

Hong Kong Catholic Works of Mercy

(Fourth of a Series)

Challenge Undesigned

By Richard Core

If you have a spare half-hour and you are keen on extending your studies in human psychology, then ride a few times back and forth on the Star Ferry.

You may see a seedy, old derelict whose quiet look of offended dignity bespeaks a more opulent past in other years. He whistles profusely and smiles serenely as though soulfully detached from the passing parade.

En route home via the Star Ferry the other afternoon, after visiting the Precious Blood Sisters at Shumshuipo, one would like to have been in the lead role of the song being softly whistled by this whimsical lad. It was the ironic but refreshing melody "I Haven't Time to Be a Millionaire."

We've got Lots more Babies just like this



It would be nice to open one's bank-account and throw a few idle hundred, thousand, or million dollars in the direction of these Chinese Sisters of the Precious Blood whose capable although little-noted works of mercy for the poor are so heart-warming.

Many idealists engaged in social welfare endeavours are often abruptly and necessarily compelled to adjust themselves to realistic, hard facts if they wish to prosper successfully.

One such social venture is the conduct of an orphanage. By design, it exists for the purpose of maintaining, as nearly as possible, the environment of a natural and happy home-life where this has been denied to orphans and abandoned children.

In the Colony's Shumshuipo district at Yuen-chow Street, there is an orphanage under the supervision of the Hong Kong diocesan Congregation of the Sisters of the Precious Blood.

Since their beginning in 1923 as a religious group independent of their parent organization under the Canossian Sisters, 36 zealous Chinese nuns under Mother Clara Tam, have dedicated themselves to three objectives:

Teaching, hospital work and catechetical labours in conjunction with parochial missions in suburban districts of the Hong Kong diocese.

A side interest on the part of this energetic group of Sisters who now number nearly 80 religious, was the care of about fifty orphans who lived in their Convent until the completion of the Precious Blood Hospital in 1937. At that time the children

were moved into the Hospital to form a separate and definite social work of the Sisters.

The vast inflow of refugees to Hong Kong in general and the already thickly settled area of Shumshuipo in particular, with its boom-town like rows of squatters' huts, have brought the Sisters a previously unforeseen set of conditions necessitating a shift of emphasis from their original aims.

Despite the tremendous and admirable work for orphan children by the Government and non-religious agencies in Hong Kong, the general public's seemingly gross apathy and inadequate support of this necessary work is lamentable.

In consequence, the Precious Blood Sisters no longer run a simple home for orphans and deserted youngsters; they have been forced to combine the functions of several distinct institutions all into one.

With the cessation of the global war, their burdens have been heightened, not decreased, mainly in view of the outbreak of hostilities in interior China. The Sisters have cared for 23,661 children. They had no alternative but to establish the quadrilateral role of baby home, hospital, nursery and school.

Only two Sisters with the aid of four nurses provide for the care of infants. Another two Sisters and four teachers attend to the education of the older orphans who, when of age, are adopted by carefully screened Catholic families.

The prodigious and increased efforts of the Precious Blood Sisters would be greatly ameliorated if given the addi-

tional services of specialists in infant care, modern hygienic facilities and medical ministrations so necessary in lowering infant mortality.

Vocational directors and experts in child psychology, in addition, would be a welcome aid to these heroic Sisters who need no introduction to the enormous human suffering which exists here.

As though there were no limitations to their capacity for dispensing the charity of God towards their fellow man, the Precious Blood Sisters have provided for 2,156 charity cases at this writing, in their Shumshuipo

po Hospital.

The next time you see a foot-loose millionaire anxious to spread about his largesse, head him off and guide him with all gentleness to the Precious Blood Hospital. Not a very likely occurrence, but breathe a prayer anyway—one such millionaire may be overwhelmed with the notion someday.

How little he'd miss the \$40,000 per annum it costs the Sisters just to feed and care for the orphans alone!

Teaching the Chinese youth is another commendable undertaking of these Sisters. At the Tak Ching school for girls, more than 1,600 students daily pass through their doors. Four Sisters assisted by seventy Catholic lay teachers comprise the faculty board here.

In keeping with the latest and best canons of orphanage care, all of the older orphans attend Tak Ching in Kowloon. Mingling with girls from middle class and poorer families, they display no typically institutional signs of inferiority or instability. Those who do not wish to continue further studies are granted every chance to study nursing or some other specialized work.

On the island of Hong Kong at Wanchai, the Sisters maintain a Tak Ching branch school for about 730 students where three more of the nuns are helped by 40 lay teachers. Both schools conduct night classes five times a week to assist the Colonial Government's undertaking in providing education for hundreds of youngsters who would otherwise have no schooling facilities at the present time.

Added to the Sisters' work in education is the supervision of the Casa des Padres Institution

at Macao which provides for about eighty homeless boys and a number of old men. This work was commenced in 1946.

In the pioneer days of the Congregation, the Sisters of the Precious Blood made and sold shoes and clothes to insure their own livelihood. No loop-hole was left unchallenged in an effort to make ends meet. And they raised pigs for market too.

The buildings and projects which are so flourishing and inspiring today are modern without the facade of luxury, simple without the show of extravagance, their charity and zeal without parallel.

If you can't support or emulate their Christ-like love for God manifested through their works of mercy, or intercept foot-loose millionaires with guile, then surely you are not limited with prayers in their behalf.

THE CHILDREN'S HEALTH SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

