

TESTIMONIALS FOR BROTHER LA SALLE BOSSONG, FSC

Bro. La Salle taught my class geometry. We were amazed by how he could draw a perfect circle on the board without using the string trick. He stood with his shoulder to the board and with chalk in his hand, he swung his arm in an arc and formed the perfect circle.

Br. Richard Orona, FSC

I was fortunate to be assigned to Justin-Siena High School in the early seventies with Br. La Salle. He was a great community man, good teacher, and a great tennis coach. I always enjoyed our conversations in the residence while sipping on a glass of fine Christian Brothers wine.

Br. William Carriere, FSC, Ph.D.

As I was volunteering at my son's Cub Scout Pinewood Derby at Millikan HS in Long Beach, as adults introduced themselves, a person was really interested when I mentioned I worked at Cathedral. He asked me how long I had worked at Cathedral, and did I know someone named Br. La Salle. He explained that he was from the neighborhood and was "supposed" to go to Cathedral, but his freshman year was the year Cathedral didn't take freshmen, because it was scheduled to close. Most of his friends did go to Cathedral, and many of them played tennis.

He then explained that Cathedral didn't have a team, but had a tennis club. Apparently, Br. La Salle let this guy go along with his friends for tennis club meetings, even though he was never a Cathedral student. He proceeded to tell me what a wonderful teacher and person Br. La Salle was in the context of those tennis practices- how Br. La Salle was a model adult to him as a young man. He had nothing but beautiful things to say about Br. La Salle, and expressed his great respect for Br. La Salle, even if he could never beat Br. La Salle at tennis.

His last point really stuck with me- he explained that Br. La Salle wasn't the fastest player, and wasn't the hardest hitter. However, in returning the shots he reached, Br. La Salle was amazingly consistent, with sound fundamentals. Br. La Salle just didn't commit "unforced errors". He would let the other player's weaknesses and erratic play be their downfall. I guess I just really like the analogy of Br. La Salle's tennis technique to his approach to life. He wasn't the most aggressive or flashiest, but his fundamentals were sound, and his method was consistent.

Brian Bartel

I have been trying to put into words my tribute to the first Brother I ever met and my former teacher, wise counselor, and friend Br. Paul La Salle Bossong, but it has not been easy because I start crying when I remember him and all he did for me. Only my recent hospitalization is keeping me from attending his funeral.

I first met Br. La Salle the day I went to take the entrance exam at Cathedral. My freshman year he was my Religion and Latin teacher and I later was in his Geometry class. Br. quietly and gently nurtured my young mind to become more open to different ways of thinking and studying. He did this by the example he set in the classroom and on the campus. He would give us different examples of how to view ideas and concepts that I had not encountered before while gently prodding us to what would later become known as "thinking outside the box." As I pondered what to do with my life, it was his example that led me to make the decision to enter the brothers. Many years later, after I had received my dispensation, married and had a family I would seek him out for guidance and understanding and he always in his quiet manner would lead me to resources that helped me deal with the challenges and opportunities that come with being a father and family man. He immediately agreed to assist my oldest son with issues he was having when working on his college and graduate studies. We spent time at a couple of Dodger games and spent many fun hours playing Crazy Rummy (he was a master at it!). He has left an indelible mark on my brain and on my heart and my soul. I know that he is in heaven and will continue to help me. Rest in peace beloved brother and THANK YOU AND GOD FOR YOU!

Your former student, Deacon Charlie Stanton

Brother La Salle was very proud that he was turned into a character in this book, Spitwad Sutras. He loaned me his personal copy years ago. I thought I would share, so we might remember him better.

Here is the blurb -- Brother La Salle is "Brother Blake": "This work goes beyond the basics of classroom management to consider the path of both teacher and student toward authentic intellectual maturity and spiritual growth. It provides a framework for stripping away the external and personal pressures that bleed intellectual content out of classroom teaching so that teachers may, in fact, experience their vocation as sublime. Written in the novelistic first-person narrative, it is a seasoned teacher's story of his initiation from graduate student at the University of Chicago to ninth-grade teacher in a Catholic high school where he manned the battle lines in provincial, petty, sometime even violent world of American secondary school. It is also the story of how a certain Brother Blake, a 67-year-old practitioner of the pedagogy of the sublime, passed on his vision of classroom teaching

as a sublime vocation. A major contribution to the field by the acclaimed author of *The Ignorant Perfection of Ordinary People*."

