

VARIA  
3

**The  
Beginnings  
of the Salesian  
Presence  
in East Asia**

*Nestor C. Impelido (ed.)*

**Vol. II**

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ASSOCIAZIONE CULTORI STORIA SALESIANA

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**ASSOCIAZIONE CULTORI STORIA SALESIANA**  
**VARIA-3**



## PRESENTATION OF THE COLLECTION

*At the threshold of the “Fourth International Congress of the History of the Salesian Work”, which will be celebrated in Mexico City in February 2006, the Presidency of ACSSA (Associazione Cultori di Storia Salesiana) presents to the members of the Association, as one more exponent of the work realized in its five year term which is about to end — the creation of a new historical collection, entitled VARIA ACSSA.*

*Its creation answers, the finality of ACSSA: “to promote studies on Salesian History, favouring the research, the actualisation and the collaboration among its members”; to the necessity of offering a scientific course of spreading, through written publication, the results of the researches which the members of the association realize in their respective countries; to grant the opportunity for these works to be known by colleagues and whoever may be interested in them: Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Salesian Family in its whole.*

*The collection is self-explanatory for its title, VARIA ACSSA, which signifies the amplitude and the diversity of the themes: sources, studies, notes, bibliographies, etc. At the same time it is also explained by its collaborators; it is reserved exclusively to the members of the ACSSA, in line with the ACSSA’s statute, which differentiates it from analogous collections (as that of the Salesian Historical Institute).*

*The Presidency is responsible for the concrete aspects of the collection VARIA ACSSA, as well as on the possibility of how determined works can be published also in other ways, given the non-commercial character of the collection. Moreover, the contributions are subject to*

*the editorial norms of ACSSA's secretariat, which, however, respects the liberty of methodology of each country and its language.*

*The Presidency is very satisfied of having achieved this goal of creating this collection. It trusts that it may also be the realization of a desire, more or less expressed, by all the members of the ACSSA.*

*“To know history is to know life”, an old proverb affirms. To spread the history of the two Salesian Congregations and of the groups of the Salesian Family is to make known the vitality, already secular, of its charisma, and the immense apostolic work realized, in all the continents, by those who preceded us. This is the task of ACSSA; it is also the finality of the new collection.*

*Maria Fé Nuñez FMA  
President ACSSA*

*Rome, 4 November 2005*

ASSOCIAZIONE CULTORI STORIA SALESIANA  
VARIA-3

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***THE BEGINNINGS  
OF THE SALESIAN PRESENCE  
IN EAST ASIA***

(Acts of the Seminar on Salesian History,  
Hong Kong, 4-6 December 2004)

Part Two  
The Salesian Family  
(FMA, CSM, SIHM, DQM, DBV)

Nestor C. Impelido SDB (ed.)

**HONG KONG**

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## INTRODUCTION

It is certainly a pleasure to write this page of introduction to the Acts of the ACSSA Seminar of Hong Kong (December 2004), on the presence of the Salesian Work in East Asia, immediately following the celebration of the first centenary of the arrival of the Salesians in India (Bombay, 5 January 1906) and preceding the analogous celebration of the coming of the Salesians in Hong Kong/ Macao (13 February 1906). A century of history has indeed passed, but not in vain, because its consequences are still alive amidst us, “children of that history”, who now can go in search of the roots of the apostolic labour of our predecessors with instruments at our disposition.

With regards the first event, the Salesian India has already in its hands numerous local studies and two recent volumes on its first fifty years of history written by the specialist Joseph Thekkedath (*A History of the Salesians of Don Bosco in India from the beginning up to 1951-1952*, Bangalore 2005). With regards the second commemoration, the ACSSA seminar was intended to stimulate the study of the presence of the Salesians in the whole of East Asia, meaning not only China, but also Korea, the Philippines, Japan, Thailand, East Timor and Vietnam, even as the region awaits the publication of another expert, Carlo Socol, regarding the Salesian presence in China.

“Salesian Work” does not refer only to foundations by the Salesians of Don Bosco, but also to those started by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and by the numerous groups belonging to the Salesian Family, whether of local (Asian) or non-local (European) origin. In these two volumes containing the Acts of the Seminar of Hong Kong, we have about fifteen essays, of varying length and depth of analysis, whose value lies in their offering a first panorama of the origins and establishments of the Salesians in different Asian countries in a period of about fifty years: from the first presence in Macao (1906) to that in Korea (1954).

It is said, that books are the points of arrival of long researches; that they are the syntheses of previous intense studies and the conclusive results of many writers’ and researchers’ efforts. It can be said, however, that these two volumes of the ACSSA Hong Kong seminar are and simply intend to constitute the point of departure for a history that is still be written and to be told.

The apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* of 6 November 1999, born from the Synod of the Bishops for Asia celebrated in Rome in April-May 1998, reminded us that Asia is the land of birth of Jesus and of the Church, and that together with the ecclesial community spread in the world, the Church in Asia will cross the threshold of the Christian third millennium, contemplating with marvel how much God has done from the beginning up to the present, and strong in the knowledge that just as in the first millennium the Cross was planted on European soil, in the second millennium on that of America and Africa, one could hope in the third millennium of gathering a great harvest of the faith in this continent so vast and alive: a continent inhabited by about two thirds of the earth's total population (India and China together constitute half of this), the great part of which are Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist, with a number of Catholics which does not even arrive at 100,000,000 million, including the 55 million of the Philippines.

To the spread of the gospel message in Asia, which began on the day itself of Christ's birth, the Salesian Society, which grew in Italy the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has contributed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the re-awakening of missionary activity, the re-organization of the Propaganda Fide, the greater attention to the establishment of local churches, the works of education and charity which accompanied the preaching of the Good News.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the first Salesian missionaries landed in China and educated generations of the young along the years. They committed themselves there and in the nearby countries to preach the Good News according to the charisma of Don Bosco. Their attempts to inculturate varied in success and failure. Their journey was often difficult not only because of the human deficiencies of individual missionaries, but also because they were sometimes unjustly considered foreigners to Asia and were identified with the colonial powers of the time.

Missionaries of great value (the likes of Fr. Carlo Braga, Fr. Gaetano Pasotti, Coadjutor Vincenzo Seneca, Fr. Antonio Cavoli, Fr. Erminio Rosetti, Fr. Archimede Martelli, Coadjutor Andrea Bragion, Sr. Elena Bottini, Sr. Letizia Begliatti, Sr. Maria Baldo) worked together with missionaries of modest capabilities to effect educative, religious and social works. They might not have reached the summit of fame of some of the missionaries in Latin America, but they attempted to adapt to the new

populations who learned from them ideas taught in Europe. True and authentic martyrs declared as such by the Church (Msgr. Luigi Versiglia and Fr. Callisto Caravario) or perhaps awaiting such recognition (the venerable Fr. Vincenzo Cimatti, the servant of God Fr. Carlo della Torre, Fr. Francisque Dupont) spent their daily existence together with humble priests, coadjutors and sisters in situations which threatened their freedom and in which often times they risked imprisonment for that same reason – that of the Gospel. They are responsible for the actual flowering of vocations of the Salesian Family in some countries of East Asia, as well as the re-launching of new works inside and outside of these nations.

The beginnings of such “undertaking”, which now arrive at the 100 or 70 or 50 years of existence in the different countries of East Asia, are here recalled like flashes of light by professional scholars and by simple enthusiasts of history who give us a brief account of the first Salesian works in East Asia. These beginnings, guided by a Divine Providence capable of writing straight on the crooked lines of human freedom – the event of the Salesian presence in the Philippines is a classical example – can not and must not be forgotten. Otherwise, the Salesians risk to deprive themselves of their own roots, and in a certain way, of the significance of their lives and actions. In the light of their past, they can enlighten the paths of the their present and their future.

“The data exist”, the anticipations succulent. What is now needed is to complete the documentation, interpret the documents correctly, deepen the less-known and problematic issues, and write out a version according to scientific criterion which is greatly shared in the actual ecclesiological-cultural time.

ACSSA has given a modest contribution with this seminar of Hong Kong which has been preceded by analogous seminars held in Europe and Latin America: it has opened and indicated the way to professional historians who have now the task to write monographs, whether national and local. Society in general, the Church and the Salesian Family feel the need and have the right to pretend for these works in the near future.

Francesco Motto

Rome, 31 January 2006



## EDITOR'S NOTE

The aim of this current work is to present together the results of the seminar on Salesian History regarding the beginnings of the Salesian presence in East Asia – Oceania, held in Hong Kong from 4 to 6 December 2004. This particular seminar has been conducted in collaboration with the committee preparing the celebration of the centenary of the Salesian presence in China.

With this book, which is an initiative of ACSSA, the contributions of the seminar will be better diffused and shared with the SDBs, FMAs and other members of the Salesian Family in this particular region of the Salesian Society. It will also be a concrete cultural and historical contribution to the celebration of the 100 year anniversary of the coming of the Salesians in China, which can be considered as the “mother province” of the other Salesian presence in East Asia.

We have tried to respect the contributions of the authors of the articles contained in this book, whether in the language expression or content or method of research. Our effort was to coordinate the written reports presented in the seminar; to present them in a systematic and orderly manner; to arrange them in a manner that each contribution harmonizes with the whole work. Moreover, we have divided the work into two main parts. The first part deals with the lectures presented by the Salesians of Don Bosco on particular topics related to the world and regional historical contexts when the Salesians came to East Asia, and the actual establishment of the Salesian works in East Asia. The second part deals with the reports of the other members of the Salesian Family (FMA, CSM, SIHM, DQM, DBV), which present the origins of their respective institutes in the region.

Some of the contributions have been translated from their originals (Italian, Portuguese) into English (Anjos, Compri, Loparco, Miravalle, Motto, Mukai), which is the lingua franca of the region. Except for one contribution, we have included all the lectures and communications presented in the course of the seminar. We have also included the texts of the statements given by the Rector Major of the Salesians and the Vicar General of the FMA, as well as that of the President of ACSSA, as we consider them as important indicators of the direction to which the future work on Salesian history can go.

The seminar has created in the participants a greater consciousness of the need of preserving and conserving the historical patrimony of each

member of the Salesian Family at work in East Asia. It has also provoked an admission of having been indifferent and of having been remiss in wanting to preserve the sources for the future writing of the Salesian history, of being weak in the sense of history. But it has, nonetheless, challenged the participants to a resolution of greater awareness to study, write and teach one's local Salesian history.

We hope that the diffusion of these "brief histories" of the Salesian presence in East Asia will create further interest on the Salesian Family's rich and revealing historical wealth, specially on the part of those who have the responsibility of assuring that this is nourished and not lost.

# THE ARRIVAL OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS IN THE FAR EAST

*Grazia Loparco FMA\**

## Introduction

The arrival of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) in the Far East is characterized by the educative nature of the institute, by its missionary commitment between 1922 and 1950, within the missionary impulse of the Catholic Church, which entrusted this undertaking to Religious Congregations using specific strategies.

One must go back to these circumstances in order to understand some of the difficulties that appeared both in the management and development of the works linked to the missions, both as institutional relationships with the Salesian Superiors who, at times, contemporarily have both ecclesial and religious authority, and in other circumstances as two distinct persons who need to clarify their reciprocal juridical positions. Among the Salesians, and even more among the FMA, we do not see the missionary themes discussed on the European level; this leads us to believe that the missions were seen mostly from the pragmatic point of view.

The economic factors were not secondary when it involved requesting personnel; nor when the possibilities of developing presences and works were called for. Besides this, we need to look at the missionary mentality that prevailed: the missionaries had to put together the explicit requests of those responsible with their desire to characterize the various works with the educative spirit of the institute.

The ecclesial and social-cultural climate of that period gave rise to the Apostolic Vicars promoting Religious Congregations among the indigenous youth. Often, the FMA were asked to collaborate in the foundations and beginnings of such institutions, acting as temporary superiors. Events in China, Japan and Thailand make us reflect on the relationship existing between these foundations and the admission of indigenous youth into the Institute of the FMA; and a wider reflection on the genetic components of the various members of the “Salesian Family”, especially the common spiritual patrimony.

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On this background, we see the great problems of inculturation; development of the Catholic Church in multi-religious contexts afflicted by the problems of international politics; relationships between missionary Religious Congregations, and, not the least, difficulties in communication and mutual understanding between these countries and the General Council resident in Italy.

This research explores precisely the argument from the point of view of the authority, to whom requests for foundation and the first resonance of the life in the mission would arrive. The description of the works in the different nations would be the object of the other communications.

## 1. The Missionary Relaunching of 1922

1922 coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Institute of the FMA and was the occasion for renewing the missionary thrust (with the symbolic mandate of 50 missionaries).<sup>1</sup> The General Council planned to entrust each province with a different mission to care for both financially and in terms of personnel, coming to a concrete decision in this matter.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the missionaries already present in South and North America, and in the Middle East,<sup>3</sup> new frontiers opened towards Eastern Europe, Poland; Asia, India in 1922; and China in 1923.<sup>4</sup> After several years, the FMA arrived in Japan, 1929, and in Thailand (Siam), 1931. After World War II, in connection with the expulsion from China in the beginning of the 50's, houses were founded in the Philippines, in Korea, in Australia; and at the beginning of the 60's, in Vietnam.<sup>5</sup> Later on, a foundation was opened in East Timor.

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<sup>1</sup> The missionaries FMA sent out between 1877 and 1952 are divided in this manner: 1877 to 1908, 679 missionaries; 1909 to 1928: 518 missionaries; 1929 to 1952: 1,062 missionaries. Total: 2,259.

<sup>2</sup> Cf AGFMA, *Verbali adunanze Consiglio Generale dal novembre 1913 al novembre 1924*, 5 October 1922.

<sup>3</sup> Latin America 1877; Asia (Bethlehem 1891), Africa (Algeria 1893; Congo 1926). In 1920, Mother Daghero wanted to send missionaries to Australia, but did not obtain permission.

<sup>4</sup> Following these, we have the foundations of Shanghai, Macao, Hong Kong.

<sup>5</sup> In 1924, the General Council took up the theme of a foundation in Australia, but decided to wait for more information and postponed the decision. Cf *Verbali adunanze Consiglio Generale... 1913-1924*, 21 agosto 1924.

The new missionary impulse of 1922, after the war, was in harmony with the general ecclesial commitments.<sup>6</sup> In this period, 1924-1943, Mother Luisa Vaschetti was the Superior General. She, herself, was for 20 years a missionary in Argentina (1883-1903), before being called to be the private secretary of Mother Catherine Daghero.

Differently from what was happening in America where the missions were founded to serve the Italian immigrants, in Asia there was no talk of "Italianization" seconded by the government. This term alludes to the language and culture, especially faith values, the figure of the Pope and the Founder of the Congregation; it encompassed a Catholic identity to preserve in a land far away from home. For the Far East, instead, there are direct dealings with the propagation of the faith which entrusted the missions to the Salesians. In Italy the fascination for these lands grew.

The FMA arrived in the Far East on the invitation of the Salesians. They were aware of the special characteristics of the territory and specified some of the requirements necessary for the missionaries. Before inviting other Congregations, they turned first to their Sisters in the "Salesian Family", making known, however, that a refusal would mean that the Salesians would look for others, so as not to deprive the mission of a fundamental component. There was an increased quality with respect to the first generation. The requests arrived on the table of a General Council which was often working in those years not only to find the correct person<sup>7</sup> for each work, but the means as well, and they were often working to improve formation strategies.<sup>8</sup>

The minutes of the General Council meetings registered several interventions of the Rector Major, Fr. Philip Rinaldi (1925, 1929, 1930) who, when asked to give his opinion, invited all to have great care for the houses of formation for the missionaries. At the same time, he had such foresight (which we call today projectual mentality) to assure continuity

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<sup>6</sup> After the *Maximum illud* of Benedict XV (30 November 1919), with the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* (February 28, 1926) Pius XI promoted the foundation of local congregations in the mission territories, giving preference to indigenous vocations; often these vocations, especially the women, remained in a subordinate status in the European Congregations.

<sup>7</sup> In these years, the missions sought missionaries who were "strong, young, educated with specific abilities". *Minutes of the General Council meetings 1913-1924*, 28 August 1924.

<sup>8</sup> In 1924, a missionary aspirantate was opened at Arignano (TO) along with the Missionary House of Mother Mazzarello (Torino, Via Cumiana) for the professed destined for the missions; they followed a course of study to prepare themselves professionally for the missions. In 1928, the missionary novitiate was opened at Casanova of Carmagnola (TO), for candidates from various nations.

and development, both for missions already in existence and for new ones. In the General Chapter IX (1928), he gave recommendations for the missions, just as Fr. Ricaldone did.

In 1930, Fr. Rinaldi encouraged greater organization of the missionary issue, with long range planning which could assure vitality to the missions already opened and adequate formation of the personnel destined to become missionaries.<sup>9</sup> In order to select the right personnel, plans were made for a council member to visit the more promising Italian novitiates and interview the novices at the end of the canonical year (the first year of novitiate) so as to get to know the young people who that year could make the missionary application.<sup>10</sup>

Besides this, on different occasions, the Rector Major expressed a favorable attitude towards indigenous vocations, especially for India and China, countries which presented great difficulty for foreigners for both language and customs, not to mention mentality. With difference from the others, these nations, including Japan, appeared to be promising for the recruitment of vocations; thanks to the ancient civilization, culture and traditions. His opinion was that this formation needed to take place locally, some of these indigenous vocations could live in Italy for a few years to get to know the spirit of the Institute better while getting professional qualifications.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cf *Minutes of the meetings of the General Council 1929-1932*, 22 October 1930.

<sup>10</sup> Cf *Ibid.*, 2 September 1931.

<sup>11</sup> "Sixth problem, indigenous vocations. [Suggestions given on various occasions gathered here by Ceria] This is how the Benedictines, Capuchins and Jesuits have done and are doing it so as to reach even the most unwelcoming parts of the world; this is the spirit of the Church. This is an undeniable fact: those countries are more interested than we in doing good to their own people, know their own surroundings better than we so as to use all for the greater good and with greater care. The indigenous people know their own language, do not need to overcome the difficulties of becoming accustomed to the climate, nor deal with the inevitable difference between the indigenous people and strangers; they can require their compatriots what can never be obtained by those coming from outside their area. Thus, you can see that one gains on all sides. How to do this in practice? Especially for India and China, have the Novices make the novitiate in their own country; then, those who seem more promising, send them as professed to Italy for a few years to perfect themselves with studies or vocational training, and drink the genuine spirit of the Institute. Generally, for the foreigners who come for the Novitiate in Italy, it is not convenient to have them stay on for several other years [...] Call some of them from all parts of the world to prepare them as well as preparing the future. Yes, call them for the novitiate, having them stay on for a bit of time so as to sustain the houses and the spirit in their nations; all this is good, but do not make laws. Treat each case individually since it is clear that not all cases will produce the same hopes and the same results". Eugenio CERIA, *The Life of the Servant of God Father Philip Rinaldi*. Torino, SEI 1947, pp. 400-401.

In 1931, the missionary dimension of the institute was formalized, choosing a formula for the missionary ceremony for the religious and a special missionary feast day, distinct from what the Salesians celebrated.<sup>12</sup>

## **2. From the Requests to the Foundation**

The missionary openness towards China was very alive in the FMA plans, even among the young girls and children.<sup>13</sup> In 1908, the boarders at Nizza Monferrato enthusiastically responded to the missionary proposal of Fr. John Fergnani, missionary in China from 1906 to 1912, to found the Holy Childhood Association.<sup>14</sup> The Association was launched in January 1909 with the support of Fr. Versiglia: children and young people offered prayers, small contributions, especially good works, for the missions.<sup>15</sup> Even the work of the Holy Innocents, with their *Annals*, increased interest for the Chinese children.

In this atmosphere, Fr. Luigi Versiglia made his pressing appeal to Mother General, M. Catherine Daghero (1856-1924).<sup>16</sup> The Vicar Apostolic of Canton had just assigned to the Salesians an immense territory in the north of Kwangtung with 6 million inhabitants. Among so many “gentiles” there were also an ancient Christianity very rich in vocations. The character of the people was “humble and simple, very disposed to accept Christianity” and the climate of that part of the country was better in comparison with the South.

The Salesians were given two years to take the place of the Society of the Foreign Missions and Fr. Versiglia committed himself right away to “preparing a place for our Sisters without whose collaboration our work

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<sup>12</sup> It was decided to hold the feast on the Sunday after that chosen by the Salesians. Cf *Minutes of the General Council Meetings 1929-1932*, 2 September 1931. For the formula, an agreement was reached with Fr. Rinaldi who was present for the meetings on September 11<sup>th</sup>. That year the celebrations were foreseen to be on the first Sunday in October.

<sup>13</sup> The Salesians arrived in Macao in 1906, and at the end of 1917, they arrived on continental China at Shiu Chow.

<sup>14</sup> See the invitation by Mother Marina Coppa, Councilor for Studies, in her circular letter; China was also in the missionary dreams of Sr. Teresa Valsé Pantellin.

<sup>15</sup> On the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a small publication: *The apostolate of the innocent in its first twenty-five years of life among the FMA*. Turin, 1<sup>st</sup>. FMA 1934, manuscript.

<sup>16</sup> On 6 January 1918, he took up again the discourse begun a year and a half earlier, when there was only the hope that the Holy See would grant the Salesians a mission, which “would be truly Salesian, and consequently include the Sisters as well”.

for women would be impossible". It was thus necessary, to prepare personnel. Sisters were not needed for the ordinary work in the kitchen, cleaning or household chores since local personnel could be found for these services; also, it would not be appropriate for Europeans to do these works since they would be "looked down upon by the proud Chinese", and thus it would become quite difficult to do any good. What was needed were teachers, especially English and even French teachers, experts in embroidery, music, design, and, if possible, even someone prepared in medicine, with a license. In China, there was greater need for "heads rather than arms".

It seemed better to await for the right persons rather than begin badly: "The peoples of the Far East have a pretty proud [altero=fiero] temperament. You cannot be successfully accepted by them without showing an evident superiority in knowledge and ability. There were expectations for a showy education, one that would even include gymnastics. Besides the organizational and professional abilities, mature and virtuous persons were needed to set the foundations of the future work: charity, understanding, maternal care, leaving no space for envy and jealousy. Fr. Versiglia suggested to send Sisters who were between 25 and 35 years old, who, because of their youthfulness, a good health could learn the language, and who are mature enough not to be over impressed by customs that were very different, courageous in accepting without discouragement the necessary sacrifices.

Sr. Palmira Parri, the first Superior, kept up correspondence with the Superiors and with Fr. Rinaldi over the years, explaining the characteristics of the context from her viewpoint, the requirements for the missionaries, and thus the necessary care in choosing the Sisters, as well as their preparation in Italy, along with the difficulties met at various levels.<sup>17</sup>

In 1928, Fr. Vincent Cimatti insistently asked for the FMA in Japan, after the Salesians founded their works there a couple of years earlier.<sup>18</sup> In his letter to Mother Luisa Vaschetti (1857-1943), he reassured her of

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<sup>17</sup> The works entrusted to the FMA in China were orphanages, Holy Childhood works, a boarding school [collegio] for girls from well-to-do families, the formation of catechists for the indigenous people, perhaps already foreseeing a religious foundation. Works of assistance included services for the blind and for the elderly. In 1925, a teacher training institute [Normal School] was begun for the formation of teachers.

<sup>18</sup> Precisely at the time when he felt the missionaries could learn the language and begin the works.

the house, the food, and the expanse of the apostolic field open to them; at the same time he asked that the Sisters be solidly formed in piety and chastity, intelligent, capable and patient in facing the “very difficult” character of the Japanese people. Since this was an independent mission, Fr. Cimatti was also the ecclesiastical superior, he did not hide the poverty of the mission even in a well developed nation.<sup>19</sup>

He informed the Sisters that they would find the girls already organized in associations. He suggested that each missionary be prepared to be “isolated, like a child” incapable of good communication for at least two years.<sup>20</sup>

Sr. Letizia Begliatti’s first letter to Mother General, of 2 March 1930, sometime after she had arrived, showed her commitment to adapt herself to the totally new customs.<sup>21</sup> The presence of a young woman aspiring to become a religious caused two questions to be posed to the General Council in the month of October.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, it seems that on one side, there appeared to be an interest in indigenous vocations who would serve better than foreign religious; there

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<sup>19</sup> The cost of living was equal to that in a large Italian city. He gave details of what to include in the trousseau, objects and useful materials, items and their cost in Japan; he also made reference to gifts that would attract the interest of the Japanese people.

<sup>20</sup> The agreement on the contract [convenzione] was made concrete with the General Economist, Mother Arrighi, who had understood the importance of instruction as well as manual and artistic abilities for the missionaries who would need these characteristics in proportion to the good they wanted to do in these lands. After learning the language, the Sisters saw open before them a vast field of work in the schools, vocational centers, kindergartens, which Fr. Cimatti had called «day assistance for children», the daily oratory and after school activities.

<sup>21</sup> A prolonged rainy season, the solitude and the gentleness of the people, the sadness of “living surrounded by pagans”...

<sup>22</sup> The first regarded the date for beginning the Novitiate. Sr. Letizia noted that August 5<sup>th</sup> was the least suited time in the Japanese climate since the change from using the kimono to the religious habit would have coincided with the hottest time of the year with respect to Europe. She thus asked to be able to try setting the date for December 8<sup>th</sup>, a date very dear to the heart of St. John Bosco. The second had to do with the fact that the Japanese seemed to have “a character that was difficult to understand, very sensitive and easily changing”, she suggested changing the length of time for the Aspirantate as well as fixing the Postulancy at twelve months. Cf text of the typewritten page (probably an extract from a handwritten letter) of Sr. Letizia Begliatti to the FMA General Council, Miyazaki, 7 October 1930, in AGFMA 121 02-302.

is on the other hand, the need to adapt the rules to the needs of the environment.<sup>23</sup>

The registration of the children was slow, seeing as teachers, Christians and foreigners. It would be necessary to strive to prepare religious teachers who were not foreigners, or at least, someone who could imbue “grit and initiative” and introduce the educational method of the institute into the kindergarten. In other words, after a year and a half of experience, the Superior presented Mother General with the pressing request for qualified personnel.<sup>24</sup>

In the meantime, at the end of 1929, a request for founding an FMA presence in Siam, with the approval of both Fr. Rinaldi and Fr. Ricaldone, was received. The first answer from Mother General was concise: lack of personnel. Six months later, Fr. Adolfo Tornquis<sup>25</sup> noted that in Siam there was space, work, sun... the only thing lacking was money. It would make it easier to live the vow of poverty there. The Siamese people were educated and well disposed toward foreigners, and the language was not too difficult.<sup>26</sup>

It seemed opportune to wait a few years until the personnel could be prepared to what was foreseen. However, after several days, the decision changed; probably this was due to the counsel of Fr. Rinaldi who was a very prudent man, and especially for the suggestion of Fr. Ricaldone,

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<sup>23</sup> In 1931, the first formation house was approved in Beppu after the request appealed to the fact that “necessity does not have rules”. The kindergarten Miyogio, Morning Star, was inaugurated. The poetic title was attractive to the “pagans” (this was the Superior’s comment when she explained on its meaning for the Catholics). Cf letter of Sr. Letizia Begliatti to Mother General, Beppu, 18 August 1931, in *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Even though she knew the lack Turin was already feeling, for an increase in the works of the FMA with an educational quality adequate for meeting the needs of the environment, Fr. Cimatti, on his part, underlined the continued linguistic difficulties, but also the need for FMA to take greater risks to uplift the lamentable economic situation surrounding them. Cf letter of Fr. V. Cimatti to the Mother General, Miyazaki, 11 May 1931, in *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Visitor and benefactor, he sent Mother Daghero a picture of the house reserved for the sisters, together with the promise of several young women ready to enter the Institute.

<sup>26</sup> In July 1930, Msgr. Pasotti wrote a reminder, in view of sending the missionaries out. He appealed to the spirit of sacrifice and of adaptability, and described the presence of several good educational institutions for girls which were especially staffed by French Sisters, offering the same courses as in Europe, including English and sometimes French. He wanted to entrust the FMA with an elementary school in BangNokKhuek, an oratory, medical center, kindergarten, orphanage, and catechism. A nursing Sister would be a wonderful means of making progress. Various types of women’s work, medicine, religious objects of a certain value that could win against the ... pagan competition! At the end of October 1930, the Superiors were still uncertain about accepting the proposal for the foundation; Fr. Rinaldi invited them to get to the core of the issue and express their intention of going or not, and if yes, when would they go.

who pushed for the foundation, following the insistence of Msgr. Pasotti. The adherence of the General Council came on 6 May 1931; yet, they still had to look for the missionaries adapted for the work of foundation in the month of July. On 17 August, Msgr. Pasotti wrote thanking them for the confirmation of the foundation and adding details for its organization; he also included the program for the feast of the XV centenary of the Council of Ephesus. The Sisters arrived in Siam on 14 November 1931, and their travels were narrated in the Newsletter of the FMA.

Sr. Maria Avio, who was already a missionary in India, was the Superior of the first group. A few weeks later she lamented with the Superiors the lack of clarity with their program of action. Fr. Ricaldone, who was questioned on the matter, noted that after the first phase of getting settled in, it would be necessary to send in a Sister who was gifted with a spirit of initiative. The missionaries would have to resign themselves to use one or two years to learn the local language as well as a bit of English, too. In effect, Sr. Maria Baldo was to have been the missionary with initiative, increasing the works in a markedly Buddhist land, which for a good number of years would give few vocations.

### **3. Commitment to adapting as well as facing economic difficulty**

The missionaries' letters testify to their availability to serve as needed, according to the initial requests, and the effort to develop works that respond to the spirit of the Institute.

Various aspects of daily life required flexibility, from food and climate to types of housing, customs regarding women's education and collaboration with lay personnel, to traveling and traditions.

For education and instruction, the social setting was considered so as to offer something in keeping with development potential, as was already being done in other parts of the world. Especially in China, in 1928, we have this testimony:

"If some orphans show a special aptitude for studying, have them continue their studies so that they can eventually become teachers to replace the pagan and protestant teachers who are presently teaching at the orphanage and mission schools. There are also extern students who number about 40, all paying the tuition fee which goes to the benefit of the house. In the orphanage there are four elementary classes, three intermediate and one each of I and II Normal".<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Description of FMA works in China, June 1928, anonymous original in the FMA Archives, 13.6501-1-10.

In an important letter to Fr. Rinaldi in 1929, Sr. Parri lamented the scarcity of personnel, and admitted that much good was being done visiting the families. This was a report on the first six years of the mission. She insisted especially that missionaries should be versatile and self-sacrificing, capable of going easily from refined work to humble work, especially that which the Chinese would not (accept) to perform. The missionaries felt that only the christian faith would make them open and available to the needs of charity.

Some references were to the schedule, to the habit of giving punctually loans that had been approved, to the wish of preparing some girls who could become the first collaborators after improving the level of learning which was very low. In this way, the letters showed the fatiguing *iter* of the development of the missionaries' strategies, including a home for the elderly and a house for *Kuneong* (consecrated catechists), and helper women (not always trustworthy) for some services such as shopping and housework.<sup>28</sup> In all of the works, there is missionary assistance which is integrated by a few external students who could pay the tuition fee. As for the orphanage, it was projected that opening a knitting shop would offer a sizable income, but a Sister who was expert in this trade was not present in the mission.

