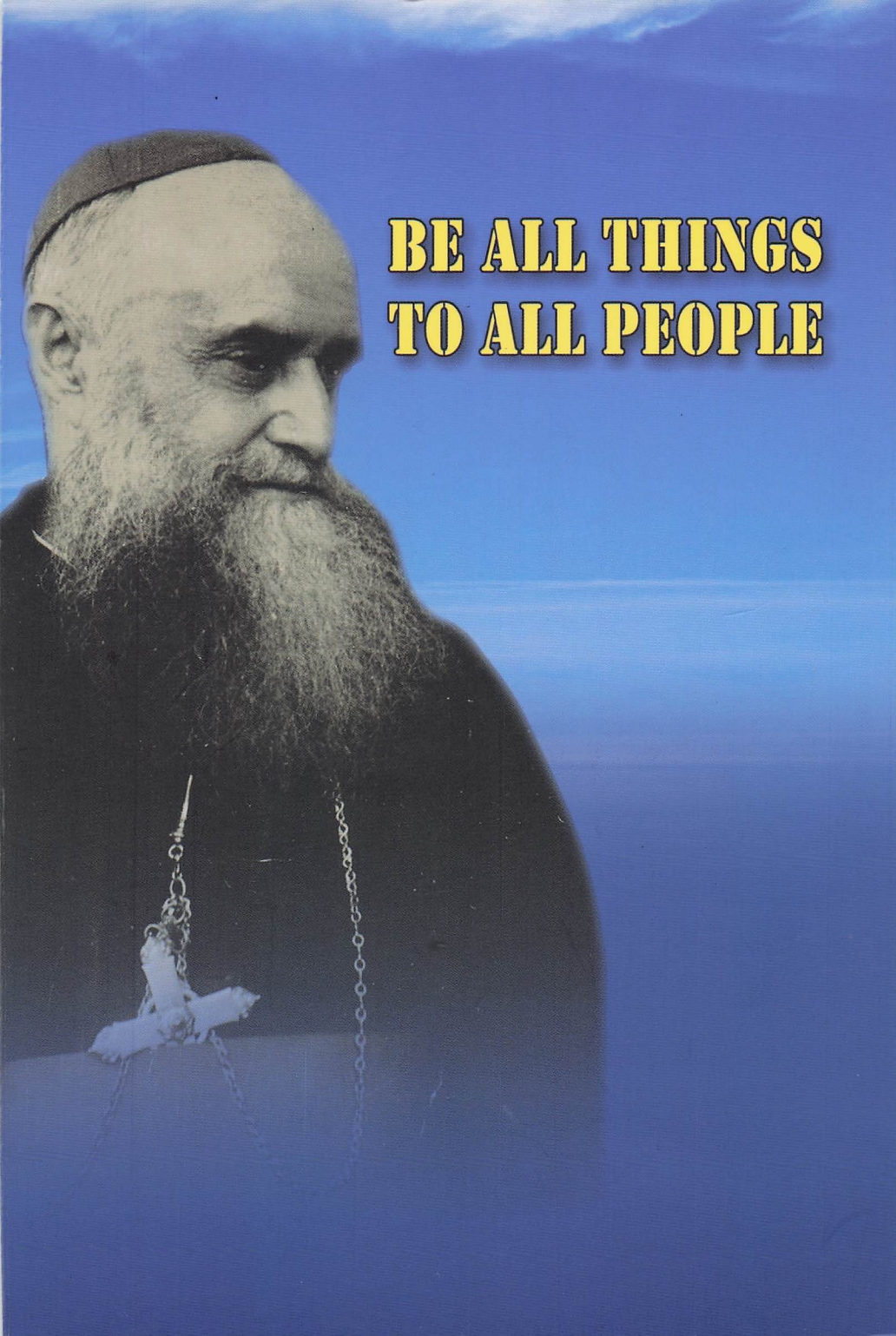


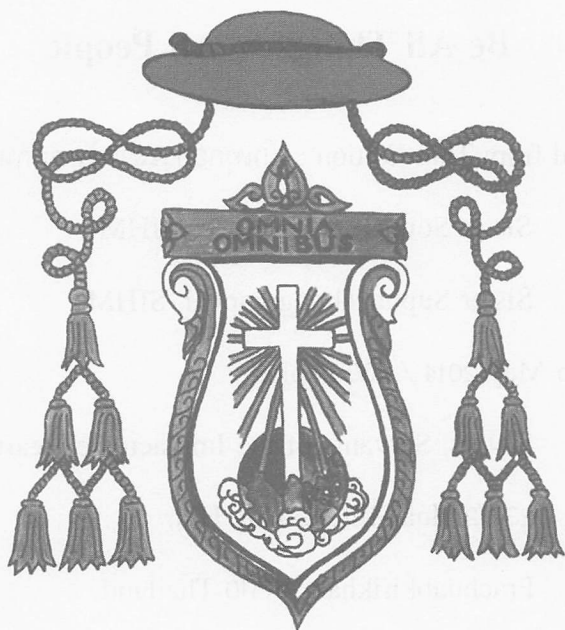
A portrait of a man with a long, grey beard and a dark cap, wearing a dark garment with a chain and a cross. The background is a clear blue sky. The text "BE ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE" is written in yellow, bold, serif capital letters in the upper right corner.

**BE ALL THINGS
TO ALL PEOPLE**



*"Holy year, Holy life
I command you to have special devotions
to Jesus in the Eucharist
and our Blessed Mother"*

*Circular letter : April 1934,
Holy Year*



Omnia Omnibus

Be All Things to All People

The Life and Mission of

Mons. Gaetano Pasotti, S.D.B.

The first Bishop of Ratchaburi

**The Founder of the Congregation Sisters Servants
of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

Be All Things to All People

Translated from Thai Edition : เป็นทุกอย่างสำหรับทุกคน

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INTRODUCTION

After the Golden Jubilee of the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1987, the idea of digging deeper into the origin of the Congregation has been more strongly thought of. It was then that a group of members had been assigned to compile both the history of the Congregation and the founder's biography, to make this a source for the renewal of life of the Congregation.

When the work was seriously begun, several questions and challenges were found. But there was one incident which looked like the providence of God and became the inspiration for the Sisters in charge to work on the biography of H.E. Gaetano Pasotti. In 2003, Father Nestor Impelido, a Salesian historian, with encouragement of the Salesian Rector Major, showed his interest and contacted us that he would like to make a research on important confreres in Salesian history, those whom nobody had yet worked on, especially those in Asia. Father Nestor Impelido is a member of the Salesian Province of Philippines. He used to read about Fr. Pasotti and he has a special liking because of personal reasons, i.e. his birthday is on 6 February while that of Pasotti is on 5 February. On the other hand another challenging dimension is that the life of Pasotti has encountered both complexities and controversies worth studying. He then began to compile a substantial amount of personal data both from Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Salesians, But because of his ill health health

and several other important historical matters of the Salesian Congregation taking up priority, his research on Fr. Pasotti's biography stopped short. Since our Congregation has the urgent need of this biography, slowly we continued the work, asking information and seeking advice from Fr. Nestor Impelido from time to time. It can be claimed that this must be God's way to push us to earnestly begin this work. Thanks be to God!

Later on, while the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was preparing its 75th Anniversary Celebration in 2012 [7 December 1937 – 2012], the Mother General and her Councilors agreed that the preparation should start 3 years in advance, beginning from early 2010, so that all areas of activities would be taken care of. A committee was established for each set of activities. Spiritual renewal, both short-term and long-term, which was considered the most important part of all in order that the preparation and the celebration would be a process of spiritual renewal for all the members, including all the collaborators. Year 2012 would be the "Holy Year" of our Congregation.

In preparing the activities, the organizing committee saw that the Historical dimension would be the most important of all, and it must be the basis for a radical renewal through deeper knowledge of the life of the Founder and the history of the Congregation, giving credence to the saying: "Those who do not know their own history, do not have a future." Hence, a group of Sisters have been assigned to do additional research and compile the biography of our Founder and the history of our Congregation. Such comprehensive

document can be source for members to study and reflect upon as renewal of the Congregation's life, charism and mission.

We were well aware that this work would be quite a challenge due to the fact that the biography of our Founder, H.E. Gaetano Pasotti, was voluminous, involving a wide, complex contexts, because he was an Italian Salesian missionary priest, who used to be a missionary in China for 9 years before coming to be a missionary in Thailand for another 23 years, a pioneer of the Salesian missionary work in Thailand after the footsteps of the MEP. Finally, he became the first Bishop of Ratchaburi Diocese after this was separated from the Diocese of Siam. He had undergone tough experiences and challenging situations during the difficult times of Thailand. However, while we accepted the limitations of our capabilities, we were also encouraged to work on this project in order to announce the glory of God in the life of H.E. Gaetano Pasotti. We thank God for guiding his life and for fulfilling his assigned mission, both in the Church of China and in Thailand. This included the founding of the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The life and spiritual heritage that he gave us has become a constant inspiration for the Congregation, and this would be the impetus for us to move forward with courage and dedication, after his footsteps and through his intercession.

Within the limited time-frame, the Committee on history had received information from several sources, including those that were already available. The first part of the biography was then

compiled, from 1890 to 1930. This included his childhood, his early religious-priestly life, his being a missionary in China and his first three years in Thailand. This was proposed to the Sisters on 8 December 2010, the first year of the jubilee preparation, for them to study and reflect on.

Since the second part of his life [1930 – 1949] was quite complicated, and his field of work more expanded, the Committee needed more time to collect data for compilation. The Committee, therefore, opted to compile the last part of his life, the year 1950, in order to propose this to the members on 3 September 2011, the 61st death anniversary of H.E. Gaetano Pasotti, the second year of the jubilee preparation.

Finally, the historical Committee, desiring to let the whole life of H.E. Gaetano Pasotti be more known thoroughly and deeply, spent the last year of preparation for the 75th anniversary of the foundation of our Congregation to collect data of the middle part that was temporarily put aside, and compile all the three parts together to compose a book, to be on time for the celebration.

This work is the result of the compilation of data from various sources which the Congregation has, from the archives of the Salesian Province of Thailand, the Salesian Archives in Rome, and from others. Utmost loyalty to the texts and time frame of the events was kept; interpretations were limited to necessary matters only, because the compilers were not in the contexts of the various events. Aside from this, the title: “Omnia Omnibus”

“Be All Things to All People” was chosen for this book because this was the motto of H.E. Gaetano Pasotti when he was chosen as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Ratchaburi. Besides, this could best summarize his life and mission.

The first objective of this book is, above all, for the members of the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to better know the father, Founder of the Congregation. Aside from this, we wish to extend this to those who have known or heard about him, and to all who wish to know him who played an important role in the Church in Thailand.

Certainly, this book is not yet perfect, and there must be some mistakes and errors. I, in the name of the historical Committee, am ready to receive the comments and advices of the readers in order to make improvements and make this a more perfect book. May this book be a window of opportunities for those interested to study, to make further deeper and more detail research.

