

世紀服務

為回應宗座代牧師多敏主教（Vicar Apostolic Bishop Pozzoni Domenico M.E.M 1861-1924）於 1910 年的邀請和當時社會的需要，安貧小姊妹在 1923 年來到香港為天主教會和社會服務。創辦了兩間安老院就是在牛池灣的聖若瑟安老院（2003 年遷往上水）和在黃竹坑的聖瑪利安老院（1958 年）。

聖若瑟安老院

邀請安貧小姊妹來香港服務，最先是由宗座代牧師多敏主教於 1910 年提出。其後在 1915 年他與當時的聖雲先會會長艾菲先生（Mr J. M. Alves）再次提出。時值戰爭及其他種種困難，而當時修會已在上海及廣州設立會院，就沒有確實應允下來。

那時，香港有很多老年人流離失所，乏人照顧。早在印度就已經認識安貧小姊妹的艾菲先生（Mr J. M. Alves）切願為他們做點事。那時在九龍塘一個小丘上，有一座原屬德國路德會，後來在大戰期間被政府沒收了的莊園。那裡有一間可容納 80 人的大宅。艾菲先生就把房子租用下來，並請求嘉諾撒修女在小姊妹抵港前暫時照顧那批老年人。期間，師主教及艾菲先生不斷向安貧小姊妹的總會院提出請求。

由於照顧老人並非嘉諾撒會的使命，兩年後她們便表示不能繼續此項服務。獲悉這消息後，總會院的議會決定在九



龍建立會院。1923 年 2 月安貧小姊妹終於抵港，艾菲先生、他的助手及另一位朋友早在碼頭等候。在院舍那邊，師主教當時不在香港，他的代表施巴達神父(Fr. Spada, Bishop Pozzoni's representative) 和兩位照顧老人的嘉諾撒修女亦在等候。她們向小姊妹們交代了任務後，便離去返回自己的團體。小姊妹們接收了由嘉諾撒修女暫時管理，位於九龍塘的安老院，當時已約有八十名老人。

首天抵達院舍，已有數位善長到來探訪，當中包括廣華醫院的葉錦華醫生，他並答應為長者們義診。二月底，修女們開始出外募捐。在 1923 年 3 月 19 日首個聖若瑟瞻禮日，艾菲先生為院舍安排了正式的開幕典禮。為了讓更多人認識修會的服務，艾菲先生當日邀請了超過六十位有名望的各界人士和商家參與盛會，好能日後獲得幫助維持院務。

經過四年時間的省儉儲蓄，加上得到修會總會院的幫助，修女們於 1926 年 7 月從一位已故的華人富商的幾位遺孀處購得一座位於牛池灣面積廣闊的莊園。莊園裡有幾座中國式住宅和一座家族用以安奉先祖牌位和祭祀的祠堂。若加以擴建，收容的人數將會增加至四百名之多。1927 年工程開始，首先是興建聖堂，隨著是興建聖堂兩旁的長者院舍，廚房，洗衣房，和與聖堂相對望的修會院舍。聖堂是興建在祠堂所在的淨土上，奉獻聖祭用的祭台建立在置放牌位的地方。寓意每日獻上的聖祭為世人求得恩寵。





1932 年 7 月 2 日恩理覺主教主持聖堂的奠基禮，儀式簡單而莊嚴。他把那塊只刻上 A-D-1923 的花崗岩基石放上，

用混凝土黏固，就跪下誦唸伏求聖神降臨和諸聖禱文並以乳香祝聖所有的柱石。工程順利進行，在同年的 12 月 23 日聖堂落成揭幕。聖堂內的祭台和兩旁的小祭台是艾菲先生(Mr J. M. Alves) 捐

獻的。1933 年 1 月 6 日主顯節，恩理覺主教偕同數位司鐸祝聖聖堂並主持第一台聖祭。艾菲先生和慷慨捐款的善長們也有到來，大家一起讚頌上主。看到從無到有，經過千辛萬苦創建聖堂和院舍的修女和長者們，歡欣感動之情更是不可言喻。1933 年 5 月與聖堂相對望的修會院舍也落成。







牛池灣聖若瑟安老院的大門是一道大閘，兩旁是門房，整座院舍圍著矮石牆。從大閘門進入寬敞開豁的園子，正中是一條兩旁植著樹木的小徑直通到修會院舍的接待

處和中庭。中庭兩翼是長者院舍，後面是聖堂，進教之佑聖母像就佇主中間，有如在主前為我們代禱。整座院舍的設計不但讓住在院裡、也讓到訪的人在庭院深深中感到主臨世上，與人在同行。



在 1941-1945 年，第二次世界大戰及香港被日本佔領的期間，是一個極度艱苦和悲慘的飢荒歲月，不少的平民死於空襲和戰火。其間，糧食供應缺乏，每個家庭都有一張配給許可證，每人每天只可得到六兩四的白米，沒有其他雜糧及食品供應。而錢幣不斷貶值，物價無了期地上漲，即使有軍票及配給證也買不到食糧，許多飢饉的人流落街頭而死，實在使人難受。沒有恩理覺主教努力維持教區的運作，各個堂區和修會所面對的困難應該會更加嚴重。然而，上主卻繼續照顧著我們，時有善心人士捐贈金錢或食物，從未間斷。1945 年隊長 Leo d'Almada Castro 和四位加大拿軍官從軍營那裡來，他們獲分發給許多的食物，鮮肉和蔬菜，一時也不知怎樣處理，最後決定把這些東西送給嘉諾撒修女和我們。這時捐贈都是解決膳食的及時雨，但還須繼續傷腦筋去籌募，才可以維持。日子就在這樣艱苦的境況中度過。





