A Good Bishop, a Saintly Bishop

Bishop Domenico Pozzoni, who led the Church for nearly 20 years, gained fame as a 'good bishop, saintly bishop' according to an expression mentioned by Cardinal John B. Wu, in the preface of a book on Bishop Pozzoni by Fr. Fernando Germani, PIME (1991).

Bishop Pozzoni died consumed by his heavy workload, after an exhausting pastoral visitation to Sai Kung, in February 1924, at the age of 62. Ten thousand people attended his solemn funeral liturgy. It was a spontaneous tribute of respect and devotion.



1917: Bishop Domenico Pozzoni celebrates the 25th anniversary of his priesthood and the arrival in Hong Kong of Frs. Giovanni Spada and Davide Arvat in 1917.

The colony's daily *South China Morning Post* had words of uncommon praise:

Not only the great body of Roman Catholics, but to the community generally, the death of Bishop Pozzoni can only appeal as a tragic event. ... His Lordship's great interest in education, his welfare work and his public spirit further contribute to a full record of service such as entitle him to public thanks and a worthy funeral.

But there was something more. Bishop Pozzoni was also a lovable, and well beloved leader. His charm of manner, his innate kindliness, his self-sacrifice for others have won for him more than mere respect, something

which converts mere regret into poignant grief. There is a deep sense of loss. The kindly care of a father seems, temporary perhaps, snatched away from thousands.

The monthly Catholic magazine *The Rock* (founded in 1920 by two English intellectuals), wrote an impressive account of life of Bishop Pozzoni:

In their needs, spiritual and temporal, every member of his large flock, even the very lowliest in the eyes of the world, knew that their beloved bishop was approachable without ceremony or formality at any moment of the day or night. At the Cathedral he continued to perform the duties of an ordinary priest with great assiduity. He rose every morning before 5 am and was always in the Cathedral, to hear confessions, at 5:30 am, remaining until 8:30 am. Every evening he was to be found in the Cathedral for about two hours, hearing confessions or in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

A man of remarkable piety, he drew from his strong devotion to the Holy Eucharist the light and strength to carry on his manifold and heavy duties.

Bishop Pozzoni carried into the Mission House at the Cathedral the perfect simplicity of life that had been in his mission stations in the interior. In the daily life of Mission House he never accepted any privileges not enjoyed by his clergy, European and Chinese. Perhaps the only distinction was that he took on himself the privilege of working harder than his other brethren.



Bishop Pozzoni's reputation for saintliness was widely held among Christians. Some thought of initiating the process for his beatification. People would invoke his intercession for special favors and some claimed to have had their prayers answered. An added sensation was the news that, although his casket had been kept above ground for seven months and exposed to the elements, his body was still intact and odorless.

Who worked the longest on the Mainland?

It is narrated that Pope Pius X personally picked Pozzoni as bishop of Hong Kong. A reliable source stated that the pope, holding in his hands three names of possible candidates, asked: "Which one of these three worked the longest among the Chinese in the Mainland districts?" After learning that it was Fr. Pozzoni, the pope declared: "Then he is the one I choose!"

Soon after his consecration, the new bishop went on a pilgrimage to Shangchuan Island, to the spot where St. Francis Xavier died, to request protection for the work he was about to undertake as bishop.

Turmoil and war

In the years Bishop Pozzoni was at the helm of the diocese, China and the rest of the world lived through radical and often tragic change. The turmoil had repercussions also on the Hong Kong Vicariate which extended beyond the boundaries of the British colony.

By declaring itself a republic on January 1, 1912 and abolishing the millenarian imperial system, China turned a new page in its history. Soon afterwards, World War I broke out; and Japan's expansionist ambitions dragged the new republic into the international conflict when it extended its influence over the northern regions of China.

Socially and economically Hong Kong felt the consequences of the unrest and war. The influx of



Bishop Domenico Pozzoni welcomes South-east China Bishops for the Regional Synod in Hong Kong in 1909.