Sr. Sompong Thabping
In behalf of the Historical Committee
75th Anniversary of Foundation
Congregation of Sisters Servants
of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
December 2012

FOREWORD

“How do you know me?” [Jn 1, 48] “O Lord, you have probed me, and you know me.” [Ps 139, 1] The Lord knew them all, [cfr. Jn 2, 24] and He chose the one He desired to be His instrument.

This book “Be All Things to All People,” which is now in your hands, is a proclamation of the goodness, the love, and the greatness of God shown in the life of H.E. Bishop Gaetano Pasotti. God had chosen this simple country boy from Pinarolo Po of Pavia, Italy, to be a Salesian priest, a missionary to China and Thailand, the first Bishop of the Diocese of Ratchaburi, and finally the founder of the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He wholeheartedly devoted his whole life for God’s work and for the good of the souls in the lands where he was sent.

In order to answer the call of the Church that the religious return to the root of their charism and to know their founder, since the General Chapter of 1985, the Congregation established the Commission to gather the history of H.E. Gaetano Pasotti, to work on the translation and compilation by sections, so that the members can study and learn from the life of their father founder. This work required time, patience and intense effort to search for data from various sources, compile and arrange the life, the mission in the area of administration, formation, pastoral ministry due to his being a missionary and a Bishop. This valuable history included the opinions and the feelings of those who knew and were close to the Bishop.

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of

Mary, the preparatory Commission for the celebration intended to present the history of H.E. Gaetano Pasotti in order to proclaim his honor on this important occasion.

Although this plan was not realized on time for the anniversary celebration [held on Saturday, the 8th of December 2012], yet this did not tone down the intention of the preparatory Commission. Thus, this book “Be All Things to All People” is now a reality. I would like to extend my special thanks to Sr. Sompong Thapping, the chairperson of the Historical Committee, who successfully gathered and compiled this book.

May God be praised and thanked from life and mission of H.E. Bishop Gaetano Pasotti who dedicated his life for the Church, especially in the preparation of personnel, both the clergy of the Diocese of Ratchaburi and the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, so that the Kingdom of God would reach all the people. All the things that happened were not the works of man, but were the plans of God. Thus, the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary would be occasion of ‘thanksgiving’ season to God who began His work in a simple way through H.E. Bishop Gaetano Pasotti who was truly “Be All Things to All People”.

Sr. Wilaiwan Yonpalatyod, SIHM
Superior General – Congregation of Sisters Servants
of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

FOREWORD

After reading the book “Be All Things to All People” - The Life and Mission of H.E. Gaetano Pasotti, SDB, The First Bishop of Ratchaburi Diocese, The Founder of the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary” I felt deep appreciation at the industriousness of the Committee who prepared this precious document which is very important for the Congregation. Knowing the history, especially of the founder of the Congregation, would lead the members to understand clearly the gift which the Holy Spirit gave to the Church through the founder. This can be rightly and truly a guideline for living according to the plan of God.

This is a very valuable book because the Committee took the pains to search for documented, written data and compiled them academically, enable this credible and reliable source for further research and references.

The growth of the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the past 75 years shows the balance between reviewing the “charism of the founder” and the “development of the mission.”

The movement of returning to the “charism of the founder” allows the members to receive inner strength from the gift of the Holy Spirit, like a water source that keeps the Congregation alive.

As for the “development of the mission”, this is like bringing to the world the charism of “love, service, and forgiveness” which is the evangelical spirit.

I hope that this book will be very useful to the members of the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and also to the faithful in general.

Loving blessing,

H.E. Bishop Joseph Prathan Sridarunsil, SDB

Bishop of Surat Thani Diocese

FOREWORD

The first thing I did when I received the Episcopal Consecration was to put up the statue of H.E. Bishop Gaetano Pasotti, the first Bishop of Ratchaburi Diocese, in front of the Bishop's House, as a reminder to myself and to all those who would pass by about the life and the many blessings that he had done for the Church and for the Diocese of Ratchaburi.

I would like to thank Sr. Sompong Thapping for letting me read first draft of the life history of Bishop Gaetano Pasotti, so that I would be one of the first to read this. I consider this as a special privilege, being one of his successors, to read this history which the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary had collected and compiled on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of their foundation.

This collection and compilation of the life and mission of Bishop Gaetano Pasotti on this occasion is a very valuable work which I deeply appreciate. I feel grateful to all those who had a part in studying, researching and compiling from the various documents which can be referred to so that the members of the Congregation can “return to their roots” and know better the history, the fruits of the mission and the charism of the Founder. This is like opening a new venue for the following generation to know the Founder, allowing them to touch his real life. I believe that this historical

work of the Church and of the Congregation will bear good fruits for all the members of the Congregation and for all the faithful.

H.E. Bishop Gaetano Pasotti was an example of a Salesian Confrere who was filled with the spirit of St. John Bosco. This founder has generously dedicated his whole life for the works of God and of the Church, worthy of the slogan of St. John Bosco – “Give me souls, I don’t need the rest!” Bishop Gaetano Pasotti has overcome various obstacles in life, both from his health, from doing his duties and from various disasters. Through his fervent devotion to the Holy Eucharist and Mary Help of Christians”, he really became “Be All Things to All People”

This book, therefore, is a valuable monument for this Year of Faith and for the 75th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Congregation of Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I am deeply grateful to Sr. Sompong Thapping and the Historical Committee for this work.

H. E. Bishop John Bosco Panya Kritcharoen
Bishop of Ratchaburi Diocese

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CIRCULAR LETTER OF BISHOP GAETANO PASOTTI MISSION SUNDAY 1946–1947

FOOTNOTES– END NOTES



PART I

THE WONDERFUL PLAN OF GOD

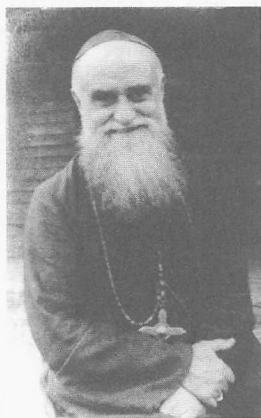
PART I

THE WONDERFUL PLAN OF GOD

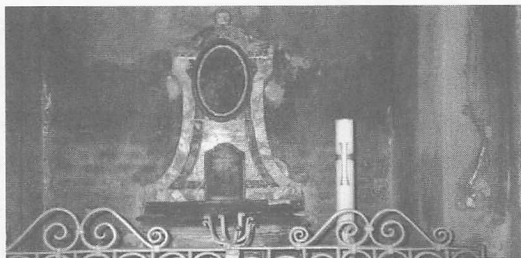


Chapter 1 : Family and Childhood [1890 – 1905]

At the Pinarolo Po District of Pavia, in the Diocese of Tortona, Italy, a baby boy, Gaetano, was born on 5 February 1890 to the poor Pasotti family of Marco Tullio and Leopolda Taggoni. Gaetano was baptized on 11 February 1890 by Fr. Sacera Bosio



of St. Augustine Church, the parish of Pinarolo. His christened name was GAETANO ANTONIO GIUSEPPE. His god-parents were Giuseppe Taggoni and Antonia Pasotti.



St. Augustine Church



Pavia was the birthplace of the Salesian missionary saint and martyr in China, Bishop Luigi Versiglia, who was born in Oliva Jessi, Pavia [1873 – 1930]. He sacrificed his life to protect the faithful. Because Bishop Versiglia was born 17 years before Gaetano Pasotti, they neither knew nor met each other in Pavia. [Fr. Luigi Versiglia of Pavia had the opportunity of meeting Don Bosco at the Youth Center in Turin, and a few months after the death of Don Bosco, he received the religious habit from Fr. Rua] Any how, it would not be a coincidence that later both of them met and worked as Salesian missionaries in the same diocese of Shiu Chow in China.



Bishop Luigi Versiglia

Before that, Fr. Versiglia studied in Rome and Fr. Rua appointed him novice master at Gensano, Rome, at the age of only 23. He was holding this duty for a period of ten years before he was appointed head of the first missionary team sent to China. Later,

he was consecrated the first Bishop of Shiu Chow. Meanwhile, Fr. Pasotti was appointed novice master in China and later became the head of the first group of Salesian missionaries to Thailand. He was later consecrated the first Bishop of Ratchaburi Diocese.

In the Pasotti Family, other than the father and mother, there were other members consisting of 4 boys and 2 girls: ¹



Order	Name	Date of Birth	Status	Date of Death
	Marco Tullio Pasotti	3 Oct 1859	Father	---
	Leopolda Taggoni	12 Apr 1865	Mother	21 Mar 1931
1	Gaetano Pasotti	5 Feb 1890	Son & SDB Priest	3 Sept 1950
2	Crocifissa Angela Ernesta	21 Sep 1896	Daughter	1910
3	Immacolata Regina Felicina	13 Mar 1899	Daughter + Bonfoco	5 Jul 1981
4	Giovanni Carlo Angelo	3 Nov 1902	Son	---
5	Paolo	16 Jul 1904	Son	26 Sept 1970
6	Pietro Antonio Giovanni Giuseppe	5 Nov 1910	Son	1974

We do not know about the occupation of the Pasotti Family. We only know that, like the other families in the vicinity, the Pasotti family was poor and lived simply, but was full of faith and piety in God. Gaetano Pasotti received the Sacrament of Confirmation at Barbianello Church, on 24 May 1899, by H.E. Pietro Berutti, Bishop of Visevano.

Mrs. Enrichetta Gaverini, a niece in the Pasotti family [Immacolata's daughter], wrote a letter to Fr. Cesare Castellino [Salesian priest and former missionary to Thailand] who requested information from her about her family. She wrote to him:

*"Our family lived in a farming rural area. The farmers were generally poor, but after the last war they became poorer. They received false hope and were deceived by a political movement who opposed the clergy that they would have a better life if they would follow them. Hence, disinterest in religion became a subject of concern. If we do not have a genuine faith, we would become another sect which society itself could not help at all."*²



SIHM visited one of Mons. Pasotti's niece family

It seemed that after the war, most of the people were reduced to starvation and darn difficulties. Many people did not have food to eat, did not have a shelter, and poverty spread to every nook and corner. Worse than anything was the decadence of religion and morality. The anti-religious movements were formed which destroyed the faith of a great number of people. The Pasotti family, likewise, fell into this harmful state, but fortunately the head of the family had a strong faith. Fr. Antonio Alessi related that: *“Though materially poor, he was filled with good moral values, outstanding in faith and piety, which one could clearly notice in that community.”*³ With this kind of atmosphere during his childhood, Gaetano was formed both physically and spiritually to be “cheerful and decorous as an angel”, according to the opinion of the superiors prior to his entrance into the seminary.⁴

Because Gaetano was the eldest son of the family, he was very intimate with his parents especially during the first six years of his boyhood before his younger sister was born. He was well taken cared of physically and spiritually. In the holy atmosphere of the Pasotti family, everyone would always go to Mass on Sundays and all the important feasts at St. Augustine Parish. The observant eyes of the zealous parish priest noticed the religious piety and cheerfulness of the young Gaetano. He gave advice and helped the boy to grow up more in the knowledge of God and in the practice of virtues. Besides, being the eldest son, Gaetano used to help his mother even at his young age. Enrichetta’s mother, one of Gaetano’s younger sisters, often said of her brother that since

the age of six, Gaetano always alleviated their mother's burden by washing and looking after his younger brothers and sisters to behave well. So, Gaetano became his mother's mainstay in helping himself and others from boyhood. He grew up with the sense of responsibility in his various duties.