Though the FMA mission in China, Japan, and Thailand were very different from each other, they did have in common, the uncertainty due to the difficulty of the language, the impossibility of founding great works due to the lack of means, absence of local support, and a lack of enthusiasm in the request for their presence. In the beginnings of these missions, Fr. Versiglia assured the Superiors:

“Regarding the finances, I assure you that just as we are able to make a living, so will they, and as long as there is bread and rice for us, there will be the same for them. The last bit of bread and the last portion of rice will certainly not be for ourselves, but will be reserved for them. I am sure that they will do all they can, and thus Divine Providence will not be lacking to us”.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Cf the description of the works in China, June 1928.

<sup>29</sup> Extract from Msgr. Versiglia's typewritten letter of 20 April 1920 in the FMA Archives (13.65 01-1-01). This is a memorial addressed to Fr. Vincent Bernardini, who was scheduled to leave Macao for Turin for the International Congress of Salesian Cooperators and Past-pupils, held in occasion of the inauguration of the monument dedicated to Don Bosco. The entire memorial is in the Salesian Congregation's Archives, A 3520506. The context is clear in Guido Bosio, *Martiri in Cina. Mons. Luigi Versiglia e Don Callisto Caravario*. Leumann - Turin, Elle Di Ci 1976, pp. 172-173.

The restraints were felt when it came to enlarging the Sisters' work in 1925 with a school for the formation of teachers, an expense which the mission had to face. Perhaps this was the only courageous initiative which characterize the FMA who were always attentive to the needs of the girls for instruction.

The slow development of the works prolonged the dependence of the Sisters on the Salesian Fathers more than what they had foreseen. We can see a clear echo of this from Fr. Ricaldone's evaluation (he was the prefect and visiting Superior in the Far East at the end of 1927). He wrote to the Rector Major that, following his return, they would need to study the questions raised by that Vicariate as well as by the missions in the East. In that region the Vicars and Apostolic Prefects usually helped the religious only in the beginnings of the works, until they could become autonomous. It seemed that the FMA Superiors had other criteria. In China they were still being sustained by Msgr. Versiglia (after five years) and this called for an urgent solution, given the necessity of deciding various particular cases (probably linked to the development of the works). He concluded: "Our Sisters in the East have a great future; however, they need to clearly outline the way and the program".<sup>30</sup>

In Japan, too, the Sisters were living in great poverty. They were dependent on the mission at Miyazaki, and it was clear that they still needed a couple of years to learn the language and give a good foundation to the works, while they were working in the Salesians' laundry and wardrobe. Before the end of the two years, Fr. V. Cimatti proposed that the FMA open a kindergarten in Miyazaki so as to become more independent; the other reason was that he could no longer meet the expenses their maintenance incurred. The international economic crisis placed the Sisters and the Superiors in serious difficulty, since they had to contribute to the upkeep of the house in Beppu as well where Fr. Tornquist had originally given help, but was then unable to do so due to financial difficulties. In 1932 the Sisters sustained Beppu, but were unable to commit themselves for Miyazaki, and were disposed to leave that work and send the missionaries to other works.

In October of the same year an economic globalization took place: the FMA received a donation from a benefactor of the Orphanage in Nizza Mare (France), the general economer of the Salesians encouraged the

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<sup>30</sup> Handwritten report by Fr. Peter Ricaldone to Fr. Philip Rinaldi, on board the Pilsna, 11-12-1927, in ASC F 158.

councilors to express their thanks to the Rector Major (who probably had a very active role in this donation) and to buy the kindergarten at Miyazaki, thus avoiding bankruptcy for Fr. Cimatti. The councilors agreed, taking the funds from those put aside for the beatification of Mother Mazzarello, simultaneously sending the French province the reimbursement of the amount necessary for acquiring the kindergarten in Japan as soon as that would be possible.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4. Collaboration with the Salesians

In 1923, the Salesian Visitatoria was born in China, with Fr. Ignatius Canazei as its courageous guide; in that same year, the first FMA arrived. It is understandable that between the tribulations and resettlement, an attempt to define the physiognomy of the works and collaboration would take place.

On his arrival in China in 1927, Fr. Ricaldone found a memo by the Provincial, Fr. Canazei, which touched on the question of the relationship between the FMA and the Salesian Superior and the Apostolic Vicar, Msgr. Versiglia:

“The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. There is a fundamental question to resolve, as religious, are they under the care of the Provincial, representative of the Rector Major? Sometimes the Superior of the FMA community would like to discuss things with the Provincial; however, it is clear that as long as they are completely dependent on the Apostolic Vicar, the Provincial can do nothing, except listen to her. The FMA’s are all still at Shiu Chow and Hosai. Besides the usual difficulties all have experienced, especially at the beginning in China, they have those of personnel, and the difficulty of dealing with the Delegate Vicar (Guarona); it seems that he interferes excessively in their affairs, seeing them as servants of the missionaries...”<sup>32</sup>

Fr. Ricaldone found that the three works of the FMA were still under only one superior. He also noted the excessive interference of Fr. Guarona (Pro-Vicar) in certain moments, even if the spiritual assistance was important. Fr. Ricaldone’s reflections had repercussions in Italy. In June 1928, a description of the works was sent to the Superiors, including the three houses

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<sup>31</sup> Cf *Minutes of the General Council 1929-1932*, 23 October 1932, in AGFMA.

<sup>32</sup> Memo of the Provincial, Fr. Canazei to the visiting superior, Fr. Ricaldone. July 1927 [AIC, Provincial Archives].

with their means of sustenance: the orphanage-school,<sup>33</sup> religious instruction, difficulty of setting up the oratory for various problems (not described in detail) with the Salesians.<sup>34</sup> Besides, Msgr. Versiglia – it is said – wants the feasts of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, the Ascension,

“To have the Sisters with the catechists go to the different districts so as to better prepare the christians to celebrate the solemnities with due respect. Up to now this has not been done because of divergence of ideas, or better, because the superior does not see it as being in conformity with the spirit of the institute”.<sup>35</sup>

The superior, instead, lamented with the major superiors the lack of personnel as the reason for not being able to do more visits among the people. Thus the motivations given did not coincide when it came to justifying the insufficient presence among the people, both far and near. One could sense a certain tension between the availability of the FMA, faithfulness to the spirit of the Institute, and the requests for evangelization put forward by Msgr. Versiglia who, as Apostolic Vicar, had the full responsibility for the christian community. These were spread out according to an older strategy of missionary presence that dispersed the forces of missionaries, forcing them to live in isolation most of the time.

At the end of 1928, Msgr. Versiglia presented his point of view, upon the request of the superiors, on the distribution of personnel and activities, in view of what the center thought about reinforcing the missionary presence. The bishop was disposed to give greater space to the initiative of the FMA to found works more in keeping with the spirit of the Institute, if they were able to assume the economic situation. Faced with the need to select an animator for each work, he noted that some Sisters did

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<sup>33</sup> Sr. Elena Bottini is probably the author of this description of the works. She indicates that Msgr. Versiglia would like to call the work “orphanage” while the Sisters called it “college”. Of the 36 students, 32 were completely cared for by the Mission.

<sup>34</sup> Twice when speaking of the Oratory, there is a negative reference: “The principal work should be the Oratory, but for now we have not concluded anything due to the differences of idea between the Superior and the Salesians. Many children are abandoned on the street while their parents are at work; they often try to enter our grounds and come with us, but the superior has instructed the doorkeeper to send them away. When they are able to enter, we share our time with them, but sister superior is not pleased”. Elsewhere, “Here too, we should often have the Oratory, but continued contradictions interfered in the development we expected”. Cf the presentation of the works in China of June 1928, anonymous handwritten, in the AGFMA 13.6501-1-10.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

not like being dependent and controlled. Instead of changing personnel right away, he suggested very discretely that another very good missionary be sent who could, after a year in training, assume responsibility.<sup>36</sup> In the meeting of General Council on 29 January 1929 his message was considered and the councilors decided to speak with Fr. Ricaldone before deliberating on the matter.<sup>37</sup>

The long letter from Sr. Palmira Parri to Fr. Rinaldi, which we have already cited, has the value of an accounting at the end of the first six years in China, when some FMA returned and others joined the group. The sowing time was very long, and other threats were arriving. From the letters exchanged by the superior, you can see the various tensions, which accompanied the Salesian community and the tragedy of the two martyrs, including Msgr. Versiglia, during this time of trial and lack of consensus. After his death, his successor, Msgr. Canazei, wrote to the Rector Major in 1931:

“Speaking of the FMA, I would like to make a few observations: a) Presently, with the work they have to do here in Shiu Chow, where all twelve are staying, at least four are too many, and I would prefer that for now, that new ones not be sent, b) Even if I wish to send them to other cities, I do not have the means to build their house, school, etc.; if they want to begin something of their own, with the Institute’s means, I would be very happy. Having the occasion of speaking with the Mother General, reverend Fr. Rinaldi, I would like to share these two observations with her so that she knows how to prepare the next FMA expedition in China.

Ignatius Canazei  
Apostolic Vicar of Shiu Chow”.<sup>38</sup>

Good will was not lacking, yet the limitation of economic resources seemed to inhibit the best distribution of the personnel already present. In other missions as well, this same problem held up development.

## 5. The formation of “indigenous” religious

The Holy See favored the foundation of local diocesan congregations to facilitate evangelization. The Salesians, too, formed catechists among the young women in view of their choosing religious life.

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<sup>36</sup> Letter of Msgr. Versiglia, typewritten and signed, Shiu Chow, 27 November 1928, in AGFMA, 13.65 01-1-01.

<sup>37</sup> Cf *Minutes of the General Council meeting 1925-1929*, 29 January 1929.

<sup>38</sup> Letter of Fr. Ignatius Canazei to Fr. Rinaldi, Shiu Chow, 12 July 1931, N. 10/1931, Typewritten, in ASC A 8670281.

While the political situation in China worsened, in 1931 Sr. Parri was asked by Msgr. Ignatius Canazei, the new Apostolic Vicar, to begin a new religious institute for the indigenous women, the Announcers of the Lord - Hin Tchu Wui, for whom he had already written the Constitutions. Msgr. Versiglia had already thought of founding them.<sup>39</sup> The aspirants were already ready for several years; their house was in construction. They wanted to begin the Novitiate. Sr. Parri was asked to be the Superior for a few years, being freed from other responsibilities.

Very soon difficulties and differences arose between her and Msgr. Canazei. In 1933, two young candidates chose to enter among the FMA as aspirants.<sup>40</sup> This created some tension, the echo of which can be heard in a letter of Msgr. Canazei to Fr. Ricaldone, following the annual report he sent to the Propagation of the Faith for 1932/33. There, he expressed two reasons for lamenting about the Salesians at Don Bosco College and about Sr. Parri; for these reasons, Fr. Ricaldone had to notify him of his disappointment:

“Shiu Chow, 5 November 1933

[...] Regarding the FMA – I had cause for great displeasure this year – in relation to the Association of indigenous Religious... it would take too long to give all the details. I am not saying they are rebels, no! But they certainly are not guided (and they don't want to be!) in the missionary work, were they need to be directed. The Sisters certainly do work with zeal and sacrifice, yet their director, the Vicar, has had many difficulties. If you think it is a good idea, you can read the letter that I felt obliged to send to the Superior (July 1933) and a copy to the Mother General in Turin. Besides this, these observations, which are true, were not published in the newspapers, but simply referred to the competent ecclesiastical authorities, as was my duty: a) that in one school “religious instruction ... was neglected”; and, b) that

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<sup>39</sup> From the information given by Canazei, he appears to be the Founder, yet the DIP makes the foundation of a lay Diocesan Congregation go back to Msgr. Versiglia in 1928. The Canonical Erection is from Canazei and the approval of the Propagation of the Faith took place in May 1931. With communism taking over, the Sisters were dispersed and some imprisoned. Eight took refuge in Hong Kong, obtaining the Bishop's permission to reopen the Novitiate in 1957, a permission that was ratified by the Propagation of the Faith on 13 December 1957. Cf Mario RASSIGA, *Annunziatrici del Signore*, in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione I*, directed by Guerrino PELLICCIA - Giancarlo ROCCA. Roma, Ed. Paoline 1973, col. 670-671.

<sup>40</sup> On 24 July 1933, Msgr. Canazei wrote (in the Diary): “Wong Agnes and Tchan Teresa, with their letter of 22 July notified me that they have ceased to be postulants of the Hin Tchu Wui [=Suore Annunziatrici del Signore] and have become aspirants among the FMA”.

for various difficulties (where I really never would have expected to find them) I was forced – with great sorrow – to close the formation house for indigenous religious.

If only, by God's grace the mere exposition of the facts could erase them! Unfortunately, they continue – especially as regards to the association of the indigenous religious and there are still other steps that must be taken (in Rome) and painful decisions for me and for others need to be taken.

Msgr. Canazei".<sup>41</sup>

Two years later, the situation was still not peaceful. He had to write a special report for the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, since he was in his fifth year as Bishop. He denounced a certain lack of commitment by the Salesian Superiors towards the Mission. With a long letter dated 26 February 1936, the Vicar defended himself to the Rector Major, who had scolded him for the report that was sent to Rome. Among the other motives for the displeasure regarding the FMA:

“A word regarding the FMA: Please remember that when I speak of the FMA, I am not speaking of all of them together, but only about their Superior (Sr. Parri). All of the difficulties came from the fact that she (helped secretly someone, she should not have done so), due to a project dear to herself, went against a program of the Ordinary (the present Bishop of the local diocese as well as his predecessor, Msgr. Versiglia) a program that had been approved and recommended by the Holy See. That the FMA desire to work for their own Institute is understandable and reasonable. But, as long as they have a work to accomplish, which was entrusted to them, accepted by them, and the mission maintains them, living in the Mission house, they are required to help the Apostolic Vicar to develop the programs established for the good of the Vicariate. Judgment on the opportunity of said program is not part of her responsibility, but belongs to the Superior of the Missions. The Superior, by wishing to do other works outside the place and time established, place obstacles in the way of a very important work of the Vicariate for several years. For this reason, I am now forced, unwillingly and with sorrow in my heart, to look elsewhere for a religious who can help me with the formation of the indigenous religious and with the young catechists of the Vicariate. And to think that this glorious and most important work I wished to entrust precisely to the FMA! Of all this that took place [sic] in 1933, I remained very displeased and I permitted myself to write about it to the Superior General of the FMA, and to present the case to the eminent Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

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<sup>41</sup> A handwritten letter of Fr. Ignatius Canazei to Fr. Ricaldone, Shiu Chow, 5 November 1933, in ASC A 8670239.

For the others, as I have already had occasion to write, I am very happy with the work of the FMA who merit praise for the zeal and patience they use in trying to instruct and educate the youngsters of the Orphanage and the village of Hosai. You scold me in your letter saying: «Unfortunately, in your reports to Rome, you have already complained about the Sisters and the Salesians as well...» Yes, in the five reports sent to Rome, 1931/35, TWICE I had to reprimand our members: once in 1933 in the College St. John Bosco (N.B. I don't think I can say "Salesians") since for the entire year they neglected the teaching of religion in the school. Another time, in 1935, with the FMA Superior (here, too, it seems to me I did not say "the SISTERS") who, in order to carry out her project, interfered with the very important work of the Vicariate. It seems to me that in both of these cases, reprimanding those who deserved it, and letting those responsible know about it, I was only fulfilling my duty as the superior of the Mission".<sup>42</sup>

We do not know with certainty what Sr. Parri's undertaking was in 1935 that was not shared by the Vicar. It seems that it refers to the institution of the novitiate of the FMA. It is certain that in 1936, Sr. Parri left China and was transferred to far away Egypt, where she passed the rest of her years. The formation of the Announcers of the Lord was entrusted for various years to the Superior of a diocesan congregation present in Canton. In fact, their mission was the catechetical apostolate, helping the missionaries, especially by means of girls' oratories.

At their origin, is the figure of the *kuneong* (virgin catechists), typical of the Chinese missions, committed to integrating the work of the few missionaries in all parts of the mission. In 1927, Fr. Ricaldone had recognized their presences as more numerous than that of the catechists, giving their contribution:

"A great and profitable work is preparing the kuneon[g], who, without becoming Sisters, fulfill the work of the Sisters. There are two or three in each house. Generally, they live apart and according to the conditions suggested in their regulations, as for the Sisters. They care for the girls, some teach school and others visit the families so as to teach the women and to do good. Msgr. has established a type of formation house for the kuneon[g] with the direction being entrusted to the FMA. Things are going pretty well and we hope that the kuneon[g] formed by the Sisters will serve well. In the houses, our missionaries are required to be serious and prudent, in the way they deal with the kuneon[g]. Seek to overcome those few small inconveniences and let's hope that all proceeds well".<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> A long typed letter of 7 pages, by Msgr. I. Canazei to Fr. Ricaldone, Shiu Chow 26 February 1936, in ASC A 8670247.

<sup>43</sup> Letter from Fr. Ricaldone to Fr. Rinaldi, 12 November 1927.

Msgr. Versiglia had entrusted their formation to the FMA from the time of his arrival. In 1928, the religious wrote in their report, about their work in the house at Ho-Si, “House of the Kuneon [sic], or Chinese Sisters”:

“This is how these catechists are nominated in China; there are 9 of them. Msgr. Versiglia’s intention is to prepare these young women to be able to conveniently explain the Catechism to the catechumens and to the christians, to teach in the elementary classes, to do needlework and to cook so that they can be of great help when sent to the missions in the outlying districts. When a kuneon [sic] wishes to leave on her own, even if she asks to return, she is no longer accepted. The kuneon [sic] receives a check of 7 dollars monthly; they are completely dependent on the mission. A christian teacher, who is Chinese, was given charge of their mission and teaching. The kuneon [sic] attended only the elementary schools. [...]

N. B. The kuneon [sic] are those Chinese girls who spontaneously want to remain virgins, or they are young women who, having failed with a marriage contract, either because of the death of the spouse, or for changes of idea by parents, or because the spouse wants nothing to do with the obligations of marriage with a young woman he has never met; these girls do not want to go against the Chinese laws that in these cases impose virginity”.<sup>44</sup>

In Thailand, too, the FMA contributed to the formation of the indigenous religious; in fact, Sr. Antoinette Morellato remained for several years with the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Religious, founded by Msgr. Pasotti in 1940. Few years later, Fr. Cavoli founded the Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki in Japan.

## Conclusive remarks

The facts we have recalled show, how the missions of the FMA in the Far East were clearly thought out, realized with modest means, responding to the needs, especially in China and in Japan. The economic and political crisis, the vulnerability of women’s conditions, and the standstill caused by World War II did not help the development of the works. It was only later that they took on vigor. Vitality was expressed by the new foundations, linked as they were to painful circumstances, wars and revolutions, which produced the exodus to other nations.

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<sup>44</sup> Cf the presentation of the Works in China, June 1928.

The superiors offered a specific preparation, inspired by the Salesians; nonetheless they were, at the beginning, rather approximate and limited by the pragmatic concept of mission. Certainly, many of the young FMA missionaries stayed many years and were often the ones to promote the expansion. Both in the letters and testimonies in the Sisters' biographies, it could be seen how sacrifices and difficulties were abound. Notwithstanding a strong faith, a rather restricted outlook persisted which caused tensions.

Generally, one can see their efforts to adapt to the environment, notwithstanding the great differences on all levels, an attitude of sympathy and empathy with the people who, especially at the beginning looked with mistrust on the European Religious. The Sisters had thus to gain the trust working among the people. And the experience showed how along with certain cultural gifts, the human and spiritual ones were no less necessary.

It is difficult to outline the typical physiognomy of the Salesian missionary, because though there were some common traits, but specific traits were also present due to the context. It is for good reason that the superiors sometimes had to take time to find the persons adapted. Based on the example of Sr. Parri, in 1928, they realized that in the East it was necessary to choose FMA who were younger, intelligent, capable and flexible and, above all rich in religious virtues and capable of patiently waiting for the fruits; disposed to make sacrifices and continually adapting to difficulties, becoming ever more humble, and zealous in God's love, full of charity towards all; persons with an energetic, detached, and balanced character, not inclined to melancholy.

It is also a fact that they took a certain amount of time to discern the possible initiatives, perhaps they remained a bit too attached to the Italian model of educational apostolate; even if only in desire, and for several years, they did not attain economic autonomy. Some missionaries did leave a long-lasting and fruitful legacy.

Among the problems at the beginning, those related to the formation of the indigenous youth are outstanding: some went to formation houses founded locally; others, according to the province to which they belonged, were sent elsewhere, as for example, the Thais went to India, while those of China and Japan did not. The increase in the number of houses generally determined the birth of autonomous delegations, which could be followed better.

There also emerged various aspects related to the personnel, espe-

cially the animators, in the new missions: often they came from Italy, and were perhaps a bit more mature than the others who were young and inexperienced. Other times, the works began with an FMA who is already a missionary, who brought the richness of her other experiences; at the same time, some models were not adequate to the new context.

In fact, we see alternate hard beginnings with others that are in keeping with the territory. How efficacious were some works organized on the Italian model, a novelty in the territory, as for example the orphanages? Rural areas and city areas determined the need for the work and the possibility of the local population to profit from it. Often, however, in the mission the choice of works was determined, differently from other places.

There is also a spontaneous interest for the Religious Congregations identified as part of the Salesian Family with aspects that are similar and others that are different. At the same time, the young women continued to enter among the FMA, notwithstanding some requirements (for example legitimate birth, good health, good character, certain abilities, a certain way of understanding authority and obedience, etc.).

Not rarely, the will to follow one's native customs, becomes a source of misunderstanding and a block to a proper adaptation to the context. Nevertheless, it brought ideas and new energies in favor of feminine education. The exchange between the missionary priests and Sisters, and those who received the Gospel created the groundwork of a Church in evolution, according to the real possibilities, which needed to be differentiated according to the context.

## **THE MISSION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS IN CHINA**

*Elena Miravalle FMA\**

Msgr. Luigi Versiglia, in 23 January 1923, embarked from Brindisi accompanying to China the first six Daughters of Mary Help of Christians whom he had requested already for some time. They arrived at Shiu Chow on 15 May 1923.

Sr. PARRI Palmira (Directress)  
Sr. ARMELLINO Domenica  
Sr. BOTTINI Elena  
Sr. PALLAVICINI Marcella  
Sr. TARTAGLIONE Giovanna  
Sr. TESTA Giuseppina

### **1. Paternal Cares**

Msgr. Versiglia was prodigious in counsel and assistance to the newly arrived, so that they could assimilate the usages and customs of a culture so diverse from theirs, but above all so that they could be at the level of inserting themselves in the work of evangelization among the simple souls and open to grace. For this, he took personal care of the formation of the Sisters. Five days after their arrival, Monsignor gave the Sisters a conference:

1) Because here your Mothers and Superior are far and their word and counsel cannot reach you but rarely through letters, it is necessary that you are solid, strong, exemplary, exact with mathematical precision in the observance of your Rule. Think that you are the first Sisters in China and that you give imprint to the Mission.

2) Remember that Jesus died on the cross for the salvation of souls. Souls are not saved without suffering. We must make it as ours, that which are lacking in the Passion of Our Lord, in the sense that uniting our small

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\* Sr. Elena Miravalle is actual provincial secretary of the FMA China Province based in Hong Kong.

privations and sufferings to his, we apply them for the salvation of souls. Don Bosco promised an efficacious mission in China, in as much as the members of our Society correspond to grace and to vocation.

3) I would like that you are not pessimists but optimists. Meaning: when something is lacking, you do not know what to do, see uncertainty in the future, do not be lost in vain fears. Always believe in Divine Providence. Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco are with you. Do not be afraid; on the contrary, always go ahead with holy enthusiasm. Optimism and trust in God.

4) Still one last thing: wish each other well! Among yourselves and with the Directress. Consider her as a mother; obey her; respect her; listen to her. She must also scold you sometimes, but it will be for your good. She must do it. Help her and do not leave her the task of correcting you always. Do it among yourselves, and remember that where more persons are gathered in charity, there Jesus reigns. All that favors charity brings near to God. On the contrary, all that harms charity draws Him away. Desire above all your sanctification, and then you will also procure that of many others. Fraternal charity.

Msgr. Versiglia was forming a group of young catechists to send to the various mission districts, to help the missionaries, for the religious instruction of the women and of children. Upon their arrival, the Sisters found in the mission of 7 Kuneong. They helped each other, specially for the necessary relations with the externs, for the catechumenate and for the oratory.

## 2. First Priority

*The study of the language:* in order to speak with the young that they had in the house, to fulfil their educative mission and to communicate with the people.

“21 March 1923 - We begin the lessons of the Chinese language with Tong Sin San, repeating sounds and gracious monosyllables, almost always without understanding nothing...”.

The missionaries were committed in the study, but that monotonous repetition of sounds sometimes became heavy, so that the Sisters were distracted.... Sr. Elena Bottini, a good teacher of design, sketched the old teacher at the margin of the notebook; another was letting the pieces of bread or the grains of rice fall on the ground, happy to see the birds rushed

to her feet to peck on them; another counted the hair of the beard of the teacher... These were inconveniences which could not be tolerated during the lesson. With severe tone, Tong Sin San called the attention invariably of Sr. Domenica Armellino, who had the defect of being the youngest. Sr. Domenica complained about this to Msgr. Versiglia who answered her: "You do not know that the Chinese cannot get angry with the old and thus the fault is always on the young?" Sr. Domenica understood the lesson of inculturation and accepted in peace the scolding in the name of the group.

After eight months of study, the six pioneers placed themselves in the apostolate. Following the Salesians and the Kuneong, through fields and gardens, they arrived in a poor house where several families of catechumens were gathered. The missionaries taught the men, the Sisters and the Kuneong, the women and the children, teaching the sign of the cross, the prayers, and the first answers of the catechism. For about two years, this good people asked for Baptism and finally on Christmas, the missionaries offered to their bishop 104 baptisms.

### **3. Works and Expansion**

1923 - HO SAI

At Ho Sai, the works were:

- Studentate for the native young: work, music, song, sewing, embroidery, cooking.
- Orphanage for healthy babies abandoned or belonging to very poor families.
- Shelter for the blind and for old women.
- Holy Infancy, the work which has given many troubles. It consisted of sick children, abandoned.
- School with the first elementary classes for interns and externs.
- Festive oratory.
- Knitwear with works of commission to obtain economic help.
- Catechism for Christians and catechumens; visit to families.
- Linen room for the Salesians.
- The care of the laundry for the churches of the district.

The works opened, according to the needs of the place and the circumstances.

The “Shelter” for the blind and the old women, and the “Holy Infancy” for abandoned children were born in this manner: one day, a teacher brought to the Sisters of Ho Sai a three-year old girl, who became blind because of sickness. She was the first blind of the “Shelter”. A little later, a girl of 13 was taken from the street, abandoned, almost dying under a plant. On another day, a woman accompanied a young sick bride to the Sisters. During the feast of the Directress, an orphan and blind boy of four years was brought. The teacher, who brought the first blind baby, arrived one day with a two-month old baby who was very sick. The little child had hardly the time to receive baptism and flew to paradise.

#### 1924 - SHIU CHOW

At Shiu Chow, the works were:

- Mary Help of Christians College with classes for teachers, which prepared teachers and gave regular diplomas (The college was bombarded in 1940).
- Clinic which gave assistance to the poor.
- Festive oratory.

With the beginning of the scholastic year 1924-1925, Sr. Elena Bottini was transferred to the College of Shiu Chow from Ho Sai. The house hosted three interns. There, Sr. Elena taught English and design. Several months earlier, the good Miss Mary Hanghton left for Hong Kong, “after having been an interpreter for a year, rendering a most useful service”.

The apostolic work brought joy and satisfaction to the missionaries. But the economic resources did not go at the same pace. To trust Providence was sign of faith; but it was also wise that they did something to obtain funds. The Sisters asked a Sister who knew how to knit. And so they procured wool and machine. The interns who were big enough, the old ones with a good vision, sewed the shirts which the good Sr. Giuseppina Mattioli ably produced.

Another source of income, which today would be considered as exploitation of minors, was the production of matches, which the nearby factories gave to houses. The children, with their small hands, placed the head of sulfur. For the children, it was as if they were playing. The remuneration was minimal. It was like a drop in the ocean; but it was very useful.

1933 - LOK CHONG

Three Sisters worked on the following:

- Kindergarten, the only one in the area, very frequented, but often disturbed by the guerrillas.
- Catechesis, catechumenate.
- Clinic.
- Care of the church and its linen.

The mission was poor. Electricity did not exist. For the water for the kitchen and for every need, there was the need to go to the river to fetch water. Sometimes, there was no mass, because the Salesians visited the villages. Because the zone was rural, for several times, the house served as rest house for the missionaries who were tired and sick.

The kindergarten of the Sisters was the only one in the village. It was filled to capacity quickly. Sr. Fusina was one who was cheerful and smiling, and who easily made friends with everyone. The mothers would bring new babies, but the Sisters were forced to refuse them for lack of space. "You see - they told the mothers - there are no more benches". And these answered back: "I buy a chair, but you accept my baby!".

At Lok Chong, at that time, there were no doctors nor pharmacist. When Fr. Bartolomeo Fochesato went to the Rector, a good doctor as he was, he immediately opened a clinic. Sr. Agnese Fusina, a courageous nurse, was of great help. One day, they brought to the mission an injured man with a dislocated leg. He was suffering terribly. Fr. Fochesato and Sr. Agnese made a big sign of the cross, and then with determination, put the bone at the right place. After a few days, he was able to return to his house, thanking the Madonna who had cured him.

Another day, they brought to the mission a woman with an arm crushed and already gangrene. To save her life, it was necessary to amputate the arm. Having given the injection, Fr. Fosechato, with a saw, cut the arm, held steadily by Sr. Fusina. The woman was cured. She and the husband asked for religious instruction. They were baptized and they lived as good Christians, very much devoted to the Madonna who had helped them.

1934 - SHANGHAI

The beginning at Shanghai was modest, and the development difficult on account of the war. But later, the work became consolidated, above all with the school.

- Nursery for abandoned infants - the service did not last long because of the difficulty with the Buddhist administration.
- Nursery school, elementary and high schools, humble beginnings but later great development.
- Service at the Hospital “Immaculate Heart of Mary”, bombarded in 1937.
- Sisters as nurses in the military hospitals during the war.
- Boarding house for young workers, to protect them and to give them an environment of family.
- Evening school for young workers, about a hundred students.
- Boarding school for children who were orphans. Everyone was frequenting the school of the Sisters.
- Parish works very flourishing.
- FMA Pre-novitiate and Novitiate (closed at Ho Sai).

#### 4. Challenges

*Health* - In 1928, after a little less than five years since the presence in China, there had been the first repatriation of three Sisters:

Two of the first expedition and

One of the second expedition (1926).

In 1926, three new missionaries arrived from Italy: Sr. Maria Menegotto, Sr. Antonietta Quaglino and Sr. Orsolina Serra. The acclimatization was very difficult for Sr. Maria Menegotto. After two years, she returned to Italy together with Sr. Marcella Pallavicini and Sr. Giovanna Tartaglione, as advised to them by the doctor.

In 1933, ten years since the foundation, another two returned to Italy. Which were the causes of the repatriation? Tuberculosis - malaria and its consequences - incurable allergies.

