

Hong Kong Island

In April 1841, three months after Hong Kong was opened for trade, the Catholic Church in Hong Kong was established as a Prefecture Apostolic, separated from the Diocese of Macau. The first Prefect Apostolic was Fr. Theodore Joret (1804-1842), a Swiss diocesan priest and representative of the Congregation for the Propaganda of the Faith. Since then, the fishing village officially established a relationship with this religion introduced from the West. The Western missionaries began to relocate here from Macau, a Portuguese colony. In 1842, a church with a quarters was built on Wellington Street in Central. Hong Kong Island was taken as a stepping stone for missions in mainland China, as the land across Victoria Harbour, including Kowloon Peninsula and the inland area further beyond (later leased as the “New Territories”), was still ruled by the Qing government.

In these early days, the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres, which has arrived Hong Kong in 1848, and the Daughters of Charity of the Canossian Institute, which has arrived in Hong Kong in 1860, were already there to serve the Chinese grassroots in Wan Chai. The former established an orphanage called *Asile de la St. Enfance* at the site where it is now Johnston Road. They also founded a school (predecessor of St. Paul's Convent School in Causeway Bay), an almshouse for the elderly women and a

hospital for Chinese women and babies (predecessor of St. Paul's Hospital). The Canossian Sisters founded various institutions, such as St. Francis' Canossian College, a hospital (predecessor of Canossa Hospital on Peak Road) and a Home for the Blind.

Apart from the Central and Wan Chai, Aberdeen was another early missionary site established by the Catholic Church. In 1849, the Catholic Mission acquired a 999-year lease on a site in Tin Wan, near the coast of Aberdeen. A church, a dormitory and schools were built there. In the 1860s, the ship-building and repairing industry were growing in this area. The missionaries often preached to the Chinese and foreign engineers, dock workers, sailors and fishermen there until the industry diminished in Aberdeen. Since then the priests started to make irregular visits. In the 1890s, the Canossian Sisters began to serve the fishing community in Aberdeen and established the Holy Family Convent in 1897. Later, it founded a private school (predecessor of Pui Tak Canossian Primary School) and a charity clinic that provided free medical services.

Cathedral Of The Immaculate Conception: A Base For Missions In Mainland China

To date, the most important Catholic building on Hong Kong Island is still the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Caine Road. In 1842, the first Catholic Church in Hong Kong—the Immaculate Conception Church— was built at the junction of Wellington Street and Pottinger Street in the then Victoria Town. However, it was destroyed by a devastating fire in 1859. Although another one was built on the same site, the Catholic Mission decided to sell the land in Wellington Street and build a new church at No. 16 Caine Road. The new Cathedral of the Immaculate



Photo: The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

Conception held its first Mass on December 7 in 1888. Fifty years after completion, a solemn consecration was held on December 8, 1938. In 1946, the Holy See elevated the Vicariate Apostolic of Hong Kong to the status of “Diocese” with Bishop Enrico Valtorta (1883-1951) appointed as the first bishop. This “main church” as it called in Chinese was renamed as “cathedral”. To comply with the liturgical reform of Vatican II, the main altar was moved forward to the center of the transept in 1969. The seats, furnishings and decorations were also re-arranged. In October 2000, Pope John Paul II canonised 120 Chinese martyrs. Before that, a side chapel—Chapel of Our Lord’s Passion—was converted into the Chapel of Chinese Martyrs and Saints. A box containing relics of 16 Chinese martyrs was placed under the altar, and two patterned stained-glass windows with the theme based on the Chinese martyrs were installed to represent the communion and prayers of all Chinese martyrs. These arrangements in the Gothic-style cathedral manifested a fusion of Chinese and Western cultures.