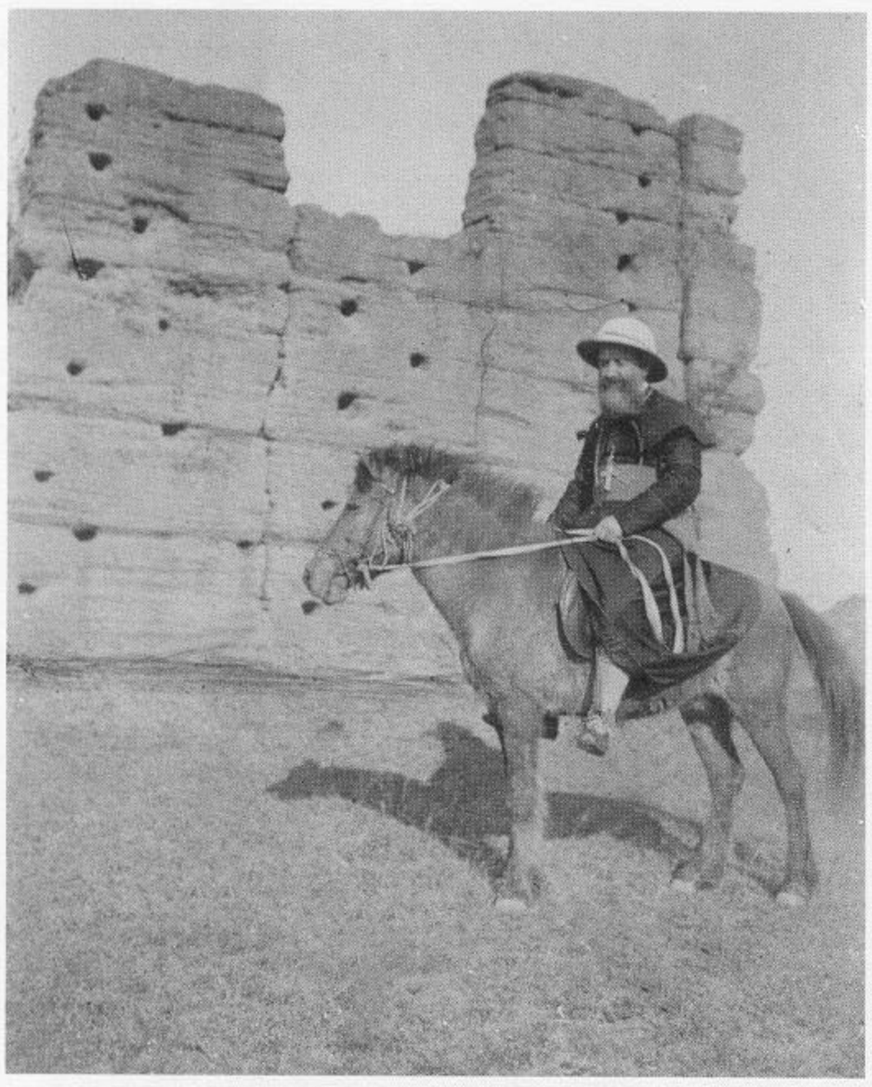
refugees increased poverty and diseases such as smallpox and the plague, with a especially large number of victims in 1916.

Missionary activity decreased during World War I, yet, all the Milan missionaries, except for Fr. Agostino Placzek, stayed at their posts and dedicated themselves to easing suffering, both in the colony and in Mainland China. At the end of the war, the Church of St. Margaret in Happy Valley, was erected as a 'peace memorial'.

Despite winning the war, China was humiliated at the Versailles Treaty on April 28, 1919. The May 4th Movement, with its students calling for 'democracy' and 'science', was China's nationalistic response to the humiliation. At the same time, China began to be torn apart by internal conflict as the disorderly period of the Warlords began. The conflict was increased by fighting between the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), and the Chinese Communist Party, founded in Shanghai in July 1921. Among the communist revolutionary bases in China, the three Soviet Republics of Hoi-Luk Fung in 1927 and 1928 were of relevance because the Hoi Fung district was part of the Hong Kong Vicariate.

Apostolic Delegate to China

During so much social upheaval, the Church could not remain unaffected. Many felt the need for a change of mentality and methodology in their mission work, so that the Church could become more deeply ingrained into Chinese life. Many advocated that it was about time for the Church to free itself from the French Protectorate, and for the Chinese clergy to acquire the leadership of their Church.



Bishop Domenico Pozzoni riding a horse.

Pope Benedict XV, who would have initiated diplomatic ties with China were it not for France's opposition, condemned the nationalism of some missionaries in the 1919 apostolic letter 'Maximum Illud'. He also called for preparations of the First Plenary Chinese Synod, originally intended to begin in 1922, but which actually took place in 1924 in Shanghai.