Fr. Alessi concluded also that: *"Under the loving care of the holy mother and living in the parish under a zealous priest, Gaetano passed the first stage of life by learning the various truths and practicing good morals which helped his pure soul to open to the light of graces, thus yielding immediate fruits in the path of a firm religious vocation."*⁵

At the age of 10, Gaetano, like any other boys who like to run around and stay with friends in the playground, wished to step out into the wider world. So, he was ready to make his first grand decision by making the biggest sacrifice, i.e., leaving his family and homeland, especially his most loving mother, on 10 October 1900. He began to spend his life with other boys at the Salesian Youth Center in Valdocco, Turin. The Center was ran by Don Bosco under the Salesian atmosphere and motto – "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle" [*Give me souls, take away the rest*], where there was always a priest staying with the children at all times.

His diary during childhood spoke only about his characteristics of being lively and dedicated, trying to control himself, and outstanding in study and behavior among his friends.⁶ During his high school years and up, the superiors gave their observation

that he was a good boy, “*active, intelligent, eager to learn, self-composed, loveable and the first among his friends.*” ⁷ In brief, he was “*cheerful and good-behaving like an angel.*” ⁸ At the youth center of Valdocco, it was the first time that Gaetano began to know about the life of the great saint who dedicated his life for the young and sought only the salvation of souls. He was Don Bosco, with all the various Salesian activities. He met with the fatherhood of the superiors, the holy joy and the atmosphere filled with religiosity. Certainly, all these things slowly found their way deep into the mind of Gaetano and became the strength and the clear inspiration that pushed him to enter the seminary after he finished his high school right here in Valdocco.

Chapter 2 : Towards the Salesian Life and Service to the Country [1905 – 1918]

2.1 Vocation to Salesian Life

The environment filled with piety and practice of various virtues during childhood was like preparing good soil for God to sow the seed of vocation and wait for the seed to grow. He wrote a letter to the seminary rector asking to enter the novitiate:

*“After discerning my vocation and consulting my confessor and superiors, I decide to be a Salesian. Therefore, I desire to go for a retreat to prepare myself and improve my behavior so that I will be suitable for acceptance into the novitiate at Foglizzo.”*⁹

By the month of September 1905, Gaetano entered the Salesian Novitiate at Foglizzo at the age of 15 and received the religious habit from Blessed Michael Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco.

Living in the novitiate, where one has to be serious especially with regards to spirituality and understanding the will of God through the superiors, the rules and various disciplines, novice Gaetano showed a heart filled with zeal and enthusiasm. He was ready to fight against any temptation. His fellow novices gave their observations about Gaetano’s special traits that “he was always cheerful, with lots of humor; he created usually an atmosphere of happiness both in the games and in conversations.”¹⁰

Before the first profession, Gaetano wrote a letter asking to make his vows:

*“With full awareness of what I am doing and with the forthcoming commitments in life within the Salesian Congregation, having prayed and consulted my superiors, I would like to humbly seek permission to make the profession in the Society. May I kiss your hands. From me, your humble servant.”*¹¹

On 15 September 1906, novice Gaetano made his first profession along with his classmates at Foglizzo. He began his work at the Sunday Youth Center of St. Francis. He studied philosophy in 1907 at Valsalice and at the same time worked at the Sunday Youth Center of Martinello. Between 1908 – 1910, he was in charge of the sacristy. Three years after the first profession, Gaetano decided to dedicate his whole life in the Salesian Congregation. On 30 June 1909, he wrote a letter requesting to make the perpetual profession:

*“After consulting with my superior and confessor, and after a long meditation and discernment about the obligations and commitments in choosing this path, I would like to request to make the perpetual profession.”*¹²

He made his perpetual profession on 30 July 1909 at Valsalice after which he continued his philosophy course for another year before moving to Ivrea for additional studies from 1910 to 1912. At the same time, he was working at the Sunday Youth Center of St. Joseph. He was proficient in Italian, Greek, Science, History and Mathematics. He lived the Salesian charism energetically, filled with optimism and loving-kindness. He was widely praised

by those who met him, especially the young with whom he worked and helped both in their studies and in the practice of virtues and piety.

2.2 Preparation for the Salesian Priestly Life

As of 1912, Brother Gaetano studied theology at Foglizzo, preparing himself to be a Salesian priest. On 5 August 1914, he received the minor orders, and on the following year, with the inception of World War I, he wrote a letter asking to be ordained Subdeacon with the following text:

*“I am aware that I have been receiving good formation and have received the various minor orders. I think that now I am ready to serve our nation in the army; at least I have good health. While subconsciously I am rather afraid, I humbly request you to allow me to receive the subdiaconate. I think that I have sufficiently developed my conscience and I rely on the graces of God so that I will be firm in the commitments which I will make.”*¹³

On 27 August 1915, with permission from the superiors, Gaetano Pasotti was ordained subdeacon. However, there is evidence that he was ordained on 24 May 1915, in Ivrea. It seemed that the ordination was made prior to the official permission possibly because in 1915 he had to undergo the military service.

2.3 The Soldier in Service of the Country and Pastoral Care

A letter of Gaetano was written, dated 7 December 1915, from the war field of Udine with the following text:

*“After several months in the war zone – a place where I have not seen such work of mercy – I, therefore, humbly turn to you to please allow me to receive the Diaconate which I should have received in the previous fall, together with my third year classmates who still remained in Foglizzo. This is the most important step that would take me to the priesthood, my highest goal. I ask this so that this would become a source of inspiration in the time of difficulties. I assure you that I will find ways to prepare myself not only at this time, but I will try to prepare myself daily by doing my duties well. While awaiting your reply, I entrust my total self to the decision of the superiors.”*¹⁴

The superiors gave the letter of permission on 13 December 1915. He was also granted to go back to Ivrea to be ordained deacon. On 9 January 1916, Gaetano was ordained deacon by H.E. Bishop Filippello. Immediately after that, he went back to the war zone.

2.4 Ordination to the Priesthood

In the war front, Gaetano was assigned the duty of caring for the injured soldiers. It was evident that it was God’s providence to prepare Deacon Gaetano for his future work. He looked after the sick, provided consolation and encouragement, both physically and spiritually. From the battle field, he more clearly saw the will of God and the path of his life. So, only a few days after returning back to the battle field, he once more wrote a letter to the provincial superior on 18 January 1916, requesting to receive the priestly ordination:



*"I returned to the battle field and continued to work in a hospital providing compassion and consolation to the sick and the injured. I am of the opinion that it will be of great good if I am able to do more as a military chaplain in order to provide spiritual assistance, especially in the dispensation of the various sacraments. I, therefore, would like to request to be ordained a priest...Rest assured that I will do everything possible to prepare myself suitably, with the grace of God."*¹⁵

With the certainty of his good intention, the superiors gave their consent as a special case. Gaetano spent some time in retreat to prepare himself for this important day. Two days before his ordination, he wrote a letter to Fr. Barberis expressing his gratitude to all the superiors including those at the seminary, apologizing for his defects and assuring them of his

intention to be a good priest...a true Salesian priest.¹⁶ On 18 March 1916, Deacon Gaetano, or the young soldier, was ordained priest in the war zone by H.E. Anastasio Rossi of Udine. It was the day he has been waiting for. It was the day when the world looked so beautiful. Everything seemed joyful. It was the day to be remembered throughout his life. We do not know exactly who went to participate in his ordination ceremony. In a letter dated 16 March, he mentioned about his father's presence, but there were no others, including his mother, because of the war, the poverty and the place of ordination being in the war zone.¹⁷ His ordination motto, printed at the back of the souvenir pictures depicting 'Jesus knocking at the door' was: "In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." [Jn 16, 33] This seemed to be in contradiction with the joy of the day, but it was in consonance with the situation of the world war at that time and was some sort of prediction of the many challenges that he would meet in the time to come. It was the Word expressing the joy derived only from faith and hope in God.

Chapter 3 : Life and Missionary Activities in China [1918 – 1927]

There has been no record when Fr. Pasotti returned from war, and also when and how he had this missionary vocation. However, we believed that the challenging life experienced in the battle field proved to be a good preparation for him towards the missionary life. If it were not a request from him to be sent out as a missionary, the superiors themselves must have seen his promptness. We can see later that he was very enthusiastic about missionary life and works.

3.1 Origin and Situation of the Salesian Mission in China ¹⁸

In order to understand the life and mission of Fr. Gaetano Pasotti in China, it is necessary to understand first the origin and situation of the missionary activities in China, and also the life and mission of the Salesian missionaries prior to his arrival there.

Fr. Francis Xavier Rondina [1827 – 1897] was like St. John Baptist who was the precursor and prepared the venue for the Salesians to be missionaries in China.

In 1890, H.E. Bishop Antonio Gioachino Medeiros, the Bishop of Macau [1884 – 1897], wrote a letter to Fr. Francis Rondina that he would be very pleased to have the Salesians to work in his diocese, to help in the evangelization of Timor, and that he would provide a house in Macau to be the center and administrative base for the missionary work there. So Fr. Rondina contacted

Fr. Corneli, who was close to the Salesians, to write to Fr. Rua. Fr. Rua responded directly to the Bishop in October 1890, asking for more detailed information, showing his interest in sending the Salesians to open a house and a college in Macau. When all the works were in place, he would think of Timor. ¹⁹

In spite of the good will of every party, this had to wait until January 1906 before the Salesians could send the first group of missionaries to Macau ... consisting of Fr. Luigi Versiglia, the head of the team, Fr. Ludovico Olive, Fr. Giovanni Fergani, Fr. Boracio Felice, Fr. Luigi Carmagnola and Roda Gaudencio...

The Salesian missionaries arrived in Macau on 13 February 1906. Shortly after, they began the work at an orphanage, a small house next to the seminary, a small house just enough for a start. With zeal, Fr. Versiglia also started the Sunday Youth Center. ²⁰

Later on, in the year 1910: *"Not long after the political revolution in Portugal, the monarchy was abolished and a republican state was established. All the new rulers embraced Marxist ideology, and their first agenda was to get rid of religious institutions. On 8 October, an order was issued to expedite the program both in Portugal and the colonies. Initially, Macau hoped that the order would not be so severe, but that hope was wiped out. All the Jesuit priests left the seminary immediately, but the Canossians and Salesian Sisters had hoped that their works would be exempted. Finally, they too had to leave their houses on 30 November."*

“Fr. Versiglia and the confreres escaped to Hong Kong ... Bishop Paolino suggested to Fr. Versiglia to evangelize in the territory of Heung Shan which was nearest to Macau. In fact, both places share the same border, so that if they want to go back to Macau this would be the nearest.”