這座位於牛池灣的聖若瑟安老院，自創立於 1923 年，八十年來一直為長者服務，直至院舍差不多無法再進行維修及改善工程。為配合安老服務設備的相關條例，修會就於 1996 年以牛池灣院址與發展商交換用地，於新界北區上水興建一所設備完善的新院舍。



新院舍於 2003 年落成，聖若瑟安老院亦遷往該址，於 2004 年 2 月 7 日正式揭幕，繼續修會在香港的服務，為長者提供住院照顧。

2015 年教會舉行了以「家庭」為主題的世界主教會議，教宗方濟各再三強調家庭的重要和核心價值。並呼籲社會「要預防任何可以傷害家庭的危機…大家要多關心自己的家庭」。為響應教會的呼籲，聖若瑟安老院在義工們的協助下，也特別在 2015 年的聖家節為此舉行慶祝。在感恩祭後祝福了住在院裡的七對老夫婦，婚齡分別為 70 年、65 年、60 年、57 年、53 年、48 年、43 年，合共是 387 年的婚姻。

隨著是祝福他們的子子孫孫，還有就是在場參禮的其他年輕夫婦。感恩祭後，七對老伴就穿上西裝、換上裙褂或婚紗，在婚禮進行曲中步入禮堂與家人親友拍照。瞬間，整座安老院迴盪著「海誓山盟」，好不浪漫！實在，在婚姻備受挑戰和考驗的今天，維持一段細水長流，持久的婚姻盟誓是一份恩賜。這七對老夫婦見證出天主所建立的婚姻及家庭制度，是人類社會的根基，人生活快樂的源頭。

樂見老年人活出晚年的恩寵，並透過他們的表現和貢獻，發揮他們在家庭，社會和教會的使命和不可替代的角色，讓服務者也感到照顧是責任，也是福份。



A Century of service to the Elderly

Responding to an invitation by the Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Domenica Pozzoni, PIME in 1910 and the need at that time, the Little Sisters of the Poor first came to Hong Kong in 1923. Two Homes for the Aged were established – first St. Joseph's Home for the Aged, originally at Ngau Chi Wan, Kowloon, which was relocated to Sheung Shui in 2003; and St. Mary's Home for the Aged in Wong Chuk Hang, Hong Kong.

St. Joseph's Home for the Aged

The invitation by Bishop Pozzoni in 1910 could not be taken up any time soon. In fact, events in China and numerous difficulties did not give much hope for a foundation! At the time, the Congregation already



had two foundations on the mainland – Canton and Shanghai. Bishop Pozzoni renewed his invitation in 1915. Mr. J.M. Alves, then President of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, knowing of the Little Sisters in Calcutta, would not take “no” for an answer. He desperately wanted to do something for the abandoned old people in Hong Kong. He *started the ball rolling* by renting a property which had formerly belonged to the German Lutheran Mission, but which had been confiscated by the Government during the war. This property situated on the summit of a hill in Kowloon Tong, consisted of a big estate with a large house able to accommodate about 80 people. He asked the Canossian Sisters to accept the work of taking care of the old people until the Little Sisters arrived.

The Canossians sent two of their Sisters for this work of charity. Meantime, Bishop Pozzoni and Mr. Alves sent reminders to the Motherhouse in

France that there was a house full of old people waiting for the Little Sisters! At the end of two years, the Canossian Sisters said they could no longer continue since this was not really their mission...

When this news reached the Motherhouse, the General Council immediately decided to accept a foundation in Kowloon. And so, at 8am on February 3rd, 1923, the first wave of Little Sisters of the Poor arrived at the pier and were met by Mr. Alves, his assistant, and a friend. When they arrived at the Home they were greeted by Fr. Spada, Bishop Pozzoni's representative, (the Bishop was out of the colony at the time), and the two Canossian Sisters who had been taking care of the 80 Residents.

The Little Sisters recounting to the Motherhouse about their arrival, wrote: "We entered the Chapel where Our Lord was waiting for us, to bless us and to assure us of His help, which we truly needed in this strange country, not knowing the customs or language, except the language of love and devotedness. After the Canossian Sisters gave us a brief orientation, they left for their community in the afternoon."

On the first day a few benefactors came to express their joy at our arrival. Among them was Dr. Ip Kam Wah, from Kwong Wah Hospital who promised his services.

At the end of February, the Little Sisters started the collecting rounds. On the first Feast of St. Joseph, Mr. Alves organized the official opening of the Home and invited over 60 influential businesspeople, to make our work known since we would need their help to maintain our apostolate of hospitality!