From 1923 to 1954, year of the departure of the last Sisters, the situation of the FMA in China:

53 FMA of which 34 missionaries

17 missionaries who returned to their home country

4 missionaries transferred to other provinces

4 deceased (2 Chinese and 2 missionaries).

*War* - Aside from the difficulty of the language, the inconveniences of poverty and the sacrifices of the apostolate, there was another factor which rendered life difficult, not only to the missionaries: the guerrilla.

Msgr. Versiglia asked each of the Sisters in private if she preferred to go elsewhere; he feared that the FMA might suffer fear and abuse. All answered that they preferred to remain in their mission, where obedience had placed them. The heart of the good Father remained consoled.

1930 was the year of sorrow for the martyrdom of Msgr. Luigi Versiglia and the young confrere Fr. Callisto Caravario.

- In Shanghai, the hospital of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (1937) was bombarded.
- The college of Mary Help of Christians in Shiu Chow was bombarded (1940).
- The bombardments forced the flight of families, with the consequent closures of the schools.
- The Sisters were forced to leave the works, because of the continuous inspection by the government, the persecutions, the escapes.

At Ho Sai in 1932, there were two attempts on the part of soldiers to take over the house. Once, they came in the night, after prayers. The Salesian Fr. Ricaldone, called urgently, put them to flight. A second time, they entered the house of the Kuneong. But without knowing how, or better, after fervent prayers to the Madonna, they left before dark.

Towards the end of 1937, the bombardments of Shanghai ceased. The Japanese troops had entered victoriously. The new masters allowed the foreigners to return to their residences. For the Chinese, instead, there was the need of special permission from the Military Command. There was the permission to return to the old residences; but the residences did not exist anymore! Chapei was practically razed to the ground. Yangtzepoo was partially destroyed. The Hospital Immaculate Heart of Mary, was hit by the bombs and seriously damaged, and therefore was non-functional. Everything had to start from the beginning!

1937-1938 - At Lok Chong, even if it was an agricultural zone, the people fled for fear of the bombardments. The schools were empty. Without the school fees, without the tutorial lessons: how could the Sisters live? They cultivated vegetables, raised chicken and rabbits. They sewed childrens' clothes. A Christian lady who lived with the Sisters, helped sell and bring income to the house. In this manner, Providence was not lacking!

On 12 December 1941, the Sisters of Ho Sai received the order not to go out of their house. They were already surrounded by soldiers in

disguise. By order of Msgr. Canazei, the Sisters hand over the direction of the works to the Superior of the “Announcers of the Lord” Sr. Monica, in collaboration with Sr. Maddalena Tch’an and Sr. Teresa Tch’an. For this, the Sisters who were foreigners did not appear in front of the authority.

1945-1946 - In Shanghai, the American soldiers, in order to free the port from garbage, unloaded in the playground of the Sisters great quantity of commodities, the most varied, and in bulk. There was everything: wood, paper, glasses, rags, boxes, all commerciable and recyclable materials which the industrious Shanghaiese knew how to utilize, after having acquired them for a considerable price. The Sisters armed themselves with courage and good will: they separated, divided, broke, sawed, piled up, cut and then sold all these goods which they considered to be from God. Thus, with the garbage brought by the Americans, they constructed four classrooms for the high school, which immediately was populated, and a pavilion for the orphans. However, the orphans were so many, that the American soldiers brought a large shed good for 22.

## 5. FMA deaths

*Sr. Tch’an Maria:* born in Ho Sai on 06-06-1907 / died in Shanghai on 23-05-1940.

In presenting her to the Sisters, Msgr. Versiglia said: “May they look at this urchin and may they take care of her. If they cultivate her well, they will make her a saint; otherwise she will come out reckless”.

One of the first four FMAs. Lively, cheerful, a little overbearing, she entered when was already a teacher, graduated at the College of Mary Help of Christians. She got sick of tuberculosis, at 33 years of age.

*Sr. Tong Rosa:* born in Lok Chong in 09-1913 / died in Shanghai on 07-01-1944.

Simple, timid, of few words. She was assistant of the interns who called her “the good Sister”. She never raised her voice; but she made people obey her. She got sick of glandular tuberculosis. The surgical intervention did not give hope to the result. She died in Shanghai at 31 years of age.

*Sr. Maria Russo:* born in Catania on 06-05-1904 / died in Ho sai in 20-09-1944.

Directress of the house of Shiu Chow. Died of heart trouble, because of the frights she underwent during the bombardments, the persecutions

and rough manners of the soldiers. Msgr. Canazei wrote Mother Elena Bottini: “She was a holy religious, and the Lord gave her the occasion of obtaining many merits, specially in her sufferings during her last hours”.

*Sr. Giovanna Rossi*: born in Milano on 01-02-1888 / died in Ho Sai on 03-09-1945.

Directress of the house of Ho Sai. She had high fevers because of malaria; cured but did not recover; on the contrary, she succumbed to complications which brought her to the tomb.

*Sr. Wong Caterina*: born in Tsingtien on 09-08-1924 / died in Shanghai on 10-01-1965.

After the departure of the missionaries, she was interned with the other Sisters of Shanghai. Probably the communists had their plans for her. She was a leader. She had an uncommon capacity. She was forced to follow courses of indoctrination day and night. But because she did not give in, she was enclosed in a room and never went out from there. The day and the circumstances of her death were not known.

## **6. FMA vocations**

At Ho Sai, the first four aspirants were received: the Sisters Maria and Maddalena Tch’an, Teresa Tch’an, and Agnese Wong of Lok Chong (these last two did not wish to continue the postulancy in the Congregation of Msgr. Canazei). The four young shared with the Sisters the common life. On 31 January 1935, they received the medal as postulants and on 31 January 1938, they made their first profession.

For reasons of discretion, the Novitiate of Ho Sai was closed, so as not to create inconveniences to the “Announcers of the Lord”. The postulants were sent to Shanghai where on 22 March 1939, the Congregation for Religious have canonically erected the FMA novitiate at Yangtzepoo, after having declared as close the novitiate of Ho Sai. The novice mistress was Sr. Orsolina Serra.

## **7. Vocation SAL (Sisters Announcers of the Lord)**

On 1 March 1933, Msgr. Canazei imposed the crucifix on the first six postulants of the native Congregation “Announcers of the Lord”. The young postulants were: Kung Clara, Lieu Lucia, Chin Teresa, Wong

Agnese and the two Sisters Chiu Maria and Francesca. Monsignor entrusted them to the Directress Sr. Parri. They had as assistant Sr. Domenica Armellino, who transferred to their house, to introduce them to a life in community. Of these, only three arrived at the profession which came on 12 December 1938. In 1940, six professed and seven entered the novitiate. They had as guide a Sister from Canton.

## **8. Past Pupils**

At Shiu Chow, but specially at Shanghai, the past pupils gathered.

This relationship of the young and with their educators was significant. They would be the ones to make known the religion when the Sisters will be impede to preach.

## **9. Exodus**

At the end of 1945, it was necessary to protect the two German Sisters Sr. Peter Elisabetta and Sr. Zöllner Rosa. The house of Macau was started.

The Sisters had diverse offices before dedicating themselves to education and scholastic instruction:

- Kitchen and linen room of the personnel and students of the Salesian Institute (for a few years).
- School for poor children (for some years in the house).
- Help to the Salesian Press - Bindery - Sale of books and religious objects.
- Nursery school and first elementary classes (Yuet Wah-Pedro Lobo).

Hong Kong - In 1950, Mother Elena Bottini left Shanghai and went to Hong Kong in search of a residence and work for the Sisters. She found a house for rent in Kowloon, Diamond Hill and successively, at Wong Tai Sin.

All the Sister missionaries reached Hong Kong; but not all the Chinese Sisters could leave China. Five of them remained. At Ho Sai, Sr. Maddalena Tch'an was brought into prison, because she was in contact with foreigners and because she was from a land-owning family.

At Shanghai, all the Sisters were interred in the convent of the Sisters “Helpers of the Holy Souls”, with courses of indoctrination. Thus, they were compelled to forced labor with the intent to break their will and to compel them to sign the “Three Freedoms”. Sr. Caterina Wong died in this house.

## **10. Province**

On 4 May 1938, Mother Elena Bottini was named Visitatrice. The Superiors separated the houses of China and Japan from the Indian Province of St. Thomas the Apostle, entrusting them to Mother Elena Bottini, resident in Shanghai. They assigned to her as her direct collaborators: Sr. Antonietta Quaglino, first counsellor resident at Lok chong; Sr. Letizia Begliatt, second counsellor resident at Beppu, Japan; Sr. Jolanda Benazzato, secretary and economer resident at Ho Sai. Mother Elena remarked: “Here, indeed, there is the need for faith! To put as Visitatrice one who lives in a rented house, with collaborators so far, with difficulties of communication which no superior of Italy can imagine...”. However, Mother Elena had the sufficient faith.

On 16 May 1946, the Superiors separated the houses of Japan and erected the houses of China as a Province, and Mother Elena Bottini was named Provincial.



# THE HISTORY OF THE MISSION OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS INSERTED IN THE HISTORY OF SALVATION (1929-1952)

Marisa Gambato FMA\*

## Introduction: “Cast in to the deep”

“Cast in to the deep” is the command of John Paul II at the beginning of the millennium. In fact, it is the command of Jesus to Peter and the other disciples, therefore, to the church for all times. At the same time, it is an interior urgency dictated by the Holy Spirit, which drives the church and its members to leave their places of security and go beyond all boundaries in places where the Good news should be announced.

The first article of the constitution of the FMA expresses this characteristic of the institute as follows:

*“Through the gift of the Holy Spirit  
and the direct intervention of Mary,  
St. John Bosco  
Founded our Institute  
as a response of salvation  
to the profound hopes of young girls.  
He endowed it with a spiritual heritage that had  
its inspiration in the charity of Christ the Good Shepherd,  
and imparted to it a strong missionary impulse”.*  
(Const.1)

The history of the mission of the FMA in Japan, therefore inserts itself in the history of the salvation of humanity and in particular to that page of history written by our founders.

## PART I

### 1. Strong missionary impulse

In 1958, Don Bosco founded the Salesian Society in Turin for the education of boys. In 1972, at Mornese with an equal thirst for the salva-

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tion of the young through education, Mary Mazzarello started caring for a group of young girls. This providential encounter with Don Bosco brings about the establishment of the FMA.

The purpose of the Institute as mentioned in the Constitution, is to “participate in the salvific mission of Christ in the church, by adopting a project of christian education based on the Preventive System”. This is what all the Salesian and FMA missionaries opted for at all times together with all the members of the Salesian family.

In 1875, Don Bosco sent his first missionaries to Argentina, and in 1877, a second expedition went to Uruguay. The first missionaries of the FMA accompanied them to start together the educational work based on the “Preventive System”. Therefore, after only five years, the FMA and the Salesians were collaborating and trying to strengthen their mission. Looking at the chronicles of that period we see the intensity of the missionary fervor that the letters of the first missionaries were creating that spurred the desire of many to want to leave for the Missions. Mother Mazzarello herself, had that desire but her poor health and the fact that she was the Superior of the Order prevented her from fulfilling this dream. However, through her letters to the first missionaries we see that she was living the mission in a unique manner, in the essence of the desire to “save souls”.

In 1925, on the golden jubilee of the Salesian Mission, the first missionaries headed by Fr. Cimatti left for Japan where they established their mission in the Miyazaki prefecture in the south of the country.

Two years later in 1927, Fr. Cimatti expressed his desire to have the FMA in Japan, to the Vicar General, Fr. Ricaldone, on the occasion of his visit to Japan. After having pondered over this matter, on 12 September 1928, Fr. Cimatti wrote a letter to the third superior general of the FMA, Mother Luisa Vaschetti, requesting explicitly for the missionaries to come to Japan. On 19 October of the same year, Fr. Cimatti who was responsible for the Region of Miyazaki, wrote again to the superior general and obtained a positive answer as noted in the letter of 22 November 1928.

Sr. Letizia Begliatti at 44 became the corner stone of the FMA in Japan. Her mature age made her well qualified. Mother Vaschetti from Nizza, responsible for the mission in Tortona, wrote the following letter to Sr. Letizia:

“In confidence between the two of us: do you feel that you have a vocation for the mission? Yesterday while praying the rosary, the thought of the in-

auguration of the missions in Japan crossed my mind, not having someone to head the mission, your name crossed my mind. What do you think? Pray and answer me in Turin, but don't try to tell me that you are not capable etc., etc. ...tell me simply yes or no. The rest is in the hands of the Lord and we shall see". Sr. Letizia's response is the following: "Mother, if you believe that this is the will of God, overlooking all the deficiencies of an unworthy subject, I recommend myself with all my heart to our Beatified (Don Bosco) here present in his relic and implore him for us, so that you will not make a mistake by choosing me an unworthy servant, and I give you from my heart, in spite of all my fears, my cordial, humble, yes!". I seem to hear the words of Mary. 'Let it be done unto me according to your Word'".<sup>1</sup>

## **2. Arrival of the FMA in Japan**

The first group of six missionaries destined for Japan was composed of the following: Sr. Begliatti, head of the expedition, and five young Sisters: Sr. Conte M. Giovanna; Sr. Gregorat Teresa; Sr. Mozin Sibilla; Sr. Reynaud Adele and Sr. Tomatis Maria. They sailed from Venice on 22 October 1929 with the third expedition of the Salesians consisting of three additional missionaries headed by Fr. Mario Marega. The journey lasted 54 days. On 14 December 1929, they dock at the port of Kobe, in Japan. Several days later, they arrived at their final destination at Miyazaki and were welcomed by the Salesians and many good native Christians. Fr. Cimatti was absent; he was in Italy for the beatification of Don Bosco. The welcome to the new arrivals was given in Italian by a young Japanese girl, Hana Hirate, to whom Fr. Cimatti had taught Italian and was preparing to become the first native aspirant of the FMA.

Fr. Margiaria, one of the first missionaries who died several years ago, testified:

"The Sisters settled in a rented house given to them by us. They began immediately to study the language and helped in the church in all that they could... The missionary ardor at that time was certainly apostolic and it is wonderful to recall the memory. Miyazaki was only the springboard of the FMA work that would expand in the future. The situation at Miyazaki was not without difficulties..."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf M. D. GRASSIANO, *La Montagna solitaria*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 13.

Before proceeding with the mission started by the FMA in Japan, the following is a prospectus that shows the vitality and importance given by the Center to the mission.

PROSPECTUS OF THE MISSIONARIES

EXP.	YEAR	NAME	ORIGIN	NOTES
I	1929	Sr. Begliatti Letizia	Italy	+13/7/1963
		Sr. Conte Giovanna	Italy	+11/5/1960
		Sr. Gregorat Teresa	Italy	+14/1/1948
		Sr. Mozin Sibilla	Germany	Back to Germany
		Sr. Reynaud Adele	Italy	Back to Italy
		Sr. Tomatis Maria	Italy	+2/5/1997
II	1930	Sr. Fantoli Antonia	Italy	+24/5/1991
		Sr. Probst Margherita	Germany	+18/4/2003
		Sr. Carmela Solari	Italy	+28/2/1985
				(1957-1968 Korea)
III	1931	Sr. Gazzada Giuseppina	Italy	+18/10/1975
		Sr. Grossi Santina	Italy	+9/3/1978
IV	1935	Sr. Graf Teresa	Germany	+20/12/1987
		Sr. Quagliosi Ottilia	Italy	Back to Italy
V	1938	Sr. Scrivano Giovanna	Italy	+20/8/1990
		Sr. Bianco Margherita	Italy	+11/4/2001
VI	1939	Sr. Motta Maria	Switzerland	+20/8/1990
		Sr. Barone Angiolina	Italy	
VII	1940	Sr. Morando Mafalda	Italy	Back to Italy
		Sr. Baratto Annalisa	Italy	
VIII	1947	Sr. Pietrobelli Maria	Italy	(Provincial '58- '68)
		Sr. Pravisano Gioconda	Italy	Back to Italy
IX	1950	Sr. Tarraran Angela	Italy	Back to Italy
		Sr. Bertuletti Anna	Italy	
X	1950	Sr. Boni Rita	Italy	+21/8/1999
		Sr. Broccardo Francesca	Italy	Back to Italy
		Sr. Gindri Annita	Italy	Back to Italy
		Sr. Marcuzzo Margherita	Italy	
		Sr. Zaninetti Giuseppina	Italy	(Provincial '68- '74)
XI	1952	Sr. Cardin Gina	Italy	
		Sr. Perossi M. Bambina	Italy	Back to Italy
XII	1952	Sr. Avoledo Nice	Italy	Left the Institute
		Sr. Gritti Ancilla	Italy	
XIII	1952	Sr. Marazzi Maria	Italy	Back to Italy
		Sr. Righele Adelaide	Italy	+17/4/2001
XIV	1953	Sr. Morosini Giuseppina	Italy	
XV	1955	Sr. Broccardo Maria	Italy	Back to Italy
		Sr. Costa Maria		
XVI	1956	Sr. Rother Ruth	Germany	
		Sr. Aguilar M. Fanny	Columbia	1989 Bolivia
XVII	1960	Sr. Galli Teodolinda	Italy	
XVIII	1976	Sr. Gambato Marisa	Italy	

When it concerns the life of the FMA at the beginning of the mission, the author of “the solitary mountain” writes as follows:

“Quasi immediately started the disputes with the Sisters... Were they not for the service of the mission that is of the parish? But how? For what reason? In everything and for everything. And like the parish priest wanted as a right. However the superior had in her hand a small book, small few pages and yet valuable: it was called ‘the Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians’ and it had the papal stamp”.<sup>3</sup>

Sr. Letizia who was in charge of the development of the young mission was determined to follow the course and not deviate from it, not only for her sake but also for that of the Sisters...

We notice that the agreement reached between Fr. Rinaldi and Mother General for the coming of the FMA in Japan was thus expressed in a letter by Fr. Cimatti:

“The first nucleus of Sisters came in 1929 with the understanding that they would be responsible for the nursery that is being built and the education of the young women from the city of Miyazaki”. In addition it is stated: “For difficulties independent of the Mission, the construction of the Nursery together with the house for the FMA, adjacent to the Nursery, had to be delayed”. Fr. Cimatti also asserts: “... it also seems to me that since then (1930) we lacked a perfect understanding, difficulties were arising perhaps from the incompatibility of character and views...”<sup>4</sup>

### **3. Miyazaki: Casa Maria Ausiliatrice**

In the book, “La Montagna Solitaria” from where I draw some ideas for my work, the author, Sr. Domenica Grassiano describes the first house of the Sisters as a “doll house”. In reality, from more recent studies, the house given by the Salesians was rather big and certainly spacious enough for six Sisters.

The chronicle of the Sisters notes that the first night, Sr. Begliatti pulled out from the suitcase the statue of Mary Help which Mother Vaschetti had given her, and placed it on top of a small table at the same time she took out the mattresses to sleep on in the Japanese style and entrusted to Mary Help the mission that was on its way.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf M. D. GRASSIANO, *La Montagna solitaria*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

As previously mentioned, Fr. Cimatti had prepared the young Hirate girl for the FMA, from the very beginning she helped the Sisters and often remained with them, on 24 February 1930, just after two months from the arrival of the Sisters, Hana Hirate moved definitely in with the Sisters and remained with them. That same day another important event took place; one of the rooms of the house, the most beautiful and spacious, was transformed into the chapel for the Blessed Sacrament.

The Sisters, in addition to their studies and their work for the Salesians, were surrounded by a group of girls who out of curiosity for the foreign Sisters would come and play in their property. Although the Sisters could not understand much of the language yet, they played with the girls and gave them medals and holy figurines.

They started a sort of Oratory and by April 1930 the Oratory consisted of 40 girls. Due to difficulties beyond their control, the Salesians and the FMA could not start a nursery school for lack of space, consequently their educational objective had to be delayed. The Sisters, however, were intensifying their preparation by visiting different nursery schools in the area for better understanding and inculturation of customs and traditions. In June of the same year, a second aspirant, Sugi Nakamura, entered the order and on 8 December, the young Sister of Hana Hirate, Hana Shizu, also joined the order.

#### **4. Building the new nursery school in Miyazaki**

When Fr. Cimatti invited the Sisters to Japan, he wanted them to run a nursery school for the children and young girls of Miyazaki. He believed, in fact, that where the Christians were a minority, the school would prove to be a suitable instrument to introduce the message of Christ to the families.

In spite of the struggles they were faced with, on 24 March 1931, ground was broken for the building of the nursery school and on 6 June, it was inaugurated with a simple ceremony during which Fr. Cimatti explained the meaning of the word “Myojo” that is, Morning Star. Fr. Cavoli, the parish priest became the founder figure, while Sr. Begliatti was made the principal of the nursery. Among the first teachers were Sr. Giovanna Conte, Sr. Teresa Gregorat, the aspirant Shizu Hirate and a lay teacher.

In 1933, the superior from Turin expressed her desire that the Sisters should be independent of the Salesians so that they could freely work on

their own. So the FMA purchased the school and the place where they were living. In 1939, however, the FMA decided to leave the Miyazaki's mission since there were too many schools there. They also became convinced that their mission would not expand and at the same time they were motivated by the prospect of starting a mission in Tokyo where they foresaw the possibility of a greater expansion. This move was brought about by the rising difficulties between the FMA and the SDB in regard to the responsibilities assigned to the Sisters. The conflict became prevalent in 1937 when a new Institute, more in conformity to the needs of the Salesians, was built. The presence of the FMA at that time became almost irrelevant.

## PART II

### 1. Works at the house in Beppu

August 1930 marked a decisive turning point in the life of the FMA in Japan. This new start for the FMA was the direct consequence of the visit of Adolf Tornquist, a Salesian and son of a rich banker from Argentina. Adolf became a Salesian after he was ordained priest and was given permission to visit the various missions around the world in order to study their needs and donate the money he inherited. He offered the superior at the Miyazaki mission 100 yen with the promise of further help.

The Miyazaki's chronicle of this event states:

“Fr. Tornquist in a very simple letter announces to the superior that the souls in purgatory and Mother Mazzarello suggested to him to donate this sum of money to Sr. Begliatti so that she could purchase a house in Beppu...” reporting in this chronicle the author of “The Solitary Mountain” adds: “two days later Sr. Letizia and Sr. Sibilla left for Beppu to look at the house. At Oita, meeting with Fr. Margiaria, they were surprised to hear that they had received an additional 4,000.00 yen for the house in Miyazaki”.<sup>5</sup>

This was a huge three-story house built similar to a hospital, unfortunately the house was badly furnished and was in a place that lacked water. The idea of using it for a mission had to be abandoned and the house

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<sup>5</sup> Cf M. D. GRASSIANO, *La Montagna solitaria*, p. 22.

was put up for sale. The Sisters had to work very hard and concentrate all their energies to make up for the lack of water. The problem was finally solved when the American soldiers arrived and helped them.

At the same time, due to the worldwide economic difficulties, Fr. Tornquist could not keep his promise of sending more money and the FMA found themselves with additional debts.

In 1931, the first Sisters who transferred to the new house, dedicated to Mother Mazzarello, were Sr. Solari and Sr. Reynaud. The following year, on August 1932, Sr. Begliatti left the responsibility of Miyazaki to Sr. Solari and came to Beppu. The house was planned as a house of formation but as for the missionary work, the Sisters were hoping for a sign from above... In the same year the aspirants from Miyazaki were housed in Beppu, thus the house became the place for formation. Fr. Cimatti immediately thought about contributing to the formation of the aspirants, unfortunately, it was not possible to have proper classes for the aspirants during that year. Fr. Margiaria began teaching the catechism for the aspirants and taught them twice a month. This shows that although the Salesians gave the Sisters freedom to start their own way in the mission, they felt the responsibility to continue to help and assist them in their spiritual needs.

The aspirants had their schedule adapted for each one according to their personal inclinations. Mother Mazzarello's book, translated by Hana Hirate helped in the spiritual reading. With the intention of increasing vocations, the FMA sent letters to all the parishes announcing the opening of their house of formation in Beppu and invited the young girls who had an inclination for the consecrated life to visit with them.

On 3 December, the first three aspirants started direct preparation for their novitiate and in August of the same year, Sr. Conte became the first mistress of novices in Japan. That same year, they received the visit of Mother Tullia de Berardinis, the Provincial and Superior of the Asian Province to which Japan also belonged. In 1938, Japan and China formed the first 'Visitatoria'. Several years later the China-Japan Province was formed under the guidance of Mother Elena Bottini who had visited Japan several times earlier.

## **2. Social Work Sayuri Aijen**

The beginning of this mission started in the following way: “Superior Begliatti during her weekly conference announced that on the following day a ten-month old child would arrive, this would be the beginning of the Holy childhood, that is the mission for the newly born”. In fact, the following day the baby arrived making this the first providential step towards their Social Works. The Sisters who lived that moment were convinced that the mission of the FMA in Japan was to serve the poorest of the poor and that Sr. Begliatti with her true pioneer gesture established the spirit of their mission then and this spirit is still vibrant today.

“Sayuri Aijien” meaning “Garden of Small Lilies” began on 8 June 1935. As time went on, the center accepted not only babies but also older children based on the circumstances and necessities of the time, particularly during the occupation of Manchuria by Japan.

In 1935, Sayuri had 37 newborn babies, 20 older orphans, 11 aspirants, and five novices. On 3 October 1935, the first three vocations to the order made their vows. By 1939, the children numbered 73 and the chronicle of that year notes 22 baptisms, 13 first communions, 11 confirmations, six baptisms and 18 aspirants.

After the war, on 8 June 1949, Emperor Showa visited the mission and left the Sisters with the following words: “Thank you for the dedication and zeal with which you work”.

In 1991, the mission had to be closed due to the demographic fall and the decline of the city, the number of the children in the center had diminished considerably.

## **3. The opening at Tokyo: The mission at Mikawajima**

At the beginning of May of 1935, the FMA went to the Archbishop of Tokyo, his Excellency Monsignor Chambon, to ask his advice on the opening of a novitiate. In response they received an unexpected suggestion that they open instead a center for Social Work in the poor area of Mikawajima where the Salesians were already working for the boys. He felt that the Sisters should be doing likewise for the girls. Taking the Archbishop’s advice as an inspiration from heaven, the Sisters asked the Salesians to locate a suitable property for them. This was accomplished in October of the same year. Actually the Sisters left for Tokyo only in

April 1939. The chronicle of Mikawajima notes: "...finally we can bring to realization the opening of our Social Work Mission in Tokyo...."

Sr. Begliatti, who until then was responsible for the mission in Japan, received the obedience to report to Shanghai. Before leaving, she entrusted the statue of Mary Help, which she had received from Mother Vaschetti, to Sr. Grossi saying: "keep it safe because Tokyo will become the center for the mission of the FMA in Japan". The new mission in Tokyo was under the patronage of Our Lady and was given Her title: "House of Mary Our Help". This proved to be the beginning of a new dawn. Sr Begliatti remained in Shanghai for just one year.

The Sisters occupied the second floor of the Salesian parish until the house in Tokyo was ready. Later on with the increase in the number of Sisters and aspirants they moved into two houses. There, their activity began by helping the Salesians in their work at the nursery school and teaching various classes in the evening with the expectation of beginning their own work as soon as the building became available. On 31 January 1940, the feast day of Saint John Bosco, the Sisters went to the then Archbishop of Tokyo, Monsignor Doi, to give him their report. He was satisfied, but added: "you need benefactors and people who can council you". Bishop Doi introduced them to the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, through them the FMA were able to contact people who would give financial help to their young mission.

After many ups and downs, on 9 March 1940, the foundation stone for the new house was laid; by December, the structure was completed, all this was made possible with the help of many benefactors. The house was called "Seibi" Morning Star. The mission started immediately with the kindergarden and nursery school and very quickly became quite crowded.

Sr. Santina in writing about those initial days states:

"At 4 o'clock as soon as the children of the nursery school are dismissed, the halls fill up again with the boys and girls of the elementary school for the early evening session, towards 8 o'clock, the young women arrive for their classes in needlework, singing, music and language. All the classes for religious instructions were also very well established and divided in various groups. The good that was being done for the young and the mothers was great".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

World War II had broken out, the food for the children became progressively scarce. The Sisters were advised to subscribe to the Federation of Social Works in order to obtain a subsidy. The Government who was interested and appreciated the work being done by the Sisters granted the subsidy. To respond to the needs of those difficult times the Sisters began to accept children for both food and board.

In 1942, the USA began to bomb Tokyo.

For a time, the work went on normally even though the number of children was increasing considerably. In July of the same year, the municipality suggested the evacuation to a safer place. The Sisters began to look for a safer place to evacuate to. The danger was imminent. In 1943, the situation was critical. Life in Tokyo was too dangerous. Fr. Lucien Adolphe Delahaye, the parish priest of Shimizu in Shizuoka and a member of the Foreign Missions of Paris, offered to accommodate the Sisters and the children in exchange for some contribution to the parish.

At Mikawajima in the midst of many problems and difficulties the work with the day students and several of the Sisters continued. Meanwhile, an order was issued that all foreigners had to be interned; they were looked upon as potential spies. In spite of this, the missionaries in Tokyo were allowed to continue their work, which had become very fruitful; the number of the aspirants had increased and so did the responsibilities of the young Sisters. On 10 March 1945, during a bombardment the house caught fire and burned out completely.

The chronicle of the house described the event as follows:

“At midnight as soon as the alarm sounded, flames of fire like hailstones began to hit the house. We all got out and began to throw our belongings out of the windows. Many neighbors came to help and for a short time we managed to put off the fire, soon after, another attack followed without forewarning, the noise of the planes and exploding bombs was everywhere, again we tried to put out the fire although the danger was tremendous. We were anxious to save our beloved house that cost us so many sacrifices and had become the admiration of many. In spite of our determination and effort, the house burned down and with it thousands of houses around us; we were engulfed in a sea of fire. With broken hearts we saw our house disappear before our eyes...”.

The house was gone but the work continued. We evacuated first to the house in Shimizu and later to the one in Fujieda that had been opened to accommodate the increased number of children. Due to the famous earthquake of Tokyo and its environs in 1944, the buildings that housed

the children in Shimizu became uninhabitable. Consequently for the sake of the children and their security we transferred the mission to Yamanaka, in the prefecture of Yamanashi.

### PART III

#### **1. House of the Sacred Heart in Beppu**

Going back to Beppu where the mission for the newly born and youngsters was, we noticed that the Salesian family had increased greatly as a result of the war, the number of orphans had multiplied, at the sametime the mission began to accept the illegitimate children born from the union of American soldiers and Japanese women. It became necessary to look for a larger place and also to divide the mission in two. The Mother House “Mary Mazzarello” and a second branch. The responsibility fell upon Sr. Carmela Solari who with the help of the native Sisters, by then, well schooled in the FMA charisma, and a group of benefactors after considerable difficulties finally found a large property that would satisfy their needs. The property was only a 20 minutes walk from the existing mission and they had permission to occupy it. The property called “Mantetsu” served as a hospital and convalescence home for the military and was still operable.

After the necessary documentation, the House of the Sacred Heart was built and immediately a number of young children were transferred there. Later on, the very young ones were kept in the Mother House while the older children were sent to the new branch where they could attend kindergarten and elementary school. As a matter of fact, in 1947, Sr. Carmela was given permission to start kindergarten and elementary school also for day students; the school was also named “Myojo” after the Institute for Social Work. In 1948 Junior and Senior High were included.

