

A TEN-DAY TOUR OF SOUTHWEST GUANGDONG PROVINCE

TRIPOD

In this issue of Tripod we introduce our readers to a tour, which takes about ten days and will take the visitor to nine places in southwest Guangdong Province, all places of special interest for Catholics. The tour costs about HK\$1,500 or US\$200 and includes an air conditioned bus for 20 to 40 persons, hydrofoil tickets from Hong Kong to Macao, lodging at medium-class air conditioned hotels, three meals per day, and all transportation, including the return plane fare from Haikou to Hong Kong, with many flights per week. Hotels must be arranged for Taishan, Shangchuan Island, Zhanjiang and Haikou.

The churches and religious places to be visited on this route include the following:

1. St. Francis Church on Jardim da Rocha Street, Coloane, Macao, which contains the relics of St. Francis Xavier's arm and the bones of many Japanese saints. The pastor is Father Mario Acquistapace, SDB.
2. Immaculate Conception Church at 52 Sunwen Middle Road in Shiqi. The person in charge is Bishop Peter Li, chairman of the local Catholic Patriotic Association. Three Chinese Sisters assist in this parish.

3. The Catholic Church at 15 Old Lane, Changan Road, Jiangmen, served by Father Paul Liao and two Sisters. Another Jiangmen church is located at 67 Haipang Street in the Beijie section, served by Father Linus Wang and two Sisters. Nine young women who are interested in becoming Sisters also live at the Beijie church.

4. In Xinhui, two Sisters live at the Catholic Church at 9, Lane 10, Nanyu Road.

5. Two Sisters live at the Catholic Church at 44 Jiyuang Road, Taishan.

6. The church on Shangchuan Island the place where St. Francis Xavier died in 1552, is located on the site of the original grave of St. Francis Xavier on Holy Hill in Xindi Village. Initially the local government allocated funds to renovate the church; later many Catholics from all over the world began to make contributions to enhance the project in order to make the place more attractive for pilgrimage. The renovation project included building a road to the church, digging a well, and building steps behind the church along which will be arranged the 14 Stations of the Cross.



Hong Kong Priests at St. Francis Xavier Graveyard, Shangchuan

7. Father Joseph Chen Chu is pastor of the Catholic Church at 85 Luyin Road, Xiashan, Zhanjiang City, where a Sister directs 18 young women who desire to become nuns.

8. Fathers Thomas Huang Zhongwen and Longinus Xie Ruiguang are in charge of the Catholic Church at 127 Chendong Road in Haikou City. Three Sisters also serve the parish.

Attention should be given to the following points:

1. In order to promote the modernization program and to increase contact with foreign financial interests, the mainland authorities, who are professedly atheistic, have nevertheless granted a certain amount of religious tolerance. Therefore, contact with the above mentioned places

is helpful for understanding the degree of openness on the mainland. The Chinese Constitution recognizes "freedom of religious belief," but "freedom of religious activity" is subject to a certain amount of supervision.

2. In order to implement the Party and government's religious policy, offices of the United Front Department and the Religious Affairs Bureau have been set up in every place. One duty of the government cadres in these offices is to meet and to acquaint themselves with visitors.

3. "The Catholic Patriotic Association" and "The Catholic Church Administrative Commission" are two government-recognized church organizations. The responsibilities of the former are to maintain government and foreign contacts. The latter organization is responsible for matters internal to the church. The actual situation of the members of these two organizations is not uniform in every place.

4. Most of the Catholics in China have undergone severe trials, and their spirit of faith is worthy of our admiration. Regarding communion with the universal church and unity with the Holy Father, the government's policy and the patriotic association's principle of "independently running the church," often make it difficult for the Catholics to express this aspect of their faith.

5. The Chinese church places great emphasis on social service. For instance, the 18 Sister-candidates in Zhanjiang, besides spending their time in prayer and the study of the spiritual life, are involved in production (sewing and making clothes), like other working women. Likewise, the two priests in Haikou are both distinguished retired professionals: one was a middle school teacher and the other a medical doctor.

The beach on Shangchuan Island is called "the Hawaii of the Orient;" Zhanjiang is the base for oil drilling operations in the South China Sea; and Hainan Island is slated to become an independent province in the future, like Taiwan. These places are worth visiting.

Some Catholics from the Hong Kong diocese have already visited these places. If others are interested in traveling this route, they can organize their own group, seek instructions from people who have already made the trip, and ask them to make contacts for you before you go.