

In the Footsteps of St Paul

Sisters of St Paul of Chartres
Hong Kong

1848 - 1998



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1

From Levesville to Chartres

France had become the greatest power in Europe in the seventeenth century, achieving not only military and political superiority but also cultural pre-eminence. However King Louis XIV's expensive wars and extravagant palaces, aggravated by natural disasters, harsh winters, epidemics, and a decline in agricultural production causing famine, began to create economic and social difficulties for the lower classes which went on to the next century. It was to alleviate the misery of the poor and the unfortunates that St Vincent de Paul, well known for his charitable works, founded the Daughters of Charity at the beginning of this century.

France was just coming out of a massive famine in 1693 which killed two million people when a young priest, about 30 years of age, arrived in Levesville-la-Chenard the following year. This small village with a population of about one hundred fifty lies some 15 miles southeast of Chartres. Full of holy zeal for Christ's Gospel and prompted by the words of St Paul, "*I made myself all things to all men so as to save some at any cost*", (1 Co 9.22) Father Louis Chauvet immediately swung into action to relieve his impoverished peasant parishioners not only of the evil of poverty, but most of all of ignorance. He knew that he could not do it alone and would need the assistance of others.

What Fr Chauvet wanted were good religious women - regardless of class and financial distinction, whose dowry would be their natural aptitude for work, for this would be their livelihood - vowed to Christ and following out one ideal - Christ-like charity - consisting of visits to the poor, care of the sick and the education of children.¹

Soon two young girls and a lady - generous, courageous, selfless - were only too happy and eager to follow him and give their life to God in the service of their neighbours, especially the needy. In the beginning they lived in their own homes until 1700 when the house near the parish church Fr Chauvet built for them was ready. He drew up a simple rule and chose 17-year-old Marie

¹ Rene Gobillot, *The Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres*, trans (Manila: 1956), p. 5

Michau as Superior.² With the aid of co-foundress, Lady Marie-Anne de Tilly, a devout member of the village nobility, he took care of their formation, guiding them as they undertook their first ministry of teaching the illiterate village children, as well as visiting the families and the sick.

Although from the outset, Fr Chauvet meant to form a religious family, he had not intended to found a big congregation. His immediate concern was only his poor parishioners. However, in the mystery of God's loving Providence this small group became the 'seed' that grew and blossomed into a big tree.

The spirituality of the Congregation, being Paschal and Christo-centric, was determined by Divine Providence. The early years of the Congregation was marked by the Paschal Mystery. The first Superior, Marie Michau, met an untimely death in 1702, which prompted Lady Marie Anne de Tilly to leave her family despite their unyielding opposition to her religious vocation. She too however followed her to the grave a year later.

By 1708 the nascent Community, known at first as "Daughters of the School of Levesville", had spread to the neighbouring towns. It was at this time that the Bishop of Chartres, Mgr Paul Godet des Marais, took the Sisters under his wings. He gave them their official name - Sisters of St Paul - after his patron saint: a providential name indeed which indicated accurately what the future of the Congregation would be - missionary, like St Paul.

Hardly had the Sisters been settled in Chartres when once again death struck the young Congregation with the demise of Bishop Godet des Marais in 1709 followed by their beloved founder, Fr Chauvet, aged 46, a year later.

Holding on to their faith in the Resurrection and a deep love for Christ, the Community struggled to survive in spite of all these serious setbacks. Not even the violent and bloody French Revolution which suppressed all religious congregations in France and disbanded the Sisters from 1792 to 1803 could dampen their spirit and stop their zeal from pursuing their one ideal of following Jesus Christ and spreading His love to everyone.

"The Sisters took refuge with their families, with their friends. In secular dress they went on teaching, nursing, caring for the poor."³

² Louis David, From the notes of, *History of the origin of the Sisters of St Paul of Chartres*, trans (np: 1986), p. 145

³ James B Reuter, *For the young at heart: highlights from the history of the Sisters of St Paul of Chartres* (Manila: 1965), p. 19

2

M.issionary Journeys

The year 1727 was a turning point in the life of the Congregation posing a great challenge to the generosity, courage and missionary zeal of the Sisters. That year the young Congregation took its first step towards the realization of its missionary call. Four courageous young Sisters were chosen among the many volunteers to undertake the 120-day journey to the unknown - to Cayenne, French Guiana, a colony in South America where prisoners and convicts were deported by the French Government. Sending women missionaries abroad was still a novel idea at that time. The Sisters of St Paul was only the third congregation of women religious in France to send Sisters to far-away foreign missions, the previous two to Canada in 1639.⁴ Thus did the little known Congregation embarked on the first of two most important missionary journeys - the first to the New World, America, and the second to the Old World, China. Ironically, it was the trip to the Old World that proved to be the more significant and fruitful of the two.

Over a century after the first missionary journey, within which time missionary Sisters were also sent to Mauritius and Reunion Islands off the coast of Africa in 1770, the second momentous missionary journey was launched in 1848. In the meantime the Congregation was also growing in other directions. Two new off-shoots from Chartres were founded in Strasbourg, Alsace in 1734 and in England in 1846. The foundation in Strasbourg in turn gave birth to numerous independent congregations spreading beyond to Holland, Austria, Yugoslavia, the Balkans, even to USA. Thus, the inconspicuous little 'plant' in Levesville became a beautiful worldwide 'garden'.

⁴ Gobillot, 45

3

From Chartres to Hong Kong

In 1846 Fr Theodore-Augustin Forcade of the Society of Foreign Missions of Paris, was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Japan and Titular Bishop of Samos. While waiting for the Japanese ports to be opened to foreign missionaries, he was also appointed Pro-Prefect Apostolic of Hong Kong in October 1847.



Mgr Theodore-Augustin
Forcade MEP

Not long after, he went to Paris, but his thoughts were always with his new mission. Hong Kong needed Sisters and he was determined not to go back alone. It was to the religious congregation he knew best, where his own sister was a member, that he addressed himself in writing on 14th December, 1847.

You know, Mother, that the island of Hong Kong is several miles away from Canton and today the British, who govern the territory, the Chinese and the descendants of Portuguese emigrants from the city of Macau live there together. Almost the entire garrison are Catholics of Irish origin. Finally a small Christian community formed among the Chinese tends to expand daily

I would need Sisters to run the hospital for the Irish soldiers. I would need Sisters to run the school for their daughters The young Portuguese girls from Macau could also be admitted to the school

Finally, I would need Sisters to run an already established small hospital to bring up those little Chinese abandoned by their parents

What else? I would perhaps even need Sisters to train ... young Chinese, who will later on take up the responsibility of running hospitals and schools for their own people.⁵

The response was quick. Although it still fell short of the number he needed for the work he envisioned for the Sisters, it would do, for a start.

⁵ Jean Vaudon, *The general history of the community of the Sisters of St Paul of Chartres*, trans (Hong Kong: Sisters of St Paul de Chartres, 1979), pp. 1-2

Mgr Forcade returned to Hong Kong with four missionaries - Sr Auguste Gallois, Sr Gabrielle Joubin, Sr Louise Morse, an English convert, and his own sister, Sr Alphonsine, who was recalled from her mission in Guadeloupe and appointed Superior. After a four-month dangerous journey by sea, they finally set foot on the shores of Hong Kong on 12th September, 1848.

The island of Hong Kong had only been a British Colony for seven years. Not only was it a rather unhealthy place to live in, but was also short of almost everything. The Sisters were installed first in a 'straw hut' by the hillsides in Wanchai. This location, just outside the former Catholic Cemetery, was the second site granted by the Government to the Catholic Church; the first one being in Central. About seven months later, better accommodation was found for them in the same area, close to the parish church.

The climate and living conditions in Hong Kong, so different from that of France, were harsh for the pioneer Sisters. The strain and continuous hard work took their toll on their health. After two years of exhausting toil, Sr Alphonsine Forcade, only 37 years old, succumbed to the attacks of brain fever in October 1850 - a "martyr of charity" according to his grieving brother, Mgr Forcade. As if this sacrifice was not enough, Sr Gabrielle Joubin, aged 33, was the next victim about three weeks later. The first seeds had fallen on Hong Kong soil. Like a seed that one day would grow into a tree, Sr Alphonsine and Sr Gabrielle gave their lives in the service of God and the Chinese people. It would germinate and bring new life!

The death of the first two missionaries was a big blow to the new Hong Kong mission, but this did not prevent the Sisters from forging ahead. Fortunately their Superiors in Chartres had anticipated the need for reinforcement - three more Sisters arrived in March of that year; one of them was Sr Ste Marcelle Carette who replaced Sr Alphonsine as the new Superior.

The first work they undertook was the rescue of abandoned children. Soon their hands and their place were full. In order to accommodate more children, Mgr Forcade obtained for them before he left Hong Kong larger premises in Queen's Road East in 1851. At that time it had 'two substantial English-built houses' on it.⁶ This was how Sr Ste Marcelle described it.

It is as if the house was built just for us. It is beside the sea. There is a chapel, community room, bedrooms, apartment where French lessons are given to several ladies from town,

⁶ Carl T Smith, *A sense of history*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Educational Publishing Company, 1995), p. 121

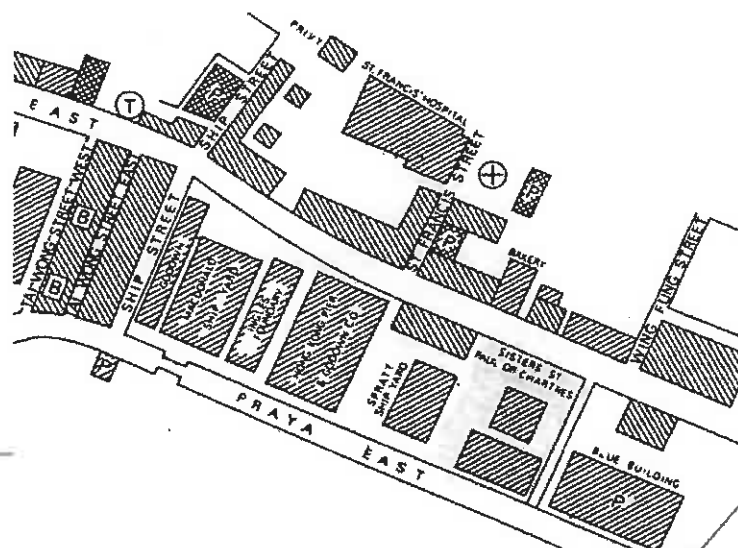
dormitory, refectory and classrooms for boys, and in an adjacent building, dormitory, refectory and classrooms for girls, etc. It has all the essentials.⁷

From the start, the Sisters had to live amidst a society which was not only distrustful, but also hostile to western people. In the end, by their constant devotion in seeking out and caring for abandoned children, the Sisters succeeded in winning the confidence of the Chinese who were not completely indifferent to the attraction of the subtle charm diffused by Christian charity. In a letter to Chartres on 26th November, 1857 about the time a Chinese baker tried to poison the expatriate community, the Superior wrote:

Everybody fears that the Chinese will rebel during the absence of the troops (British and French), plunder, set fire to the European city and slaughter its inhabitants. We can only put ourselves in the hands of Divine Providence, although we don't think that the Chinese will ever attack the Home, because they know and appreciate the Work of the Holy Childhood. Lately when they closed their shops and refused to sell anything to the Europeans for one or two days, they brought our provisions to the house as usual so that we were not affected by the disruptions, but we were forced to pay higher prices for the goods.⁸

Aside from the tremendous problems associated with the launching of this new mission, the Sisters had to face the frequent recurrence of natural disasters like epidemics, plagues, fire, etc. The cholera outbreak in 1863 proved to be the most devastating, costing the lives of three Sisters. In 1878 the first Chinese Sister, Sr Benjamin Dei, perished during a fire in Wanchai.

Earlier on the Sisters had faced a heavier cross which threatened not their lives but the very existence of the Congregation in Hong Kong.



⁷ Vaudon, 22

⁸ *Ibid*, 34

But for God's Divine Providence and merciful assistance, the Sisters would not be in Hong Kong today. Fr Antonio Feliciani, who was re-appointed to replace Mgr Forcade, was succeeded by Fr Luigi Ambrosi as Prefect Apostolic in 1855.

Before leaving Hong Kong, Mgr Forcade, on behalf of the Association of the Holy Childhood in France, bought from Fr Feliciani Marine Lots 23 and 24 on Queen's Road East near the sea. Since the Association could not own property in Hong Kong, the purchase was done in the name of the Sisters of St Paul on condition that "if for any reason whatsoever, they happened to leave their house, it would become the property of the Mission again, which in its turn, would pay back to the Association the purchase price."⁹



Mere Benjamin le Noel
DE GROUSSY

Unfortunately it was not immediately paid. The day after the new Superior who replaced Sr Louise, Sr Benjamin le Noel de Groussy, arrived on 21st June, 1859, she was notified by Fr Ambrosi that they had to leave their house. Shocked and at a loss to explain why, the Sisters wondered whether Fr Ambrosi wanted to merge the French Work with the Italian Work so that he could have full control over the temporal and spiritual life of the Sisters.

Mother Benjamin refused to move because she must first get the approval of the Association of the Holy Childhood, the rightful owner of the property, and of her Superiors in Chartres. This did not come fast, communication at that time being very slow. Fr Ambrosi however could not wait. The following month in July 1859 he invited an Italian congregation to come to Hong Kong which he hoped to replace the Sisters of St Paul. Six Canossian Sisters arrived in 1860.¹⁰

Fr Ambrosi wanted the Sisters to vacate the premises immediately because he had sold it to a Swiss called Vacher, Consul of France, certain that he would succeed in driving them away. To put pressure on the Sisters, he resorted to all sorts of threat. All the Sisters could do was pray and wait patiently for a

⁹ *Ibid*, 38

¹⁰ NM Clarke, *The governor's daughter takes the veil, Sister Aloysia Emily Bowring, Canossian Daughter of Charity* (Hong Kong: Canossian Missions Historic Archives, 1980), pp. 111-114

decision from Rome. In the meantime, Mother Benjamin went to Macau to ensure that the Sisters would at least have a refuge if they really had to leave Hong Kong.

The long-awaited reply came from the Bishop of Chartres, Mgr Louis-Eugene Regnault, in his letter dated 5 June 1861.

I come to inform you of the result of the conferences which have taken place in Rome ... and of what I have agreed upon ... with His Eminence, Cardinal Barnabo, Prefect of Propaganda: (1) You and your Sisters will be maintained in Hong Kong. (2) You will propose again to Rev Fr Ambrosi, Prefect Apostolic, to receive the payment of the sum agreed upon in the sales contract plus the interest.¹¹



The *Asile de la Sainte Enfance* is the third building from the left (c 1860s)

Thus ended a sad and painful chapter in the history of the Sisters of St Paul in Hong Kong. It had a happy ending for the Sisters, but they had to pay dearly for the privilege of living in and working for the people of Hong Kong. For nearly one and a half years they were deprived, one after the other, of Holy Communion, Holy Mass, the Blessed Sacrament, and the chapel which were their only source of consolation and inner strength!