Hong Kong Catholic Centre in the Central Business District

Founded in 1945, the Hong Kong Catholic Centre is aimed to be a central location for religious, social and cultural activities of the local Church. It is located in the Central business district, and was used as the office for the Catholic Truth Society of Hong Kong and *Kung Kao Po* in the early days. The Catholic Centre was also an essential venue for the Church to get close to the believers. Besides having departments for publications and religious articles, the Catholic Centre is also the main distributor of two Chinese Catholic publishers in Hong Kong and Taiwan—the Catholic Truth Society and the Kuangchi Cultural Group. It was originally located in the five-storey King's Building on Connaught Road, not far from the General Post Office. It later moved into the neighbouring, newly-renovated Grand Building. On the third floor, it has the Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel, which is open daily except for public holidays. There are Masses in the morning and dawn to fit the busy schedules of the working class. The long opening hours allow them to attend Mass, to pray or to have a moment of contemplation before or after work and during lunch hours. Many Chinese and foreign white-collars who work in the Central have spent the most sacred moments of their lives here.

Kung Kao Po was founded in 1928 as the first Chinese Catholic newspaper of the Catholic Church. Its office was located in this building

before moving to the Catholic Diocese Centre on Caine Road. Although it is a Chinese weekly, the first editor-in-chief was an Italian priest, Fr. Andrea Granelli (PIME, 1892-1976). Thus, Kung Kao Po can be described as a medium for communication between Western vision and Chinese culture.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in a Catholic Settlement

“Ha Wan” (now known as “Wan Chai,” referring to the area from Arsenal Street to Happy Valley) was originally a remote area in Victoria Town with only Chinese residents. Over time, European merchants, Portuguese, Indians and Africans came to reside here, turning it into an unusual multicultural neighborhood.

In the early days of port-opening, the Hong Kong colonial government allotted the land on a hillside in Ha Wan as Protestant and Catholic cemeteries. After the cemetery was moved out of Victoria Town to Happy Valley, the Catholic Church built some housing estates on the site, renting to the Chinese faithful and Portuguese migrants coming from Macau for work. It became a Catholic settlement known as St. Francis Yard. In 1860, St. Francis Xavier Chapel was built nearby, which was the second church built in Hong Kong. The Chinese word “wai” (圍) for St. Francis Yard (進教圍) might be inspired by the traditional walled villages commonly found in Hong Kong and Guangdong province. There is also a sloped road named St. Francis Street on the way to St. Francis Yard.

By the 1930s, Bishop Valtorta began the preparation of constructing a new church in response to the growing number of believers. He received a generous donation from a benefactor surnamed Wong to purchase a piece of land. However, the preparatory work was suspended due to the outbreak of the Second World War. The bishop resumed the preparation

after the war and sought donations from various sectors to cover the construction cost. Father Giacomo Zilioli (PIME, 1898-1960), the first pastor of the chapel, and the laypeople actively contributed Requiem Masses to raise funds. The Holy Souls Church was finally constructed in 1950. A primary school, Ki Lap School, was also attached to it. Apart from evangelising, the Holy Souls Church also helped many deprived families by providing relief supplies. In 1957, the Holy Souls Church was renamed as Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.



Photo: The old Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church before demolition (1990)

Ki Lap School was suspended in 1994 due to a sharp decline of schooling population in the area while the prestigious Canossian schools remained there to provide education to young girls. Three years later, the diocese demolished the church in cooperation with a property developer. The new Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church was rebuilt inside a new building at the original site at No. 1 Star Street, Wan Chai. Today, in this

multicultural area, the Catholic Church continues to focus on both evangelisation and education, nurturing the spiritual and intellectual growth of the people in the vicinity.

St. Paul's Institution in Causeway Bay: A Rare Religious Complex in Downtown

The St. Paul's Institution at Causeway Bay Road belongs to the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres. As mentioned above, the history of the French congregation in Hong Kong can be dated back to 1848. It was the first foreign female Religious congregation to come to Hong Kong.

Soon after their arrival, the Paulinian Sisters immediately realised that many infants were abandoned, with most of them being female and on the verge of dying. Taking care of these infants became their top priority. In 1851, the Sisters received funding from the Society of the Holy Childhood in France and moved the orphanage, *Asile de la Sainte Enfance*, to a large coastal property. To meet the needs of the orphans and of the society, the sisters began establishing schools, hospital and an almshouse for the elderly and the sick.

