

Saint Thomas

Seminary

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In Shandong Province, there is a mountain called Tai Shan (泰山). Because it is very high, there is a saying in Chinese: "From on top of Tai Shan, the world is small." There is a small hill in Taibei, Taiwan also called Tai Shan, in what is now an industrial area. Near this small hill on Guizi Road (貴子路) is Saint Thomas Seminary. The students of nearby Fujen University like to refer to Guizi Road as the "Holy Road", the reason being that both sides of this road are lined with religious houses and seminaries. Guizi Road lies at the foot of Tai Shan, at the rear of Fujen University, and joins Tai Shan Village to Xinzhuang Town (新莊市). Every morning and evening as one walks along this road, one hears songs of praise and the chanting of prayers being offered to God. It gives one the feeling of being in a holy place.

The building of Saint Thomas Seminary is simple and unassuming; one feels there is nothing very special about it. The Seminary was founded by Thomas Cardinal Tien; the building completed in September of 1965 and entrusted to the care of the clergy of the Diocese of Taibei, with Reverend Liu Dezong (劉德宗) as its first rector. At that time, all those living in the seminary were students of philosophy and theology. Those seminarians who qualified for entrance into the university studied philosophy for four years in Fujen; those who did not, studied two years of Latin and two years of philosophy in the seminary. While in 1968, not all seminarians studied in the Fujen College of Theology, by 1972, the

Taiwan Chinese Bishops' Conference had decided that all graduates of minor seminaries had to be admitted into Fujen University before they could be admitted to Saint Thomas Seminary. In 1983, the Bishops' Conference requested the Jesuits to take over the administration of Saint Thomas. The Seminary's present rector is Reverend Rao Zhicheng S.J. (饒志成).

Saint Thomas Seminary has been in existence for 19 years, during which time 39 seminarians have been ordained priests. At present, there are 15 seminarians: 4 are ready to be ordained priests, 5 are studying theology, 1 is studying philosophy and 5 are presently doing their military service.

During the 60's, when the Diocese of Hong Kong sent seminarians to Fujen for both philosophy and theology, they, too, lived in Saint Thomas. Their adjustments to a new place and a new language made for quite a number of situations that were both frustrating and humorous. During the 70's, Holy Spirit Seminary in Hong Kong was reorganised, and Hong Kong seminarians remained there for their training, with only a few going abroad to further their studies.

Saint Thomas Seminary is about a 10 minute walk from Fujen; its quiet surroundings are most suitable for study and for prayer. Saint Thomas once housed a centre for Asian spirituality and culture, and ecumenical dialogue. It remains a dynamic centre for spirituality, with special emphasis on localization and indigenization.

