

## China – Brother David Liao “The Most Beautiful Rural Teacher”



Buddhist by birth and a convert to Catholicism, Brother Liao Le Nian (Brother David) was born in Malaysia and his grandfather was originally from Dabu-Meizhou in the Province of Guangdong. He is currently the only De La Salle Brother in China. He retired from teaching in 1999, and he returned to his native village in 2002 to start his activity as a volunteer teacher. “In 1999, when people first spoke about coming to this territory, nobody wanted to come. Even I was thinking of going to Africa. And in my home region in Malaysia, before coming to China, I was once the only Catholic Brother living in a Muslim village.”

Since coming to this region of China, he has been living and working alone and has won the esteem and affection of the whole local community. In 2013, he received recognition by being named as *China’s Most Beautiful Rural Teacher* on the occasion of the Chinese National Day for Teachers.

“Every 5 weeks, I try to go to St Joseph’s Community in Hong Kong to have community life and I stay there for about five days. I also make a report to the Brother Director of Hongkong”

When he began his mission, he was labelled the ‘mad man’ by the villagers, but he worked unceasingly and has taught English to more than 5,000 students, from primary school to university level. “I use an innovative method I developed that I named *Pinphonics*, to enable them to read English. I teach my students to speak English by asking them to think in bad Chinese grammar structure, which is not normally done.”

By a programme of subsidies for university fees, he has enabled 26 students from the village to follow higher studies at different colleges and universities. He has organized community development projects for improving the drainage in the farms and for redeveloping agricultural land that had been abandoned. He has turned the subsistence agriculture way of life in the village to commercial fruit orchard agriculture of pomelos.

“Children do not have to pay to go to school, but there is a need to give financial help to students going for higher education at colleges and universities. I never hesitate to ask for money for a good cause. I do not hold on to the money, if I cannot make use of it. I prefer to give it back.”

*“I adore in all things the will of God in my regard”*. These are the words of St John Baptist de La Salle which interest me most. Every day, I ask what God wants of me, and what I can do to fulfill His will. Adoring God means accepting all things, good and bad, as God’s will.”

“Especially when things seem most difficult, it is important not to give up but to accept willingly the chance to achieve something”. When you hear him speak about himself and see the video clips about him, it is easy to understand why he is so much loved and appreciated by the local population.

“The best legacy we can leave behind and the best way we can show leadership is to work in such a way as to ensure that those who come after us can do things better than we have been able to do ourselves.”

Carry on! Brother David!

Interview by Ilaria Iadeluca – Director of Communications  
Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Rome

[iiadeluca@lasalle.org](mailto:iiadeluca@lasalle.org)  
<http://www.lasalle.org/en/?s=david+liao>  
[www.lasallechina.com](http://www.lasallechina.com)

**China – Brother David Liao “The Most Beautiful Rural Teacher”** added by [Administratore La Salle](#) on December 13, 2017