

EARLY HISTORY OF ST. LOUIS SCHOOL (1863-1922) ¹

Beginnings of West Point Reformatory (1863-1875)

In the early decades of Hong Kong history under the British rule, the problem of orphans, street children and young offenders was rather serious. Several youths were even detained by the police for some minor offenses against the law, but were liable to fall into even worse habits after being discharged. The need for an institution to take care of them and to teach them a job has long been felt and the Catholic Mission, through the efforts of the then Fr. John Timoleon Raimondi (Bishop since 1874, 1827-1894) opened a school for arts and crafts, which later was called the West Point Reformatory.



*A Catholic Reformatory was opened in 1863 in a small house in West Point. Sir Hercules Robinson granted to the Roman Catholic Mission a large piece of ground in this area for the Reformatory. The foreign community very liberally subscribed to the erection of the building and in 1865, the inmates from the Chinese house were transferred to the new building, and their number increased. They were not many, from 12 who had been received at the first starting of the Institution, they increased to nearly 30; a large number was not accepted on account of lack of funds. The allowance of \$ 2 each for 12 boys was made out of the Poor Box from the Magistracy and this aid enables the Directors to open shops in the same building where the inmates were taught carpentry, shoemaking and tailoring. The Establishment grew in favour with the Community.*²

Anthony Sweeting wrote about 1863: *A new Roman Catholic school was opened under the name of 'West-Point Chinese Day school'. E.J. Eitel [Inspector of schools in Hong Kong from 1879 to 1897] claims that this was probably the 'germ from which later the West Point Reformatory sprang up'. And about 1864 he added: The West Point 'Industrial Reformatory' was opened under Ignatius Ip Uen, James How, Aloy Leang and Asam Wan and taught 45 Chinese boys such crafts as shoe-making, carpentry, tailoring and bookbinding, this institution may certainly be regarded as the first initiative in technical education in Hong Kong.*³

The site of the Reformatory was in Battery Road, at the end of then extended Queen's Road West, the area where the present St. Louis (then St. Lewis) School stands. The building included a refectory, a dorm and three workshops for carpentry, shoe-making and tailoring, as

¹ The main sources for this paper are J.T. *Dates and Events connected with the history of Education in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong, St. Lewis Reformatory Press, 1877), for the beginning until 1876, and *Il Nostro Orfanotrofo* (Scuola Tipografica S. Luigi, Hong Kong, 1916), supposedly written by Fr. Giuseppe Carabelli, for the following years. About the booklet *Dates and Events...*, the acronym of its author, J.T. was first explained as John Timoleon, attributing the authorship to Bishop Raimondi. Other historians, noting the polemic tone, attributed it to John J. Francis, a leading and strong Catholic barrister then working in Hong Kong, who reveled in debate. My further research, however, found that, almost surely (based upon the writing and research style, which are not Raimondi's), the author was the leading teaching staff of Holy Savior's College (later St. Joseph's College), since its early years, named James Terry, who was frequently praised for his diligence, devotedness and efficiency, "never neglecting any of his pupils." He was also known as the best mathematician in the Colony (St. Joseph's College – Hong Kong, 1875-1925, typewritten text in SJC Archives, pp. 18-19).

² *Dates and Events...*, o.c., p. 11.

³ Anthony SWEETING, *Education in Hong Kong, Pre-1841 to 1941, Fact & Opinion* (Hog Kong University Press, 1990), p. 152. This explains the difference in dating the beginning of the Reformatory, 1863 and 1864.

well as two rooms, one for the director and the other as class and prayer room.

Purposes of the Institution

The aim of the institution is stated by *Il Nostro Orfanatrofio* in the following terms: *The aim of the Institution was not as it is now, that is to receive poor orphans, but to collect those young rascals, who had already served some time in jail for their crimes and those vagrants, who, living in the streets without any work, were easily introduced to vice and crime. Because of this, the name of the Institution was West Point Reformatory. But it was not a reformatory in the strict sense of the word, because the superiors did not and could not have any power of coercion upon the youngsters.*⁴

The statement is not quite fully correct. Fr. Raimondi was primarily concerned about the presence in Hong Kong of a large number of Chinese street children and orphans without any education. If they were left in ignorance, they would increase the population of thieves. Later his concern enlarged and he accepted in the Institution also youths who have been introduced by the local police. The 1868 Report, however, underlines that instruction should not be limited just at teaching them a European language, but should include learning a job or a profession:

*A carpenter, a shoemaker, might be very well educated in his own sphere, since not everyone is called to the academic pursuit, but all are entitled to be instructed? This idea has induced us to open industrial schools, and as the lowest class is more in need of education, we undertook to accept abandoned boys and even those who have been taken before the Magistrate, or have been in the company of robbers and pirates, in an Establishment, where the boy under a good discipline are taught to work, being our conviction that were we to succeed in training to work these poor wretched people, we could diminish the number of robbers and pirates, who are created by idleness and disgust for work...*⁵

The name of *Reformatory* was a bit misleading. In the special report on this Institution, dated 17 January 1872, Raimondi clarified this point:

*The inmates of the Reformatory are evidently improving in moral habits; they are trained up to consider work as a natural duty, they are taught not to treat it with aversion, and from the treatment they receive, they feel at home in an Establishment which unfortunately is generally considered as a place of punishment and looked upon with dislike. At present, during this year, as well as during the six precedent years, among the great number of boys now in the Reformatory, as well as among those who have already left it, there was not one found guilty of petty offences.*⁶

A further objective inspired the Institution: it was clearly stated by the Church authorities during the public debate of the grants-in-aid system for schools and the debate between secular and religious (or denominational) education during the 1870s.

