

# How Aloysian! – Excellence With Soul

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*“The best type of liberal education in our complex modern world aims at producing men who know a little of everything and something well.”*

*Abbott Lawrence Lowell*

Isn't it a bit far-fetched, if not unfair to juxtapose the ideal of Harvard University with that of St. Louis School? Isn't it hard for a high school to live up to this standard? Idly thumbing through the 1987-88 School Magazine, I find the memory of my Alma Mater precise, yet discrete. St Louis School (“SLS”) provided a place of grounding from which I could experience and assimilate changes in perceptions, attitudes, roles and role models; from which I could venture into the world of excitement and renaissance and then return to ponder and reflect.

I always believe that Aloysians stand out from their peers, not necessarily intellectually though. Capitalizing on the feat of our forebears, each generation makes its own meaning out of this place; each generation tries its utmost to build this place. What makes my beloved school tick? On the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it's tempting to recount the good old days with relish. I do not intend to regurgitate the cliché: *Scientia et Pietas* (science and piety); and Alpha and Omega (i.e. seeing things through); and nor do I shed light on the profiles of our alumni. Instead I am furnishing the niches this school has found, aka religious education and moral (religious) education as follows.

Ever before general education became a buzz word in town, I was always fascinated by how knowledgeable our teachers are and how insightful their remarks are. The late LAW Yin-shun (夫子), who was my Form 3 class master, was an influential, yet interesting figure. His Chinese language lesson played to a cohort of teens, with verve and panache, and opening up a world otherwise sterile and unknown. Subject matter aside, he was well versed in almost everything. Frankly I learnt more in a mere 35-minute lesson than reading an encyclopedia. Even till this day, his ounce of common sense and wise counsel I am still craving for. How Aloysian. It is hard and rare to find this kind of mentor. While lauding his traits, I am not sure, in the hindsight, how far current youngsters, being too realistic, would appreciate or loathe it. During the time when it was not curriculum driven, teachers still had the luxury of instilling their know-how and experience into student's minds. General Education (or liberal education) should never be a curriculum, let alone a subject *per se*. The close student-teacher rapport is what distinguishes SLS.

Another solid foundation lies on our superb moral education. Practising Catholics or not, you will notice tireless toil (both spiritual and mundane) carried out by priests and religious alike at SLS, especially missionaries. It is quite unfair to single out any one of them. But I believe the impact of Rev Fr Bruno Gelosa on religious education at SLS will be everlasting. Why was he the most durable and adorable figure of our time? Not because he practiced what he preached, but because he cherished the time to interact with youngsters within and beyond chapel. Not because he evangelized, but because he always cared about the spiritual development of all students. One of my seniors said that Bruno was one of us. And so he was. He was a priest (even in his seven decades) who played soccer with us on a daily basis. How Aloysian. He was a conscientious spiritual director who led lots of retreats for the Union of Solidarities members from inclement winter straddling scorching summer. How Aloysian.

To tens of thousands of his protégé, Fr. Bruno Gelosa was an Aloysian hero, a hero who shared and honored their belief in seizing the moment, worshiping God, paying attention to the forgotten in the neighborhood. Following the footsteps of Don Bosco, he devoted his whole life to providing a sanctuary for street children every Sunday. In the safe haven, these adolescents would go on to become responsible citizens, if not devout Catholics.

But we should also not underestimate Father Gelosa's teaching credentials. For it was Bruno who incessantly taught biblical studies courses and led catechism classes over the years. Fr Gelosa embarked his missionary work in China, in turn Hong Kong for almost half a century. His enthusiasm remained unabated towards the very end as he served a tiny Milan parish back in Italy until his death in 2005. To know the secret of Bruno's relationship with the Aloysians, you need only to stroll around his former office at SLS' old wing where antiquated yet impeccable religious movies were shown, together various fun quizzes, meetings, and debates. Our vibrant faith is due in no small measure to his tireless nurture. Strong, brave, unyielding in his convictions, living every day of his life to the hilt, the titan of our time whose influence will be timeless -- that is Fr. 伊思高. How Aloysian.

Desperate to explore the farthest reaches of my memory, I always had that same sense of nostalgia about the 179 West Point campus. These are but a few of the reminiscences which jump to mind. The key, from my perspective, was the ability to experience all of these, and other events and people, in the company of intelligent, articulate and interesting peers. There are few other places where such opportunities existed. SLS offered me entree to the best minds and the most interesting people imaginable. I can't think of any other place I would have preferred to grow up in. I like to think I've become a caring, useful and honorable person, and parent, and that, somehow, my years in SLS helped mold me in that direction.

The other thing I admire my Alma Mater is that she never dwells on cosmetic slogans. She walks her talk, nurturing future pillars of our society day in day out. Wisdom cannot be acquired but cultivated. Yet it takes precedence over others, including academic knowledge. That is the type of learning that I most value now. Of course we could not rest on our laurels. That's why our devoted teachers and priests are still working very hard in the vineyard. Amid an age when we have more qualifications, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment, does SLS dare to rise to this occasion and pick up the gauntlet of a lifelong pursuit of sophisticated education? With the strength of SLS' academic foundation together with her sound and abiding traditions, there is much promise that the aberrations that seemed bothersome will work themselves out. As a staunch Aloysian, I am very proud to see our institute scaling another height.

*"Education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living."*

*John Dewey*