

The New Territories

The Prefecture Apostolic of Hong Kong was established in 1841. Since then, the "Hong Kong Island and the surrounding six leagues" were separated from the Diocese of Macau. In 1849, missionaries began their missionary work in where it is now the Tsuen Wan district of the New Territories. In the 1860s, the Chinese and British governments signed the Treaty of Beijing. The jurisdiction of the Prefecture was expanded to include almost the entire Xin'an County (later renamed Bao'an County). Missionary work was expanded to areas like the Kowloon Peninsula, Tai Po, Sai Kung Peninsula, Nan Tau, and Wu Kai Sha. In 1874, the Prefecture Apostolic was upgraded into a Vicariate Apostolic. Its jurisdiction expanded again to include Xin'an County, Guishan County (later renamed Huiyang) and Haifeng County. Father Timoleon Raimondi (PIME, 1827-1894) was appointed the first Vicar Apostolic and was ordained as bishop on November 22 the same year.

Bishop Raimondi was keen to develop missionary work and send clergy to preach in different places. The scope was not limited to the ceded land of the time—Hong Kong and Kowloon (south of Boundary Street)—but also got into the inland areas which were still under the jurisdiction of the Qing government. For example, in the eastern New Territories, ecclesiastical jurisdictions were established in Tai Long and Sai Kung in

1867 and 1880 respectively. The latter became a base of future missionaries in Hong Kong.

In 1898, according to Convention Between Great Britain and China Respecting an Extension of Hong Kong Territory, the British government leased areas north of Kowloon's Boundary Street and south of the Shenzhen River as well as more than 200 outlying islands from the Qing court for 99 years. The former Xin'an County was divided into Bao'an County governed by China and the "New Territories" governed by Britain. This meant that the Church also needed to revise its missionary strategy, gradually adopting Sai Kung in eastern New Territories and Nan Tau in Bao'an County as the two main centres of mission. After the British leased the New Territories, the succeeding bishops expanded pastoral works there. In 1905, after Father Domenico Pozzoni (PIME, 1861-1924) becoming bishop, he first established the Tai Po mission station. The missionary work in the New Territories was closely related to the development of the area. In 1926, the local Church divided the New Territories into the three ecclesiastical districts: East (with Sai Kung as the centre of mission work), West (with Tai Po as the centre of mission work), and Islands.

In a nutshell, the development of the Catholic Church in the New Territories before the 1940s was mainly centered in Tai Po, radiating

north to Fanling and Sheung Shui, south to Sha Tin and Tai Wai, and west to Yuen Long and Tsuen Wan. Missionary activities in Ma On Shan were under the responsibility of the missionaries in Sai Kung of the New Territories East ecclesiastical district. After the Second World War, many refugees who fled to Hong Kong lived in remote areas of the New Territories and the Catholic Church took on a more active social service mission in these communities.

Sai Kung Sacred Heart Church: Missionary Activities Integrated into the Community

Sai Kung, belonging to Xin'an County of Guangdong originally, was placed under the management of the Prefecture Apostolic of Hong Kong in 1861. Three years later, missionaries went there to carry out mission work. Fr. Simeone Volonteri (MEM, 1831-1904) was the first priest to preach there while Fr. Gaetano Origo (MEM, 1835-1868) was the first priest to reside there. They were welcomed and supported by the inhabitants. Soon, the first chapel was opened. By 1870, there were 350 believers scattered in 12 villages.

In 1912, Fr. Angelo Ferrario (PIME, 1876-1933) returned from Italy and went to preach in Sai Kung with a Chinese priest, Father John Situ Teng-chiu (1872-1947). In December of the same year they welcomed the companion of another priest Fr. Emilio Teruzzi (PIME, 1887-1942). They successively built 15 churches and chapels in Sham Chung, Yim Tin Tsai, Sai Kung, Wong Nai Chau, Chek Kang, Tai Long, Tan Ka Wan, Pak Sha O, Che Ha, Wong Mo Ying, Lung Shun Wan, and Long Ke, including the Sacred Heart Church in Sai Kung. These small churches later developed into several major Christian communities. As the believers were scattered, the priests needed to travel long distances to visit them. According to the 1922 annual report, there were 1,500 Catholics, 12 catechists, a church, and 10 schools with 260 students distributed among 22 communities. In 1924,

the Sung Tsun Catholic School affiliated to the Sacred Heart Church was founded.



Photo: Sacred Heart Church is an important missionary point in Sai Kung

During the Japanese occupation, Sai Kung was severely damaged. Pirates were also rampant. Many churches and houses were destroyed. Some Catholics died of famine and disease; others were killed. After the war, Fr. Giorgio Caruso (PIME, 1908-2004) returned to Sai Kung and missionary work could continue. Churches and primary schools were repaired for use, and there was an increase of believers. Nine churches and Mass centres served 23 villages. There were also four church-run schools. In 1949, the first batch of post-war catechumen got baptised in

Sai Wan while there were a gradual increase of inhabitants becoming catechumen. The re-opening of the Holy Spirit Minor Seminary in Sai Kung became the formation cradle of clergy until it was moved to Pok Fu Lam in 1957.

