

PIME Missionaries and 155 Years of Evangelization in Hong Kong (1858-2012)

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On the morning of April 10, 1858, an Italian priest, Fr. Paolo Reina 雷納神父, arrived on the shores of Hong Kong. He was the first of more, nearly 210 missionaries, belonging to the Seminary of the Foreign Missions of Milan, who would come to Hong Kong. They served in Hong Kong even up to the present day, and in 1926 they assumed the name of PIME (Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions). They first worked in Hong Kong, and then in the neighboring areas on the Mainland. Gradually they assumed the leadership of the 16-year young local Catholic community, which was looking for new resources to meet the challenges of the then English colony. On April 22, 1841, Hong Kong was established as an Apostolic Prefecture, independent from the Diocese of Macao, and the See of the Procure of the Chinese missions. In those early years the Catholic community grew significantly through the labor of a handful of Chinese priests, missionaries of Propaganda Fide, the Franciscan Order, the Paris Foreign Missions, and Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres, Canossian Sisters, in addition to the PIME missionaries.

The PIME missionaries have been contributing immensely to the development not only of the Catholic Church, but also of society at large, in particular, in the fields of education, social activities and charitable assistance for those in need. The Italian missionaries engaged themselves in the local community, in some cases becoming trailblazers of change, and in the process likewise transformed themselves. At present the Catholic community is still a minuscule segment of the population (about 5 percent) and yet the Catholic Church in Hong Kong is one of the most vibrant and dynamic in Asia. The rest of the population has benefited from the

efforts of the missionaries, particularly through the educational and social services that PIME and other Catholic institutions and agencies provided.

The various Italian missionaries that worked in Hong Kong during the 155 years of PIME presence in the territory (1858-2012), over time, had to re-invent themselves and their methods. They had to re-introduce and re-package their mission on account of the 'otherness' and the diversity of their audience. Thanks to their encounter with the different ethnicities and social groups of Hong Kong, the missionaries of Milan gained a better knowledge of themselves and their resources. It was not a generic encounter between cultures and civilizations but, rather, of an encounter between people of different traits with both cultural wealth and cultural limitations. Over the 155 years, the missionaries encountered a complex and multifaceted blend of different ethnic groups, languages, nationalities, cultures and lifestyles in the relatively constricted area of the mission of Hong Kong.

Hong Kong: 155 Years Ago

"As I was waiting for him (Fr. Paolo Reina), after Mass I caught sight of the steamboat and I rushed to climb aboard to advise him of a few minor things. The good priest declared himself ready to carry out any task, and I do not doubt his sincerity. Subsequently, we had other opportunities to talk to each other and I am firmly convinced that Divine Providence, at long last, has decided to help out this poor mission of ours with these new arrivals."

These words full of hope were written on April 12, 1858, by an Italian priest, Luigi Ambrosi, who, at the time, was in charge of the small Catholic community in Hong Kong.

Fr. Paolo Reina was the Superior of the first group of missionaries, originally sent to Papua New Guinea in 1852. Due to extreme hardship, fruitless apostolate and the killing of one of their members, they left that area, and Fr. Reina came to Hong Kong to continue his work of evangelization. However the young Fr. Reina passed away very quickly and the leadership of the small Hong Kong Catholic community was taken over by Fr. Timoleone

Raimondi, who was destined to become the first Apostolic Vicar (the name a bishop in a mission territory was called back then) of Hong Kong (1874-1895). He ran the local Catholic Church with strong leadership and clear vision. After him, the Hong Kong Catholic Church was lead by other great personalities such as Luigi Piazzoli 和主教, an itinerant missionary who became the second Apostolic Vicar of Hong Kong (1895-1904) and Domenico Pozzoni 師多敏主教, known as holy bishop (1905-1924), and renown for having fostered the spiritual life of the diocese. He was also a member of the board of the newly founded University of Hong Kong. Pozzoni's successor was Enrico Valtorta 恩理覺主教 (1926-1951), a bishop of firm purposes and decisive character. He defended the territory and minimized the hardship of the populace during the Japanese occupation (1941-1945). He has been remembered as "the father of the poor", due to his great generosity and charitable work.

