



## BENS - ON THE WEST COAST CANADA/USA

March 2006

In retrospect the year 2005 was very significant for our alma mater under the able stewardship of Rev. Bro. Granville Perera FSC the Director imbued with a charismatic vision. The achievements of the students in academics, sports and extra-curricular activities were remarkable and reminiscent of the 'good old days' when St. Benedict's stood proud and tall in the educational firmament of our country.

In the backdrop of this success saga the keen interest evinced and the continuing financial assistance extended to our alma mater by alumni under the proud mantle of their respective OBA's is the best tribute to the spirit of Benedictinity that unmistakably binds us all. May I seek your continued participation in our activities and support for the projects that are being handled by College and the OBU in Colombo as Benedictines confidently forge ahead with the Vision for 2015 gaining credibility with the passage of Time.

.....Eric Motha

### MEMBERSHIP:

We welcome Nihal Maligaspe of Kamloops BC.

### BIRTHS:

Congratulations to Conrad & Dilani Sathianathen (San Francisco) on the birth of their son Johann Andre.

### OBITUARY

(SRI LANKA) Herbert Christie Victor Joseph, father of Lambert our OBA Auditor.

Donald Maligaspe brother of Nihal

Our condolences to the bereaved families.

### RETIRED CHRISTIAN BROTHERS FUND

The status of the Fund at present is Rs. 1,022,694.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Vancouver:** 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner Dance under the aegis of Bens on the West Coast - May 13, 2006 at Eaglequest Golf Coyote Creek Surrey.

**Toronto:** 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner Dance organized by the Alumni Association of Canada - April 22, 2006 at Radisson Hotel Toronto East.  
Foxy Nite II in aid of the College Grounds Development Project - Date to be announced.



### Benedictine Memoirs

*Brother Baptist Croos FSC*

***"Nothing ever built rose to such heights as to touch the skies,  
Unless some men dreamed that it should,  
Some men believed that it could  
And some men willed that it must."***

*...Joe Darrion and Mitch Leigh*

Hats off to Neil De Votta, the die-hard Benedictine, for having meticulously edited the "Benedictine Memoirs" which contains such a spectacular array of enlightening testimonies of some eminent and illustrious past pupils, which warm the cockles of one's heart and urges one to become more ardent and committed to the vision and mission of the Alma Mater.

The cover has been exquisitely designed by Mr. and Mrs. Ranjan Nadesapillai, which depicts the college crest with the motto (Religio, Mores, Cultura) that has been moulding and shaping the destinies of countless Benedictines for well over a century. The college clock tower, a part of the symbolic banyan tree and photographs of four lasallian stalwarts, three of whom (Brothers Claude Marie, Luke Gregory and Alexander Cyrillus) had been at the helm of the ship of St. Benedict's steering it through the stormy and murky waters during precarious times. Brother James had been a beacon of light and a tower of strength on spiritual matters for umpteens years. As we realize, besides these four Brothers, there had been a number of

remarkable educationists to whom we are extremely indebted. Paragons of excellence, they are ever worthy of emulation. They have etched their immortal names in the glorious history of St. Benedict's.

***"Lives of great men all remind us,  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And departing leave behind us,  
Footprints on the sands of time.  
Footprints, perhaps another  
Sailing over life's solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again."***

An erudite scholar and an accomplished poet, Brother Anselm Calixtus had very intricately woven the "Story of St. Benedict's". Painstaking research and precious time had gone into it, providing sufficient vital information, historical facts and figures. No doubt, it makes a fascinating reading and paints a reliable backdrop to the incredible story of St. Benedict's. It takes us through the vicissitudes and metamorphosis of this great institution, especially during the tumultuous years ensuing the first and the second World Wars.

Thereafter testimonies follow in reverberating cadence delving deep into the mighty ocean of reminiscences. As it is said, "Souvenirs perish but memories linger on." They are egging us on to do something worthwhile, for the spiritual, moral and intellectual formation of the present generation. The sweat and toil of the Lasallian lay partners, the faithful staff and the staunchly loyal old boys will be remembered with immense gratitude. The old boys are luminaries in all walks of life: religious, actors, engineers, architects, bankers, teachers, businessmen, form the galaxies in the Benedictine firmament. With class and character some had reached the zenith of their professional career bringing glory and honour to the motherland, while others have gone into oblivion.

