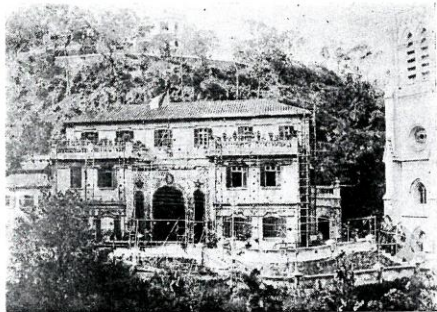


# How Did the Hong Kong Diocesan Seminary Come to Be?

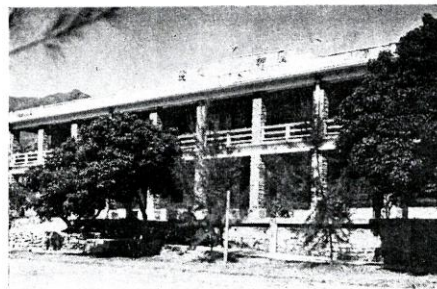


The Seminary in front of the Cathedral, in 1900.

IT all started in 1841 when in April Father Theodore Joret, the first Prefect Apostolic of Hong Kong, came on a junk from Macao to Hong Kong with two missionaries from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, and twenty seminarians from China. They built a cottage on the present Wellington Street and spent their first months there. Then they moved to a small house in Wanchai, where there is now a school for blind children run by the Canossian Sisters. They did not stay there very long. In 1843, they moved back to the first floor of the Mission House on Wellington Street and had a small chapel built near it.

This simple building was to house the seminarians not only of the Diocese of Hong Kong, but also of other dioceses in China taken care of by the Propagation of the Faith. These had come to Hong Kong to seek a quiet

place for their priestly training as there had been frequent outbreaks of anti-religious fever in the mainland. But when this antipathy died down the bishops of the various dioceses called them back for the special training calculated



The Seminary at Sai-kung, after World War II.

## The Seminary Belongs To Us All You Too Have A Share In It

The Father Rector of Holy Spirit Seminary speaking on the fostering of vocations.

THERE is an institution to which the Hong Kong faithful and all those concerned with the progress of the Kingdom of God should look with interest and dedication. That is our Diocesan Holy Spirit Seminary. Directly or indirectly all those who have at heart Catholic life in Hong Kong should concern themselves about the progress of the seminary. It is a duty imposed on us by our faith and by the new Decree on Priestly Formation.

The very fact of being called to work in Hong Kong includes the command to work for the diocesan seminary. Do all pay attention to this duty? We must remember that to "ask the Lord of the harvest" means also to act in favour of diocesan vocations. To pray: "Send forth labourers into Thy harvest" and stop there without coming down to action, means we are only praying half-heartedly.

All saints felt this duty and did their utmost to foster vocations for the diocesan seminary and clergy. Among the many of them we can cite St. Ignatius of Loyola, who worked, and indeed worked very hard, for the foundation in Rome of an inter-diocesan seminary for Germany. St. Vincent de Paul and St. John Bosco, though they felt inspired to found their own societies,

also worked unceasingly to provide many and good vocations and well-qualified priests for the dioceses. The fruits of their zeal for vocations were abundant, for in France and Piedmont at the time of St. Vincent and St. John Bosco, not only was there just an increase of priests, but an increase of saintly diocesan priests. I remember when I was still a boy I met saintly parish priests who had St. John Bosco as spiritual director and they themselves in their turn raised a lot of vocations in their own parishes. Surely vocations are fostered by the saintly lives of priests in whom boys and young men can see the man of God. An ordinary priestly life, not outstanding in virtue and heroism, is not appealing at all to our boys.

The Hong Kong diocese, blessed by God with so many religious institutions, schools, Catholic societies, active and brave lay people, should have every year a strong group of Chinese young men ordained for the ever-increasing needs of the diocese. This is a problem, serious and at stake, to which, by order from Jesus, from the Canon Law, and from the Vatican Council, all should give a serious thought.

In the end all will benefit—the whole diocese and all the religious societies

to answer the pastoral needs of the area in which their ministry was to be exercised.