In 1955, the number of Catholics had increased to 800, including many boat-dwellers. As the believers continued to grow, the Diocese built a new worshipping venue on the hill of Yau Ma Po to replace the small church that had been rebuilt several times since 1880. The new Sacred Heart Church was consecrated in 1959. Severe typhoon affected the livelihoods of the boat-dwellers in 1964, the priests helped them to go ashore and rented a land plot from the government to build a village in Tui Min Hoi. This Catholic village was called St. Peter's Village, with a small church attached to it. The village was initially managed by Caritas-Hong Kong, which provided livelihood training to the villagers. Later, Caritas returned the management rights to the villagers' self-organised "Improving Life Limited Liability Cooperative," which became a rare cooperative village in Hong Kong that is available only for rent but not for sale. Fr. Adelio Lambertoni (PIME, 1939-2006) had served at the Sacred Heart Church since 1967. The Italian priest helped the local boat-dwellers and the poor greatly, and he received support from people of all walks of life. He later successfully got approval to build the Tai Ping Village and

Ming Shun Village. By this time, the missionary service was extended further to the south to Hebe Haven. In 1979, the Sacred Heart Church was raised to a parish and Sai Kung area has been under the charge of the PIME missionaries until today.



Photo: The Chapel at St. Peter's Village in Tui Min Hoi

Yim Tin Tsai St. Joseph's Church: A Historic Catholic Village

Yim Tin Tsai is an outlying island three kilometers away from Sai Kung town center. The Hakka villagers on the island all bear the surname Chan. The ancestors can trace back to the Chan Meng Tak couple in Chong Yuan Ha Village in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. One offshoots of the Chan clan subsequently moved to Yim Tin Tsai. As the villagers used to make living from the saltpans, thus the village, which has existed for two centuries, was named after Yim Tin (salt field) and the word “Tsai” (梓) refers to native place.

In 1864, Fr. Volonteri and Fr. Origo visited Yim Tin Tsai to preach there. After two years, Fr. Origo baptised seven villagers, and Fr. Volonteri baptised 33 members of the Chan family. The Catholics donated open space to build a chapel and a school (a predecessor of Ching Po School founded in 1920). St. Joseph was venerated as patron of Yim Tin Tsai since the villagers believed the saint had once made an apparition and scared away the pirates, protecting them from being looted.

In 1875, the villagers of Yim Tin Tsai were all baptised, and it became a truly Catholic village. In 1879, Fr. Joseph Freinademetz (SVD, 1852-1908) arrived in Sai Kung to preach and served in Yim Tin Tsai for two years. A new church was built in Yim Tin Tsai in 1890 to replace the old

chapel. In 2003, Pope John Paul II canonised him as a confessor saint for his missionary work in China and Hong Kong.



Photo: The restored church in Yim Tin Tsai

Entering the 20th century, Yim Tin Tsai turned a new page in its evangelisation work. It cultivated a number of vocations for the Catholic Church in Hong Kong. In 1917, villager Chan Dan-shu (1890-1975) became a priest. Five other women became nuns of the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres and the Sisters of the Precious Blood. Fr. Dominic Chan Chi-ming was ordained a priest in 1979 and was a vicar general of the diocese for almost 30 years.

In 1920, Ching Po School was opened to educate people in Yim Tin Tsai and nearby villages. Until 1959, the village had 193 believers. Life became difficult due to economic recession in the 1960s, and villagers began to move away from the island. The population of the village continued to drop. However, every year on the first Friday of May, Catholic villagers from the city and different parts of the world would come back to celebrate the parish feast. Being Hakka ethnically, the villagers recited the Hakka version of the “Lord’s Prayer” in Mass. Today, some senior church members can still recite prayers in Hakka. This reflected the inculturation endeavours of the Catholic Church and is another cultural testimony of East meets West.

St. Joseph's Church was restored in 1948 and 1962. The most recent restoration was completed in 2004. In 1990, the Antiquities Advisory Board of Hong Kong listed it a Grade 3 historic building. It also received an Award of Merit of the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation in 2005.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Tai Po Market Town

Tai Po is one of the earliest mission centres of the Catholic Church. The missionaries began expanding their area of service to Tai Po by climbing over Tai Mo Shan from Tsin Wan (today's Tsuen Wan). Fr. Andreas Leong Chi-hing (1837-1920), Fr. Guiseppe Burghignoli (MEM, 1833-1892) and Fr. Luigi Maria Piazzoli (later bishop, MEM, 1845-1904) were the first missionaries to reach Tai Po. In 1860, Fr. Raimondi (later bishop) visited Wun Yiu Village in Tai Po and recruited a young man named Ma Kam-siu as a catechist. Under cooperation of the Western missionaries and local Chinese, they built St. Peter's Chapel in Wun Yiu in 1863 and St. Andrew's Chapel in Ting Kok Village the following year.