Since it proved to be impossible to establish a nunciature in China for Benedict XV, his successor Pope Pius XI sent an Apostolic Delegate to the Church in China, in the person of Archbishop Celso Costantini. He had two main tasks to accomplish: to organize the Chinese plenary synod and set up a hierarchy of Chinese clergy. Archbishop Costantini arrived in Hong Kong in November 1922 specifically to meet Bishop Pozzoni. PIME Father Gerardo Brambilla recounted the event in this fashion:

In Milan's major seminary, young Pozzoni was taught by Fr. Achille Ratti who would become the Supreme Pontiff, Pius XI. He would never forget the good traits of his former pupil. In the course of the departure ceremony of August 4, 1922 when the pope saw Archbishop Celso Costantini off as Apostolic Delegate to China, he reminded him that it was the feast of St. Dominic, the namesake of his former and beloved pupil, Bishop Pozzoni, Hong Kong Apostolic Vicar. The pope entrusted a most beautiful and artistic medal to the archbishop so that he could give it to Bishop Pozzoni. The Archbishop also gave the assurance of the pontiff's daily prayers for Bishop Pozzoni, as well as a promise of help for the bishop's apostolic labors the best he could.

Aboard the ship 'Venice', down in the port of Brindisi, the author of these lines heard directly from Archbishop Costantini how His Holiness had told him to stay for a while in the home of the pope's former pupil, Bishop Pozzoni, before setting out for the Northern part of China that was still quite new to him. The pope was certain that Bishop Pozzoni, with his vast experience and honed prudence would help Archbishop Costantini a great deal to get an accurate picture of things Chinese. Consequently, Archbishop Costantini, respectful of the pope's wishes, stayed for as long as he could with Bishop Pozzoni. In those days spent together, the Archbishop saw his esteem and love for Bishop Pozzoni grow for he found him to be a prudent and holy man.



Revolution in Macao

As the result of the revolution in Portugal, religious communities were expelled from Macao on November 29, 1910. Consequently, many religious of both genders sought refuge in Hong Kong. Among them were the Salesians, led by Fr. Luigi Versiglia, future bishop and martyr, and the Jesuits. The latter were planning to open a Catholic university, but their plan never



A portrait of Bishop Domenico Pozzoni, a who left a strong spiritual mark on the Vicariate.

materialized. In its stead, however, in March 1912 Hong Kong University was established. Bishop Pozzoni was on the Board of Directors. Bishop Pozzoni's commitment towards education and social service was strong; and he was eager to get other religious institutes involved. Among them were the Maryknoll Sisters in 1921, the Little Sisters of the Poor as well as the newly constituted Sisters of the Precious Blood who, with the bishop's blessings, had branched away from the Canossian Sisters in 1922.

A snapshot: the state of the Mission in 1920

For reasons of his own, Fr. Pietro De Maria, pro-vicar of the Vicariate, complained about the poor evangelization efforts being made in the city of Hong Kong to the Milan Foreign Missions Institute's Superior General in 1918. The latter sent Fr. Gustavo Maria as special visitor in 1920. His report, gave a description of the state of Milan's Mission in Hong Kong:

I [Visitor Fr. Maria] am truly edified by the amount of work carried out in the city as proven by the multitude of religious institutes. So numerous and diverse were the congregations and confraternities to administer that, just by looking at the directory, one would guess that at least 20 priests must be needed for the different offices. The bishop strikes me as being a model of affability, patience and prudence and loved by all. The missionaries are all zealous, even though not all equally useful. Some fathers are rather sickly, worn out by unceasing work, while others seem neurasthenic — also due to the climate. Among all the world missions, Hong Kong needs missionaries the most; yet, they must be of the soundest mind and physically strong, especially in the city. I got the impression that some priests are still weak in mastering the Chinese language. Generally speaking, though, there is a tremendous amount of zeal. Bishop Pozzoni leads by example working harder than anyone else. The missionaries' demeanor with both Christians and pagans is praiseworthy and informal. Harmony seems to be present among the missionaries. The bishop is obeyed. Bishop and missionaries have a good rapport with each other although with occasional innocent fits.

When Bishop Domenico Pozzoni died in 1924, the Hong Kong Vicariate had a population of 650,000: 28,110 of them Catholic, 6,500 catechumens, and 3,114 adults were baptized in the course of that year. The faithful were distributed among 35 main stations and 372 secondary ones. There were 65 Churches and 367 chapels. There were 20 missionaries of the Foreign Missions of Milan, while the Chinese priests numbered 10, there were 131 nuns from Europe, and of Chinese extraction, 35. There was a seminary with 40 seminarians and a catechistic center with an enrollment of 135. There were 7 colleges for male and female students, 90 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, 5 vocational schools, 7 Holy Infancy kindergartens housing 300 children, 4 orphanages with 528 orphans, 7 shelters for the elderly with 444 guests, 6 hospitals with 1,523 patients and 8 clinics serving 8,600 patients per year.

Evangelizing through the Press

Bishop Timoleone Raimondi had wanted to establish a Catholic periodical since 1871. He wrote about it to Dr. Herbert Vaughan, then the director of the English Catholic weekly The Tablet, as well as founder of a seminary for the missions. Bishop Raimondi dreamed of having a magazine similar to the one published by Dr. Vaughan "for Hong Kong, for the whole of China and for Japan".