Blessings however ensued from this regrettable episode. From it came out new foundations in Macau and Vietnam. In the midst of all these trials, Mother Benjamin was negotiating the

¹¹ Vaudon, 51

opening of a new mission in Vietnam. She sent two Sisters ahead on 11th May, 1860, and followed soon after the dispute in Hong Kong was resolved. For her steadfast endurance in the face of agonizing pressure she deserved her new appointment in 1861 as Principal Superior based in Saigon, retaining Hong Kong and Macau under her jurisdiction.

As for Fr Ambrosi, it cannot be argued that he contributed greatly to the early development of the Church in Hong Kong. When he died on 10th March, 1867, he was mourned by Catholics "as one who was respected and much loved and had given his life for his flock." The chapel at the cemetery in Happy Valley was erected in memory of him.¹²

Unfortunately, when the Hong Kong Prefecture was turned over to the PIME Fathers in 1867, the Sisters' relationship with the Italian clergy continued to be strained and less than ideal. There were the MEP Fathers on whom the Sisters could depend for advice and spiritual support. However, the French Fathers were at times reluctant to help or intervene for fear of upsetting the Italian prelate. Without the backing of the clergy, it was not surprising that the Sisters' apostolic works remained confined in Wanchai for more than fifty years.

When Mother Paul de la Croix died in 1891 she was replaced by Mother Felicie Jourdan, whose long tenure was marked by the biggest development in the work of the Sisters in Hong Kong. She was also appointed the first Mother Provincial of Hong Kong. Unlike her predecessors, she was greatly helped and supported by the gentle and holy Mgr Luigi Piazzoli, appointed Vicar Apostolic in 1894, who was a true father to them. Everyone knew of his special devotion to the Sisters, so much so that among those around him, he was called the 'French Father'.

He visited with frequency the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres in Wanchai. They were then approaching the fiftieth anniversary of their arrival in Hong Kong and in all those years they had saved thousands of children from death, and educated them and given them a start in life. Nothing was more pleasing to him than this work, and it was the one which had the warmest place in his affection.¹³

¹² Thomas F Ryan, *The story of a hundred years* (Hong Kong: Catholic Truth Society, 1959), p. 44

¹³ *Ibid*, 110

Mgr Piazzoli lifted all the prohibitions the Sisters had to bear during the past years, telling them, "Do all the good you can, but notify me when you will depart from any former prohibition. I will take the full responsibility upon myself."¹⁴

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 90

4 ***Rescue of Abandoned Babies***

It didn't take long for the first group of French missionaries to realise upon arrival in 1848 that the most urgent need was the rescue and care of unwanted and abandoned babies, mostly girls. It was a generally accepted and widespread custom in China, including Hong Kong, during those days to abandon babies condemned as being unworthy of bearing the name of their ancestors or looked upon as a burden by their families. Most often girls, they were treated like commodities, either disposed of or sold, abandoned, picked up and reared to be sold to rich households as concubine or *mui tsai* (domestic servant). Worse of all, a great number of these little girls were collected and sold to brothels; their prices depended on their beauty, state of health and age. The kidnapping or detention of girls was not uncommon. It was this sad state of affairs that urged the Sisters to rescue as many babies as they could from a life of misery. In a letter to a French benefactress, a Sister, writing to Chartres, expressed her dismay over this deplorable practice.

So now with this money we can buy some bigger children who always cost a few dollars more. The budget of the Holy Childhood can never afford this. Actually we hardly have enough to run the whole place and to buy a few of the dying babies. What makes us suffer most is to know that many of these bigger girls were sold to the pagans, and the prettier and healthier ones always went to the loose women. Oh, if only we have more money to buy them all.

Her big heart wanted to rescue not only a few but all!

In the absence of a law to protect these unfortunate children and young adults, the orphanage run by the Sisters offered a practical solution to the problems and evil of human trafficking. It would take years for the Hong Kong Government to pass legislation declaring the *mui tsai* practice illegal. Barely a month after their arrival the Sisters accepted their first abandoned baby - the first of thousands of destitute children they would save from a life of poverty, neglect and misery, even death. As soon as it became known that they gathered and even bought abandoned children, many Chinese Christians hastened to cooperate in this work of salvation; while the money paid for each child attracted others to bring the unwanted children to the Sisters.

Financially the work of the Sisters was supported by the Association of the Holy Childhood, an organisation of Catholic children founded in 1843 by French Bishop Charles de Forbin Janson, who was profoundly touched by the cries and sad destiny of these innumerable little Chinese victims. His proposal and appeal to the children of France to help the children of China by prayer and a small monthly financial contribution received overwhelming support. This unique concept of 'children helping children' which spread throughout the world enabled the Sisters to save thousands of children from the pangs of misery, and most of all from the loss of heaven. It was in their honour that the Sisters named their first institution in Hong Kong "*Asile de la Sainte Enfance*" (Home of the Holy Childhood).

As the work of the Sisters expanded, so did the need for more funds. The Sisters had to resort to giving private French lessons, soliciting subscriptions and donations, as well as selling the lace and needlework of the orphans.

By the end of 1849, the Sisters had taken in 226 children, many of whom were in pretty bad condition. The mortality rate was very high. From 1850-55 the average percentage of death was 68%, increasing to 94% from 1880-85.



The orphans, the aged and handicapped in the *Asile de la Sainte Enfance*. (c 1900s)

Although most of the children did not survive, those who did were reared by the Sisters "from the cradle to the grave". Realising that the work at hand was more than they could handle, they formed a band of lay helpers they called "Lovers of the Cross". Wearing a special dress, these Chinese virgins came from good Catholic families in Hong Kong and the mainland.¹⁵ The Sisters hired wet nurses to look after very young babies.

When their wards became of age, marriage with Catholic young men were arranged for them by missionary priests. The priest contacted the Home first, but the Sisters vetted the prospective groom with their own requirements for an acceptable marriage partner. He must be between 20-30 years old, not more; must be of good character and a practising Catholic. He must be financially stable which allowed him to provide amply for his family.

¹⁵ Gobillot, 83-84

5 *Education Ministry*

True to their original charism of instructing the ignorant, the Sisters recognised early the need not only of providing their charges with shelter, clothing and sustenance, but also of preparing them for their future. The Sisters must have begun their education ministry with the orphans sometime in 1851 when they moved to bigger quarters by the seaside.



Orphans during a reading lesson.

Starting with the basic knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic and, of course, religious knowledge, the Sisters later taught them skills that equipped them with the means to support themselves.



Orphans sewing class.

At first they learned to sew their own clothes. Those who showed greater skill were taught lace-making, linen-work, embroidery, etc. As soon as the English ladies learnt of the good work of these young girls, they began to make their orders. These were welcome additional income for the Home.

When the Sisters arrived in 1848, there were three small schools for Chinese boys and girls run by the Vicariate.¹⁶ There was however none for expatriate girls. Catholic parents, anxious about the education of their children, pressed the priests, who in turn urged and put pressure on the Sisters, to open a school for them.

Among the first group of French missionaries to come to Hong Kong was an English Sister - Sr Louise Morse. After the first Superior died in 1850 and the second returned to France in 1856, she became the third Superior. Before the end of the year, Sr Louise started a class with 14 children increasing to 24 by May 1857. She explained the situation to her Superiors in Chartres.

We cannot do otherwise. The Italian priests are losing patience. ... It seems that the parents of Catholic families are angry because despite Sisters being around for a long time, there is no sign of classes. ... I will go with another Sister for a few hours daily to teach them in respectable apartments. Having no place here and the distance being so far for the children, it is impossible to teach here....

Unable to find a place in the Home, she rented an apartment nearby for five months.

This first attempt to run a school for girls must have been aborted when Sr Louise returned to France in 1859 due to failing health. Seventeen years later in 1876 Mother Paul de la Croix Biard opened again a class of 12 European children.¹⁷ The Sisters' aim in this, as in everything they did whether for the orphans or the pupils, went far beyond this world. The school's prospectus issued in 1910 clearly stated their purpose: "to impart to the pupils ... not only a sound general instruction but such an education as will form and fit the girls for after-life."¹⁸

¹⁶ Sergio Ticozzi, *Historical documents of the Hong Kong Catholic Church* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Archives, 1997), p. 21

¹⁷ Bord, Paul, *Mother Benjamin le Noel de Groussy*, trans. (np: Sisters of St Paul of Chartres), p. 101

¹⁸ *Hong Kong: Asile de la Sainte Enfance* (Chateaudun: Societe Francaise de Phototypie, 1910), p. 43

The school, located in Wanchai, was still considered 'far' from the city center of Victoria. During the early days, going around the colony was not that easy. The chief means of transportation was the rickshaw on level ground and the sedan chair used on hilly parts. With Bishop Raimondi's permission, the Sisters were allowed to accept student boarders, but not exceeding 12, until this restriction was removed by Mgr Piazzoli in 1895.

The school became a grant school in 1902, but it was still struggling to give the students a good standard of education. It was therefore a big boost when Sr Beatrice Roberts arrived in 1910 and was appointed Headmistress. Talented, very capable and driven to excel, she spearheaded the school's drive for excellence and quality education, which still prevails today.



The French Section was closed in 1926, although French continued to be taught as a special subject, together with Music, Drawing, Painting, Needlework, Typewriting and Shorthand. Sr Beatrice was transferred to the Philippines in 1937 and came back to Hong Kong two years later to be Warden of Our Lady's Hall, the Hong Kong University hostel for women.

6 *'House of Happiness'*

Gradually the charity of the Sisters extended to the alleviation of all kinds of human needs and deprivation. Little by little, those with physical handicaps were accepted in the orphanage. They formed another section in the Home called 'Almshouse', where they received special instruction and were trained to do some work. The deaf and dumb learned and communicated in a sign language peculiar to Hong Kong. They were also taught sewing, but more particularly to do housework and to help the Sisters take care of the small children.



The aged who could still work were taught some skills.

By 1880, the condition of the buildings at the Home was getting worse and at the same time overcrowded. The need to enlarge it became imperative. Mother Paul de la Croix immediately addressed herself to the Motherhouse in Chartres.

Our beloved work always gives us a lot of consolations. During the year 1879, we received 1,062 children. Despite the large number of deaths, our dormitory becomes once again too small. We must build or send away some of the children. Your heart answers me: build. And as a matter of fact, I don't have the courage to close the gate of the garden to any of these flowers of Paradise.¹⁹

¹⁹ Vaudon, 81

As soon as permission was granted, the Sisters used all means to raise funds - by soliciting donations, bazaars, charity sales, etc. Their efforts were rewarded by the construction of new spacious buildings which doubled the capacity of the establishment, even to accommodating missionary priests and Sisters in transit or stranded by typhoons or shipwrecks.

During the deadly plague of 1894, many people were reduced to destitution such that the number of abandoned children increased. However, Sisters did not only rescue children. Old people, too, were especially affected by the misery caused by the epidemic.

One day one of these, impelled by a secret inspiration and attracted by the account of the inexhaustible charity of the good Sisters, knocked at the door of the Asile of the French Convent. She demanded but one thing: 'To be received into the house of happiness.' The size of the establishment and chiefly the great number of children received counseled refusal to this application: the Superior however listened only to the voice of charity, and the doors of the 'house of happiness' were opened to the poor old woman.

Soon others came imploring the same pity and received the same welcome. Another work of charity was providentially placed in the hands of the Sisters which they had no heart to refuse - the care of the aged. In fact this work proved to be just another catalyst to a bigger apostolate which would be more demanding but lasting.

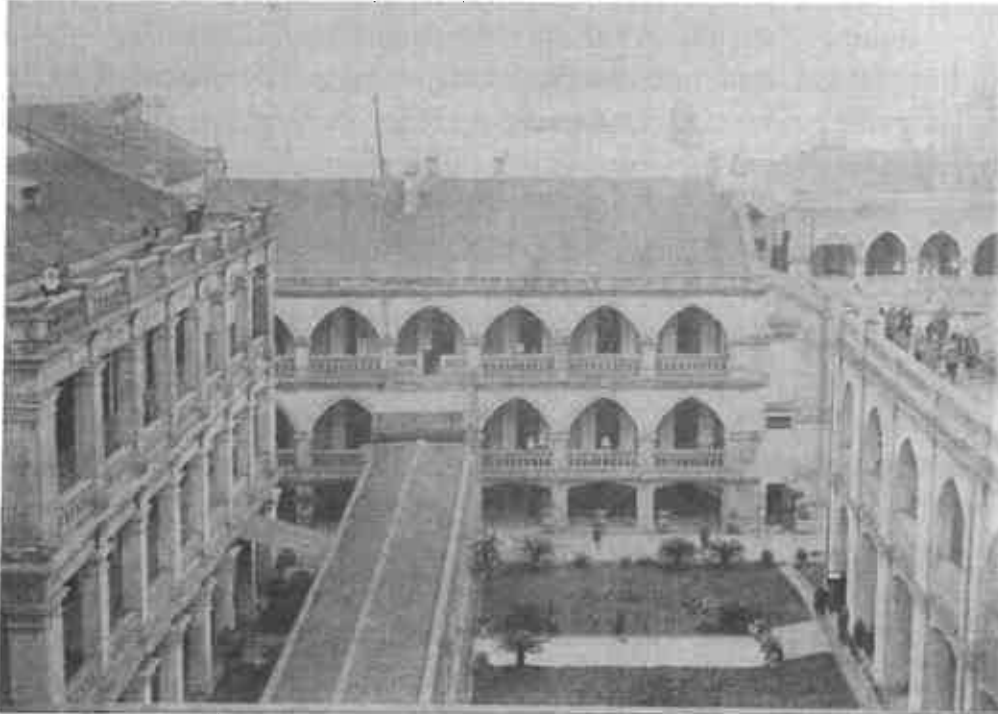
It soon became evident that Providence was asking the Sisters a new work of hospitality. Not planned at all, the immediate response of the Sisters to the devastating bubonic plague of 1894 marked the beginning of what is now known as St Paul's Hospital. With so many inhabitants (abandoned children, orphans, blind, deaf and dumb, lame, the aged) in this 'city of refuge' in Wanchai, and many of them needing medical attention and medicine, it was providential that a hospital would eventually be established. Although space at the Home was already stretched to the limit, Mother Felicie Jourdan, who



The hospital opened in 1898. (c 1900s)

succeeded Mother Paul did not think twice in asking permission for the construction of a hospital. Completed in two years' time, it was officially opened on 1st January, 1898 and became popularly known as the 'French Hospital'.

