

25 years at the Crossroads of the Orient

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Twenty-five years ago in Hong Kong, the first Holy Mass was celebrated in the first centre of the women on 1st May 1982. Since that day, our Lord's

presence in the tabernacle of that centre has been a boost for the apostolic activity in the city.

Regular trips to Hong Kong were already being made from Manila some years prior; and in 1981, they began looking for a place that could be the first centre of the women in the city. On 10th December, feast day of our Lady of Loreto, a suitable apartment on Hong Kong Island was finally secured, thanks also to the heavenly intercession of our Founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá. The following year, three women members of Opus Dei moved to Hong Kong on 1st March to begin the first centre of the Work. Two months later, the oratory was ready for the first celebration of the Mass and for the reservation of our Lord in the tabernacle.

Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, Prelate of Opus Dei and successor of St.

Josemaría, was following all the developments with fatherly interest and with his prayers. Towards the end of February 1982, he wrote to his daughters who were busy with the preparations to move to Hong Kong, encouraging them, “You have everything well prepared, with all the prayers and mortification offered by your sisters and brothers the world over, especially in this last year... Besides, you can count on the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary who will watch over you and help you, now and later, at every moment. Do not forget, my daughters, that a tender and filial devotion to the Mother of God is the best foundation for our spiritual life and for all we do. (...)"

In the new centre, some spiritual activities could be offered for friends and those keen to grow in their faith and spiritual life; and so it continues till today. At present, there are 3

centres of Opus Dei which offer activities for women, one on Hong Kong Island and 2 in the Kowloon peninsula. There are a similar number of centres with activities for men.

In 1996, Bishop Javier Echevarría, who succeeded Bishop Alvaro as Prelate of Opus Dei, visited Hong Kong and Macau from 15th to 18th April. On 16th April, he celebrated Mass for his daughters in the oratory of that first centre. During the thanksgiving after Mass, he prayed at the foot of the altar, before the tabernacle and the altarpiece, which was an Oriental painting of Holy Mary, Queen of China, with the Child Jesus standing on her lap.

In a general get-together that same afternoon with several hundred people who have come from all over Hong Kong —truly, a crossroads of the Orient and threshold of China—

he said, “It is logical that we desire to spread this human and supernatural joy to everyone in China, in Asia and to the other continents. In order to do so, pray a lot for them. Love them; offer up your work for them, your difficulties, those that crop up everyday. With all this, you are preparing the ground for them to be closer to God.”

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