“After the troubles of the revolution passed, the Bishop wanted the Salesians to return to work at the abandoned orphanage. The state rulers also approved this idea ... The superiors in Turin, therefore, sent new missionaries. They should be under the supervision of Fr. Versiglia and must work in that orphanage ... So, in 1912, the Salesians once again returned to Macau to begin the work in their beloved orphanage.”

“In 1912, the additional members were Luigi Viola – a tailor, Ottavio Fantini – a sock weaver, Giuseppe Sturm – an industrial technician, together with Fr. Canazei and Don Lucas ... In the following year, Fr. Giovanni Guarona, Bro. Guglielmo Vincenzo – printer, and Giuseppe del Corno – bookbinder, followed. In 1916, Fr. Versiglia was able to construct a building with several large rooms, workshops, and a room in front of the main gate ... On the issue of religion and morality, he laid down the foundation of charity and compassion in the orphanage, established religious groups and catechists...”²¹

3.2 The Journey to the Mission in China – 1918

We have to be grateful to Fr. Mario Rassiga who compiled the missionary expedition to China in great detail.

“On 6 June 1918, His Eminence Cardinal Cagliero gave his farewell address to the Salesian missionaries going to the diocese of Shiu Chow, China. He told them what Don Bosco told him just about three days before his death:

“I entrust the missionary activities to you ...”

“Yes, Father ... the missionary activities in our beloved America.”

*Don Bosco said: “I entrust Asia to you.”*²²

“But I offered my life to the West, how can I go to the East?”

Don Bosco calmly said: “I entrust Asia to you.”

*“The group of Salesian missionaries sent to China at that time consisted of Fr. Sante Garelli, head of the team, Vincenzo Barberis, Ernesto Cattaneo, Carlo Frigo, Bassano Lareno Faccini, Gaetano Pasotti and Bro. Giovanni Gnavi.”*²³

Thanks to Fr. Vincenzo Barberis who recorded in detail that interesting journey which Fr. Mario Rassiga brought to our knowledge.

“They departed from Turin on 20 June 1918 at 17.00 p.m. by a rapid train; and for sure it must be third class. They arrived in Rome the following morning of 21 June, physically tired because

of the hard benches. They stayed in Rome for a week to sustain their piety and their curiosity of the city. They continued their journey and arrived in Naples on 28 June. On 4 July, they took the steam-propelled Ischia, a cargo ship belonging to the city governor – the only ship that would take us because the war was not yet completely over and the Mediterranean waters up the straight of Port Said was still under the control of the enemies. There were 23 ships plying together and at times they had to zig-zag because the sea was still perilous. The lights must be turned off while sailing. One night, the Ischia drifted away from the leading Greek ship. The expert ship captain calmly tried his best to avoid disaster. On 16 July, the fleet arrived in Greece. On the 20th of the same month, they arrived at Port Said. After all the complicated formality checks, they were able to get ashore. They were informed that two ships departing from Marseilles on 1 and 15 July, on which they would have been on board had there been places available, were both wrecked. The former capsized in the north of Alexandria of Egypt where all the passengers were unaccounted for. The latter drifted about 18 miles from Malta where a number of passengers were saved, while the rest drowned in the sea. Our Lady, help of Christians, protected the lives of her children!”

“On 25 July, they changed the ship from Ischia to How Ting, a British cargo ship with English and Chinese crew members sailing from Italy. Among the missionaries, no one could speak English. Luckily, one of the British crews could speak some French, but things were not easy, though the crews were courteous to them.

The cargo ship brought goods from Shanghai and unloaded them at Port Said. So the ship was empty to bring us back to Shanghai. Two of us were put up in a room next to the engine chamber. It was very hot and noisy. Fr Barberis scribbled in his diary that: 'it can be guessed that they will encounter the most difficult journey.'"

"Since the ship did not depart immediately, the missionaries, therefore, went to stay with the kind Franciscan priests. [At that time, there was no Salesian house at Port Said] On those days, Fr. Cattaneo had a little fever which was the result of malaria. On 26 July, the fever went up to 40 degrees. He was immediately brought to the hospital. Not long after that, he was also bleeding. So, with deep sorrow, he had to give up his intention to be a missionary in China. A Salesian confrere came up from Alexandria, and when Fr. Cattaneo could walk a little, he was accompanied to our house in Alexandria to receive treatment until he would be able to return to Italy."

"The remaining group of missionaries – one cook and five missionaries [as they were fondly called], departed from Port Said at 18.30 p.m. on 31 July 1918. It was the most difficult trip as foreseen by Fr. Barberis. The heat in the Red Sea was almost unbearable, and in the Indian Ocean they met several typhoons which made the passengers uncomfortable and sea-sick. Besides, since the ship had no cargo on board, it was thrown slanting right and left by the gigantic waves. On 25 August, they saw the island of Sri Lanka, and the typhoon began to reduce its mighty force. On 2 September, the ship anchored in Singapore for a few

hours, but nobody was able to get ashore [probably because of exhaustion]. On 9 September, they saw the island of Macau and Hong Kong from afar. Finally, on 13 September, at 17.00 hours, they left the ship and stepped on Chinese soil in Shanghai. They did not meet with Fr. Versiglia as expected, but instead they met the Jesuit priests who knew of their arrival in advance. He gave them a warm, fraternal welcome. During the many days there, they were taken to see the city and many catholic activities which were very prosperous. They travelled once again and arrived in Hong Kong on 20 September. There they met Fr. Versiglia, and they became the guests of Bishop Pozzoni and his missionaries. They led the new missionaries to see the town and various catholic activities. Finally, on 23 September, they arrived in Macau and stepped into the Salesian house once more. The journey from Turin to Macau took 95 days.”²⁴

Fr. Rassiga related further:

“About one week after, they went to Canton to pay a courtesy visit to Bishop De Guebriant. While on the way back to Macau, they passed Heung Shan where they met many new things which slowly taught them to adapt to the Chinese way of life. They left Macau on 15 October, and two days later they arrived at Shiu Chow where they resided in a very poor house. There they met Fr. Ly, a diocesan priest of Canton, and Fr. Olive came to see them. On the following day, Fr. Ly led them to take a boat to Pak Heung [Beijing] which took about an hour, passing through Nam Hung River at Lok Chong. Later, the rower informed them that

they will continue on their journey on the following morning, so they had to go back to the rest house. They arrived there in the evening. On the following morning, immediately after rising, they took the boat and sailed on. In the evening of 25 October, they arrived in Beijing. They walked past a vast wet paddy field. One of us slipped, while Fr. Barberis fell down full-bodied. He got up, all wet and muddy, with his umbrella, back pack – everything, including his diary. [I, Fr. Rassiga, recorded these stories to let you know.] There is still fresh remembrance up to now of the water and the field. “

“In Pak Heung [Beijing], all the missionaries were prepared to spend several months learning Chinese. However, after just a few months, because of their zeal, they parted ways and went to different places. It can be understood, then, that because of this they lacked the expertise, and could not avoid making mistakes in the use of the language. In fact, they frequently made mistakes. And we have to understand what Fr. Olive had written which demonstrated their innocent faith: “We have done something shocking, but Our Lady, Help of Christians, solved them all.”²⁵

3.3 Varied Life Experiences in China

Fr. Gaetano Pasotti, who was one of the group, wrote his first letter from China dated 11 October 1918. This must have been done after visiting Bishop De Guebriant in Canton and returning back to Macau through Heung Shan. He demonstrated his zeal and eagerness in dedicating himself for souls in the vast mission of China which he began to encounter. He wrote:



"My first impression of China was excellent. The vast field of work opened wide before us where we could do many good things. So, Father, you can imagine how my spirit was filled with joy coupled with gratitude. I thanked Jesus Christ and the superiors who sent me to this remote land, and I hope that, in the name of Our Lady, Help of Christians, and Don Bosco, our dear father, I will use all my strength here until the end of my life. Our confreres here have been doing miraculous things. I have seen Chinese children in our orphanage and the work we have done in this mission, all of which those living in Italy can never think of! Father, when are you coming to visit us?"

"...Right now, we are living a lonely life far from each other. The distance will take us several days before we can meet. Who will know that there are so many people of different faiths whom we have to convert..." ²⁶

There was yet another letter dated 10 November 1918 telling that he had arrived in Pak Heung [Beijing] for three weeks already. He said that he had to adjust himself so much:

“...For my self-preparation, these days seemed difficult. I was used to the systematic activities of the Sunday Youth Center which I would not easily forego. However, I found out that in order to sow good ideas, it was not enough to feel isolated. I had to be detached even from the place to which my spirit was attached to... Between the period of 30 October to 8 November, I was bed-ridden of a high fever. Now I feel better, but still weak, which was a hindrance to my learning. And when I could not study, I felt sad and depressed. However, I have to try my best for the sake of the mission. I intended to follow always the will of God which could come through my superiors.”

“...There was not a single catholic in the city and in the villages! They lighted candles to worship false gods and ancestors. It made me think of my little capability and weakness. I hoped that Our Lady, Help of Christians, will think of us...”²⁷

“In 1919 [10 August – 28 September], the superiors sent another group of Salesian missionaries with Fr. Joseph Colombo as the head of the team. Aside from that, there was Fr. Carlo Braga ...”²⁸

In the letter dated 8 October 1919 from Ham Kong, Fr. Pasotti enumerated various feelings about his missionary activities. There were disappointments, joy, hope and consolation. He also mentioned

his experience with the pirates, but with the intercession of Our Lady, Help of Christians, he was set free without losing anything.²⁹

After that, in a letter dated 10 October 1919, Fr. Pasotti recalled his painful experience of sickness during the previous year, and that it was through the intercession of Mary, the Immaculate Conception, that he was healed.

“... As you already know, I began my mission in Pak Heung [Beijing] with illness. I was bed-ridden for about two months. On 8 December 1918, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the teacher who took care of me on that day gave me eight chicken legs, and eight chicken wings to eat. He was a catholic who provided all those things. The Blessed Mother still did not want me to go to heaven. Further more, the Blessed Mother gave me her blessings by letting me go through this first test. It was a real blessing after a life of three years in the battle field, and after that as well. Now, I feel shaken and hesitant when I am thrown into a land where everything, both people and culture, is new, without mentioning the difficulties of learning the language... All these would have driven one to discouragement, but today [and I can't explain this] I begin to love this land...”

“I am quite afraid and uncertain if I can be a good Salesian as I used to be during my first few years when I was quite zealous. I pray to God to let me die rather than go against the order of Don Bosco, our loving father!”

“Dear Fr. Barberis: I promise to be honest even in minute matters in the daily pious practices and the observance of the rules. Meanwhile, I wish that you assure me of your remembrance every day. Please pray for me before Our Lady, Help of Christians, and Don Bosco with whom you are so close.”