Space became inadequate as the work of the Sisters continued to grow. In 1916, the Sisters decided to relocate to Causeway Bay, where they built a convent along with a novitiate, an orphanage, an Anglo-French school and a private hospital, St. Paul's Hospital. In the centre of the complex, there is a magnificent and solemn private church called Christ the King Chapel. Consecrated in 1930, this chapel reaffirms that Jesus Christ is the pillar of life for the Paulinian Sisters.



Photo: Christ the King Chapel

The chapel was built in Neo-classical style, with gigantic Corinthian columns at the main entrance. There is a sizeable dome at a cross-shaped intersection on top of the chapel. The main entrance and the two side entrances are built with porticos. A bell tower is attached to one end of the chapel, and the sloping roof was constructed with double-layer Chinese-style tiles. The huge columns form an open colonnade around the building and support the balcony in the attic. In the interior, one can see the arched ceiling and a spiral staircase to reach the attic. The classic decorations, colourful mosaic tiles and sculptures of angels add a lot of flavour to the chapel. This elegant church carries a unique and distinctive architectural feature that is rarely seen in the city. Without much change for decades, it stands as if it was frozen in time. More importantly, stepping inside the

chapel from the busy streets of Causeway Bay surrounded by skyscrapers is like engaging a retreat, allowing people to escape temporarily from the madding crowd.

Next to the chapel, St. Paul's Convent was called the "French Convent" in the early years, and St. Paul's Hospital is more commonly known as the "French hospital," both of which indicates the French root of the congregation. Even though there are not many foreign sisters stationing in Hong Kong nowadays, the service target of the congregation remains to be the local Chinese, giving a real example of communion between the Westerners and the Chinese.

Aberdeen Technical School: A Model of Arts and Crafts

As early as 1849, Catholic missionaries had come to Aberdeen to carry out missionary work. At the beginning of the 20th century, the number of Catholic believers grew along with the increase of population in Aberdeen. Converted from a cowshed, the St. Peter's Church was built on the hillside not far from Aberdeen town centre in 1929. Fr. Giuseppe Carabelli (PIME, 1874-1936) from Italy was appointed to be the first rector there. In 1949, the church was elevated to the status of a parish. Owing to expansion of Aberdeen after the Second World War, the diocese renovated the church in 1961 as the number of parishioners reached 2,000. Most believers were from Aberdeen town centre, but some were from Ap Lei Chau, a fishing hamlet then across the harbour. Most of the believers were fishermen. Since they often went fishing or worked at other ports, they were not able to attend every Sunday Mass and the diocese was lenient on this. St. Peter is both the patron saint of this church and of the fishermen. In the past decades, on every June 29, the parish's feast day, the bishop would go to the port near the Holy Spirit Seminary to hold a blessing ceremony for the boats, using a rite from the West to fulfill the spiritual needs of the local fishermen.

