

# Barquilla de la Santa Maria

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Rev. Bernard C. Werner, 1894-1985  
From Steubenville, Ohio,  
Administrator Apostolic of the  
Mission of Kianning



Rev. Frederick A. Gordon, 1897-1974  
Native of Somerset, Ohio,  
Vicar Provincial of the American  
Dominicans in Fukien Province

## THE DOMINICAN MISSION TO CHINA, 1923-1955 Part III - After the War

### Return to the Mission

The missionary activities of the American Dominicans in Fukien Province had been interrupted by World War II -- which their country had entered on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1941 and which had closed with the surrender of Japan on the feast of the Assumption, 1945.\* The Fathers and

\* The date of surrender is often given as August 14, but in Japan, past the international date line, it was already August 15.

Sisters, anxious to be on with the mission effort, wasted no time in returning to Kienning-fu or Kienow, as it had come to be called. Some of the priests visited their homes for a short time, while others, including Father Werner, had not left Asia. Several priests were newly assigned to the mission. Those whose names appear either on the mission or in China studying for the mission in 1946 and 1947 were:

V. Rev. A. P. Curran, O.P., Vicar Provincial  
Rev. Bernard C. Werner, Administrator Apostolic  
Brother James Murphy, O.P., Procurator  
Rev. James G. O'Donnell, O.P.                      Rev. Berchmans H. Seheerer, O.P.  
Rev. James G. Joyce, O.P.                              Rev. Daniel Casey, O.P.  
Rev. P. P. Reilly, O.P.                                 Rev. John J. Ryan, O.P.  
Rev. Joseph E. Hyde, O.P.                             Rev. Lawrence R. Dolan, O.P.  
Rev. James Luke Devine, O.P.                        Rev. Aloysius Louis Scheerer, O.P.

Three Chinese priests, natives of the mission area, helped the missionaries. Rev. Thomas Dominic Chang, O.P., the first Chinese to make his profession in St. Joseph's Province, had been ordained in Washington, D.C. He was returning to China when the war broke out and spent the duration in Manila. He had made his way to Kienow by the end of 1945 and soon was appointed director of the mission schools. The other two were secular priests, Fathers Matthew Ch'en (Secretary of the mission) and Bartholomew Fox.

As early as January, 1946 negotiations were begun for the return of the Sisters to the mission, in answer to Father Werner's cabled pleas that the mission fields were ripe for conversions. Moreover, the U. S. Navy, who had occupied the Sisters' compound for about a year, were preparing to leave and Father Werner feared that Chinese soldiers would occupy it if the buildings remained empty. Four Sisters departed from St. Mary of the Springs on August 13, 1946 and arrived at the mission on December 10: Sisters Carlos Dolan (Superior), Felicia Schick, Rosaire Rall, and Rosamond Maritz. Bishop Ready presided at the departure ceremonies and gave the missionaries his blessing. These four Sisters were later joined by Sister Dorita Basbagill\* after she received her R.N. degree from St. Francis Hospital in Columbus, and still later by Sisters Concilio McNamara, Rose Agnes Murray, and Mary Bernard Lyons.

The number of Sisters in the community in Kienow was twelve. The increase was due to the profession in March of 1947 of four Chinese Sisters, namely Mary Chen (Sister Annunciata), Ch'i-wing (Sister Mary Peter), Catherine Chen (Sister Cecilia), and Tang-Shu-chu (Sister Mary John). Sister Virginia Gordon had been their first novice-mistress but they had gone to live with the Spanish Dominicans when the Americans had been recalled near the end of the war. Father Werner officiated at the profession, which was held in the Sisters' Chapel in Kienow; the Chapel and the two porches outside were crowded with Chinese Christians, for a religious profession had never before been seen in Kienow. The Sisters resumed their former works of catechising, caring for orphans, and operating dispensaries.

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\* Sister Dorita was born in Columbus on August 13, 1899 and entered St. Mary of the Springs from Our Lady of Victory Parish in 1924. In addition to the mission work, she worked as a teacher or a nurse in many of the congregation's houses, until she retired to Mohun Hall in 1979.

