

I have thought about this tribute since Brother Jeffrey asked me to do it. I told him that he knew people who could deliver this better than I and without a heavy southern accent...He smiled and said, "but YOU know me best!" I responded like so many kids have under his care, "Yes, brother,. I will!"

My biggest concern is addressing you gentlemen in the student body. Why? Because Brother fervently believed that you are the center of the school and you are here to give us, your older Brothers and Sisters an opportunity to live out our vocation. I asked Brother David Sinitiere when Jeff told me of his decision to go into hospice care...How do I describe Jeffrey...who to me seems indescribable...and how do I explain his importance in the Greater Lasallian World? This tall, often sleepy, Christian Brother influenced so many people but no one any more than me... I mean we were an unlikely pair, don't you think? This 6'4' Giant of a Brother and me, barely 5 feet tall...in fact when his kidneys began to fail two years ago and he was still a candidate for a transplant, I offered him one...He offhandedly responded that my kidneys were too short...

Well, for the past 30 years Brother Jeffrey became part of my family celebrating holidays, birthdays and readily joined us in a family life engulfed in our love for one another...but it was different...I have

described him to most of you as my best friend but even THAT falls short of explaining the connection Jeff and I shared. As I have thought about this relationship, in this lengthy pause since his passing, I have come to settle on the fact that we were kindred spirits... you know kindred spirits connected by a great love of young people and the solid belief of the transformative role of the teacher in the lives of those entrusted to them. I could give you hundreds of examples of what Brother Jeffrey taught me about De La Salle, his life and the Institute... I taught him the LANGUAGE of professional education, the theories of educational practice, I showed him how to budget and our greatest joy came from our annual pilgrimage to the Mothership at the Home Office in Cupertino CA...He sure did love all things Apple!

His ability to read and absorb new information still astounds me...after all he was on a quest, a search for new answers to help him fill the VOID that can happen to adolescents with HOME, with SCHOOL and with CHURCH. This was an endless quest and one he never finished and never gave up on...

The highlight of my time with Brother Jeffrey was in our summer work together. I mentioned the trip to the Apple Campus. The Summer Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies for many years took place on the West Coast just outside of San Francisco in what I consider the most

beautiful part of our country. It is a three year program of study about the life and practices of the Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. For many years after I graduated from the Buttimer Institute. I presented with Brother or served alongside him as community director and it was in this role I got to observe Brother Jeffrey at his best... He was one of the Principal presenters in Buttimer I and Buttimer II. It was here that I believe he made the greatest impact in his vocation. Many of the people who are guests here with us are here because Brother Jeff was their teacher. In the area of Formation and Learning about the Mission of the Brothers of the Christian Schools he was a larger than life man to most of the adults he taught for the last 30 years. Today many of his students in that program continue to share what they learn. The Faculty and Staff here at Saint Paul's participate every year in the Buttimer...YOUR faculty represent you well!

Jeff was at his best in this element...Teaching the life of the Founder of the Brothers was his life's passion, along with working with young people. He did not simply teach about a SAINT LaSalle. He taught about a MAN, a very HUMAN man of his time who began this society of teachers... He often emphasized to his classes the great obstacles those who educate young people can face but the real focus was the idea that all of us share and are owed...education grounded in human relationship.

Jeffrey would tell anyone that his greatest love was working with students and witnessing the great possibility in each one. We often argued about young people needing...craving boundaries...and that fine line that exists between Enabling and Compassion. His stand was clear there are no boundaries when it comes to caring for and nurturing young people and he would bear being misunderstood or criticized for trying too hard with EACH young person...

We often marveled at the question of why is teaching RELATIONAL? If you watched Jeff teach his Religion class over these last years...It was orderly, almost obsessively so... If you would have asked him why he would have told you that students need order, they function best when they respect the teacher and follow his or her direction... Order, after all, is the language of humanity that we all speak with those we care about. Brother Jeffrey's belief in the individual young person was without limits. One young man here told me that he kept screwing up and kept waiting for Brother to get angry with him and he never did... Three or four years ago someone here at Saint Paul's asked me, "Does Brother Jeffrey ever give up on a student? Why does he keep beating his head against the wall...I did not hesitate in my response... No...he sees the possibility in each one and knows that they need our unconditional love and care...they are simply growing up..." I spent

years observing how he made a difference in the lives students by never giving up and never letting even ONE young person feel unloved.

Brother's last words to me were, "Gina, take care of the kids... They are the presence of God especially the ones that are most unlovable..."

What a challenge but what a vocation! A vocation that never dimmed and never waned! OUR Brother!

While in his adopted homeland...Australia, HIS beautiful Land of Tomorrow" he became a member of a research/teaching staff of researchers and he designed the LOGO..It was a depiction of a Starfish...One day I received a package from Brother Jeff and I opened it and inside was this starfish and a copy of the legend of the starfish and I read it and understood immediately that he was talking about students...His Logo!



## The Starfish Story

An old man had a habit of early morning walks on the beach. One day, after a storm, he saw a human figure in the distance moving like a dancer.

As he came closer he saw that it was a young woman and she was not dancing but was reaching down to the sand, picking up a starfish and very gently throwing them into the ocean.

"Young lady," he asked,

"Why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?"

"The sun is up, and the tide is going out, and if I do not throw them in they will die."

"But young lady, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and starfish all along it?"

You cannot possibly make a difference."

The young woman listened politely, paused and then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves, saying,

"It made a difference for that one."

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