Sr. Carmela Solari became the first principal and the first teachers were the young native Sisters and the aspirants. They taught during the day and assisted the children during the night. Their work was accomplished with great sacrifice, but encouraged by the faith of their principal, the love of God and the children they overcame all obstacles still keeping a generous heart.

To testify to the tenacity and daring of our Sisters, the Summer Camp

for the children started in 1950. Many of the children physically and psychologically tested by the war were in dire need of spending some time away from the pollution of the city in open spaces, benefiting from the fresh air. The Sisters were able to overcome additional obstacles and with the help of the American Army, they procured an area near the sea at Ozai in the province of Oita. In 1952, the house in Ozai became the House of St. Joseph of Oita which houses young girls who have completed Middle School and do not continue with higher education. The first Sisters housed there were Sr. Gazzada, Sr. Marcuzzo, Sr. Tashiro, Sr. Iwamoto Kumi and 15 girls who would be taken care of and at the same time be schooled in agriculture.

## **2. House Mary Help Tokyo-Akabane 1946**

We have already mentioned the work being done at Seibi Gakuen when the house burned down. The Sisters and students that were housed there were hoping to return and were waiting to find a new place. It behooves to mention at this time, that the ways of Providence are infinite and they manifest themselves to us in the most unthinkable manner.

Having evacuated to Yamanaka, the children continued to attend the public school of the town. The entire Seibi family however, lived in unimaginable meager means. It was soon after the war, food and all basic means for survival were lacking all over. The Sisters then looked upon the occupying forces in the country to receive some aid.

Although somewhat lengthy I must report the experience as narrated by the author of "The Solitary Mountain":

"...Sr. Letizia called Sr. Angiolina and spoke to her thus: 'go to Kofu, at the headquarters of the American General. Ask to speak to the General in person, explain to him the work we are involved in with all our limited means and necessities and ask him: Could you kindly give us permission form to obtain from a factory a number of clogs so that our children can attend school across town; they are in desperate need of them.' Sr. Angiolina left for Kofu accompanied by Sr. Santina and Sr. Monica-Hana the latter were going to Tokyo to look for land....

The American General, Mr. Braibanti received her immediately, listened to her story without blinking an eye and answer thus: «But, Sister you are educators. Why don't you teach your orphans». He rang a bell and an officer appeared at once, the General asked for the necessary papers that would authorize the Sisters to open a school.

Sr. Angiolina with much delight returned to Yamanaka with the application forms, instead of the clogs. Sr. Letizia was not at all happy by this development. They lived in three small wooden houses plus the Summer Home of the University: there was no space for classrooms, there were no desks, nor teachers, nor money. She sent Sister back to return the application forms accompanied by all her sincerest thanks and begged again for the clogs.

General Braibanti, listened again with much patience... The farmer sows when it's time to seed and concluded-this is the time-therefore-start sowing!

With the application forms Sister once more returned to Yamanaka and related the General's message. Sr. Letizia remained silent for a long time: she was praying.

On the third day, a third encounter with the General-Our Superior says that we will start teaching, however our children will take their year-end examinations at the public school— No. You are capable. So, start working!

The application forms were filled and the process went along. Obviously, with the application completed the clogs also arrived”.

That was how the school in Yamanaka began, it can also be considered as the starting point of the educational activity of the Institute in Japan. Meanwhile, in Tokyo the Sisters were scouting for land with buildings that could house the children. After long days of wondering the streets of Tokyo, through the help of a relative of the Hirate Sisters who was an ex-member of the Japanese military, (the military had been dissolved by the occupying powers) the Sisters were directed to a complex of ex-military barracks in Akabane. They were able to obtain the complex on loan, therefore allowing the children to return to Tokyo and to start a school. The barracks became the houses for the Sisters, the children, the classrooms, and the chapel.

The name House of Mary Help was given to the new house, and it became the Mother House of the Institute of the FMA in Japan.

A Sister remembering those early days attests:

“We all worked till very late at night. Having survived the hardship with all its consequences, it was easy and natural for us. We all got along well and we were all serene and full of life. We worked very well indeed”.

The school was also recognized by Tokyo's Authorities and gradually, all its academic levels were also approved: Middle School and Senior High. In 1948, we had 300 boarders and the enrollment of day students also increased.

A great deal of help came from the American soldiers, not only economically but also with physical labor. It was through their effort that

the hill of Akabane was put in order. Even on this matter there is a lot to be said, but for lack of time and space, I cannot add more.

The post-war religious activity was also flourishing thanks to the collaboration of the Salesians particularly Fr. Crevacore, who became the chaplain. During that period there were many baptisms among the students.

The Novitiate for many years that was in Beppu was transferred to Tokyo in 1948 and slowly all the various levels of formation were also housed in Tokyo.

### **3. Shizuoka: House of the Sacred Heart and school**

As mentioned earlier, the children of Seibi had been evacuated to the Parish of Shimizu, Shizuoka. At that time, however, the parish priest, Fr. Delahaye in addition of giving hospitality to the children and due to the new laws regarding the schools, asked the FMA to help him in obtaining a large sum of money in order to be able to continue with the school he had started, adding that one day he would turn over the school to them. Sr. Begliatti, who was responsible for the FMA in Japan, came to the conclusion that the time had arrived for the Sisters to start seriously their educational mission. She procured the money from a benefactor who also agreed that one day the Sisters should take over the direction of the school.

Since 1944, Sr. Shibayama Setsuko had been teaching in the school. When the Sisters and the students left to go to Yamanaka, she remained to continue teaching in Shimizu together with Sr. Aikawa Kiku. Unfortunately, this school was also burned down during the war so they too had to find refuge in Yamanaka. At the end of the war however they were requested to return and resume their work and of course they gladly accepted; this happened on 2 October 1945. The new scholastic laws forced difficult solutions. It was necessary to find new property that would accommodate the new school with the new objectives.

In 1947, The FMA took over the management of the school and gave it the same name as the school in Akabane, which is Seibi Gakuen. They have the school, as an Institution, however they lack the building and the necessary land.

In 1948, some property was found not too far from the parish. To purchase this land the cooperation, sacrifices and prayers of the parents,

students and aspirants were decisive. Sr. Begliatti who could not dispose of such large sum of money decided to proceed with the plans hoping that the expenses would eventually be taken cared of. A new community was started that consisted of the Superior, Sr. Conte, one aspirant and two FMA teachers, Sr. Shibayama and Sr. Shizu Hirate. Sr. Begliatti became the principal and Sr. Conte the vice-principal.

As always, the economic problems were great, however with the help of benefactors and the formation of Parents Union, a collaborative system was put in place and still has its roots today.

Contrary to the other schools in Shizuoka, we started first with the upper classes (to continue the work of Fr. Delahaye) and later added the lower classes. It was also necessary to say that in a town where most of the students were children of farmers there was no great need for a private school for children. Among the various activities of the house it was necessary to mention the mission on behalf of the orphans that continued till 1996 and was similar to the one in Beppu and also called "Seibi Home".

In 1953, there was a request from the community to accept children for room and board. The first to be accepted were a brother and sister whose father had been ill for seven years therefore, their mother was forced to work leaving the children home alone. The FMA saw this as a sign and a call from Divine Providence. The following day a girl from Junior High asked for shelter and so began the Social Work mission, that initially was subsidized by an American benefactor, Miss Margaret Benedictus, employed in the Marines Aircraft carrier at Oriscany. For this reason, the mission was named the "Oriscany Home" as a tribute to the contribution received from the personnel of the carrier. However with the approval and subsequent subsidy of the State, the name was changed to "Seibi Home".

#### **4. Osaka: House and school of Mary Immaculate**

After the first experience of the FMA at Miyazaki, for a certain period, with the exception of the brief interval at Mikawajima, the FMA did not work along side the Salesians. However, our contacts remained active particularly with Fr. Cimatti and others. As a matter of fact, at Akabane, the Sisters obtained as a chaplain a Salesian and also in Shizuoka. The Salesians continued in providing for all our houses their spiritual assistance and teaching in the formation of the young FMA. They also had

expanded their missions in many localities and together with the FMA the Salesian charisma had fruitfully spread throughout Japan.

In January 1949, the Salesian director, Fr. Margiaria from Osaka sent the following request to the FMA: "The Salesian Fathers are about to open, by next year, a school for boys and they invite the Sisters to do the same for the girls". In reality, not only the Salesians, but also Tamatsukuri responsible for the elementary school of the parish, wanted the Sisters to take over the management of the school. The Bishop of Osaka, Monsignor Taguchi had written a letter expressing his desire that the FMA would open a school on all academic levels in his diocese.

The FMA arrived in Osaka on 29 September 1950, welcomed by the Salesians, they proceeded to the parish church for mass and to ask God's blessings on their new mission. They initiated their work taking over the administration of the nursery school "Garashia" named after a Japanese martyr, keeping always in mind, however to start as soon as possible their own mission. Their first objective was to find a suitable piece of property, which they found adjacent to the parish. As a result of the war, it was in terrible condition, but they foresaw a great future by developing it. They started to work immediately to open the nursery school and gradually completed an entire school complex all the way up to secondary school.

Meanwhile, the Salesian charisma was developing through the many Oratories and catechism classes in the various parishes. In a relatively short time we had two vocations: one was sent to us by the Salesians, another was the young lady responsible for the youth of the parish, additional vocations came later.

Once again, the procedures to obtain the necessary permissions to build schools and the economic hardship became our daily concern, but our faith in Mary Help Of Christians and our love for the youth of the country made everything possible. Here too, the Sisters opted Seibi for the name of the school, however since there was already another school by that name, they chose "Josei", "jo" meaning castle in honor of Osaka Castle that was near by the school and "SEI" meaning star that symbolizes the Blessed Mother.

The school compound developed in very short time. The student enrollment soon became numerous. The prediction of the development became a reality.

## PART IV

### **1. The foundation of the FMA Province in Japan**

So far, the Japanese Mission was dependent initially on the Oriental Province, and from 1930 on the Sino-Japanese Province with its headquarters in Shanghai. During this period we witnessed the devastating war in Europe as well as in Asia.

To summarize, therefore, by 1952, the Japanese mission at Akabane, we had Mary Help of Christians House, which served as the mother house; the nursery; the social work for needy boys and girls; and a scholastic complex that covered all the various level of education from kindergarten to senior high. At Beppu we had: the mother house (Mary Mazzarello); the day nursery; and the social work “Sayuri Aijien”; in addition, Beppu also had the Sacred Heart House with the social work and a scholastic complex. At Shizuoka, we had the Sacred Heart House and a scholastic complex. At Osaka: the Mother house, Mary Immaculate and a scholastic complex. The missionary Sisters sent to Japan till 1950, numbered 30 and the Japanese professed Sisters were 39 plus two Korean Sisters. At that time an even larger expansion was anticipated not only for Japan, but also for Korea.

It became appropriate at this time to establish an additional Province. Sr. Teresa Merlo became the Provincial of the house. Sr. Merlo was one of the first six missionaries who were sent to India, although she never learned to speak Japanese, she would remain in the memory of the Sisters for her goodness and her innate leadership qualities.

The Japanese Province thus became independent and took the name selected by the Center as ‘Alma Mater Province’.

By now, the work of the FMA in Japan was solidly underway, progressing along the path traced by the spirit of our founding Sisters. With the social and economic changes of the time, the increase in available personnel, and the freedom of action of the mission, the works of the FMA multiplied. It was indeed a period of great expansion in this fertile land.

In 1957, the work of the FMA reached Korea. For twenty years, Japan and Korea worked in unison till 1976, when the Province was divided.

## **2. The present time**

For a missionary outlet outside of the Orient, after repeated requests from both the Mother Provincial of Peru (Mother Maria Lucia Beccalossi) and the Mother Provincial of Bolivia (Mother Eunice Mesa), a first Missionary Sister was sent in 1989. She was soon followed by two additional missionaries in 1990. They were needed to work among the many Japanese of the Okinawa and San Juan Colonies. They were also needed among the girls of Japanese origin who were studying in the boarding school run by the FMA. It is well to note, that, when the request for missionaries arrived at the Provincial House, many Sisters immediately volunteered to go, proving that they had reached the full maturity of the FMA spirit, that is: the shedding of egocentric thinking that leads to courageous sacrifices in the giving of one self.

In 1992, to answer the needs of the new Japanese society that received many immigrants from the Philippines, two missionaries, Sr. Anita Miranda and Sr. Violeta Tuason, came to Japan to work among their nationals who were and still are in need of pastoral, social and economic help. Since then, the collaboration among the Sisters continued and now the Sisters from the Philippine are three: two work in Tokyo and one in Osaka. At the same time, in 1993, a Sister from Japan went to the Philippines as a bridge to the strong relationships between the two provinces.

Today our mission does not aim any longer at its expansion, rather it is urgent to restructure our works because of the reduction in personnel, but the call “*da mihi animas*” is even more imperative.

“Cast in to the deep” in the past could have been the call to expansion. In the present time, we are facing a period of discernment... It is not easy... We know however, that as always we must be open to new ways that are in consonance with the unexpected situations that are arising. At times, they could be very uncomfortable, but they must be faced with both a spirit of humility and also audacity to spur the prophetic vision.

## **Conclusion**

This year, our Province is celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the FMA mission in Japan. For this reason, a book has been written containing our history from its inception up to the present, the title of this book is: “Nel

Divenire il Monumento Vivente di Riconoscenza a Maria”.

As Don Bosco said, we are always more and more convinced that it is “Mary who has done everything”.

In order to continue to become “the living monument of gratitude of our Founder Don Bosco to Mary Help of Christians”, we are called to live in a renewed and conscious way the charisma that was given to us.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This report is based on the book: “Seibo e no Kansha no ikita kinenhi to natte” (“Becoming the Living Monument of gratitude to Mary”) on the History of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Japan written in Japanese on the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Arrival of the first Sisters in Japan (1929-2004).

# THE BEGINNING OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS IN THAILAND. THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS (1931 - 1952)

Ana Rosa Sivori FMA\*

## 1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to present the beginning of the work of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Thailand.

The FMA came to Thailand invited by Fr. Gaetano Pasotti, Acting Provincial of the Salesian Congregation and later the first Salesian Bishop in Thailand, to help in the mission field of the Salesian Fathers who arrived in Thailand on October 1927, after they were sent away from China. "I am sure", said the Bishop to the Superiors, "this country is going to be a beautiful field of work and apostolate also for our Sisters". Mother Luisa Vaschetti, the Superior General, accepted the invitation.<sup>1</sup>

Some important particulars, the difficulties and the sacrifices the Sisters of the first generation had to undergo in order to give a good start to the works we enjoy nowadays will be briefly recalled in this work.

## 2. General Background

Thailand is situated in the heart of the Southeast Asian mainland. There are conflicting opinions regarding the origin of the Thais. It could be said with presumed certainty that the Thais originated in Northwestern Szechuan in China about 4,500 years ago and later migrated down to their present homeland. Siam is the name by which the country was known to the world until 1939 and again between 1945 and 1949. On May 1949, an official proclamation changed the name of the country to "Thailand". Thailand is a constitutional monarchy with a democratic form of government. Since 1932, Kings of Thailand have exercised their constitutional legislative powers, their executive powers and their judicial powers through specific government institutions. While not directly involved in

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Province Archive, *Chronicle of the Thai Province* - year 1931.

Thailand's political life, the King exerts a strong moral influence on carefully selected issues.<sup>2</sup>

The Catholic Church has a long history in Thailand. The first catholic missionaries were Portuguese, they came to Siam in the year 1567. In 1922, the Vicariate of Bangkok had some well established churches, but there were only 30 indigenous priests and 20 missionaries MEP, too few to assist the catholic population of about 25,000. At that time, Msgr. René Perros proposed the division of the Vicariate in three parts and invited some religious orders to come to work in Thailand.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. The FMA work in Thailand

Our mission in Thailand began on 14 November 1931, with the arrival of five missionaries from Italy: Sr. Maria Baldo, Sr. Luigina Di Giorgio, Sr. Graziella Amati, Sr. Antonietta Morellato and Sr. Giulia Lauton. The Major Superiors from Turin had appointed Sr. Maria Avio, at that time missionary in Assam, as the leader of the group, so she joined them in Bombay.

The first residence of the Sisters was Bang Nok Kuek village. Provisory, they were lodged in the house where the Sisters of a local Congregation Lovers of the Cross formerly lived who had left the mission before the Fathers of the Missioni Estere di Parigi handed over the mission to the Salesian Fathers.

From their arrival, the Sisters had to share the house with a local community of eight old ladies that had been assistants of the missionary fathers. "The community – said the chronicle – was formed by eight sisters (ladies) who formerly were the right hand of the missionaries in the different residences. All of them were old and they were suffering from many ailments. They had worked very hard and with great zeal for the Church but now their only occupation was the teaching of the catechism".<sup>4</sup> In the same house, besides these eight ladies, there were some orphans and some other women who acted as housemaids. Annexed to the house, the Salesian Fathers had a small school for girls. They were helped by a

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<sup>2</sup> Cf Acts of the 6<sup>th</sup> World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Tourism. 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Robert COSTET, *Siam et Laos: Histoire de la Mission*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Antonio M. ALESSI, *Con Maria nel paese del Buddismo*. Leumann – Torino, Elle Di Ci 1984.

young teacher, Maria Ngieb who later became the first native Daughter of Mary Help of Christians of Thailand.

Our Sisters brought up in much different surroundings and with other mentality had to make great sacrifices to adapt themselves to that situation. Fr. Braga, the Provincial of China, visiting the Sisters said: "...you are the first FMAs who arrived in Thailand so you have a great responsibility in front of the Congregation who sent you and in front of the people who saw you arriving here. We wait for God's miracles but we have to help God to fulfil those miracles".<sup>5</sup>

Besides these inconveniences, they had to face the communication problems because of the difficulty of the new language. The big obstacle the Sisters had to overcome at first was surely the learning of the Thai language. A young Salesian, Giorgio Bainotti, had been assigned by the superiors to teach them Thai half an hour a day.

After six months, the Sisters were able to speak a little bit of Thai, so they could take up the responsibility of the school and the parish activities.

On 2 June 1932, Fr. Gaetano Pasotti, the Provincial, gathered the FMAs, the assistants, the orphans and the workers and officially appointed Sr. Maria Avio as the only superior of the house and responsible for the school and all the activities. This change of course hurt the feelings of the old teachers, but our missionaries tried their very best to make them understand the necessity of this arrangement. The FMA then, could begin to organize their work and the activities of the mission.

Only on 6 January 1934, the two communities, that of the FMA and the assistants were completely separated and their members could live and work independently.

Right from the beginning, our five FMA were under the direct care of the Major Superiors of Turin, but on 18 October 1934, the community was affiliated to St. Thomas Apostle Province with the head office at Madras, like the houses of China and Japan.

On 21 June 1935, Sr. Maria Avio returned to India and Sr. Maria Baldo took her place as Superior. On the same year, the first three aspirants started their postulancy and were sent to India for their further formation.

At the end of the year 1935, other four missionaries arrived in Thailand. The Sisters worked in the school, were responsible for the kitchen

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<sup>5</sup> Cf Province Archive, *Chronicle of Bang Nok Kuek*, November 1931.

and the laundry of the Salesian Fathers and besides that, they started visiting the catholic families in other villages.

#### 4. First exodus

On December 1935, during the provincial visit, Msgr. Pasotti asked the Provincial, Sr. Clotilde Cogliolo, to send two Sisters to the small town of Banpong to take care of the parish school for girls, the kitchen and the laundry of the Salesian Fathers. Sr. Cogliolo accepted the proposal and sent five Sisters there. The Sisters were lodged in a provisory wooden shack. At Banpong, life began in great poverty: lot of work, lot of sacrifices and no comfort at all. On 5 May 1937, the General Council sent the approval for the foundation project of a school.<sup>6</sup>

On 16 February 1938, Msgr. Antonio Drapier, Apostolic Delegate for Thailand and Indochina, blessed the laying of the foundation stone for a new house dedicated to the Sacred Heart. The building constructed by the Congregation, on a piece of land given by Msgr. Pasotti, became the first house of the FMA in Thailand.<sup>7</sup>

In the meantime, Msgr. Pasotti decided to found a new local congregation. He requested the FMA for the religious formation of the new native Sisters.

“I know I am asking you a great sacrifice”, he said to the provincial, “but I think no one better than you can form them giving the principles of the salesian apostolate”.

Mother Provincial immediately understood the importance of having a local congregation for the apostolate in the villages. “Father”, she answered “your trust and confidence is something grand, but I am afraid I don’t have Sisters enough prepared for this important job. Anyway I will try to please you”.<sup>8</sup>

Mother Provincial called back from Banpong: Sr. Luigina Di Giorgio to be the Superior of the new congregation, and Sr. Antonietta Morellato to be the Mother Mistress of the native novices.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf Province Archive, *General Council minutes*, May 1937.

<sup>7</sup> Cf Province Archive, *Mgr. Pietro Carretto's statement*, 22 July 1956.

<sup>8</sup> Cf Province Archive, *Chronicle of Bang Nok Kuek*, June 1938.

On 19 March 1939, the Provincial, Sr. Cogliolo talked to Msgr. Pasotti to make clear some points regarding the Sisters and their activities. These were the main points of the agreement:<sup>9</sup>

1. The FMA will definitely leave the house of Bang Nok Kuek to the Sisters of the new native congregation; there they will have their mother house and novitiate.

2. Only four FMA will be left at Bang Nok Kuek: one as Superior, one as Mother Mistress and the other two as responsible for the school, the workroom, the dispensary and the parish activities till the native Sisters would be ready to take the responsibility themselves.

3. All the other FMA, including the aspirants, will live in Banpong.

On 11 April 1939, the FMA went to live in the new house built at their own expense and the school was left under their own responsibility. Finally, seven years after their arrival in Thailand, the FMA could have their own house and their own mission. The school was given the Thai name Narivooth School.

The four Sisters left at Bang Nok Kuek were effective members of Banpong community and they were under the direct responsibility of the superior of Banpong.

During the years 1940 to 1946 the sisters had to undergo many hardships and difficulties. In December 1940 a fierce religious persecution began in the north eastern provinces. All the French priests, brothers and nuns were order to leave the country; some Thai priests and nuns were imprisoned and some were shot dead.

On 13 December 1941, after the Japanese troops broke in Thailand, Sr. Rose Moore, Irish missionary holding British passport, was imprisoned in Banpong and then she was sent to a concentration camp in Bangkok for two months.

In September 1943, when the Italian and the Japanese became enemies, our Italian missionaries were in great danger. Before the Japanese soldiers could do any harm to the Italian missionaries, the Thai authorities quietly arranged their imprisonment in the Capuchin Nuns' Convent ("domicilio coatto"); the Thai cloistered nuns went to Narivooth School and lived with the three Salesian Sisters left there. After two months, our Italian missionaries were free but because of the dangerous situation all

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<sup>9</sup> Cf *Ibid.*, March 1939.

of them went to Bang Nok Kuek and lived there for two full years till the end of the war in August 1945.<sup>10</sup>

## 5. New requests

After the war, in 1947, the Bishop of Bangkok, Msgr. Perros, invited the FMA to take up the direction of the School for the Blind founded in 1939 by an American blind lady Miss Genevieve Caulfield. The superiors studied carefully the situation and at the end accepted the new mission. The Governor of Bangkok handing over the school to the Sisters said: “We entrust these unfortunate children to you and are sure that we put them in good hands. If your religion can make them happy, don’t refuse them this consolation”.<sup>11</sup>

Haad Yai, was the third house opened in Thailand by the FMA. According to the chronicle of the house: “This foundation was desired and encouraged by Msgr. Pasotti who lent some money, without any interest, to the Sisters, in order to purchase a piece of land and a house. On 28 June 1950, the first 240 girls were welcomed by the Sisters at Thidanukhro School, Haad Yai”.<sup>12</sup>

These first three houses remained under St. Thomas Apostle Province with the head office at Madras until 1952. The Provincials: Sr. Tulia Bernardini, Sr. Clotilde Cogliolo, Sr. Maria Avio and Sr. Teresa Merlo regularly visited the Sisters in Thailand. In 1952, the Major Superiors decided to erect the three houses of Banpong, Bangkok (School for the Blind) and Haad Yai as a Province. This event took place on 24 February 1952. Sr. Antonietta Morellato was the first Provincial. The new province was put under the patronage of St. Mary Mazzarello and the head office was at Banpong.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Cf Province Archive, *Chronicle of Banpong*, December 1940 – August 1945.

<sup>11</sup> Salesian Bulletin, January 1947, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Cf Province Archive, *Chronicle of Haad Yai*, June 1950.

<sup>13</sup> Cf Province Archive, *General Council minutes*, M. Clelia Genghini, Turin, 24 February 1952.

## **6. Conclusion**

In these past 75 years, the mission of the FMA in Thailand changed notoriously according to the times. In 1931, when the five pioneers arrived, the mission field was just a small village; now we have 11 houses all over the country.

Today we are 91 FMAs in Thailand, and 74 are native Sisters. All of us, except a few aged Sisters, are involved in the assistance and the formation of children and young people in big schools, vocational centers, hostels and in small poor village centers.

Our first missionaries lived in great poverty and endure with joy and generosity the labour and the privations of the hard beginnings. With their lives, they wrote beautiful pages of courage, sacrifices and authentic heroism. It seems almost unbelievable how our pioneers could give life to such a great enterprise.



## **THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS IN THE PHILIPPINES**

*Estrella Castalone FMA\**

I believe that long before the FMA set foot on Philippine soil, God, in His mysterious ways has set the stage that it might work out. The interior disposition of the Filipino people is one. The religion of the primitive Filipino was animistic. Objects and places were believed to be inhabited by spirits - some good, some bad. The souls of human beings were thought to survive after death and to exert an influence on the living. The belief in an invisible world and in the power of the beings that populated it led naturally to attraction for practices of worship and veneration. It was a fertile ground for evangelization.

It was therefore no wonder that since the discovery of the Philippine archipelago by Magellan in 1521, the conquest and Christianization of the islands proceeded at a fast pace and with considerably less bloodshed compared to Latin America.

To this day, among the nations of the Far East, the Philippines is noted as the only country graced with the gift of Christian faith. 83.5% of the total population are baptized into the catholic faith. How the Filipinos readily accepted the Catholic religion remains an enigma to historians. It is a fact that despite the Philippines' centuries' long contact with other cultures and religions, Roman Catholicism has long been the predominant religion in the country.

The great non-christian religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism or Islam though present in the Philippines for centuries have always had a rather restricted influence on its people. The average Filipino grows up peacefully in a catholic universe and becomes habituated to sacred images and practices and participating in traditional religious celebrations and having the school or work calendar interrupted by the Christmas and Holy Week holidays.

Could this openness to the catholic religion be the reason why the FMAs chose the Philippines after their expulsion from Mainland China?

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There are no supporting documents to this effect. What was certain was that as early as 8 March 1955, then Provincial Superior of Hongkong, Sr. Elena Bottini wrote to the FMA General Council informing them of her Council's decision to accept the invitation of a certain Mr. Federico Ossorio, Vice President of the Victorias Milling Company to start a school for the children of the company's workers specifically the girls in Negros Occidental.

That time, the Salesians were already present in Victorias at the Don Bosco Technical College for boys with Fr. Carlo Braga as Rector of a community with 20 Salesians. In her letter, Sr. Elena Bottini, among other things specified "... from the Philippines we are certain to have good vocations and they said it will not be difficult to open another house immediately after this one would have been established..." (cf. Sr. Elena Bottini, *Letter to the FMA General Council*, Hongkong March 8, 1955).

After the permission from the General Council was obtained, Sr. Catherine Moore, delegate of the Provincial Superior, left Hongkong for the Philippines on 1 December 1955 with Sr. Erminia Borzini to make the necessary preparations. Thus, the first house of the FMA in the Philippines was formally opened by the first Sisters on 8 December 1955 in Victorias, Negros Occidental. The Chronicles of the House started precisely on that day with the significant entry:

"Today, with the help of our heavenly Mother, we begin our work in this land...our small community is made up of Sr. Josephine Gallo, Sr. Ligia Borges and Sr. Erminia Borzini—the Superior of the community..." (Chronicles of Casa Sacro Cuore, Victorias, December 1955)

On 24 February 1956, the Sisters formally opened the Rosary Kindergarten School with 54 pupils. The name was later changed to St. Mary Mazzarello School, the first school run by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in the Philippines. Thus began a journey, which gave birth to the FMA Philippine Province of St. Mary Mazzarello on 8 October 1984. From one house and three pioneer Sisters in 1955, the FMA in the Philippines now count 17 houses (15 in the Philippines and two in Papua New Guinea), 130 perpetually professed FMA, 28 temporarily professed FMA and four novices. Weaned from the FMA Chinese Province in 1984, it has, in its turn given birth to the Timor - Indonesia Visitatoria.

Now, looking back over the past 50 years of FMA presence here in the Philippines and 20 years as an independent province, we count our blessings along the way.

1) Creative fidelity to the Salesian charism and to the spirit of Mornese in the integral education of the young, particularly of young girls. The first seven houses in fact attest to this:

Casa Sacro Cuore in Victorias, Negros with St. Mary Mazzarello School opened in 1955,

Casa Maria Immacolata in Balic-Balic, Manila with Holy Trinity Academy opened in 1958,

Casa San Giuseppe in Canlubang, Laguna with Sta. Cecilia Catholic School opened in 1960,

Casa San Giovanni Bosco in Paco, Manila with the Pius XII Ladies' Dormitory opened in 1965,

Casa Maria Ausiliatrice in Tondo, Manila with the Don Bosco Youth Center opened in 1969,

Casa M Ausiliatrice in Canlubang, Laguna with Mary Help of Christians School opened in 1979,

Casa Madre Mazzarello in Punta, Cebu with Lourdes Kindergarten School opened in 1981.

Going beyond the bounds of formal academic education, the FMA in the Philippines ventured into more challenging apostolate in behalf of the young. Most significant of these are: the creation of Centers for Street Children, Technical/Technological Centers for young women and work among the indigenous people.

1.1. Centers for Street Children -in answer to Jaime Cardinal Sin's appeal to all religious to take care of the numerous Street Children crowding the busy streets of Manila, in 1989, the FMA embarked on this delicate mission encouraging the collaboration of interested lay people. It was not a hit and miss thing because the FMA's zeal for this needy sector of the society was well defined in a five-year plan called "A Journey of Hope" and concretized in the formation of the Laura Vicuña Foundation for Street Children which now enjoy the status of an accredited Non-Government Organization (NGO) with its Board of Directors manned by lay people outstanding in their respective fields in the society.

The Laura Vicuña Center for Street Children in Cubao, Quezon City established on 19 June 1991 obtained government permission to operate on 15 July 1993, full accreditation for Street Children on 15 December 1993 and the more significant accreditation for sexually abused girls on 8 June 2000. Day drop-in centers are also functioning in Don Bosco School, Sta. Mesa, Manila and at the Don Bosco Youth Center in Tondo, Manila.

1.2. Technical/Technological Centers for young women. Aware of the reality that the most urgent problem of Filipino youth is survival, the FMA set to work towards the human promotion of the young among whom they work. More practically, they established centers equipped to train the young in some technical skills so much in demand in this fast changing technological society. Tie-ups and networking with companies and agencies, which can readily employ the trainees become one of the winning features of the FMA *Techcen* (as they are now called) in Sta. Mesa, in Mabalacat, in Malihao, in Mindoro and in Cebu.