For the year 1947, the mission numbered 2,043 Catholics, 617 catechumens, and 311 auditors among a papian population estimated at 1,260,000. Signs of the mission's fruitfulness were the 372 baptisms and 207 confirmations conferred in that year alone. There were six churches, three oratories, two primary schools, the orphanage, and five dispensaries.

#### Father Devine

Father James Luke Devine, pastor of the mission at San Ken, on May 13, 1947 received a letter from the sheriff of his village, warning him to leave the area because Communist guerrillas had been sighted nearby. Father Devine decided to wait in the area for two more days, however, so that he might hear confessions and offer Mass for his parishioners on the feast of the Ascension. On the evening before the feast, twenty-five guerrillas suddenly appeared upstairs in Father's rectory. They took him captive and for his release demanded money, guns, bullets, and flashlights. The priest bade good-bye to his helpers with the words, "Excuse me, I must go, but we shall meet again in heaven."

Within a week of Father Devine's capture, troops were sent to obtain his release. He was wounded in the ensuing skirmish, from which two of the guerrillas escaped up a mountain with the priest between them. Nothing further was heard of him for several months, during which time the Sisters, women, and children at Kienow offered continual prayer for him. Finally in October Father Curran was officially notified that Father Devine was dead. He had been killed by the guerrillas on May 23, in fear that if he returned to his people he would reveal the Communists' hide-outs to the soldiers.

In December 1947 some Communist prisoners lead a party of soldiers to the ravine where Father Devine's remains had been thrown. The remains were gathered up and were taken to the mission at Chungan. In February they were taken to Kienow, where after a funeral Mass they were interred in the cemetery with the other American Dominicans who had died peacefully on the mission (Father Gillespie and Sisters Hildegard and Leocadia). Father Devine's passport and confessional stole, found in the ravine with his remains, were sent to St. Mary of the Springs.

#### Close of the Mission

In 1948 V. Rev. Paul Curran was named Prefect-Apostolic of the Kienow mission and Father Frederick Gordon was sent back to China to take his place as Vicar Provincial. Father Gordon was superior of the mission through its final, most difficult years.

Father Devine's capture had been a sign of things to come. In November of 1948 the tide of war between the Chinese Nationalists and the Communists turned in favor of the latter, against whom the United States had given the Nationalists only meagre support. By May of 1949, Communist activities were placing the Sisters on the mission in real danger. Mother Bernardine, in Columbus, decided to recall them to the United States, even though they had no desire to leave the mission. Her decision saved them from great danger, for only a few days intervened between their departure from Kienow and the arrival of the Communists. As they left their missions, the Sisters met the retreating Nationalist soldiers, and as they travelled through unforgettable

hardships, they saw everywhere truckloads of refugees and miles and miles of marching soldiers. The Sisters, including the four Chinese Sisters, arrived home in Columbus in June and July of 1949.

In October of 1949 the Chinese Communists launched a ruthless persecution of the Catholic Church. Over five thousand missionaries were expelled; native religious and clergy were harrassed, arrested, and imprisoned; nearly four thousand schools, 216 hospitals, 781 dispensaries, and 254 orphanages were closed.

Most of the American Dominican Fathers departed from China, but Father Gordon stayed on and in 1951 was refused an exit permit by the Chinese government. On August 22, 1953 the last priests remaining, Fathers Gordon, Joyce, and Hyde, were placed under house arrest in their Procuration House in Foochow. They were placed in solitary confinement in small rooms in the house's servant quarters. For the next two years, the priests were not permitted to communicate with each other or with the outside world, nor to offer Mass. They usually were not directly subjected to physical torture, but suffered from poor food, lack of fresh air and exercise, and the tedium of being observed day and night by the guards -- the lights were kept constantly burning. Indirect attempts were made to indoctrinate the priests, but they retaliated by trying to convert the guards. Father Hyde was allowed to keep his Bible and the other two priests had their breviaries. They repeated what they remembered of the Mass each morning.

