

FR. WU DEXIN RETURNS HOME

by Elmer Wurth

Father James Wu Dexin, who is the last priest of Guangdong Province to be released from internment, has returned to the active ministry in Guangzhou City. After studying in the seminary in Penang, Malaysia, Father Wu was ordained in Shishi Cathedral in 1935. He served as a priest in Dongwan County of the Guangzhou diocese until he was arrested in 1955. Father Wu spent the next seven years in a Guangzhou prison and one year in a prison in Yingde County, before being transferred in 1963 to a labor camp near Taiyuan, Shanxi Province where he worked in a coal mine. He was released from labor camp only last year. Now at 75, Father

Wu is not only pastor of Holy Family Church, but he also helps out at Shishi Cathedral. In spite of his advanced age, Father Wu impresses visitors with his dedication, vigor and piety.



L-R Mrs. Zeng, Fr. Wu, Sr. Gu

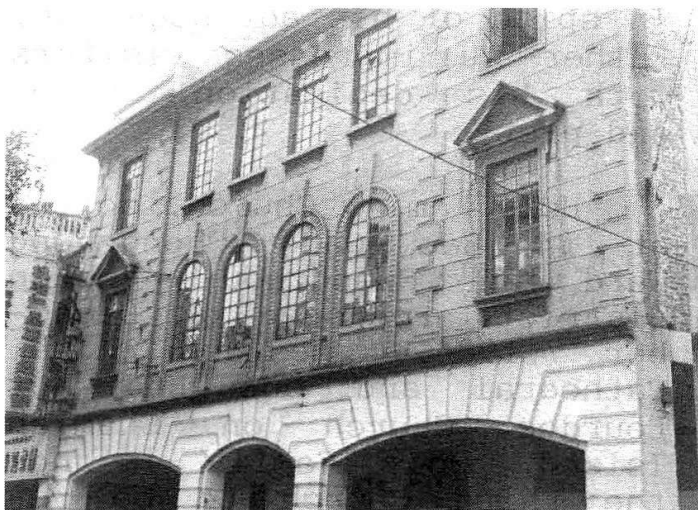
Holy Family Church, located at #4 Bao Gang Chongzheng Ward in Guangzhou's Henan district, reopened on December 7, 1986. Besides Shishi Cathedral and Our Lady of Lourdes Church on Shamian Island, Holy Family is now the third Church to be reopened in Guangzhou in recent years.

This writer attended the 8'clock Mass at the Church

on the Sunday after Christmas (it happened to be the feast of the Holy Family), and after Mass had an opportunity to talk to the approximately 20 Catholics who were there. They informed us that the original property for the church had been donated by the Zeng family which lives nearby, and that the original name of the church was Our Lady's Church. The name was changed to Holy Family upon restoration and re-opening. A Maryknoll missionary, Fr. Bernard Meyer, served the church for a while and ran a small clinic there. Later, he moved to start another mission at Tong Fu Xi Road, not far away. That property is now used as a police station and cultural centre.

Also serving at Holy Family Church is Sister Gu Lihua, 68. The day we attended Mass, only the fourth Sunday since the church reopened, Sister Gu played the organ and directed a small choir. The choir rendered the sung Latin Mass very well, in addition to singing a number of Christmas carols in Chinese.

Another pillar of Holy Family Church whom we met was old Mrs. Zeng (of the Zeng family who donated the original property), who at 98 impressed us with her alertness and devout faith. Accompanied by her daughter, Mrs. Zeng was



1 2

1. Former Mission at Tong Fu Xi Road

2. The Front Gate of Holy Family Church



the first person to arrive for the 8'clock Mass. She quietly shuffled off to confession and communion, no doubt happy in the realization that she could finally resume this pious practice denied her for over 30 years.

We also met Mr. Zhang Longxiong, the Patriotic Association representative, who attended Mass accompanied by his wife and son. Mr. Zhang explained that his work entailed trying to recover all the church properties of the Guangzhou diocese and helping Father Wu and Sister Gu visit the Catholics of the parish.

We then took some photos of the Catholics, and were surprized when one of them, a young lady of about 30 years of age, said to me, "Tell me when to smile, Father, because I am blind and I won't know when you are ready to snap the picture!" Unfortunately we could not get a good picture of the church building itself because it is surrounded very closely by a wall and other buildings.

We were happy to meet these pillars of the Holy Family Catholic community, who though in some cases are advanced in years, nevertheless forget the past and only look ahead - to a time of joyously living out and spreading the Good News again.

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