The Catholic Register

In the following years, preoccupied by combating anti-clerical attitudes, Bishop Raimondi became ever more convinced of the necessity of having a Catholic means of communication to influence public opinion. The Hong Kong *Catholic Register* was born on September 22, 1877. The first editorial introduced the new periodical and listed the purposes for printing it:

> *It is already several years that our beloved bishop has been thinking about founding in Hong Kong a Catholic periodical in English, which, in due time, could take a place among the most popular newspapers in the Far East and become for the Catholics in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Japan what* the Tablet *is for English Catholics and the* Bombay Examiner *for English India.*
>
> *Its aim is to collect and publish all religious information from all over the world, the main events of the Catholic Church and the Holy See, the speeches of the Holy Father, and all*



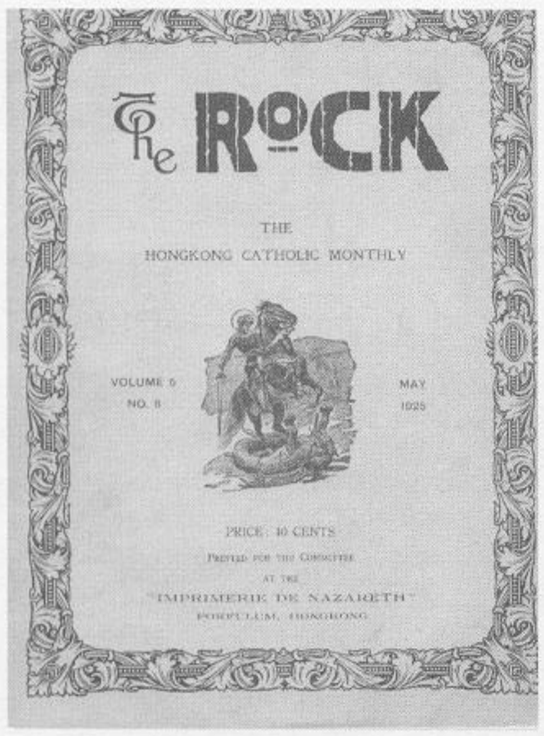
1925: Milan missionaries after the Spiritual Exercises. Fr. Giovanni Spada (the third sitting from right) is the Administrator of the Vicariate. Fr. Andrea Granelli is the second from right on the top row.



the news related to the progress of the Catholic missions, especially those in the Far East, and to answer to the attacks on the Catholic faith.

The Catholic Register became a weekly paper in 1878. Some Catholic figures in the colony, among them a journalist surnamed Cruize and a lawyer by the name of John J. Francis, were urged by Bishop Raimondi to write articles. For his part, the bishop would routinely send copies of his weekly to Milan for *Le Missioni Cattoliche* and also to Rome for *L'Osservatore Romano*, offering Italian Catholic readers information about the missions. He was fond of his newspaper; and, even from afar writing to Fr. Giuseppe Burghignoli, he would not fail to advise him about editing and future editors of the journal.

The newspaper changed format in 1882 and shortened its name to *The Catholic Register*.



The cover page of The Rock, *May 1925.*

The Rock

In 1920, some English intellectuals launched *The Rock*, a monthly Catholic periodical in English. It was an excellent publication but was suspended in 1925 when its editor, Lieut.-Col. F. J. Bowen retired to Britain. In 1928, *The Rock* resumed publishing under the responsibility of the Irish Jesuits. The Japanese occupation of Hong Kong caused its final suspension in 1941 and after the war it was not resumed.

Kung Kao Po

Hong Kong's first Chinese-language Catholic periodical, the *Kung Kao Po* was launched on August 4, 1928 by Frs. Andrea Granelli and Philip Lo. They started out printing 8,000 copies and it quickly became a weekly newspaper. Bishop Enrico Valtorta made it readily available in Catholic schools.



Fr. Andrea Granelli.



Cover page of the first issue of Kung Kao Po, *the Chinese Catholic magazine founded by Frs. Andrea Granelli and Philip Lo, August 4, 1928.*

Fr. Granelli began his work in Hong Kong in 1925. He was 33 at the time and with considerable experience as both a war veteran and a diocesan priest. He worked in Hong Kong until his death in 1976, at the age of 84. He was loved for his goodness, for his

personality and for his exceptional commitment. He was endowed with physical stature to match. His commanding physical appearance was accompanied by a temperament marked by simplicity of heart, gentleness and genuine goodness. The *Sunday Examiner*'s eulogy in 1976 read:

