Chronology

1953, *July*: Fr. Charles Herman Vath, a German-born priest, starts the Diocesan Social Service, which in 1955 becomes the Catholic Social Welfare Conference, and in 1958 Caritas-Hong Kong.

1954: Fr. Antonio Riganti is appointed PIME Regional Superior (until 1959).

April 14: St. Joseph's Church in Fan Ling, under the care of Fr. Ambrogio Poletti, is blessed.

Sedes Sapientiae, a house where newly arrived missionaries will attend language classes is established in Cheung Chau. Its first rector is Fr. Pietro Bonaldo. The school will remain in operation for 10 years. Teachers included Frs. Giorgio Caruso and Vincenzo Carbone.

1955: Bishop Bianchi donates Fr. Raffaello Maglioni's writings, personal library and his valuable collection of archeological finds from Guangdong province to the University of Hong Kong. The Maglioni Exhibition is opened on March 3, 1956 and moves to the Hong Kong Museum of History in 1975. In November 2006, the Hong Kong Museum of History informs that the Maglioni Library, with over 1,000 books, will be transferred to the Hong Kong Central Library.

1956, *October 21*: St. Francis of Assisi Church in Sham Shui Po is blessed. Since its development in the 1930s, the area had been served by PIME priests including Frs. Baldassarre Pilenga, Orazio De Angelis and Nicola Ruggiero.

1957, *May 31*: The Tai Po district is divided into Tai Po, Sha Tin and Fan Ling districts. Their rectors are respectively: Frs. Domenico Maringelli (until 1962, and then Fr. Narciso Santinon); Fr. Valeriano Fraccaro (until 1960, and then Fr. Giovanni Viganò); and Ambrogio Poletti (until 1973).

November 25: The Church of St. Jude in North Point is blessed. This territory has been detached from St. Margaret's Church in Happy Valley. The area is under the care of PIME Frs. Giorgio Caruso (from 1953), Ottavio Liberatore (from 1955) and Antonio Formenti (from 1965).

1957: The minor seminary is transferred from Sai Kung to Pok Fu Lam, with Fr. Secondo Einaudi as rector, and, from 1962, Fr. Domenico Bazzo.

1958, *June 16*: Bishop Bianchi establishes Caritas-Hong Kong as the official social welfare bureau of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong. Fr. Francesco Lerda heads Caritas until his death in 2003.

June 17: The three ecclesiastical districts on the Mainland (Po On, Wai Yeung and Hoi Fung) under the diocese of Hong Kong, are officially declared by the government in Beijing to be under the jurisdiction of the People's Republic of China.

July 31: PIME celebrates the 100th anniversary of its arrival in Hong Kong. Fr. Thomas Ryan S.J. writes a history book, *The Story of a Hundred Years*. Fr. Angelo Lazzarotto edits a special issue about PIME's activities in Hong Kong: *Catholic Hong Kong. A Hundred Years of Missionary Activity*.

December 17-20: Cardinal Grégoire-Pierre Agagianian, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, visits Hong Kong. He blesses the Church of Ss. Peter and Paul in Yuen Long, and Raimondi College at Mid-level, built and directed by Fr. Giuseppe Carrà. Fr. Carrà was also, for many years, responsible for the formation and organization of the Serra Club of Hong Kong and the Christian Association for Executives.

1959: Fr. Salvatore Martino, who resides in Japan, is appointed PIME Superior of the Sino-Japanese Region. He holds this position until 1964.

August 5: The long and occasionally bitter controversy which started in 1934, between the PIME Superior General and the Vicariate of Hong Kong, is finally settled. A second "Agreement" is signed between PIME Superior General Fr. Augusto Lombardi and Bishop Bianchi. The dispute (named *historia dolorum*), stemmed from the failure of the Hong Kong diocese to pay the interest agreed in 1933. Hong Kong diocese did not pay the interest at first because of a lack of money; and then due to the urgent need to use all available funds for Church development. It is decided that the properties near St. Teresa's Church and St. Joseph's Terrace (located at the left side of the Cathedral) should belong to PIME.

September 20: The new Sacred Heart Church in Sai Kung is blessed. It is under the care of Fr. Quirino De Ascaniis, who serves as rector from 1955 to 1961.

1961, *June 11*: The new Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Tai Po is blessed. Fr. Domenico Maringelli is the rector.