The last PIME bishop was Lorenzo Bianchi 白英奇, who lead the diocese through the most tumultuous years of Hong Kong history (1950s-1960s), when the territory played host to more than one million refugees from the Mainland (for more on Bishop Bianchi see below).

Five Chinese bishops have succeeded the PIME missionaries in leading the Hong Kong Catholic community: Francis Hsu 徐誠斌, Peter Lei 李宏基, John Baptist Wu 胡振中, Joseph Zen 陳日君 and John Tong 湯漢. At present, the PIME missionaries are continuing their work of evangelization through pastoral ministry in the parishes, which are missionary communities in this big city of 7 million people. PIME is also involved in social activities and educational programs, alongside many other local priests, pastoral agents and foreign missionaries.

As the Church in Hong Kong is fulfilling its call to be a bridge and sister Church with the Church in the Mainland, the PIME community is also engaged in contributing to the accomplishment of this task. Some members are present in China, other are studying Mandarin and a few more visit China frequently, especially former PIME missionary territories (in the provinces of Guangdong, Henan and Shaanxi), as there is naturally a special attachment to those local communities.

The Itinerant Missionaries

The first decades of evangelization in Hong Kong missionary territories was carried out by “itinerant missionaries”. They no longer exist, but their methods were probably the most traditional (and fascinating) form of evangelization. For several decades the Milan missionaries engaged in a very difficult itinerant missionary apostolate in those districts in China that were, in those days, part of the Hong Kong Apostolic Prefecture and then Vicariate. They worked also in three large districts in Guangdong Province (Po On/Bao'an, Wai Yeung/Huiyang and Hoi Fung/Haifeng) that were under Chinese rule.

The Milan missionaries moved from village to village, openly preaching on streets and squares. They were sometimes welcomed, sometimes driven out. When well received, they established small groups of believers, under the care of a local catechist.

The missionaries were always accompanied by Chinese priests or catechists. The Chinese priests and catechists created the large network of connections that allowed the itinerant missionaries to produce results. The contribution of the local priests and catechists was essential as they guided the foreign missionaries, and suggested new areas or villages for evangelization. Regrettably their role was not always adequately acknowledged in the missionary accounts of the past.

The missionaries of Milan were ill acquainted with the sophistication of the liberal arts and, with few exceptions, had no contact with intellectuals and men of culture. Their daily exchanges were with the local populace, including its poorer segments and those held in low esteem. Most of the missionaries shared the living conditions of these humble people and learned some of their dialects with remarkable fluency. This was no small accomplishment, since these dialects were as diverse as were the customs and the lifestyles of each group. The missionaries also had to learn English, a language no less foreign to them. For a few decades, some studied Portuguese as well, in order to minister to Catholics speaking that language. For most of the missionaries, immersion into the Chinese lifestyle, culture and language was a daunting task. They often lived alone, struggling with the hot and

humid weather, and were often sick due to insufficient food intake. To a great extent, they shared the poverty experienced by a large part the local population.

The Christians were always a small minority, often discriminated against, and often the victims of injustice and acts of violence. Many times converts came from the edges of society, from groups not well integrated into the framework of Confucianism, from the victims of injustice and oppression: in short, they were persons, families or clans looking for a fresh start. A sizable number of new converts were those who belonged to minorities, who faced overwhelming difficulties, such as the Hakkas, who belonged to impoverished families, who fished or produced salt for a living. Even pirates and members of secret societies and chronically ill people, such as lepers, were numbered among their converts. In not few cases, the missionaries became the defenders of the rights of wronged families and communities.