While the top floor served for a time as refuge for the American Assumption Sisters fleeing Manila during the Filipino-American War, the first of three floors was occupied by the Almshouse and *Crèche* [nursery].



Asile de la Sainte Enfance: The orphanage (left and right buildings) with the convent and school facing the sea next to the hospital on the right. (c 1900s)

Thirty-six old women were accommodated, the number reaching to more than sixty later. A general ward was set up for children of poor families. The second floor had an operation room entirely conformable to the strictest rules of hygiene. Here, clinical surgeries were performed by the famous German doctors, Dr Karl Justi, the hospital's Medical Attendant, and Dr Oskar Muller. There were no fixed charges; each patient gave according to his good heart and his purse. The generosity of the rich supported the poor. A dispensary was annexed to it, where each year about two thousand women and children would seek medical care and medicine.

7 *Native Vocations*

Among the requests specified by Mgr Forcade in his letter asking for Sisters of St Paul to come to Hong Kong, the last one was the formation of Chinese religious. It took a little more than fifty years before his dream of Chinese girls entering the Congregation was realised.

Indeed, the faith, zeal and unselfish devotion of the Sisters did not fail to attract and inspire young women. Already in 1857 Sr St Marcelle wrote to Chartres about three young girls who wanted to join them. This however did not materialise. It was probably too early, and the girls not yet ready therefore posing great difficulties for them to get accustomed to a rule and customs that were alien to them.

Among the first candidates when a Novitiate was opened in Saigon, Vietnam in 1862 was Sr Benjamin Dei, the first Chinese vocation. She returned to Hong Kong where, greatly loved and esteemed, she led an edifying life, a true model for the Chinese vocations who would follow her footsteps. Unfortunately her young life was cut short by a fire in Wanchai in 1898.

In Hong Kong, it was only in 1899 that a Novitiate opened and began accepting local aspirants. Before that candidates, some of whom came from Portuguese families in Macau, were sent to the Saigon Novitiate. Many remained in Vietnam; others returned to Hong Kong and a chosen few became the pioneers of new missions, like Korea and the Philippines. The first to enter the Hong Kong Novitiate, Sr Celine Yu, made her profession on her deathbed in 1905.



The Novitiate in Wanchai was canonically erected on 11 February 1899. (c 1900s)

8 *Beyond Wanchai*

By the end of the nineteenth century, the *Asile de la Sainte-Enfance* had reached its maximum capacity. Despite subsequent reclamations on Praya East which added some needed space for their work, the Wanchai compound was bursting and buzzing with activity. Within such a small area were the convent and novitiate, an orphanage with its nursery, classrooms and workrooms, a hospice for the physically handicapped and aged, an infirmary, a hospital and dispensary, and a boarding school.

A report sent to Chartres gives an idea of the numerous and varied works of charity being undertaken by the Sisters at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Asile receives daily an average of five to seven abandoned little children - about one thousand nine hundred per year, of whom three to four or more die within a few days or several weeks. The British Government contributes a small subsidy for coffins and burials. The survivors are brought up in the House. Today there are about 390 from 1-20 years of age ... in the nursery (*creche*), workshop, or in the hospice or hospital (for the blind and handicapped). In a hospital annex, there are fifty to sixty old women. Girls who are able-bodied from the two workshops, now number 188. Some do mending, others make laces which are sold for the maintenance of the House. Younger and the older girls make outfits for European families. Those who reach the marriageable age, we have them married, mostly with Christian men from the mainland. Those who wish to remain unmarried, stay in the house. There are also two other schools for French and English where European children are taught. At present there are 95, of whom 25 are boarders. There are 246 children (orphans) who follow classes of two to three hours per day. Two teachers are paid for this.²⁰

With so many people being sheltered, activities and works being done in such a small place, it was soon evident that additional space was urgently needed. The hospital filled such a pressing necessity that after a few years accommodation proved wholly inadequate. Besides, when the trams began operating in 1904, the noise was so disturbing to the patients in the hospital that when Fr Leon Robert MEP, Procurator of the Society of Foreign

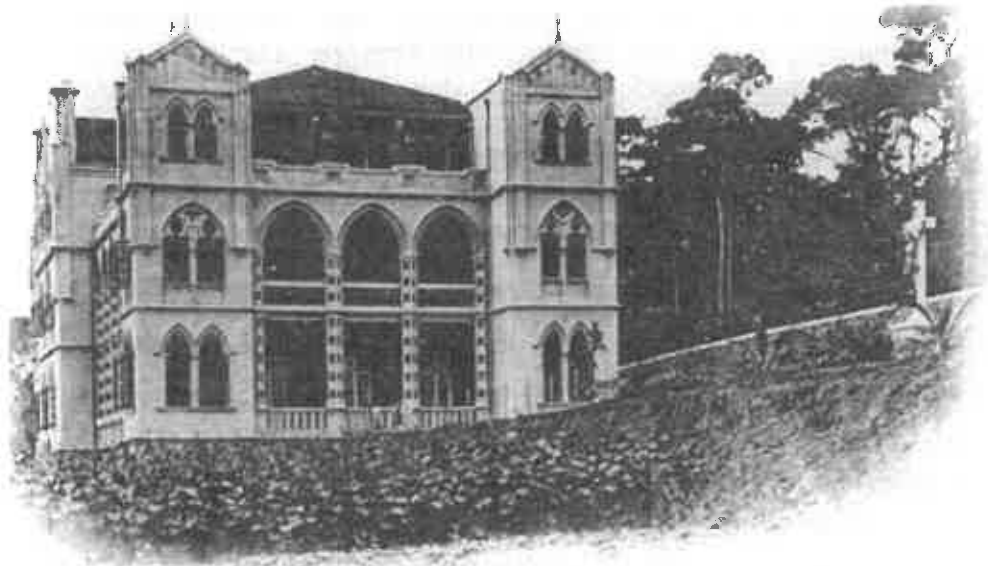
²⁰ Emile Legue, *Journal de la Communauté*, Vol. 1 in Sisters of St Paul de Chartres Archives.

Missions of Paris, was hospitalised there, he was so bothered by the noise that he urged the Sisters to relocate.

There was no way of expanding in Wanchai as they were surrounded by buildings on two sides and the road and the sea on the other two sides. Providential circumstances solved the problem for them. An epidemic of cholera which broke out in the Home in 1902 facilitated and helped strengthen the request of Sr Felicie for additional land from the Government. After inspection of the Home, the Head of the Sanitary Board brought to the attention of Sr Felicie the need to keep the children outside buildings to avoid overcrowding. On this, Sr Felicie jumped at him at once. "If the Government would grant us some more land ... I would be more than ready and willing to construct another building."²¹

After this, things went fast. The Inspector himself took care of it. A petition was sent to the King in England and on 17th August, 1903 a lot in Happy Valley was granted to the Sisters.

The lot was formerly used as a Chinese cemetery forty years ago. Workmen began clearing the ground; the Sisters had the bones of the dead exhumed and delivered to claimants. Progress however was at a snail's pace. Mother Felicie, whose health was never stable, could not give her whole attention to it. She was so tired she was compelled to go to Shanghai with another Sister who also needed to rest. In the meantime construction at Happy Valley proceeded slowly. It was only in 1906 that the wall on Wong Neih Chong Road was completed and construction of the house began.



Le Calvaire in Happy Valley at first served as an extension of the Wanchai orphanage and hospital.

²¹ *Ibid*, Vol 2

At last on Christmas Day of 1907, cars in procession carried the sick babies and long-term patients to their new home in Happy Valley named 'Le Calvaire' by Mother Felicie. Why 'Le Calvaire', asked many people?

That house has been Calvary for me, which is good omen for the future. It will therefore bear the name. ... Why be afraid of Calvary? Did not Our Lord say that one must pass through the crucible of suffering before being glorified?²²

She had a big granite cross erected at the entrance in memory of the late Bishop Piazzoli, much loved by the Sisters. The new building was blessed by Bishop Dominico Pozzoni the following day, but the official opening was held only on 6th January, 1908. In his discourse, Bishop Pozzoni remarked that the lot was granted through the recommendation of Sir Henry Arthur Blake, the foundation laid under the administration of Sir Matthew Nathan, and it was being officially opened by Sir Frederick



Mere Felicie Jourdan, first Mother Provincial of Hong Kong (1891-1926)

Lugard.

The first off-shoot of the original convent in Wanchai served as an extension of the hospital, a refuge for sick old people, until 1918 when the hospital in Wanchai was transferred to Causeway Bay.

When the Little Sisters of the Poor arrived in Hong Kong in 1923, Mother Felicie confided to them fifty old people to start with.

²² Marie Paul Bord, *In China* (np: Sisters of St Paul of Chartres, 1996), p. 16

9

A New Center of Operation

The transfer of part of the Sisters' works from Wanchai to Happy Valley did not solve the problem of noise, which for patients who were already suffering was almost intolerable. Again it was Fr Robert who intervened and pushed for the transfer of the hospital to another location. The opportunity came in 1914 when it was learned that a big cotton mill, the Hong Kong Cotton-Spinning, Weaving and Dyeing Company, was selling their property, land and buildings, in Causeway Bay. The company, suffering from stiff competition, decided to relocate to Shanghai. Sir Paul Chater, their generous sponsor and 'protector' of this enormous project, bought the Wanchai property and helped the Sisters acquire the one at Causeway Bay at a very reasonable price.

It was a providential move which allowed the Sisters to establish themselves in Causeway Bay.

This was a bold, and in fact daring, suggestion. Causeway Bay was then considered to be almost in the country. There were electric trams in the city but there was little traffic so far out, and few houses near the Hong Kong Cotton Mill which was the only large building of the district. ... It was described then as being situated between 'the racecourse and the Polo Ground in Causeway Bay'. Few people thought the place would ever become a residential district.²³



Entrance gate at St Paul's Institution on Caroline (now Leighton) Road. On the left was the Chinese School building; the middle, the English/French Schools; on the right was the orphanage. (c

²³ Ryan, 30

Besides, it was surrounded by swamps, and malaria was rampant.



A view of St Paul's Institution from Cotton Path Lane.
From left: convent/novitiate, school, and hospital

After receiving the go signal from Chartres, Fr Robert was given charge, not only of the sale and purchase of the Wanchai and Causeway Bay properties, but also the transformation of the old factory site into a little city with a convent, orphanage, school, and hospital. It took three years to complete. Bishop Pozzoni called it a 'gigantic enterprise'.

Modifications and reconstructions of buildings commenced in December 1914. As soon as the first building was ready for occupancy, the historic transfer from Wanchai began. With so many orphans being cared for by the Sisters, the orphanage was the first to be installed in the largest building which had two big interior courtyards used as playground.



Lady Helena May, wife of the Governor, Sir Francis Henry May, graced the bazaar to mark the transfer of the orphanage on 6th October, 1915.

The following year it was the school's turn to hold its opening ceremony in Causeway Bay. The Governor himself, accompanied by his wife and secretary, cut the ribbon at the entrance of the school.



Blessing and Official Opening of the school in Causeway Bay in October 1916.

Finally the last to move from Wanchai was the hospital. The site of the former workmen's quarters of the old factory demanded considerable reconstruction and enormous financial outlay. It was then that Mother Felicie felt the weight of the whole project.

She accused herself of rashness for having dared to undertake so much responsibility without enough funds. ... Her recourse was in God alone and His Providence which never abandons those who act with an upright heart and who desire the coming of His Kingdom.²⁴

Blessed by Bishop Pozzoni on 24th March, 1918 without fanfare and official opening, the hospital was a credit to the committed dedication of the Sisters who worked hard to make the hospital one of the finest and best equipped in Hong Kong. An article in the magazine, *Economic Awakening of Indo-China*, gives a description of the hospital.

²⁴ Bord, 23-24

A British doctor is there for the poor, but all doctors can practise medicine there Eight French Sisters and two Chinese Sisters, assisted by four Filipino nurses who graduated from the Sisters' college in Manila, ... take care of the patients. The operating theatre is the most beautiful one in Hong Kong ... The hospital has a maternity section with individual rooms, ... common ward and confinement room equipped with improved apparatus....

The patients' ward has first class rooms with one bed plus a berth for a parent or friend who wishes to help the patient. ... The price is \$7 per day. The second class rooms cost \$4-\$5 and have the same comfort with less luxury and slightly less choice of food. The 4-bed third-class rooms ... is \$1.50 for poor patients ... who are treated free of charge. ...

... There is a clinic for the poor Chinese run by the old Sister Anna, considered the best doctor of Hong Kong by the poor people, exercising her benevolent activities for 35 years ...²⁵



Indeed all of Fr Robert and Mother Felicie's labours and heartaches had not been in vain.

The hospital, familiarly known as the French Hospital, became one of the finest and best equipped hospitals in the Far East, while the orphanage was spacious and fitted with equipment for many forms of training for the destitute girls who were received into it.²⁶

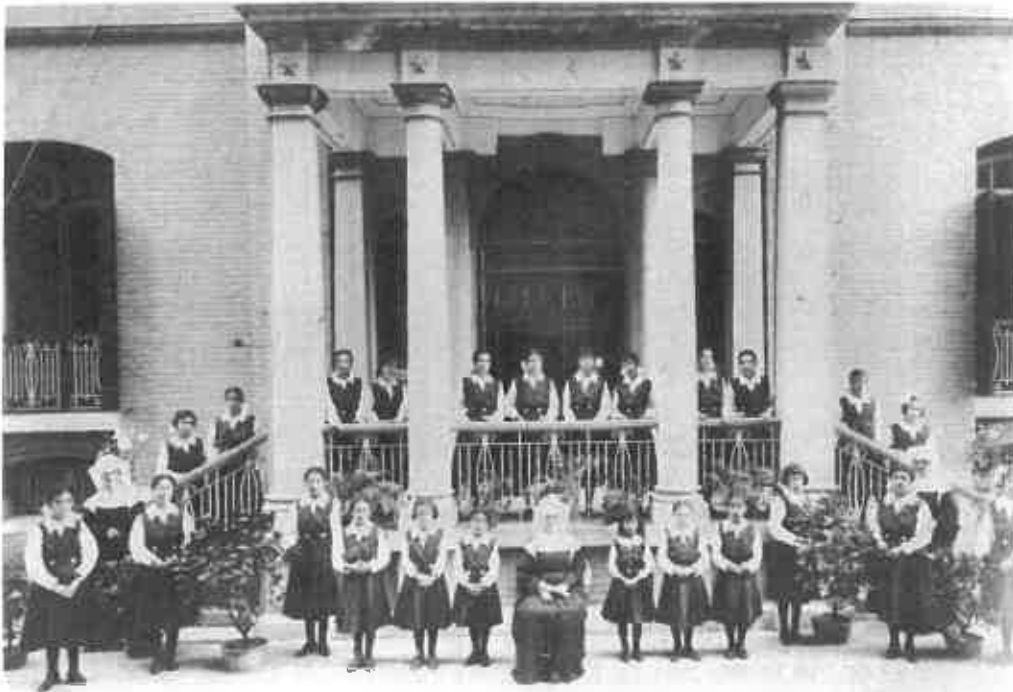
In celebration of its golden anniversary in 1931, the Gestetner firm launched its first electric duplicator and organised a ballot to decide which was the best hospital in the colony. St Paul's Hospital emerged as the people's top choice, followed by Tung Wah Hospital.