In 1872, at the end of the reports on Holy Saviour's College, West Point Reformatory and the Girls' Schools, the leaders of the Catholic Church stated:

We earnestly hope that none of our readers will be scandalized at hearing that we impart to Catholic youth a Catholic education. It is the doctrine of the Church that Religion cannot be separated from Education, and it would be the greatest wrong we could do to them to suppose that our Catholic Community would prefer being independent from the rulers of their Church. We speak of Catholics as we do not at all interfere with the Religion of those boys

⁴ *Il Nostro Orfanatrofio* (Scuola Tipografica S. Luigi, Hong Kong, 1916), p. 1.

⁵ Dates and Events... p. 26.

⁶ Report of T. Raimondi dated 17 January 1872 (PIME Rome Archives).

*who are not Catholic. In a certain quarter a warm praise has been made lately on secular education. It is neither our wish nor our business to enter here into a discussion on this question; we must say, however, that a secular education will not do for us Catholics, since it is at variance with the principles of our Church? Experience teaches that an Education, which in principle is not religious, leads practically to irreligion.*⁷

Moreover, the 1876 Report clarified once again:

*In concluding the Report, it is almost needless to say that in all our schools the character of the education given is markedly religious and that we are more than ever convinced that education without Religion is not only useless but mischievous. In our own sphere we shall ever act up to this principle, not seeking to interfere in any way with the education and training of those who, not being Roman Catholics, have views and opinions of their own.*⁸

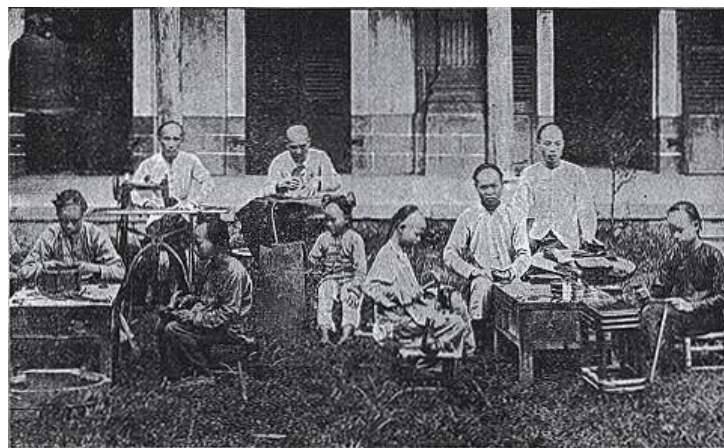
Practically, the objectives of the Institution was to bring up orphans, street children and also young offenders to a sense of respect for the law not by constraint but by instilling in them the need of acquiring a good habit for work or study, in order to be able to earn their own living in an honest way.



⁷ *Dates and Events...*, p. 29.

⁸ *Dates and Events...*, p. 47.

Life in the Reformatory



The achievement of the practical objectives of the Institution required setting up a strict discipline and time-table, which could balance work, study and recreation.⁹

The young men in the Reformatory followed the present timetable: they got up at five o'clock; after the toilette, they swept the work-shops, corridors, verandah and dormitory. From six to nine, the elder inmates worked in the workshops and again from ten to five, with a lunch break at one o'clock. The food was abundant but simple, the clothing neat but common; everything reminded them that they needed to work to assure their livelihood. The most industrious boys were allowed a pair of shoes and stockings for the outings. The younger boys were taught Chinese language and Catholic doctrine, while the elders were at work, and in the evening all the boarders have Chinese classes and practiced Chinese calligraphy. They were brought to consider work as a natural duty, and they improved considerably not only morally and intellectually but also physically. The students were at liberty to leave the place, whenever they wanted, but if they remained they had to accept the discipline, in order to assure order, industry and cleanliness.

They were taught, first, carpentry, tailoring and shoemaking, and, later, bookbinding, gardening, and even printing, according to their inclination and ability. Some of them were learning printing at the press, which then was attached to Holy Saviour's College. Some of them also have started to clear some barren ground attached to the Reformatory and cultivate vegetables.

The lay teachers, mentioned above, took charge of the daily activities and teaching the crafts, while the clergy provided them with the religious services. Fr. Timoleon Raimondi (1827-1894), the Principal, from the church in Wellington Street, paid them visits for this purpose, helped for it also by the Chinese priest, Fr. Mark Leong (?-1904),¹⁰ coming from Aberdeen, where he resided and worked after his priestly ordination in 1861, and later residing for almost two years in the Reformatory itself until 1869.¹¹ There was also Fr. Bernard Viganò (1837-1901) who helped from 1865 to 1869.

⁹ All the following data are given in a special report of T. Raimondi dated 17 January 1872 (PIME Rome Archives), quoted in "*St. Joseph's College – Hong Kong, 1875-1925*", pp. 27-28 (SJC Archives).

¹⁰ Rev. Mark Leong was ordained in 1861, and started work in Aberdeen with Fr. Simeon Volonteri (1831-1904). Later he worked in the Reformatory and served the Chinese community in the central church. In 1875 he was transferred to Eastern Hong Kong District at St. Francis Xavier Church in Wanchai with Fr. Bernard Viganò, becoming later in 1877 its rector. His health, however, was not very good and due to respiratory problems he could not sleep well. He died on October 29, 1904.

¹¹ On 2 September 1868, Fr. Mark Leong wrote in Latin to Card. Barnabò, Prefect of Propaganda: "For the last 14 months I have been staying at the Reformatory. In the coming summer I will return to Hong Kong for the sake of health..." (AP-SC 22/837).

