that this ethos transcended all aspects of education in St. Paul's Institution.

Bro. Felix's commitment to St. Paul's Institution is unrivalled and unquestionable. Long after he left SPI and long after retired from active service to education, Bro. Felix continues to serve and representative of the Mission in the SPI Secondary Board of Governors and the SPI Primary Board of Managers. He continues to be instrumental in the development of both schools. Amongst his key contribution is the securing of sponsorship from ECM Libra Foundation for the SPI Secondary school hall.

Bro. Felix's love for St. Paul's Institution is anchored in his love for and admiration of the "Paulian Spirit". He unravels this phenomenon is the following way.

The Paulian "Spirit", which includes so many diverse elements, defies full analysis or definition. A scholar might identify one component as La Sallian ethos, another as the will to persevere; but this is murdering to dissect. The Paulian Spirit is simply that indefinable intangible something in the air one senses the moment one steps into the school compound. It is as old as SPI but yet lives on, having evolved and adapted to ensure its relevance to the needs and demands of the present day.

Paulians are not perhaps the most modest of people. The famous rhetorical question of "Who's the Best?" followed by the rousing full-throated roar of "SPI" is symptomatic of their unabashed self-confidence. This sentiment, one might hasten to add, is not born of arrogance or superiority, but results from a justifiable pride in belonging to a school that has a tradition, a sense of values and a glittering record of achievements. New schools may have excellent facilities, competent staffs, intelligent pupils, but more often than not,

things simply do not "click" - for missing is TRADITION - that sense of being part of a great institution and an epic history. Other things being equal, the Paulian Spirit is what carries the Paulian over the final threshold and on to success.

The Paulian Spirit then stems from our being the great custodians of a great tradition of which it is our duty to cherish, nurture and enhance as we pass it on to future generations. It is our most valuable asset, our most prized possession. It will sustain us, and give us strength as we confront the obstacles Life places in our way.

The Paulian Spirit today is a torch that has been handed down from each succeeding generation of Paulians to the next. It burns ever bright and illuminates our future, driving away the shadows of despair and disillusionment that may at times encroach upon our souls. It is our common identity, the symbol of our oneness, the bond that unites all Paulian as we advance through life true to our Alma Mater.

Paulians respect and admiration for Bro Felix is reflected in the setting up of the "The Brother Felix Donahue Fund" (BFD Fund), created in Year 2010 initiated by the Class of 1970. The purpose of this fund is also to assist needy students in Form 6 for tuition fees and purchase of reference. The BFD fund is managed by OPA and has to-date assisted tens of students who have all gone on successfully to higher education.

For Paulians, young and old, Bro Felix represents the most sustainable and sustained vestige of the La Salle Brothers and their contribution and commitment to the education of the children of St. Paul's Institution. Bro. Felix, to many Paulians is an integral part of the Paulian Spirit and the ethos of St. Paul's Institution. Paulians revere him, admire him, respect him but most of all love him not only for who he is but more importantly for all that he represents.

St. Paul's Institution, the Old Paulians' Association and All Paulians wish Bro. Felix James Donohue God Blessings, Good Health and Everlasting Happiness