“In the months of May and June, I went for a field visit assigned to me in Jing Tak ... There were two villages without any visit from the missionaries for a long time, which resulted to the abandonment of the Church. Other catholics migrated to other places, here and there, and they left the Church as well. So you can imagine the pain that the work of building and evangelizing demanded from me...”

“Devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist through frequent communion and loyalty to Our Lady, Help of Christians, will be like two knights in the battle field for the conversion of China...”

“Here we live in the hands of God. I am far from Fr. Garelli, about 5 days journey, one to two days to Shiu Chow, our mission center, two to three days away from Fr. Centin and Fr. Larena, three days away from Fr. Guarona, and four days away from Fr. Olive. We could meet once every three months, if we wished so ... Fr. Versiglia could not find a person to accompany me, and I protested that if he did not help, one day I may run away. In the past month of July, Fr. Frigo and myself had to walk about 68 kilometers to meet Fr. Vincenzo so that we could go for the retreat together. Our regulations said that we could have rest and

recreation not more than 2 or 3 hours, but here we have to walk about 30 or 40 kilometers per day. A good Salesian must always travel by foot to save on expenditures, to save 2-3 dollars for other necessary expenses or for buying gifts for the children.”³⁰

The missionaries learned how to adjust themselves with poverty and local cultures in order to be like the people with whom they were working, and to make their evangelization effective. It must have been this experience which Fr. Pasotti adapted to the situation in Thailand and stipulated in the first regulations of the “Congregation of Xi Song Khro”, i.e., to be Siamese for the Siamese.³¹

Fr. Rassiga related more:

*“In the evening of 23 October 1919, the statue of Our Lady, Help of Christians, was installed in the poorest chapel. It was the statue which the missionaries brought to China in the previous year. On the following day [the 24th], after the Mass, there was a simple ceremony of offering flowers to Our Lady in front of all the missionaries. Fr. Versiglia, in his prayers, offered all the missionaries, the faithful and the mission territory to the Blessed Mother, and nominated Our Lady, Help of Christians the patroness of our mission. That liturgical service was an internal family affair; but on the following Sunday, the same liturgy was repeated with participation of more than the usual number of faithful. Fr. Versiglia sang the Mass and Fr. Guarona acted as the master of ceremonies explaining the meaning of the various parts of the liturgy.”*³²



“On this very same day [23 October 1919], Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter from Ham Kong to the superiors telling about his boat trip to the place accompanied by Fr. Cucchiara, Fr. Frigo and various pets. It was like a story-telling event with a sense of humor and optimistic attitude in spite of the fact that he had to depend on self-centered persons that made the trip quite uncomfortable.”³³

*“Later, on 27 October, the ‘old’ missionaries who arrived one year earlier took the new ones to the various posts as assigned.”*³⁴

One year later, on 7 January 1920, Fr. Pasotti wrote to Fr. Barberis giving a report of his missionary experiences saying that he had to be ready to change his personal plan, such as going to rest for 4-5 days with Fr. Lentin, his friend, after the monthly retreat at Shiu Chow, but Fr. Versiglia and Fr. Braga asked him to go and look after Fr. Lentin’s residence for a week.³⁵

In the same letter, Fr. Pasotti confessed to Fr. Barberis, one of the superiors of the Congregation in Italy:

“I am afraid that I am allowing myself to do bad things, to do things against the will of God - not to responding to His graces, not evangelizing as well as I can. But I don’t want to be so. The lack of community life makes me realize that I am quite slow in the development of my spiritual life. I feel that I am rather lukewarm, taking life too easy, distracted... But I have confidence in the grace of God...”

*“Other than that, I offer glory to God for calling me to this far land... I am happy within my heart not only for not longing for the past, but also for desiring to stay here in this humble place...”*³⁶

Beside the community life, another thing that Fr. Pasotti felt lacking and desired to have was to have access to the Salesian information and newsletter, including the catholic prints, which have been missing for quite a while.

Again in the same letter, Fr. Pasotti said: “I have had the honor of encountering the pirates three times.” He further mentioned about the unity of all, between the missionaries and Fr. Versiglia who tried every possible way to let all keep the Salesian tradition, to be good example in the spirit of piety, humility, poverty and obedience.

Fr. Pasotti also confessed that he suffered a great deal because of Fr. Garelli’s departure from the mission in Lin Chow without him knowing the reason. He remembered the days when Fr. Garelli was his companion travelling together up to Ham Kong before proceeding to one’s own mission.

On 7 January 1920, Fr. Pasotti wrote from Yen Tak telling about his visit to the Christian communities of Tsion Van and Son Tcha, where he blessed a marriage. He learned about the traditional Chinese marriage ceremony which started with the bride 'leaving the house' of her parents and sending her for marriage in Son Tcha which took two days and two nights to travel.

On the second night in Son Tcha, a group of pirates made a hole in the wall and stole several cooking pots, but no one was hurt. Further more, on the way back from Son Tcha to Mioa Ha, passing through the forest where Fr. Pasotti had once encountered the pirates, his heart was throbbing fast. But he trusted in the Blessed Mother. Together with the catechists, he prayed the rosary in a soft voice until they reached their destination.³⁷

At Miao Ha, Fr. Pasotti was pleased to prepare the young and the children for the first Holy Communion. He experienced the good will of the parents who provided food for the festivity. Here there were plenty of robbers. Some villages had been razed to the ground by fire and there was so much violence that the villagers were unable to earn their living peacefully. He was sad to see the Chinese having recourse to superstition. So, he asked the Blessed Virgin Mary to provide special care for them. On the other hand, he was consoled upon seeing that the villagers tried to make the chapel look nice and proper to the best of their abilities.

From Miao Ha, he went on to Tsion Van. At both places, he felt the poverty of the villagers and felt much pity for them. However,

they also showed their good will by collecting some money to help him in accordance with their Christian duty.³⁸

Fr. Pasotti took pride in relating about the installation ceremony of the statue of Our Lady over the altar at the church in Yen Tak. It gave him the opportunity to talk about Jesus, the Savior, and Mary, Queen and Patroness of the Salesian mission territory. He observed that the faithful accepted and had special piety toward Mary, the Help of Christians. He, therefore, entrusted the evangelization of this area to the Blessed Virgin Mother.³⁹

In the month of March 1920, Fr. Pasotti wrote about his life amidst the faithful in the north, that there were sermons encouraging devotion to St. Joseph and that special prayers be directed to him who is the Patron of Universal Church, for the conversion of those who have not yet received the faith. He thanked the Rector who revived the piety of the faithful and of the Salesian confreres by praying the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Glory be, invoking St. Joseph for the intention of the superiors.⁴⁰

On the 13th of the same month, he was asked to go to Miao Ha again because a girl named Andrea Lei has been seriously sick for a month, with a kind of bone disease. It was expected that she was near death. He proposed to pray to Our Lady, Help of Christians, and gave her the medal of Mother Mary to wear around her neck. On 21 March, the girl was healed after being bed-ridden for 40 days. She prayed the morning prayers, obviously grateful to the Blessed Mother.⁴¹

After that, Fr. Pasotti took a cargo ship from Lin Kon Heu to Ham Kong, with a helper. There were two accompanying ships going together for security. About half-an-hour after the departure, they met four pirates who demanded protection fees. He entrusted himself to Our Lady, Help of Christians, asking for protection of his life and belongings. With prudence, peaceful dealing and courtesy, and agreeing to give some amount of money in exchange, the pirates allowed the boat to move on. However, after just about 15 minutes, they met a new group of more fearsome pirates who seemed to be friends of the ship's crew members. After threatening with guns and pretending to search the ship, the pirates finally changed their minds. When the pirates left, the ship's captain said that he had to pay 50 dollars, and he asked for donation of 10 dollars each. But Fr. Pasotti was firm and said that he had already paid more than enough to the ship's owner. That was the end of it! After arriving home, he immediately went to the chapel to thank God and the Blessed Mother.

Another most consoling factor in the missionary work of Fr. Pasotti was the catechists who carried out their duties very well. They were the witnesses of Christian love amidst the people of other faiths.⁴²

Fr. Gaetano Pasotti, like his other missionary friends who were still in the missions, had encountered so many difficulties which were so different from their native land, such as culture, language, food, climate, etc. But he was an example and a source of inspiration

to his missionary friends by always looking at things with optimism and hope.

3.4 Under the Leadership of His Excellency Bishop Luigi Versiglia

On 9 April 1920, His Holiness Pope Benedict XV divided the Diocese of Canton and established Shiu Chow as a new diocese. On 22 April, he appointed Fr. Versiglia to be bishop of Caristo, assuming the position of ordinary of the new diocese of Shiu Chow.

*“The consecration was made on 9 January 1921 in the beautiful cathedral of Canton ... There was a melodious choir of college students from Macau prepared by Fr. Lucas. In the choir, there was a baritone voice sang by Fr. Boccasini and a tenor sang by Fr. Cucchiara and Fr. Pasotti for “Ecce Sacerdos” composed by Fr. Cimatti especially for this occasion. The organ was played by Fr. Braga.”*⁴³



Salesian missionaries and the faithful of Shiu Chow diocese

In the month of July 1920, Fr. Pasotti gave account of his visit to the Christian community of Ha Tai, a land between Jing Tak and Lin Kon Heu, inspite of the warning that it would be of no use to go there because the faithful had already left the Church. But he decided to go since he wanted to know the fact by himself and not rely only on rumors. He also considered that it was his duty to visit the sheep put under his pastoral care, and if they had left the faith, he would rekindle their Christian life. After his arrival, he immediately began to follow the scattered sheep in the small villages near the mountain, walking along for a distance of 30 kilometers without a catechist or a helper. He walked under the hot sun while praying all the way to Mary Help of Christian Finally, when he arrived at the destination, he saw some signs which indicated that not all the sheep had lost their faith even after a period of five years without a pastoral visit. He saw a picture of Our Lady which used to be hanging over the wall in a church of their ancestors, and was transferred a long time ago in a chapel. He believed that where Our Lady is present, it would be impossible that the love of God will disappear from that place. They have not forgotten the prayers and important duties of the Christians. Besides, they were very eager to go and meet Bishop Versiglia who came to Lin Kong Heu from SHiu Chow.⁴⁴

In Ha Tai, Fr. Pasotti encountered with the pirates once again, and they came from no where but within that village. They were in the Christian group praying the night prayer, while Fr. Pasotti was about to give the 'buona notte' according to the Salesian

tradition. They did not do harm to the villagers but went away in the following morning with their arms, ready to plunder and rob without fear. Fr. Pasotti was saddened by the fact that among the robbers there was this 17 year old catholic youth. He wanted him to know what he felt, but ... So, he entrusted that youth and the other delinquents to Mary, Help of Christians. ⁴⁵

Fr. Pasotti entrusted Sui Pien to Don Bosco in a special way. Some of the male and female catechists came from well-off families. But, in Yong Sua Hang, the Christians were poor but full of good will. ⁴⁶

In the Salesian Bulletin No. 47 [1923], Fr. Pasotti gave an additional information that at Sui Pien, which was under constant threat from the pirates, they had to tighten up the security with volunteer guards, day and night, who would sound the alarm and ready to fight with the robbers. Some Christians did not dare even to sleep at home. They went to sleep somewhere near the mountain where they had temporary farm huts. But they had much devotion to Our Lady, Help of Christians. They prayed to her and asked her motherly protection over them.

