

EULOGY FOR BR. LA SALLE BOSSONG

GIVEN BY BR. JAMES MEEGAN

Our Brother La Salle, Paul Norman Bossong, was born in San Francisco on October 26, 1929 and his arrival in this world was promptly greeted by the collapse of the Wall Street Stock Market 3 days later!! Not to be deterred by this disaster Paul Norman Bossong lived a life of love, hope, service, and inspiration.

La Salle had a life-long attachment to his place of birth. He attended elementary school at Star of the Sea and Dolores Mission – but for a year or so when he was ten he and his widowed Mom moved to Hollywood to work and live with his Aunt. As a true son of San Francisco he disliked his LA experience and longed to return north. Ironically Br. La Salle spent almost half his life in Southern California rooting for the 49er and the Giants.

He chose to enter St. Peter's High School and then began his long life with St. La Salle's Brothers of the Christian Schools. Clearly sensing a call to religious life very early on, he entered the Juniorate at Mont La Salle at the beginning of the 2nd Semester – much to the chagrin of his high school friends – particularly a popular young lady from his elementary school class known as the Queen Bee. She visited with Paul Norman during his summer break from the Mont and learned that he would not be returning to San Francisco.

Br. La Salle's commitment was clear to him at a very early age and he continued to grow and prosper in that life to the time of his death this past Sunday. He spent his apostolic life beginning with his first assignment to Garces High School in Bakersfield until December 2017 at Cathedral as a classroom teacher. He taught Religion, Latin, Geometry, English and his favorite – the Great Books, to thousands of students. He moderated yearbooks, coached tennis, golf and attended football and basketball games until the last year of his life.

For those of us who he taught we have wonderful memories – not so much of the content of the class- but of a loving, funny, dedicated, holy, older brother to us. Brother La Salle was the first Brother I ever saw on the Cathedral campus as he administered the entrance exam. And he was the first teacher I had at Cathedral when we began school the day after Labor Day of 1957.

One of the most memorable encounters that I and my classmates remember about Br. La Salle was the day in our Latin I class that we 9th graders staged a rebellion. An exam had been scheduled and we 14 year olds did not want to take it. So in the Great Decade of Conformity, what did we do – we wrote up and signed a Petition asking that the exam be postponed. Br. La Salle was given this document and he examined it carefully and declared our request null and void! Why – because my name appeared on the petition twice!! So we

took the test and for over 50 years wondered about the mystery of the forged signature. At a dinner at Cathedral one night, with a classmate who was a member of the Board of Trustees and his wife, the old story was told once again – and we finally got a confession! And the guilty party is here with us today mourning Br. La Salle lost and celebrating his life.

There are many classroom stories like this that many generations of his students can retell and relish. Br. La Salle lived a full and joyous life as a Christian Brother. He was a deeply spiritual man. He had great love for the liturgy and attended Mass daily – even on those days Mass was not available in the community. He prayed the rosary and did his meditation. When you couldn't find Brother La Salle in the house – look in the chapel because that is where he often was.

He loved to travel and later day travels with La Salle and Camillus were wonderful journeys. He was fully attentive to the development on the local, national, and world-wide scene. He read 3 newspapers every day and spent the time after dinner each day watching the evening news. He had developed strong political views that supported the causes of the poor and needy – fostered the common good.

Br. La Salle was good company – he was aware and concerned about those with whom he lived and worked. He enjoyed a good meal and a good drink – usually a Manhattan, but on special occasions when we were dining out a Beefeater Gibson – often times frustrated that his order couldn't be served because they had no cocktail menu. He loved to engage Br. John in polite political discussions during the news – this often resulted in the 3 of us yelling at each other – 2 against 1!

I don't know of anyone who was more prepared to meet Our Lord as he entered the gates of Heaven. But I also know that he didn't want to go yet. What he wanted to do was to go back home to Cathedral High School. He was stubborn about this. But I am sure that he has found a wonderful welcome in paradise by many of his former students from all the schools he taught for, and as St. La Salle has said he will spend eternity with those who strove to bring each other to salvation.