At the threshold of the golden jubilee of FMA presence in the Philippines, its Technical Centers have prepared numerous young women to take their rightful place in the world of work as a most necessary step towards a more dignified future for them, for their families and their society.

2) The journey towards the formation of the Educating Community has come almost spontaneously right from the beginning. This may be attributed to the fact that among the Filipino cultural values, the so-called “pakikisama” is a primary value. It is literally translated as “getting along with others” but may well be defined as the willingness to share with one another the burdens as well as the rewards of living together. It is particular to the Filipino that, side by side with others who are similarly motivated, he is strong and can endure.

Thus in all these years, the educative work of the FMA has found willing collaborators from parents, lay teachers, simple friendly neighbors, past-pupils and even from the youth themselves. It is interesting to note that in the archives of each house, lay people are nominated as the first strict collaborators of the first Sisters (the Osorios and Locsins in Victorias, the Silvas in Balic-Balic, the Yulos and Mamons in Canlubang, the Lims and Comejos in Cebu... to name a few). Their collaboration goes beyond material help and assistance as they gradually imbibed the Salesian values and the “Da mihi animas”.

To this point, the journey with the Educating Community in each house and at the provincial level has taken us way ahead on the road of communion such that the monthly FMA Day of Spirituality now sees the constant presence of teachers, parents, cooperators, past-pupils and young people. We spend one whole day together to reflect and share on formative themes that will help us become more effective elements of communion in our respective communities.

3) The Salesian Youth Movement (SYM) has become a beautiful reality in the course of the years. In the Salesian Youth Spirituality primer, the “group” has been identified as the privileged place of formation and proposal among the young. It has not been difficult to make the proposal of a common spirituality to the young Filipino who considers the “*barkada*” (literally translated as “group”) as a very strong unit of existence and creates a great sense of belonging. This cultural value makes it almost spontaneous among the Filipino youth to come together as a group sharing whatever is common among them. Based on this ground, the Salesian Youth Movement started off in 1987 as a small group of 25 youth leaders from Holy Trinity Academy, Manila; Sta. Cecilia Catholic School, Canlubang; Mary Help of Christians School, Canlubang and Don Bosco Youth Center, Tondo gathered in the lush green of the FMA Novitiate in Canlubang, Laguna. Reflection and deepening of the Salesian Youth Spirituality charged these young people with contagious enthusiasm coming up with their slogan for DB 88: “With Don Bosco We Can Make It!”. And they did make it! When Mother General, Sr. Marinella Castagno came for her canonical visit in 1989, the Salesian Youth Movement was ready to “explode”.

The formal launching of the Salesian Youth Movement was an event participated in by 12,000 people at the Ateneo Gym in Loyola Heights on 19 November 1989 with the presence of no less than Mother Marinella Castagno, then Superior General of the FMA! This youthful enthusiasm and desire to proclaim God’s love in way particularly Salesian is constantly nourished by a systematic and well defined formation program at the local and provincial level.

To date, the SYM remains the vehicle of the Salesian Youth Spirituality as valid proposal to our young people to pursue holiness and proclaim to all the joy of being children of God! This same Salesian Youth Spirituality characterizes the journey of the whole Educating Community towards communion. This is the journey that will open before us wider horizons in this patch of the Kingdom especially dedicated to the young.



# BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF MIYAZAKI

Maria Mukai Yumiko CSM\*

## Introduction

In the year in which Pope Pius XI promulgated the encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926), on 16 February 1926, the Salesian missionaries arrived in Miyazaki, Japan, center of their mission, and capital of the province in the Island of Kyushu.<sup>1</sup>

On the same year, Japan was greeting the beginning of the period Shōwa of which its first years, different from the period Taishō of the reforms and of the consolidation of the economic-social formation, were characterized by imperialism and colonialism and grave economic crises. The Church in Japan had undergone strong opposition by the Japanese government, with the nationalistic climate of the country. Moreover, it is good to remember the negative prejudices of the people towards Christianity created during the persecution and which rendered the activities of the missionaries difficult.

The Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki, born from the humble activity of the women Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul, was founded in this social-political-ecclesial environment, in faithfulness to the wish of the Holy Father<sup>2</sup> and to the spirit of Don Bosco. But it was also the result of the initiative of Fr. V. Cimatti and Fr. A. Cavoli, becoming “one of the works most characteristic of the missionary action of the Salesians in Japan”.<sup>3</sup>

## 1. Before the foundation (1929-1937)

The Salesian missionaries, while trying to learn the difficult Japanese language and to accept the Japanese customs, began immediately

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<sup>1</sup> A. CREVACORE, *Un uomo dalle molte vite, il servo di Dio Don Vincenzo Cimatti*. Torino 1979, 215 p.

<sup>2</sup> Cf V. CIMATTI, *Breve Cronistoria dei primi 25 anni di lavoro salesiano in Giappone*, pp. 130-131. Lettera di don Cimatti a don Ricaldone 31/8/1937.

<sup>3</sup> L. FIORA, *Don Vincenzo Cimatti, il Don Bosco del Giappone*. Torino 1996, 195 p.

their apostolic activity going particularly to the poor and the needy as based on the Remembrances of Don Bosco to his missionaries: "Take special care of the sick, of children, of the old and of the poor, and you will gain the blessings of God and the benevolence of men".<sup>4</sup>

With generosity and good will, also the words of farewell of the Rector Major Fr. F. Rinaldi oriented the action and the life of the missionaries. At the end of the mass of 29 December 1925, on the day of departure of the first missionaries for Japan, Fr. Rinaldi "inculcated charity as the unique means or at least the indispensable in order to be able to penetrate the soul of this people".<sup>5</sup> You should further remember, the apostolic orientation of Fr. Cimatti, then Superior of the mission, which is expressed with generous works saying "The works of charity will be those which will save the missions in Japan".<sup>6</sup>

Following this directive, Fr. Cimatti, hardly began his activity as parish priest in Miyazaki (1927-1929), aside from the typical Salesian activity, he felt the necessity to intervene in whatever manner towards the poor which surrounded him and already had the idea of a shelter to welcome them.<sup>7</sup> He shared this idea with Fr. Cavoli, then assistant parish priest, so that in the month of September 1929, with Fr. Cavoli, he undertook a discreet apostolic activity by founding a leading "feminine circle of the Immaculate", whose principal end was that of visiting the homes of the numerous poor and sick of the city and bringing to them the comfort of Christian religion. This work was later consolidated under the form of the Conference of Saint Vincent de Paul, and was approved by the General Council of the Conference of Bologna in 1934.<sup>8</sup>

In 1930, the first old and most needy children, also among the children of lepers transferred from the Franciscan Sisters of May at Hitoyoshi, were first entrusted to good families. But soon Fr. Cavoli, who had become parish priest, became convinced that there was the need of providing a house for them with persons who could care for them. Thus, Fr. Cavoli, with the constant paternal support of Fr. Cimatti, notwithstanding

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<sup>4</sup> Cf BS 62 (1938) 132.

<sup>5</sup> A. CAVOLI, *Dall'Italia al Giappone: autobiografia di un missionario*. Rimini, Tip. Garattoni, 1959, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> Scritti di don Cimatti 5.

<sup>7</sup> Nel quaderno di don Cimatti in 1928 si legge: "Idea da studiarsi: Vi sono alcuni vecchi abbandonati... Casa di ricovero? Dove? A chi affidarli?...".

<sup>8</sup> Cf A. CAVOLI, *Dall'Italia al Giappone* p. 81; Id., *Conferenza missionaria femminile della B. Imelda Lambertini a Miyazaki*. Bologna, Tipografia Luigi Parma, 1934; Lettera di don Cimatti a don Ricaldone 31/1/1939.

the contrary opinions of the confreres who were preoccupied by the precarious economic situation of the mission, brought forward this project of charity.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, on 18 December 1932,<sup>10</sup> the hospice of *Kyūgoïn* was solemnly blessed in the presence of civil authorities and other personalities. There were speeches which exalted Christian charity. On 11 January 1933, the first four old people entered the hospice. And on 16 August of the same year, the section for orphans was added.<sup>11</sup>

For their service, Fr. Cavoli looked for ladies who would work for the hospice gratuitously. The first of the ladies who answered the call was Taki Osafune,<sup>12</sup> who would later become mother general of the CSM. Fr. Cavoli “provided them a brief regulation for the apostolate, as well as for the community life and practices of piety. Thus, he created a lay association with a spirit of sacrifice which distinguished its members from the beginning”.<sup>13</sup> From October 1933 to August 1935, Fr. Cavoli was in Italy for reasons of health and to seek financial help for the new work.<sup>14</sup>

“In the absence of Fr. Cavoli, Fr. Cimatti substituted him in guiding the hospice, particularly the personnel. He tried to give a greater religious formation to the young girls. He preached to them spiritual retreats, gave them periodical conferences, encouraged them and enthused them... in his mind, he saw among them «the future sisters» which he already dreamt for a long time”.<sup>15</sup>

On November 1934, the hospice had already 75 persons, made up of the old, children and personnel.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the need came for constructing a larger hospice. The number of collaborators also increased. By August 1935, when Fr. Cavoli returned, the construction was almost completed, so that on 29 September the hospice was solemnly blessed and inaugurated.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cf A. CAVOLI, *Dall'Italia al Giappone*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>10</sup> Cf Lettera di don Cavoli a don Ricaldone 12/1933; Cronaca personale di don Cimatti 18/12/1932.

<sup>11</sup> Cf Cronaca di *Kyūgoïn* in 1935.

<sup>12</sup> Cf K. TANIGUCHI, *Conquista desafio e esperança, Vida de Irmã Maria Osafune Taki*. Irmãs de Caridade de Miyazaki, 1992.

<sup>13</sup> A. CAVOLI, *Dall'Italia al Giappone*, p. 89; Cf Cronaca di *Kyūgoïn* in 1933.

<sup>14</sup> Lettera di don Cimatti a don Ricaldone 23/9/1933.

<sup>15</sup> Cf Cronaca della parrocchia di Miyazaki 19/8/1933; Cronaca di *Kyūgoïn* in 1933-1935.

<sup>16</sup> Cf L. TASSINARI, *Don Cimatti visto da vicino*, a cura della comunità “Salesio Hause”, Pro manoscritto, Beppu 1999, p. 65.

<sup>17</sup> Lettera di don Cimatti a don Ricaldone 1/10/1935.

The daily life in the hospice was based on the spirit of St. John Bosco: piety, morality, work, family spirit, cheerfulness. Inspired by this spirit, the young Japanese girls, now called *Daughters of Charity*, consecrated their lives generously for work of good, and were formed to such spirit.<sup>18</sup>

In 1936, Fr. Liviabella also left for the same scope. At the same period, in the Hospice, the Santa Maria printing press was set up in order to send newsletters entitled *Voci Lontane* (Far-away Voices) to Italian benefactors. Later, it began to print other newsletters for Catholics and non-Catholics.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Foundation of the new Native Congregation “Sisters of Charity” (1937)

Fr. Cavoli said in his autobiography: “My first idea was that of a lay association without vows and without habit”.<sup>20</sup> He never thought of founding a religious institute. On the contrary, several times, he emphasized to the group of women, the opportunity and the beauty of a lay association. Instead, it was Fr Cimatti who thought of founding a congregation.

Fr. Cimatti, who for four years already, held in his heart the idea of founding a new religious institute, seeing that the times were mature, one day in 1937, confided this to Fr. Cavoli, following his usual criterion of entrusting to the others with faith, the apostolic initiatives idealized by him. Fr. Cavoli told this in his autobiography.

“...One day in 1937, Fr. Cimatti expressed to me the convenience, given the time which were maturing, and also to comply to the pontifical directives, to found a religious congregation for women, capable of providing to the direction of the Hospice and, consequently, also to expand elsewhere with similar works of charity...”<sup>21</sup>

Notwithstanding the resistance of Fr. Cavoli, who alleged his lack of capability, Fr. Cimatti insisted on his invitation. “At the third time - continued Fr. Cavoli - I feared that I might be disobeying and thus bowing

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Cf Cronaca di *Kyūgoin* in 1935; Cronaca personale di don Cimatti in 1936; *BS* 15/7/1936.

<sup>20</sup> A. CAVOLI, *Dall'Italia al Giappone*, p. 95; Cf *Id.*, *Conferenza missionaria femminile della B. Imelda Lambertini a Miyazaki*, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> A. CAVOLI, *Dall'Italia al Giappone*, pp. 95-96.

my head, I answered him saying the words of St. Peter ‘On your word I shall throw the net’”.<sup>22</sup>

In the same way, Fr. Cimatti also intended to follow the directives of the Church. In fact, Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical *Rerum Ecclesiae*, addressed all prefects apostolic who were working in the missions, and hoped for the creation of new religious congregations, male and female, composed of native religious.<sup>23</sup>

Notwithstanding the initial perplexity for an unexpected announcement, most of the ladies who were already working at the hospice, opted to enter the religious life. They immediately began the process for the approval by the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide in Rome. On 6 June, Fr. Cimatti received the authorization to found a new congregation, while the formal decree of institution was issued on 1 August 1938. Fr. Cimatti indicated the scope of the new Institute: “The special scope of the new Congregation is the propagation of the faith with works of charity, whether corporal or spiritual...in every kind of work of social assistance for all kinds of persons”.<sup>24</sup>

The first novices were entrusted to the Congregation of the Visitation founded by Msgr. Albert Breton, then Prefect Apostolic of Fukuoka. Such concession was given on 15 August 1937, with the declaration of the foundation of a new religious congregation by Fr. Cimatti, the prefect apostolic of Miyazaki, which can also be considered as the date of the foundation of the Congregation of the Caritas. Five aspirants were chosen to be the first novices.

On 22 August, the investiture to the novitiate was made in the parish of Miyazaki in the hands of Fr. Cimatti.<sup>25</sup> After a year of absence of Fr. Cimatti, Fr. Cavoli celebrated in the church of the Hospice the investiture of the four new aspirants.

On 31 January 1939, the first solemn religious profession was celebrated. In that ceremony presided by Fr. Cimatti, Prefect Apostolic of Miyazaki, Sr. Maria Osafune and Sr. Giuliana Kubo pronounced their first vows.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Cf Lettera di don Cimatti a don Ricaldone 31/8/1937.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Cronaca personale di don Cimatti 22/8/1937.

### 3. Period of trial (1937-1945)

From the name of the place of origin, the newly established religious institute was called “Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki”.<sup>26</sup> Fr. Cavoli chose the name *Caritas* because, “through the CSM, the advice of Fr. Rinaldi may be relived in a great number of souls”.<sup>27</sup>

After the foundation, from April 1939, Fr. Cavoli, leaving the office of parish priest to Fr. Liviabella, dedicated himself to the religious formation of the aspirants and of the Sisters with the help of Fr. Cimatti and of other Salesians. On 31 January 1938 (the approval would only be in 1949 because of the war), with study and research, finally managed to complete the draft of the Constitutions and gave them to the Sisters. Moreover, he dedicated himself to the composition of the Manual of Formation, a useful and concrete guide to be put into practice the religious life.<sup>28</sup>

But, on 8 December 1941, feast of the Immaculate Conception, the news which would put into test the work of the Caritas arrived: the beginning of the Pacific War. Immediately, the celebrations were suspended. After several days, Fr. Cavoli learned that he could no longer mail “Voci Lontane”. Furthermore, and what was worse, the entrance of outside help would no longer be authorized. At that time, the Hospice was one big family of more than 200 persons, so that if help did not come from Italy, it would have meant that it could no longer continue.

Fr. Cavoli, preoccupied of the situation, consulted with the Sisters and asked the prayer of the whole community. The common decision was to continue the Word without hoping for subsidies, trusting only Divine Providence. Thus, they turned to farming<sup>29</sup> and breeding animals; they even put up a small factory for small bamboo objects. Thus, they worked for four years, something which no man would have done.<sup>30</sup>

Because of the long and hard work, and poverty, six Sisters died of tuberculosis and pneumonia. Meanwhile, even Fr. Cavoli had to officially

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<sup>26</sup> Ma, nei primi documenti, il nome della Congregazione viene presentato come “Solores Charitatis in Japonia”.

<sup>27</sup> A. CAVOLI, *Dall'Italia al Giappone*, p. 97.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>29</sup> Vicino alla parrocchia di Tano la cui cura pastorale era affidata ai salesiani, si trovava il terreno incolto di circa cinque ettari e una vigna. Nel febbraio del 1939, don Cavoli decise di mandarci le suore e le aspiranti per coltivarlo, e per facilitare lo spostamento per il lavoro, comprò una casa a Tano che sarà la prima filiazione della casa madre.

<sup>30</sup> Cf V. M. TANIGUCHI, *Come Girasoli, Don Antonio Cavoli e la Congregazione Caritas di Miyazaki*. Leumann-Torino, Elle Di Ci, 1988, pp. 100-103.

abandon the direction of the Hospice. It was because in 1945, all foreign missionaries of the island of Kyushu were interned like prisoners at the foot of the Aso volcano, in the province of Kumamoto. They were put under very rigid surveillance to prevent them from escaping. They were freed after two months, however.<sup>31</sup>

World War II ended on 15 August 1945, feast of the Assumption. All the missionaries were freed. When they returned, the Hospice was in a disastrous condition on account of the bombardment and natural calamities; it was no longer habitable. However, Providence was not wanting for the reconstruction. The American Army offered help immediately. They helped repair the buildings and brought food and clothes in abundance. And, on the request of the local and provincial governments, boys from the street, orphans and old people who no longer had parents were received once more. The buildings were enlarged and those who were sheltered therein reached 360.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

The Post-War development of the Congregation was very rapid. Indeed, the growth that the CSM presently shows is a witness to the richness of the Salesian Charism. In 1955, the Salesian Rector Major, Fr. Renato Ziggotti, while having his canonical visit to Japan, remarked that the CSM is a succedaneous family, that testifies to the vital energies of the Salesian Society, which from its trunk has given life to new branches.<sup>33</sup> Fr. Cimatti, through the years, verified this word of Fr. Ziggotti, and expresses it so in his letter destined to Fr. Cavoli on 7 July 1957.

“Dearest Fr. Antonio, excuse me for the delay. I believe that which refers to the Holy Father is without certain doubt on what has been done for the ‘Charitas’. It was then duty of the undersigned to give order and the advice to do; and to you the duty to execute. The actual results demonstrated that the Lord has blessed our obedience. *Deo gratias!* Let us pray for one another. Fr. V. Cimatti.

P.S. I have underlined the words which indicate the *duty to...*”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Cf *Ibid.*, pp. 93-96.

<sup>32</sup> Cf *Ibid.*, pp. 97-100.

<sup>33</sup> A. CAVOLI, *Dall'Italia al Giappone*, p. 120.

<sup>34</sup> Lettera di don Cimatti a don Cavoli 7/7/1957.

The CSM is called to live a particular mission in the Salesian Family, that is, to proclaim the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus by living the words: “Go and tell the world, Blessed are the merciful,” and by assimilating the spirit of St. John Bosco and of St. Vincent de Paul through charitable service to various people. When we try to reach the historical origins of the Congregation, we rediscover and value once more the true Salesian missionaries who were faithful to the Gospel and the spirit of St. John Bosco.

# THE IDENTITY OF THE SISTERS SERVANTS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY IN THAILAND

*Maliwan Paramathawirote SIHM\**

The universal call of the people of God to holiness is carried out in a special way by the members of the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (SIHM). The sign of God's merciful love towards the Institute is clearly manifested in the history especially at the time of birth in the Church, through its founder and its history. When we go through the history we can understand that the foundation of the Congregation was the providential and particular gift of God to the Church.

## 1. Founder

“Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing” (Gen. 12:1-2).

Msgr. Gaetano Pasotti<sup>1</sup> was an Italian Salesian. Born from a poor family in Pinarolo Po (Pavia) in Italy on 5 February 1890. He entered the oratory in Turin in October 1900 and completed his course in the grammar school. He went to novitiate at the Foglizzo receiving the religious habit from the hands of Fr. Michael Rua in 1905. He professed at Foglizzo on 15 February 1906. He had to interrupt his Theological studies, since he was called to join the military during the World War I. He was ordained a priest in the war zone at Udine on 18 March 1916.<sup>2</sup> In 1918, he was discharged from the zone of war and he was asked to go to China as a missionary. Under the guidance of Fr. Versiglia, he left for the missions in China where he worked for nine years.<sup>3</sup>

In the beginning he did his apostolate in an institute in Macao and later in the Vicariate Apostolic of Shiu Chow in the district of Leinchow

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<sup>1</sup> Cf M. AGOSTINO – P. EGAN and Others, *The Salesian Family of Don Bosco*. Roma, Istituto Salesiano Pio XI 1999, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> Cf G. FAVINI, *Dizionario Biografico dei Salesiani*. Torino, Scuola Grafica Salesiana 1969, pp. 213-214.

<sup>3</sup> Cf M. AGOSTINO – P. EGAN and Others, *The Salesian Family of Don Bosco...*, p. 125.

(1924-1926). In 1926, he was appointed as a novice master (1926-1928). On 26 November 1927 he left once again, as a leader of a Salesian expedition to Thailand, at that time called Siam.<sup>4</sup>

After having arrived in Thailand, he put his heart and soul for the organization and development of religious life in the different parts in Thailand. In a short time with many sacrifices he was able to establish many Christian centres and the Salesian works. After having canonically established the mission, he was appointed as the mission superior on 30 June 1930.<sup>5</sup> In this year he opened a minor seminary to train local clergy.<sup>6</sup>

On 28 May 1934 he was appointed as the first Apostolic Prefect of Ratchburi and was consecrated Bishop on 24 June 1941. His episcopal consecration took place during the war. During the period when Thailand was affected by war, his anxiety and responsibility increased so much so he had to represent the Holy See in the whole country of Thailand. Like all the Salesian confreres Msgr. Gaetano Pasotti had to suffer inconveniences, privations, exhaustions, and extraordinary sacrifices. But because of his temperament and faith he was able to overcome all the difficulties especially by preparing the native clergy, establishing schools and social work centres. The vocations started to grow among the fervent Christians. And Msgr. Pasotti had the joy of leading personally the first priests of the Vicariate who were destined for studying in the different Pontifical Universities of Rome and in Salesian Athenaeum. In a few years, he was able to establish 10 houses: house of students, novitiate, schools and boarding schools, etc. With the establishment of various social work centres, the Salesians earned the affection of the people and the esteem of the government. Among all these works there was the establishment of institution for the formation of teachers and catechists, and an orphanage at Bang Nok Khueak was inaugurated and blessed in February 1948.

Catholic action i.e., the involvement of Catholics in the parish and the establishment of a seminary were very close to his heart. When he came to Thailand there was not much of Catholic action in the missions. Immediately after his coming he organized the catholic action with good guidelines. He had the plan to build a big seminary but he was called to his eternal reward. He died at Bangkok in Thailand on 3 September 1950. He died because of Malaria and blood cancer. His death left the vacuum among the clergy and the faithful of the Vicariate.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf G. FAVINI, *Dizionario Biografico dei Salesiani...*, pp. 213-214.

<sup>5</sup> Cf *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Cf M. AGOSTINO – P. EGAN and Others, *The Salesian Family of Don Bosco...*, p. 125.

## 2. Foundation

The Congregation of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a diocesan Congregation, was officially established by Msgr. Gaetano Pasotti on 7 December 1937. On the following day, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the first group of seven young women began their novitiate at Bang Nok Khueak, which is the native place of the Congregation and beside the Salesian Theologate.

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception in the following year (8 December 1938), six novices made their first profession. The founder himself explained why the feast of the Immaculate Conception had been chosen for the establishment of the new Institute: “When I founded the Congregation, I offered it to Our Lady. I chose her as patron to show that the congregation is hers...”<sup>7</sup>

The first name given to the new religious Institute in Thai is “SONG KHRO” which means, “Sisters-Helpers”. The mission of the Congregation would be to help in the missionary field, in the works of evangelization, education, works of mercy and others.<sup>8</sup>

Along the course of the time (1937-1971) we felt the need to change the name of the Congregation; the first name of the Congregation was “Sisters-Helpers” and the current Thai word broadly meant ‘social action’. We thought it would be more consistent and ideal for the Congregation to adapt the new name, “Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary” (SIHM). This change of name however, didn’t change the spirit and identity of it.

Many Salesians (SDB) and Sisters of ‘Daughters of Mary Help of Christians’ (FMA) contributed to the birth of this Congregation. At the death of the founder, the Congregation was only thirteen years old. After the death of Msgr. Gaetano Pasotti in 1950, his successor Msgr. Peter Caretto SDB took over the responsibility of the young Congregation. He guided the Institute, so as to contribute to the cultural development in the country.

The founder was deeply devoted to Don Bosco and to the Church, as were the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from the time of our foundation. The first superior of the Congregation and the first mistress

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<sup>7</sup> G. PASOTTI, *Teaching for Sisters Servants* (SongKhro). (The small collection and translation in English), Bang Nok Khuek, 22 August 1942.

<sup>8</sup> Cf G. PASOTTI, *The Path of Life: first edition of the society of Sisters Helpers*. (The original text is in Thai and translation in English). Bang Nok Khueak 1937, No. 2.

of novices were FMA Sisters. In 1964, the Congregation became autonomous, with the first Thai superior elected at the first general chapter. The presence of Salesians and FMAs explains the deep Salesian roots of the ‘Sisters Servants’.

### **3. Charism and mission of SIHM**

The Church wants that the religious families should have a clear idea of their particular physiognomy and their own mission: each one of them has been called to manifest some aspect of the richness of the One Mystery of Christ the Saviour and to cooperate in some way in the one salvific mission of Christ which the Church continues to realize.<sup>9</sup> The charism which is the gift of God that lies at the origin of the institute and of the vocation of everyone is the central point of orientation and measure of fidelity to the plan of God, to incarnate a particular aspect of the countenance of Christ.

The original grace of the founders put in evidence that our institute was born to respond to the needs of the local Church, and is totally and exclusively dedicated to the service of the local Church and the missionary activity. All the members dedicate their life to it through the witness of life, proclamation of the Word and charitable services in order to make the Church fully present to the whole world and that all may share fully in the service of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

For the approval to establish the Congregation, Msgr. Gaetano Pasotti, sent to the ‘Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith’, ‘The Path of Life’ the first edition of the rules/guidelines of the society of ‘Sisters Helpers’. In art. 1 of the path of life, he wrote; “The society of Sisters of Helpers of Ratchburi Diocese is a native society who makes simple vows, with a strong missionary spirit, making oneself a Siamese for the Siamese.”<sup>11</sup>

The charism of the Congregation is the heart of every Sisters Servants. The art. 4 of the Constitutions speaks of the charism of the Congregation, that is:

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<sup>9</sup> *Lumen Gentium*. No. 46.

<sup>10</sup> *Ad Gentes*. No. 5.

<sup>11</sup> G. PASOTTI, *The Path of Life: first edition of the society of Sisters Helpers...*, No. 1.

“The charism of the Society is love, service and forgiveness, ready always to answer “ I am the servant of the Lord” just like the Mother of God, by giving oneself wholeheartedly to serve God in man, ready to do anything which God desires, with sacrifice, even in very difficult circumstances because of love for Christ, following the slogan of the Society “the love of Christ impels us”.<sup>12</sup>

Love Jesus, serve Jesus and Mary, give forgiveness of the same Jesus on the cross to the people in need.

The original charism of the Congregation has always been to help mission centers, prepare and teach catechism with great interest, the proclamation of the gospels where it was needed, educating the young girls and women, and leading the Catholic group activities in the various Churches.<sup>13</sup> We notice that the Congregation has originated in a country, which is in need of evangelization. For the spiritual development of the people, the Congregation adapts the culture of the people. Through teaching in the schools at different levels, with the method of loving kindness and by serving people of other religions, we impart fundamental values of Christ in the way of Don Bosco.<sup>14</sup>

The mission of the Congregation is to help the local Church, with the young people and for the young people with the varied forms of apostolate and evangelization. Inserted in the local Church and devoted to the service of people through the apostolate, we help them to love God and experience His love in a visible manner.

### *3.1 Service and bonds with the local Church*

In the service of the local Church, the pastoral appointments suggested by the founder and encouraged by the Bishop of the diocese remain of importance. The work of evangelization and catechesis continue to remain priority for the Sisters.

The relationship with the local Church as in the article 2 of the Constitutions is:

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<sup>12</sup> CONGREGATION OF SISTERS SERVANTS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, *Constitutions of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*. (The original text is in Thai and translation in English), Suratthani 1985, No. 4. Here after the Constitutions articles will be referred to as, Constitutions.

<sup>13</sup> Cf E. VIGANÒ, “*Letter of Recognition*”, in *The Salesian Family of Don Bosco*. Roma, Istituto Salesiano Pio XI 1999, p. 129.

<sup>14</sup> Cf *Constitutions*, No. 47.

“The Congregation of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary is an apostolic religious society approved by the Church under the Bishop ordinary of the Diocese where the mother house is established”.<sup>15</sup>

This means the Congregation has particular bonds with the local Church: being in the local Church in collaboration with the Bishop to develop work of apostolate. In the article 44 of the Constitutions it underlines with clarity such bond:

“By the workings of the Holy Spirit, the Society was born in the Church for her good. Thus, cooperation in the various activities of the parish and the Diocese is actually doing the work in the name of the Church”.<sup>16</sup>

Accordingly, the Congregation is under the rules of the diocese and is under the responsibility of the Bishop of the place, where the mother house is established. The principle goal of the Congregation is to serve the local Church.<sup>17</sup> The mission also expresses the privileged state of close bonds concretely with the local Church. The realization of the mission is:

“to answer the needs of the local Church. Therefore, Sisters will cooperate in the different activities of the parish and the Diocese specially in lending a hand to the parish in house work, pastoral work, educational formation in the school and works of mercy, giving special attention to the needy in body and spirit”.<sup>18</sup>

We express our bond with the local Church in our careful and docile manner in listening to the magisterium of the Bishop in the early of the foundation, the passage to the novitiate, the first profession and the perpetual profession are privileged occasions, where the Bishop offers to teach magisterium of formation for the religious life. He visits at particular circumstances of formative and true opportunities to consolidate the bonds with the local Church.

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 44.

<sup>17</sup> Cf *ibid.*, No. 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 3.

### *3.2 Bonds with the young people and with the people*

In the apostolate, a strong attention of the Sisters Servants has turned to the young people and the people. Being a Congregation to “be in the Church and for her good”,<sup>19</sup> the cooperation with the Dioceses and the Parishes is a fundamental element of the apostolate. The Sisters Servants require to devote generously to the urgencies of the people to announce the Good News of Christ.

The bonds with the people have to be expressed and lived mainly through the apostolate of catechesis. “The teaching of catechism is the formation of Christians because it is the planting of faith in the heart”.<sup>20</sup> The education of the youth is considered as an important sector of the apostolate of the Congregation. It is worth to bring the whole article 47 to affirm the intention:

“The formation of youth is one of the apostolic works of the Society. Thus, the Sisters will create a family atmosphere together with the children, with a supernatural love (...) the Sisters will apply the method of Don Bosco which is based on loving-kindness, reason and the practice of religion, which will make the service of looking after the children and the youth, specially the poor ones, pleasant, prudent, joyful and responsible, seeing these youth as children of God”.<sup>21</sup>

### *3.3 Varied forms of apostolate and evangelization*

We get inserted fully into the local Church and involve in many forms of apostolate. From the catechesis up to contributing vocational growth in the schools have an important role to play and the Constitutions underline this element:

“The school is one of the important institutes of learning which helps the youth to develop themselves to be adults in society and in the Church. The Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary consider education as an activity which can truly evangelize”.<sup>22</sup>

As initiated in educational work the relationship with the students of the school is maintained long even if they leave the school.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 44.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 45.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 47.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 49.