²⁵ Vaudon, 101-102

²⁶ Ryan, 15

The Wanchai property was sold to Hong Kong Land Company, who redeveloped it and opened up two streets in 1917 named Landale Street and Anton Street after two taipans of Jardine, Matheson and Co - the Hon. David Landale and Hon. Charles Edward Anton.²⁷

At first the school with its three sections - Chinese, English and French - was just part of the many different works undertaken by the Sisters at the *Asile de la Sainte Enfance* in Wanchai with no proper name of its own. When the Sisters transferred to Causeway Bay in 1915, the Sisters took the new name of St Paul's Institution. It was only later, in 1919, that the school got its own name - Anglo-French School. This changed once more to French Convent School after the war before settling down in 1955 to its present name, St Paul's Convent School.



Student boarders of the Anglo-French School. (c 1930s)

Bishop Pozzoni had long desired to have a Chinese school outside the city [of Victoria]. The Sisters had been operating a vernacular school in Wanchai for the foundlings from the 1850s, as well as the English School and French School since 1876 which were attended mostly by expatriate children. In February 1924 the Chinese Girls School was opened to the public for those who

²⁷ Smith, 122

preferred to study in the vernacular. That was the Bishop's last joy before he died that same month.

The Chinese Girls School began with 36 primary pupils divided into four grades and five teachers. Those who were from poor families were accepted free. A year later, the enrolment increased to 125, so two more classes, Infant Class and Fifth Grade, were added in 1926. That year the school had ten primary school



graduates. To assist these graduates to progress in their studies, a preparatory class for Middle School was set up in 1929. Though it was on a trial basis, the results were satisfactory. In 1931 the higher class of Middle School was introduced. From that year on the academic year commenced in autumn instead of spring. The first five Middle School graduates received their certificates in 1933.

A branch was opened in February 1927 in Happy Valley, which until 1945 was at first called St Marguerite's Vernacular School, forerunner of the present St Paul's Primary Catholic School.

In order to better equip students of the English School in Wanchai for a career in the business field, Typewriting was introduced as a special subject as early as 1913 and Shorthand was added in 1915. At that time women had no chance to go to university as it was only in 1921 that the University of Hong Kong

began accepting women.²⁸ An evening Speed Class, where students were drilled to increase their Shorthand speed, was started by a certain Mrs Goddard at the Anglo-French School in Causeway Bay in 1933. It was not until 1940 that Sr Marie du Sacre Coeur Gil opened the first Commercial Class with 12 students.



The first Commercial Class with Sr Marie du Sacre Coeur Gil.

When the Sisters moved to Causeway Bay the Government entrusted to them a new work. St Paul's Refuge, located on a hill close by, used to be the Belilios Reformatory donated by the well-known Jewish philanthropist, Emmanuel Ralph Belilios, to the Government for a reformatory for boys. However, no inmate was ever admitted there, except for one boy, who escaped shortly after. In 1909 the Legislative Council questioned its use as a branch prison, which was contrary to the intention of the donor, and proposed to hand it over to the Eyre Diocesan Refuge, an Anglican charitable institution which rescued derelict Chinese women and girls.²⁹

In 1914, when the German Superintendent of the Refuge, had to leave Hong Kong along with other German residents because of the ongoing war in Europe, the Refuge moved to Kowloon.³⁰ The following year, the Government turned over the use of the building to the Sisters.

²⁸ Hong Kong Urban Council, *Education in Hong Kong, past and present* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Museum of History, 1993), p. 59

²⁹ Hong Kong Legislative Council, Minutes of the Meeting, 7 October 1909, <http://www.legco.gov.hk/1909/h091007.pdf>

³⁰ Hong Kong Legislative Council, Minutes of the Meeting, 3 December 1914, <http://www.legco.gov.hk/1914/h141203.pdf>

... they cared for women and girls in distress, mostly those who had come from China and needed help. It was availed of regularly by the Secretary for Chinese Affairs when cases of special need were brought to him. There was work there for all: laundry, sewing, household work and gardening, and for many years the Refuge did valuable, unobtrusive work in the rehabilitation of women and girls.³¹

There were 45 of them in 1925. The Government took back the property in June 1932 to start a work of another nature.

³¹ Ryan, 188

10

A Monument to Christ the King

Having successfully set in place all the works of the Sisters in Wanchai in its new and more spacious accommodation in Causeway Bay, Mother Felicie had one more dream - a chapel worthy of Christ the Lord in the middle of the compound. It had been included in the original plan laid out by Fr Robert, but the project had to be delayed not only due to lack of funds but also because of troubles in mainland China.

With all debts paid by 1923 and after completion of the new nursery building in 1925, Mother Felicie began planning again with Fr Robert for the realisation of this dream. But like Moses, who was not able to go to the Promised Land after having led the Chosen People through the desert, she was not destined, nor Fr Robert was, to finish what they had began. Fr Robert returned to France in May 1926; while Mother Felicie left for her eternal home the following month, both without having the pleasure of seeing the fulfillment of their dream.

She had served faithfully and capably the Community in Hong Kong for 36 years, 35 of them as Mother Provincial. Her term in office was characterised by tremendous expansion of the work of the Sisters from Wanchai to Happy Valley, Causeway Bay, and mainland China. It was she who fulfilled the last two wishes of Mgr Forcade - the hospital and the Novitiate. It was now left to her successor, Mother Marguerite de St Paul Nuss (who preferred to be called Mother Paul), and to Fr L Vircondelet MEP, who replaced Fr Robert, to accomplish her last wish.

Once again a big obstacle had to be surmounted before this monument to Christ the King could become a reality - opposition from the Bishop. When permission was sought in 1928, Bishop Enrico Valtorta, Apostolic Vicar of Hong Kong, was at first reluctant fearing the unforeseen cost of construction would be too high. Considering the present state of missionary work that needed to be addressed, he suggested that a less expensive structure would amply serve the purpose and the savings would be better used in enlarging their charitable works. Three years ago the local papers had published the news that the Sisters were going to build a \$300,000 church in Causeway Bay. Mother Paul explained to the Bishop that contrary to that news,

the present plan is an entirely new one - composed for us gratuitously and is perfectly simple. The chapel will be an

ordinary building of brick and reinforced cement without any elaborate decoration in the interior or exterior. The dome - the only outstanding decoration of the exterior will be constructed with reinforced cement and will not incur any extra expense... According to the architects' estimate we should not exceed the sum of \$130,000...³²

It was with great pleasure then that Bishop Valtorta presided at the ceremony of the blessing of the cornerstone of the chapel on 24th July, 1928.

You often told me, Reverend Mother, to make this chapel of Christ the King, large and beautiful. Large, it will be. Beautiful? It will be more so, thanks first of all to Mr Chanatong, the architect, who offers his work as a gift. This chapel will be spacious, well-lighted and well-ventilated. There is not one column inside; the altar is in view from every direction, for all must converge towards it as the center, the *raison d'être* of every church.³³

Two years later the imposing Christ the King Chapel was ready. The main altar of Italian marble executed by French artists was generously presented by devoted friends. A grand statue of the Sacred Heart was donated by Mr William Gardner, who had two daughters (Sr St Jean and Sr Rita) in the Institution; while the Children of Mary of the Anglo-French School subscribed a superb statue of the Immaculate Virgin.

On 10th May, 1930, with Mgr Francois-Lazare Sequin MEP (Vicar Apostolic of Kweyang, China) officiating, no fewer than six bishops took part in the impressive ceremonies of the dedication and blessing of the new chapel in the morning and the thanksgiving service in



the afternoon. Aside from Mgr Enrico Valtorta PIME, other bishops concelebrating were Mgr Adolphe Rayssac MEP (Vicar

³² Bord, 26-27

³³ *Ibid*, 27

Apostolic of Swatow), Mgr Francis Xavier Ford MM (Bishop of Kaying-Chow), Mgr Jean-Baptiste Penicaud MEP (Bishop of Pakhoi), and Mgr Gustave-Joseph Deswaziere MEP (Superior of Nazareth House). Fr Patrick J Joy SJ delivered the sermon.

The chapel, being private, was not available for public use, but in no time, many Catholics began asking the Sisters, and even the Bishop, for permission to attend Divine Services there which eventually had to be refused. In order to avoid the unpleasantness of a refusal, the Bishop was compelled to publish a Notice on 25th November, 1930 informing the public that the chapel was exclusively for the private use of St Paul's Institution, except for special meetings of pious associations according to their rules, spiritual exercises and retreats, and ceremonies of clothing and religious profession.

After nine years of dedicated service, Mother Paul left for France in 1935 and due to her failing health she was unable to return to Hong Kong. She was replaced by Mother St Xavier Vermeersch, a veteran Belgian missionary who had spent many years in Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines where she was Mother Provincial for 12 years before coming to Hong Kong.

Always finding new ways of responding to the needs of the time, Mother St Xavier opened in 1937 French Convent Hostel, a boarding house for young working girls and lady visitors, behind Christ the King Chapel.

The MEP Fathers asked Mother St Xavier for a Chinese School at Tai Koo Lau, a Catholic community in Pokfulam whose original members were brought from China by the French Fathers to help them at Bethanie and Nazareth Press. They had grown from a couple of families to two hundred fifty parishioners by 1924.³⁴ The request was granted and three Sisters were sent in May 1937 to take care of St Joseph Girls' School, as well as a small clinic and dispensary.

Three years after their arrival in Hong Kong in 1926, the Jesuit Fathers started Ricci Hall, a Catholic hostel for male students of Hong



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³⁴ Alain le Pichon, *Bethanie and Nazareth - French secrets from a British colony*, (Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, 2006), p. 125

Kong University. In 1939 Fr George Byrne SJ, desiring to have a hostel for Catholic female under-graduates, approached Mother St Xavier who responded favourably to his appeal resulting in Our Lady's Hall, opened on 30th August, 1939.

11 *Towards Kowloon*

When the Government Kowloon Hospital in Mongkok opened in 1926, it was soon considered 'too crowded'. The population of Hong Kong, especially in Kowloon, was rapidly increasing due to the frequent political upheavals and disturbances in mainland China.

Bishop Valtorta had been urging Mother Felicie to get a footing in Kowloon, which was bigger than Hong Kong Island. In 1931 Mother Paul made plans to build a hospital in Kowloon. The site acquired was on an elevated spot in Prince Edward Road. "However, it was found that a building of the size contemplated could not be erected there, for it was on the line of approach to the airport and the height of the buildings was restricted."³⁵

The British Government also did not look favourably at a private hospital quite near the Kowloon Hospital. Burdened with so many obstacles and difficulties and despite the Bishop's appeal for reconsideration, the project was abandoned in 1935. Much disappointed, the Bishop, in his desire to have the Sisters of St Paul run the hospital, was willing to wait, even though two new religious societies had offered their services to undertake this project.

Mother Paul did not come back to Hong Kong after the General Chapter held in Chartres in 1935. Her successor, Mother St Xavier bought a bungalow in Kowloon and opened an orphanage for abandoned babies, named St Teresa's Nursing Home, in 1936. Part of

the bungalow was turned into a small clinic where the sick poor were treated by some kind and generous doctors. When the Government was



no longer opposed to the plan, she revived the request of Mother Paul for a hospital in May 1938.

Meanwhile, in 1939 the Kowloon Residents Association, desperate to have another hospital in Kowloon sent a written appeal to various agencies, including the Catholic Church through Fr

³⁵ Ryan, 210

Andrew Granelli PIME, Parish Priest of the newly built St Teresa's Church. Fr Granelli forwarded this request to Bishop Valtorta, who once again strongly reiterated his previous plea to the Sisters of St Paul.

A chain of misunderstandings ensued. Unfortunately, for reasons unknown, the reply of the General Council in Chartres was unfavourable. This greatly displeased Bishop Valtorta who did not hesitate to express his regret and frustration in no uncertain terms in his letter to the Mother General in Chartres.

I take the liberty to insist once again with all my strength for, to me, Bishop of Hong Kong, the installation of a Catholic hospital in this city of almost a million people is essential.

I appeal to your Sisters for I find that the way they administer St Paul's Hospital of Hong Kong is a guarantee of success. I am really disappointed by your hesitations, I was going to say your contradictions. I understand them all the less since your Mother Provincial is asking you neither for Sisters nor for money, but simply for your authorisation. ...

If you think that you should not give an affirmative answer for this work which you have already authorised several times, I would do well in future to approach another community for certain apostolate which become vital in my vicariate.³⁶

The Papal Nuncio to China, who had been previously informed by the Bishop of the urgent need of a hospital in Kowloon and the frustrating negotiations with the Sisters of St Paul, made it his business to pay a personal visit to the Motherhouse in Chartres when he made a trip to Europe. The Superiors in Chartres claimed that, although letters went back and forth regarding the building of the hospital, there was no formal request made, no plan, no estimate.

As soon as the confusion was cleared and permission obtained, the construction of the hospital proceeded smoothly and was completed within eight months. It had 75 beds and



St Teresa's Hospital opened in 1940.

³⁶ Bord, 68-69

six wards. While the official opening was held on the feast of St Therese of Lisieux, 3rd October, 1940, it began accepting patients on 14th September.

12 *The War Years*

In Kowloon everyone was elated and happy to see the newly opened St Teresa's Hospital progressing rapidly, but their joy was short-lived. On 8th December, 1941 Kai Tak Airport was bombed. The hospital, which was near the airport, was at once filled with wounded patients. Soon the news spread like wildfire that the Japanese would be coming. Fighting continued for a few days but on the eve of 11th December, Sisters watched the army cars with British soldiers retreating to Hong Kong Island. The Japanese Army was advancing fast to Hong Kong as they greatly outnumbered the British army. The young soldiers were determined to fight to the end but due to the loss of so many lives, the British Army was forced to surrender on 25th December.

The Sisters continued serving in the hospital until one day in February 1942 at midnight, they received on short notice an order from the Japanese authorities that they must leave by 7 am the following day. They passed the rest of the night packing.

The following day the Sisters moved to five houses of families interned in Stanley - Mr Barton's at Waterloo Road, Mr Figueiredo's, and Dr Bernardo de Sousa's - to set up a clinic. Sisters found again their friendly doctors who with their bicycles (all cars were commandeered by the Japanese soldiers) continued to visit the patients every day. They never abandoned the Sisters.