In 1870 Fr. Mark Leong was substituted by Fr. James Leong (?-1883),¹² who after his ordination in 1866 had spent one year working in mainland villages but got sick and returned back to Hong Kong island, serving the Chinese Catholic community and helping in the Reformatory.¹³



Fr. B. Viganò



Fr. Mark Leong

Further Development

In 1866 the inmates were 42; the work produced amounted to \$ 30 per month; the work aimed at making the Institution self-supporting. Visitors and press frequently praised its arrangements and results. On March 4, 1867, the Press wrote: 'We've not known of any charitable institution in China, which presents such strong claims on Christian consideration as the Reformatory at West Point.' The writer dwells on the great many benefits derived by the prisoner from such an institution, who has finished his time of confinement and cannot get either a place of work in society...

*In 1869 a fixed subsidy was granted by the Government: \$ 50 per month. Sir Richard MacDonnel, on March 22, explained the reason for it: 'Fr. Raimondi had made reference to the grant which had been made to the Reformatory at West Point; he thought it needed some explanation, since the grant has been made on behalf of the Government. The facts were simply these. If it is not for this Institution, the Government would have thrown upon its hands a great number of destitute children for whom a maintenance would have to be provided. Building would have to be erected. Superintendents provided, and a large expense therefore entailed by the Colony. Now all that he had done was to make a very good bargain for the public. He had made a calculation based upon which he had given one fourth of what would otherwise be necessary to spend from the public funds. He could say that children had the very best of care from those who now have charge of this valuable Institution, and no one could do better than them.'*¹⁴

Bro. Marcello Puricelli (1843-1897) arrived in Hong Kong at the end of January 1869 and worked both in Holy Savior College and in the Reformatory, together with Fr. James Leong.

In 1870, the inmates were 52 and in the year report, Fr. Raimondi wrote:

*It is with pride we assert that during the six years the Reformatory has been operating not one of the former inmates has been brought before the Magistrate and even out of the number who have been sent there by the Police, not one after leaving the Reformatory has been brought up a second time to the Police Court.*¹⁵

During the year, the Reformatory was visited by two high rank Japanese Officers, who

¹² Rev. James Leong was ordained in 1866, a native of Guangdong province. He entered the HK Mission seminary in 1852 and studied theology in Latin with Fr. Raimondi. After ordination he worked in the mainland district but after one year he got sick and returned to Hong Kong where he worked with Fr. Tagliabue in the Reformatory and in the prisons. He also took care of the Chinese community at the central church. He worked hard until his premature death in 1883.

¹³ HA Seong Kwong, Louis E. Keloon, *The Foundation of the Catholic Mission in Hong Kong, 1841-1894* (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Hong Kong 1998), p. 188

¹⁴ *Dates and Events...*, o.c., pp. 22-23.

¹⁵ *Dates and Events...*, o.c., p. 23.

were very pleased with the management system and felt encouraged to open a similar institution in Japan.

In 1871 the students were 54. The report reads:

*We are gratified with the results of our labours in the Reformatory. There the work was hard. We have to tame down, control and educate in the school of industry young ragamuffins used to the free life of the streets, and who were at liberty to leave us when they pleased. A few of these boys first admitted are still there, as paid assistants and useful aids to us in our work. We are rather proud of them. Fourteen are in good situation in Hong Kong as carpenters, shoemakers and tailors. Of the boys, who are at present in the Reformatory, no less than 30 are working well and satisfactorily, 68 others have spent a short time in the Reformatory and have gone away without fully acquiring a trade but we have not heard of any being brought before the Magistrate a second time.*¹⁶

Some of the students have been trained as printers and then employed in the press at Holy Saviour's College.

During the year, one of the students of the first batch got married, and after his marriage, he asked hard to be allowed to work in the institution: being a good carpenter he was appointed master to teach and supervise the pupils.

Five students in Italy, 1871

The students even got a chance of aspiring at higher education, for the superiors were keen on selecting those who were mentally gifted and encouraging them to continue their studies. And not only in Hong Kong, but also abroad.

Due to the good relationship between the former Holy Family College in Naples, Italy, officially founded in 1732 by Fr. Matteo Ripa (1682-1746), but reformed into the Royal Asian College of Naples on November 25, 1868, and the Milan Seminary for Foreign Missions, Prefect Raimondi, a member of the latter Seminary, accepted the proposal to send some Chinese students to Italy, in order to solve the recruitment problem and to avoid the suppression of the missionary section of the College.¹⁷

During the past year – wrote Raimondi in the above quoted report dated 17 January 1872 – the Directors of a College for the Chinese in Italy have offered us five gratuitous places for poor boys who have distinguished themselves in the Reformatory for their good behavior; and we had the pleasure of forwarding, last May, to the Asiatic College in Naples, five very intelligent and smart young fellows, whose travelling expenses were kindly paid out of the funds of the same college. A short time since, we have received very good information of them, and it appears that even during their passage and their stay in Bombay, by their good demeanour they became the favorites of the town, as the Bombay Examiner spoke very highly of the boys as well as of the Institution from which they came.

The five teenagers arrived at the Royal Asian College of Naples, Italy, on June 18, 1871. They were Louis Zhang Dingyang (張定養), Richard Deng Guotai (鄧國太), Peter Pan Shangdeng (潘上燈), Louis Luo Xizai (羅喜仔) and Andrew Lu Chengdai (盧成帶).

However, they did not have a strong attitude to study, even less the vocation to the priesthood. Their complaint about being clothed as clerics and their slow pace of their studies

¹⁶ *Dates and Events...*, o.c., p. 24.