November 13: The new Church of Our Lady of Fatima in Cheung Chau is blessed. Fr. Nicola Ruggiero is the rector.

1962, *February 17*: St. Peter's Church and school in Aberdeen, served by Fr. Giacomo Zilioli and built under his direction, are blessed.

May 28: Caritas opens its first Social Center in Aberdeen, followed by other centers, where several PIME members work.

June 11: The new Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Tai O is blessed. Fr. Nicola Ruggiero is the rector.

October 31: The Church of St. Vincent in Wong Tai Sin is blessed. Fr. Fernando Galbiati is the rector.

1963, *March 7*: The Catechetical Centre starts operation under the direction of Fr. Cirillo Speziali, who is also the Spiritual Director of the Legion of Mary from 1956 to 1965.

1964, *September*: The Diocesan Holy Spirit Seminary in Aberdeen opens after the minor and major seminarians are united. Fr. Domenico Bazzo is the rector until 1967.

1965: Fr. Secondo Einaudi is appointed PIME Regional Superior (until 1968).

1966, *February 19*: The Church of Mother of Good Counsel in San Po Kong is blessed. Fr. Fernando Galbiati is the rector.

April: A house for teaching English to PIME missionaries is opened in Watford, England. Fr. Carmelo Orlando is appointed its first rector. He also serves the Catholic Chinese community of London.

1967, *July 1*: Fr. Francis Hsu is appointed Auxiliary Bishop, and ordained on October 7.

The violent Riots caused by pro-communist leftists inspired by the Cultural Revolution bring death (51 people killed, hundreds injured) and decline of confidence among Hong Kong's populace. While many residents sell their property and relocated overseas, Bishop Bianchi invites Catholics to contribute to the stability and future of Hong Kong.

1968: Fr. Giuseppe Carrà is appointed PIME Regional Superior. He serves until 1973.

The Chapel of St. Cecilia in Diamond Hill is inaugurated. Fr. Luciano Aletta works there from 1955 to 1996.

September 11: The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate (PIME Sisters) arrive in Hong Kong. Fr. Edoardo Fazzioli is active in helping them to get established.

December 19: The resignation of Bishop Lorenzo Bianchi is accepted. Bishop Hsu is appointed Apostolic Administrator.

1969, Fr. Emilio Leoni is the first PIME missionary to work in a factory. In the following years other priests, including Frs. Sergio Ticozzi, Carlo Tei, Gianni Giampietro, Franco Mella and Franco Cumbo, choose to witness the Christian faith as priest-workers.

The Chinese translation of the Bible, under the direction of Fr. Gabriele Allegra OFM, is published.

May 29: Bishop Hsu is appointed the 3rd Bishop of Hong Kong and installed on October 26. With this act, the process of handing over leadership of the diocese to the local clergy is complete.

October 14: The Catholic-Anglican Joint Port Chaplaincy is inaugurated. The first chaplain is Fr. Fedele Giannini, PIME's future Superior General. He came from Japan to serve in Hong Kong for one year.

December, 23: The parish St. Paul in Yau Ma Tei, initiated by Fr. Dino Doimo, is erected.

1970, *February 15*: The Diocesan Convention begins. Several PIME missionaries are actively involved. It will end in November 1971.

December 4: Pope Paul VI visits Hong Kong and delivers a cordial message to China.

1971, *February 2*: PIME missionaries work under "A Special Mandate" from the bishop. Under the new agreement, the diocese takes back St. Margaret's Church in return for a financial compensation.

April 19-20: PIME community holds a "Two - Day Meeting" to discuss and approve 'New Ways' of missionary service.

July 3: Fr. Peter Lei is appointed Auxiliary Bishop and is installed on September 8.

December 26: The Church of Ss. Cosmas and Damian in Tsuen Wan is blessed. It is under the care of Fr. Nicola Ruggiero.

1972: 72 PIME members are serving in Hong Kong, the highest ever number of PIMEs in the territory.

Fr. Melchiorre Arnoldi founds the Gospel Movement, officially approved by the diocese in 1981. Its purpose is to enhance evangelical life in the family through devotion to the Sacred Heart.

Fr. Franco Gritti, in collaboration with PIME sisters and priests, founds homes for the elderly in the Tsing Yi and Tsuen Wan areas.