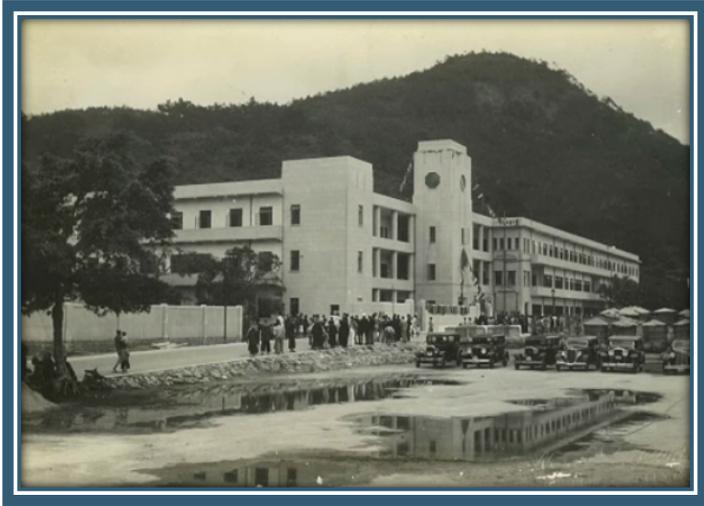


Photo: Aberdeen Technical School in its early days

Located in this area, the Aberdeen Technical School was constructed in 1935. It was originally named the Aberdeen Industrial Institute before 1952. Social leaders, such as Fung Ping Shan and Sir Robert Hotung, donated to fund the construction cost. The school was established to provide vocational training for boys from deprived families and was managed by the Society of St. Francis of Sales (Salesians of Don Bosco). The Religious congregation was founded in Italy in 1859 with educating young people as its main goal.

On the eve of the Second World War, the technical school was requisitioned by the British government as a naval base, and later as an auxiliary hospital for the wounded soldiers. When Hong Kong fell into the

hands of the Japanese at the end of 1941, the Japanese used it as a military base for seaplanes to guard the south. However, in the following year, the Japanese government declared it as a “free school” and allowed it to continue providing tailoring and shoe-making classes.

At that time, the boarding school was regarded as remote. It provided a regular and balanced community life for the boarding students in line with the Catholic tradition of the Salesians. Boarding became optional in the early 1980s. It was completely suspended in the 1990s but was re-introduced since 2012. The students were commonly known as “Heung Kung Tsai” (Boys of the Aberdeen Technical School) or “Tsz Yau Tsai” (Salesians Boys) since the school is run by the Salesians.

The school was listed as a Grade III historic building in 2010. The main building is an early example of modern architecture in Hong Kong, being built in the International Modern style. It consists of several linear three-storey blocks of different design crossing each other and arranged in an L-shaped plan onto an elongated site. In terms of the design, it has certain Art Deco influence, such as the long straight balconies, portholes, distinctive columns and the square-shaped tower embedded to the main entrance. The Art Deco influence can also be seen internally in the design of the main hall and the main staircase. The Shanghai plaster and polished terrazzo finishes are typical of the period.

The Annex Block at the back of the school is the priests' quarters. This three-storey building has detailed drawings on the walls, a flat roof and windows in metallic grilles. Although it was built at the same time as the school, the architectural style is more Neo-Classical or Neo-Georgian. Besides its rarity and architectural value, the school is also a model of Hong Kong's early industrial education history since the Industrial Revolution and a symbol of industrial development in Wong Chuk Hang.

The Béthanie and Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Centuries-Old Pok Fu Lam Village

While several important missionary stations on Hong Kong Island continued to develop in conjunction with the growth of the city, a few other major church institutions and historic buildings receded from their functions, reflecting city transformation over the century.

Pok Fu Lam bears witness to the history of mainland Chinese moving to Hong Kong in different eras. As early as in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), Pok Fu Lam Village was already recorded in *Xin'an Xianzhi* (Xin'an County chronicle), indicating that the village was inhabited at least from beginning of the Qing Dynasty. It is among the oldest indigenous settlements on the Island. The majority of the villagers were Teochew people, who mostly believed in folk religions. Having a Catholic village in the neighbourhood was thus an unusual scene. This Catholic village, Taikoolau, was the living quarters of the workers at Nazareth Press.

In 1875, the Paris Foreign Missions (MEP) built the Béthanie Sanatorium for the care of elder confreres in Pok Fu Lam, with around 40 to 80 missionaries residing there each year. The small chapel in the sanatorium was built according to the style of the Tokyo cathedral. It is an extraordinary Neo-Gothic-styled church in Hong Kong. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, many missionaries left mainland China. Advancement in modern medicine also reduced the need for the

Béthanie Sanatorium. In its centenary year in 1975, the building was sold to land developer Hongkong Land, which planned to demolish the building for a housing estate. However, the Hong Kong government proposed to exchange another piece of land (now known as Chi Fu Fa Yuen) for the Sanatorium and the Dairy Farm's cowshed. It then became government property and was handed over to the Hong Kong University Press in 1978. Printing machines were then installed in the building while it was also used to store books and archives until 1997, when it was returned to the Government Property Agency. In 2003, the building was taken over by the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and renovated for the School of Film and Television.