¹⁷ Details of this episode are taken from Michele FATICA, "Francis Xavier Wang, Missionary, Translator and Poet: A Life experience in Naples (1861-1891) in *Hong Kong Journal of Catholic Studies*, 2011, No. 2, pp. 311-349.

sparked off a debate in the Italian Parliament, during which its anticlerical members publicly demanded the transformation of the religious section of the College into a Language Institute freed from any ecclesiastical interference. The solution of their case was taken in October 1878: two of the Chinese students, Peter Pan and Louis Luo, were admitted as ‘extra staff’ at the Ministry of Education in Rome with the remuneration of 100 lire per month. Two others, Andrew Lu and Louis Zhang, found a job at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the rank of ‘clerks’, while Richard Deng was sent to the Italian Legation in Shanghai as interpreter.

New results and plans

The above quoted special Report on the West Point Reformatory dated 17 January 1872, most probably had a specific purpose, that is to be submitted to the Government Authorities in order to clarify its financial needs. In fact, on September 20, 1872, the Hong Kong Legislative Council voted a subsidy of \$ 600 for the Reformatory.

In 1873, Prefect Raimondi expressed his great desire to extend the premises and the activities of the Reformatory, either by increasing the number of the inmates, or even by opening a branch at Kowloon or some other place suitable to start a farm. But lack of funds prevented carrying out the plan.

After his arrival in Hong Kong at the end of February 1874, Fr. Antonio Tagliabue (1836-1904) took up the care of Holy Savior’s College and of the Reformatory, working there until 1877.

The official yearly report, dated March 24, 1875, noted:

The Reformatory was strongly hit by the [last September] typhoon, and, although inside it looks decent, at the outside it still shows the signs of the suffered tragedy. The chapel of the Reformatory, dedicated to St. Louis, has become quite devout and nice through the care of Fr. Tagliabue. The population in this area seems to increase greatly. The students are 50.

After the Vicariate Synod in May 1875, Fr. Tagliabue, assisted by Fr. James Leong, was put in charge of the Hong Kong Western Ecclesiastical District, whose apostolate was still centered in the St. Louis Chapel of the Reformatory.

Under the direction of the Christian schools Brothers (1875-1893)

Bishop Raimondi for years has tried all his efforts to find qualified teachers for the Catholic educational institutions in Hong Kong. For this purpose, he has approached various religious congregations, among which also the just founded Salesian Society,¹⁸ but without success. At last he succeeded with the Brothers of the Christian Doctrine, who accepted to send their personnel for taking care the Holy Saviour’s College and the Reformatory.

This is why, on September 16, 1875, Brother Lothaire-Marie informed Bp. Raimondi from Saigon that *Brother Benilde who went to Hong Kong at the beginning of the present year, is appointed Director of the Orphan Asylum. I am almost sure that he will do very well.*¹⁹

Indeed, in 1875 a radical change took place: the direction of the Reformatory, as well

¹⁸ Prefect Raimondi, during his visit in Italy in 1873, paid a visit to Rev. John Bosco and made the official request: at first, it was accepted but later did not materialized. See Giovanni BOSCO, *Scritti editi e Inediti*, Vol. XI, Epistolario (Francesco Motto, ed.) Vol. IV, 1873-1875) (LAS-Roma 2003).

¹⁹ *St. Joseph’s College – Hong Kong, 1875-1925, o.c., p. 53.*

as of Holy Saviour's College (later St. Joseph's College), was handed over to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The first director of the Reformatory was Bro. Benilde, helped by Fr. James Leong (until his death in 1883) and Bro. Puricelli, who was working both in the Reformatory and in St. Joseph's College. The latter, in 1876, joined the Brothers of the Christians Doctrine, with the name of Benedict Peter and remained to work there until 1893, when he moved to St. Joseph's College until his death on March 24, 1897.

The 1875 Report informs:

Up to now the number of the boys has not exceeded 50. However we hope the time has come now for improvement. The Christian Brothers, who have come from Europe for St. Saviour's College, also take the Reformatory under their wise direction, so that a further increase in the size of the establishment and a more comprehensive teaching, than has been carried on hitherto, we do hope for a great success.

*We intend removing the printing press of Holy Saviour's College to the Reformatory, the practice of which alone shall bring up many boys in an acquisition, which is ever surely guarantee a good situation. Adding to this a bookbinding department, with a school for Drawing and Painting, we have good reason to expect, with the blessing of God, everything shall go most satisfactorily.*²⁰

The following year, 1876, the Reformatory started to admit also Portuguese and European boys, with three Brothers taking care of them. It was noted in the annual report that there was no intention to change the purpose of the Institution and, even less, to turn it into an easy asylum for illegitimate children of mixed marriages between European and Chinese. Probably, in the same 1876, a new director was appointed in the person of Bro. Leo, a Canadian (?-1907), who later was considered *the most successful Director*. He introduced two major changes: the setting up of the press moved from the Holy Saviour's College and the starting of a vegetable and fruits garden in fields around the Institution.²¹

On November 23, 1879, the Visitor Brother Idinaelis, wrote in French to Bp. Raimondi from Singapore:

*The Reformatory, totally at the expenses of the Mission when it was entrusted to the Brothers, is now self-supporting, thanks to an allotment of Francs 10,000 given by the Holy Childhood at the request of our Superior General. Out of a uncultivated ground, Brother Leo has turned it into a magnificent garden, a section of which has being rented at 5-600 Francs and the rest will provide enough vegetables for the Mission; besides these advantages, the lot, property of the Mission, has an extra-value...*²²