In July 1942 the Argentine Consul who was once treated at the hospital went to Tokyo and told the authorities of the injustice done to the Sisters. An order was received by the military officer in charge of the camp prisoners to return the hospital to the Sisters. On 15th August, the Sisters returned to the hospital but were forbidden to accept patients. The Kowloon residents fought bravely for them and begged the Japanese authorities to allow the Sisters to operate at least a consultation clinic and dispensary.

To their disappointment the Japanese Medical Department called for and informed the Sisters in July 1943 that the Civil Japanese Department wished to re-take the hospital for the civilian patients, but offered to rent it from them. In order to discourage the Japanese authorities, the Sisters proposed a very high rent. They were recalled several times to the Civil Defense Office but they did not give up. After two months of fruitless negotiations, the Sisters were called again, this time not by the Civil Defense Office but by a high-ranking military officer. The officer received them coldly,

but as usual the Sisters demanded their rights. He was rather despotic and told them authoritatively that whether they liked it or not, they would take over the hospital. He gave them 15th August as the deadline. The Japanese renamed it Pok Oi (Love) Hospital.

On the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, while their belongings were loaded on carts pulled by coolies via the Yaumati Ferry, the Sisters walked to the Jordan Ferry to cross the harbour to Causeway Bay.

In Happy Valley the Sisters and their charges were forced to move to Causeway Bay when the Japanese military police took over the building of '*Le Calvaire*'. The school was however allowed to operate in Causeway Bay where the classes had been closed. They were under strict order to teach Japanese instead of English.

During their occupation of *Le Calvaire*, the Japanese converted the vegetable garden into very tiny prison cells where they imprisoned Chinese and some Europeans before killing them. The huge crucifix was eventually destroyed and the metal used to make ammunition.

At the Causeway Bay compound there were 95 infants and 106 orphans in the orphanage, and 229 aged and handicapped, as well as about sixty patients in the hospital in 1941. How to feed these mouths, and the Sisters and boarders as well, was a nightmare for Mother St Xavier. Anna Chan, a boarder of the school when the first bombs fell on Hong Kong, wrote of those days in her autobiography, "The Education of Anna". She married the well-known American World War II hero General Claire Lee Chennault, becoming famous herself as a journalist, author and special consultant of US Republican Presidents from Kennedy to Reagan.

With all the food shops shut down, we were running out of supplies. ... All of us, about fifty nuns and boarders, would have to get by on one slice of bread for breakfast, and a half of bowl of rice for supper.³⁷

Difficult decisions had to be made. Mother Xavier was forced to send some Sisters in batches to make the dangerous trip to Vietnam. Given the option to go home to their families, 29 out of 66 aspirants and novices in the Novitiate opted to leave and the Novitiate was closed.

The compound was dangerously situated in the center of a military area - to the north, there were the Jardine Matheson

³⁷ Anna Chennault, *The Education of Anna*, (New York: Times Book, 1980), p 43

godowns used by the Japanese for storing oil and ammunitions; the south, the Sookunpoo Military Training Field; the east, the Texaco oil tanks; the west, a carpark and a small-arms factory. When the bombardment started, it received missiles not only from the Japanese, but the British as well. Only the chapel and part of the hospital miraculously escaped from the constant volley. It was estimated that at the beginning of the war two hundred missiles must have fallen on the compound - three were found unexploded in the chapel, the hospital and the workshop of the orphanage. Many were the proofs of divine protection during those terrible days.

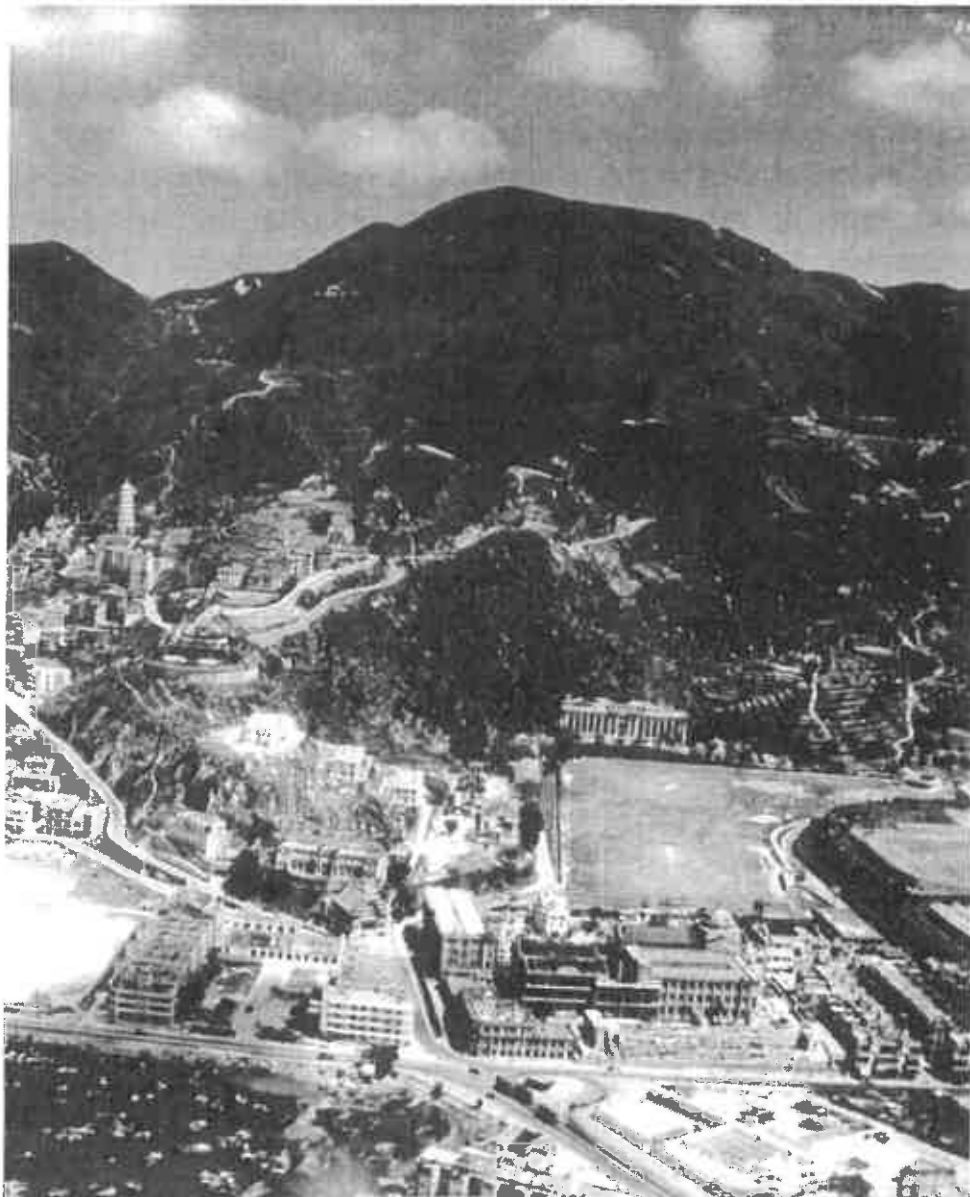
Before the war broke out, the Government, in preparation, had requisitioned the hospital as well as other buildings in the compound, except the Sisters' quarters and the chapel. Sisters and novices took the First Aid Course organised by Queen Mary Hospital and learned simple home nursing. When war started the whole complex became a hospital and a refugee center as well. The sick and the wounded overflowed so that the schools and orphanage were turned into extensions of the hospital. Classrooms were transformed into operating theatres. Later, even the chapel had to be used to treat the many wounded. Medical personnel from Queen Mary Hospital as well as some British officers were stationed in the compound. When the European doctors and nurses were interned in concentration camps, Chinese nurses were sent to replace them. Only Chinese civilians could be received in the hospital, and there were many, not only the sick but also the wounded.

Black-outs occurred very often in the chapel, so the Sisters learned the songs and hymns by heart. They sang to keep up their spirit. During these moments of danger and uncertainty, the Jesuit Fathers, especially Fr Robert W Gallagher SJ and Fr Gerard Hugh Casey SJ, were always among them, consoling the sick, hearing confession, baptising the dying, giving the Sacrament of Extreme Unction to the Catholics, preparing them for the journey to eternity, for who among them could be sure if he or she would still be alive the next moment? How many maimed, sick and dying passed through the hands of the Sisters during those years of stress, with thousands of them being baptised.

Living day by day amidst chaos, destruction, and suffering, never did the Sisters expect that the worst was still to come. Towards the end of the war, tragedy struck. Luckily that day, 4 April 1945, was Children's Day, a school holiday. Many American planes were hovering over Causeway Bay unceasingly. Seconds

later, an air raid alarm was heard and people at once dashed into shelters for safety. In the twinkling of an eye, bombs rained on the compound. In their attempt to bomb the Japanese gasoline and ammunition dumps on Caroline Hill, they hit the little 'city of charity' instead.

Suddenly, in a matter of minutes, more than fifty lives, including six Sisters, were lost and nearly all buildings were either completely destroyed or severely damaged. Once again, the chapel was miraculously spared. Six hundred persons living in the compound found themselves without shelter, since the few buildings that remained were not fit to live in. The shock nearly killed Mother St Xavier and for over a week her life was in danger.



An aerial view of Causeway Bay after World War II showing the completely destroyed orphanage and part of the Chinese school. (c 1940s late)

Together with forty Sisters and a hundred orphans, she was compelled to accept the hospitality of the Canossian Sisters. Through the kind assistance of the Bishop of Macau, some Sisters and orphans were evacuated to Macau in the convents of the Canossian Sisters and the Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels for eleven months.

13

Post-war Reconstruction

The destruction caused by the war in terms of life and property was so devastating that the Sisters had to begin all over again. The Sisters however did not lose time in trying to return to normal life and activities. The students of both Causeway Bay and Happy Valley resumed classes in Happy Valley on 1 October 1945. Only after urgent repairs had been carried out in Causeway Bay did the English and French Sections move back. All the orphans and the aged were housed in Causeway Bay, leaving Happy Valley entirely a vernacular school which now included the Chinese Section from Causeway Bay. The Commercial Section stayed on in Happy Valley returning to Causeway Bay only in 1951.

After general clearing and cleaning which lasted for five months, St Teresa's Hospital in Kowloon was opened again to the public in December 1945. Struggling to get over the horrible experiences of the war years, the hospital continued on but facilities were still inadequate to meet the needs of the patients.

By 1949 repair of the buildings in Causeway Bay was completed. The new orphanage, renamed St Paul's Orphanage, opened in September and some orphans returned. After the war, most men were jobless so many families were forced to abandon their babies. In addition, owing to the shortage of houses in Hong Kong, tenants often refused to rent rooms to families with babies. So a great number of these poor little creatures ended up at the door of the Orphanage.

The population of Hong Kong, which was greatly reduced during the war, increased from 600,000 in 1945 to 1.75 million in 1947 and was increasing at an average of 75,000 every year. The addition of the maternity wing, Pavilion Notre Dame, in 1949 at St Paul's Hospital addressed the need for more maternity services.

While the schools and hospitals, as well as the orphanage, began operating again as soon as it was possible and the Novitiate accepted new candidates in May 1948, several works had to be abandoned. Among them was St Joseph's Girls School in Tai Koo Lau. The French Convent Hostel in Causeway Bay was now used to accommodate the boarders of the school. Our Lady's Hall, the Hong Kong University hostel, was permanently closed.

The stress and strain of supervising the Community during these trying times told on the health of Mother St Xavier, who bore the brunt of the destructive war. After her return from the

Canossian Convent, she was admitted to St Paul's Hospital. Despite her age and poor health, she continued to shoulder the responsibilities of restoring and rebuilding what was destroyed by the war until Mother Pauline Figus replaced her on 30th December, 1947. Mother St Xavier did not fully recover anymore and passed away on 13th March, 1948.

For the first time the Mother Provincial was assisted by four members of a Provincial Council. In July 1949 Mother Pauline welcomed the first of Filipina missionaries to Hong Kong, Sr Isabel of the Angels Narciso, who came to render additional support and assistance to the greatly reduced number of Sisters after the war.



Causeway Bay compound in 1959: Community, Novitiate, St Paul's Institution (English and Chinese Schools), hospital and maternity, nursery, orphanage, boarding school, etc ...

Still struggling to rise above and get over the horrifying and destructive effects of the war, Hong Kong's existence was once again threatened by the Communist take-over of China in 1949. When the Communists defeated the Nationalists and Mao Zedong declared the founding of the People's Republic of China, life in Hong Kong was greatly affected. A flood of refugees to Hong Kong caused the Communist Government to seal the China-Hong Kong border. Among the thousands of refugees pouring into Hong Kong were priests, religious and lay Catholics. It was with open

arms that Mother Pauline received the Mother Auxiliatrix of Shanghai, the Sisters of Good Shepherd, the Canonesses of St Augustine and other religious congregations. The Catholic population of Hong Kong surged from fifty thousand in 1950 to one hundred fifty thousand in 1960.

One by one, the missions of the Sisters of St Paul in the mainland which did not close during the war, were abandoned - Fuzhou, Hainan Island, Kunming. When the Sisters fled from Fuzhou in 1949, they brought with them about twenty orphans as well. Accommodation already being tight in Causeway Bay, the Sisters moved them to the former Our Lady's Hall in Po Shan Road in 1952, naming it *Ouvroir Ste Jeanne d'Arc*.

Mainland immigrants were everywhere and settled anywhere, even on hillsides and street sides, wherever they could find a place to stay. The influx of thousands of immigrants stretched the limits of the social services offered by charitable organisations in Hong Kong. The Catholic Church, in response to this crisis, mobilised its vast resources - human, material, financial.

The responsibility of overseeing the enormous task of assisting the new arrivals from China fell squarely on the shoulders of the newly appointed Bishop of Hong Kong, Mgr Lawrence Bianchi PIME, who at



En visite chez les réfugiés.

Visitina refuacees.

the time of his appointment was a missionary in Hoifung District in mainland China. Although appointed in 1949, it was only in 1952 that he was able to assume his duties as Bishop, after he was released from prison by the Communists. Assisting the thousands of refugees from China was the first task he had to face, and his first acts were in the fields of charitable assistance and education.

The opening of schools was one of the enduring and lasting legacies he bequeathed to Hong Kong.³⁸ To carry out the operation of many of these schools, Bishop Bianchi had to rely a great deal on the religious congregations of men and women. Parishes and

³⁸ Piero Gheddo, *Lawrence Bianchi of Hong Kong*, (Hong Kong: Catholic Truth Society, 1992), pp. 136-137

Catholic institutions were also actively involved in addressing the needs of the new arrivals.

St Margaret's Church in Happy Valley opened St Margaret's Evening School at *Le Calvaire* in Happy Valley in 1950 with 330 refugee children attending Primary 1-6 classes two hours a day. Two hundred twenty children attended in Causeway Bay. The schools were staffed by volunteer members of the Legion of Mary who served as teachers.