Dr. Robert James

Here are some of my memories of Brother La Salle:

He was perhaps the best yearbook moderator for the yearbooks he produced at Cathedral High School from 1954 through 1959. When I got to Cathedral High in spring of 1955, he had both the Chimes newspaper and the Chimes yearbook; both after school activities meaning that he had no break from his full teaching schedule, his main responsibility. Never a complaint, always upbeat. In the 1955-56 year, I took over the duties of the Chimes newspaper which relieved him of that burden.

I had a habit of nicknaming people and I was looking for a nickname for Brother La Salle because in the Brothers community we referred to him as "Chimes", pronounced like many Hispanic students said the word as "Shimes." So I was thinking of what term should go with "Shimes" and decided on "Shimmy"...not because he could shimmy (as in the song, "I wish I could shimmy like my sister Kate") but exactly because shimming was the something we could never associate with good Brother. But that name stuck and we would call him Shimes or Shimmy or both.

In those days, the Brothers at Cathedral (and all other schools) would do their studying and class preparations in the Common Room. Our small bed rooms only had room for a bed, a chair and cabinet for clothes. So the common room was it; and for me, it was enjoyable to do my prep work along with the others. It was admirable to see that Brother La Salle and the Brother he patterned himself after, Brother Ligouri Edward, working at their desks way beyond when we others had left. Brother Edward developed his own vocabulary each year using such terms as "Formal Light", and others. Initially, Brother La Salle used those terms but soon after developed his own terms which had special meaning for his students.

Brother La Salle loved to take his vacation with the Brothers of the District at the St Joseph's Camp on the Russian River. He loved the singing of the group, religious and secular with the Provincial playing the Accordion. Brother Alfred (the Provincial) had put together a booklet, "Our Song Book", with over 225 songs to choose from. The next afternoon on the

beach, I heard people on Rien's Beach across the way saying that the music was coming from a night club high above the River.

Also at the River, Brother La Salle and others enjoyed the evening and night card games, "Oh Hell" (that's what was shouted when you didn't win); and in later years when we had a few quarters to gamble, Crazy Rummy. At the suggestion of the Rummy game, Brother La Salle would rush to his room to get his little bag of quarters. Then the game would proceed.

During the 60's, golf became popular during our August vacation at the River and we played at Northwood where we were allowed to play for free. However the golf pro there did not like the Brothers and gave us a bad time, calling us free loaders. So we found that we could go to the swank Santa Rosa Country Club and play with the blessing of the golf pro there...and surprisingly he was the brother of the Northwood pro. Even when we showed up with several foursomes, the Santa Rosa pro would make room for us. And one day, as everyone was warming up before the first tee, rookie golfer Brother La Salle who was taking some swings took a huge divot out the turf with his club. My friend, top golfer Brother Anselm Forrest, immediately went over to Brother La Salle and showed him how to re-plant that sod and then how to take moderate cuts at the ball. Later on in his career, I heard that Brother La Salle was himself a golf coach.

In later years I had left the Brothers, but taught and counseled at Christian Brothers High in Sacramento. During three summers I had tennis tourneys honoring Brothers (they were Brother Kilian Millane, Bede Van Duren and Norman Cook). Brother La Salle who loved tennis was always excited to play. La Salle's tennis was always measured and done with precision where he looked forward to attacking the net at the perfect time. Sometimes, however, he got frustrated when his opponent knew what was happening and would lob the shot over the advancing La Salle, left at the net.

Brother La Salle was very proud of a class he developed, a combination philosophy and Great Books class. As I visited Cathedral High a few years ago, I talked to a couple of students from his class and was surprised by their serious approach to the class and the knowledge and thinking they demonstrated in what they were learning. I'm proud that Brother La Salle brought this challenge to his students because I don't know of any other Brothers school who had a course like this in their curriculum.

Finally, it was impressive to see so many of his Cathedral graduates, some with their wives, at his Funeral Mass, burial and luncheon reception. It was proof of the esteem they had for their brother and friend.

Pat O'Brien