Here there was an example of a miracle in which the Blessed Mother healed a sick person who was near death. He was a doctor, and there was no hope to be cured by human hands, but they did not loose hope in the divine intervention. The patient's father knelt before the picture of Our Lady, prayed the rosary, and promised to offer two masses and to make known the blessing they would

receive. On the following day, his son was completely healed.

Fr. Pasotti used to say Mass in some catholic families which hid themselves in secret places from the pirates. Fr. Pasotti was convinced that Jesus would be listening to the prayers of those new poor Christians. It is worth mentioning here that fear of ghosts had great influence over their mentality as well. ⁴⁷

A catechist gave an inspiration to Fr. Pasotti saying that there was hope that the lost Christians of Long Pi might return back after going astray for so many years. As a new parish priest, he petitioned graces for those people in a special way. ⁴⁸

“The Salesian confreres in China were increasing. In 1921, the new comers were Fr. Bortholo Fochesato, Fr. Luigi Boccassino, Fr. Beniamino Ronchi, Fr. Sante Garelli, and Bro. Giovanni Gnavi...” ⁴⁹

“When H.E. Bishop Versiglia and his missionaries began their work at the assigned mission ... they found that there were only a few Christians, a few poor mission stations, a multitude of non-christians to be evangelized. So they began to work immediately ...

The activities they started were:

St. Joseph Orphanage at Ho-Sai: the elementary school and the beautiful St. Joseph Church were the first two places the Salesians built in the diocese.

The Don Bosco Technical School at Shiu Chow which was opened on 6 July 1924.

Hostel for female catechists and Mary, Help of Christians College were given to the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. The places were changed from a small catholic school for girls in Shiu Chow.

Asylum for poor and abandoned children, under the patronage and help of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

Home for the many aged and poor people who were waiting for their last moment...

Social Welfare Center at Ho Sai, and later at Shiu Chow, where each day the sick people would make a long queue to receive treatment and received good religious lessons from the catechists who were always present.

Special formation program for the catechists.

"Seminary at Ho Sai which was considered the top crown of the Bishop." ⁵⁰

Fr. Pasotti provided information that 30 March 1922 would be the inauguration day of the new Mission Center at Lin Kon Heu, constructed according the plan of Fr. Frigo and dedicated to Saint Raphael. This was intended to keep the promise made by Fr. Versiglia in 1918. He gave a clear description of the new Center as follows:

*"This new house is situated on a hill. It is a good expansion of our land. It is just a few steps from the Canton – Suathau railway going to the south. Lin Chow River is in front of our Center and it flows down to join with Pak Kon River where the current is very strong. It is the location where a lot of goods are loaded and unloaded on and from the cargo ships."*⁵¹

Fr. Guarona presided over the inauguration ceremony, with Fr. Sturm from Shiu Chow present. Fr. Guarona celebrated the Mass, heard confessions and gave the homily encouraging piety to Saint Raphael who provided protection to all from dangers; he also blessed the whole area. Fr. Sturm entertained the audience by playing the flute and the gramophone, reminding Fr. Pasotti of Don Bosco who used all these instruments to promote piety.

At Lin Kon Heu, far from Sui Piem and Ha Tai about 3 and 4 polu respectively,⁵² the faith of the Christian family and a death by tuberculosis of a faithful who adhered to the faith till the end became witnesses to other Christians, including the alumni of the Salesian's St. Joseph Institute who came for summer vacation and who desired to propagate the faith to the remote villages as well.⁵³

Fr. Pasotti spoke about the participants of the inauguration ceremony:

"There were about 60 people, both catholics and catechumens. Most of them were new comers within the last couple of years. Among them, there were also the boat drivers who were under the loving care of Fr. Bardelli ... Even the businessmen and staff

of the railway station, including government officials, came to participate in this joyous occasion... They lighted the big pack of firecrackers, like any other big Chinese celebrations according to her tradition ... I believed that all the catholic children at Lin Kon Heu came to the feast together with their non-catholic poor, pitiful friends. One surprising observation was that, without any expectation, those poor, non-catholic children were the ones who received big gift prices. “ 54

In 1923, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to Fr. Barberis and the superiors of the Salesian Congregation telling them about the hope of the Salesians in Shiu Chow. There were so many young people in various institutes who registered to prepare themselves to be Salesian religious, including some from St. Joseph Institute of Ho Sai which was under the responsibility of Fr. Braga. Many young men were zealous to work in evangelization. For example: during the summer vacation at home, they took the opportunity to bring the Good News to their friends of other faiths. They braved themselves even to evangelize a Minister's wife who was a Protestant. The Salesians were convinced that evangelization in China would be effective through the youth. Working in the youth center gave hope and made the Salesians [at least Fr. Pasotti who wrote this letter] feel lively and youthful.

From the experiences amidst the pirates, Fr. Pasotti dared to say that these people have become his friends. They invited him to have meals with them, and handed a cigarette to him like a friend, which he humbly declined. He hoped that this friendship will

slowly help them to walk away from the unlawful and risky life.

Fr. Pasotti related more that in the Salesian mission in China, each mission territory was dedicated to the patronage of the deceased, holy former Salesian superiors. So, Sui Pien was dedicated to Don Bosco, Ha Tai to Fr. Rua, Pak Sa to Fr. Albera, Sak Kok Hong to Fr. Beltrami. At every place the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to Mary Help of Christians and St. Joseph was promoted. He admitted that the results of the work were not easily seen and proceeded slowly, but there was bright hope.⁵⁵

3.5 The Salesian Novitiate in China

We have already seen that in the Diocese of Shiu Chow there were many young men in various settings under the responsibility of the Salesians who began to take interest and received the vocation to be a Salesian. Hence, the superiors began to think of establishing a novitiate.

On 12 October 1923, the superiors in Italy received the green light from the Holy See to establish a novitiate in the Shiu Chow Mission. The Provincial superior, Fr. Ignacio Canasse, sent a telegram to the Salesian superiors to nominate a novice master for this place. The response was that: let China propose first the names because it was not easy to appoint a novice master. Fr. Canasse had in his heart 4 persons: Fr. Bernadini, Fr. Braga, Fr. Guarona and Fr. Pasotti. The first one was out of the picture because he was already a rector. Fr. Canasse then asked for Fr. Pasotti from H.E. Versiglia, and if it was impossible, he would

like to request one of the remaining two names in the list. Bishop Versiglia confirmed that he could not give away any one of them because Fr. Guarona was his vicar. Fr. Braga was the rector of a small college which was getting to become a big Don Bosco College in Ho Sai, while Fr. Pasotti was the director in charge of the vast Lin Khao territory, and he has just started to assume the duties of being a rector, although the official appointment from the Rector Major has not arrived yet. It came on 1 March 1924.

There was an agreement between the diocesan ordinary and the Salesian rectors according to the resolution of the superior council in Italy on 24 November 1923 stipulating that a Salesian rector cannot transfer a Salesian personnel from the mission unless it was really necessary for the sake of the spiritual welfare of that confrere. Fr. Canasse, therefore, must look for the novice master from the other members. Finally, he chose Fr. Larenò Faccini Bassano, with Bro. Alessandro Terpin as the assistant. On 29 January 1924, the novitiate was opened in Ho Sai in the compound of the church where the Salesians were working. The novitiate was situated behind St. Joseph Church. After that, in October, the superiors in Turin gave an order to close the novitiate in Ho Sai in the Diocese of Shiu Chow, and instead opened a novitiate in the Diocese of Macau. In practice, however, with some reasons, the novitiate in Ho Sai continued to function until the month of August 1925 before it finally moved to Macau.

During the first year of novitiate, the superiors began to think of the major seminary for philosophy which would continue the formation of the confreres after the novitiate.⁵⁶

Fr. Pasotti played the role of rector with utmost care and seriousness. He fought against many obstacles side by side with the great bishop of the diocese – H.E. Mons. Luigi Versiglia. Fr. Pasotti has learned about the missionary life in a foreign land from this bishop who became his important guide and who had influenced his missionary life including that part in Thailand.

On 20 November 1924, the superiors sent the first group of Salesian missionaries to Shanghai. They were Fr. Antonio Martin, seminarian Calisto Caravario, Ernesto Fontana, and others, with Fr. Canasse as the head. Together with this group, there were 8 novices who later moved to Macau [in this group there was also novice Mario Rassiga who wrote the history of the Salesian mission in China which we often referred to in this book]. After that, on 16 January 1923, Fr. Sante Garelli, the rector, arrived with the other missionaries. Among them were Fr. Paulo Stacul and Vittorio Raviola, who later moved on to Thailand.⁵⁷

29 January 1925 was a historical day for the Salesian mission territory in China because the first group of novices made their first profession. There were 5 Italians and 3 Chinese. On this occasion, the house of philosophy was opened at Ho Sai to accommodate the newly professed. The novice master was also acting as the temporary rector. Besides, two newly professed confreres came from Macau to join them.⁵⁸

On 23 April 1925, being the first day of the month of Our Lady, Help of Christians, Fr. Ricaldone wrote a letter to Fr. Pasotti begging the Blessed Mother to bestow special graces for the conversion of China through the works and sacrifices of Don Bosco's children. He encouraged Fr. Pasotti not to be afraid to look at the world with extreme optimism. Being more optimistic does not hurt anybody, but not so with a pessimistic outlook. Most sacrifices will be unbearable without positive enthusiasm. Thank him for the good news sent in the letter of 16 February and encouraged him to carry out his new assignment with a cheerful heart. ⁵⁹

On 27 August 1925, the novitiate was moved from Ho Sai to Macau, with the students of philosophy moving ahead. On 8 December of the same year, solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, there was the first profession of 4 novices in Macau. ⁶⁰

In 1926, there was a change of the novice master. Fr. Gaetano Pasotti was chosen to be the novice master in Macau. Bro. Pietro Garbero, who came to Macau on 30 January 1926 with a big group of 8 candidates – 7 clerics and 1 lay brother, as assistant. There were also 2 Chinese candidates and 6 postulants who came together with Fr. Garelli. They began their novitiate on 1 February 1926. ⁶¹

On 26 October 1926, another group of missionaries left Italy for Macau with Fr. John Casetta as the head. Some of them would enter the novitiate in Macau. Among them were Carlo della Torre and friends who would be sent later to Thailand as missionaries. ⁶²

Fr. Carlo della Torre, a novice of Fr. Pasotti in China, gave us a brief description of the place:

“In Macau, the Salesians have a huge technical school, and when the typhoon came, we, the seminarians living in an old house, have to run away from there to the new building. We began our novitiate at this old house. Our novice master was Fr. Gaetano Pasotti who has been a missionary here for many years. Our novitiate was separated from the technical school building, and all the priests assigned here would stay in that building when they come to do some errands.” ⁶³

Formation is an important and sensitive task, but Fr. Pasotti took care of this with utmost capability so that all the novices will progress physically and spiritually, and prepare themselves to be good Salesian religious. Fr. Rassiga gave his opinion on this issue:

“The previous novitiate life was seen to be too strict. Many novices left during the tenure of the first novice master. During the time of Fr. Pasotti, the formation was filled with a joyous atmosphere because of the personality and confidence of the novice master. Though at times some disciplinary action had to be taken, yet it did not mean that the novice master did something wrong. However, during the time of Fr. Pasotti, some novices also left. Some even left after only a few years of profession.” ⁶⁴

On 18 January 1927, Fr. Rinaldi, the Rector Major, wrote a letter to Fr. Pasotti who was the novice master in Macau. He thanked Fr. Pasotti and the novices for their Christmas and New Year greetings.