Entering the 20th century, Catholic population increased gradually. In 1924, the total population in the Vicariate Apostolic reached 650,000, of which more than 28,000 were Catholics and 6,500 were catechumens spread among 65 churches and 367 chapels. In 1926, a larger St. Andrew's Church was built in Kam Shan, Tai Po. Fr. Richard Brookes (PIME, 1892-1980) was the first rector for the vast New Territories West district with Tai Po as the mission centre. Given the vastness of the area, it was obvious that having only one priest was not enough to cope with the demand, so in 1931 it was decided that, Fr. Diego D'ayala Valva (PIME, 1900-1989) was also to be sent to the ecclesiastical district. The vastness also limited the development, and thus Sunday Mass had to be held in Catholic families

in different mission points by monthly interval as there were not enough church venues. In 1937, St. Andrew's Church was damaged by the typhoon. A building on Tai Po Road was rented as a temporary worshipping venue until after the Second World War.

The Catholic Church continued to develop in Tai Po after the war. The premise on Tai Po Road was renamed as Sacred Heart of Mary Church. Later, the Chu Ting-cheong family sold their villa on Wan Tau Street, Tai Po to the Diocese at a low price. The new Immaculate Heart of Mary Church was opened in 1961. It was elevated to the status of parish in 1979. There are three bells in the Church. They came from the Immaculate Conception Chapel in Tai Long Village (this one was made by a bomb shell), the Epiphany of Our Lord Chapel in Sham Chung and St. Andrew's Church in Kam Shan respectively, symbolising the mission of the missionaries among the Chinese while displaying the Catholic Church's missionary history in New Territories.



Photo: St. Andrew's Church

With the development of new towns, population grew even faster. The Tai Po Parish has added Blessed Anna Wang Mass Centre (renamed as Saint Anna Wang Mass Centre in 2000) inside the Valtorta College in 1990, and Blessed Zhang Dapeng Chapel (renamed as Saint Zhang Dapeng Chapel in 2000) in the Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School in 1992, invoking the blessing of the Chinese martyr-saints in a place which has witnessed close cooperation between the foreign and Chinese Catholics.



Photo: Immaculate Heart of Mary Church

Ss. Peter and Paul Church: A Church in a Walled Village

Since 1840, the Catholic missionary work had reached outside Hong Kong Island. They initially set up a school and a missionary station on the shore of Tsuen Wan, then later spread to Tai Po, and from Lam Tsuen finally reaching the Yuen Long plain.

In Yuen Long, indigenous people have settled there for centuries. They viewed veneration of their ancestors as an important matter. Temples were always prosperous with many pilgrims visiting to venerate the folk deities. However, the foreign missionaries were still able to set up multiple mission points there in the early 20th century. The early development of the Church in the locality was characterised by the establishment of small church buildings like the traditional village house found in the New Territories. Catholic liturgy performed in these Chinese-style buildings was a sign of integration of a religion introduced from the West with the local environment. After the Catholic population grew to a certain level, a proper church would be built to accommodate more followers.

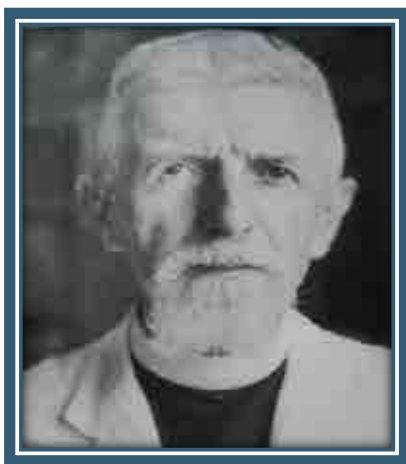


Photo: Fr. Richard Brookes

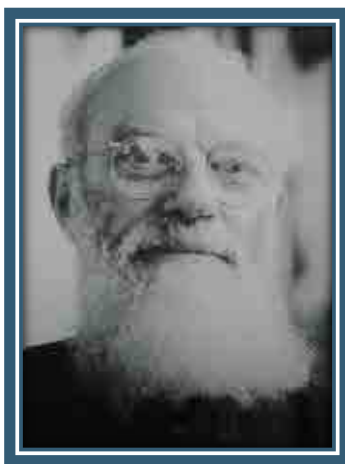


Photo: Fr. D'ayala Valva

Fr. Richard S. Brookes was a pioneer missionary in Yuen Long. He served as the rector of the New Territories West in 1926, managing areas that covered Tai Po, Yuen Long, as well as Tai O and Shek Pik on Lantau Island. At that time, there were two Chinese catechists, one male and one female, and five other teachers assisting his work. Since then, missionary work has also been extended to Yuen Long Hui (market town).

His successor, Fr. Diego D'ayala recruited many converts during his tenure. According to his report, there were around 150 Catholics in Yuen Long: 99 in Yuen Long Hui, 35 in Sheung Che, three in Ha Che, two in Wang Toi Shan, five in Shui Lau Tin and 25 in Cheung Po. Fr. Valva felt strong competition between Catholics and Protestants in Yuen Long. Fortunately, Catholic schools were valued by many parents, leading them to become a

robust support for the missionary work. In fact, he believed that preaching in schools was better than relying on catechists alone.