Later, when the Cathedral was built at Caine Road, the diocese sold the building on Wellington Street and a new one for seminarians was built just behind the Cathedral. Twelve years later, in 1900, it moved from behind to the front of the Cathedral, where Nam Wah Middle School had been. The ground floor of this building was used by the Catholic Union Club and the other two storeys as seminary quarters. At this time the seminarians were not only studying hard and preparing themselves for the priesthood, they were also sharing the burden of the parish priest by taking up apostolic work at the Cathedral.

In 1941, when the stifling tide of the Second World War swept across the peaceful land of Hong Kong the seminary was forced to close down, and the seminarians were scattered far and wide. When peace was made four years



Holy Spirit Seminary, Tai Koo Lau, Pokfulam.

later, the seminary had already suffered great losses. But signs of life and vitality soon appeared. A new building for the seminarians went up at Sai-kung, in the New Territories. Owing to traffic inconveniences, however, it was difficult to employ good and willing teachers to teach the seminarians. So in 1957, a new seminary was erected at Tai Koo Lau, Pokfulam, on the ground generously donated by the Paris Foreign Mission Society.

Meanwhile the Regional Major Seminary had been founded in Aberdeen, to train priests for the southern part of China. After the Communists had taken hold of China, there was at first a great increase in the number of seminarians in Aberdeen: refugee seminarians poured in from all over China. Soon, however, this flood died away, and no more

seminarians could come even from the southern provinces. The number of seminarians decreased rapidly year by year. Therefore the Propagation of the Faith decided to transfer the administration of the seminary, which had formerly been entrusted to the Jesuit Fathers, to the Bishop of Hong Kong, and in 1964 made it a diocesan seminary. The seminary at Tai Koo Lau could no longer accommodate the increasing number of seminarians. So in July 1964 the Holy Spirit Seminary moved into the former Regional Seminary building in Aberdeen. And a new wing for the Theology and Philosophy students was erected at the eastern end. This new building is a majestic extension of the old, with the flavour of a Chinese temple and the loftiness of a European castle.



The Seminary today.

within it. For it is the diocesan priest who, having his daily life intimately connected with the people of God, has the best opportunity to discover who can become His chosen ones.

## What We Expect of Our Future Diocesan Priests

HOLY Spirit Seminary is in a very real way the very heart of the Hong Kong diocese, for it is here that our own Hong Kong priests are being formed to carry Christ into the hearts and homes of Hong Kong. Here one finds young men with heads bent over their books, or chasing a football across a dusty field, or heartily singing praises to God in the chapel — young men who are quite like all the rest of those in Hong Kong, quite ordinary, really, by family background or talents or appearance — yet extraordinary in a profoundly mysterious way: for these young men have been touched by the finger of God, chosen by Him almost before time itself, invited to the highest possible life which God deigns to share with human beings, and which will be theirs on the day the Bishop lays his hands upon their heads, passing on to them a share in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ Himself.

What do we, the people of God of this particular Church of Hong Kong, expect of our future diocesan priests?—That they will be true priests, holy and strong

through their participation in the holiness of God Himself, a holiness which will be continually increased by their life of sacramental union with Christ the Eternal Priest, especially in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and through their prayer; and that they will serve us in all our needs and weaknesses, especially by giving us the Word of God, and by administering the sacramental life to us, daily, weekly, and at the most important moments of our lives, from baptism to the grave. We want their encouragement and help in leading better, richer, fuller lives. We want their own lives to be a two-way current of love, receiving its fullness from the Father, passing it on to us, and then gathering it up again as we offer back to the Father, through our priests, the praise and worship and thanksgiving that is His eternal glory.

We want this seminary to produce priests who will be men of this century, who will be apostolic in the broadest sense, with their own lives conforming as closely as possible to that of their Bishop, successor of the Apos-

les, who gives his life for his sheep. Other times in history and other places have been dominated by special needs and met by special apostolic forms: the ransoming of captives from the infidels, or planting the faith in newly discovered continents, or defending it against heresies, or making reparation to God through a life of prayer and penance. But in Hong Kong where the Church is still young and still developing, we need diocesan priests who will be truly all things to all men, whose apostolate will not be limited to one or another aspect of Christ as model, but rather whose lives will be total in their patterning upon Christ, and who will be as fully as possible what the Apostles themselves were when their Master sent them forth to carry the Gospel to all men.

Can this ideal be realized? Why not, since it is Christ Himself who calls them, forms them, gives them the participation in His Priesthood, and sustains them until they are with Him forever?

A lay person in Hong Kong