The employment of St. Louis Chapel of the Reformatory as the center of the apostolate lasted until 1879, when, due to the increase of the local population, a new church dedicated to the Sacred Heart, was started to be built in 1876 and blessed on March 22, 1879. At the end of the blessing ceremony of the church, held on a Saturday, Bishop Raimondi gave briefly its history, as reported by The Hong Kong Catholic Register:

At the conclusion of the service, His Lordship addressed the congregation, telling them that for nearly seventeen years he had been preparing the way for the erection and opening of a chapel at West Point, to be the parish church for that district of the town and congratulating them and himself of the fact that, after many struggles and in face of some opposition, he had been able at last to provide for them a chapel of their own, small though it was. He reminded

²⁰ 1875 Report (PIME Rome Archives)

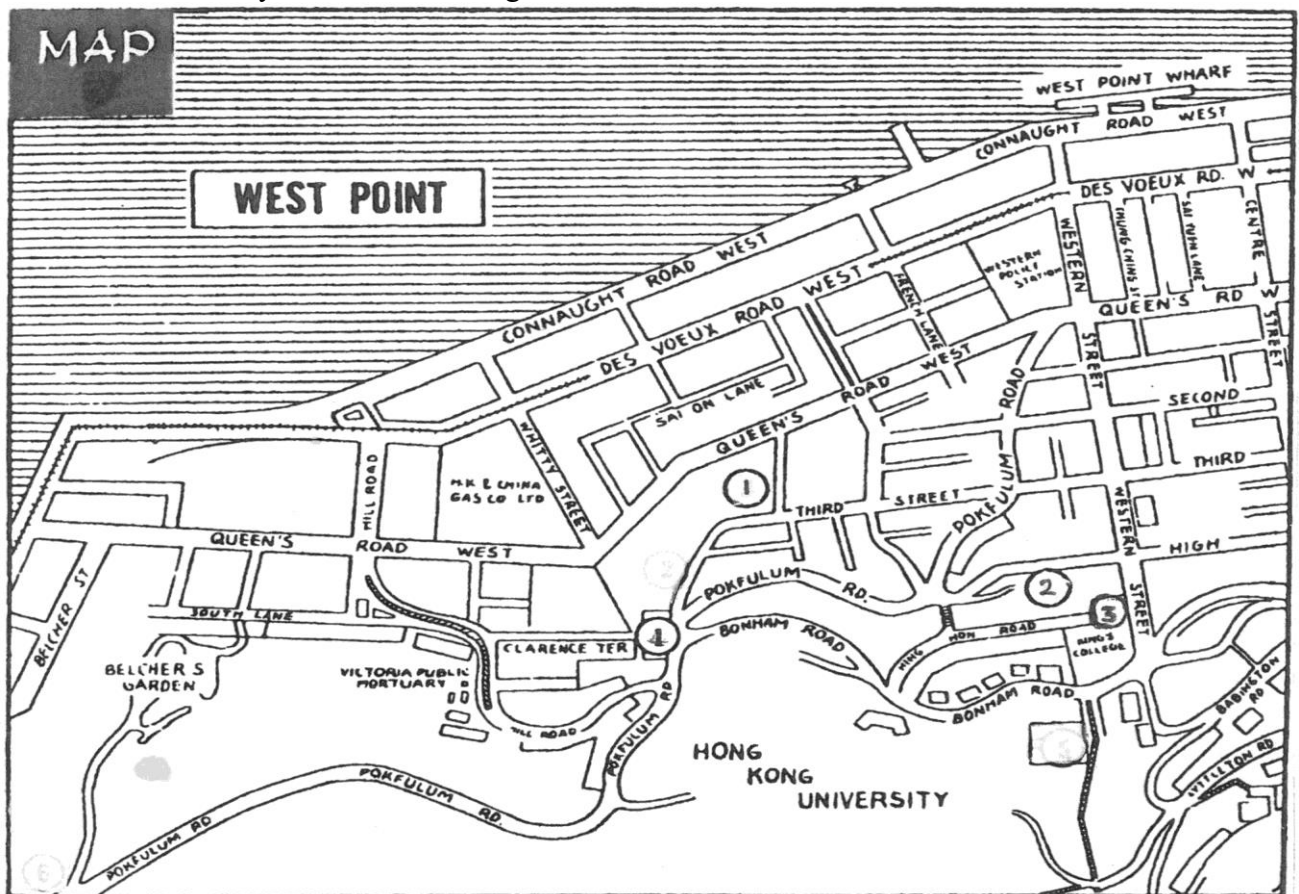
²¹ *Il Nostro Orfanotrofio*, o.c., pp. 5-6.

²² *St. Joseph's College – Hong Kong, 1875-1925*, o.c., p. 86.

his hearers that the first Catholic work in that neighborhood had been the Reformatory, opened at the suggestion and mainly through the exertions and at the expense of the late John Charles White, whose memorial tablet was erected in St. Joseph's Church.

He referred to his first Mass in that quarter of the town celebrated in a hired room attached to the Reformatory, in the presence of 10 boys, the first fruit of the enterprise, and of three or four laymen and women, the only Catholic residents then within reach. From the hired room, the chapel moved with the growth of the Reformatory into a slightly larger apartment in the new building. From the Reformatory it was transferred to two rooms in the house of an esteemed member of the congregation. From that house it had been now moved to the building in which they were. Its first suitable habitat. From three or four, the Catholic population of the district had increased till they were now sufficient in number to more than fill the building.²³

The site of the Sacred Heart Church was located where Caritas Ling Yuet Sin Kindergarten now stands. Fr. Louis Reidhaar (1853-?), who was just back from the ministry on the mainland district, was put in charge of the church and worked there until his leave for Switzerland in April 1884. His assistant was Fr. James Leong until his death on July 2, 1883. He was succeeded by Fr. Joachim Leong²⁴ until 1893.