On June 29, 1927, a new rectory was opened in Tung Tau Tusen (village), Yuen Long Kau Hui (old market town). They established a Catholic church with Ss. Peter and Paul as patron saints and founded Shung Tak School. Priests often traveled to different villages to spread the Gospel. The old church was actually a traditional village house with pitched-shaped tiled roof and a Cross painted in red on the façade.

In 1952, Yuen Long was elevated as an independent ecclesiastical district, and was handed over from foreign missionaries to the local ones. Shuffles of clerics also brought changes to evangelisation from a Western way to the Chinese way. Fr. John Baptist Wong King-in (1911-1971) began gathering funding to build the new Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Shui Pin Tsuen. In 1958, it was officially consecrated. Fr. Thomas U Uen-chi (1914-1987) changed the asbestos tiles on the roof to ceramic ones so that the faithful would feel cooler during religious gathering. The wooden beams in the church were also replaced with steel ones. In addition, he refurbished and replaced the pews, and built a new confessional. He also built a small Marian Lourdes grotto. This shows that people of the Church do not always stress differences in cultures but also stress common points in doctrinal expression.



Photo: The words “Hong Kong Shung Tak Catholic School” painted in black could still be seen on the wall before the red cross.



Photo: The façade still bears the Chinese characters of “Catholic Church” (partially collapsed) in the above and an old plaque that reads “Shung Tak School.”

St. Jude's Catholic Church In Kam Tin: A Church Integrating Traditional Values

Pat Heung includes eight relatively large villages to the east of Kam Tin: Sheung Tsuen, Sheung Che, Wong Toi Shan, Yuen Kong, Moon Kong, Lin Fa Tei, Cheung Po, and Shui Ngau Tin. It was surrounded by hills and mountains such as Kai Kung Shan, Tai To Yan, Kwun Yam Shan, and Tai Mo Shan.

As early as 1926, two important mission points were already established in Kam Tin: Holy Family Prayer House in Sheung Che, and Sacred Heart Chapel in Pak Wai of Kam Tin. The pastor served also as the supervisor of Kam Chuen School. In 1962, Kam Tin became an independent ecclesiastical district separate from Yuen Long. A generous layman Wong Man-tim donated a piece of land on Kam Sheung Road near Kat Hing Wai for the building of St. Jude's Catholic Church. Another Catholic Shak Chung-shan and his wife donated half of the construction cost and the rest was funded by the church authority. It was consecrated by Bishop Joseph Julian Oste of Chengde Diocese (C.I.C.M, 1893-1971) on February 15, 1967.

The Cross at the main entrance of St. Jude's Church was placed at a lower position, rather than the highest point of the church building. It is believed to be related to the village custom: no roof can be higher than the ancestral hall of the village, and the design reflected the Catholic Church's respect for local traditions.



Photo: Fr. Philip Chan Chi-yan, the first priest of St. Jude's Catholic Church



Photo: *Kung Kao Po* reports the consecration ceremony of St. Jude's Church

Although St. Jude's Church was elevated to parish status in 1979, at that time Bishop John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung did not have any priests to send to the parish so he asked for assistance from the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (PIME Sisters). Sister Luigia Mindassi was

responsible for managing this rural church while other sisters provided help. Sister Goretti Yeung Mei-ling continued to serve at the Yuen Long parish. A priest was dispatched to St. Jude's for Mass every Sunday. He would also visit various villages (Kam Tin, Cheung Po Tsuen, Kam Tsin Wai, and Lui Kung Tin Tsuen) and hold a monthly Sunday Mass in each village on a rotating basis. During school holidays, with the help of young volunteers, outdoor activities were organised for the village children. Despite different nationalities, the Italian Sisters who served at Kam Tin until 1988, built up and maintained close relations with the rural people. Kam Chuen School was closed in 1988 and St. Jude's Church was reverted into a Mass Centre the following year. Since 1994, it was placed under the management of Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Yuen Long, with only one Mass available on Sundays.



Photo: St. Jude's Church

Cheung Po Tsuen Chapel: A Church Built with Green Bricks

Cheung Po Tsuen, a village of people with mixed surnames (including Tang, Tsang, Cheung, and Wong), was founded during the reign of Qing Emperor Kangxi (1661-1722). Villagers made their living mainly by farming. The word “Po” of Cheung Po (長莆) generally refers to water plants. Given the fact that the nearby villages were named “Ho Pui” (literal meaning: river back) and “Tai Kek” (literal meaning: great curved river), there is reason to believe Cheung Po is an ideal farmland for farming with sufficient water source.

St. John’s Chapel in Cheung Po Tsuen was consecrated by Fr. Situ Teng-chiu on June 24, 1928. It was the result of cooperation between the local and Western Church: the construction cost was raised partly in Hong Kong and partly in Italy. In the past, apart from being the venue for church activities, it was also used as the primary school of the village until 1951. It attracted many children, including those from other villages, to study there. Fr. Valva once praised the mission zeal of the Catholic families in Cheung Po. However, since the 1960s, in terms of religious services, the chapel was gradually replaced by the small church in Kam Tsin Wai (another village) and St. Jude’s Church on Kam Sheung Road. St. John’s Chapel has been vacant since 1980s.