1973, *March 2*: Fr. Filippo Comissari is elected PIME Regional Superior. He serves until 1977.

April 8: Holy Redeemer's Church in Tuen Mun is blessed. Fr. Ovidio Calzini is the rector.

May 23: Bishop Francis Hsu dies.

October 8-12: PIME Asia Regional Superiors meet in Hong Kong.

November 12-16: PIME community holds an historical "Five - Day Meeting", setting directions for community and missionary life. The handing over of 'offices of power' to local clergy and the 'New Ways' of evangelization are confirmed. Its conclusions are made public by the local Catholic press.

December 21: Bishop Peter Lei is appointed as the 4th Bishop of Hong Kong, and is installed on April 22, 1974.

1974, *July 23*: Bishop Peter Lei dies. Fr. Gabriel Lam is elected Capitular Vicar.

September 28: Fr. Valeriano Fraccaro, the parish priest of Sai Kung, is brutally murdered in his residence.

1975, *April 5*: Fr. John Baptist Wu is appointed the 5th Bishop of Hong Kong. He is consecrated and installed on July 25.

Fr. Fernando Galbiati initiates Yu Chun Keung College in Ho Man Tin with an innovative administration system and academic methodology.

1976, *December 12*: Rosary Church in Hung Shui Kiu is blessed. Fr. Giuseppe Famiglietti is the rector and pastor from 1965 to 1990.

1977: Fr. Mario Marazzi is appointed PIME Regional Superior, replacing Fr. Comissari elected member of the PIME General Council in Rome.

March 27: St. Alfred's Church in Sha Tin, where various PIME priests have served, is blessed.

April 5: The much-loved Fr. Enea Tapella, active in serving the disabled, dies as a result of a road accident at the age of 48. A massive outpouring of grief is expressed across the Catholic community.

Later in the year, the Father Tapella Home is initiated by Fr. Giosuè Bonzi, in collaboration with other PIME priests and sisters. He also founds The Society of Homes for the Handicapped which has been called Fu Hong Society since 2001.

1978: *March 15*: Fr. Mario Marazzi is elected PIME Regional Superior (until 1980).

1979: The influx of 'boat-people' from Vietnam begins. Fr. Adelio Lambertoni becomes involved in helping them. Fr. Lerda and Caritas-Hong Kong manage the Vietnamese refugee camps.

1980, *April*: PIME community is reunited in a "Two - Day Meeting", in the presence of the Superior General, producing a document entitled "Reflections and Orientations for the 1980's". The document includes a proposal to hand over positions of leadership in the diocese, including well established parishes and schools.

August 4: Fr. Nicola Ruggiero is elected PIME Regional Superior.

October: The Holy Spirit Study Centre is founded to resume contact with Catholics in China. Fr. Angelo Lazzarotto is among the co-founders.

Various PIME priests, Frs. Giancarlo Politi, Angelo Lazzarotto, Luciano Aletta among others, initiate contact with former PIME missions on the Mainland. Fr. Aletta supports the construction or repair of about 20 Churches in Hoi Fung.

December 26: St. Stephen's Church in Ha Kwai Chung is blessed. Fr. Mario Marazzi and others have been serving there.

1983, *June 16*: The chapel of St. John the Apostle in Sheung Kwai Chung is blessed. Fr. Franco Gritti is in charge.

1984, *August 15*: Bishop John B. Wu issues the *Statement on the Catholic Church and the Future of Hong Kong*.

August 20: Fr. Nicola Ruggiero is re-elected PIME Regional Superior.

December 19: The Sino-British Joint Declaration announces the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 1997. A period of uneasiness and anxiety about the future begins.

Fr. Sergio Ticozzi begins work in Beijing (until 1991) as coordinator of an Italian-Chinese project, and later as a translator.

1985: PIME Superior General decides to open a mission in Taiwan, to which Frs. Pietro Martinelli (until 1989) and Gaetano Matera are sent from Hong Kong. A large group of PIME missionaries in Hong Kong oppose the decision, fearing that it might be interpreted as an 'escape route' from Hong Kong before 1997. The PIME community issues a document stating its intention to remain in Hong Kong in solidarity with the population no matter what happens in the future.

March 25: Bishop Wu visits Mainland China. Two more visits follow in 1986 and 1994.

May 5: One year after being reelected as Regional Superior, Fr. Nicola Ruggiero and all PIME Regional Council resign.