Evangelizing through Education

The objectives of the missionary work were the conversion of people to the Catholic faith, the instruction of catechumens, their pastoral care and the establishment of a local church. These objectives were flanked by two other services meant to support and complement the missionary activity: youth education and aid to the needy. The objectives were integral parts of preaching the Gospel, as a way of putting into practice the love of Christ, even though they would not necessarily lead to the conversion of all those who availed themselves of what was offered. From the outset of their work, the Italian missionaries offered education to the people of Hong Kong, through the setting up of schools, both in Hong Kong and in remote villages, and in distributing assistance to the poor.

Since the time of Matteo Ricci, the Chinese Catholic mission effort has been characterized by the activity of numerous missionary-scientists. But the PIME institute had a clear preference for direct preaching and charity rather than engagement in cultural or scientific activities. In Hong Kong, there were two notable exceptions among the PIME missionaries: Fr. Simeone Volonteri (1831-1904) who in 1870 was the first PIME to go to Henan,

created the first maps of Hong Kong and surrounding districts, which were much appreciated; and Fr. Raffaello Maglioni (1891-1953), who worked in Hoi Fung, Guangdong Province during the thirties and forties of the last century. They are the only PIMEs worthy of being called missionary-scientists. Bishop Lorenzo Bianchi donated his important archeological collection and library of over 1000 valuable books to the Hong Kong Government. They can be viewed in the Hong Kong Museum of History. Maglioni was a self-taught man moved by a keen passion, and he had a special talent for languages. In fact he compiled the first dictionary of the Hoklo/Xuelao dialect spoken in the Hoi Fung district.

Both Volonteri and Maglioni were first of all missionaries engaged in the traditional mission apostolate. The importance of their scientific work, a result of their personal interest and energy, was for a long time underappreciated by their fellow PIME missionaries. The Institute had never trained missionary-scientists as the Jesuits did in Late Ming or early Qing period. One of the negative consequences of this PIME policy was that no Catholic university was ever founded in a city of such importance as Hong Kong. In my opinion this is one of the most serious shortcomings of the PIME legacy in Hong Kong. PIME missionaries however, as we shall see, contributed to education in Hong Kong by founding numerous kindergartens, and primary and secondary schools.

War in China and in Hong Kong: The Plight of the Refugees

When Japan invaded China in 1937, Hong Kong was already suffering its own difficulties. It was struggling to deal with an outbreak of cholera and to recover from two violent typhoons that claimed 1,000 lives and caused widespread destruction. An influx of refugees from the Mainland, with their burden of needs and horrific stories, put considerable pressure on the city and demanded an extraordinary display of good will from the local residents. From July 1937 to the summer of the following year, more than half a million people took shelter in the colony with 30,000 of them forced to sleep on the streets.

Bishop Enrico Valtorta urged everyone, those in Hong Kong and on the Mainland, to show charity towards the refugees, and he

placed a number of nuns and a priest at the government's disposal as volunteers. Gradually, by the middle of 1941, the population of Hong Kong had risen to 1,640,000. The bishop urged his Chinese faithful to provide help to their compatriots on mainland China. Thousands of dollars were given to the Chinese Red Cross and sent to the city of Nanjing, which experienced a brutal massacre at the hands of the Japanese. Bishop Valtorta also organized an expedition to Guangdong to deliver food and medicine via a passenger ship rented for the occasion. The Chinese government acknowledged Bishop Valtorta's charitable work in the districts by conferring on him the Jade Medal.

The Japanese attack on Hong Kong itself began on December 8, 1941, spreading death and destruction everywhere. Bombs hit the cathedral. St. Joseph's Church sustained considerable damage, while Canossa Hospital, hit by bombs, was in flames and eventually was totally destroyed. People, mostly women and children, took shelter in churches and religious institutions. People crowded into every available corner, cooked rice on clay barbecue stoves and slept on the floor. The cathedral, the bishop's house and convents became shelters. From January to April 1942, 600,000 people, including many Catholics, left Hong Kong. Those who could not emigrate risked dying of starvation. About 300 to 500 corpses were picked up daily off the streets. By the end of the occupation, the population lost about two-thirds of its pre-war level of 1,500,000 people.