“In order that the fruits of education which started in the school continue in life, the Sisters will take care of the past pupils by following them up with love and care, give advice and continuous help. As for the Catholic past pupils, the Sisters will encourage them to take part in the activities of the Church, be truly responsible of their Christian duties, and bring Christ to their houses, the school, the society and their daily lives, after the spirit of Don Bosco. Aside from this, they will establish the Salesian Cooperators wherever possible”.<sup>23</sup>

The Sisters are called not only for the above mentioned apostolate but also wherever the service and help is needed:

“Therefore, the Sisters are glad to accept all works in order to serve all men after the example of Christ, even if it is looking after the sick, the aged, giving welfare to the poor, and the development of the marginalized so that they may have a better life according to the desire of the founder”.<sup>24</sup>

#### **4. Identity of SIHM**

The Sisters Servants are religious persons dedicated to the service of the local Churches. We are inserted in parishes and dioceses in a missionary spirit, animating groups which operate within the ecclesiastical structures. We live the *Fiat* of Mary, always ready to do the will of God. We are ready to forgive, in accordance with the word and example of Jesus. Love fills all our activities. Like the founder, we strive to be all things for all people. We live and work in a family spirit, with simplicity, joy, optimism, and with the ability to adapt ourselves to all situations.<sup>25</sup>

##### *4.1 Mary, model of charity for the Sisters Servants*

Mary is the model of reference of the spirituality of the institute. The main characteristic of Mary is charity. This virtue contains the whole activity of the Sisters Servants. We do everything to everybody, as the founder has lived and exhorted us to do so. We live and work in the family spirit with simplicity, joy, optimism and ability of adaptation.

The motto of the Congregation is contained in the words of St. Paul “The love of Christ rules us” (2 Cor.5,14). The spirit of our Congregation is defined by few words “to Love, to serve and to forgive”.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 50.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 46.

<sup>25</sup> Cf *ibid.*, No. 11.

It is to Mary that the Sisters Servants raise their eyes as their model. We take Mary as the model of humility and obedience, docile to the voice of the Spirit, to realize His will in the words and in the works, which are conforming, to the divine wish. We insert ourselves in the cultural and social contexts alert to the needs of our brothers and Sisters. The Sisters Servants answer with promptness to every necessity of the situation like Mary's response to God: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Lc 1,38). The Sisters Servants are ever ready to and available to read the signs of the times in the light of the Word of God; they strengthen their commitment to fulfil the wish of God for the good of their brothers and Sisters; they are ready to push themselves to embrace any sacrifices. In every activity and pastoral service, "the love of Christ rules us"(2 Cor. 5,14) and is translated in daily gestures of availability and brotherly/sisterly service.

The apostolic commitment is noticed in the daily service following the model and example of Mary.

"The Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary will imitate the attitude of acceptance of the will of God in obedience every time they receive whatever responsibility from the superior with the spirit of "fiat" like the Blessed Mother".<sup>26</sup>

#### *4.2 Spirit of Don Bosco*

Another essential element, which characterizes the institute, is the contribution to the development of the culture of the people. It is effected in providing educational opportunities through the teaching in the schools at different levels, practising the method of the loving kindness and serving each other with reason and religion which are the fundamental values in the pedagogy of Don Bosco. The Sisters Servants have been called to live the Salesian spirituality, in our educational mission. Speaking of the style of life, in fact, the Constitutions affirm:

"Aware of the relationship with the Salesian Society, every member will try to uphold the charism of Don Bosco as the driving force in her consecrated life, her apostolate, her community life, her relationship with others. She will try to protect and develop this charism together with the other members of the Salesian Family just like this is a very special spiritual treasure".<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 40.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 9.

## 5. Spirituality of SIHM

The spirituality of the SIHM is based on her constant docility to the Holy Spirit sustained by the strength that comes from the Eucharist and trust in the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>28</sup>

Our spirituality is expressed first of all by a life of complete docility to the Spirit. It commits us to be moulded from within by the Spirit, so that we may become ever more like Christ. It is not possible to bear witness to Christ without reflecting his image, which is made alive in us by grace and the power of the Spirit. This docility then commits us to receive gifts of fortitude and discernment, which are essential elements of missionary spirituality.<sup>29</sup>

The Holy Spirit is the first guide and interior teacher who transforms each one from within, making her like Christ, so that we may carry on His mission in the world. It is the Holy Spirit, the principal agent of evangelization who guides her through the prompting of words which by herself she would not be able to utter, and prepares the hearts of the listeners to welcome the Good News that is proclaimed.

### 5.1 *The apostolic dimension - spirituality of the institute*

Today, the human sciences underline the importance of open relationships. This not to be understood as in the level of I-you, but also with the reference to the third person, the other in the society. The communities of our Sisters Servants and our apostolic life is characterized by the interpersonal and intra-personal relationships, marked by the family spirit according to the spirit of Don Bosco. The Constitutions put in evidence in this regard that:

“Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary have accepted the vocation to work together with Don Bosco by using his method and charism which the Society has received through the members of the Salesian Society and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who together established and planted the roots of the Society in order that his special gift will bear more fruits among the people of God”.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Cf *ibid.*, No. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Cf *Redemptoris Missio*, No. 87.

<sup>30</sup> *Constitutions*, No. 8.

It is nevertheless the article 11 of the Constitutions that it expresses with transparency the characteristic life and the task in the Congregation: “In the service of the local Church, which is the specific role of the society, the members will make the charism of Don Bosco appear in their apostolic religious life by their simple and moderate way of living”.<sup>31</sup>

Endowed with faith, humility and love, the Sisters Servants will work for the service of brothers/sisters in the field entrusted, with spirit of sacrifice, diligence, without preference of job and with creativeness. The Sisters Servants will live in the spirit of family together. Their contact with the other is characterized with good manners, joy, tenderness, optimism, flexibility and promptness to forgive according to the teaching and the example of Jesus.<sup>32</sup>

Speaking of the family spirit, the Constitutions exhort us that:

“The family spirit that Don Bosco established as the foundation of real fraternal love is expressed in mutual acceptance and respect, in sharing everything whether properties, works, experience, sorrows and joys, daily life together like the practices of piety, meals, recreation and in being mutually responsible for the various projects of the community”.<sup>33</sup>

The charity according to the spirit of the institute must include the evangelical spirit that is specified in details in the article 54 of the Constitutions. The interpersonal relationships in the community and in the various apostolate, must be accompanied by the evangelical values. Then it is obvious that, having good interpersonal relationships, the Sisters Servants are exhorted to live a solid life of prayer. The spirituality and the interpersonal relationships don't walk separately in each one's life but if tuned well, they enrich each other reciprocally. To weave relationships, fed by a solid spirituality, it is the commitment that every Sisters Servants assumes with clear awareness. This is a finish ever reached, but always-open verse to ulterior improvements, that are effected in the community and apostolic life of every day.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 11.

<sup>32</sup> *Cf ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 53.

## 5.2 Interior Dimension – Christological

It is to Jesus, the teacher of prayer, that the Sisters Servants turn for strength and inspiration. Jesus shows us the principal novel model to be followed in prayer. We need to follow Him in our daily lives.

“Each Sister has a need to meet God in the deep recesses of her life. Thus, she will look for an occasion to converse often with Him personally in peaceful silence, to listen to His words in her heart, and to show her love, express her resolve, ask for strength and to examine her own life situation. This will enable the Sister to know Christ and to build deep friendship with Him which will strengthen her to be faithful to her consecration. In order to build this closeness with God, the Sister will meditate daily, which is focusing on the Lord by bringing in His Word spoken through the Scriptures and in the events of daily life, and meditate in her heart. In this way, she will discover the salvific plan of God in history and recognize His presence in the daily events. For this reason, she can be a witness to the announcement of the good news of love, justice and peace to mankind”.<sup>34</sup>

With all the help provided by the Institute, the Sisters Servants are to follow Jesus who had incarnated into the situations of people. He is the best model, in establishing relationships with people and with God, whose will, He has fulfilled. He is our strength and we receive this from the daily Eucharistic celebration. The Constitutions article 65 presents to us this element:

“Since the Eucharist is the center of Christian life, the Sisters will participate daily in the offering of the Holy Mass and receive Communion often, practice the teaching of Don Bosco which advises to make a personal visit to the Blessed Sacrament often in order to show love, gratitude, and increase closeness with Jesus, drawing strength for one’s life and apostolate”.<sup>35</sup>

## Conclusion

We have already seen the important elements of the Congregation. The beginnings of our Institute, the persons with vision who are responsible to change the way of life of many, especially, the founder Msgr. Gaetano

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 63.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 65.

Pasotti, the mission entrusted to the followers and the various ways through which this mission is to be realized. We have also seen the approach, which is to be followed in our mission, namely, the Preventive System of Don Bosco, from whom we have received our charism. Here, in our journey, we have Jesus the ultimate example to fulfil the will of God, which is the mission of each and every one. Coming closer to our realities, we have Mary the model in our life to show us the attitudes that we need to possess, in following her Son. Let her *fiat* be ours in imbibing the charism and fulfilling the mission. Though our identity consists of rich values and attitudes, it is evident that there are many difficulties to arrive at its fullness, to live the charism and mission of the institute. There are many factors that can limit one's freedom to internalise the values of Christ. Therefore, we are looking forward to the future with our hope and our trust in God, who call us and be still with us through our journey. We pray that we will be faithful to our vocation and serve God and others more fruitfully.



# HISTORY OF THE ORIGINS OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF THE QUEENSHIP OF MARY

Anna Saksri Ngamwong DQM\*

## 1. Introduction

Fr. Carlo Della Torre SDB is the Founder of the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary. The History and the development of this Institution are strictly connected with the life of the Founder. He fought and faced various obstacles only to follow what God had established for him. Through the advises of Our Lady and of St. John Bosco, he faithfully followed the will of God, even when he had to suffer for the incomprehension of the people, especially the Superiors and members of the Salesian Congregation who he always loved. Though he strongly felt forced to it, he was ready to overcome his feelings asking to enter among the diocesan clergy of Bangkok, where he found a good welcome from the Bishop and the local clergy.<sup>1</sup>

The experience of the Founder exceeds human understanding, but this experience leads to a real understanding of the Mystery of Christ and His Gospel. This experience brings to a specific way of service to the church and society answering to a specific situation in that specific history. This experience is transmitted by the Founder only to those who follow his way of life.<sup>2</sup> So nobody can study the origin of an institution or even just its charism, if he does not start from studying the life of its Founder. It is from the experience of life of the Founder that the supernatural inspiration springs out. For these reasons, in order to understand the origins of an institute of consecrated life like the Daughters of the

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Carlo mentioned quite a lot of times in his letters that he still considered himself one of Don Bosco's sons. For example: "You know well that it has been many years since I have started the process to be able to return to the Salesian Congregation. But my efforts were met with obstacles from the very beginning of the process... Anyway, deep inside myself, I always felt that I still am one of Don Bosco's sons". This letter was written in Bangkok on 2 April 1981. A similar letter was written on 5 March 1950.

These two letters were addressed to the Father Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation. The manuscripts are kept in the Archives of the Salesian Congregation, No. 15065 Della Torre.

<sup>2</sup> M. Germinari, *I nuovi termini della vita religiosa*. Roma, Editrice Rogate 1983, p. 45.

Queenship of Mary, we have to know the life experience of Fr. Carlo. He looked for the salvation of his brothers and sisters desiring to “renew and extend the Kingdom of God... among the people of God and the Christian families”<sup>3</sup> and especially amidst the poor young people.<sup>4</sup>

## **2. Fr. Carlo: the source of the Charism**

Fr. Carlo was born on 9 July 1900 in Cernusco, Milan, Italy, in a rural family with a simple life style and very devote.<sup>5</sup> He became the eldest among his brothers after the death of his elder brother, who had lived just a few days. Fr. Carlo went back to the Father’s House on 4 April 1982 at the Camillian Hospital in Bangkok at the age of 82 years. He was a religious among the Salesians for 23 years, a priest for 46 years and a missionary in Thailand for 55 years.

His father’s name was Antonio Della Torre, the youngest of three children. All of them married and had their family. Antonio had seven children and he died of stomach cancer in 1920 when he was only 53 years old.<sup>6</sup>

The mother was Filomena Magni. After the death of her husband, she changed a lot. Automatically she became a very silent person, very reserved, seldom speaking. Whenever she had the opportunity, she would look for her son Carlo and she would talk with him about spiritual matters and eternal life. For her this world was not able anymore to attract her attention. Her heart was already in another world. She died when she was 76 years old, a few years after her beloved son Carlo had been ordained as a missionary priest in that very far country (Thailand) for the mission of evangelization. He had never gone back home following the request of his mother before he left home for the mission.

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<sup>3</sup> The first constitution written by Fr. Carlo Della Torre, in Italian, 1956, pp. 2-4. This constitution was translated into Thai for the sisters to follow, since 1961.

<sup>4</sup> MS 494 (MS = Manuscript of the autobiography), written by Fr. Carlo as requested by Fr. Raineri, who was responsible for the Salesian Family at that time. He wanted it to be the spiritual heritage for the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary.

<sup>5</sup> The letter of Antonio Mariani, the son of Rosa, Fr. Carlo’s the youngest sister, written on 11 January 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Antonio wrote this letter to inform us that Fr. Carlo’s father died when he was 53 years of age and his mother died when she was 76.

"I am happy that I have seen you once again. Now go, go to the land where the Lord is calling you. Remember me, your mother, every day. But I ask you never to leave the work the Lord has given you, not even when I will be sick and die".<sup>7</sup>

Seven were the brothers and sisters in the family of Fr. Carlo. His elder brother died very soon after his own birth. Followed two elder sisters, Serafina and Emilia, followed by three brothers, Carlo, Natale and Luigi. The last one was the youngest, a girl, Rosa.

### **3. Carlo's youth**

During last century and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the world population has doubled. It was the time of the industrial and agricultural revolution. Europe was considered the center of the world. It was the time of a strong and fast urbanization. The cities became very big and crowded. There was a clear division of classes in society. The middle class was the owner of all activities, like for example banks and hospitals, while the working class had a difficult life, low wages and was exploited. All this led to a transformation of the society towards a better living for all, with more comforts, especially in transportation and communications.

The beginning of this century was considered like the beginning of technology. The time of carbon and vapor was finishing. The use of electricity was spreading all over and there was the invention of radio, after telegraph and telephone. Later on, all this will be used for military purposes. It started a new understanding of science and the construction of airplanes with two seats. Colonies were still sought and Africa and Asia were under the political control of European countries.

A difficult situation developed in the Balkans. The majority of the countries sided with Germany and Austria, while Serbia allied with Russia. So the Austrian-Hungarian Empire developed a difficult relationship with Russia. From 1905, a very complicated situation developed all over Europe, which brought about World War I.

At that time, in Cernusco the people lived a very devoted life. Everyone would go to the Church for mass and confession. Sunday was like a feast day for them all. On Sunday afternoon there was time for the teach-

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<sup>7</sup> MS 65.

ing of catechism for the adults (men and women), the youth (boys and girls) and the children (males and females). After catechism, they would gather all together for the Litanies of Our Lady and the Eucharistic Benediction, led by a priest, in order to close their feast day (Sunday).

In Carlo's family, the mother dedicated herself to the formation of her children, teaching them how to pray and to well prepare for eternal life. She liked to repeat often that "without prayer it would be impossible to cross the sea", because she would also say that "between speaking and doing there is the sea".<sup>8</sup> We can notice that later on, these ideas would become part of the ideal of Carlo's way of life. As a child Carlo was interested in studying catechism regularly. Often he had questions about God and His mystery, questions he would ask every Sunday to the priest teaching catechism, instead of playing with all the other children.

During World War I, the young Carlo was only 16 years old, but he was called to join the army. However, it looked like the atmosphere of the war in the first row of the army prepared Carlo to the service of God and his brothers and sisters at the spiritual level, for the special mission in the Church. This young boy recalled an experience impressed in his memory in an undeletable way:

"I just started my military life since two days and it was the first day we had to wear our uniform. While I was wearing it, a handsome young man with my same size and a smiling face came closer to me and asked me to exchange our hats. I asked him where he was coming from and he answered that he was coming from a seminary studying to become a priest. I asked him further from what town in Italy was he. Staring at me he laughed and put his hat from his head onto mine and my hat on his head. At the same time smiling at me, he said that now I was a seminarian also".

"While he was speaking I had a strong feeling and raised my head to look at him and ask some more questions, but I did not see him anymore and I couldn't see him anymore even later, though we were in the same camp and we were wearing the same uniform. This experience is still very vivid in my memory, I couldn't forget it".<sup>9</sup>

After this experience, he became a silent type, he did not want to speak with anyone and he started feeling bored of listening to the stories of his friends, when they would go out for relaxation during the free time.

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<sup>8</sup> MS 80.

<sup>9</sup> MS 26-27.

Military life does not support a devoted life, if one does not look for and supports an atmosphere of prayer and Christian life.<sup>10</sup>

His friends' life of worldly pleasures during free time, a way incapable of satisfying one's life, worried the young Carlo very much, bringing him to exclaim: "living a short good life is better than a long one stinking of a rotten soul and body".<sup>11</sup> This thought helped him decide to enter among those in the front line, ready to die. There he spent only one year and a half, but in this context of the front line he practiced living fraternal life out of christian love and giving witness<sup>12</sup>. In this context of war, Carlo started his life of prayer and work for the salvation of his soul. Here in this situation he loved in a special way the prayer of the Rosary. He tells us that:

"In the front line of the war in 1917, everyday and day after day, we had to walk at least 20 km. This walking and running was a law to follow in order to keep our bodies strong. So, we had to accept this difficult practice everyday, in spite at the end there is nothing worth it. Why then, we are not willing to do what is of advantage for our soul, which is even more important than our body? Among the companions in the battlefield we were talking about this, while we could constantly hear the noise of the cannons. We all had to be always ready, always alert to keep ourselves alive. We would close all our conversations in the same way, that is, everyone must try to do what he believes will be good for his soul".<sup>13</sup>

When freed from the duty of the war, Carlo returned to Milan, his home place. Just a short while later, he was called again with the rank of official for the war in Albania, a neighboring country to Italy towards the South. Though he spent only a few months, there the practice of acting according to God's will and practicing fraternal love grew and bloomed in his heart.<sup>14</sup> Very soon he was called back home to visit his father, who was very sick and who finally died of cancer of the stomach. In this sad occasion, he was the one giving courage to his mother and brothers and sisters. After these happenings, Carlo spent his life as teenager helping his mother. He helped teach catechism to the children at the Church and he made as a plan of life to join the celebration of the mass, to have

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<sup>10</sup> MS 27-28.

<sup>11</sup> MS 38.

<sup>12</sup> MS 40-42.

<sup>13</sup> MS 484.

<sup>14</sup> MS 64, 75-76.

eucharistic adoration and pray the Rosary every day, in order to find his way in life.<sup>15</sup>

He established this plan of life out of two important reasons, that is, in order to thank God and to look for His will concerning his own future. He wrote: “Gratitude to God for having helped me overcome the dangers of the military life and going back home still in good health appeals in my heart all the time”.<sup>16</sup>

He felt that his way of life was not a family like the others. Thus, he waited for some light from the Providence, living a good christian life as thanksgiving and asking for help in search of the light from God.

While waiting for the light, sometimes he felt it was very clear and some other times very dark, up to the point that he did not know what to do with his future. During this time of confusion, a girl wrote a letter to him, expressing her desire to join her life with him in a good christian marriage. He answered the letter that at the moment he was only 22 years old and he did not feel ready to choose something for life. However, if this letter was a sign of the will of God, he would be happy to welcome her invitation at the proper time for him and for her. While answering this letter a special event happened, which he kept as a secret at the moment.

“The day I answered the letter was a Sunday, about 2:00 PM. I was writing the letter in the bedroom upstairs. The door and the window were closed. When I finished writing, I folded the letter, put it in the envelope and closed it. Immediately after closing it, I felt a strong wind and I saw a hand pulling the letter from my hands and throwing it on the floor. At the same time I heard a voice saying that this one was not the way I should walk on. When the voice stopped, also the wind calmed down and the silence came back as usual”.<sup>17</sup>

#### **4. Following the internal voice: 1923-1936**

The young Carlo came to know about Don Bosco through the conversations he had with his friend, Franco Balcone and also through the Salesian Bulletins, given to him by Fr. Seraphim, his confessor. But above all, the conversation that he had with Fr. Seraphim, on a certain day of November 1923, in which the Father had told him frankly:

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<sup>15</sup> MS 91, 93, 486-487.

<sup>16</sup> MS 98.

<sup>17</sup> MS 91-92.

“You have to leave everything, family, work, studies, because you have to study to be ordained as a priest. Later on you will found an institute. If I will be still alive, I will help you. Think carefully about what I told you, because there is no other way for you to walk, except for the one I told you. After some silence for a few moments he continued: I told you what I had to tell you. Now let us pray, because all the important actions must start from prayer and be continued with it”.<sup>18</sup>

There have been a lot of signs happening in Carlo’s life prior to this. All these signs served as the support and preparations for him, before hand, and in accordance to the advice given to him by his spiritual director. Having prayed and considered what had been happening to him, including his mother’s advice, Carlo rejected Franco’s invitation to set up a big business in order to become a millionaire. Carlo had chosen to follow the advice of his confessor. He decided to leave home for Ivrea to join the Istituto Salesiano Card. Cagliari, in 1923. It took him three years to complete the training in that institute.

#### *4.1. Life in the mission lands*

On 26 October 1926, Carlo said goodbye to his homeland for the last time and headed for Macao, China, to begin his novitiate in the Salesian Congregation. The chapel of the novitiate served as the public place for worship as well. The Gregorian Chants and the Liturgies conducted by the novices drew a lot of people to the novitiate, in such a way that the big parish churches in Macao were almost empty. Every Saturday afternoon, the parish priest invited the singers from the singing school to sing at the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. This drew even bigger crowd in such a way that the priests in Macao were uneasy because their parishioners had deserted their parishes to come to the novitiate. The novitiate life was a happy one. After eight months in Macao, Fr. Gaetano Pasotti led the first group of the Salesian missionaries to a new land.

There was only one Apostolic Vicar in Siam at that time, namely, the Apostolic Vicar of the Apostolic Vicariate of Bangkok who looked after the catholics throughout the country. The majority of the priests who worked in Siam at that time were the French missionaries. And many of them were over 60 years of age. Therefore, the Apostolic Vicar of Bangkok

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<sup>18</sup> MS 100-101.

had written to the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, in Rome, asking for help. He was willing to give a part of his responsibility to the new missionaries. The Salesian Congregation had responded to the Holy Father's call, by appointing Fr. Pietro Ricaldone to be in charge of the missionary activities in the area of Ratchaburi, of the Kingdom of Siam. The father went to Macao to select some of the Salesian missionaries there, to go and work in Siam. Fr. Gaetano Pasotti who was the novice master was appointed to be the leader of the group. The father decided to take the novices and the brothers who were with him in Macao to Siam. They took a boat from Suathao, China, together with 800 Chinese, headed for Siam.

Having traveled by boat for several days, finally, arrived at the Bangkok Port, at the dawn of 26 October 1927. They looked around them and saw everything was beautiful. They saw the lush grounds, full of flowers and water. There were three priests, seven brothers and 11 novices in the group. They were met by a French priest who took them to see the Apostolic Vicar of Bangkok, Msgr. Rene Perros. They were warmly received. Having finished their breakfasts, they were sent to the Ratchaburi area, by boat, prepared by the Apostolic Vicar. They headed for Bangnokkhoek, situated on the banks of the Meklong River. There was a big congregation of the catholics living in this area.

After departing from Bangkok for sometime, the boat had to stop to wait for the high tide. When they arrived at the area of the Maeklong River, it was dark already. The sky was filled by the stars. Both banks of the canal were full of trees, both small and big ones. There were plenty of the fire-flies or *Lampyrus noctiluca*. It was really a beautiful sight. They arrived at Bangnokkhoek about 2.00 a.m. On hand to welcome them, were Fr. Duran, the French missionary and the members of the Salesian Congregation who preceded them. They were housed in a two-story wooden house.

Siam is a tropical country. The weather is hot and humid. One must take a bath at least once a day. It is totally different from Europe. The people bathe themselves in the rivers and in the canals. There were no bathrooms. So our young missionaries had to learn to do likewise.

At first, the Salesian missionaries were warmly welcomed and looked after very well by Fr. Duran, the French missionary of the Foreign Missions of Paris who was the parish priest of Bangnokkhoek at that time. But when they started to settle down, they came across a lot of difficulties. The first difficulty that they had to face was the language. So they

had to learn the language. Then, there was the problem of the food. Their cooks, who were Chinese, could not cook the European food. They were not used to the Asian food, even though they had to spend a lot of money on the food, so many of them were sick and in bad health, could not study properly. Carlo and his friends who came from Macao with him, took their first vows, in the Salesian Congregation, on 8 December 1927. Carlo was appointed by the Rector to look after the seminarians and the novices. The problem of the food still went on. The hygiene was really bad. Furthermore, the cooks embezzled some money for their own usage. And then made a false account. To avoid all these, the Rector put Carlo in charge of the kitchen and the girls working in the kitchen as well.<sup>19</sup>

#### *4.2. The reward of life on the difficult path*

Carlo, a newly professed religious, had to carry a heavy burden, at the same time, he had to pursue his Philosophy studies and religious training as well. He had to look after the spiritual life of the girls working in the kitchen also. This was the cause for some members of the Salesian Congregation to misunderstand Carlo. So, he handed in his resignation in order to avoid the misunderstandings and to have more time for the studies but the Rector would not listen to him. The refusal of the Rector was interpreted by him as the Divine Providence for him to help many people. He understood all the time that the job was dangerous to his vocation, so he prayed a lot. He mortified and fasted. He put his life under the divine guidance.

At the same time, the Salesian priests who worked in the parishes had the same opinion that the young girls were neglected. There was no one to look after them. So Carlo proposed his own idea. He proposed the establishment of a female religious order in order to look after these young girls more seriously to Msgr. Gaetano Pasotti who was in charge of the Salesian Congregation in Thailand at that time,<sup>20</sup> but the Monsignor's councilors did not buy the idea.

Anyway, in 1932, Carlo had prepared a constitution for the new religious order to be established. It was written in line with the Constitution of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, with

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<sup>19</sup> MS 177.

<sup>20</sup> MS 203.

some alterations to suit the situation, condition of life, the geographical climate and the thinking of the girls who wished to join it.<sup>21</sup> He had in mind the 12 girls he was looking after. He wanted to name the order ‘Xi-songkhro’ or the ‘Welfare Sisters’. When it was actually established, it was named: ‘*The Congregation of the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*’. Carlo even built a small chapel for these girls, within the compound of the kitchen where those girls stayed. The building of the chapel was met with the tacit approval from the Superiors and nobody said a thing because it was hidden in the kitchen compound, their private property. The chapel was completed six hours before he started his retreat to prepare himself for the ordination to the priesthood.

After his ordination to the priesthood, on 26 January 1936, Fr. Carlo Della Torre was given another assignment. So, he had to leave behind his ‘new religious order’, the group that he himself had trained, out of obedience to the Superiors of the Salesian Congregation in Thailand at the time. His bitterness and obstacles were brewing. It seemed as though all his initiatives were ended by that assignment. The future of the native religious order that he was trying to establish was opposed in such a way that he was really bitter by the whole thing.

‘That was the reward for the efforts and the difficulties of eight hard working years with humility in the kitchen, as the guardian and the helper of the young girls. Now Fr. Curti and Fr. Casetta have a chance to oppose the training and the establishment of the religious order. They have been opposing it since a long time. If the establishment of a new religious order were God’s will, the seeds that were sown would not wither and die but would germinate and give many fruits’.<sup>22</sup>

It happened as he had said. In 1937, the councilors of the Salesian Congregation in Thailand had brushed up this idea, once again. This time they all agreed with the establishment of a native religious order with the help of two sisters from the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. At present, this new native religious order was approved by Rome and became a member of the Salesian Family.

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<sup>21</sup> MS 177.

<sup>22</sup> MS 204.

## **5. The missionary priest: 1936-1950**

After his ordination to the priesthood, Fr. Carlo was asked to be the parish priest of the Parish of the Nativity of Our Lady, Bangnokkahoek, the rector of the native seminary and the bursar. He declined all these posts, citing his poor health because of his fasting for the last eight years. So, he was sent to Thava to recuperate and look after his health. Disappointed by the failure of his project, he exclaimed:

“without knowing it and intending it, the Superiors sent me to be on the path of the Divine Providence, for me to find the way to carry out the desire that I have had for many years, to its completion”.<sup>23</sup>

While Fr. Carlo was at Thava, Msgr. Pasotti kept on telling him that whatever was in his mind, he would never succeed it because the Superiors of the Congregation would never allow him. So, there was one thing left for Fr. Carlo: kneeling in front of the tabernacle asking for guidance. He spent his time of recuperation in prayers and helping out the Parish of Thava. The church attendance of Thava at that time was very low, especially the youth. The Father also noticed that there were no catechism lessons in the Sunday afternoons. There was no benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. So he suggested the idea to the parish priest.

### *5.1. Looking for the will of God*

Being in Thava for six months, Fr. Carlo was reassigned to be the assistant at the Parish of Thamuang, on 29 June 1937. This was the hardest time for the missionaries in Thailand because of the Indochinese Conflict. The Catholic Church in Thailand was persecuted during these years. They became the years of poverty.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> MS 267.

<sup>24</sup> Between 1940-1944, Siam was engaged in the war with the French who occupied Indochina at the time. The French missionaries were driven out of Siam. So many parishes in the northeastern region of the Kingdom were left untended.

The rest of the Kingdom was the same. The Siamese government did not want the Kingdom to be under the influence of the Europeans, so it persecuted the Catholic Church, thinking that the Catholics were spies for the French. The persecution was so severe, especially in the Northeast, that there were seven persons murdered because they did not give up their faith. They were beatified on 22 October 1989.

His assignment to Thamuang happened before it should have happened. Even though there was no ill intention in it, but Fr. Carlo could help thinking that his superiors wanted him to meet with the crises of his life, in such a way that he wanted to leave Thailand or followed their wish and did it in the way that they wished.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, he also thought that it was providential for him as well. Because of the war and the persecution, Fr. Carlo thought of the inspiration that he received, once again. So he started to prepare for the project that was dear to his heart for many years.