The Paris Missions Fathers, who took charge of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Kennedy Town where many immigrants also settled, asked the Sisters for help in 1959. Sr Marie Isabelle Tchang, future Provincial Superior,



Teaching Catechism to refugee children in Kennedy Town. (c 1960s)

was appointed Headmistress of St Charles School, a primary school, while three Sisters helped in the parish.

Major changes were initiated in Happy Valley in 1957. The Infant Class was closed, while construction of a new secondary school began the following year. By 1960 a new Science stream school, St Paul's Secondary School, was officially opened. That same year the primary school in Happy Valley became a Government-subsidized half-day school, with English session in the morning and Chinese in the afternoon. Formerly a branch of St Paul's Convent School in Causeway Bay, it was renamed St Paul's Primary Catholic School, and the Prefect of Studies, Sister Eliza Joseph Chow, was now Headmistress.



St Paul's Secondary School opened in 1960.

14

A Fresh Breeze

Ten years after the war, St Teresa's Hospital in Kowloon, now fully recovered from the devastating experiences of the war, had made considerable progress so much so that it was always full of patients. Doctors flocked in to have their patients admitted. It was not surprising that one would find patients along the corridors or the verandahs. Patients had to book a room a few days before admission.

By this time, the hospital had a new Superior, 34-year-old Sr Bernard de Marie de Broqueville, a young and zealous Belgian missionary who arrived in 1949. An extension was necessary and permission from the Motherhouse in Chartres was immediately granted. Finally, after much ordeal and frustrations on the part of the young Superior, the South Wing was officially opened on 3rd October, 1960. Hospital beds increased from 75 to 275.

The feverish activities going on in the diocese during the 1960s were matched in the Community of the Sisters of St Paul by the appointment of Mother Bernard, the energetic, capable and totally dedicated Superior of St Teresa's Hospital, as Provincial Superior in April 1960. A fresh breeze blew rejuvenating the whole Community. She gave it a face-lift beginning with a major revamp of its organisational structure.



The whole Province depended on the Provincial Superior alone.³⁹ Mother Bernard divided the big community into four according to the apostolic work undertaken, ie hospital, orphanage, school, and the convent, each with its own local Superior. The Novitiate was moved to Po Shan Road which was vacated by the orphans from Fuzhou. They would not stay there long however. Smothered by the skyscrapers being built around it, the Novitiate relocated to Sheung Shui, a more quiet place, in 1967.

Not only the convent but the schools as well were affected by the reorganization. Whereas the Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary Sections of St Paul's Convent School had always been headed by one Headmistress, a new one was appointed for the Primary and Kindergarten. In 1961 it was decided to stop accepting boarders. The school had boarders even in Wanchai. Among its

³⁹ Bord, 79

former boarders was Baroness Lydia Dunn, who as Senior Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council and Executive Council from 1985-92 played an important role in the history of Hong Kong prior to its turnover to China in 1997. The Sisters, except those working in the schools and orphanage, were installed in the former boarding house, now Sisters' Convent.

Bursting with energy, Mother Bernard's apostolic zeal and enthusiasm, coupled with compassion and generosity, blossomed into many initiatives, most of them for the benefit of the underprivileged, especially the refugees who were at that time a major Hong Kong problem. It drove her beyond the shores of Hong Kong - to Taiwan. She left Hong Kong when she was appointed Assistant General from 1977-83, returning to Taiwan until ill health forced her to retire to the Motherhouse in Chartres in 1986.

In 1962 the Novitiate in Chartres was transferred to Rome opening it not only to French- but also to English-speaking candidates. Concern for the future of the Congregation prompted Mother Bernard to recruit vocations from the Philippines and send them, together with those from Hong Kong, to the International Novitiate in Rome. She also encouraged young Sisters to pursue higher professional training in Hong Kong and abroad.

During her term in office, the violent effects of the Cultural Revolution in mainland China spilt over Hong Kong in the 1960s. This however did not deter the Sisters from continuing their apostolic work to include parish/pastoral work and branching outside of Causeway Bay to areas which were predominantly poor.

In November 1960 two Sisters began their apostolic work at St Lawrence Church in Shamshuipo. Staying first at St Teresa's Hospital, they visited the families at the Li Cheng Uk resettlement area. Pastoral work was quite tough at the beginning. The faith of these so-called 'rice Catholics' was still quite weak; their main concern, understandably, was self-preservation. It was an undeniable fact that many of the refugees became Catholics because of the material benefits they received from the Church, like rice, noodles, flour, biscuits, etc.⁴⁰

A little room adjoining the church was made available to the Sisters in January 1961. It was so small there was no place for a kitchen or sanitary facilities. Life was difficult and inconvenient, but they adapted themselves to the circumstances. The Sisters did not only take care of the church sacristy, they also gave

⁴⁰ A Granelli, "The Bumper Harvest", *Catholic Hong Kong, a hundred years of missionary activity*, (Hong Kong: Catholic Press Bureau, 1958), p. 65

catechetical instructions and made home visits consoling, encouraging refugee families or just listening to their problems and miseries. They shared their life of poverty to some extent which gave them better access into the hearts of the people they served. In this way they earned their respect and trust. Their initial antagonism gradually subsiding, the parishioners began to regard the Sisters as part of their family, their advisers and comforters.

Another milestone in the episcopacy of Mgr Bianchi was the founding of Caritas-Hong Kong in 1959.⁴¹ It was in cooperation with Caritas that Mother Bernard opened in 1964 two clinics for refugees - Lombardi Clinic in the Squatter Area off Clementi Road in Tai Hang, Causeway Bay, and Pope John XXIII Clinic in Kennedy Town. Being a nurse herself, Mother Bernard loved to slip out of the Convent from time to time to minister to the sick poor in the Tai Hang Road clinic.

It was at this time that the Second Vatican Council began and concluded. Sweeping reforms were introduced, among them regarding the religious habit of women religious all over the Catholic world. Sisters began changing their ancient garb belonging to an age long gone, not a few of them removing it altogether and reverting to ordinary modern clothes. Except for a minor modification in 1953, the Sisters of St Paul had worn the traditional dress of the peasants of seventeenth century France for more than two and a half centuries. Being more suitable for cooler countries where it originated, it was therefore a great relief for the Sisters in the Far East, including Hong Kong, when in 1966, a more simple modern religious habit was adopted. It was a gradual change beginning with the *cornette*, that ancient head-dress, which was replaced by a veil. Then the dress itself followed a few months later.

Towards the end of 1960, the Hong Kong economy had greatly improved, due in part to the availability of cheap labour supplied by the mainland immigrants which was ingeniously taken advantaged of by the Government. In the 1950s factories increased from three thousand to ten thousand. Although living standard was rising, low wages was still the norm. Through the efforts of the Government, the different Churches and charitable organisations, the housing, education and medical needs of the people were being addressed. Emergency services to the refugees were no longer needed. In 1967 St Margaret's Evening School both in Happy

⁴¹ Gheddo, 140

Valley and Causeway Bay were closed; while the Caritas clinics at Tai Hang Road and Kennedy Town ceased operation the year after.

15 *Historical Milestone*

The year 1968 was a milestone in the history of the Community in Hong Kong. One hundred twenty years after the arrival of the first French missionaries, the first Chinese Provincial Superior was appointed - Mother Marie Isabelle Tchang. She was a native of Kunming, Yunnan Province, China, where the Congregation had a mission from 1911-51.



Mother Isabelle carried on the policies and charitable programs of Mother Bernard. In Lam Tin, a resettlement area where a school was much needed to cater to the educational needs of the refugees who have settled there, the third Paulinian secondary school was opened in 1970. Appointed Headmistress was a young fresh graduate from England, who was destined to lead the Hong Kong community in the future - Sr Marie Pauline Wong.



St Paul's School (Lam Tin) opened in 1970

Among the major reforms introduced after the Second Vatican Council, what affected the public worship of ordinary Catholics most was the revision of the liturgy. Latin was replaced by the vernacular in the Eucharistic celebration and the priest had to face the congregation. To celebrate the 125th Anniversary of the

Sisters' presence in Hong Kong, the Christ the King Chapel underwent a major renovation in March 1973 with the apse and altar area completely changed. In conformity with the liturgical reforms of Vatican Council II, the communion rail was removed and a new altar was placed in the middle with the beautiful sculpted panel of the Last Supper underneath. The whole floor area of the altar was raised five steps higher on the same level of the old altar floor.

One of the outstanding features of the chapel was the stained glass windows overlooking the altar - a beautiful legacy of Mother Pauline Figus, who was noted, not only for her great kindness and devotion to the poor, but also for the cult of the house of the Lord. For the chapel, nothing must be spared; all had to be beautiful; everything must be of the best: altar ornaments and linen, vases, Stations of the Cross, etc. What she could not find in Hong Kong, she would order from Shanghai, or Macau, even Paris. She herself arranged the altar, and nobody arranged bouquets better than she did.

At the beginning, the chapel was exclusively for the private use of the Sisters. In 1961 Fr John Pittavino PIME of St Margaret's Church requested the use of the chapel for special Children's Masses on Sundays. Gradually more and more people joined in. Later on, with permission from the Sisters and the Bishop, the parish was allowed to use the chapel on Sundays for its parishioners. The chapel proved to be a welcome and greatly appreciated extension to the parish church, which was not big enough to accommodate its growing number of parishioners. However, since it was a private chapel, no wedding was allowed. Able to accommodate nearly a thousand, the chapel was also often used by the Diocese and Catholic associations for special celebrations.

Meanwhile, St Teresa's Hospital in Kowloon was soon overcrowded again. The continuous growth in the population of Hong Kong began to tax the hospital accommodation to the limit. This was how a French nursing Sister described one of the busiest days in the hospital.

One day, we received 47 patients ... some of whom were rich, others very poor, some tourists and others were from the resettlement area! But all came to ask for help and care. They were sick, their health was failing - their strength gone! It took us quite an amount of devotion and kindness to accompany each patient to his respective place, help him to bed and make him feel confident he would be given efficient and prompt

attention because every member of the staff is concerned with his welfare. Every effort should be made to treat the patient that way. It is very important for the process of his recovery.
42

Before long, construction of a new extension was underway. However, the 1966 and 1967 riots gave rise to feelings of insecurity and made the hospital authorities question the advisability of going ahead with the project. Fearing an escalation of the troubles with the Communists or worse still, of a Communist takeover, the building works on the North-West Wing extension was suspended. Only necessary minimum building work was continued. As the situation gradually returned to normal, construction proceeded once again and the new wing was completed in 1971.

The opening of a nursing school had long been a subject of thought and talk of many doctors at the Hospital. Sr Marie Noel Aranda, Matron, started a Pilot Scheme School for Nursing, primarily for Forms 3-5 graduates who were being trained to be assistant-nurses. April 1969 saw the gathering of 12 candidates to commence their lessons in nursing. By 1974 it was officially recognised by the Hong Kong Nursing Board as a training course for pupil nurses which now required completion of Form 5. After graduation they could work as Enrolled Nurses. This paved the way for them to further their studies and become Registered Nurses. Forty-eight groups had completed the two-year course by 1998.



St Teresa's Hospital Nursing School started classes in 1969.

⁴² Cecilienne Huard, *Give and Take*, No. 2, November 1968, p. 15

In the early 1960s Mother Bernard introduced notable improvements in the facilities of the orphanage. When the Social Welfare Department organised a Child Care Course and First Aid to train staff from different agencies, three Sisters attended. As a result of these developments, the survival rate of the children brought to the orphanage increased. Those who were able to study were encouraged to finish their secondary education in order to prepare them for a career outside the orphanage. Some finally got married and have families of their own.

Despite efforts of the Sisters to prepare their charges for life in the future, some, beset with psychological problems of their own, found it hard to settle in the world. Many left to face the world and try their hands on earning their own living, only to return to the Sisters after drifting from one job to another. It was here that the assistance of the two hospitals proved to be of benefit as a stepping stone to the world. Some settled down in their jobs in the hospital and some, after a period of adjustment, sailed off to find their place in the world.

Some children were re-claimed by their parents; while others were adopted locally or overseas. With a new life ahead of them, many of these adopted children found loving foster parents in America, England, New Zealand and Australia.

As Hong Kong gradually developed into a financially stable and modern society and with the emergence of a more educated and affluent population, the social fabric of Hong Kong was also changing. Living conditions of the people improved resulting to less babies being abandoned. At the same time, a new social need arose. More women were taking up employment to supplement their income leaving their children at home alone. Gutters were playground for thousands of them. They spilt out of congested cubicle homes at dawn and remained uncared for all day while their mothers worked. Thus day-care centres were badly needed.

In approving the change of the orphanage to a day care center in February 1963, the local Provincial Council noted that "there are hardly any babies left since most of the children have been sent to the US and Australia for adoption into families. The Social Welfare Department is keen on this project. They will have the right to visit the nursery, and we are allowed to charge \$20 per month per child for we have to provide the milk. Free cases may be received We are no longer allowed to baptise the babies. We have to try to find good Catholic families to adopt our children especially since the Government is building a *crèche* for abandoned babies."

The following year the Hong Kong Government opened a Children Reception Centre in Chuk Yuen (present-day Wong Tai Sin) for abandoned babies. All private orphanages were placed under the jurisdiction of the Social Welfare Department. In response to the need of working parents, as well as to make the best use of the facilities of the orphanage with its playground and gardens, the St Paul's Creche stopped accepting abandoned babies and was changed to a day care centre in September 1964. With 89 orphans and 29 handicapped and infirm still remaining, it was renamed St Paul's Orphanage and Creche. "The doors of the crèche opened at 8 am to accept the



The Nursery accepted babies of working mothers in 1964.

infants. They were fed, washed and entertained and by 6 pm they were ready to be taken home."

Another development at the orphanage was imminent ten years later. The number of orphans continued to decrease. By 1975 only about 42 orphans were being cared for by the Sisters. For them the orphanage was their home, the only one they had known; and the Sisters would continue to look after them as long as necessary.

Between 1954 and 1961, the Government embarked on an ambitious public education program and created over three hundred thousand new primary school places. Even though primary schools were not free, 99.8% of school-age children were attending primary school.⁴³ Parents were so concerned for their children to be accepted in good primary schools. For this reason pre-school education became popular and in great demand.

Despite its unofficial status in education policy, preschool education in Hong Kong has been, and continues to be, closely

⁴³ *Wikipedia*, "1960s in Hong Kong",
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1960s_in_Hong_Kong

aligned with primary schooling by both parents and teachers.

⁴⁴

At the same time, the Government, in keeping with the improving social condition and advances in knowledge regarding child care, was also changing its social welfare policy.⁴⁵ Once the Sisters decided to adapt to the new social situation, the gradual transition of the orphanage to a day care center in 1964 and then to a nursery school in 1975, covering about 127 years, was complete. Still under the jurisdiction of the Social Welfare Department, the new St Paul's Day Nursery offered whole-day pre-school education in preparation for primary school.