Undoubtedly it had not been a smooth sailing for St. Benedict's. There had been cyclones and tornados. Knotty problems of all sorts had abounded. But like gold emerging purified from the fiery furnace, St. Benedict's emerged resilient, refined and re-assured to face manly the future with indomitable courage. While admiring the determination and the tenacity of purpose of the past directors, the present administration, staff, parents and the O.B.U

inspired by Mr. Felix Dias, will have to be heartily admired and congratulated.

Barring divine intervention or the hand of providence as we say, one of the inspiring forces for the tremendous success of St. Benedict's has been the College Anthem, spurring Benedictines into lofty heights of efficiency and making them very loyal to the Alma Mater. Composers of this oft-repeated Anthem have astutely included the essential ingredients in a nutshell "High be your aim in life's onward view" taught the Benedictines the importance of having a real aim in life, a goal, a purpose so that life becomes more challenging and meaningful. The author of the "Treasure Island", Robert Louis Stevenson wrote, "An aim in life is the only fortune worth finding." For years, Benedictines have been toiling laboriously keeping that aim in view. No wonder they have succeeded beyond expectations.

***"Doing the duty that is to do, Bearing the cross with the crown in view."***

The word "duty" has been stressed impressing upon the Benedictines its significance and grandeur. In the words of the famous Bengali Poet, Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian to win a Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 -

***"I slept and dreamt that life was joy.  
I awoke and found that life was duty.  
I acted and behold, duty was joy!"***

Devotion to duty has been the hallmark of all Benedictines, holding unswervingly to the principles of life, learned from their ever devoted teachers of yester years whom they speak with profound admiration and loyalty.

"Hold fast to dreams; for if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly" wrote Langsten Hughes. The Benedictines are still dreaming and planning for the betterment of every individual who goes through the sacred portals of this renowned institution. Their plans will surely succeed and their dreams come true, because there is so much of sincerity and fervour in their hearts!

Rev. Dr. Baptist Croos FSC was a former Provincial Visitor and is presently continuing his Lasallian ministry at St. Xavier's College Mannar.

## FROM COLOMBO



### BENEDICTINE NITE 2005

A capacity crowd of 640 had graced the occasion on December 17, 2005 at the Waters Edge, Battaramulla. The gala event had been a resounding success maintaining the finesse and excellence that has characterised this event since its debut in 1981. The organizing committee was a veritable blend of youth and experience. The estimated surplus of Rs. 5 million has been earmarked for projects at College on a priority basis.

Our members Jayantha & Bernie Seneviratne (Calgary) Ashley & Cindy Wijeyeratnam (San Francisco) and also veteran Old Josephian Len & Chantal Perera (British Columbia) were present and paid tributes to the organizational skills and superlative entertainment they were privileged to enjoy.

Past President of the Alumni Association of New York Luke De Silva was amongst the Old Bens who were honoured at the Dance in recognition of their meritorious services to their respective OBA's and their commitment to the old school. Luke was OBU President 1994-96 & 2002-2004.

### BENEDICTINE NITE 2006

Colombo Hilton – December 16, 2006

### COLLEGE GROUNDS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The progress report on the massive project reveals that much headway had been achieved and the authorities are confident that work will be completed by end March 2006. However the need for finances for the completion of this mega project undertaken by College/OBU has been stressed.

Our OBA has already remitted a sum of \$3500 and gratefully acknowledge the donations made by our members. We are endeavouring to raise

the balance due on our pledge for this project through the Annual Dinner Dance.

The official opening of the College grounds is slated for April 2006.

### MANHATTAN TO KOTAHENA

The delegation from Manhattan College New York traversed to St. Benedict's College Kotahena in January 2006 and shared their expertise in an English Teachers Training Programme which will immensely benefit our Alma Mater.

The delegation led by Prof. William Merriman spent the short stint at College imparting their knowledge and guidance to the teachers in College. Dr. Peter McCarthy commented that the IT facilities available at College was one of the best he had witnessed and was very impressed with the curriculum offered to the students.

Dr. Juveninus Thampoe, Prof. Neil Devotta and Luke De Silva of the New York OBU were in Colombo and teamed up with OBU stalwarts Felix Dias, Dudley Thambinayagam, Ravi Irugalbandara amongst others in the successful implementation of this project.

### ENGLISH – A VITAL LINK

Bro. Director had remarked that due to the overall improvement displayed by the students several parents had sought admission for their children to the Collegiate section. In responding to this need he has decided to form an additional class at Grades 6 & 7 for students who possessed a good knowledge of English. This move is a prelude to commencing an additional English medium class at higher grades in the near future. It is worthy of note that the students who applied and were selected were prospective top performers.