1. Site of the West Point Reformatory and the present St. Louis School

²³ *The Hong Kong Catholic Register*, vol. II, No. 26, March 26, 1879.

²⁴ Joachim Leong (1862-1914) was ordained priest on April 10, 1886, and first worked as assistant in the cathedral, and teacher in the seminary he taught Chinese, Latin, liturgy and music, for which he was quite gifted. Besides few Chinese dialects, he knew also English and Portuguese. He worked in West Point from 1886 to 1893. In 1904 he succeeded Fr. Mark Leong in St. Francis Church in Wanchai until his death on March 21, 1914.

2. Site of the Sacred Head Church, opened in 1879, turned later into Sacred Head School and now, the present Caritas Ling Yuet Sin Kindergarten.
3. Site of the first St. Anthony Church, built in 1892, later in 1922 was requested by the Government to build King's College.
4. Site of the present St. Anthony Church, whose foundation stone was laid on June 13, 1933, but the inauguration was held on June 13, 1953.



old/new St. Anthony's Church



Meanwhile the Reformatory continued its development. *[The Reformatory] has overgrown its original purpose as a place for young delinquents and has become a useful industrial school, with the emphasis always on helping the most needy. The standard of training was recognized not only by those who saw the school in operation, but also by those who employed the boys who passed through it. The Catholic Educational and Charitable establishment Report in 1878, under the subtitle of Industrial School speaks about the Reformatory: 'The West Point Reformatory for boys, under the care of the Christian Brothers, has been progressing. The work done at the establishment has increased, and the boys have made wonderful progress in printing. Several works in various languages, done very neatly, have issued therefrom. The number of boys has also increased, and has never before been so high; the Chinese being upward of 60, to which must be added no less than 12 boys of other nationalities. More would have been accepted had there been room. A great necessity exists to enlarge the building.'*²⁵

The enlargement was carried out from 1880 to 1885, by adding a new wing, funded by the Society of St. Vincent of Paul: it allowed for separate boarding premises for European and Chinese boys.

*In 1885, because of the high cost required, it was necessary to limit, if not to close, the industrial classes, adopting the system of paying a small amount to the shops, to which the boys were entrusted during the day time to learn a craft; in the evening, all of them had to return to the institution for the common practices...*²⁶

In the spring of 1886, Fr. Gabriele Cicalese (1842-1887) paid a visit to the Reformatory: he met with the four Christian Brothers, who were working there, and noticed the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was kept day and night.

²⁵ Supplement to Hong Kong Catholic Register, No. 31, July 22, 1878.

²⁶ Il Nostro Orfanotrofio, o.c., pp. 6-7.

In 1892, the WestPoint Reformatory was attended by 70 students, and was exempt from the control of the Education department.²⁷

Again under the care of the Mission (1893-1914)

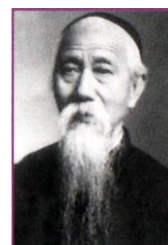
In 1892, on a nearby site, then Lot No. 755, which occupied part of the present King's College, a church dedicated to St. Anthony was built ex-voto. The care of the new church was taken up by Fr. Pietro De Maria (1866-1923), helped by Fr. Andrew Leong (1837-1920).

The former building of the Sacred Heart Church together with another piece of land given by the Government "for charitable services" was turned into a school with Chinese and European boarders under 10 years of age, the Sacred Heart School, run by the Canossian Sisters.²⁸

The Brothers of the Christian Doctrine run the Reformatory until 1893: they were replaced by Fr. Andrew Leong²⁹ for the Chinese section and by Fr. Pietro De Maria for the Portuguese section."



Fr. P. De Maria



Rev. Andrew Leong

The following year, the Government proposed to reorganize the Institution on a bigger scale and with a different approach, that is, to take in young criminals instead of sending them to prison. This change was entrusted to Fr. Bernardo Viganò (1837-1901), the military chaplain, who in September was called in to take charge. Meanwhile, during summer, also Fr. Giovanni Spada (1867-1950), after few years of apostolate on the mainland district, also went there to give a hand, but just for four months. On November 9, 1894, he wrote:

In November 7, I handed over the management to Fr. Viganò and returned to be a missionary, going back to the mainland in a few days. To the Reformatory together with Fr. Viganò there is also a Chinese priest who will help him in the direction of the schools.

The Reformatory will accept young delinquents, sent by the Government: they will serve their sentence in a separate wing, instead of a prison. Up to now, there are six, but unfortunately they will increase.

In the four months I spent in the Reformatory I harvested very gratifying fruits, which I

²⁷ See the Report of the Education Department dated 30 May 1892, written by E.J. Eitel (Inspector of Schools in Hong Kong from 1879 to 1897), who added: "There is no Industrial School in the Colony, with the exception of the West Point Reformatory which gives to its voluntary inmates instruction in shoe-making, tailoring, book-binding and gardening."

²⁸ History of our Canossian Missions, Hong Kong 1860-1910 (Hong Kong, 1997) vol. I, pp. 332-333.