To deal with this dire predicament, Bishop Valtorta sold some of the church's property, golden liturgical vessels and church bells. He also obtained support from the Holy See to help the population. Day after day he courageously confronted the Japanese authorities trying to minimize the ferocity of their occupation. He was really the "*defensor civitatis*", the protector of the city, during its most historically tragic time. Bishop Valtorta, known as "the father of the poor", helped everyone alike: Europeans and Chinese, Catholics and Protestants, prisoners of war, refugees on mainland China and in Hong Kong, orphans and the destitute. In October 1948 he became the first ordinary bishop of the newly established Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, which then ceased to be an Apostolic Vicariate. However, the PIME bishop who would make a lasting

mark on the Hong Kong Diocese was Valtorta's successor, Lorenzo Bianchi.

The PIME Missionary *par excellence*

Post-war Hong Kong was a pitiful sight. Its population was reduced to about 500,000 people, of which 80 percent suffered from malnutrition. More than half of the buildings in the city were uninhabitable and society was in chaos. A few months after the war, the population doubled as the refugees returned from China. The influx changed the city's makeup. The population had risen to 1,800,000 by 1947, and Hong Kong began to develop at a blazing pace, eventually becoming one of Asia's major cities.

After the death of Bishop Valtorta (1951), Lorenzo Bianchi, still a prisoner in China, became the bishop of Hong Kong. He was freed only in 1952, and he was the last foreign bishop to serve Hong Kong (until 1969). He perhaps did not have the same exceptional qualities displayed by his predecessors: modesty and simplicity were his strengths. Lorenzo Bianchi, born in Brescia in 1899, lived through exceptional times with reserve and calmness: the communist atrocities of 1928 and 1929 against his Christian communities in Hoi Fung; his imprisonment (March 1951 to October 1952); the influx of refugees in the 1950s and the turbulence in Hong Kong in 1967. Bishop Bianchi never spoke derogatorily about his captors, nor did he ever assume the mantle of a victim. His modest image of himself enabled him to make courageous and farsighted decisions that would leave their mark on Hong Kong. Awareness of his limits did not generate an inferiority complex, nor did he compensate by adopting an air of superiority, as often happens whenever mediocre people are put in positions of authority. Under such a man, the Church was able to successfully meet difficult challenges. The refugees were received; the hungry fed, the homeless housed; the sick cured; the children educated. Hundreds of shelters, assistance centers, social and medical services and schools were set up across the colony. He spontaneously left Hong Kong in 1969 (he died in Lecco in 1983), despite being sincerely invited to remain by the first Chinese bishop of the diocese, Bishop Francis Hsu. The departure of Bishop Bianchi was

seen as the end of an era, and the beginning of a new one. It was the high point of the presence of the PIME in Hong Kong, which had completed his mission in bringing the local Church to maturity.

In 1952, when Bishop Bianchi effectively began his term as leader of the Hong Kong Diocese, there were 40,000 Catholics and 12 parishes. Seventeen years later, when he left, there were 250,000 Catholics and 52 parishes. Bishop Bianchi was concerned with the welfare and evangelization of the community only: he was totally devoid of any spirit of nationalism, congregationalism or of cultural superiority. In the past, such evils stifled the development of the Church in China. Bishop Bianchi did not consider the Hong Kong Diocese as the property of PIME. Missionaries from any congregation willing to serve were welcome to contribute to Hong Kong's society and the Church. The number of missionaries increased tremendously and numerous new congregations, forced to leave mainland China, were welcomed to serve in Hong Kong. In a few years, more than 30 Catholic religious congregations were working in Hong Kong.

