

Hong Kong Catholic Works of Mercy

(Sixth of a Series)

“BLESSED ARE YE POOR . . .”

By Richard Core

The sleek lines of a fighter aircraft parked on a taxi-strip reflect a certain beauty of man's creative genius. In non-combat manoeuvres with faster-than-sound power-dives and clawing for altitude against a backdrop of puffy clouds in a windless, blue sky, a plane is a sort of symbol of man's God-given majesty.

The impetus of war, however, releases its latent ferocity. Its flaming .50-caliber wing-guns cause it to lose that majesty in a death-spray of violence. So too, old age, sickness and want can transform one's inherent beauty into a war-time distortion.

Possessing something of a fighter-craft's fire-power was Chow Mui, better known as Ah Gar, a blind woman in her seventies. She was received into a hostel for homeless old women and widows with children. It is a part of the charitable work of St. Teresa's Parish in Kowloon.

Ah Gar's sporadic bursts of high-octane temper on account of old age, had singled her out for dubious repute among the 80 odd inhabitants at 27 Man Kok Road near Kai Tak's airport.

At times faster than a British Spitfire leaving the local runway, Ah Gar flew into high dudgeon and it was evident that those charged with the supervision of the Hostel had to act to forestall community disaster.

Paradoxically, Ah Gar was shoved up instead of out; she landed in the Home for the Aged with the Little Sisters of the Poor. And peace reigned again at 27 Man Kok Road. Last reported Ah Gar was contented; she recently sent out word for her old friends to come and visit her.

The foregoing serves only to illustrate that St. Teresa's Hostel is not guilty of discrimination in the poor unfortunates for whom it provides shelter. Catholics attached to the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Third Order of St. Francis and the Catholic Action of St. Teresa's Parish realized long since that their efforts in providing communal living quarters for deserving old people, otherwise destined to sleeping on damp sidewalks, scarcely would be like running a hostel for Trappist Monks.

Candidates are ubiquitous; the only thing they share alike is poverty. When you are trying in a charitable manner to give shelter to the homeless, you don't condition them with qualifications for admission. Even with interesting folks like Ah Gar who turn out to be a community problem-child at the tender age of seventy-two.

Back in December 1935 Bishop Valtorta gave the green-light to inaugurate positive measures to help in ridding the metropolitan problem of street sleepers.

Old men and women were offered shelter for the night on

the first floor of a building leased at Sheh Kap Mei street in Shumshuipo. It was not until 1937 that the present three floors on Man Kok road were procured. The Hostel at this point became a place of refuge for deserving old women and widowed mothers having chil-

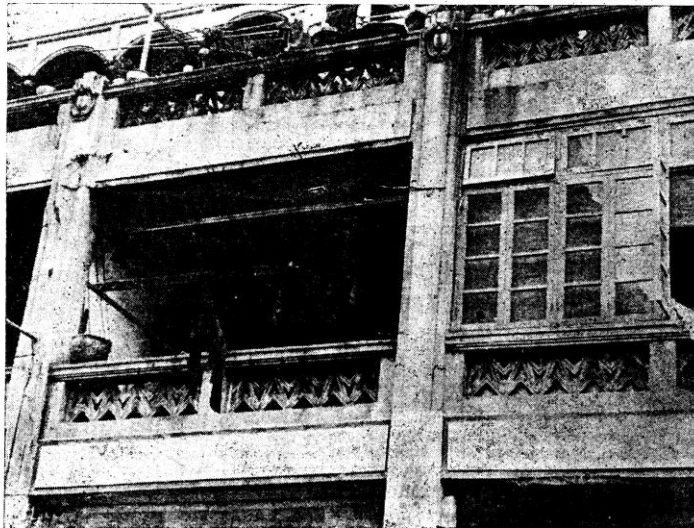
There are no rules and regulations to be followed. Doors open at dawn, close at eight in the evening. Night prayers are said in common since nearly all the women are Catholics.

In a sense the place is a sort of waiting-room for those along in years. When an opening is had at the Home for the Aged, the women are taken in by the

Little Sisters of the Poor. The Hostel has the guidance of other Sisters too since a couple of Maryknoll Sisters look in often to maintain order and settle occasional squabbles that inevitably arise.

Spirited personalities like Ah Gar are the exception, of course, but when you try to settle over

No. 27 MAN KOK ROAD KOWLOON



Belove dof God From All Eternity