MEP founded the Nazareth Press in 1885. The Press developed so rapidly that the MEP purchased Douglas Castle at No. 144 Pok Fu Lam Road in 1895 for expansion. During the peak time of the Sanatorium and the Nazareth Press, there were 50 employees working on typesetting, processing fonts and operating printing machines. From the establishment of the Nazareth Press to 1934, on average there were more than 62,000 copies in 29 titles published each year. Publications were printed in various languages: 18% were Chinese, nearly 22% were Vietnamese and almost 12% were in French, and there were even Tibetan publications. This further proves the unique role of Hong Kong as a centre for East meeting West.



Photo: University Hall of the University of Hong Kong (former Nazareth Press)

Owing to the long distance from the city centre, the Nazareth Press needed a staff quarters nearby. The MEP purchased a land plot from the Swire Group, known as Taikoo yeunghong (foreign company) in Chinese, and built the quarters, naming it “Taikoolau” (Taikoo building). In 1935, MEP began planning for a new church and a school. At that time, there were already 48 families in Taikoolau, with more than 300 residents. Most of the early residents came from Shunde and Dongguan in Guangdong province, and were recruited by missionaries to work in Hong Kong. Later, villagers from Yim Tin Tsai, another Catholic village in the New Territories, also came here to live and work. Our Lady of Lourdes Church was consecrated three years later in 1938. The open area outside the

church served as a playground for the children. Before fireworks and firecrackers were prohibited in 1967, residents would set off firecrackers outside Taikoolau during the Chinese New Year. Sometimes they would even hang a big chain of firecrackers on the church top and then start setting off from the bottom, producing a spectacular sight. The faithful deeply respected Fr. Rene Chevalier (MEP, 1909-1981) who had served the parish for 19 years. Fr. Chevalier regarded Pok Fu Lam Village as the evangelisation centre of the Southern District. During his time, the number of believers increased to 2,000. The jurisdiction of Our Lady of Lourdes Church was once extended to Lamma Island, where a small church and a school were established in Yung Shue Wan in 1957.

After the Nazareth Press closed down, MEP transferred the ownership of Taikoolau to the Hong Kong Diocese. The workers also left for other jobs. In 1976, the land was redeveloped into now private residential estate Pokfulam Gardens after the diocese sold the building. Our Lady of Lourdes Church was also rebuilt in 1982 in a new site, attached to Yu Chun Keung Memorial College No. 2 at No. 1 Chi Fu Close. After more than 30 years, former residents of Taikoolau who scattered across Hong Kong, and even overseas, have remained in contact and have set up a “Friends of Taikoolau” group to maintain their friendship.

Holy Spirit Seminary: Fusion of Chinese and Western Architecture Style

The Holy Spirit Seminary, located at No. 6 Welfare Road, Wong Chuk Hang, is the seminary of the Hong Kong Diocese. Its predecessor was the South China Regional Seminary. Founded in 1931, the regional seminary formed seminarians from Beihai, Funing, Fuzhou, Dingzhou, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Jiangmen, Jianning, Jiaying, Qiongxian, Shantou, Shaoguan, Wuzhou and Xiamen to become priests. Fr. Thomas Conney (SJ, 1896-1985) was the first superior of the Regional Seminary. Other priest-teachers included Fr. Daniel Finn (SJ, 1886-1936), Fr. Richard Gallagher (SJ, 1887-1960) and others. Besides teaching, Fr. Conney was also keen on collecting Chinese relics and contributed much to the early development of archaeology in Hong Kong. He conducted in-depth archaeological excavations on outlying islands of Hong Kong, such as Lantau Island. He unearthed many ancient relics and he also encouraged seminarians to search for them and purchase relics they found for preservation. He also did research on the customary practices of fishermen in Aberdeen.