Every year, thousands of catechumens were added to the Catholic community, and no effort was spared to instruct them in the Catholic faith. While helping the refugees, the diocese recorded an exceptional increase in the number of baptisms: over 6,000 in the year 1956 alone. Dozens of Mass centers, chapels and churches were built to accommodate the ever-expanding liturgical assemblies. In many areas, Mass was celebrated in the halls of Catholic schools. The diocese created centers that produced material and tools for the catechetical, liturgical and devotional growth of the faithful. Lay people joined various associations and groups, both at the parish and diocesan levels.

Missionaries of Love

Social services to the needy, especially refugees from China, were at first spontaneously organized by individual missionaries to cope with the dramatic social emergencies in Hong Kong. Numerous centers for humanitarian aid and education mushroomed around the churches. The parish church, schools and social centers were, oftentimes, under the same roof, and included all sorts of

services: the distribution of food and medicine, schooling and religious classes for catechumens, Sunday Mass, pastoral and sacramental ministries. In the 1950s some 20 social service centers were in operation, many of them entrusted to the care of PIME priests or to diocesan priests. Four thousand homes were built, 55 food and clothing distribution centers and 17 medical clinics were opened. Caritas-Hong Kong, the most important social institution of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong, was founded in Hong Kong in July 1953 by German born priest Fr. Charles Herman Vath. PIME Fr. Francesco Lerda was appointed as its vice-president in 1961, and then he served as its president from 1968 until his death, on June 28, 2003. Under the leadership of Fr. Lerda and his collaborators, Caritas-Hong Kong grew into a major institution in Hong Kong's society, to the point that for ordinary Hong Kong citizens the name Caritas is more familiar than the name of the Catholic Church itself.

The Father Lerda-directed Caritas-Hong Kong's contribution to social services in Hong Kong and Asia was incalculable. The wide-ranging services provided by Caritas-Hong Kong addressed basic human needs and included social work, education, medical care, community development and hospitality. Caritas serves the community through more than 240 service units in about 140 locations. It has more than 4,900 full-time employees on its staff and has received ongoing support from over 10,000 volunteers.

Charity work was not always institutionally organized. Rather, some missionaries had a special charisma for helping the poor in unconventional way. Father Richard Brookes is one of them, remembered as being a "father of the poor" or the "Saint Francis of Hong Kong." He was one of the best-loved priests in the history of Hong Kong. Born in Italy in 1892, he arrived in Hong Kong in 1921, where he lived for the next 56 years. He served as a parish priest in both the city and the countryside. He was chancellor and vicar general of the diocese, prison chaplain and leprosy colony chaplain. The work as chaplain to the Catholic lepers on Hei Ling Chau Island 喜靈洲 was especially dear to his heart. Hence, he founded the society of St. Camillus for recovered lepers. Fr Brookes was a missionary loved for his simplicity of heart and boundless charity. He was immersed in the care of those struck by

misfortune. He was a man who lived among the poor in a truly Franciscan way, spending nothing on himself, yet begging vigorously for the sake of those whom he had befriended.

Another missionary remembered for his love for the disadvantaged was Fr. Enea Tapella. Like St. Therese of Lisieux, he made a difference not through apparent exceptional qualities, but through an authentic inner goodness and deep spirituality, expressed in humility and total dedication to charity work. With his simplicity and sincerity, he inspired many people around him. In 1977, when Fr. Tapella was fatally injured in a motorcycle accident, more than 150 parishioners from Saint Francis of Assisi parish in Sham Shui Po, where he had served as assistant parish priest, lined up to donate blood in the hope of saving his life. Moved by his tragic death at the age of 48, many people called for his work to be continued. In 1977, a group of highly motivated volunteers from various professions, lead by Fr. Giosuè Bonzi 方叔華神父 set up *The Society of Homes for the Handicapped* (since 2001 called *Fu Hong Society* 扶康會), with the mission of ensuring the stability and continuity of the legacy of Father Tapella.