> *To an eminent degree he was a thinker, a humor-filled man, a linguist, a brilliant orator, a commentator on the reality of his time, a gentleman, a man endowed with the special gift for friendship as well as a zealous and devout pastor.*

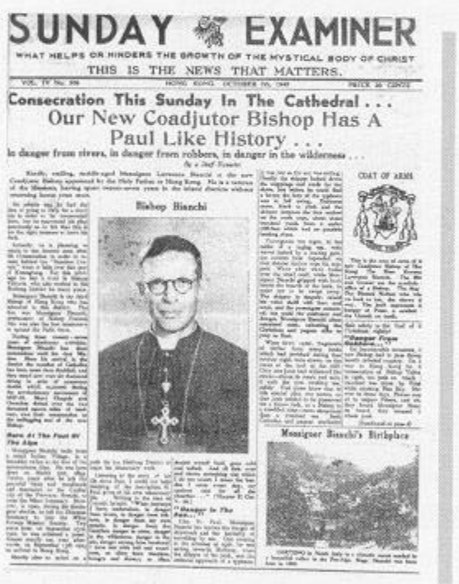
The English daily *South China Morning Post* defined him as one of the most significant men in Hong Kong. Fr. Granelli was one of the 'great pastors' PIME provided to the Church in Hong Kong. He served at St. Joseph's and St. Teresa's, two of the most prestigious urban parishes, for a total of 36 years.

Catholic Truth Society and *Sunday Examiner*

Fr. Nicola Maestrini, a figure of notable skill, remarkable initiative and great charisma, died in 2006 at the age of 97. Fr. Maestrini believed in the importance of the press and communication for evangelizing. For this purpose, on March 3, 1946, he launched the English periodical the *Sunday Examiner*, biweekly at first, then weekly. After the interruption caused by World War II, he re-established the Catholic Truth Society (originally founded in 1934) and helped restart publication of the Chinese weekly *Kung Kao Po*, the editor of which was Fr. John B. Cheng.

Fr. Maestrini established an important bond of friendship and cooperation with John Wu Qingxiong, an illustrious lawyer, legislator and Catholic politician, who arrived in Hong Kong from Shanghai in January 1938, as a refugee of the Japanese war. John Wu was China's first ambassador to the Holy See (1945-1949). He wrote several works on law and spirituality; among them his autobiography *Beyond East and West* and a precious masterpiece: The Science of Love, in which the spirituality of St. Therese of Liseux is proffered as synthesis and apex of Taoist and Confucian teachings.





SUNDAY EXAMINER

WHAT HELPS OR HINDERS THE GROWTH OF THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

THIS IS THE NEWS THAT MATTERS.

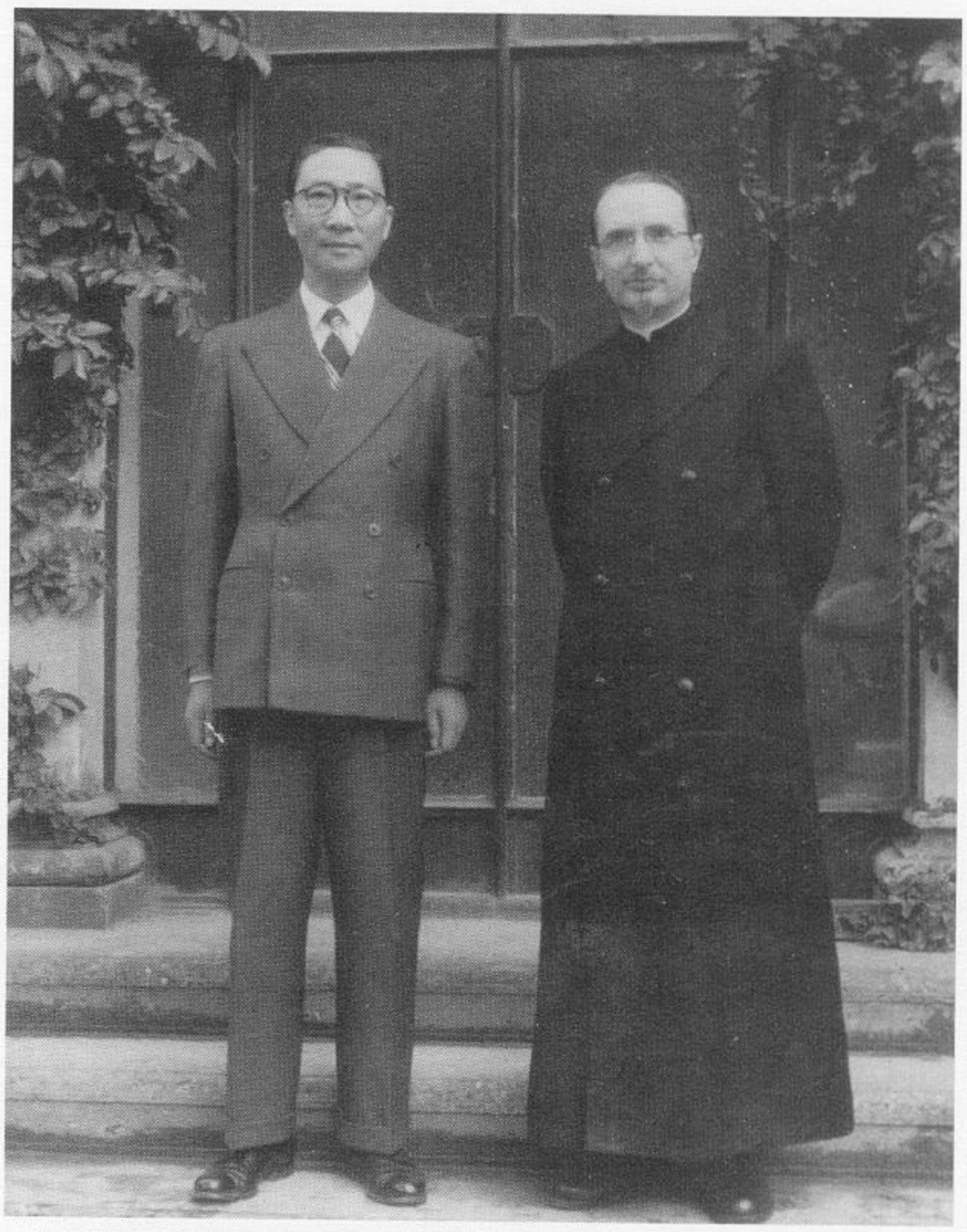
Consecration This Sunday In The Cathedral . . .
Our New Coadjutor Bishop Has A Paul Like History . . .