On the eve of Second World War, both the South China Regional Seminary and the Aberdeen Technical School were requisitioned by the British as naval bases and staff quarters due to their proximity to the coast. The Chinese Catholic War Relief Organisation was established during this period to provide humanitarian services. After the fall of Hong

Kong, there was a lack of funding from Europe, all the seminarians were transferred to St. Joseph's Seminary in Macau, which had a Third Country status as it was a colony of Portugal. The Regional Seminary was reopened in August 1945.

Since the establishment of the seminary, more than 250 seminarians had been ordained as priests. Except for those who belong to the Hong Kong Church, they serve in different countries and regions. While their main duty is to evangelise, they also bear the role of facilitating cultural exchanges between the East and the West. In addition to providing priestly formation, the seminary also offered free education to poor children and participated in social relief, such as the publication of *Vox Almae Matris* to broaden the priests' public service and contribution to society. The seminary has trained many famous religious figures, including the late Cardinal John Wu Cheng-chung of Hong Kong.

The Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in Rome disbanded the seminary in 1964 due to political turmoil and handed over the site to the Hong Kong Diocese. It was officially renamed as the Holy Spirit Seminary and served as both a minor and major seminary. In the 1970s, with the changes in social environment and education policies, the diocese gradually stopped accepting minor seminarians. At the same time, the Holy Spirit Seminary College of Theology and Philosophy was founded as

an academic institution in 1970 through the collaboration of the Hong Kong and Macau Dioceses, the Jesuits, the Salesians and later, the Franciscans.

The seminary building combined characteristics of both Chinese and Western architectures. It belongs to the Chinese Renaissance style, representing the church's vision of inculturation. It integrates features from different cultures, races, and religions in an outstanding way. The unique colour choice is very similar to that of the traditional Chinese residence in nearby Wong Chuk Hang San Wai. The Our Lady of China Chapel of the Holy Spirit Seminary was completed in 1956. It was built in modern Chinese eclectic style, featuring green glazed tiles on the roof, red pillars, grey walls, granite bases and intricate decorative patterns, blended together in a modern manner. The interior is spacious, with traditional Chinese geometric patterns on display on the roof trusses, the windows, and a Chinese-style wooden canopy over the altar. It also combined the use of bricks and masonry in an interesting architectural way, making it an invaluable architectural heritage. In 1967, a new building for the Seminary College was erected adjacent to the seminary. However, it was not built in the same style. On the whole, the main buildings of the Holy Spirit Seminary and its chapel have maintained their original appearance and style.



Photo: Holy Spirit Seminary

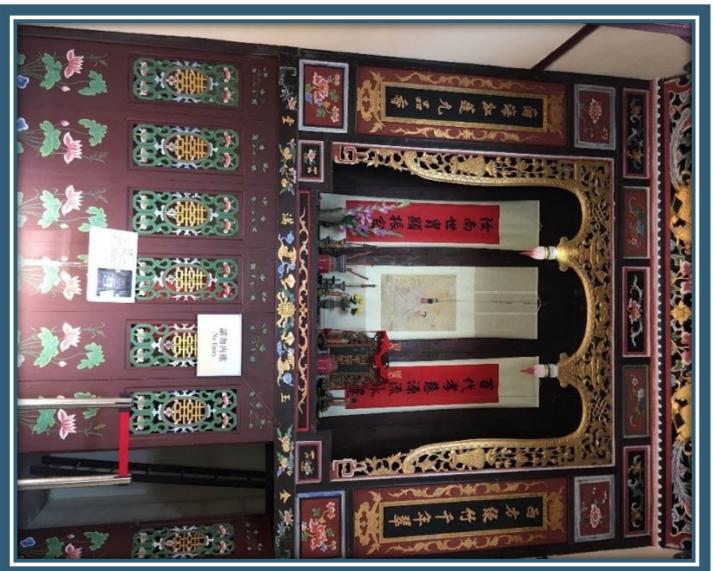


Photo: Traditional Chinese residence in Wong Chuk Hang San Wai