²⁹ Andrew Leong (1837-1920), nephew of Fr. Mark Leong, was born in Nanhai near Guangzhou and entered the seminary at 14. He was ordained priest in 1862 when he was 25. In the second half of 1869 he accompanied Prefect Raimondi in his tour to North China for the affairs of the Procure. Besides Cantonese, he was well versed in Latin, Mandarin and learned other Chinese dialects as Hakka and Hoklo. He was set to work in the mainland district, extending to Xin An, Guishan and Haifeng districts, going around and founding several communities until 1892. Back to Hong Kong he worked with Fr. De Maria in West Point and in the Reformatory and, later he took care of the Chinese community at the cathedral, as well as of the Young Chinese Club. In 1912, due the recommendation of Bp. Domenico Pozzoni, he received the title of 'Apostolic Missionary' on the occasion of the golden jubilee of his priesthood.

*offered to Our Lady in Her Assumption Feast. In that happy day, I decorated the nice chapel of the Reformatory with flags and banners of different color, with great joy and pleasure of these dear youngsters. Nineteen of them received their First Communion, and twenty-seven among young and old received Confirmation.*³⁰

Fr. Viganò adopted the measure to keep the young criminals separated from the other inmates. Then, he soon started the repairing and enlargement of the building. In 1896 his health deteriorated and he spent passively summer, autumn and winter sleeping under the porch or in the workshops.

In January 1897, the worsening of health forced him to take a break to Tonkin and returned to the Reformatory in April:

Since my arrival here at the end of the April, - he wrote on November 9, 1897 – the disorder and noise of the work and of the workers for the repairs of this half-dilapidated building kept me alive. After the departure of the workers I started to build up a room for me to sleep in. I could occupy it on the feast of St. Charles, as if renewing the traditional way of entering the seminary. Now there is with me the good Father Giuliani [Francesco Giuliani, 1872-1900], strong, steady and full of good will and good humor. I should tell you that, in my new office, first among the prisoners, I feel quite happy. Truly I could not find a more beautiful stone to wash my clothes on: these scoundrels give me new life, and, if for the discipline I keep serious and even severe, yet I do not have the courage to punish them too severely. They are abandoned kids, who suffered from their vicious families and the scam of the society, thieves out of necessity, and naughty indeed but not always for their guilt.

Please, thank God together with me that I have 27 of them, all free, according to the Government law, to keep the belief they prefer, and six out of them are Portuguese and European all Catholic (of whom I am not too satisfied, wasting my time and patience!) Of the other 21, four were baptized by the Bishop in a small feast, and other seven are catechumen but not yet sufficiently confirmed in the practice of faith. However, the best thing is that, parents and family relatives of two prisoners desire to be baptized and as catechumens attend the lessons the men here and the women at the Convent. Is not this a true blessing of Heaven? What else could I expect!... I bless the Lord, since in my ignorance of languages, I am accompanied by a pious and very zealous catechist, shining model for the whole of our Mission, esteemed for his virtue by all Catholics, by the Bishop and all the clergy. He is a bit shy, but if protected, he is not afraid of any action in our cause...³¹



Fr. Viganò first enlarged the building, but, later, due to its bad conditions, rebuilt it from the foundations, providing more suitable space for the carpentry and the press, where he trained the young delinquents, while sending out the other boys to work in shops and factories outside. He kept the direction until 1899, when illness forced him back to Italy for a medical cure, where he died in 1901. His place was taken up by Fr. Romeo Peroni (1850-1938) and then again Fr. Pietro De Maria, always helped by Fr. Andrew Leong, who continued to take care of the Chinese section, until 1905, when his post was taken over by Fr. Matthew Fu.³² The latter worked in the Institution until his death in 1909, when he was substituted again by Fr. Andrew Leong.

³⁰ Collection of Letters, 1894-1896 (I,14, PIME-GA) and *Le Missioni Cattoliche*, 1895, p. 42.

³¹ Collection of Letters, 1896-1898, I (PIME-Rome Archives)

³² Fr. Matthew Fu (1851-1909): born in Foshan, Guangdong, he studied in Hong Kong seminary and ordained on December 18, 1875. He helped Frs. L. Piazzoli and D. Pozzoni in the mainland districts for almost thirty years, and died in Hong Kong, on October 31, 1909 (HK Catholic Directory wrongly states on November 30, 1909).

St. Louis Industrial School and Orphanage (1914-1922)

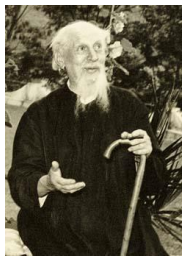
In 1908, Fr. De Maria removed all the features of a Reformatory, and turned it into an industrial school for orphans by reopening all the industrial classes and providing new machineries. The school gradually developed, especially the press. In 1909-1910 the students were 80, of whom 14 were baptized during the year.

In the year 1910-1911 the students were 72, of whom more than 60 Catholic. Fr. De Maria bought a motor to alleviate the fatigue of the students. The work of the press started to get some profit, while some former students were employed in other publishing houses. The report emphasizes that *an old Chinese priest, 73 years old and 48 years of priesthood* [Fr. Andrew Leong] *continues to work here without sparing himself: few times per week he spends three or four hours in the confessional box, without pause.*³³

The 1911-1912 report states:

*Besides the several arts, Chinese and English languages are also taught. The difficulties for professional schools are indeed great. The Chinese is too complicated, and, either the hope of greater income, or the other excuses, the student leaves the Institution in order to enjoy freedom outside. Consequently it is always necessary to start from scratch. The boys are 77 and 17 baptisms of adults have been ministered and now there are 15 catechumens.*³⁴

The 1913 Report registered the damages caused by recent typhoons to the buildings of the Institution and their miserable conditions, which the lack of funds could not improve.



Meanwhile Fr. Angelo Grampa (1882-1957) joined to take care of the buildings, while Fr. Paul Lu Keung-Yi (1864-1938)³⁵ was working both in the church and school from 1912 to 1915.