The prisoners did get out of their cells a few times: when they were hauled off to be questioned for 72 hours or longer without sleep. They were accused of being spies. Father Gordon later stated, "They tried their best to make us admit that we were spies sent here by the American government. Evidently they could not swallow the idea that we priests had come to China solely out of love for souls."

In addition to these Dominicans, thirty-eight other U.S. citizens were being held by the Chinese. In the summer of 1955 negotiations between the Chinese and the U.S. State Department, together with a desire of the Chinese to move the negotiations forward to matters other than the prisoners, brought about the release of the Americans a few at a time. Before their release, however, the Dominicans had to undergo a "trial." At a hearing on September 10, Father Gordon was found guilty of "shielding counter-revolutionary elements"; Father Hyde of "conducting reactionary propaganda and concealing a military signal pistol"; and Father Joyce of "collecting information about Chinese airfields". Father Gordon had sheltered Chinese lay teachers of the Catholic schools, while Father Joyce had sent a boy to inspect a damaged church, not the airfield, which was ten miles distant.

When sentenced to "immediate departure from China," and asked by the judge what he thought of the sentence, Father Gordon (whose sense of humor is still a living legend) replied, "It could be worse." The judge grinned. The three priests walked across the Freedom Bridge to Hong Kong on September 18, 1955. Their one regret was that they had to leave their people, and that their departure removed the last American Dominican from mainland China.

Fathers Joyce and Hyde sailed for San Francisco in October, but Father Gordon remained in Hong Kong to undergo three operations. Upon returning to

the United States, he was honored with the title of "preacher general." He spent some time in recovering from illness which had developed during his imprisonment. He then spent four years as chaplain at Albertus Magnus College in Connecticut and eight years as chaplain of the Dominican Sisters of the Sick Poor in New York City. In 1969 he went into semi-retirement at St. Dominic Priory in Youngstown, Ohio. He died there on September 18, 1974 and his remains lie in Calvary Cemetery in that city.

### The Church Persecuted

At the time that the three American priests were expelled from China, it was reported that the Communists had begun mass arrests of Chinese Catholics, both lay and clerical, in Shanghai, on charges of counter-revolutionary activity. Within a few years, however, they began to take a more subtle approach against the Church. In July of 1957 the government established the Patriotic Association of Chinese Catholics, which renounced all "political and economic" ties with the Vatican. A schismatic hierarchy was established, with bishops consecrated validly but illicitly, without permission or approval of the Holy See. The consecrating bishop, Archbishop Ignatius P'i-Shu-Shih, had been arrested in 1951 and was said to have been brainwashed into compliance with the government's demands. Pope Pius XII secretly issued the encyclical Ad Apostolorum Principis to the Church in China, warning against the Patriotic Association.

In December of 1958 the government stepped up its drive to force Catholics into the Patriotic Association. The indoctrination courses were said to be "deadly, there is no escape." Pope John XXIII in his Christmas message of 1958 called Catholics throughout the world to public acts of prayer and penance for the faithful of China. The Catholic Bishops of the United States designated Sunday, February 15, 1959, the First Sunday of Lent, as a day of prayer for the Church in China. In Columbus, Bishop Issenmann declared a triduum of prayer and offered Mass at St. Andrew Church as part of the effort. (A group of Chinese priests in Rome at this time formed the Union of Prayer and issued the lovely prayer card, a copy of which, shown below, was providentially donated to the Record Society earlier this year.)

Rev. Dominic Chang, O.P.

One of the Chinese faithful, for whom the Catholic world prayed, was a spiritual son of the Province of St. Joseph, for he was a son of the Kienow mission. Rev. Thomas Dominic Chang, O.P. (mentioned above and in Part I),



with two other native priests carried on the work of the mission in Kienow. In 1955 it was reported that Communist soldiers were living in the rectory with the priests. Soon he was accused of being an imperialist agent and an enemy of the state. He was arrested several times and was in prison for a great part of twenty years, suffering physical and mental torture. He did all kinds of labor, such as grazing cattle and feeding hogs. While in prison he did what charitable work he could. He gave his own food and clothing to the poor and taught English to the doctor who took care of him in prison. After a long period of hardship, torture, and trials, Father Chang developed an ulcer and could not eat. He lost weight and his hair suddenly turned gray. He died in prison in 1969.

