

BISHOP BIANCHI BLESSES SEK-KONG GARRISON CATH CHURCH MIDST ENTHUSIASTIC GATHERING

Last Sunday April 25th the new church at Sek Kong dedicated to Mary Immaculate and St. Michael was blessed by His Excellency Bishop Lawrence Bianchi. Father Joseph Gardner, the Senior Catholic Chaplain has been working on this project with months of preliminary preparation. In January the ground was broken, and on Easter Sunday the first Mass was celebrated there.

After blessing the new church, which will serve a Catholic population in the area of approximately 350, consisting of members of the Army and Royal Air Force, their wives and families, and the civil community, His Lordship celebrated Pontifical Mass.

The sermon was given by the Rev. Fr. T. J. Sheridan, S.J., who took as his text: "Oh, Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth (Psalm 25)." Fr. Sheridan said the new church at Sek Kong testified to its need in a world of conflict. Its presence was evidence of the efforts of the Rev. Fr. Gardner, Senior Chaplain to the Forces (RC), in conjunction with the builders and all who had associated themselves with its planning and construction.

The fact that the various authorities had decreed that the church should be built proved

that the soldier of to-day required not only his fighting weapons and his personal strength, but also an internal, spiritual strength. One could approach God at any time, in any place, but the new church provided a means whereby the Serviceman could fortify himself with the spiritual means of combating the forces of evil which abound in the world today.

The new church was completed in ten weeks. Fr. Gardner was commissioned, a year ago, to leave the United Kingdom for Hongkong, and set up such a church in the New Territories. A grant from the Army Church Building Fund (Roman Catholic) provided the money for the construction so the new church has been built for the Army with the soldiers' own money, for the funds were indirectly contributed by the troops, through collections made at Sunday Masses in Garrison

Churches and at Masses said for troops; the balance of such collections, over and above immediate local needs is contributed to the Army Church Building Fund (RC).

The church was dedicated to Our Lady because it was built and blessed during the Marian Year, and to St. Michael, since it was on the Feast of the Saint last year that the documents for the grant were signed. St. Michael is also the Patron Saint of the fighting services.

During the ceremony, the congregation received a souvenir book containing the prayers of the blessing of His Excellency and photographs of the progress of the church.

The necessary liturgical and rubrical requirements for the saying of Mass, the giving of Benediction and the Blessed Sacrament were presented by the Council of the St. Thomas More Association. Other items were presented by individuals.