At Thamuang, Fr. Carlo spent most of his time in prayers. He went to pray in the church from 8.00 a.m. - 11.30 a.m. and from 13.00 p.m.-15.00 p.m. He spent his evenings studying Theology, especially the Moral Theology. At the same time, he also helped the parishioners, especially the youth, to grow in their spiritual life. Even after the parish school was closed down in 1939, Fr. Carlo still helped the people with the catechism. The situations in the Parish of Thamuang at that time, were described in the Salesian Newsletters as follows:

“Thamuang had the residence for one priest only. The priest had brought progress to the Parish. He established the primary school that was very important for the Catholic children. The parish was served, as though, a place for the Japanese prisoners of war to congregate, a theatre of love without borders. Fr. Carlo Della Torre was described as the guardian angel of the military cemetery. He visited it quite often, as though he was the relative of those dead soldiers, who sacrificed their lives for peace”.<sup>26</sup>

The religious persecution and the attacks on catholicity went on until the Japanese Invasion of Siam in 1941. Under those conditions, Fr. Carlo recommended the weapon to protect oneself, namely the rosary. He said:

“This is a powerful weapon that helps you in every matter, especially to combat the devils from hell”.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> MS 295.

<sup>26</sup> G. ULLIANA, *Nelle nostre Missioni, SIAM, Un trimestre nella Missione di Rajaburi*, in «Bollettino Salesiano» 72 (1948) 168.

<sup>27</sup> MS 323.

### *5.2. Fidelity to the Providence*

In 1948, Fr. Carlo was transferred to Bangkok to work at the newly created Salesian Centre, in honour of Don Bosco. Fr. Carlo was given the task of hearing the confessions of the first group of the orphans of the school. In his free time, he allowed to pursue his project of the establishment of a new religious order. So, with the permission from the Provincial, he built a house for his 'postulants'. This made Bishop Pasotti very upset, owing to the fact that Fr. Carlo was not under his jurisdiction and the work was done outside his Vicariate. So, there was nothing much the Bishop could do about it. Anyway, not long after that, the Provincial received the orders from the Father Rector Major of the Congregation to halt Fr. Carlo's project. It was understood that the Rector Major did so under the request of Bishop Pasotti.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, there was an attempt to send Fr. Carlo out of the country and send his girls home.<sup>29</sup>

Fr. Carlo foresaw that the Superiors of the Salesian Congregation would not let him carry on with his project, so he asked Fr. Modesto Bellido, one of the General's councilors, for the permission to bring his case to the Apostolic Vicar of Bangkok, Msgr. Louis Chorin.<sup>30</sup> He received the permission from the Provincial to see Msgr. Chorin, on 18 March 1950. And on 19 March 1950, the feast of St. Joseph, the Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Fr. Carlo asked the permission to leave the Salesian Congregation and be incardinated into the Apostolic Vicariate of Bangkok. Msgr. Chorin received Fr. Carlo as: 'an independent priest to establish a institute consecrated'.<sup>31</sup> He also gave Fr. Carlo all the necessary faculties he needed in establishing an institute.

## **6. His last years: always humble, simple and faithful**

Even though he left the Salesian Congregation, Fr. Carlo was still faithful to his praying of the rosary. The rosary was always in one of his hands. Praying the rosary, he trusted that Our Lady would provide him with everything that he needed, as he often said:

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<sup>28</sup> MS 409.

<sup>29</sup> MS 407-408, 410.

<sup>30</sup> MS 418-419.

<sup>31</sup> MS 424.

“Their attitude had taught me to trust in the protection from heaven, more than looking for help from human beings. The help from heaven are always trustworthy and long lasting, much more than that of the human. Furthermore, they are always limited”.<sup>32</sup>

### 6.1. *A Salesian from beginning to end*

Fr. Carlo Della Torre entered the Salesian seminary when he was 23 years old. Prior to that he had served in the army. And while he was in the army, he volunteered to go to the front lines. He went through a lot of difficulties during World War I. He had to face matters of life and death throughout the war. That meant that he had gone through all sorts of difficulty and danger. In the end, he decided to dedicate his whole life to God and to the souls. This decision coincided with his ideals and values of life, even though there was nothing in the documents to tell us about this, his own life proved itself. There was one thing that he that mentioned repeatedly in his autobiography: “I try to do God’s will”.

From the age of 23 until the age of 50, the Father had lived a life of a Salesian religious. He was a Salesian for 28 years. Throughout these years, he had accumulated, had learned and loved the life that he had chosen in the first place. Having listened to God’s voice and responded to it with the greatest love. Throughout the years in the Salesian Congregation, the Father still listened to God’s voice and ready to respond to it. That was the state of his soul. In the mean time, he had never abandoned the project that he understood to be God’s will for him, the establishment of a new religious order.

In the establishment of a new religious order, Fr. Carlo followed all the rules and regulations of the Church and of his Congregation. He proposed his project to the Superiors of the Salesian Congregation and of the Apostolic Vicariate. Owing to the time factor and the practice of the time, a member of the Salesian Congregation was not allowed to establish a female religious order. So, he had to leave the Salesian Congregation, the Congregation that he loved and closely associated with. This can be ascertained by his letters to the Superiors of the Congregation, for example, the letter that he wrote to the General Superior of the Congregation:

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<sup>32</sup> MS 434.

“Having prayed to Don Bosco and the heavenly hosts asking for help, I now humbly beg you...”.

Another factor concerning this matter was that, besides his greatest devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, he was also devoted to Don Bosco. This also can be ascertained by what he wrote in his autobiography. His consultations with Don Bosco concerning the religious order that he was about to establish and of how he should run it. That meant that while leaving the Salesian Congregation in order to establish a new religious order, Fr. Carlo was still in close contact with and devoted to Don Bosco.

Therefore, on 19 March 1975, the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his leaving the Salesian Congregation, Fr. Carlo wrote a letter to the Salesian Superiors asking permission to return to the Congregation:

“The many times that I have met Don Bosco, it did not matter before or after my leaving the Salesian Congregation, he still conversed with me amicably, full of love and respect. He always encouraged me, saying to me: ‘do not be afraid because everything will return to me...’”<sup>33</sup>

Fr. Carlo tried hard and really wanted to return to the Salesian Congregation, even though he had to face a lot of obstacles and fears. He had to patiently wait for a long time. It took him seven full years before he was allowed to do so. This was due to the complicated procedures, in the Diocesan and Pontifical levels, laid down by the Canon Law.<sup>34</sup>

On 5 December 1981, Cardinal Michai Kitbunchu, the Archbishop of Bangkok, informed Fr. Raimundo Garcia, the Salesian Provincial of Thailand, by telephone, that he had no objections to Fr. Carlo’s returning to the Salesian Congregation, as he had been asking for the past seven years. The Provincial hurried to give the good news to Fr. Carlo who was hospitalized at the Camillian Hospital, Bangkok. Fr. Carlo was overjoyed by the news that tears streaming out of his eyes.

On 9 December 1981, noticing that Fr. Carlo’s conditions were deteriorating and he could pass away at any moment, so the Provincial permitted him to make the vows in the Salesian Congregation, once again, as he has been waiting since a long time. It was done in front of the Salesian Provincial, his confreres and surrounded by his beloved daughters, the

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<sup>33</sup> Fr. Carlo’s letter, dated 19 March 1975.

<sup>34</sup> Fr. Carlo’s letter, dated 2 April 1981.

members of the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary.<sup>35</sup> A few months after that he gave back his soul to its Creator. He entered his Heavenly Father's House on 4 April 1982. Therefore, Fr. Carlo ended his life in the embrace of Don Bosco, in the Salesian Congregation that he had loved throughout his life. He bade farewell to the Institute that he had firmly established.

Along the way to establish a institute consecrated, Fr. Carlo had always respected and honoured his Superiors in the Salesian Congregation. He never had any ill-feelings against them, even though he was in conflict with them on this matter all the time. This spirit of humility, he had passed on to his beloved daughters in the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary. We have witnessed his humble life, faithful to the divine plan and active in the apostolic activities, entrusted to him by God. The Father was a strong willed person. He dedicated his life to the will of God, whom he searched and contacted with his personal life. The Father's life was tested by God and by his own Superiors. He had passed the tests victorious. This was because his guide was the Blessed Virgin Mary, herself.

## **7. The way of the charism: The Institute of the Queenship of Mary**

The Institute of the consecrated persons, 'The Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary', originated from the Fr. Carlo Della Torre's spiritual experiences. It humbly followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It also cooperated with the project that the loving Divine Providence had entrusted to the Church to bear fruits, both in the form and the unique charism. The Institute grew up gradually, through Fr. Carlo's life. The Father had placed himself under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He trusted in the Holy Spirit without worrying about his own future, in such a way that he could realize the divine charism. He dedicated his life to that charism. He knew full well that he was only an instrument of God and of our Blessed Mother. As he had often exclaimed, after the Institute was established, that:

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<sup>35</sup> Fr. Grasia's letter that was quoted.

“Had I known from the start that the establishment of an institute was this difficult, I would not have started it at all”. He also said that: “Everything that I have done, it was not I who did it. It was God and the Blessed Mother who did it. I was only a stupid bystander”.<sup>36</sup>

## **8. The way leading to the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary: 1937-1952**

In 1937, Fr. Carlo was given a new assignment. The situations in the new assignment went from bad to worse, especially during World War II. In the atmosphere of the war, there was a calling deep inside him for him to start anew his project. He should begin it with the girls and the women helping him in the parish, in order to establish a female institute for those who wanted to consecrate their lives to God, for the apostolate. Fr. Carlo thought of the time when the Superiors did not allow him to quit the work in the kitchen, at the seminary. The thought of the establishment of a religious order at the time was for the reward from heaven and also to protect his vocation in the dangerous situations. The thought of the establishment of a religious order at the present, however, was the reflection of the words of his confessor, Rev. Fr. Seraphim:

“...You are to study to become a priest and to establish a institute consecrated”.<sup>37</sup>

Including the voice that he heard from the tabernacle while he was still a seminarian. The voice told him:

“Wait until you are ordained a priest”.<sup>38</sup>

Also at Thava, where the Blessed Virgin Mary told him:

“Your desire will be fulfilled after six”.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Sr. Cecilia Sopha Virasilp's letter, dated 16 November 1992. She was the Mistress of Novices immediately after Fr. Carlo, until 1992. She was one of the girls in first group that the Father had gathered. She was close to the Father from the very beginning until his death. She had inherited the religious spirits from the Father. That was why she was entrusted to train the members, by the Father. This letter was to share with later generation, her fond memories of the Founder.

<sup>37</sup> MS 100.

<sup>38</sup> MS 200.

<sup>39</sup> MS 283.

Even though we do not intend to verify these voices but they were the facts that we could not say otherwise. The establishment of the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary had happened, after the father had been transferred to six places, out of obedience to his Superiors.

### 8.1. *Walking with our Lady*

The years of the World War II were the difficult time for the Thai Catholics. They were the years that the French missionaries were driven out of Thailand because of the conflict with the French authority in Indochina. Msgr. Pasotti was appointed the Apostolic Delegate, by the Vatican, for the time.<sup>40</sup> It seemed as though Fr. Carlo's dream of establishing a religious order was dashed by this appointment. This was because the Bishop was not in favour of the project. But things did not happen that way. After the Japanese invasion of Thailand in 1941, Bishop Perros and the French missionaries were allowed back to Thailand once again.<sup>41</sup> It meant that Fr. Carlo's dreams of establishing a religious order were alive once again.

On 5 December 1943, Bishop Pasotti had asked the Catholic people to dedicate themselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The girls who wished to dedicate themselves in the religious order that Fr. Carlo was about to establish and had been trained by him for some time, took that opportunity to dedicate themselves to God in front of the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Even though this act was a private one, but they were the first seeds of the future Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary.<sup>42</sup>

The problem of the establishment of a religious order was still lingering on until 1948, because the authorities of the Vicariate and those of the Salesian Congregation did not think that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. It was Fr. Carlo's dreams. At the same time, the Thamuang Parish

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<sup>40</sup> During this difficult time, the Salesians in Thailand had to work hard to replace the French missionaries that were driven out of the country. Msgr. Pasotti was appointed the Apostolic Delegate to Thailand and Laos. The Catholic schools were closed down. Written by M. Bongioanni, *Don Bosco nel Mondo*. Vol. II. Direzione generale opere Don Bosco. Torino, Mariogros 1988, p. 396.

<sup>41</sup> MS 325.

<sup>42</sup> MS 350-351.

School was allowed to function once again. Fr. Carlo, however, thought that the time for him to establish a religious order was approaching and his time at the Thamuang Parish was also approaching. The Father asked the people to carry on with the praying of the rosary and to be devoted to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. They should attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass more often, especially on the first Saturday of the month. They should also renew their dedication to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.<sup>43</sup>

Fr. Carlo said that while he was at the Thamuang Parish, he met with Don Bosco twice in a vision. The first time, Don Bosco said that: “I want this man (Fr. Carlo)” And then, Don Bosco turned and said to Fr. Carlo:

“Look at the dry field, scorched by the sun. Go and work there... Be courageous. Don’t be afraid. All this work will be mine in the end”.<sup>44</sup>

Another time, Don Bosco said to Fr. Carlo:

“Don Carlo, the Salesian authorities on this earth like to reject all the time. We, in heaven, however, accept it all the time”.<sup>45</sup>

Fr. Carlo was reluctant to accept the invitation of Fr. Pietro Carretto, the Salesian Provincial at that time, to go to Bangkok, together with his 10 girls, to work in the kitchen of Don Bosco’s Vocational School. Fr. Carlo had to pray hard, in front of the Statue of Our Lady of Sorrows, Thamuang, asking for help and guidance. While he was praying, full of reluctance, he felt deep inside him that the Blessed Mother telling him to go to Bangkok.<sup>46</sup>

## *8.2. The realization of a dream*

The compound of the Don Bosco’s Vocational School, in Bangkok, was a large one. It was situated on the outskirts of Bangkok, a promising area of the Capital City. The Salesian Congregation of Thailand had acquired it in 1947.<sup>47</sup> It was a huge paddy field. There was no electricity,

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<sup>43</sup> MS 388.

<sup>44</sup> MS 393.

<sup>45</sup> MS 395.

<sup>46</sup> MS 396.

<sup>47</sup> M. NICITA, *A Bangkok tra I salesiani di via New Petchabury*, in «*Bollettino Salesiano*» 114 (1990) pp. 15, 34.

no running water and not even a market. In order to purchase food and the daily utensils, one had to travel by boat, up the canal for about two hours. Nobody wanted to live or work in the area such as this. The first group of the ‘aspirants’ of the order to be established had to work in this school, with the hope of making it their centre or headquarter. Even so, it was opposed by Bishop Pasotti. He did not like it from the start and vowed to oppose it to the very end.

So, not very long after that, these girls were ordered home by the Salesian authorities from Turin. By doing so, they were allowed to live together in a house that Fr. Carlo built for them in that same compound. They had to work. They sewed the garments and so on, for their own keeping and for their survival. Even then, they were still opposed by the Salesian authorities. So Fr. Carlo was thinking of sending some of them to study further in order to work in their own schools in the future. So this was really the work of the loving Providence.<sup>48</sup>

What brought them more joy was the fact that they were welcomed into the Apostolic Vicariate of Bangkok, where Fr. Carlo was incardinated at the same time. He was permitted by the Apostolic Vicar of Bangkok to realize his dreams, saying:

“We do not have the money or the land to give to you but we bless you and give you all the necessary permissions you need in the establishment of your religious order”.<sup>49</sup>

The feast day of St. Joseph, the Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 1950, was the day of the realization of the dreams. It was considered to be the date of the birth of the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary. Fr. Carlo and the first group of the aspirants prayed the rosary together to thank God and vow to pursue their goal together with the help from the Heavenly Mother.

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<sup>48</sup> MS 412.

<sup>49</sup> MS 424.

### 8.3. *The first small house*

Before Fr. Carlo and the first group of the aspirants left the Don Bosco's Vocational School to move into the new place, on 19 March 1950, the day that Fr. Carlo received the permission from Msgr. Louis Chorin, the Apostolic Vicar of the Apostolic Vicariate of Bangkok, to establish a new religious order, he admonished them very specially. He also gave them a motto for the way of life of the new order. His motto was "prayer and work". He also admonished them to "always pray and work under the guidance of the Blessed Virgin Mary". They must love her and give her their due respects, as a faithful and infallible Mother.<sup>50</sup> The Father himself knelt in front of the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary and prayed that in the establishment of a new religious congregation for the salvation of the souls, he would not ask any human being for help. He would asked it from her alone.

That meant that the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary started off with Fr. Carlo's empty hand and that of the first group. They had no lands, no money. The only thing that they had, and had it to the full, was their full trust in Mary.<sup>51</sup> Fr. Carlo's confreres noticed all these things and asked him what he wanted to do, seeing that:

"You are alone, have no special incomes. The girls, your collaborators, are of good will but they are uneducated. So how could they take on the big work in the future?"<sup>52</sup>

Then in 1952, in the midst of the obstacles and difficulties for a long period of time, Fr. Carlo and the first group of his collaborators had a piece of land, about two rais (about an acre), and a school to give the education to the young for the first time, in the Prakhanong area, on the outskirts of Bangkok. That was the first step and the first house of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary.

In this atmosphere and such an environment, Fr. Carlo saw Don Bosco in a vision, once more and for the last time. On this occasion Fr. Carlo asked him a few questions that were very significant and important to the Congregation. Let us hear what they had to say to one another.

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<sup>50</sup> MS425.

<sup>51</sup> MS 470-471.

<sup>52</sup> MS 447.

“What will I do about the activities of the Congregation?  
Do everything with humility”.

“How do I train the aspirants of the Institute?  
Train them in humility, in the family spirits. The Superior should be a good  
mother. The members should be good daughters and sisters”.

“How should they work?  
They should work with full humility. They should work together in love.  
They are not to seek prominence. Always imitate the Blessed Mother in  
everything”.<sup>53</sup>

## 9. The bases of the Institute and the enlargement of its activities

The school and that piece of land seemed to be too small for the development in the future. Fr. Carlo who envisaged the future plus having full trust in the Blessed Mother, had asked the first group of the members of the Institute to pray for the expansion. In the end, the father was able to buy the second piece of land for another school. It was in the place where the father thought it could serve as the headquarters for the Institute in the future. And it did actually become the headquarters of the Institute at the present. Having established the second school, the Father, now, turned his attention to the official establishment of the Institute.

The Father had proved himself to be a person who truly had a charism. His vision was that of a prophet. He envisaged the fruitfulness of the new congregation in the future. He had said clearly about the life of the Institute.

“I have to give suitable regulations to the life of the people in this country, with their foundations in the gospel. It is a prayer life, a holy life, a life of dedication and apostolate, at the same time. All the activities concerning training, counseling must have its objectives in the conversion of the youth who have been educated in the schools of the Institute”.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> MS 468-469.

<sup>54</sup> MS 469 The catholic schools are very important to the activities of the Church. They are the special places that the Church can bear witness to Christ and points Him out to the Buddhists. Many people would like their children to be educated in these schools. From the very beginning, the Catholic Church had given the best education to this country. This can be ascertained by the speech that the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, gave to the Thai Bishops when they visited him, ‘ad Limina Apostolorum’ 1991. The Holy Father said that: “The catholic schools in Thailand serve as life builders, guarantors of the youth in the matters of religious education and create responsible lay men in living the life according to the spirits of the gospel”. *L’Osservatore Romano*, Saturday 25 May 1991, p. 5.

### 9.1. *The charism giving life*

As time went by, the Father had accumulated big debts. The members of the Institute had to work hard but they were still faithful to their promise, not asking any human being for help. They would ask it from Our Lady alone. The Father knew full well that a small piece of land at Prakhanong would not be sufficient for the activities of the Institute. He was looking for another location. But he was reluctant because of the financial situations. While he was reluctant about this thing, one of his Aspirants said to him: "Father, you should buy that piece of land". The Father replied: "I do not have enough cash on hand". She said to him: "If you wait until the time you have cash on hand, Our Lady won't send you any". Having heard from a youngster who was full of faith, the Father thought it might have been the will of Our Lady. The girl kept on saying: "You should buy that piece of land. We are praying to Our Lady asking her to pay for it, for you". In the end, the Father listened to the advice of the aspirant.<sup>55</sup>

The last day of the annual retreat at the Assumption Cathedral, while the Father was kneeling and praying his rosary, he looked at the statue of Our Lady of the Assumption that was above the altar. While looking at the statue, the Father was surprised because the statue disappeared. Instead, he saw her sitting on the big throne. Looking at that image, the Father was thinking of asking the Blessed Mother for help. But before he could open his mouth, the Blessed Mother said to him: "Please go and see St. Joseph immediately".<sup>56</sup> Saying so, the image disappeared and he saw the statue of Our Lady of the Assumption as before. Having heard that, the Father turned to the statue of St. Joseph and asked him for help.

Having completed his retreat, while he was returning to the Srirachan, a catholic who was an official working in the Interior Ministry informed the Father that the Cabinet had approved the purchase of lands to build a super highway to the Don Muang International Airport. And it was prepared to give a just price to the owners of the lands. Fortunately, part of the Father's land was in the pathway. So the Father sent two of his aspirants to negotiate with the Interior Ministry and the Father was compensated for the 26 rais (about 10 acres) of his land. The Father used this sum of money to pay his debts and to purchase the necessary items for the

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<sup>55</sup> MS 463-4, 470.

<sup>56</sup> MS 472.

congregation. This made the Father more confident in Our Lady and asked the Aspirants to pray even more.

Not long after, in 1954, the Father purchased a piece of land, of 15 rais, at the Trokchan from Luang Sithi, for the sum of two hundred and twenty thousand bahts. He built a one-story school building, no walls, only partitions of 1.50 meter high. There were 300 pupils. The members of the Institute who were qualified to teach in a school were asked to run the school. They had to work very hard, full of sacrifices. Not long after that, another building was added to it. It was 100 meter in length, built of old woods. The number of the pupils had increased. This place had been developed in such a way that nothing of old was left. It started off in a stable to become the heart and the headquarter of the Institute.

While developing the Institute and training the members of the Institute, the Father had sent the petition to Rome. This was to ask to be recognized as a Secular Institute (cf. *lex peculiaris*), together with the regulations and the constitution, in accordance with the Canon Law, on the behalf of the local Ordinary. The Institute of the Daughters of Queenship of Mary was officially approved by the Church together with its constitution, through the documents sent to the Ordinary of the Apostolic Vicariate of Bangkok, on 3 December 1954. And on 9 December 1955, the first group of seven members of the Institute took their first vows in the chapel of Msgr. Louis Chorin, the Apostolic Vicar of Bangkok, (which is the Vatican Embassy at the present). It was presided over by the Apostolic Vicar himself.

## 9.2. *The way to the Salesian Family*

In 1973, Fr. Carlo showed his desires to have his congregation become a member of the Salesian Family. Having considered that the Salesian Provincial and the Salesians working in Thailand had accepted the Institute of the Queenship of Mary, Fr. Carlo had applied for a membership of the Salesian Family for his Institute. The Salesians in Thailand had expressed their feelings as follows:

“The Salesians in Thailand extend their welcome to the newly established congregation and are willing to provide it with the pastoral cares and Don Bosco’s spirit...”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Fr. Carlo’s letter, dated 15 March 1973.

Two years later, Fr. Giovanni Raineri, who was in charge of the Salesian Family throughout the world, had expressed his approval to Fr. Carlo, saying the if Fr. Carlo returned to the Salesian Congregation, the chance of joining the Salesian Family was even greater.<sup>58</sup>

On 1 January 1977, Fr. Carlo sent in his application for the Institute of the Queenship of Mary to be a member of the Salesian Family. He began his letter saying:

“While I was still a member of the Salesian Congregation, the Blessed Mother and Don Bosco had asked me to establish a religious order for the salvation of the christian and the non-christian youth”.

He, then, explained the history of the Institute and how the Salesians in Thailand had helped him out in the matters of the pastoral cares and the Salesian spirit. Because of these, the Father thought that his Institute had already become a member of the Salesian Family in actuality, lacking in paper work only. That was why he sent in his application.

Fr. Carlo concluded his application saying:

“Because I was a member of the Salesian Congregation and had been trained in the Salesian spirit, I, therefore, want the members of my Institute be trained in the Salesian spirit as well. I, who still am a member of the Salesian Congregation, request that the Institute that I have established be admitted into the Salesain Family, in accordance to the objectives of the establishment of this Congregation. That they had to carry on and preserve the Salesian spirit that I have instilled in them, to the full”.<sup>59</sup>

Fr. Carlo's relationship with the Salesian Congregation had been growing by the day, both in his way of thinking and in his way of doing. He had transmitted Don Bosco's spirit that he had received to the members of the Congregation that he had established. He tried his best to help the members of the Institute of the Queenship of Mary to preserve their vocation that they have received from God. The members of the Congregation saw and understood the Father's good intentions, by practicing them in their own lives.

In 1986, the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary held its first General Chapter and the assembly had approved unanimously the adoption of Fr. Carlo's desires in bringing the Institute into the Salesian

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<sup>58</sup> Fr. G. Raineri's letter to Fr. Carlo, dated 16 January 1975.

<sup>59</sup> Fr. Carlo's letter to Fr. G. Raineri, dated 1 January 1977.

Family. The members understood that their relationship with the other groups in the Salesian Family would help them to preserve their identity and helped them to know more about the spirit of the Salesian Family. It would also strengthen the spirit of each group and advanced in their apostolic work, in accordance to the objectives of the founder.

Being a member of the Salesian Family did not mean that each congregation must come under the administration and a part of the Salesian Congregation. It meant to be a sharing in the vocation and the charism of Don Bosco. It meant the sharing in the spiritual life and the apostolic activities that each group of the family shared in the Salesian identity. Because of the spirit and the activities in training the youth, “the Institute (of the Daughter of the Queenship of Mary) wishes to be a part of the Salesian Family. It wishes to receive the Salesian spirit as well, in order to preserve the spirit of its Founder”.<sup>60</sup>

After the First General Chapter, the Institute of the Daughter of the Queenship of Mary had carried on the application to be a member of the Salesian Family. Owing to the difficulties in the matters of the paper works and the language problems, the matter was dragged on until the Second General Chapter in 1992, in which the matter of the membership of the Salesian Family was brought up again. Having studied the matter carefully, once more, the Institute still had a unanimous decision to join the Salesian Family. Mother Maria Chanthavarodom and her councilors, therefore, carried on this matter.

In 1994, when all the documents concerning this matter were ready, Mother Maria Chanthavarodom, the Mother General at the time, had sent them to Fr. Viganò, the Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation who had fallen sick after he had received the documents. So the matter had to wait once more. Anyway, after the Salesian Congregation had its new Rector Major, this matter was carried on immediately. Fr. Juan Vecchi, the new Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation, had approved the membership of the Institute of the Daughter of the Queenship of Mary in the Salesian Family, on 12 July 1996.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The 1986 Constitution n. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Fr. Juan Vecchi's letter, No. 96/1025, dated 18 July 1996.

## THE SECULAR INSTITUTE OF THE DON BOSCO VOLUNTEERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Agnes B. Paulino\*

### 1. Historical background

In 1947, Pope Pius XII formally recognized secular institutes as a state of perfection – a true form of consecrated life in the Church. The Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* expressed this recognition and gave the institutes their proper name and their own particular law. One year later, the motu proprio *Primo Feliciter* more clearly stressed the uniqueness of the institutes' character – a secular character – and their role as Christian leaven in the world. Immediately following *Primo Feliciter*, was the Instruction *Cum Sanctissimus* which further developed and clarified points, particularly from *Provida Mater*.

Canon 710 defines as secular institute as follows: A secular institute is an institute of consecrated life in which the Christian faithful living in the world strive for the perfection of charity and work for the sanctification of the world especially from within.

Secular institutes share with religious that total consecration of life recognized by the Church. Their distinguishing characteristic, consecrated secularity, is reflected by speaking of members living in the world, and seeking its sanctification from within. The latter phrase suggests the image of leaven appearing explicitly in canon 713. Pope Paul VI highlighted the notion of consecrated secularity when he addressed the institutes on the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Provida Mater*. He wished them to be an example and model of the spirit the Council wished to infuse in the Church – overcoming secularism and rendering the Church leaven and soul in the world:

“The world has need of your witness! Humanity is waiting for the Church to increasingly incarnate this new attitude before the world, which in you, in virtue of your consecrated secularity must shine forth in a most special way”.

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Pope John Paul II picked up the same theme when he addressed institute members in 1980. He spoke of their “hallmark... to change the world from the inside”.

“You are in the world, but not just in the social sense, classified as secular, but put there, personally, every bit of you. Being there must be a thing of the heart, what you really mean and want. So you must consider yourselves part of the world, committed to the sanctification of the world, with full acceptance of its rights, its claims upon you, claims inseparable from the autonomy of the world, of its values, of its laws”.

A member’s canonical condition within the people of God is not changed. Members of institutes remain lay persons as provided for by Canon 711.

The first two paragraphs of Canon 713 follow:

The members of these institutes express and exercise their own consecration in their apostolic activity and like a leaven they strive to imbue all things with the spirit of the gospel for the strengthening and growth of the Body of Christ.

Lay members share in the Church’s evangelizing task in the world and of the world through their witness of a Christian life and fidelity toward their consecration, and through their efforts to order temporal things according to God and inform the world by the power of the gospel. Also, they cooperate in serving the ecclesial community, according to their particular secular way of life.

Pope Pius XII referred to the members as light and salt in a dark and savorless world.

Further, the entire life of the members of secular institutes must become apostolate. This apostolate of the secular institutes is to be faithfully exercised not only in the world, but as it were, as originating in the world and consequently in its profession, activities, forms, places and circumstances it must correspond to the secular condition.

While some institutes have a specific work (e.g. catechists, the medical profession), most frequently the lay institute members are immersed in the midst of others as farmers, lawyers, teachers, nurses, factory workers, civil servants. The quality of their consecrated life reflects on their everyday situation. What pertains to the role of the laity in the Church is theirs.

## **2. The Don Bosco Volunteers**

On 18 December 1850, John Bosco laid the foundations for a vastly expanding religious family, and he called the first group of followers "Salesians".

In the eyes of Don Bosco, the first group was only a part of the greater number of "Salesian Promoters". From 1858, he stated clearly that he wanted a definite division of his family of helpers into two categories: "interns" who lived permanently with him in a community, and "externs" who lived in their own homes and helped in his mission as best they could.

However, to gain definitive approval for his Rules, he had to delete the chapter on the "externs". Nevertheless, the original idea did not die. It was left in the hands of Fr. Philip Rinaldi.

In 1910, on the occasion of the first Congress of the Alumnae of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, fourteen young ladies publicly expressed to Fr. Rinaldi "the desire to unite themselves more closely with Don Bosco, to live his spirit, to acquire a perfect knowledge of and to put into practice in the world the very work performed by the Salesians". One of them was to prepare a rule. This first effort failed to meet the needs of the people who must live in the world.

On 20 May 1917, Fr. Rinaldi was able to take a new initiative in Turin. Three young women, Luisa Carpanera, Francesca Riccardi, and Maria Verzotti met him to start the Association of Zelatrici. For more than two years, Fr. Rinaldi carefully nurtured the group with his wise instructions and practical directives in their monthly conferences. The "Cuaderno Carpanera" is the compilation of these conferences diligently recorded by Luisa Carpanera.

In 1928, the Association had 16 members. When Fr. Rinaldi died in 1931, it declined for more than a decade.

Luisa Carpanera rekindled interest in 1943 when she turned over to Fr. Domenico Garneri her book containing the conferences of Fr. Rinaldi. Fr. Garneri tracked down some of the first members and began to revive the Association. With the help of Fr. Luzzi, he was able to begin two groups outside of Turin, in Bagnolo and in Milan. However, the former enthusiasm and vitality that existed when Fr. Rinaldi directed the groups was gone.