Father Chang's body was laid to rest in Kienyang but later was moved to the Catholic cemetery at Kienow. As late as 1979 his grave was still unmarked, for fear that the Communists would dig up his remains.

#### The Kienow Mission in 1979

In 1979 Rev. Anthony C. Li, a native of Wufuchieh, a town of the Kienow mission territory, was able to return to China for a visit. He found the country prosperous on the surface, but the people struggling and very poor, hungering especially for spiritual food and values. The small communities of Catholics he found shrunken by persecution and by flight to Taiwan, but still alive and keeping God's grace and faith.

At Chungan, the former mission church had been converted to headquarters of the Office of Food Supplies. The beautiful chapel was living quarters for government workers. The school was a store-house.

At Wufuchieh, Father Joyce upon his departure from Chungan in 1949 had turned over the Catholic station and residence to Father Li's brother and almost immediately it had been occupied by the Communists. It had been returned to Mr. Li just days before the priest's visit. The Catholics of the area were only able to pray privately and dared not worship openly in the chapel. In the 1950s and 1960s they had suffered all sorts of torture and threats, some becoming so frightened that they had committed suicide.

At Kienyang, where Father Li's guide was a nephew of Father Dominic Chang, the Catholic compound had been converted to a clinic or hospital.

At Kienow, the former St. Albert primary school was in use as a guest house, as were most of the other buildings in the compound. The Sisters' convent was used as the People's High Court. There were two hundred Catholics in Kienow in 1979, "a Christian community still alive and active in a non-religious society."

#### The Story Continues

Today, the situation of the Church in China appears to be similar to that of 1979. Sister Annunciata Chen of St. Mary of the Springs, accompanied by her nephew, a priest of Taiwan, visited her old home recently. It still is forbidden there to give religious instruction before the age of 18 years. Nevertheless, Sister Annunciata and Father Chen were impressed by the piety of the faithful, their hunger for the Word of God, and the number of confessions.

The Catholic Church is still strong but is underground and still is persecuted by the government. It lives in uneasy truce with the Patriotic Association. The Church in China still needs offered for it the prayer approved in 1952 and specially blessed by the Holy Father in 1955 and promoted by the Union of Prayer:

Almighty and eternal God, Comforter of the afflicted, and Strength of the suffering, grant that our brothers of China who share our faith, may obtain, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of our holy Martyrs, peace in Thy service, strength in time of trial, and the grace to glorify Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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A special "thank you" is due to Sister Mary McCaffrey, O.P., Archivist at St. Mary of the Springs, without whose help this series on the Dominican Mission to China would not have been possible. In addition to newspaper articles, the story was based largely on the following sources, all but the last of which Sister provided:

- "Kianning-fu Chronicle" by Rev. William F. Cassidy, O.P., 1948.
- "St. Mary of the Springs: Its History and Spirit" by Sister Estelle Casalandro, O.P.
- "Three Came Home" by Rev. Richard E. Vahey, O.P., printed in The Torch of December, 1955.
- Letter from Rev. Anthony C. Li to V. Rev. Thomas Quinn, O.P., Oct. 6, 1979.
- "Sister visits, priest-nephew in Taiwan" by Rev. Msgr. James Kulp, Catholic Times, Nov. 2, 1990.