Back in 1961, Mother Bernard settled the Sisters in a house in Taipo, called 'Catholic Mission' which belonged to the diocese, to help the needy and disadvantaged in this depressed area.



The "Catholic Mission" in Taipo.

It was a semi-rural, semi-maritime zone where sampans side by side served as living quarters. The Sisters were first lodged in a one-room former shop, then inherited the old presbytery when a new one was built near the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Emma Pearson and Nirmala Rao, *Early childhood education policy reform in Hong Kong: challenges in effecting change in practices*, CNet Networks, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3614/is_200601/ai_n17174789

⁴⁵ Frederick Cheung, "The contribution of the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres in Hong Kong in the twentieth century", in *Ritsumeikan Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* (Beppu, Oita, Japan: Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, November 2007, Vol 23), pp. 89-98

⁴⁶ Bord, 80

The Sisters, like the first Sisters in Levesville, visited the poor and the sick in their homes. With their winning smile and kind words, they penetrated right into their huts in the squatter areas and in their boats. They taught catechism and opened a small dispensary. It was named Stella Maris Catechumenate and Dispensary.



A Sister with refugees in Taipo.

The following year the parish opened Sacred Heart of Mary Primary School with Sr Stanislaus Leung as Headmistress. Fr Narciso Santinon PIME, former Parish Priest, described the parish and how the school started.

On February 13, 1962 I came to Tai Po to do my priestly work. At that time ... the only road that crossed it, Kwong Fuk Road, was bordered by the sea on one side and by fishermen boats and water-meadow on the other. And the inhabitants were some ten thousand. In the church premises, besides the church and the priest's living quarter there is space for three irregular classrooms and a small playground. I made use of them to start our Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Primary School. ... Got the Education Department permission and the precious help of a Sister of St Paul of Chartres as Headmistress, in September 1962 the school started her journey with only Primary One, with 17 pupils. In the second term, Primary Two also began with seven pupils, and afterward a new class was added each year up to Primary Six.

As for the first seven years, it was a private school. It collected a monthly school fee of \$8 from each pupil. The meagre salary the teachers had at that time was increased a bit with the income got by selling bread at 5 cents a loaf; bread that we were able to make with the flour and oil donated by the welfare service. And such donations terminated in 1969, just when the private school became a subsidized one.⁴⁷

In 1971, Mother Marie Isabelle bought a two-storey house in Taipo Market where the Sisters moved from the old Mission House. The ground floor was turned into a clinic, named Star of the Sea Clinic. In September 1975, in response to the appeal of working

⁴⁷ Narciso Santinon, "30 Years", *Hong Kong Paulinian Newsletter*, No 143, June 1992, Sisters of St Paul de Chartres.

mothers, the Sisters turned part of the clinic into a day care center for children aged 2-4 years old.

Since the early years of Hong Kong, the task of assisting the underprivileged and needy had been carried out mainly by private charitable associations. During the late 1960s the Government began to take more responsibility in providing social and welfare services to the people. With the opening of more private and Government clinics, the Chinese population, formerly used to traditional Chinese treatments, began turning to western medicine.⁴⁸ Because of this, the clinic was closed in April 1976 and the whole premises was used for the nursery school, renamed St Paul's Day Nursery. Following the changes initiated in Causeway Bay, it prepared children from 2-6 years old for primary school.

By the end of the 1970s, due to lack of qualified Sisters, the administration of two primary schools was turned over to the parish - St Charles School in Kennedy Town in 1975 and Sacred Heart of Mary Primary School in Taipo in 1976. Parish and pastoral work at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Kennedy Town continued until 1978, while at St Lawrence Parish in Shamshuipo until 1979 when one of the Sisters retired. Sr Rosalie Chan however continued to faithfully take the bus from Causeway Bay to Shamshuipo every Sunday to visit the parishioners and teach catechism even until her 80s.

⁴⁸ Robin Gauld and Derek Gould, *The Hong Kong health section, development and change*, (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2002), p. 47

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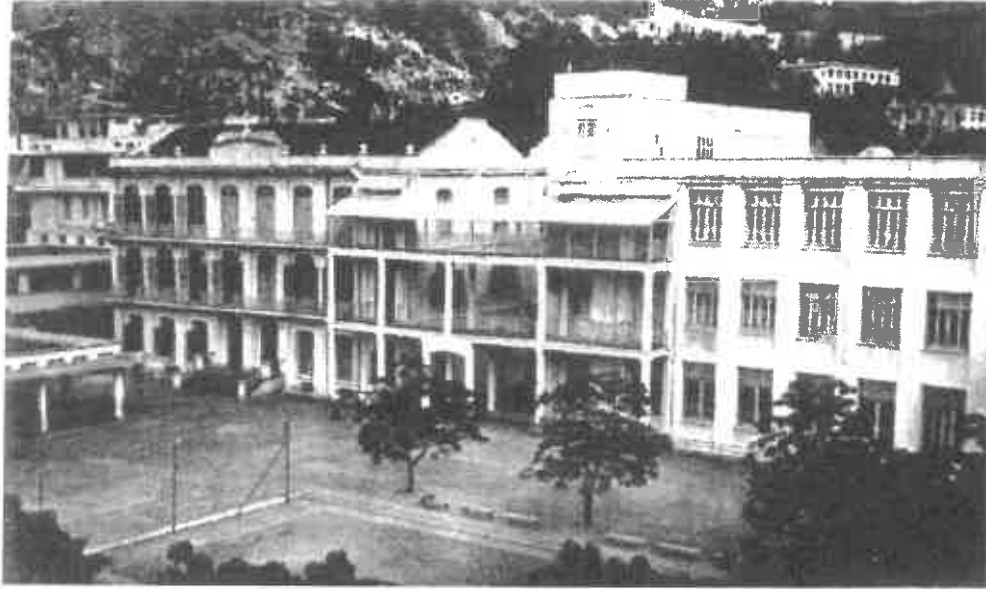
Causeway Bay Transformation

It had always been Mother Bernard's dream to provide adequate support, not only for the Sisters' apostolic works but also for the Sisters' welfare and well-being. It would however be her successor, Mother Marie Isabelle, who would see to it that this dream was realized. St Paul's Convent, completed in 1975, served not only as the seat of the Province's administration, but also as retirement home and infirmary for the old, retired and sick Sisters. Adequate rooms for retreatants were also provided. The new building afforded privacy and space which was more conducive to the Sisters' life of prayer and silence. Having its own chapel was also a great relief for the old Sisters, who previously had to go to the big chapel for their daily Mass and their prayers, inconvenient especially during rainy days.

Over the past years, the doctors of St Paul's Hospital had been asking for an extension, since the hospital was always overcrowded. They however understood that due to financial constraints, it was not possible at that time. It took four years more before the long-awaited extension was approved by the Congregation's General Council in Rome. Notre Dame Pavilion, the maternity section of the hospital, was demolished in 1974 to make way for a new and modern hospital building. The new wing, officially opened by Sir Murray MacLehose and blessed by Bishop John Baptist Wu on 6th September, 1976, increased the number of beds from one hundred eighty to four hundred.

In 1976, the Supervisor/Principal of St Paul's Convent School, Sr Isabel of the Angels, requested permission to rebuild the old school buildings. Almost entirely made of wood, there were already cracks in the walls and white ants proliferated. The two buildings must have dated back to 1899, when its previous owner, the Hong Kong Cotton Spinning, Weaving and Dyeing Company, began its operation.

The first of three big school projects - that of replacing the old buildings in Causeway Bay - was the last undertaking approved by Mother Marie Isabelle before she turned over the rein of the Province to the newly appointed Provincial Superior, Mother Lucie Ko, in February 1978. The new Provincial Superior was young, energetic and proved equal to the enormous task of overseeing the construction of the new and modern school edifices we see in the Causeway Bay compound today.



The old school building demolished in 1979. (c 1950s)

It was a rather emotional day for those who were present at the demolition ceremony of the first building to go - the former School Hall - on 16th October, 1979. Officiating at the demolition ceremony was Lady MacLehose who was on the teaching staff of the school twenty years ago. For the thousands of students who had passed through its hallowed walls during its more than 63 years of existence as their beloved school, it was the end of an era, forever committing to memory all their happy experiences connected with the old building.



The school hall at the junction of Leighton Road and Tunglowan Road built in 1951.

For the incoming students and staff there was however a great feeling of excitement and anticipated satisfaction when classes opened in September 1981. Despite being nostalgic over the old premises, Sisters and students alike were delighted to move to the new premises instead of the old building with creaky floors and cracked walls. In addition to the

classrooms, it had a three-storey auditorium and a 25-metre swimming pool complex.

Soon after, construction of the Primary Section followed and by 1983, it was ready for occupancy and classes.

Then it was the turn of the orphanage building to be demolished. When it was completed in 1985 the new 7-storey structure accommodated the St Paul's Home for Girls (orphanage), St Paul's Day Nursery and the Kindergarten Section of St Paul's Convent School, renamed St Paul's Kindergarten and with its own Headmistress. Both pre-schools prepared pupils for Primary One. While St Paul's Day Nursery was a 4-year whole-day school for children aged 2-6 years registered with the Social Welfare Department, St Paul's Kindergarten was a 3-year half-day school for children aged 3-6 years registered with the Education Department.



The old Orphanage demolished in 1983.

In 1986 the Hong Kong Government's Education Commission recommended the unification of pre-school services. The Provincial Council, local governing authority of the Community, also seriously considered combining the two into one. In the end it was resolved to carry on with the two types in consideration of the different needs of parents. To this day these two systems of pre-school education exist in Hong Kong.

Their purposes were ... very different. Child care centers [day nurseries] emerged as a response to the need for care for children from families where both parents were obliged to work. ... Kindergartens ... on the other hand, was a response to the practice of selecting pupils into primary schools on the basis of entrance examination results. In order to prepare their children for these examinations parents turned to kindergartens. ... Although their original purposes have

changed over time, differences between the two sectors still exist.⁴⁹

All the four pre-schools run by the Sisters in Causeway Bay, Happy Valley and Taipo, whether nursery or kindergarten, achieved a high standard in pre-school education. The Kindergarten in Happy Valley, closed in 1957, was re-opened ten years later with Sr Helena Noronha, fondly called 'Mother Helena', as Headmistress until 1972. She served the Community in various important positions, including Mother Mistress and member of the Provincial Council. Possessed with many talents and gifts, she made no small contribution to pre-school education in her short career as an educator. Innovative and daring, she introduced two unconventional teaching concepts: 'no homework, no examination' and the ITA (Initial Teaching Alphabet), a completely new approach in teaching English no Hong Kong pre-school had ever tried before. Revolutionary at that time, ITA was a success and much valued by both teachers and parents.

The schools were therefore in great demand among parents so much so that it was not so easy to secure a place for their children. Application Forms were usually given out on a fixed date months before the opening of the school.

It was on one such day, on 28th January, 1984 that the unthinkable and unfortunate tragedy happened. Very early in the morning a line of adults and children formed a queue at Wong Nai Chung Road in Happy Valley where the Application Forms were to be distributed by the Kindergarten Section of St Paul's Primary Catholic School. In a split second, a double-decker bus rammed through the line killing six and injuring eight. It was a traumatic and unforgettable experience not only for the victims and their families, but also for the Headmistress and staff of the Kindergarten. In fact there was no need to line up as all would be given the form. To ease the pain of their loss, the children of the victims were offered places at the Kindergarten in Causeway Bay, instead of Happy Valley.

The computer age reached Hong Kong in the late 1960s, and starting from the private sector, it gradually filtered to the education sector by early 1980s. St Paul's Secondary School in Happy Valley was a pioneer in computer education in Hong Kong, two years before it was adopted by the Education Department for

⁴⁹ Sylvia Opper, "*Comparison of certain structural and organizational features of Hong Kong kindergartens and nurseries*".
<http://sunzi.lib.hku.hk/hkjo/view/36/3600007.pdf>

Hong Kong schools. Its Principal, Sr Margaret Wong, was one of the first educators to embrace the new technology with great enthusiasm. With IBM sponsoring a computer laboratory, she introduced Computer Science in Form 4 in 1981.

In recognition of her contributions in the fields of education and community service, Sr Margaret was honoured with a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire award in 1997. Also receiving an MBE award that year was Ann Hui, former student of St Paul's Convent School and distinguished film director, while Mrs Diana Wong, Principal of St Paul's Secondary School received the Badge of Honour. In 1973, Sr Rose-Mary Clifford, Principal of St Paul's Convent School for 18 years, was among those included in the Queen's Honours MBE List. Another gifted educator who left her mark in the history of the Hong Kong Schools Music Festival was Sr Carmela Santos. The choirs she trained at St Paul's Convent School and St Paul's School (Lam Tin) gained an excellent reputation for high-standard performances during the 1950s to 1980s.

One of the last initiatives of Mother Lucie was the establishment of the Friends of St Paul. Far back in 1916, the Province of Japan organised the Sisters' friends and relatives into an association they called Friends of St Paul. It didn't catch on with the other provinces until more than sixty years later when Canada started its own group. In Hong Kong it began in 1989 when Mother Lucie met a group of 13 ladies, who were mostly staff of Paulinian institutions. They promised for one year to abide by the rules and regulations of the association. Meetings were held once in two months wherein they prayed and shared to deepen their faith and love of God, imbibing the Paulinian spirit as well. From time to time they organised social and religious activities and participated in the Sisters' outreach programmes for the poor in Hong Kong and China.

17

Facing an Uncertain Future

From the beginning the Sisters had been doing their apostolic work independent of the diocese. This caused some local clergy to remark that the Sisters did not cooperate with the diocese in its pastoral ministry. This was of course not completely true as the Sisters had been quietly doing parish work in Taipo, Kennedy Town and Shamshuipo since the 1960s. In any case, Mother Lucie decided in 1979 to send the Junior Sisters to different parishes in Hong Kong, Kowloon as far as the New Territories and the islands to help during week-ends. Unfortunately ten years later this had to be scaled down as there were less and less Junior Sisters to send due to lack of vocations.

This was the problem that Sr Marie Pauline Wong inherited when she was appointed Provincial Superior in 1989. She however allowed anyone interested in pastoral ministry to take up full time parish work in spite of the decreasing number of Sisters.

By this time the effects of Vatican Council II particularly on the priesthood and religious life was beginning to be felt by the Community. The end of the Council in 1965 was followed by years of tremendous crisis for many Catholic believers. There was a spectacular worldwide decline in vocations and a movement among existing priests and religious to leave the priesthood and religious life.