The appearance of the chapel resembles the countryside churches in Europe, but it uses Chinese-style building materials, such as green bricks for the wall. (The green bricks are made of mud from fishpond and burnt in a kiln). These bricks, which are usually harder than normal bricks and waterproof with good heat insulation, was the best building material at that time. However, they were quite costly, and thus not commonly used by ordinary people. This reflects how the missionaries cherished the building of a church. There is a terrace in front of the chapel. Alongside the fence marked three Chinese characters that read “Catholic Church.” To both left and right sides are green glazed-tile decorative windows. The carved flower patterns not only allow good air circulation, it also lets natural light to shine through. Near the roof, the skylight also increased the number of light sources in the interior—a typical Chinese architectural characteristic.

The Cross on the bell tower on the façade is the main symbol of the Catholic Church, commemorating Jesus’ sacrifice for saving all humans. On the main wall, the date of construction completion was marked clearly: “AD1928.” In terms of Chinese architectural traditions, marking the date of construction completion is not uncommon, but it is rare to see it on a church building. This gives another example of the integration of Western and Chinese culture.



Photo: Cheung Po Tsuen Catholic Church witnessing the development of Catholicism in rural areas



Photo: The stone altar against the wall before the Vatican II, engraved with a Cross and “IHS” which is the abbreviation of the Latin words “In Hoc Salus,” meaning salvation through this Cross (also stands for Jesus Salvator Hominis). The stone altar symbolises that Christ is the “cornerstone,” “living stone” (1 Peter 2:4). It also represents the stone that

Moses used to obtain water for his people and take care of the people.

Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Chapel: An Ancestral Hall with a Cross

From 1923 to 1937, the British colonial government ordered the relocation of Tai Wai Village in Shing Mun in order to build Shing Mun Reservoir. The descendants of the Cheng clan thus moved to Pat Heung Kam Tsin Wai in 1929. The Kam Tsin Wai (wai means walled village) consisted of 25 village houses built by green bricks. The Hon Pang Ancestral Hall was also built at the same time. It was mainly used for celebrating important Chinese festivals. The ancestral hall was then converted to a Catholic chapel and Kam Chuen School. Later, it was transformed into a kindergarten and is now being used for holding meetings of village affairs.

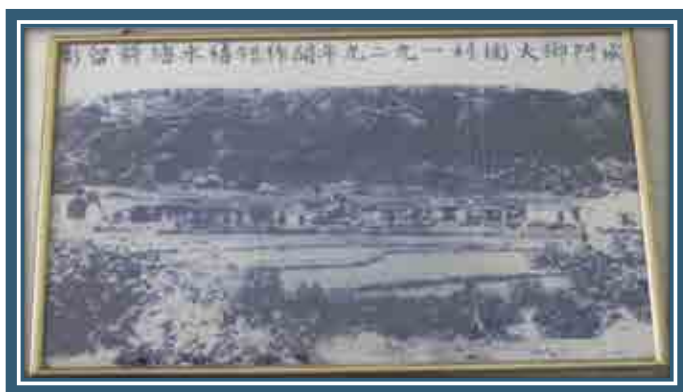


Photo: A photo of the original Shing Mun Tai Wai Village was hung inside the ancestral hall

Like other Hakkas, the Cheng clan believed in folk religions and lived by farming. They were good at “Kylin-dancing” and martial arts. In the early days of relocation, as the nearby fertile land has been occupied by the prominent Tang clan, there was no arable land for the new settlers. In order to continue farming, some villagers walked several hours every day returning to their fields in Shing Mun. After harvest, the crops would be taken to sell in Tsuen Wan. Most villagers worked as temps or were tricked and sent to Southeast Asia to work there. There were some villagers who wasted all the money they got from government’s compensation and the village’s public saving in improper ways. They even spent all the money they needed to repay for the construction of houses, leading to the seizure of the ancestral hall and some houses.

Photo: The ancestral hall was named after the 19th generation descendant Cheng Hon Pang.



In 1932, Fr. Valva became the rector of New Territories West succeeding Fr. Brookes. Fr. Valva knew some Hakka dialects and was a friendly person. With the help of educated Chinese catechists, he soon gained the trust of many villagers in Pat Heung. After getting in touch with the elders in Kam Tsin Wai village, Fr. Valva promised that the church authority would redeem the ancestral hall and the detained houses from the property contractor, and allowed the villagers to repay the Church when they could afford it. In addition, the Catholic Church often provided material relief to the poor villagers, improving their livelihood. As a result, some villagers started taking catechism classes. During the Dragon Boat Festival in 1935, Fr. Valva baptised all the villagers, and the whole village was converted to Catholicism. The ancestral hall was mortgaged to the Vicariate Apostolic at HK\$300 to be converted into a chapel, named “Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows Chapel.”