Fr. Renato Ziggiotti became the Superior General of the Salesian Society on 1 August 1952. The situation of the association was presented

to him on 3 August 1953. In the summer of 1955, Fr. Ziggiotti arranged for the preparation of an outline of a new rule with the ideas of Fr. Rinaldi, updated and adapted to the times. Members of the three existing groups met in Turin in the afternoon of 6 January 1956. The Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians gave their approval. Oblate-Cooperators of St. John Bosco became its new name.

On 19 March 1959, the Central Council renamed the growing association Don Bosco Volunteers. The title clearly indicates its lay character.

Cardinal Maurilius Fossati, Cardinal Archbishop of Turin issued a decree on 31 January 1964 recognizing the Don Bosco Volunteers as a "Pious Association". A decree by the new Archbishop of Turin, Cardinal Michael Pellegrino, established the Don Bosco Volunteers as a Diocesan Secular Institute on 31 January 1971. In the summer of 1977, the first General Assembly took place. The assembly revised the Constitution and for the first time, elected the Central Council.

Pope Paul VI placed the final seal of approval on the Institute on 21 July 1978 by establishing the Don Bosco Volunteers as a Secular Institute of Pontifical Right. The Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes issued the official decree on 5 August 1978, one day before Pope Paul VI passed away.

On 14 June 1990, the Holy See gave the definitive approval of the Constitution.

The seed planted by Don Bosco and nurtured by Fr. Rinaldi has blossomed in 173 Groups and Sub-groups worldwide.

As of 31 January 2004, there are 1,324 Don Bosco Volunteers in the following continents:

- Africa (19)
- America (450)
- Asia (127)
- Europe (726)
- Oceania (2)

Of the 1,324 Volunteers, 975 are perpetually consecrated, 232 with temporary consecration and 117 aspirants.

### **3. The Don Bosco Volunteers in the Philippines**

#### *3.1. Establishment of groups/sub-groups*

##### **3.1.1. Metro Manila group**

The Central Council of the Secular Institute of the Don Bosco Volunteers based in Rome approved the establishment of groups in the Philippines in July 1972. Fr. Luigi Ferrari, the Provincial, entrusted to Fr. Valeriano Barbero the task of recruiting the first members of the group. As Acting Rector of Don Bosco Technical Institute, Makati, Fr. Valeriano Barbero found five teachers in the Primary Department of the school who became the first aspirants in the Philippines.

Fr. William Balocco, Rector of the Provincial House, was the first Ecclesiastical Assistant. He had the primary responsibility in the formation of the members.

A whole day spent in recollection at the Mater Dei School in Calamba, Laguna was the first meeting of the group on 23 July 1972. Subsequent formation meetings in the Provincial House were held every second, third, and fourth Fridays of the month. The Three-Year Formation Program of the Aspirantate covered the following:

- First Year – Formation of Personality
- Second Year – Formation of the Christian
- Third Year – Formation of the Consecrated Soul

The initial formation conference held on 16 August 1972 dealt with the following topics:

- 1) Brief Outline of the History of the Institute
- 2) Brief Outline of the Government and Structure of the Institute
- 3) Brief Explanation of the Nature of Secular Institute

At the end of the school year, Fr. Balocco was assigned to Don Bosco in Tarlac. Fr. Lazaro Revilla, the Provincial Secretary and former Novice Master replaced Fr. Balocco as the Ecclesiastical Assistant of the group.

The newly constructed Provincial House in Better Living Subdivision, Parañaque became the new venue for the weekly formation meetings. Another Don Bosco teacher joined the group at the start of the school year.

The First Annual Retreat was at the Redemptorist Convent, Nevel Hills, Cebu City, from 26 to 31 December 1973.

On the third year of its existence (1974-1975), two new members joined the group. One was a Don Bosco teacher and another one was a bank manager, the first one recruited outside of Don Bosco Makati.

On the Feast of Mary Help of Christians in 1975, the first five aspirants in the Institute in the Philippines made their First Temporary Profession. This was the highlight of the Annual Retreat held in the Canossian School in Lipa, Batangas. Fr. Luigi Ferrari, Provincial was the main celebrant at the mass of the first profession. Fr. Peter Zago, Vice Provincial, Fr. Valeriano Barbero, Provincial Economist, Fr. Joseph Savina, Rector of Don Bosco Makati, Fr. Jose Reinoso, Retreat Preacher, and Fr. Lazaro Revilla, Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Makati group concelebrated.

In 1976, following the first temporary profession of five members, the Center appointed the first Local Council, the governing body of the group. There were four council members: the Local Directress, the Delegate for the Aspirants, the Secretary-Treasurer, and the Ecclesiastical Assistant who did not have any right to vote.

The meeting venue moved to the Pius XII Catholic Center, Manila. The monthly days of recollection were either at Manresa Retreat House, Quezon City or at the Colegio de Sta. Rosa in Makati.

### 3.1.2. Victorias group

Past pupils of the Oratory of the Salesian Sisters comprised the nucleus of the group in Victorias, Negros Occidental. Sr. Fosca Barco, FMA introduced to them the idea of a consecrated secular life. Six responded favorably. With the six aspirants, it became a Sub-group by 13 July 1973.

Fr. Joseph Giaime, as the newly appointed Ecclesiastical Assistant conducted the initial formation meeting on 31 May 1973. The members met for regular formation meetings and monthly days of recollection in the Chaplain's office at St. Joseph's convent. They also participated in the first annual retreat from 26 to 31 December 1973 in Cebu City.

On 30 May 1976, five aspirants from the Sub-group made their first temporary profession. After this, the Center appointed a Local Delegate. Likewise, Fr. Remo Bati, the new Rector of Don Bosco, Victorias became the new Ecclesiastical Assistant.

### 3.1.3. Canlubang group

Fr. Lazaro Revilla presented the idea of a consecrated secular life to a teacher and a telephone operator in Canlubang on 13 May 1973. Mother Mary Boccardo, the Mother Superior of Canossa Academy in Calamba invited one of their teachers and a librarian to join the group.

On 24 July 1973, Fr. Adolf Faroni, designated as the Ecclesiastical Assistant, gave the first weekly conference to the new members. Mass was celebrated after the conference. The venue was the convent of the Salesian Sisters in Canlubang.

Two Volunteers were able to participate in the first annual retreat from 26 to 31 December 1973 in Cebu City. Three of the original members made their first temporary profession on 24 May 1976 after the annual retreat in Manresa Retreat House, Quezon City. Fr. Pietro Schinetti, the Central Ecclesiastical Assistant gave conferences regarding the Institute. He was the author of “La Mia Vita”, the commentary on the 1977 Constitutions.

Canlubang became a Sub-group in 1976. The Central Council appointed a Local Delegate with a three-year term.

### 3.1.4. Cebu group

In 1977, four Volunteers from Victorias conducted a Christian Family Life Seminar to the members of the various religious organizations in the parish of Pasil, Cebu City. Fr. Joseph Giaime, the former Ecclesiastical Assistant of Victorias was the newly appointed Rector of the parish. When entrusted to the Salesians, the parish of Pasil was a slum area.

Two Volunteers decided to return to Pasil and work as catechists and social workers. They agreed to go back to Victorias for the monthly day of recollections. However, with the entry of new aspirants, Cebu later became a Sub-group.

### 3.1.5. Tarlac sub-group

In 1975, Fr. William Balocco became the Rector of Don Bosco in Tarlac. With his experience as the first Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Makati Group, he began to establish a group in Tarlac. Two ladies an-

swered the call. Two more joined the following year and the Center declared it as Tarlac Sub-group.

The life of the Sub-group was short-lived. Only one among the four aspirants persevered in her vocation. The numerous responsibilities of Fr. Balocco left him little time to attend to the formation meetings of the volunteers. With only a Volunteer left, the absence of new prospects, and the lack of Salesian assistance forced the Center to suppress the Sub-group of Tarlac in 1985. The remaining Volunteer became a member of the Metro-Manila Group.

### *3.2. Consolidation of the groups/sub-groups into a zone*

Under the 1971 Constitutions, six consecrated Volunteers form a Group. (Art. 90) When there are less than six, a Sub-group is established. (Art. 96) The Central Council can establish a Region when there is an adequate number of Groups and Sub-groups. (Art. 81) However, it may establish a Zone “when distance or too small a number of groups would make it impossible or premature to establish a Region”. (Art. 87) In all cases, it is essential that the “necessary spiritual assistance is assured”.

From 1972, the Philippines belonged to the Zone consisting of Hongkong, Macau, and Thailand.

By 1978, the Central Council created an independent Philippine Zone after the First General Assembly of the Institute held in Rome, Italy in the summer of 1977. The Zone Council consisted of a Zone-in-Charge, two councilors and an Ecclesiastical Assistant with no right to vote.

## **4. Transition of the zone into a region**

### *4.1. Asia I*

In 1989, the Third General Assembly held in Frascati, Italy reformulated the Constitutions. The new Constitutions no longer provided for a Zone. The Groups and Sub-groups now form a Region. The need and the number of the Volunteers of the Region determine the number of councilors who will assist the Regional President in the animation of the Region.

With this development, the Philippine Zone automatically became the Philippine Region, officially designated as Asia I. The other Groups and Sub-groups in the Asian region were combined to form Asia II.

#### *4.2. Philippines-Australia (Fila)*

In 1998, the Central Council incorporated the Sub-group of Victoria, Australia to the Philippine Region. Previously, the lone Volunteer of Australia was dependent directly on the Center from 1994.

### **5. The region today**

Thirty-two years after it was founded, there are now 56 Don Bosco Volunteers in the Region: 42 Perpetually Consecrated, 9 with Temporary Consecration and 5 Aspirants.

They are in the following groups in the Philippines: 21 in Metro Manila, 16 in Victorias, 9 in Cebu, 8 in Canlubang. There are 2 in Victoria, Australia.

Each group has a schedule of formation and sisterly encounters and monthly days of recollection. The Regional Council initiates the Annual Retreat and Course of Spiritual Culture. The Regional President and some members of the Regional Council visit the groups for the canonical visitation each year.

Based on the suggested topics provided by the Center, the Region has come up with its Program of Formation.

The Region sent representatives to the five General Assemblies held in 1977, 1983, 1989, 1995 and 2001. With the expansion in the membership, the representation with voting rights grew from one in 1977, two in 1983 and 1989, and three in 1995 and 2001.

### **6. Prospects of the region**

Growth is the biggest challenge facing the Region today: growth in the number of Don Bosco Volunteers and growth in their spirituality that must be evident in the daily life witnessing.\*

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\* REFERENCES: Provincial Report on the Progress of the Secular Institute of the Don Bosco Volunteers – Philippines Province (July 1978–July 1979); Constitutions (1971, 1977, 1983 Modifications, 1989).



# **APPENDIX**



Casa Generalizia

Rome 4 December 2004

Dear SDB, FMA and members of the Salesian Family:

On behalf of members of the General Council presently in plenary session, I wish to greet you and to welcome all of you in this Seminar on Salesian History in the East Asia – Oceania region of the Salesian Society.

I am very glad that all SDB provinces (except Oceania which I visited lately) of your Asian region are represented in this Seminar, which I consider important for the on-going reflection on the life and apostolate of the Salesian Society today.

I am also happy that the other members of the Salesian Family (the CSM by the Venerable Vincenzo Cimatti and Fr. Antonio Cavoli [1937], the SIHM by Bishop Gaetano Pasotti [1937], the DQM by Fr. Carlo della Torre [1954], and the SAL by St. Luigi Versiglia [1936]) are participating and sharing their own respective Salesian histories regarding their beginnings. Definitely, their contribution will reveal how rich our Salesian history is, and how extensive it has become.

Even the participation of the DBV reveal how Don Bosco’s charism, in the consecrated Christian faithful living in the world, has been imbibed and continues to make history among the lay in your promising Region.

That your Salesian History Seminar coincides with the China Province’s preparation for its centenary is a further reminder to us all that we cannot neglect to know our roots and our past. The Salesian apostolate in China, so very fruitful and promising, could not but “spill over” to the other countries around her.

We cannot become indifferent to our history; otherwise, we risk losing a part of our being Salesians. The Seminar you are inaugurating should help in going back to our roots; it should challenge us to a serious reflection on the present and the future of the Salesian presence in East Asia-Oceania. For when you think of the beginnings of the Salesian presence in East Asia-Oceania, you delineate what could help to make your present apostolate among the young more actual and more relevant, and thus assuring your continuity and future.

In my last circular letter (#387 October-December 2004 “I Give thanks to God each time I remember you” [Phil. 1:3]), I presented the Western European Region of the Salesian Society, endeavouring “to make you better acquainted with the history of this Region”. Your seminar is one way of making me, as well as all the Salesians and members of the Salesian Family, acquainted with your regional history which cannot be considered inferior to the rest of our Salesian History. Definitely, you will also discover something “spectacular” in the development of the Congregation in your Region. And that which is “spectacular” will reveal to you the presence of the Mystery and the Lord of History in the journey of the Salesian Family in your part of the globe.

Your seminar should help us not to get bogged down with the past. Instead, with the knowledge of the past, the Salesians should be enlivened and provoked to offer to the present young new responses as Don Bosco did, inventing and creating in order to meet their needs. Essentially, it will not be the structures that you will recall, but “Salesian educators defined by a charism” and who became pioneers in the establishment of the Salesian tradition in East Asia and Oceania.

I shall pray for the success of your Seminar, imploring the Immaculate Virgin Help of Christians, in whose novena we find ourselves, to guide and lead you to the discovery of her Son’s constant intervention in your history. In a few days time, we shall remember the birth of the Oratory, the primordial work of Don Bosco. May your Seminar lead you to affirm and to constantly remember that our Salesian Family had made history and will continue to make history in as much as we remain faithful to our Founder. Would that our Salesian History teach us this!

Fr. Pascual Chavez V. SDB (Rector Major)

Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice

Rome, 3 December 2004

To the Participants of the Seminar ACSSA Hong Kong

Dear Participants,

At the start of the Seminar on “the beginning of the Salesian Presences in East Asia – Oceania” I wish you a fruitful encounter also on behalf of our Mother General, Mother Antonia Colombo and the entire General Council of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

The Seminar takes place at the beginning of the centenary celebrations of the Salesian (SDB) presence in China. I congratulate you for this happy initiative which allows you to reflect together on the history of the Salesian Family in East Asia-Oceania.

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians ventured out into this part of the world in 1922 after the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Institute on the insistent request of the Salesian Confreres who recognized the need of their presence and work among young girls and women. The power of the Holy Spirit opened the way for the Salesian charism to become a gift for the young people of Asia and Oceania and since then it has experienced abundant fruit.

Re-reading history brings into evidence the incarnation of God’s Project through the decisions and actions of persons and of communities who responded to the ever-changing needs of young people. Creativity is, in fact, one of the salesian characteristics .

May the experience of the seminar become a renewed reason for continuing the journey in every country of Asia and Oceania thus deepening inculturation and inter-religious dialogue. May it make our educative mission ever more effective.

For us, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the challenge of the education of women in the diverse contexts where we work remains an open question. As members of the Salesian Family we are responsible for fostering the growth of the charism, enriching it through profound dialogue with diverse cultures and sharing it in the Church with other religious congregations and with the laity. The Salesian Family has much to

receive from Asia and Oceania. I believe that the reflections of the seminar will help our discernment today regarding the future of christian and religious life in these regions of great hope and profound expectations in which we are called to live the “da mihi animas” with great passion for God and for humanity, especially for young people.

May Mary Help of Christians, Mother of all humanity and of all ages, bless you and sustain your passionate search for signs for the building of God’s Kingdom.

Sr. Yvonne Reungoat FMA

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SALESIAN PRESENCE IN  
EAST ASIA – OCEANIA  
Hong Kong, 4 December 2004

Dear brothers, sisters, friends and members of ACSSA:

From far away Spain, I wish to be present in the inauguration of your Seminar with the title “The Beginning of the Salesian Presences in East Asia – Oceania”, in order to extend to you my welcome and my greetings.

Your Seminar constitutes a new and important advancement in the work of research on the history of the Salesian Family, as traced out from the International Congress celebrated in Rome last November 2000. It is the third of a series of international and continental meetings programmed for the years 2003-2004. The first seminar, European, was celebrated in Vienna, and the second, Latin American, took place in Argentina. Today, you are inaugurating in Hong Kong the third, which is Asian.

The choice of Hong Kong as seat of the Seminar wishes to be the contribution of ACSSA to the centennial celebrations of the Salesian presence in China. It is ACSSA's way of joining you in thanking God for the fruitful apostolate realized in China during the past hundred years, a work confirmed by the Church when it declared officially the sanctity of the Salesian martyrs, Versiglia and Caravario.

The content of the previous two seminars has been oriented to prepare the coming International Congress, whose theme is “Salesian Education from 1880-1922. Instances and Actuations in Diverse Contexts”, and which hopefully will be held in early 2006.

The first round of seminars had aimed to verify the sources of documents and the situation of the archives. This was followed by the study of the orientations which were sent from the centre of our Congregations to the numerous foundations in the various continents. The answers of inculturation by the pioneers of the Salesian presences existing today, have put to light the essential and the permanent of our charism, as well as the flexible and the ductile. These flourishing presences witness to the generous giving of the Salesians to the children and to the young in their distinct poverties.

This could also be the wonderful aim of this Seminar which you inaugurate today and which we consider important. The Salesian pres-

ences in East Asia – Oceania are indeed very near in time and very varied in their contexts. But they are also full of hope, as they continue to count on the help of the Lord and the protection of Mary.

In the name of the all the members of ACSSA, I send this greetings of welcome and congratulations to you who come from countries so far. I express to you my most sincere appreciation for the valuable contribution of a greater knowledge of our Salesian history, which undoubtedly will be the fruit of your Seminar.

Seville (Spain) 4 December 2004.

Sr. Maria Fe Nuñez Muñoz FMA  
President - ACSSA

## PARTICIPANTS

1. Br. Benedict BAEK SDB (Korea)
2. Sr. Paola BATTAGLIOLA FMA (Timor)
3. Fr. Jean-Paul BEAUVE SDB (Taiwan)
4. Fr. Gregorio BICOMONG SDB (Philippines)
5. Sr. Estrella CASTALONE FMA (Philippines)
6. Fr. Michael CHANG SDB (Korea)
7. Fr. Peter CHOI YONG SUP SDB (Taiwan)
8. Fr. Gaetano COMPRI SDB (Japan)
9. Fr. Enrico DANIELI SDB (Thailand)
10. Sr. Maria DOTHI TUYET NHUNG FMA (Vietnam)
11. Sr. Maria Elena ESTACIO FMA (Cambodia)
12. Fr. Lanfranco FEDRIGOTTI SDB (Hong Kong)
13. Fr. Michele FERRERO SDB (Taiwan)
14. Sr. Marisa GAMBATO FMA (Japan)
15. Fr. Savio HON SDB (Hong Kong)
16. Fr. Nestor IMPELIDO SDB (Philippines)
17. Fr. Thomas KEMMLER SDB (Taiwan)
18. Sr. Ma. Domenica LEE CHONG JA FMA (Korea)
19. Sr. Rosetta LEE MEI YIN FMA (Macau)
20. Sr. Mae Angela LEE YONG FMA (Korea)
21. Sr. M. Goretti LAM FMA (Taiwan)
22. Fr. Domingos LEONG SDB (Hong Kong)
23. Sr. Grazia LOPARCO FMA (Italy)
24. Sr. Elena MIRAVALLE FMA (Hong Kong)
25. Fr. Francesco MOTTO SDB (Italy)
26. Fr. Francis NGUYEN MINH THIEU SDB (Vietnam)
27. Fr. John NGUYEN VAN TY SDB (Vietnam)
28. Sr. Maliwan PARAMATHAWIROTE SIHM (Thailand)
29. Ms. Agnes PAULINO (Philippines)
30. Sr. Panarat PHENGPINIT SIHM (Thailand)
31. Sr. Teresa RATCHANEE SIMMALEE DQM (Thailand)
32. Sr. Teresia Furuki RYOKO CSM (Japan)
33. Sr. Anna SAKSRI NGAMWONG DQM (Thailand)
34. Sr. Ana Rosa SIVORI FMA (Thailand)
35. Br. Hilario SEO SDB (Korea)
36. Fr. Carlo SOCOL SDB (Hong Kong)

37. Sr. Teresa THIPPAWAN PARKSUWAN FMA (Thailand)
38. Br. Francis TRAN HOANG LONG SDB (Vietnam)
39. Sr. Anna TRAN THI SANG FMA (Vietnam)
40. Sr. Cecilia TSE FMA (Hong Kong)
41. Fr. Roneldo VILBAR SDB (Philippines)
42. Fr. Joachim YE MAUNG SDB (Myanmar)
43. Sr. Maria Mukai YUMIKO CSM (Japan)

**“The Beginning of the Salesian Presences in East Asia – Oceania”**  
- A History Seminar jointly organized by ACSSA & China’s DB100  
Celebrations -

*Venue:* Harbour View International House  
4 Harbour Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong  
*Date:* 04-06 December, 2004

**Part I – China related topics (open to local auditors)**

**1<sup>st</sup> Day (Saturday 4 December)**

08:00 Breakfast  
09:00-09:15 Opening speech Salesian Provincial & FMA Provincial  
09:15-09:25 Presentation of works: Fr. Motto  
09:25-09:55 “The Political Situation in China 1920-1930 and Its Effects on the Salesians” (Domingos Leong SDB)  
10:00-10:35 “Salesian Missionary Activity While Blessed Philip Rinaldi (1921-1931) Was Rector Major with Particular Reference to Eastern Asia” (Francesco Motto SDB)  
10:40-11:00 Break  
11:00-11:35 “The Arrival of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in the Far East” (Grazia Loparco FMA)  
11:40-12:30 Q&A, Floor  
13:00 Lunch  
15:00-15:35 “The Birth of the China Province and the Expansion of Salesian Work in East Asia (1926-1927)” (Carlo Socol SDB)  
15:40-16:15 “The Beginning and Development of the Salesian Work in Japan” (Gaetano Compri SDB)  
16:15-16:35 Break  
16:35-17:10 “The Initium of the Salesian Presence in Thailand” (Enrico Danieli SDB)  
17:10-18:00 Q&A, Floor  
18:30-19:15 Holy Mass (Fr. Savio Hon SDB)  
19:30 Dinner

**2<sup>nd</sup> Day (Sunday 5 December)**

08:00 Breakfast  
09:00-09:10 Summary of proceedings & presentation 2<sup>nd</sup> day: Fr. Motto

- 09:10-09:45 “The First Salesian Presence in Timor (1927-1929)” (Amador Anjos SDB)
- 09:50-10:25 “The Beginning of the Salesian Work in Vietnam” (John Ty SDB)
- 10:30-10:50 Break
- 10:50-11:22 “Salesians in the Philippines (1949-1963): Historical Notes” (Nestor Impelido SDB)
- 11:25-12:00 “A Concise History of the Salesian Korean Mission” (Michael Chang SDB)
- 12:00-12:45 Q&A, Floor
- 13:00 Lunch
- 15:00-15:15 “The FMA Mission in China” (Elena Miravalle FMA)
- 15:15-16:30 “The History of the FMA Mission Inserted in the History of Salvation (1929-1952)” (Marissa Gambato FMA)
- 16:30-16:45 “The Beginning of the FMA Work in Thailand. The First Twenty Years (1931-1952)” (Ana Rosa Sivori FMA)
- 16:45-17:00 “The FMA in the Philippines” (Estrella Castalone FMA)
- 17:00-17:20 Break
- 17:20-18:00 Q&A, Floor
- 18:30-19:15 Holy Mass – Bishop Joseph Zen SDB
- 19:30 Dinner / Informal meeting with Bishop Zen

Part II – For ACSSA Members & interested participants

**3<sup>rd</sup> Day (Monday 6 December)**

- 08:00 Breakfast
- 09:00-09:10 Summary of proceedings: Fr. Motto
- 09:15-09:50 “Historical Notes on the Founding of the Caritas Sisters of Miyazaki” (Maria Mukai Yumiko CSM)
- 09:55-10:15 “The Identity of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Thailand” (Maliwan Paramathawirote SIHM)
- 10:20-10:40 “History of the Origins of the Institute of the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary” (Anna Saksri Ngamwong DQM)
- 10:40-11:00 Break
- 11:00-11:20 “The Don Bosco Volunteers in the Philippines” (Agnes B. Paulino)
- 11:20-11:40 “The Salesian Congregation in Myanmar” (Joachim Ye Maung SDB)

12:00-12:45	Q&A, Floor
13:00	Lunch
15:00-17:00	Methodological and programmatic issues
17:30	Departure for Holy Spirit Seminary: visit (18:00-18:30)
18:30	Holy Mass
19:30	Dinner at Jumbo Seafood Restaurant



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6. Maria MUKAI YUMIKO CSM: *“Brief Historical Notes On The Foundation Of The Sisters Of Charity Of Miyazaki”*

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8. Anna Saksri NGAMWONG DQM: *“History Of The Origins Of The Institute Of The Daughters Of The Queenship Of Mary”*

9. Agnes PAULINO: *“The Don Bosco Volunteers In The Philippines”*

## **APPENDIX**

RECTOR MAJOR

FMA VICAR GENERAL

ACSSA PRESIDENT

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

PROGRAM

GENERAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

<p style="text-align:center"><b>BY-LAWS OF THE ASSOCIAZIONE CULTORI DI STORIA SALESIANA *</b></p>
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**Art. 1.**

The scope of the Associazione dei Cultori di Storia Salesiana (ACSSA) is to promote studies on salesian history, favour research, updates and collaboration among its members, animate the Salesian Family in the historiographic profile, spread the knowledge of Don Bosco and the works which he originated, all these in dialogue with analogous civil and religious institutions.

**Art. 2.**

The ACSSA achieves its scope through:

- a. a quadriennial convention
- b. meetings of members by geographical area
- c. contributions of studies
- d. organization of conferences, courses and series of lectures
- e. promotion and collection of gathering of sources and of written memoirs, photos, radio-television...
- f. publication of a *Bulletin of Information*
- g. other initiatives suited to the by-laws of the association.

**Art. 3.**

The ACSSA has been erected by the Rector Major of the Salesians in 9 October 1996. It is located in Rome, in the Salesian General House, in via della Pisana, 1111.

**Art. 4.**

The bond of the ACSSA with the Salesian Family is guaranteed by the Rector Major through his delegate.

**Art. 5.**

The planning and the implementation of initiatives (cf. art. 2) goes in agreement with the "Salesian Historical Institute".

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\* Associazione Cultori di Storia Salesiana can be translated as Association of Enthusiasts of Salesian History. In this case, an enthusiast can be an expert, connoisseur or student of Salesian History.

**Art. 6.**

1. The members of ACSSA are those who, qualified in the historical sciences or working at various levels of research, study and salesian interest, request membership and are accepted by the Presidency.
2. The members are required to collaborate with the Presidency, at least by sending information and salesian documentation related to the zone of membership.

**Art. 7.**

1. The ACSSA is governed by the Presidency, composed of the President, the Secretary-Treasurer, four members and the director of the Salesian Historical Institute.
2. Except this last, all the members of the Presidency are elected by the assembly of members in the occasion of the quadriennial convention (cf. art. 2) without specifying their roles, which are designated by election in the internal of the same Presidency, and approved by the Rector Major.
3. The Presidency has the task of coordinating the activities of the Association, admitting members, resolving cases of doubt regarding the implementation of the Regulation, examining the economic balance, promoting and/or patronizing local initiatives.
4. When elected, the members of the Presidency remain in office four years from election; they can be re-elected.

**Art. 8.**

1. The economic management of the ACSSA, entrusted to the Treasurer subject to the responsibility of the President, is conducted in understanding with the delegate of the Rector Major.
2. The annual due is fixed in dollars...

**Art. 9.**

The annual *Bulletin of Information*, sent by the Secretary to the members who are up-to-date with the payment, will insure the necessary link with the Presidency and among the members of ACSSA.

**Art. 10.**

The present by-laws have been approved *ad experimentum* for a five-year period by the Rector Major of the Salesians.

Rome, 9 October 1996.

ASSOCIAZIONE CULTORI STORIA SALESIANA  
VARIA

1. FRANCISCO CASTELLANOS HURTADO, *El Colegio Salesiano del Espíritu Santo en Guadalajara (México)*. Roma 2005.
2. Nestor IMPELIDO (ed.), *The Beginnings Of The Salesian Presence In East Asia. Acts Of The Seminar On Salesian History, Hong Kong, 4-6 December 2004. Part One: The Salesians of Don Bosco*. Hong Kong 2006.
3. Nestor IMPELIDO (ed.), *The Beginnings Of The Salesian Presence In East Asia. Acts Of The Seminar On Salesian History, Hong Kong, 4-6 December 2004. Part Two: The Salesian Family (FMA, CSM, SIHM, DQM, DBV)*. Hong Kong 2006.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS ISS-ACSSA

Francesco MOTTO (ed.), *Insediamenti e iniziative salesiane dopo don Bosco. Saggi di storiografia*. Istituto Storico Salesiano, Studi 9. Roma, LAS 1996, 595 p.

Francesco Motto (ed.), *L'Opera Salesiana dal 1880 al 1922. Significatività e portata sociale*. 3 voll. Roma, LAS 2001.

- Vol. I: *Contesti, quadri generali, interpretazioni*. Istituto Storico Salesiano, Studi 16, 469 p.
- Vol. II: *Esperienze particolari in Europa, Africa, Asia*. Istituto Storico Salesiano, Studi 17, 470 p.
- Vol. III: *Esperienze particolari in America Latina*. Istituto Storico Salesiano, Studi 18, 557 p.

Ricerche Storiche Salesiane, 44 (2004) 23-312: *Atti del IV Seminario Europeo dell'ISS-ACSSA. Vienna 30 ottobre – 2 novembre 2003*.







The Salesians first went to Macao in 1906, without realizing perhaps that it would be for them a jumping board to go to the rest of East Asia: China (1910), Japan (1926), Hong Kong, Thailand and East Timor (1927), Laos and Vietnam (1941), Philippines (1951), Taiwan (1952) and Korea (1955). Later, they would move on to Indonesia (1985), Cambodia (1994) and Mongolia (2001).

These two volumes are actual accounts of what have transpired in the history of the Salesians after a century has passed since the first "Opera Salesiana" was established in China, where the uneasy and unstable events revealed to be "providential" in as much as these provoked the expansion of the Salesians to the rest of East Asia. These histories were not written only by nor about the Salesians of Don Bosco, but also by and about the other members of the Salesian Family, some of which were Asian born — Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki, Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Daughters of the Queenship of Mary, Don Bosco Volunteers. They reflect the "mission politics" of the Salesian Society in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the Church (with Benedict XV, Pius XI) was trying to upgrade and renew its missionary vocation.

Salesian East Asia, where Don Bosco's charisma is seemingly destined to be more intense and alive, is a region which has decided to go back early to its roots, in order to strengthen its present and reinforce its future. Consequently, it has written the beginnings of its presence. For the East Asian Salesians, who do not wish to be indifferent to their history, had made history and still hope to continue to make history.

Fr. Nestor C. Impelido SDB, a member of ACSSA, works for the Salesian Historical Institute in Rome, Italy. At the same time, he teaches Church History and Philippine Church History at the Don Bosco Center of Studies in Manila, Philippines.