Bishop Bianchi

COAT OF ARMS

Monsignor Bianchi's Birthplace

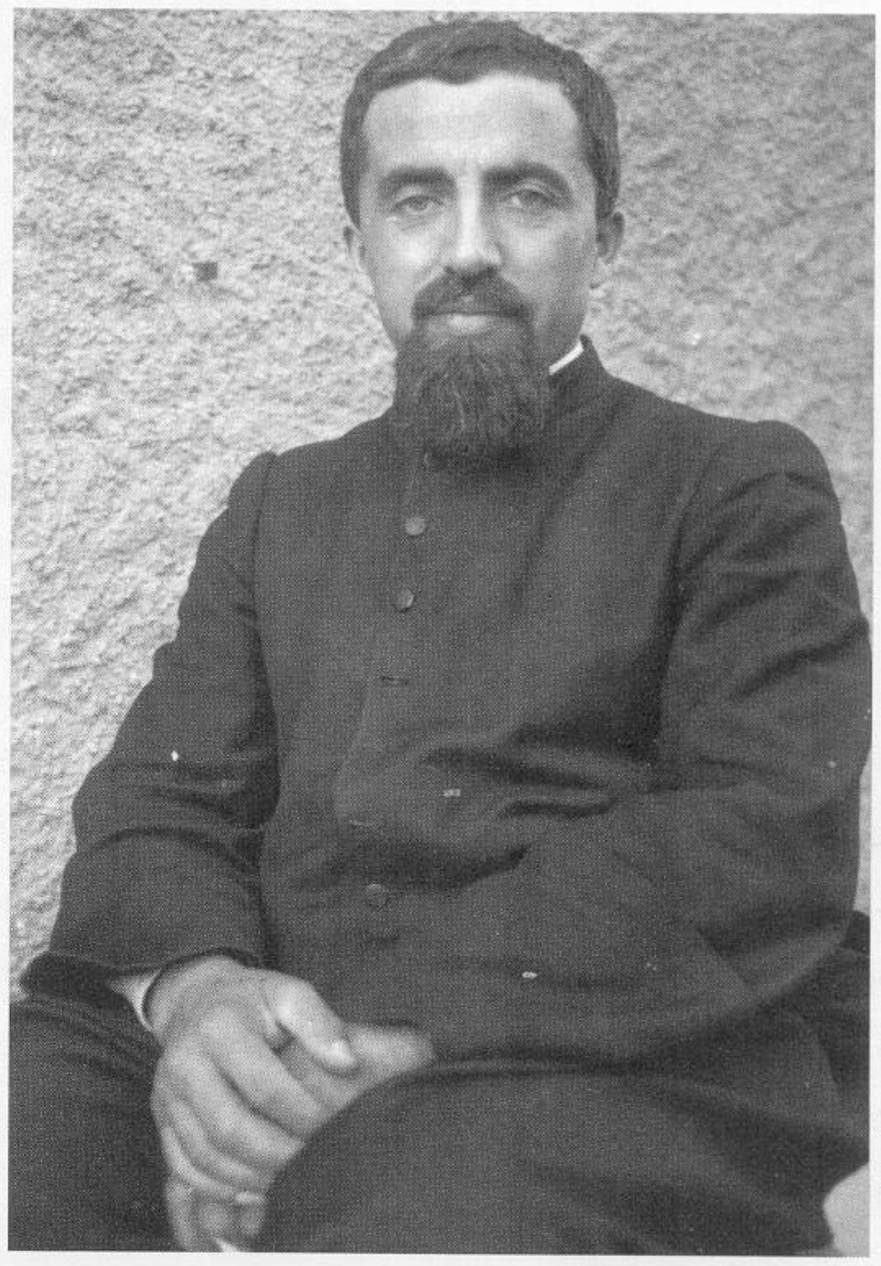
Sunday Examiner, *the Catholic magazine founded by Fr. Nicola Maestrini in 1946.*