The words “Catholic Church” were engraved on the roof of the chapel, and a stone Cross was erected on the roof. The original plaques were removed and the spirit tablets of their ancestors were thrown into the nearby Kam Tin River. To date, there is no spirit tablet of their ancestors in their houses, nor do they have any incense burner table or shrine. In the chapel, there is a stone altar next to the wall for the purpose of celebrating Mass. At that time, the Mass liturgy was still performed in Latin. Most villagers did not know the language and had to rely on the altar servers to

respond. After the Vatican II, they started using the Hakka dialect for the Masses. Although the female villagers were all illiterate, they could recite the old-style “The Lord Prayer” and “Hail Mary” with ease.

Kam Tsin Wai later became the hub of the missionary work in Kam Tin. The church also supported the running of two schools in the area. Fr. Valva spent HK\$700 to renovate Kam Chuen School and continued to run it in response to the demand from Catholics in Kam Tsin Wai in 1948. Ten years later, the Sei Luen School was established jointly with three other villages, namely Yuen Kong Tsuen, Ng Ka Tsuen and Shek Wu Tong. These schools agreed to have the rector of Yuen Long serving as the school supervisor, responsible for the administration and funding. Each class would have two sessions of Bible learning every week.

With the completion of the Shek Kong Barracks and the improvement of Hong Kong’s economy, there were more job opportunities, and the villagers’ standard of living improved.

Photo: “Hung Tsz Hall” was named in memorial of Fr. D’yala Valva



They redeemed their homes as well as the ancestral hall. Only one family who has moved to Kowloon decided not to redeem their house, and the property is now still owned by the Diocese. In the 1980s, that house was renamed “Hung Tsz Hall” (the Chinese name of Fr. Valva, Au Hung-Tsz) to commemorate his missionary achievements. The usage of the house has changed along with the times: it has served as a priest rectory, a classroom for Kam Chuen School, and a tutorial classroom for public exam preparation. Now it is used as a storage space.



Photo: A news on Feast Day Celebration of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows Chapel

Although the Cheng clan has converted their ancestral hall into a Catholic church, the villagers still bring flowers and candles and sweep their ancestors’ tombs on traditional Ching Ming and Chung Yeung Festivals, as a way to strengthen their kinship. As for weddings and

funerals, they are all conducted in the church, which is another example of the integration of Chinese and western cultures. As St. Jude's Church became the hub of faith life for the Catholic villagers in Kam Tin area after its opening in 1966, the villagers started going there for Masses instead. The ancestral hall was returned to the Cheng clan, being converted into a kindergarten, until it was closed in 1971.

Ss. Cosmas and Damian Church in Tsuen Wan: En Route Stop of Rural Mission

Tsuen Wan was called “Tsin Wan” (literal meaning: shallow bay) in ancient times. When the New Territories was leased to Britain in 1898, it had a population of 3,000, scattering along the seaside, in Shung Mun River Valley, Kwai Chung, Tsing Yi, and Ma Wan. The locals lived on agriculture and fishing and practiced folk religions. As early as in 1849, the Catholic Mission started preaching in Tsuen Wan and set up schools and mission points on the banks of Tsuen Wan. In the 1860s, Fr. Giuseppe Burghignoli (PIME, 1833-1892), Fr. Andreas Leong Chi-Hing (1837-1920) and others started coming to Tsuen Wan via the waterway, then climbed over Tai Mo Shan to preach in Tai Po. Therefore, Tsuen Wan had become the en route stop for Catholicism to spread in the more inland areas of the New Territories.

On January 21, 1861, after Fr. Burghignoli settled in Tsuen Wan, he established a small school with a capacity of 40 students. Before the war in the 1940s, Fr. Valva and Fr. Brookes took terms to offer pastoral care to the Catholics in Tsuen Wan. They baptised some locals, and with their support, in 1934, the church was moved from a hut in Chung On Street to a proper house in Sam Tung Uk, which was later named Sacred Heart of Jesus Church. At the same time, a boys’ school and a girls’ school were founded on the two sides of the church. This Tak Sing School was the first

Catholic primary school in Tsuen Wan. However, missionary work was suspended during the Japanese occupation. Both the church and the school were closed temporarily until 1947. Tsuen Wan was carved out as an independent ecclesiastic district in 1952, with responsibility also for the pastoral care of the Catholic fishing people at the typhoon shelter of Tsing Yi Island.

During the 1950s and 1960s, with a large influx of mainland Chinese to Hong Kong, they brought along a huge amount of capital, technology, and cheap labor. Many factories were built on Texaco Road, Yeung Uk Road, and Chai Wan Kok, accelerating the industrial development in the district. At this time, the government also acquired farmlands to create a satellite new town to cope with the demand for industrial development and housing. Between 1961 and 1976, 60% of the employed population in Tsuen Wan worked in the manufacturing industry. Catholic institutions were providing social services actively. With the constantly growing population, more and more people converted to Catholicism. Sacred Heart of Jesus Church near Sam Tung Uk (now known as Luk Yeung Sun Chuen) could not meet the demand. The construction of depot of the Mass Transit Railway and residential estate Luk Yeung Sun Cheun led to the demolition of the church and the school. The Diocese built a new church on Tak Wah Street to replace it. It was funded by the Essen Diocese in Germany. Since

its completion in 1969, Ss. Cosmas and Damian Church has been the venue for Catholics in Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing, and Tsing Yi districts to live out their faith life. In the 1970s, Fr. Gabriel Liu Yu-ting (1927-2016) and Fr. Mario Marazzi began to use the secondary and primary schools in Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing, as well as some residential flats in Kwai Fong, to serve as Mass Centres. These Mass Centres were successively established into parishes: namely, St. John the Apostle Parish in Shek Lei; St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Tsing Yi; St. Stephen's Parish in Kwai Fong; and Church of the Annunciation on On Yin Street in Tsuen Wan.