A Discreet Hero

Bishop Bianchi's closet collaborator was probably Father Lido Mencarini (1916-2007). Fr. Mencarini was an unassuming and dedicated worker who spent his years making sure that the Church could meet the massive needs of the many refugees flocking to Hong Kong. He was also responsible for the setting up of many primary and secondary schools sponsored by the diocese. In 1964, he was elected General Superior of PIME. He declined the high position, presumably due to a low estimation of his own abilities. But the main reason was that Hong Kong was his first priority. He served here until his final days, keeping up his pastoral work and serving the PIME community as its diligent treasurer.

After his death it was made public that Fr. Mencarini had saved dozens of Jews and anti-fascist activists in Cantù, northern Italy, during the Nazi occupation of Italy after September 8, 1943. He was indeed a discreet hero!

A Meek and Courageous Missionary

Father Quirino De Ascaniis passed away in January 2009: he was 100 years old and had spent 75 years of apostolic work in China. Father Quirino personally knew the great majority of the 205 missionaries who, during all those years, had set foot in Hong Kong. The memoirs of his missionary life, and his spiritual thoughts, which fill 17 notebooks, reconstruct the portrait of an authentic, meek and courageous man. His missionary life was not easy. In the nearly 20 years he spent in the Mainland districts of Wai Yeung/Huiyang and Po On/Bao'an (1933-1951) he had served hard time in prison, had been under forced house arrest, had endured two severe interrogations, had been attacked by brigands, and occasionally had faced the prospect of violent death. He had experienced many tense moments, in the middle, as he himself wrote, of many fires: the Japanese occupation, the Chinese nationalists, communist guerrillas, cruel bandits and the communist government. It was a time when it was all too easy to make a mistake which could have cost you your life.

Fr. Quirino moved around in that land without ever wanting to flee, with simplicity and evangelical guile. He always put the welfare of his Christians in first place. His poor health never became an excuse not to confront obstacles that were placed in his way.

Apart from his writings mentioned above, Fr. Quirino left a valuable and in-depth investigation into the murders of Fathers Emilio Teruzzi, Renatus Kwok and Francis Wong in Sai Kung in 1942. He himself served as pastor in Sai Kung from 1955 to 1961. During that time he built the Sacred Heart Church, which is still in existence. When Fr. Valeriano Fraccaro was murdered in Sai Kung in 1974, during the period of great tension that followed that tragic event, it was the meek Fr. Quirino who was invited to fill the vacancy.

Fr. Quirino served as assistant parish priest in the parishes of Saint Teresa and Holy Rosary until 1993. Then he retired first to St. Joseph's Home for the Aged in Choi Hung and then at the new home for the aged in Sheung Shui, lovingly cared for by the Little Sisters of the Poor.

PIME's Charismatic Leader

Fr Adelio Lambertoni was a leader in searching for “new ways” of having a missionary presence and doing missionary work (see below). He died at the age of 66 on July 7, 2006, after a long and painful illness. Aware that the end was approaching, he never dramatized his plight but, rather forgetting himself, he showed interest in others. Placing himself in the Lord's hands, he showed the depth of his faith by submitting completely to God's will. Such trust edified, and to a certain extent even surprised, all who knew him.

He was a true catalyst in the PIME community, arguably the most significant one; and he commanded the attention of and motivated those around him. He was a leader in the renewal of the missionary presence in Hong Kong; an innovator constantly looking for new ways to serve, which he tempered with deep wisdom and common sense. He favored a convergence among different points of view and positions, while being most cordial in his personal rapport with others. He sought unity in the PIME community, which he served for many years as councilor, and then as vice-regional Superior. Fr Adelio was deeply engaged in social work, which made him well known in society at large. But he never exercised it as an alternative to his being, first of all, a priest and a shepherd of his flock.

Fr Adelio was a man who, with his charismatic personality and astounding generosity, left a deep impression everywhere he went. He valued personal relationships and left behind a wide array of friendships, including one with the last Governor of Hong Kong, Christopher Patten. His charisma is still visible in the large family he created in Hong Kong by adopting eight homeless children. To them he was a father, and a grandfather for their children; he provided them with a first-class education and a respectable position in society and, most importantly, he created a genuine family filled with heartfelt affection.

