

# Exiled Trappist Monks Start Work on New Monastery on Lantao Island Near Hong Kong

Dom Paulinus Li, Titular Prior of the Cistercian Monastery of Our Lady of Joy, situated at Cheng-ting-fu in the Hopei Province, and now exiled with his monks in Hong Kong has been able to procure through His Excellency the Governor of Hong Kong, and through the untiring efforts of Reverend Father T. F. Ryan, S.J., the lease of a solitary valley, 73 acres in extent, near Silver Mine Bay on Lantao Island. It is beautiful mountain country and ideal for the site of a monastery.

His Lordship The Most Reverend Henry Valtorta, Bishop of Hong Kong has blessed the project with his gracious approval.

The clergy and faithful of Heng Kong receive the news with joy for it is a great blessing to have a group of contemplative monks living in their midst. Not only do the Catholics of Hong Kong welcome the institution of the Monastery, but also a large number of other citizens welcome the project, not only as a spiritual power-house, but as a centre of culture as well.

In a public lecture at the British Council Library last Friday, Dom Paulinus traced the history of the Trappist Order back to the times of St. Benedict in the sixth century, until the time of the first seed to be planted in China in 1883, at Yang-Kia-Ping, west of Peiping.

## "Chinese love monastic life"

"The austerity and hardships of the monastic life did not terrify the Chinese Catholic people, for they have a great spirit of faith and are accustomed to hard work," Fr. Ly said.

"So, very quickly, the community possessed nearly 100 members. They opened a big vineyard, they dug a long canal of three miles along a mountain to carry water from a river to the Monastery for irrigation and for a water-mill; they dug a long trench of nearly 200 yards for conserving vegetables.

"The most famous products of that Monastery were Trappist-cheese and apricots."

Fr. Ly himself entered the Peiping Monastery at the age of 13. French Fathers there educated him.

With the development of the Peiping settlement, a sister house was established in 1928 at Cheng-ting-fu, in Hopei Province. This was the Monastery of Our Lady of Liesse.

"During 20 years we got 60 people by recruiting, and everything was very prosperous until the new regime came to us for a it.

## Ten Chinese Monks Preparing in Canada

Dom Paulinus went on to say that last year the Order was able to send 10 young priests to Canada from Hong Kong to enable them to acquire deeper and useful knowledge. Nine of those who went were Chinese who spoke Latin, English and French in addition to their mother tongue.

Those young priests, Dom Paulinus added, "are indeed our future hope."

"The others who remained in China consist of seven priests, three young students and 20 young Lay Brothers, and they are those with whom we plan to start the first settlement of our Monastery on Lantao Island.

## Monks On Lantao



Some of the young Trappist monks on the site of the new Monastery at Lantao Island. Eleven are on the island at present preparing the soil for planting, and making tracks from the wharf to carry the materials for the building to the site.

"I came to Hongkong a year ago and I tried to find out whether we could get land for this purpose. It was very hard for me at the beginning, for I not know any people who could help me. But since last September, I was very fortunate in meeting the Rev. Fr. Ryan who knows Hongkong and who is known by Hongkong.

## Description of Site

"I was told that the Hongkong Government wished to develop Lantao Island, which is very rich but may not be well enough known by the people. Tai Shui Hang valley proved a convenient site for us. I went there three times to study it in detail and then decided to apply to the Government for it. We made a plan and wrote out our application.

"We received so favourable an answer that we got all through the matter before last Easter. All our Brothers are deeply grateful to the Government and for all who have so kindly co-operated with us to obtain this favour."

Describing the site chosen, Dom Paulinus said that it was solitary and free of people. Two small rivers flowed down from a mountain, crossed the whole valley and joined together at the entrance of the valley to make a beautiful waterfall upon a big rock. Only a small and poor family lived by the sea. They possessed two small plots of land in the valley that had been chosen for the Monastery.

Dom Paulinus said that he and his colleagues moved quickly to Lantao as soon as a licence was obtained from the Government. The first problem

"The bitter experience of war, the disappointments that have succeeded it, an outlook which offers but little hope . . . is no reason for being dismayed or disheartened, or of losing sight of the real situation as a whole. AND SO WE WILL NEVER TIRE OF SAYING TO ALL OUR CHILDREN: TAKE COURAGE BE OF GOOD HEART.

You are numerous, more numerous than would appear. You are powerful more powerful than your opponents.

The chief source of your strength lies in your inner convictions and these are true and genuine, solidly grounded on eternal principles, and not on false concepts, on the fabrications of error and lying maxims, on impressions or expedients of the moment. God is with you."

—Pope Pius XII

they met was where they would live. The Agricultural Department came to their aid by offering temporary accommodation in their agricultural station at Silver Mine Bay, some 10 miles from the monastic site.

Every morning the young monks walked for two hours over mountains to work on the site.

"The first day everybody felt tired, but after two days these young people got into the habit of walking and became stronger and happier. Our young brothers were born in the plain and they had no experience of mountain country. So they thought at first that the work in mountain country must be very difficult. But now they realise that it is very easy to overcome all difficulties of work in the mountains. In three days they made a good path from the sea to our valley. This will prove useful for the transportation of materials for building.

## Rooms for Visitors

Dom Paulinus envisaged, after the Novitiate house, the building of rooms for guests and visitors.

"I believe that many people will like to go to our new Monastery and solitary valley to get a short rest, even to spend a few days in our Monastery for a retreat. A peaceful sojourn in the atmosphere of a Trappist community cannot but soothe the mind and bring it comfort."

He added that they were starting at once on vegetable gardening work, and the planting of trees.

He also wished that they could very soon own some good cows and so able to begin making Trappist cheese. Such products would help to support his community while at the same time providing a good commodity to the Hongkong populace.

"We have all these projects, but our financial resources do not permit us to accomplish all these plans as soon as we wish, for we have lost everything. We are just starting with very small funds at our disposal. Furthermore, we have not enough experience in this country."

"We are in great need of the charitable co-operation and kind advice of our friends and benefactors. I am sure that all of you are very interested about our work, and many of you are quite able to help us in many

## The Trappist Community



The Trappist Community with their Titular Prior, Dom Paulinus Li, in the grounds of the Little Sisters of the Poor Home, where they have received hospitality since coming to Hong Kong.

ways — not only financially but by anything you can do."

Answering questions, Dom Paulinus said he hoped that the settlement would be self-supporting within a year. He pointed out that Hongkong was in much need of agricultural produce, and that agricultural work would be one of the activities of his group.

Dom Paulinus also said that the monks kept the rule of silence while working. Nevertheless, they had a language of symbols by which they could understand each other perfectly. These symbols, however, enabled those who did not know

the same spoken language to communicate with each other without difficulty.

He also said that all were welcome to visit the settlement irrespective of religion.

In warmly thanking Dom Paulinus for his talk, the Rev. Bro. Cassian of La Salle College recalled that history had shown that the Trappists were even able to produce wheat and wine from the sands of the Sahara. He was sure, therefore, that they could get something out of the soil of Lantao.

Dom Paulinus had at the outset been introduced to the large audience by Mr. Jack Braga.