Photo: Ss. Cosmas and Damian Church

After the government established Tsuen Wan in 1961 as the first new town in the New Territories, many working-class people and grassroots moved there. However, public social services failed to meet the demands of the residents, and the Catholic Church assumed the responsibility of helping the deprived, especially in terms of medical services and education. In 1962, Caritas-Hong Kong established the Tsuen Wan Social Service Centre on Shing Mun Road to engage in social welfare work. Fr. Marazzi, the Italian parish priest of Ss. Cosmas and Damian Church, served in the centre from the late 1960s to the early 1970s.

Further to this, the changes in the political situation in mainland China forced many religious congregations to move their bases to Hong Kong. They helped meet the demands of social services in Hong Kong. After arriving Hong Kong in the 1950s, the Marist brothers once taught in St. Martin's College. In 1963, they founded St. Francis Xavier's School, Tsuen Wan. The Sisters of the Helpers of the Holy Souls also moved from mainland China to Hong Kong and established Mary of Providence Primary School in the 1960s. In 1976, Mary of Providence Kindergarten was added. Later, they also founded a clinic. Before the establishment of Yan Chai Hospital in 1973, Catholic Relief Services from the US had already opened Kai Ming Clinic, adjacent to Tsuen Wan Typhoon Shelter and the Resettlement Area, serving the deprived. It was once entrusted to the care

of the Helpers of the Holy Souls and later became what is now known as the Caritas Jockey Club Tsuen Wan Clinic. As we can see from the above, the local church and foreign Catholic institutions have made significant contributions over the past century to the pastoral care, education, and social relief services for the people in Tsuen Wan.

St. Joseph's Church, Fanling: Founding Priest Named "King of New Territories"

Catholic missionary work began in 1926 in Fanling, a crossroads to various direction of the New Territories. After the war, in 1949, Fr. Ambrose Poletti (PIME, 1905-1973) was appointed rector of the New Territories West ecclesiastical district. He believed that it was necessary to set up a district in Fanling. Catholic layman Tang Kun-leung was willing to lend his residence in Luen Wo Market to say Masses for 20 to 30 Catholics. It was how St. Joseph's Church, Fanling, came into existence. Two years later, another Catholic Chu Yan-kit donated a piece of farmland near Luen Wo Market (now known as Wo Tai Street) for the building of a new church, originally taking the name Fanling On Lok Tsuen Catholic Church. When the church was completed in 1953, it was renamed St. Joseph's Church and was under the management of Tai Po mission centre. When Fanling ecclesiastic district formally became independent from Tai Po in 1956, it served the areas including Sheung Shui, Fanling, Sha Tau Kok, and Ta Kwu Ling.

Fr. Poletti was regarded as Hong Kong's doorman on the Chinese border as he had to make daily treks to the Lo Wu border, helping the border officials to identify missionaries expelled after detention after the Communist took over China in 1949. These expelled missionaries included Bishop Alfonso Maria Corrado Ferroni of Laohekau (1892-1966),

who had lost 110 pounds when released, and Bishop Lorenzo Bianchi, who arrived in filthy rags like a beggar. Fr. Poletti was in friendly terms with many village elders, who were authoritative in the New Territories affairs. He also had a close relation with the police and British military officials at the border that he was given permission to possess a gun. This earned him a nickname “King of the New Territories” among the Chinese.

In the 1920s, there were a number of country villas in the neighbourhood of Luen Wo Market owned by Chinese and foreigners. St. Joseph’s Church, Fanling, is now the only surviving building of its type in Luen Wo Market. It is also considered a rare example of a refined and delicate church in the rural New Territories. It was listed as Grade 3 historic building by the Antiquities Advisory Board in 2011. An expansion was started in 2018, and it is expected to be reopened in three years.



Photo: St. Joseph’s Church, Fanling

Ma On Shan Tsuen Catholic Church: A Sacred Site in a Quarry

The missionary history of the Catholic Church in Ma On Shan, a mountain 700 meters in height, can be traced back to 1869. At that time, there were only a few small villages in Wu Kai Sha. The missionaries in Sai Kung often came here to preach, and in the same year, the first villager was baptised.