### GLOBAL BENEDICTINE TSUNAMI PROJECT

It is reported that 4 students (3 hostellers and 1 day scholar) are the present beneficiaries of the project initiated in 2005. The students who were selected by a panel and hail from the North and South are making steady progress under the care and guidance of the Brothers and Teachers. Our OBA sent a sum of \$1000, being donations from well wishers in BC, towards the project which has been commended as a noble gesture in the aftermath of the tragedy.

## FOCUS

### C. PATHMANATHAN - BEN WITH A MISSION



The name C. Pathmanathan is all too familiar as a student and teacher at St. Benedict's spanning several decades. The year 1944 witnessed Pathmanathan entering College where he had his entire educational career until 1956 when he commenced his higher studies as an Arts undergraduate at Peradeniya.

It must go on record that the young man no sooner had he completed his final paper in quest of his Arts Degree was whisked away to St. Xavier's College Nuwara Eliya by Rev. Bro. Anselm with the concurrence of Rev. Bro. Vincent Joseph Provincial Visitor. However in 1960 Pathmanathan in the wake of the schools take over decided to come over to his alma mater to continue his profession of teaching. In 1980 he left for Sokota State Nigeria where he served a six year stint before returning home.

During his long association with College spread over 20 years it can be said that all aspects of school life were touched and adorned by Pathmanathan. It was no surprise that his departure to Nigeria left a void and more teachers had to be harnessed to carry on the multifarious duties that he had been in charge of that was the stature of this young pedagogue. In addition, he had taken less than 20 days of leave during his entire teaching career in College, a tribute to his exemplary commitment. To quote Pathmanathan "Laborare est orare was my watchword" - consequently all other things fell in line signifying order and harmony.

The stamp of Pathmanathan's organizing finesse was visible and appreciated in the varied tasks he undertook- from scrubbing desks and whitewashing to organizing the most impressive functions. In his teaching career spanning 22 years Pathmanathan was a Class teacher for 16 and functioned as Housemaster, Master of Ceremonies, Master in Charge of Scouts and Swimming. To cap his all-round performance he also assumed duties as Prefect of Games when

the need surfaced in College and served the OBU as General Secretary for a year affording credibility to the need of the younger Bens to carry on the mantle.

Pathmanathan attributes his success in chalking up this enviable record of work to his bachelor status, being above financial need and the very close proximity of 'Ram Ashram', 59, Shoe Road, Kotahena, where he resided. He gratefully acknowledges the immense impact that teachers of the calibre of A. Gnanapragasam, Douglas Chapman, Francis Paiva, Bro. Anselm, Wilfred Perera and V Rasiah had on him during those yesteryears. Consequent to his return from Nigeria, Pathmanathan joined the Ramakrishna Mission, Batticaloa. He was incommunicado for 15 years commencing 1986 diligently serving the Mission in his own inimitable style. In 2000 he joined the Swami Vipulananda Elders' Home where he is at present. In the wake of his entering the Home the self imposed vows of not moving out of station, etc. were relaxed and he had the opportunity of touring UK, Canada, USA and Ireland thanks to the magnanimity and generosity of his grateful pupils.

In summing up C. Pathmanathan could be termed as a loyal Benedictine whose record of service at St. Benedict's both as a student and teacher was unrivalled and will be etched with pride in the history of our alma mater.

### OBU FORMED IN DUBAI

The Old Bens in Dubai had their first meeting on December 14, 2005 at the residence of Dennis Motha. The meeting was well attended and a prelude to the formal election of office bearers. The formation of the OBU was due in large measure to the efforts and encouragement proffered by Old Bens stalwart Victor Fernando in Sri Lanka; his son Vishan made the welcome address at the meeting.

The others present were:

Uditha Ekanayake, Eric Perera, Gavin Anandappa, Sujeewa De Silva, Marlon Saverimuttu, Rukmal Perera, Jude Fernando, Adrian Vangunster, Anthony Nair, Ralston Anandappa, Ramzeen Kamaldeen, Hiran Gomez & Ishan Fernando.

Thanks to the initiative of Ramzeen Kamaladeen a Yahoo Group for Old Bens in Dubai has been created which will subsequently form a separate website with links to the main College website.

Congratulations to the Benedictines in Dubai in forming the 7<sup>th</sup> overseas branch of the OBU.