Fr. Nicola Maestrini with John Wu. The noted Catholic intellectual and author goes on to be the first Ambassador of the Republic of China to the Holy See in 1945.

A Missionary and an Archeologist

Fr. Raffaello Maglioni was an esteemed archeologist and linguist. Through his researches and studies, even when not encouraged by superiors and confreres, he showed passion and respect for history as well as the culture of local people. Along with Fr. Simeone Volonteri, he proved that missionaries are men with their own ideas and diverse skills, which can enable them to make a unique contribution. Frs. Volonteri and Maglioni belong to the numerous host of pioneer Catholic missionaries who dedicated themselves to cultural and anthropological studies and collected precious materials that would otherwise have been lost.



Fr. Raffaello Maglioni was one of the most talented PIME missionaries in Hong Kong. He left an invaluable scientific legacy. Some of his work is still to be thoroughly studied.

Born in 1891 at Pontassieve in Tuscany, Maglioni became a priest for the diocese of Florence in 1915. During World War I, he served as military chaplain. Later, he dedicated himself to the apostolate by founding Catholic Action youth circles and charitable organizations in his native diocese. He joined PIME at the age of 36 and arrived in Hong Kong on October 12, 1928, together with Fr. Orazio De Angelis.

Fr. Maglioni began his missionary work in April 1929 in Hoi Fung, where he engaged in typical missionary activities, such as building new or repairing Churches that had been destroyed and preaching the Gospel. In July 1938, he returned to his hometown to attend to family issues. After repeatedly delaying his return to Hong Kong, Bishop Enrico Valtorta wrote him several letters threatening him with suspension if he did not resume his duties at once, which he did on January 15, 1940.

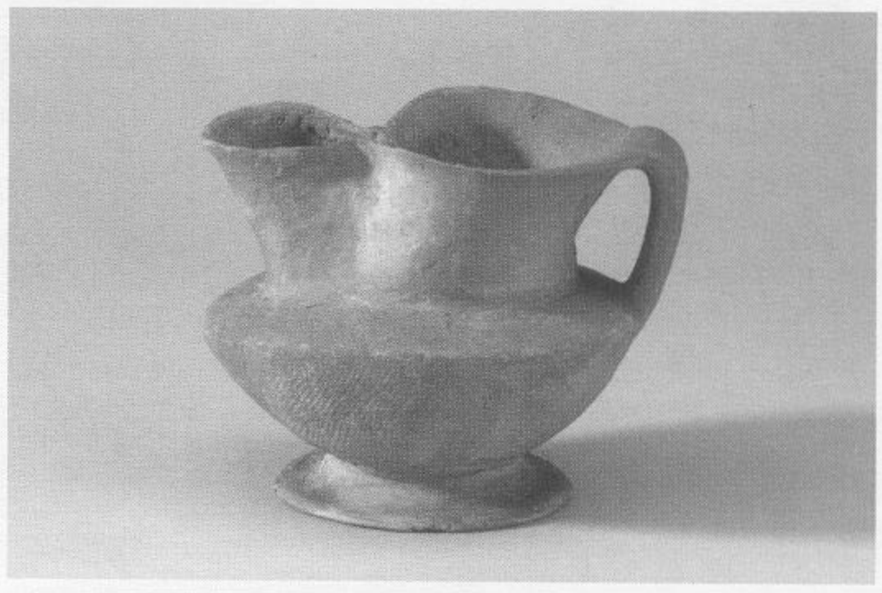
He returned to Hoi Fung. Following the Japanese occupation of southern China and the declaration of war between China and Italy in December 1941, he was interned along with other PIME missionaries. The Chinese authorities kept him at St. Joseph's village along with Frs. Michele Robba, Lorenzo Bianchi, Antonio Zago, Luciano Aletta and Raffaele Della Nina. He returned to Hong Kong Island in 1946 serving in different capacities until his death in 1953.