After the Second World War ended in August 1945, the development of the Catholic Church in the New Territories East also turned a new page. To begin with, the well-known Ma On Shan Iron Mine bloomed rapidly. At one point, there were more than 4,000 workers and their families residing there. A fair proportion of them were educated people who took refuge in Hong Kong from China and many knew the Catholic Church in different parts of China. The Franciscans who were also expelled from China had been serving the mine workers and their families since 1952, and they built St. Joseph's Chapel on the mountain, which was largely cut off from the town centre. As many people wanted to get baptised, to make attending Catholic services easier for the residents at the foot of the mountain, the foreign friars decided to build another church by the seaside named St. Francis' Chapel. The dedication service was held on the Feast Day of St. Francis in 1955.

Over time, the mine was closed in 1976 and the number of residents decreased. The government had been planning a new town in Ma On Shan since the 1980s. St. Francis' Chapel (elevated into a parish in 1979) was demolished in 1984, and St. Joseph's Chapel was closed in 1999. The parish moved its base to St. Joseph's Primary School and held services there. Nowadays, Ma On Shan has become a new town with a population of more than 200,000. The new St. Francis' Church was consecrated in 1996 with St. Francis of Assisi as its patron. The parish serves more than 2,000 Catholic families while witnessing the Gospel of Christ to the non-Catholic residents.



Photo: St. Joseph's Chapel in Ma On Shan

Church of St. Benedict in Sha Tin: A Church Full of Chinese Culture

Although Sha Tin is a populous community today, the Church mission in this area began relatively late compared to other districts. The beginning of the missionary development in Tai Wai and Sha Tin was also the work of Fr. Poletti. As early as 1953, Fr. Poletti purchased a deserted TV relay station in Sha Tin, converting it into a small chapel. It was initially named Sha Tin Prayer House affiliated to the Tai Po district. In 1954, it was renamed Sacred Heart of Jesus Chapel. Two years later, Fr. Lido Mencarini (PIME, 1916-2007) acquired a two-storey villa from the government and converted it into Sha Tin Sacred Heart of Jesus Church. The new site covered an area of 28,000 square feet. With the expanded space, it also attracted more people to come.

As the government pushed for developing Sha Tin into a new town, housing estates were constructed in Lek Yuen, Wo Che, Tsang Tai Uk, and City One Shatin, leading to a soaring population. The number of baptised also increased significantly. Sacred Heart of Jesus Church was no longer large enough to hold so many faithful. The diocese then sought help from the German bishops. Receiving funding finally from the Catholics of Essen Diocese, the donors requested the new church to be named after a German bishop, and thus it was named as St. Alfred's Church. Ten years after St. Alfred's Church was opened in 1977, Bishop John Baptist Wu of Hong Kong

divided Sha Tin into three parishes, namely St. Alfred's Church, Church of St. Benedict, and Holy Martyrs and Blessed of China Church.

In the early days, members of the Church of St. Benedict could only have Masses at the covered playground of Immaculate Heart of Mary College in Jat Min Chuen, a public housing estate. Later, they set up St. Benedict's Parish Centre at a rented venue facing Yuen Chau Kok Road. In 1993, a five-storey building for the Church of St. Benedict was finally completed. However, due to the lack of priests, the diocese had to turn the Holy Martyrs and Blessed of China Church, located in The Little Flower's Catholic Primary School in Wo Che Estate, into a Mass Centre under the auspices of the Church of St. Benedict parish.

In the masses held in the Church of St. Benedict, during the Prayers of the Faithful and Eucharistic Prayer, the altar server would ring a Chinese standing bell (磬). This traditional musical instrument aims at allowing the prayers to reach to the Heaven and help the congregants to concentrate. The use of standing bell also has a sense of Buddhist "zen," which serves as another excellent example of the fusion of Chinese traditions and other cultures.

In addition, American Fr. John Ahearn, the first priest of the church, was passionate about Chinese culture. For example, a topographical inscription is placed in the corridor on the second floor of the church. The

inscription is a replica of the Nestorian Stele from Xi'an Beilin Museum. It details the history of the introduction of the Nestorian Church (a branch of the Catholic Church in Central Asia) in Tang Dynasty (618-907) and the scriptures and prayers that were used at that time. The Chinese decoration inside a venue of a religion introduced from the West represents the cultural exchanges between the East and the West. These rituals and traditions of the Church of St. Benedict also reflect how the missionaries would adapt and transform religious practices in response to the local cultures.



Photo (left): Church of St. Benedict has the liturgical tradition of ringing the traditional Chinese standing bell during Masses

Photo (right): The topographical inscription replica of the Nestorian Stele hung on the wall of the church corridor

To conclude, it is not difficult to see that the development of Catholicism in the New Territories after the war was building on a foundation laid before the war, with Tai Po being the centre, radiating south to Tai Wai and Sha Tin, and radiating north to Fanling and Sheung Shui. All of these have been developing alongside with the social progress of the New Territories. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Catholic Church expanded its work continuously in these areas in response to the expansion of new towns in the once countryside. In the course of it, there were conflicts and exchanges of Chinese and Western cultures, changes of religious personnel from Westerners to Chinese, and the adaptation of Catholic buildings and liturgy. These also shows that the path of missionary work is a fusion of Eastern and Western cultures.