He extended his blessings and prayers asking all to work hard and be holy. He gave advice to all to prepare themselves for the canonization of Don Bosco by living a holy life, and that they all have to be saints likewise in the footsteps of Dominic Savio. He also prayed to God to protect them, while China was in war.

3.6 During the Period of Revolution and Anti-Religion in China

Between 1925 and 1927, there had been a revolution against religion and the foreigners. This spread to the diocese of Shiu Chow as well. It was really a difficult time. In fact, in 1927, the revolutionary movement was at its peak. However, slowly, General Chang Kai Shek, with his militia, successfully expelled the red guards from Canton. All the missionaries, especially at Nam Hung, were so worried. But slowly, peace came back. Life and work came back, tranquil just like before, as if nothing happened. But not so with the schools, because the government wanted to have all the schools under its control. However, with Salesian flexibility, all the missionaries allowed themselves to be under the government. So, the schools remained in their hands, and they agreed to take out the teaching of catechism. However, this was inserted into the curriculum in the form of ‘moral formation’.⁶⁵

On 24 March 1927, Fr. Giuseppe da Silva Lucas returned to Portugal after being a rector at the orphanage in Macau for about one year [from 14 February 1926]. When the position of rector was vacant, Fr. Pasotti was assigned to assume this responsibility while at the same time holding the position of novice master.

Not long after that, on 16 May 1927, Fr. Ricaldone, the vicar of the Rector Major, came for a visit and announced that there was a project to send a group of missionaries from China to a new mission in Thailand at the end of the year. Aside from that, he also told the Salesians to immediately open the theology course at the seminary in China.⁶⁶

Fr. Gaetano Pasotti spent a total of 9 years as missionary in China, the first mission area he loved and hoped to stay forever. After going through so many difficult experiences, he could adapt himself comfortably to the varying situations. So when the superiors asked him to make another step, he willingly accepted the will of God. Stepping out of the mission where he was working so well, and going to pioneer the new mission field in Thailand – this was quite a challenge and demanded from him a big sacrifice, being the head. He must have thought of his motto on his ordination day: “In the world, you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world.” [Jn 16, 33] Thus, he had strength and hope in God’s guidance.

Chapter 4 : The Leader of the Salesian Missionaries Who Opened the Mission Work in Thailand [1927]

4.1 God's Providence is Beyond Expectation

The encyclical letter *Maximum Illud* of Pope Benedict XV in 1919 was like a huge wave which propelled the missionary activities and was the origin of the division of mission areas and the promotion of the local churches. In 1923, Bishop Rene' Perros, Bishop Ordinary of the Siam Mission, proposed to the Congregation of the Propagation of Faith the division of Siam Mission into three dioceses. In February 1924, the said Congregation assigned a mission area to the Salesians.⁶⁷

Fr. Philip Rinaldi, the Salesian Rector Major at that time, sent a letter to Fr. Ignacio Canasse, the Salesian Provincial of China. He came to Siam to gather information and made contact with the ecclesiastical authorities in Siam from December 1925 to January 1926. He submitted a detailed report to the Rector Major with suggestions that it would be advisable to send priests and some brothers to learn the work from the Missions Etrangeres de Paris [MEP missionaries = Paris Foreign Missions Society].

Fr. Pietro Ricaldone, the vicar of the Rector Major, while on his way to visit the Salesian confreres in India, China and Japan, also stopped over Bangkok in April 1927 together with Bishop Louis Matthias of Assam Diocese, India and Fr. Canasse. He

had the intention to set Siam mission temporarily under India. As Fr. Canasse's opinion that it was rather impossible to be under the Salesian Province of China. After seeing the situation by himself and having learned about the revolution in China, Fr. Ricaldone proposed to the Rector Major to immediately establish a new vice-province with a senior missionary from China, like Fr. Pasotti or Fr. Dalmasso, to be the superior of the new vice-province and the new mission territory in order to prevent problems and tardiness on decisions. He further asked a question whether to leave the foreign seminarians in Macau or to move them also to Siam. According to the opinion of Fr. Ricaldone and Fr. Canasse, it seemed that Fr. Pasotti would be the most suitable leader as he would be acceptable to both the novices and the younger confreres.⁶⁸

Fr. Ricaldone's opinion was duly approved by Fr. Philip Rinaldi, the Rector Major of the Salesians. While visiting the Salesian provinces in China at the end of July 1927, Fr. Ricaldone, therefore, set an agreement with Fr. Ignacio Canasse, provincial of the Salesians in China, that Fr. Gaetano Pasotti would be the leader of the first group of missionaries to Siam together with the novices in Macau. He also intended to send some students of philosophy and some priests. Then in the month of December, he would send another group from Italy sufficient numbers to have enough numbers to establish a new Salesian vice-province and be directly under the care of the superiors of the Society.⁶⁹

Fr. Cesare Castellino, one of the novices, said:

"In Macau, China, when announcing names of the would-be missionaries, Fr. Ricaldone was cracking jokes just like what Don Bosco used to do with the youth, saying 'Jerome set off to Siam with his family.'" 70



4.2 An Exciting Journey

The first Salesian missionaries to Siam consisted of Fr. John Cassetta and cleric George Bainotti. They departed from China to Bangkok ahead of the group to prepare the place. The big group of missionaries boarded a large ship in Hong Kong and spent ten days at sea before arriving in Thailand on 25 October 1927. Fr. Pietro Ricaldone, the vicar general himself, led the group which consisted of Fr. Guarona, the vicar of Bishop Versiglia, Fr. Gaetano Pasotti, novice master and the leader of the group, Fr. Antonio Martin, 4 students of philosophy [Vincenzo Ardisson, Innocent Alberti, Job Carnini, Carlo Cassetta], 2 students of theology [Alessandro Terpin and Paulo Stacul]. Aside from them, there were 10 novices

[Egidio Bottain, Cesare Castellino, Andrea Ceccarelli, Domenico della Ferrera, Alessandro Comaski, Carlo della Torre, Giuseppe Galluppo, Vincenzo Seneca, Giovanni Battista Somani, Andrea Vitrano, and Vittorio Raviola. It seemed that this expedition of missionaries was the only one in the Salesian history that a large group of 22 missionaries were sent from a mission country to another mission country.

On 15 October 1927, this group of missionaries set off from Macau, took rest at St. Louis House in Hong Kong which was newly opened. They took the ship Kwang Chow, sailed to Bangkok and arrived on 25 October.⁷¹ This trip seemed short when compared with the 95 days when they travelled from Italy to China.

According to the words of Fr. Castellino, when they arrived in Bangkok, Bishop Rene' Perros, MEP, welcomed them with a paternal embrace and let them rest at St. Louis Hospital. In the morning of 26 October, they took a motor boat at 8 o'clock and cruised through the rivers and canals, and finally arrived at midnight in Bang Nok Khuek, their final destination.⁷²

Fr. Pasotti described the first impressions of his fellow missionaries:

"When everybody were already at the stern, gathered together around Fr. Ricaldone, eagerly waiting for the boat to enter the mouth of the river, we all desired, like the famous first missionaries of our family, to send our blessings, greeting this land of our mission with the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary when it will appear to our eyes for the first time. And we did as we desired"

*when we saw our mission land appear in the midst of the green landscape, so beautiful beyond description. We all were united, as if with one heart, ready to pray with our utmost trust. We all stood up with dignified posture like the beautiful landscape, and sang with one voice "Laudate Mariam".*⁷³

On the following day, the first day at Bang Nok Khuek, Fr. Ricaldone fixed the schedule and gave assignment to each one. On that day, he went to visit Bang Chang Seminary and the native seminarians to reciprocate their welcome. On 29 October, he led all the Salesian confreres for the offering of the Thai mission under the patronage of Mary, Help of Christians. He participated in the solemnity of Christ, the King on 30 October, and joined the community in offering the Thai mission to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the evening, there was a little ceremony to bid good-bye to Fr. Ricaldone who would return to Italy on the following day together with Fr. Guarona. He promised that his heart and thought would always be with all. Fr. Pasotti accompanied them to Bangkok and remained there for a couple of days to discuss various matters and to sign an agreement with Bishop Perros. On 2 November, Fr. Ricaldone and Fr. Guarona took off to Italy.⁷⁴

With the heart of a father, the Rector Major, Fr. Philip Rinaldi, wrote a letter from Turin to Fr. Pasotti, while the missionary group were still on the ship. He informed them that another group of missionaries would be coming from Italy to join them, and that they should provide a warm welcome. He requested Fr. Ricaldone, who was familiar with the place and the people, to give advice

and guidelines to the new missionaries. As for Fr. Pasotti, he was requested to build the community with the spirit of the Holy Family, united to Don Bosco with love and compassion. He encouraged Fr. Pasotti to trust in God and to send him regular reports of the progress, and not to forget that *“everything you do is our work, and what is of interest to you is what I am also interested in.”*⁷⁵

There is an undated letter which coincided with the letter of the Rector Major just mentioned above, because it was written for all the missionary confreres. This was a document that gave 15 guidelines for the mission work in Thailand written by Fr. Ricaldone. Fr. Pasotti requested advice from the Rector Major for the missionaries to start the new work, and the Rector Major requested Fr. Ricaldone to comply with the request. The guidelines covered the way of life and the way to work as missionaries and as Salesian religious working among the people of all walks of life in the countries of the East, with a culture unfamiliar to the West.⁷⁶ Fr. Pasotti must have used the above-mentioned guidelines, both for himself and everyone.