In Hong Kong, this downward trend was further made complicated and worse by the 1997 handover. After the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration on 19th December, 1984, the people had to face the question of the political future of the Hong Kong. From then on all issues, whether personal or social, big or small, were inevitably associated with the 1997 question. It rattled the public, unleashing the floodgates of Hong Kong and raising the emigration statistics to an all time high level, despite the proposal of the 'one country, two systems' concept by Deng Xiaoping.

In a repetition of the response of Mother Benjamin to the crisis the Sisters faced in 1859, which resulted in the opening of the new missions in Macau and Vietnam, efforts were made to ensure the survival of the Community at this critical point in the history of Hong Kong. At the beginning of 1984 Mother Lucie began negotiations for the opening of a school in Moss Vale, Australia. The first three Sisters left for this new mission in October.

The result of the confusion caused by changes in the Church and the social uncertainties in Hong Kong was in some way replicated in the Community by the gradual but steady decrease in the number of Sisters. Likewise, candidates entering the Novitiate dwindled, forcing St Paul's Novitiate in Sheung Shui to close in November 1990. It would be five years later before the Novitiate would open again in Causeway Bay.

The lack of vocations was a major setback in the apostolic activities and ministries of the Sisters. It meant not only the closing of institutions but also of some communities, as well as replacing Sisters with non-religious as heads of Paulinian establishments. In 1996, supervision of St Paul's Hospital and St Teresa's Hospital was handed over to Prof Sir Harry Fang and Dr Christina Chow, respectively. Prof Fang was well known for his pioneering work in the field of rehabilitation of the physically impaired; while Dr Christina Chow was active in the work of Caritas Hong Kong.

Among the victims of the cutback in the Community's activities were the Kindergarten in Happy Valley and the commercial schools in Happy Valley and Causeway Bay which for more than half a century provided tertiary education to secondary school graduates unable to enter University. It was to the credit of Sr Marie du Sacre Coeur Gil that the Commercial Sections of St Paul's Convent School and St Paul's Secondary School earned a good reputation for training thousands of efficient secretaries and office workers. Some of them used it as a stepping stone to management level.

In the midst of all these negative changes, a new need arose. In an attempt to secure students for Aurora College, a school for Years 11-12 ran by the Sisters in Moss Vale, Australia, St Paul's Convent School opened the Australian International Section in January 1993 with two classes of twenty Year 7 students. Catering at first to children of Australian expatriates as well as Hong Kong families planning to emigrate to Australia, it followed the Australian Secondary School curriculum for Years 7-10, and had Australian and Chinese teachers. Changing its name in 1998 to International Section, it expanded its curriculum to include the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), a two-year course designed by the Cambridge University Board of Examinations, England for their Forms 4 and 5 curricula.

18

A Time to Celebrate

Despite the bleak outlook at the beginning of Sr Marie Pauline's term and the anxiety of the people over the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, the last decade of the first millenium was a time for celebrations for the Community.

In 1996 Sisters of St Paul all over the world commemorated the Tricentennial Anniversary marking the foundation of the Congregation in Levesville, France. In Hong Kong the year-long festivities kicked off with a Thanksgiving Mass celebrated in January by His Eminence John Baptist Cardinal Wu, and a Tricentenary Exhibition opened by His Excellency Governor Christopher Patten and his wife, Mrs Lavender Patten. The Tricentenary Variety Concert in April was graced by the presence of Mrs Anson Chan, Chief Secretary, who was a Forms 6-7 past student of St Paul's Convent School, as a special guest. The past students of the three Paulinian schools in Causeway Bay, Happy Valley and Lam Tin organised a Tricentenary Dinner in June. On Foundation Day, 12th September, a Memorial Mass for the deceased Sisters was celebrated at the St Michael's Cemetery by Fr Emile Louis-Tisserand, Superior of the Paris Foreign Missions in Hong Kong.



Cardinal Wu, Auxiliary Bishops Joseph Zen and John Tong and priests concelebrated during the 300th Anniversary of the Congregation. (1996)

To celebrate the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the first Sisters in Hong Kong, several activities were held in April 1998 - Thanksgiving Anniversary Mass, Jubilee Night, and Anniversary Dinner. The Sisters gratefully remembered and joyfully thanked God for the gift of consecration and loving service they had rendered to the people of Hong Kong for one hundred fifty years, growing with Hong Kong from a remote colonial outpost to a highly urbanized modern city. Rev Mother Anne-Marie Audet, Superior General, and Provincial Superiors of Vietnam, Japan, Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines - countries who could trace their origin from that historic second missionary journey to Hong Kong - came to share the joy of this special occasion. Nor were the orphans whom the Sisters took care of for so many years forgotten. In June about a hundred of them including their families were treated to a dinner after a Eucharistic Celebration.

Before the end of 1998 another big event took place: St Paul's Hospital's Centenary. The Opening Ceremony marking this special occasion was graced by Chief Executive Tung Chee Wah and his wife, Mrs Betty Tung, His Eminence Cardinal John Wu, Bishop Joseph Zen and Bishop Tong Hon. A Scientific Congress with the theme of "Healing and Care into the Next Millenium" was organised for doctors and medical workers. Among the invited speakers was Sr Eva Fidela Maamo SPC, a doctor/surgeon from the Philippines and recipient of the 1997 Magsaysay Award for her work among the poor and underprivileged, who spoke on "The Role of Religious Organisations in Health Care". The hospital sponsored free health education talks by 12 doctors, free health checks, and a lucky draw for a \$1,000 medical check-up package.

An overview of the apostolic works of the Sisters in 1998 shows that despite their reduced number they continued to serve God in their neighbours in the fields of education, health care, social welfare, and evangelisation. In Causeway Bay, where most of the charitable works of the Sisters were being carried out, there were St Paul's Convent School with its three sections (Primary, Secondary, and International), the two pre-schools (St Paul's Day Nursery and St Paul's Kindergarten), St Paul's Hospital, and St Paul's Home for Girls (former orphanage with still 11 orphans, now elderly). The others were St Paul's Secondary School and St Paul's Primary Catholic School in Happy Valley, St Teresa's Hospital with its Nursing School in Kowloon, St Paul's School (Lam Tin), and St Paul's Catholic Day Nursery in Taipo. By maintaining their presence and active apostolate in the schools and hospitals, the

Sisters aimed to preserve the religious spirit and extend the saving mission of Jesus Christ, not only to the students and patients, but to the staff as well. With dedication and devotion, they carried on faithfully nurturing the seeds of charity planted by the first four French missionaries on Hong Kong soil.

One major project was ongoing. The long-delayed construction of the Main Building of St Teresa's Hospital was finally underway sixteen years after the Government offered the vacant lot in Lomond Street behind the hospital for expansion. Not being financially ready at that time and concerned over the lack of vocations, the hospital submitted its application for a land grant only in 1993. It was a 'take it or leave it' proposition, which the hospital, faced with an uncertain future, decided was worth the risks. The Sisters still had enough confidence that Hong Kong would overcome the challenges it faced over 1997. The hospital was definitely crowded with no space for further improvement and progress. Three more years passed before the Government approved the application on condition that a non-profit-making facility should be built on the site.

One hundred and fifty years after four French Sisters landed on the 'barren' island of Hong Kong, only one surviving French missionary, together with two Filipina missionaries, remained in Hong Kong. Arriving on 20th November, 1929, Sr Marie Auguste Roue had been in Hong Kong for 69 years. Her great love for the mission, for the Chinese people in particular, was the secret of her endurance and perseverance. It was with nostalgia that she remembered the first Mass she attended.

To my intense joy, [it] was the feast of the Presentation of Our Lady, and this gave me a clear sign to offer myself with her in Hong Kong. ... This Mass was celebrated daily for the community on the ground floor of the old Anglo-French School where all the Sisters of Causeway Bay attended daily, as Christ the King Chapel, which was just built, was not yet ready. We were crowded and the air conditioner had not yet appeared, but this was the missionary life freely accepted by all, even by a newly arrived Sister. We were happy!

In an interesting interview in 1991, when she was 88 years old, Sr Marie Auguste painted a picture of her life in retirement at St Teresa's Hospital.

Everyday, even on Sundays, at 8 am I pass from one ward to another greeting each patient "Good morning" with my best smile and inquiring about his or her pain. On some days I am disposed to do some little service here and there.

These are numerous because our Chinese patients ... are reluctant to ring the bell for small things, although I keep repeating to them that bells are there to be rung. And so, I serve water to those who admit to me their mouth is very dry. Some admit they would enjoy an extra blanket; others feel the quilt too heavy, etc, etc.

With those who believe in God and are expecting to be called soon to the operating theatre ... I invite them and their anxious relatives to join me to pray together. And if the patient wishes, we invite a priest or a pastor to come. For families of patients who are anxious I can dispose of time to listen to them and share their problems ... show them the way to the chapel where they are free to stay ... any time.⁵⁰

With hundreds of patients to visit at the hospital, there was never a dull day for Sr Marie Auguste.

By 1998 whatever remained of the pruning of the Sisters' activities since the 1970s were flourishing. Looking back in its long history, one can see that they were achieved not without anguish and tears. Like their patron, St Paul, the Sisters passed through the crucible of trials and suffering, including sickness, death, misunderstanding, threat of expulsion, destruction, etc. Like Hong Kong, and with Hong Kong, they rose to the numerous challenges they faced overcoming difficulties and obstacles on their way. Taking the words of St Paul as their own, "With God on our side, who can be against us?", they looked to the future with confidence and trust in His ever guiding Hand, leading them to pursue His Will in tending the tree of charity planted on Hong Kong soil by their religious forebears one hundred fifty years ago.

⁵⁰ Sisters of St Paul de Chartres, *Hong Kong Paulinian Newsletter*, No. 136, July 1991

19

Overseas Expansion

In 1848 French missionaries, especially of the Society of the Foreign Missions of Paris (MEP), had already been conspicuous in number among the different religious congregations present in China. Since the seventeenth century, they had been in the forefront of the evangelisation and missionary effort of the Church in the Far East.⁵¹ It was they who sought the assistance and services of the Sisters of St Paul wherever they were and contributed immensely to the spread of the Congregation in this part of the world.

The zeal of the Sisters to share the Good News of God's Kingdom impelled them to look beyond Hong Kong to countries far and wide. From as early as 1899, Sisters had crossed hills, mountains, valleys and rivers to open missions in the still primitive mainland China. Unfortunately, all houses and apostolic works there had to be abandoned due to wars and political upheavals. In cooperation with the Korean Province, attempts to re-enter China succeeded with the arrival in Beijing of two Korean Sisters in 1996. China, together with Taiwan and Australia, is now part of the Province of Hong Kong.

Although spurred on by hopes of vocations from a more Catholic population in Macau, the thought and fear of Communism's tentacles further getting its hold on Hong Kong was also a reason behind the decision of the Sisters to open a house in Macau in 1949. Casa San Jose was used as a retreat house and resthouse, as well as an orphanage and dispensary for refugees until young Sisters began arriving in 1954 to study at the nursing school run by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

This was not however the first time that the Sisters tried to establish a mission in Macau. In fact Macau had been the Sisters' first venture out of Hong Kong. Six years after their arrival, the harsh physical condition in the colony coupled with the Sisters' hard work had already claimed the lives of two Sisters. Sr Louise Morse, the third Superior, rented a house in Macau, well known for its wholesome climate, and sent the tired Sisters to rest and, those who had been ill, to recuperate. In 1859, a besieged Mother Benjamin was forced to go to Macau to ensure a refuge for the Sisters who were in danger of being thrown out of Hong Kong. An orphanage started and in 1864 a free boarding school was opened.

⁵¹ Ryan VII

Unfortunately, the Macau mission closed and re-opened a few times before the Sisters' final withdrawal in 1967 during the political disturbances.

Not only to Macau, but also to Vietnam did Mother Benjamin take on in 1860 the challenge to spread the fledgling missionary wings of the Congregation and fly to places outside Hong Kong. This proved to be a very significant missionary endeavour which stimulated further efforts to go and multiply. Vietnam became the center of missionary activities of the Congregation, from where wave after wave of Sisters landed in Japan (1878), Korea (1888), Thailand (1898), and the Philippines (1904). The Philippines in turn undertook missions in three continents - Indonesia and East Timor, the United States, Israel, Peru and Colombia; while Korea established itself in Mongolia in 1996.

Whatever the Sisters had accomplished in Hong Kong pales in comparison to the role Hong Kong played in the expansion of the Congregation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, "these valiant Sisters formed the vanguard of a whole army of white *'coifs'* that may be seen today in Cochinchina, Annam, Tonkin, China, Japan, Korea, Siam, Laos, and in the Philippines Islands; an army that went out not to sow death, but to sow life for eternity."

Hong Kong was the key which opened many doors. The spread of the Sisters of St Paul in Asia was a great blessing to the Congregation, considering that one hundred fifty years later majority of the Sisters are Asians. And now missionaries from Vietnam, the Philippines, and Korea are being sent to new and old missions including the Motherhouse itself in Chartres.

Grateful for the past and looking forward to the future, the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres, like their predecessors, continue to sow the seeds of the Kingdom of God, hoping that they will grow, blossom and produce much fruit in the future. Considering the Blessed Virgin Mary as the model par excellence, especially in her docility to the Spirit in her total YES to God, the Sisters identify themselves with the words of Mere Marie Anne de Tilly, their co-foundress, who summed up the aim of her life: "To give oneself to God for the good of the Church and the service of neighbour." This is the charism of the Sisters specifically expressed in the instruction of the ignorant and the care of the sick.

Their spirituality is a Christo-centric spirituality lived in the school of St Paul, their patron, so that like him they can say: "Life to me is Christ". (*Ph* 1.21) In tracing the development of the Congregation in Hong Kong, it must be noted that whatever the

Sisters have accomplished are the tangible expression of their Christo-centric spirituality, that is "a deep love for Christ and an ardent zeal for His Gospel."

Appendix

Local Superiors

1848-1850	Mere Alfonsine Forcade
1850-1854	Mere Sainte-Marcelle Carette
1854-1859	Mere Louise Morse
1859-1861	Mere Benjamin le Noel de Groussy*
1861-1863	Mere Marie Ambroise Yvon
1863-1872	Mere Marie de la Conception Doniau
1872-1891	Mere Paul de la Croix Biard

Provincial Superiors

1891-1926	Mere Felicie Jourdan
1926-1935	Mere Marguerite de St Paul Nuss
1935-1947	Mere Saint-Xavier Vermeersch
1947-1954	Mere Pauline Figus
1954-1960	Mere Therese de St Joseph Andrieux
1960-1968	Mother Bernard de Marie de Broqueville
1969-1978	Mother Marie Isabelle Tchang
1978-1989	Mother Lucie Marie Ko
1989-	Sister Marie Pauline Wong

*Appointed Principal Superior in 1861 based in Saigon, Vietnam with jurisdiction over Vietnam, Hong Kong and Macau.

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