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HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, SOMERSET, OHIO  
REGISTER OF BAPTISMS AND MARRIAGES, 1827-1851  
(Continued from Vol. XV, No. 9)

(page 56)

1839, continued

Dec. 2 James, son of William Gordon and Jane; sponsors William Gordon Sr. and -----. Nicholas D. Young, O.P.  
Dec. 2 James, son of P. Courtney and Sara Case; spons. John Minor and Mary Case. NDY  
Dec. 2 Mary, daughter of John Herholster and Esther Herholster; spons. John Elder and Mary -----. [NDY]  
Dec. 22 Elizabeth, daughter of William Wiseman and Catherine Dugan; spons. Henry and Sara Dittoe. C. P. Montgomery  
same George Chrysos., son of George Schefler and M. McFadden; spons. Michael McFadden and Elizabeth McAleer. CPM

1840, continued

March 1 Agnes, daughter of Joseph Slaughtner(?) and Teresa Acker---; spons. George Smith and Ch. Laughtener or Smith. F. J. H. Clarkson  
March 8 Mary Ann, daughter of James McGuire and Margaret McKernan; spons. Patrick Garland and Mary Masterson. FJHC  
April 5 Frances Isabella, daughter of James Hewit and Frances Fink; spons. John Fink and Elizabeth Fink. Eleven days old. CPM



April 5 Henry Dominic, son of Jacob Gangloff and Ellen McDonnell;  
spons. Frances A. Gongloff and Elizabeth Jackson. J.A.G. Wilson  
(page 57)

April 9 Helen, daughter of Michael McCune and Anna Steen; spons. Mary  
McGonigle; 28 days old.

[Apr.] 24 Mary Margaret, daughter of James Perring and Sara Ryan; spons.  
Augustine Delong and Ursula Johnson; 11 days old. CPM

May 2 Rose Ann, daughter of Philip Moynagh and Mary (Carville), born  
April 22; spons. David Clancy and Anna Cumisky. NDY

May [or March?] 27 Susan, daughter of Xavier Bash and Augusta Smith;  
spons. Joseph Smith and (Mariana?) Batch. NDY

April 10 Thomas, son of David Clancy and Ellen Hansy (perhaps Henry?),  
born April 9; spons. John Sheridan and Alicia Owens. NDY

May 16 Joseph Anthony, son of ---- Bloom and Margaret Hare; spons.  
Elizabeth Bloom. NDY

May 21 Sara Elizabeth, daughter of William Freeman and Catherine May;  
spons. Sara (?) Funcannon. NDY

---- Thomas Borer, son of John Borer and Mary Lockwood; born Dec.  
17, 1839; spons. John Jackson and Mary Grate Jackson. NDY  
(page 58)

May 24 Margaret, daughter of Nicholas Cody and Eveline Kearfott, born  
Jan. 11, 1838; spons. John Wade and Mary Ivory Wade. FJHC

same at the same time, Elizabeth, daughter of Nicholas Cody and  
Eveline Kearfott, born May 21; spons. John Wade and Mary Ivory Wade. FJHC

May 27 William George Wash. Sterner (?), born November, 1839, son of  
William Sterner (?) and Rose Conly; spons. Henry Bonastill and his wife Nancy.  
NDY

May 30 Elizabeth, daughter of Mathew Schott(?), born May 20; spons.  
Elizabeth F----. NDY

May 31 Two infants, born May 10, children of John Horly and Judy Not--  
named Michael and Lidia; spons. for Lidia was Rose Daly and for Michael was  
Mary Scanlan. NDY

May 31 Michael Sheridan, born May 26, son of John Sheridan and Mary  
-----; spons. Hugh Cumisky and Mary Minor. NDY

June 7 Sara A. , born Nov. 27, daughter of E--- Paget and Nancy Paget;  
spons. Jane McGragh. NDY  
(page 59)

June 7 Susan, born May 27, daughter of Peter Flowers and Catherine  
Boils (?); spons. Mathias Flowers and Mary Elder. NDY

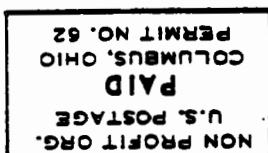
June 20 Nicholas J---, son of John Litzinger and Julianna Stine, born  
June 18; spons. Michael Metzger and Mary Car. NDY

June 29 Elizabeth, born June 26, daughter of George Flautt and Margaret  
Harbaugh; spons. Thomas Scallion and Lydia Stine. NDY

July 19 Eugenia, daughter of Edward McGruder and Mary McKinney, born  
July 11; spons. James McKinney and Catherine McKinney. J. H. Clarkson

(To be continued)

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