After four years of careful saving and with the help of the Congregation, the Little Sisters were able to build an extension to a very large Chinese-style house, situated on an even larger property purchased from the widows of a wealthy Chinese gentleman. Since the house was already vast, the additions afforded accommodations for a very considerable increase in Residents (about 400). The Chapel



was the first additional building to be constructed. Other facilities followed: the kitchen, the laundry room, the Sisters' Convent, and the reception area. The Chapel was built over the former ancestral hall of the previous owners, and the altar placed on the site of the memorial tablet. That way, the daily Mass celebrations would continue to bring blessings to the family and to the world.

On July 2nd, 1932, Apostolic Vicar Monsignor Enrico Pascal Valtorta*, PIME officially laid the cornerstone of the Chapel in a simple but solemn ceremony. The granite stone bore the simple inscription "A-D-1923". After he knelt and invoked the Holy Spirit upon the site, and after praying the Litany of the Saints, the pillars of the Chapel foundation were blessed with incense. Construction work progressed smoothly and on December 23rd of that year, the Chapel was completed and officially opened. Mr. Alves donated the main altar as well as the two side altars. On January 6th, 1933, Solemnity of the Epiphany, Monsignor Valtorta, accompanied by a few priests, celebrated the first Mass in the new Chapel. Mr. Alves and other benefactors also attended. The joy of the Little Sisters and Residents was beyond words. In May 1933, the Sisters' Convent was also completed.

**Mgr Valtorta was installed as the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Hong Kong in 1948, a little over two years after it was raised to a Diocese.*

St. Joseph's Home for the Aged was originally located at Ngau Chi Wan, Kowloon. The entire property was enclosed by a low stone wall. A large gate and archway stood at the main entrance, which opened out into the street on one side, and on the inside, into a spacious open garden. A tree lined walkway from the main entrance, led to the reception area. Past the reception area and stretching out on both sides were the living quarters of the Residents. The Chapel was situated at the back. A large statue of Our Lady Help of Christians stood in the middle of the courtyard just in front of the Chapel, as it were, interceding with the Heavenly Father for us. The design of the entire Home made visitors feel that God was among His people!



Like everywhere else, the Second World War and the Japanese Occupation between 1941 and 1945 was a very difficult time for Hong Kong. Many civilians died of hunger or during air raids. Food was in severe shortage. Provisions were rationed and members of each family entitled to only 6.4 taels (about 240 g) of rice daily. The value of money drastically fell, and inflation was rampant. Even with ration cards, there was no guarantee of getting food and many people literally starved to death. If not for Monsignor Valtorta's hard work in sustaining the operation of the Diocese, all the parishes and religious congregations would have been devastated even more than they already were. Yet, God continued to watch over us and our Home. Benefactors arrived unceasingly with cash and food. On one occasion in 1945, Captain Leo d'Almanda Castro, together with four members of his troop, delivered to the Home many food items, meat and vegetables that had been allotted to their army. Unable to handle the abundance in supply, they decided to share it with the Little Sisters of the Poor and the Canossian Sisters! Then, as now, these timely donations helped and continue to help ensure that the Residents lack for nothing at table.

Managing the upkeep of the Home was another matter though. With the passage of time,



new government protocols, and new Social Welfare standards regulating elderly care services in Hong Kong, made it necessary for St. Joseph's Home at Ngau Chi Wan to undergo massive upgrading works. But long term considerations favoured another approach. In 1996, the Little Sisters opted for a land exchange with a real estate developer that included the construction of a brand new Home in the New Territories that would meet all the prevailing government standards. When construction was completed in February 2003, St. Joseph's Home for the Aged moved into its new premises at 18, Po Kin Road, to continue its service to the elderly poor in Hong Kong.

Another important part of the legacy handed down to us by our Mother Foundress is the "family spirit". It is a subject dear to Pope Francis who never fails to emphasize the importance of the family and its core values. No surprise then, that the theme for the World Synod of Bishops in 2015 was "Family". He urged every country to "prevent any acts which would split up the family ... that everyone should be more concerned with his own family." In solidarity with this appeal, St. Joseph's Home, with the help of volunteers, organized special activities on December 27th, the Feast of the Holy Family that year. During the Thanksgiving Mass, a special blessing was bestowed on seven married couples among the residents in the Home. They were celebrating their 70th, 65th, 60th, 57th, 53rd, 48th, and 43rd wedding anniversaries – the broad smiles of the men and the radiant

beauty of their wives witnessed to a grand total of 387 years of marital bliss!



Following this there was a special blessing for their children and grandchildren, and all the other married couples present. A photo session followed for the seven pairs of Residents elegantly dressed in traditional Chinese wedding costumes, or western style suits and wedding gowns. As they entered the Auditorium to the strains of the “Wedding March”, the entire Home reverberated with pledges of eternal love. It was most romantic! Today as in the past, marriage involves challenges and trials and to be able to sustain a loving relationship for a lifetime is a blessing. These seven elderly couples bore wonderful witness of fidelity to the marriage vows which make of the family the foundation of human society.

Helping the Elderly live out and appreciate these and other blessings in their *sunset* years in celebratory style is but one of the *must-do* (!) things for the Little Sisters of the Poor!