New Ways of Evangelization

The PIME community began a long process of discernment about its new role within the Hong Kong Church and society after

the 1969 handover of the diocese to Chinese leadership. While the majority of missionaries continued to serve the diocese through pastoral work in parishes, a few who felt the need to explore different ways of serving began looking at new methods of evangelization. The ensuing debate among the missionaries became tense, giving rise to opposing views concerning the way to respond to the changes in the Church and society at large. The renewal brought about by Vatican Council II, along with a worldwide wave of calls for justice and service to the poor, also swept through Hong Kong. Young missionaries tried “new ways”, getting involved in social issues, fighting for justice alongside the oppressed, the poor and the marginalized. According to them, the Gospel had to be proclaimed not only from the pulpit or within the parish boundaries but also, and foremost, whenever people were suffering and experiencing exploitation. There, even though the Church might not have been visibly present, the suffering Christ could be found. According to this group, evangelization meant not only converting people to the Catholic faith, but also expanding the boundaries of the Kingdom of God. These priests wanted to live side by side with people in a spirit of poverty, supporting themselves by holding down a regular secular job. They lived their faith as a commitment to caring for the poor and fighting for social justice: the establishment of the *PIME's Social Concern Group* was a result of their efforts.

Following the climate of the age, there were occasions when members of the clergy and laity led protests and denounced the social and economic policies of the colonial government. Examples were concern for the homeless living in shanty towns, for peddlers, boat people, “boat mothers”, and so on. They helped juvenile delinquents and assisted the elderly. Some worked in factories (some full-time and others part-time) in the tradition of France's priest-worker movement. Their motivation was to share the life of workers, and to bear witness to the Gospel among them. Two Italian missionaries, in 1986, went to live on a boat in the typhoon shelter in Yau Ma Tei 油麻地 in Kowloon in order to minister to and share the plight of the boat people. They were instrumental in organizing social and educational initiatives for children and young people in this fishing community.

During the 1980s, Hong Kong found itself enveloped in a crisis created by the arrival of thousands of Vietnamese refugees. Some of the missionaries visited the refugee camps and protested against the colonial administration for its poor treatment of the Vietnamese. PIME missionaries were also active in the Right of Abode issue (1999 to the present) and other human rights and issues concerning civil liberties.

Now PIME is one of the various religious communities which help the diocese to carry out its missionary and pastoral activity in the post-handover (1997) Hong Kong SAR territory. At present about 35 PIME members fulfill their missionary vocation through pastoral, educational and social ministries in both Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China.

ENDNOTE

This paper presents only a few flashes on the multifaceted theme of PIME's history in Hong Kong. For a full story see Gianni Criveller, *From Milan to Hong Kong, 150 Years of Mission* (Vox Amica Press, Hong Kong, 2008, pp. 200). The volume is also available in Chinese, by the same publisher: *從米蘭到香港：150年傳教使命*. For a more extensive narration of Hong Kong's history of evangelization, I recommend the reading of this book, available also online: <http://www.pimehkc.org/feature.html>. See also a special issue of Hong Kong Catholic weekly *Sunday Examiner*, 6 April 2008, vol. LXII, no. 14. The seven articles included in the issue were written by the present author (G. Criveller). The main primary sources utilized for compiling the book *From Milan to Hong Kong* and subsequently this article are: PIME's Archives and Library, Rome; PIME's Archives and Library, Milan; PIME's Archives and Library, Hong Kong; Hong Kong Catholic Diocesan Archives. The most important secondary sources are: *Le Missioni Cattoliche*, Milan, 1861-1968 (a missionary magazine published by PIME); *Mondo e Missione*, Milan, 1968-2008 (a missionary magazine published by PIME); Gerardo Brambilla, *Il Pontificio*

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