The important change into a full Orphanage was made official, with its codification in the New Regulations, made by Council of the Mission of Hong Kong gathered on January 9, 1914, under the chairmanship of Bishop Domenico] Pozzoni (1861-1924), which read:

Paragraph 1: It is decided to continue the Institution of the Chinese Orphanage, already existing under the name of St. Lewis Industrial School and Orphanage.

*Paragraph 2: The aim of this Institution is to accept the poor orphans of our mission, who are completely abandoned, and, exceptionally, all those whose parents could not in any way provide them with the basic support and education (but not criminal) and to help them to become good Christians and honest workers, by training them in some arts and crafts according to their inclinations.*³⁶



³³ From "Stato delle Misisoni e Resoconto dei Lavori" in *Almanacco delle Missioni, 1897-1925* (PIME Rome Archives)

³⁴ The Report is published in Gerardo BRAMBILLA, *Il Pontificio Istituto delle Missioni Estere*, Vol. V - Hong Kong (PIME, Milano 1943), p. 241.

³⁵ Fr. Paul Lu Keung-Yi (1864-1938) was born in Shunde, Guangdong and in 1879 entered the Hong Kong seminary, becoming priest on November 1, 1894. After some years of apostolate on mainland district, he worked at Rosary Church from 1908 to 1924, with a break from 1912 to 1915 in West Point. From 1924 to 1938 he took care of Holy Cross Church in Shau Kei Wan. He died on 22 November 1938 in Hong Kong.

³⁶ *Il Nostro Orfanotrofito*, o.c., p.1.



Fr. A. Carabelli



Rev. A. Liu

Toward the end of 1915 Fr. Giuseppe Zamponi (1870-1925) worked in the school, but only for about one year, since in 1916, Fr. Giuseppe Carabelli (1874-1936) was appointed director, as well as the responsible priest of the nearby church of St. Anthony. He was helped by Fr. Anthony Liu,³⁷ who took particular care of the catechumenate for male adults, which, thanks to the generosity of a Portuguese Catholic, Mr. Antonio Gomes, could be opened in the premises of the school, and soon produced good fruits. He worked until 1921, when, due to sickness he returned to his native place where he died on March 3, 1922.

St. Anthony Church survived, though badly damaged by 1918 earthquake, until 1922, that is, until the Government took back a section of the site. The pastoral ministry was transferred again to the St. Louis Chapel of the Industrial School and Orphanage.

During the years after the end of the First World War, the problem of child labor became a very serious issue and a pressing social problem in Hong Kong. It was due largely to the lack of concern of Hong Kong Government and to the fact that many factory owners usually had a considerable influence on the Legislative Council, that little had been done to regulate and control child labor. A commission was set up to survey the situation in March 24, 1921. The Report of the Commission of the industrial Employment of Children in Hong Kong was published in May 1921. Its suggestions dealt with the age limits, to limited hours and type of work, to the required registration, but about the compulsory education:

The feasibility of compulsory education has been examined but owing to difference of opinion on the question it has not been found possible to come to any unanimous conclusion.

The Director of Education E.A. Irving, did not support the proposal on the grounds that “the first point to be considered is the money.”³⁸

In 1920, within our Industrial School and Orphanage, the classes for Chinese and English languages, together with the industrial classes, continued to train about 80 students, supported by the Mission with a subsidy from the Government and the Holy Child Society.

Due to the shortage of Italian missionaries, since for some years no newcomer had arrived because of the war, from 1922 to 1926 the direction of the Industrial School and Orphanage was taken over by Maryknoll Fathers. When the Maryknoll Fathers expressed their decision to leave the direction of the school, Bishop Valtorta wrote (on July 21, 1926):

I have just received today the news from the Inspector of the Salesians in China that

³⁷ Anthony Liu (1866-1923). He was born in 1866 at Shunde, in Guangdong. He was ordained priest on November 1, 1894. From 1894 to 1910 he carried on missionary work in Haifeng district. After his return to Hong Kong he worked in Rosary Church from 1912 to 1915 and then in St. Anthony Church and in the St Louis Industrial School. He was very zealous and charitable, well respected by all for his kindness and knowledge of Chinese culture. On November 1919 he received from the Holy See the title of ‘Apostolic Missionary’. His corpse was taken back and buried in Hong Kong.

³⁸ For the issue of child labor see A. SWEETING, *Education in Hong Kong...*, o.c., p. 348-394.

*they absolutely cannot accept our Orphanage, at least for this year. At present, I do not know what to do, because even for this institution I need missionaries by November, without doubt, since the Maryknoll Fathers will leave.*³⁹

Early in August 1926, Bishop Valorta approached also the Opera Cardinal Ferrari in Milan proposing to accept the care of the about 50 pupils of the Orphanage, stating honestly that the building was old and needed repair. The proposal had no practical result.

Fortunately, on July 20, 1927, Bishop Valtorta could inform that, after the visit in Hong Kong, Rev. Pietro Ricaldone, the Salesian Inspector, accepted the offer with enthusiasm. The Bishop solicited the required permit from Propaganda, which was given on August 29, 1927.

On September 8, 1927, the convention of handing over the St. Louis Industrial School and Orphanage between the Catholic Church and the Salesian Society was signed: the latter will receive for ever the right of use of land and buildings for educational purpose, together with the public church of St. Anthony but it will accept free of charge at least twenty students sent by the Church. Early October 1927 the Salesians took charge of the Institution, with 40 students.

³⁹ Valtorta > Manna, 21.07.1926 (PIME Rome Archives 24-VII.05)