Fr. Maglioni's discoveries

Fr. Maglioni worked as chaplain of the St. Michael Cemetery, residing in the new house built on its premises. He had accepted this less demanding charge so that he would have time to focus on his archeological and linguistic studies. He followed in the footsteps of the Irish priest Daniel Finn, a Jesuit scientist who served in Hong Kong from 1927 to 1936. Fr. Finn was an authority on archeological studies of the Hong Kong area, but he died prematurely at the age of 41. A self-taught archeologist, Fr. Maglioni continued Fr. Finn's work, creating a specialized library for himself. With his research and discoveries of 25 human settlements in the southern China area, he brought to light a large quantity of artifacts dating back to the Neolithic period. In February 1938, Fr. Maglioni received an invitation from the Far East Archeological Congress to present a scholarly paper.

All the material Fr. Maglioni had dug up in Mainland China was transferred to Hong Kong in 1946, and he then began the process of cataloguing his findings. The Hoi Fung findings alone (less than half of the entire collection) amount to about 600 kilograms of pottery, including 26 amphorae and numerous containers still in pristine condition, besides other items such as 400 stone axes.

Death came suddenly on May 27, 1953, just as he was about to put the final touches to his epic work *The Prehistory of Southern China*, a manuscript of some 700 files. Fr. Maglioni's work was so far ahead of its time that nobody dared to bring his cataloguing to completion and publication. He left behind a series of articles and conferences that illustrated his techniques and the results of his important discoveries.



This fine vase was among the objects from the Maglioni collection of Hong Kong Museum of History that was exhibited in Milan in 2006.

On the occasion of his death in 1953, the Hong Kong daily *South China Morning Post* wrote:

The innate gentleness and the profoundly religious nature of Fr. Raffaello Maglioni, combined with the magnificent vivacity of his fellow-countrymen, made him truly pleasant. To know him meant to love him. The death of this man can be compared only to the incalculable loss experienced by the world of science.

A unique dictionary

Fr. Maglioni was also the author of a Hoklos language dictionary, one of the languages spoken in the Hoi Fung district. He collected and studied 12,000 words. For each one of them, he provided the Italian translation, the corresponding Chinese characters with their tonal marks and the word written in the Roman alphabet. It is a particularly precious and unique work as studies of this kind about Chinese dialects in general, and of the Hoklos dialect in particular, are rare. It is difficult to organize a dictionary for a dialect such as the Hoklos, which is spoken but not written down. It is mind boggling to try to explain how Fr. Maglioni, who had arrived in the Hoi Fung district at the not-so-tender age of 38, could collect and study such a large quantity of linguistic material in 20 years.



Fr. Maglioni's heritage

Bishop Lorenzo Bianchi donated Fr. Maglioni's writings, his vast personal library and his collection of archeological findings to the University of Hong Kong in 1955. On March 3, 1956 the "Maglioni Exhibition" opened at the Fung Ping Library located on Hong Kong University campus.

The "Maglioni Collection" was moved to the Hong Kong Museum of History in 1975, where it is now one of its four archeological collections. In the same year, the Hong Kong Archeological Society published a rich monograph on Fr. Maglioni, entitled "Archeological Discovery in Eastern Kwangtung", which was edited by William Meacham. It was translated and published in Chinese by Shantou University in 1994.

A certain number of Fr. Maglioni's archeological findings are also on display at the "Museo Popoli e Culture" at the PIME Mission Center in Milan.

The topicality of Fr. Maglioni's work was reiterated by a series of prestigious cultural seminars in Milan during 2006-2007, with the participation of civil and academic institutions. During the same period, PIME's "Museo Popoli e Culture" in Milan, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Museum of History, organized an exhibition at the PIME Missionary Center. It was called "Other Men, Other Adventures," and it offered visitors eight findings from the Maglioni Collection sent from Hong Kong for the occasion.

In November 2006, the Hong Kong Museum of History informed PIME Hong Kong about the plan of transferring the Maglioni Library, with over 1,000 books, to the Central Library, so that it would become more accessible to both scholars and the public.



This photo portrays Fr. Lorenzo Bianchi and Fr. Alessandro Cometti. It was taken in Hoi Fung on March 1, 1930 by Fr. Raffaello Maglioni, who was a photographer of value. Here it seems like he is teaching his confreres the art of photography.