In Loving Memory of Two Missionaries

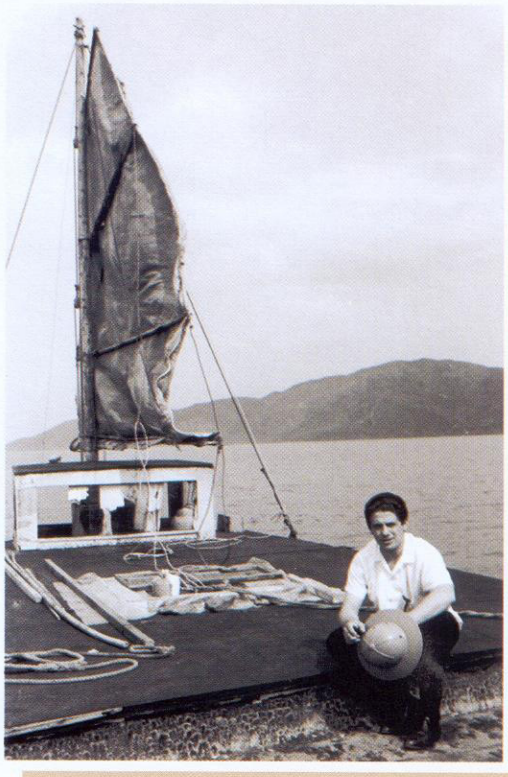
The last two missionaries to pass away before the compilation of this book, happen to be, each one in his own way, two outstanding and representative figures of PIME presence in Hong Kong for the last decades. The memory of them is still quite vivid in the PIME community and among their numerous friends. We would like to affectionately devote to them the last chapter.

A PIME's charismatic leader Fr. Adelio Lambertoni

Fr. Adelio Lambertoni died at the age of 66 on July 7, 2006, after a long and painful illness. Aware that the end was approaching, he never dramatized his plight but, rather forgetting himself, he showed interest in others. Placing himself in the Lord's hands, he showed the depth of his faith by submitting completely to God's will. Such trust edified all and, to a certain extent, even surprised some.

He was a true catalyst in the PIME community, arguably the most significant one; and he commanded the attention of and motivated those around him. He was a leader in the renewal of the missionary presence in Hong Kong; an innovator constantly looking for new ways to serve, which he tempered with deep wisdom and common sense. He favored a convergence between different ideas and positions while being cordial in his personal rapport with others. He sought unity in the PIME community which, for many years, he served as councilor and, then, as vice regional Superior. Fr. Adelio was deeply engaged in social work, which made him well known in the society at large. But he never exercised it as an alternative to his being, first of all, a priest and the shepherd of his flock.

Fr. Adelio was a man who, with his charismatic personality and great generosity, left a deep impression everywhere he went. He valued personal relationships and left behind a wide array of friendships, including one with the last Governor of Hong Kong, Christopher Patten. His charisma is still visible in the large family he created in Hong Kong by adopting eight homeless children. To them he was a father, and a grandfather for their children; he provided them with a first-class education and an honorable position in society and, most importantly, a genuine family filled with heartfelt affection.



A young Fr. Adelio Lambertoni is preparing to visit Christian villages in the early years of his presence in Hong Kong.



Fr. Adelio Lambertoni meets Mother Teresa of Calcutta during her visit in Hong Kong.

A discreet hero
Fr. Lido Mencarini

As the compilation of this book was coming to a close, Father Lido Mencarini (born in Lucca in 1916) was the last missionary to return to heaven, on May 2, 2007, at the age of 90.

A few months earlier, on November 27, 2006 the PIME community had marked his 90th birthday with a dinner attended by Cardinal Joseph Zen, Bishop John Tong and all the major diocesan authorities. Even though the celebration was simple, Fr. Mencarini looked puzzled and genuinely surprised. He considered himself unworthy of such recognition, although he had served the diocese with loyalty and dedication for 60 years. Over that time he had been diocesan procurator, head of the Board of Education, Vicar General and PIME's regional superior.

Fr. Mencarini was an unassuming and dedicated worker in the vineyard of the Lord. He spent his best years making sure that the Hong Kong Church could meet the massive needs the large crowd of refugees. Health did not always support him: for the whole of 1956 he was sick with tuberculosis. After his recovery, he resumed giving of himself without reservation. In 1964, he was elected Superior General of PIME. He did not accept the responsibility, presumably due to low self opinion of his own abilities, but in particular because Hong Kong was his first priority. In Hong Kong he served until his last days, keeping up his pastoral work and serving the PIME community as its diligent treasurer.

Fr. Mencarini kept the news about his election to himself. He probably consulted Bishop Lorenzo Bianchi. But it did not become public knowledge until long after his death. The same discretion kept hidden for many years the news of Fr. Mencarini's efforts to save dozens, possibly hundreds of Jews and anti-fascist activists in Cantù, northern Italy, during the Nazi occupation of Italy since late 1943. Fr. Mencarini was serving there as a young assistant in a parish. For some reason, witnesses disclosed information about his heroic behavior only a few months before his death. The municipality of Cantù was organizing a special ceremony and award in honor of the reluctant Fr. Mencarini, when his death forced the organizer to temporary call off the event.

His confreres, without exception, remember him with affection and respect. Fr. Dino Doimo, then regional superior, wrote:

Fr. Mencarini was a person who taught us in many ways, especially to work in silence. Always ready to serve, he took active interest in our PIME community and in all its missionary endeavors. I, for one, saw him as a role model. I would like very much to imitate, although I know I am not up to him.

He would receive people with a broad smile, putting them at ease, as if, at that moment, there was nothing more important to him. He was ready to offer his opinion and open to accept others' opinions. That humble openness enabled him to abide by the community's decisions. Fr Mencarini was a profoundly honest man, sincere, discreet and humble. He lived through conflicts, never generated by him, without becoming bitter or creating adversaries. He looked with special concern and consideration at the numerous confreres who had left the ministry. It is known for certain that he prayed for each one every day. For them he did not have words of criticism, rather, he remained close to some of them, offering them advice and encouragement. He lived with the joy, serenity and peace possessed only by the saintly.



Fr. Lido Mencarini, at the age of 90, still kept updated on Hong Kong events.