

Ordination of Father Lionel Xavier, O.P.

Father Lionel Xavier, O.P., the first Hong Kong Portuguese Dominican priest, was ordained by His Lordship the Bishop on the evening of Saturday, April 27, in Rosary Church, Kowloon, and celebrated his first Mass in the same church on the following morning.

The vast congregations that assembled for the ordination and the first Mass, showed how deeply these great events had stirred the Catholics of Hong Kong, and in particular the Portuguese community.

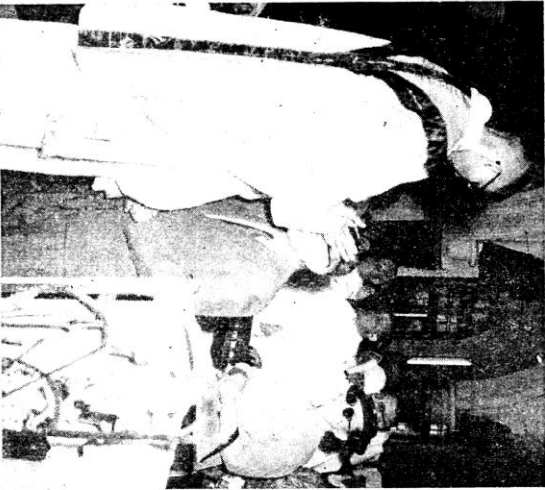
During the first Mass, Father H. de Angelis, P.M.E., who as parish priest of Rosary Church had known Father Xavier in the days when his vocation was making itself known, preached an eloquent sermon, saying in part: "Alleluia!

"This is the refrain of joy and exaltation that fills our churches in these days still resplendent with the dazzling light of Christ's Resurrection. A special resounding Alleluia we sing to-day in honour of a well known, highly esteemed and much loved young man, who is going to the Altar of God to offer his first Sacrifice of the Mass. Indeed, we have all reasons to exclaim: This is the day which the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and exult!"

"Joy and exaltation for the universal Church on earth, for the Church in Hong Kong and in particular, for this very old and very dear little church, which saw him, some 30 years ago, as a kindergarten pupil in St. Mary's School, later admitted to him as an exemplary parishioner taking active part in the life of the parish and now welcomes him back as a priest and scholar, having brilliantly attained 'magnum cum laude' his graduation in Sacred Theology in the renowned St. Thomas University in Manila.

"Joy and exaltation for the local Portuguese community that rightly shares the happiness of the Xavier family in the cherished honour of having given a priest to the Church; and, of course, joy and exaltation, to the highest degree, for our good, dear Father Lionel!

"The word Lionel means a little lion. But Father Lionel rather than a little lion looks like a lamb in his docility, gentleness, simplicity and peacefulness. Yet as priest he possesses the most formidable power ever to be con-



Father Xavier gives his first priestly blessing to his father—and next to his mother.

ferred on a human creature. Though of a frail bodily frame, Father Lionel has already displayed heroic courage by conquering the ailments of a comfortable life in society, and by fully equipping himself to conquer evil, in all its forms, in the exercise of his holy ministry.

"In his surname also I like to see a symbol of the rich harvest he will reap in the vineyard of the Lord, for the word Xavier brings before our mind the gallant figure of St. Francis Xavier, who ranks highest, amongst missionaries, in the life-long task of spreading the Gospel and saving souls.

"As you know, in his younger days, Father Lionel was a keen sportsman very successful on the playing field. From now on he will be running on other fields, along various hard paths of life in search of sheep, and his only goal will be no other than the narrow gate of Heaven.

"Father Lionel was also a skillful accountant, often bent on account books and balance sheets, busy with addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. From now on he will be concerned about a different type of mathematical operations: addition to his personal merits and successes; subtraction from his own leisure, energy and time; multiplication of himself for the benefit of others; dividing amongst his fellowmen his own talents of mind and heart. The two capital letters of the alphabet we see after his name, O.P., stand, as you know, for Order of Preachers, for the Dominicans have always been illustrious in the Church for preaching. Father Lionel will not mind if I suggest that the same two letters O. P. be also interpreted as Other People, for this is why a priest is ordained a priest: for other people.

"The large and enthusiastic attendance at this service is a public manifestation of the respect and love you feel not only for the person of Father Lionel, but also for the Catholic priesthood, which he so worthily represents.

"Once a priest, on the day of his ordination, happened to

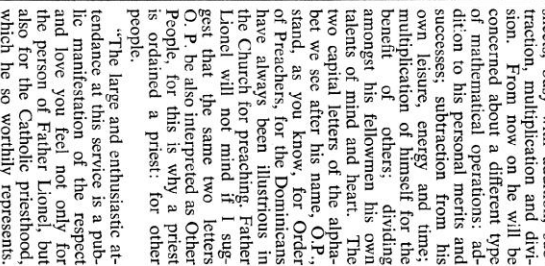
glance on a small holy picture in the prayer book of his mother. On the back of the picture he read these words: O Lord, hear my daily prayer: that one of my sons may one day become a priest. The young priest then understood why he had become a priest.

"There are here, amongst us, two persons, whose faith, generosity, good example and prayers have been, besides the grace of God, instrumental in preparing this great, red-letter day, Mr. and Mrs. Xavier. They gladly made the sacrifice of offering to God their youngest child, who is always the 'pet' child in every family.

"The Portuguese people have always and everywhere distinguished themselves for their faith in God and devotedness to the Church. In Hong Kong, in past as well as recent years, temples of God have been built partially or totally through the munificent donations of some members of the Portuguese community.

"The Church, which is now fully grown in this corner of the Far East, while still in need of material support for further expansion, appeals to-day, on this solemn occasion, to the Portuguese families, by inviting them to uphold and live the century-old Portuguese Missionary spirit, by which the torch of our Catholic faith, kept burning by true Christian life, may be passed on to future generations by surrendering some of those near and dear to you to the service of the Lord in the ranks of priesthood.

"If all Portuguese mothers, present and future, would make their own those same words: O Lord, hear my daily prayer: that one of my sons may one day be a priest, then there can be no doubt that glorious days such as this will not be so rare and we would more frequently sing the refrain of joy and exaltation: Alleluia! This is the day which the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and exult."



Father Xavier gives Holy Communion for the first time—to his father.