June 20: Fr. Lido Mencarini is appointed Regional Superior 'ad interim'.

July 3: St. Alfred's Parish in Sha Tin is divided to create St. Benedict's and Blessed Martyrs of China, with Fr. Renzo Milanese in charge of the latter.

1986: May 26: Fr. Lido Mencarini is elected PIME Regional Superior (until 1990).

October 1: PIME Press Desk and Asia News are established in Hong Kong under the direction of Frs. Giancarlo Politi and Nevio Viganò.

Frs. Franco Mella and Franco Cumbo decide to live on a boat in the Yau Ma Tei typhoon shelter. They remain there until 1991. Fr. Mella becomes a prominent leader in various protests and struggles for justice, including the fight for the rights of the "Boat Brides".

Various missionaries belonging to the PIME Social Concern Group become actively involved in public social action. Prominent are Frs. Renzo Milanese, Adelio Lambertoni, Francesco Frontini, Franco Mella, Franco Cumbo, Franco Gritti and Piero Zamuner.

1987, *June 9*: The "Special Mandate" of the Hong Kong Bishop to PIME is revoked. The relations between the diocese and PIME Hong Kong region is regulated by a contract signed on the following September 1.

Bishop John B. Wu approves the Hong Kong Catholic Lay Missionary Association, which was established with the cooperation, among others, of Fr. Gianni Giampietro. The Association sends lay missionaries to countries in Africa and Cambodia.

1988: The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception holds Centennial Celebrations.

May 29: Bishop John B. Wu is created cardinal, the first in the history of Hong Kong.

November 3: St. Francis Xavier Rectory in Choi Wan Estate, where Fr. Gritti is working, is elevated to parish status.

1989, *May 14*: Cardinal Wu issues the Pastoral Letter *March into the Bright Decade*.

July 11: Following the Tiananmen Square massacre, Cardinal Wu writes to the bishops of the world asking for prayers and support for justice, order and democracy in China.

1990: *April 3*: Fr. Renzo Milanese is elected PIME Regional Superior (until 1994).

September 8: Epiphany Parish is erected in Lantau Island, with Fr. Pietro Martinelli as parish priest.

December 28: Celebrations for the 150th Anniversary of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong begin. They conclude on October 20, 1991.

1991, *January 1*: The newly rebuilt Church of the Mother of Christ in Sheung Shui, where Fr. Antonio Garaventa has been pastor since 1973, is blessed.

Fr. Franco Mella makes Taishan (Guangdong) his permanent residence in Mainland China.

1992, *June 7*: A plan for the reorganization of the diocese is announced by Cardinal Wu.

1993, *December 4*: The new Church of the Annunciation of Our Lady in Tsuen Wan is blessed. It was built under the direction of its parish priest, Fr. Francesco Conte.

March 10: Cardinal Wu issues pastoral guidelines for the 1997 transition.

Fr. Giampietro launches the Catholic Families Movement.

1994, *April 26*: Fr. Luciano Numeroso is elected PIME Regional Superior.

Fr. Fernando Cagnin initiates a permanent presence in Guangzhou, greatly contributing to the development of Huiling, an NGO looking after the mentally disabled.

1995, *January 10-15*: 10th World Youth Day is held in Manila, with a 300 member delegation from Hong Kong, including various PIME priests.

June 4: Cardinal Wu issues the Pastoral Exhortation *Proclaim the Gospel of the Lord, Spread the Kingdom of God*.

August 8: Regional Superior Fr. Luciano Numeroso dies unexpectedly while in Italy.

September 25: Fr. Renzo Milanese is elected PIME Regional Superior (until 1999).

1996, *April 12*: Celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong diocese are launched.

December 9: Cardinal John B. Wu consecrates Fr. Joseph Zen SDB as Coadjutor Bishop and Fr. John Tong as Auxiliary Bishop of Hong Kong.

1997, *June 24*: Pope John Paul II sends a message to Cardinal Wu about the handover of Hong Kong to China.

June 17-30: PIME Plenary Council (reunion of all major superiors) is held in Hong Kong.

July 1: The diocese celebrates the return of Hong Kong to China with a solemn Mass at the Cathedral, concelebrated by PIME priests from Hong Kong and by the members of the Plenary Council, including the Superior General, Fr. Franco Cagnasso.

The PIME Delegation in Taiwan is discontinued. The three missionaries who continue to work on the island (Frs. Antonio Sergianni, Paolo Spanghero and Gaetano Matera) are assigned to Hong Kong PIME Region.

1998, *May 31*: Cardinal Wu issues a pastoral letter supporting the right of abode of the Mainland-born children of Hong Kong citizens. Fr. Franco Mella is one of the most visible supporters of the Right of Abode Movement.

July 4: The Church of St. Thomas the Apostle in Tsing Yi is blessed. Fr. Luigi Bonalumi is the parish priest.

December 29: The opening ceremony of the Jubilee Year 2000 at the Cathedral is presided over by Cardinal Wu.

1999: *September 22*: Fr. Dino Doimo is elected PIME Regional Superior and re-elected in September 2003 (serves until 2007).

2000: Various Jubilee Year activities are held throughout the year. A large group of young faithful, accompanied also by PIME priests, participate in August at the World Youth Day in Rome.

March 4: The Diocesan Synod is opened.

July 30: PIME community celebrates the 150th anniversary of the founding of PIME with a reception at PIME House.

October 1: In Rome, Pope John Paul II canonizes 120 China martyrs (87 Chinese and 33 foreign missionaries, including PIME St. Alberico Crescitelli). Solemn celebrations in Hong Kong are held despite a request by the Chinese government to keep a low profile.

2001, *May-June*: PIME XII General Assembly decides that PIME Hong Kong is to be called Hong Kong - China Region.

November 30: The Diocesan Synod closes. Ten pastoral priorities are announced.

2002, *September 23*: The much-loved Cardinal Wu dies at the age of 77. Coadjutor Bishop Joseph Zen succeeds him. The solemn funeral of the cardinal is officiated over by Cardinal Crescenzio Sepe, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, as specially envoy of Pope John Paul II.

Fr. Mario Marazzi moves to Guangzhou, living in a Huiling's family home as a humble witness of the gospel.

2003, *February – June*: An atypical viral pneumonia, known as SARS, deals a heavy blow to Hong Kong. The death toll stands at 299. The World Health Organization announces Hong Kong SARS-free on June 23.

July 1: More than half a million citizens, including many Catholics, take to the streets in protest against a National Security Bill, proposed under Article 23 of the Basic Law, which would curb civil liberties. Bishop Joseph Zen, one of the leaders of the protest, takes part in a prayer gathering at Victoria Park. Subsequently the government decides to defer indefinitely the controversial bill.

2004, *November 20*: In a circular letter, Bishop Zen denounces a proposed Education Bill on the grounds that it will deprive the Church, as a sponsoring body, of the supervision of the schools under its management.

2005, *April 2*: Pope John Paul II dies. In Hong Kong more than 6,000 Catholics attend Masses at the Cathedral. There is wide media coverage of the late Holy Father's life and work as he was seen as a staunch promoter of justice and world peace.

April 25: Masses are held at the Cathedral to pray for the new Pope Benedict XVI.

November 3: The Center for Catholic Studies is established in the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

December 4: 250,000 citizens take part in a rally to protest against unjustified delays in introducing full democracy in Hong Kong. Bishop Zen is one of the most outspoken critics of the government's failure to provide a timetable for introducing universal suffrage and democracy, as stipulated by the Basic Law.

2006, *February 22*: Bishop Zen, known as the "conscience of Hong Kong" is created cardinal by Pope Benedict XVI.

May 7: St. Joseph's Chapel in Yim Yin Tsai Village, Sai Kung, where many PIME fathers have served for about 120 years, receives a Culture Heritage Conservation Award of Merit under the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards scheme.

July 30 - August 5: Hong Kong diocese hosts the 4th Asian Youth Day.

November 19: The Church of St. Andrew in Hang Hau (Tseung Kwan O), is blessed and entrusted to Fr. Giorgio Pasini.

2007, *October 8*: Fr. Franco Cumbo is elected PIME Regional Superior.

June 29: Pope Benedict XVI publishes a Letter to Chinese Catholics that has great resonance also in Hong Kong.

Frs. Luigi Cantoni and Fabio Favata move to Beijing to study Putonghua, establishing the first PIME presence in the capital of China.

2008, *April 10 - 11*: Celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the arrival of PIME missionaries in Hong Kong are held.