Rectory at Bang Nok Khuek

The Salesian missionaries began their first work at Bang Nok Khuek. Their first house was given to them by the MEP missionaries. Later, Fr. Pasotti wrote to the Rector Major telling about this event:

“We saw this house in 1927 when we put our first step into our mission territory, and we have received this house as a heritage from the MEP priests on 12 January 1929. We love this house very much because it was like the house of the poor, no extravagance, but rich in sacrificial offerings and become a tiny dwelling place for God.”⁷⁷

4.3 And We Started to Work Immediately...

The first work of the missionaries was to learn the language. Fr. Pasotti related:

*“And we started the work immediately by learning the language which was very necessary for the new missionaries. It could be compared to breathing which is a ‘sine qua non’ for life. To make evangelization effective, before anything else, a missionary must reach the point that the local people can say: ‘he speaks like us’. But, this would mean that, for the love of Jesus and the souls, we have to become children again. We went to the elementary school to learn literacy and to listen to the pronunciation of the teacher...”*⁷⁸

The feast of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December 1927 had a special meaning as it was the first year of the missionaries, and there was also the first profession of 10 novices from China. This made Fr. Pasotti think of the day when Don Bosco began the

Salesian work. In Siam, there was also a precious gift offered to the Blessed Virgin Mary on that historical celebration.⁷⁹

On 14 January 1928, the Rector Major responded to Fr. Pasotti's letter telling him of his pleasure to receive the news, and he hoped to receive also the report on how the novices were prepared for profession. He reminded all to advance in sanctity and to be saints which was the only condition to convert the people. Besides, he also requested for articles to be published in the monthly Salesian Bulletin as done by Fr. Cimatti from Japan for the evangelization of the Europeans as well. Articles should be written with care in order not to offend anyone. For the superiors, he was asked to relate everything,⁸⁰ and Fr. Pasotti tried to comply. This enabled us to read what he had written and came to know him and his work. As for articles for the Salesian Bulletin and the *Gioventu' Missionaria*, aside from Fr. Pasotti, there were also other confreres who wrote the articles.

In fact, in the guidelines given to all the missionaries, Fr. Ricaldone also requested each member to write, at least once a year, interesting anecdotes to be published in the Salesian Bulletin.⁸¹

We have a letter of Fr. Pasotti dated 17 March 1928 which reported about the living conditions of the confreres and the progress of the missionary activities. He mentioned that to a certain extent the missionaries began to adjust themselves to the 'new house' after almost everybody was bed-ridden for a week due to the hot climate making everyone exhausted. They did not feel so in a cold climate. It was a double difficulty for the new missionaries who

just came from Italy. They had to adjust themselves physically and mentally, and this was a challenge for all.

Because the Rector Major had special interest in the formation of the novices, Fr. Pasotti would make a rather detailed and straightforward report about the formation and of each person. In a way, Fr. Pasotti was of the opinion that formation of the new members in the mission field was a good thing, though there were some inconveniences. Some confreres might see many drawbacks, but most of them admitted that there were no serious cases. Most of these involved imprudence and self-righteousness of some people who expected perfection and forgetting about the reality of life. Fr. Pasotti further suggested that if the formation house could be separated, it would be better, and that the personnel working in the formation house should be chosen for their appropriateness and example. "Formation house is like the apple of our eyes," Fr. Pasotti said.

In the same letter, Fr. Pasotti confessed that he loved every one, though each one was different from the other; some of them were older, but he tried every possible means to make everybody walk in the way of the family spirit. While maintaining a good relationship with the government officials, they tried to win the hearts of the people through the young. He ended his letter by saying that at Bang Nok Khuek, the missionaries were joyful and were giving their best efforts.⁸²

With regards to the relationship with government officials, Fr. Castellino wrote:



“Since the beginning of the Salesian presence in Siam where Fr. Pasotti was the rector, he always thought of the relationship with the local government officials. For this purpose, he brought a group of seminarians to pay a courtesy visit to the district officer, honoring him with songs and music. This brought in good understanding. The district officer promised to reciprocate us with his visit. This bore good fruits to our Salesian missionary work.”



“Not long after that, some high ranking officers from the central government came to visit our school and the various activities of the missionaries at Bang Nok Khuek. Some entertainments were performed by the students and seminarians... From that visit wider understanding arose between the government officials and the Salesians. And this paved the way for other activities.”

“We have to accept that Bishop Gaetano Pasotti was gifted with initiatives and heart-winning talents, making him known and acceptable to all levels of society. And all these were always for the benefits of the mission work.” ⁸³

With regards to the continuation of the work of the MEP missionaries, Fr. Pasotti noted with delight and gratitude:

“The mission territory assigned to us was a miraculous one. Every one was happy and full of praises for the achievements done by the holy and capable MEP missionaries. Further more, if one thought about every parish, every school, every mission house and every piece of land which were achievements that involved a lot of time, patience, magnanimity of heart from people concerned, the dedication of one’s intelligence and wisdom – hence gratitude and praises fill our hearts.” ⁸⁴

Referring to the observation of the Salesian mission written by the MEP on 19 January 1929, it also mentioned about the Salesians who would be continuing their missionary work. Fr. Pasotti referred also to a letter written from Saigon on 4 May 1928 by H.E. Aiuti, representative of the Holy Father to Indochina and Siam:

“Thanks from the bottom of my heart for Fr. Pasotti’s letter. I send you and your members my kind thoughts and wish to congratulate all of you for your wonderful progress in learning Thai. Your work started well. This is good news for Bishop Perros, and he is very pleased especially with regards to the good relationship between the Salesians and the MEP members, in particular Fr. Carton and Fr. Durand.”

On 14 May 1928, Fr. John Casetta wrote to the Rector Major, Fr. Rinaldi, that Bishop Rene’ Perros has given several hours of his time to share with the Salesians his missionary experiences in Siam – the experiences of almost three centuries of the MEP which were valuable and which coincided with the teaching, example and methodology of Don Bosco, as stipulated in the Constitutions and Regulations of the Society.⁸⁵

Working in a Buddhist country, a place entirely different from that of Italy and China where the missionaries used to be, whether it be the climate, the food, language, culture, religion, beliefs, etc.

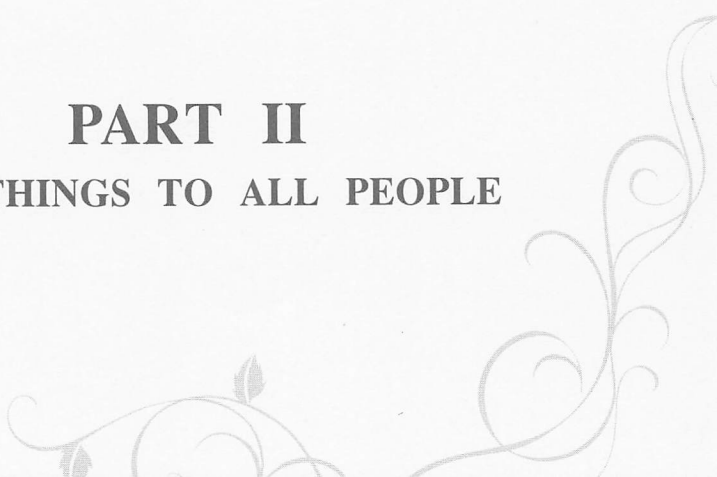
This was a mission work which demanded great sacrifices from the missionaries who had already laid down the foundation. And this was challenging the Salesians at that time.

On 14 May of the same year, Fr. Pasotti wrote to the Rector Major that the Salesian confreres had to stand against the extreme heat which exhausted everyone. They felt tired but were happy with the work assigned. At the same time, he also sent the good news of the sacerdotal ordination of two priests – Fr. Alessandro Terpin and Fr. Paulo Stacul, held on 2 June.⁸⁶



PART II

ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE



PART II

ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE



Chapter 5 : The First Salesian Rector to Receive the New Mission Jurisdiction in Thailand [1927 – 1937]

5.1 The First Rector

Fr. Gaetano Pasotti accepted the responsibility of being the first rector of the Salesian community at Bang Nok Khuek, to be the father of a big family. Fr. Castellino spoke about his personality and work style, according to what he knew from being close to him. Fr. Gaetano had lively eyes and good eyesight, smiling easily, and smiling most of the time. He had solid and sweet voice, and a solemn face. He had a little problem in walking because his right thumb finger was bigger than usual. In general, he possessed a pleasant and a respectable personality.

Fr. Pasotti did not enjoy a good health. He used to have malaria and dysentery which must have been the result of his military service and his challenging mission work in China for 9 years.

Fr. Castellino told us that Fr. Pasotti was a model of religious life, zealous in evangelization work which could be noticed by his sermons, his ministry at the confessional especially on feast days in the various parishes of the mission where he would

participate. He demonstrated a lively gesture, but was also sensitive to the conflicts in difficult and problematic situations among the confreres. In general, he was outstanding in understanding the people and was a model in helping them in the difficulties of undertaking their initiatives which were many and serious, including the financial problems and the well-being of the confreres and seminarians. There was a lack of personnel, especially priests, to provide formation. He had to encounter with resistance, criticism and complaint from some confreres about his activities. Nevertheless, he tried to create the atmosphere of serenity and joy after the charism of Don Bosco.⁸⁷

Several years after H.E. Gaetano Pasotti's death, Fr. Carlo della Torre boldly mentioned him as his novice master:

*"Fr. Pasotti was a good and pious priest. He was zealous and ready to listen to and allow any initiative, but if there was any objection that it would cost too much and would not yield good results, he would immediately order it to be stopped. As a person responsible for the mission, he would listen with attention to comments and suggestions regarding the activities to be carried out. At the same time, when another senior priest would criticize that a certain initiative was not suitable and that it would involve a lot of money, he was always ready to reject it. Because of his hot temperament, management became rather difficult. He was hot tempered but kind; he loved the young and the confreres very much."*⁸⁸

All these opinions indicated Fr. Pasotti's many facets as a Salesian priest who received a huge task when he was just 37 years old, and had to start the work in a new mission land, to be the head of a big family with 28 members – composed of 7 priests, and the rest were seminarians, Salesian brothers and novices. In 1928, two more priests were added, two students of philosophy and 16 novices – twenty members all-in-all. In the following year, the Congregation sent 28 more members. Within three and a half years, there were 74 Salesians in Siam. Among them were ten priests, and the rest were still in formation.⁸⁹ On this issue, Fr. Henri Danieli wrote:

*“Whereas the Salesians have the tradition of sending out missionaries of young age still in the process of formation expecting that they will do better in learning the language and familiarizing themselves with the local culture, but for the mission in Siam, the superiors had difficulties in several issues due to lack of preparation in several areas, including the economic crisis of the country, which caused frustration to many young members who eventually returned home.”*⁹⁰



Some of Salesian missionaries in formation

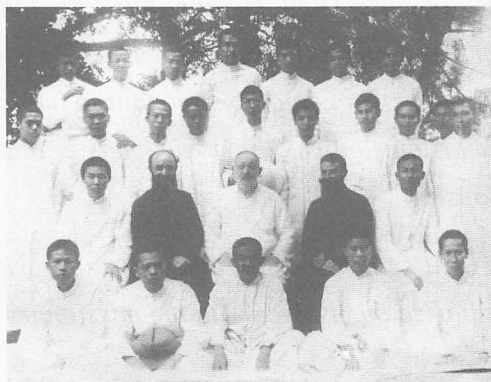
Aside from the administrative difficulties arising from a big number of confreres who came from different countries, with different background and formation, Fr. Pasotti had also encountered a serious financial problem which had an on-going negative impact on the health of the members.

One unexpected event that dealt a big blow to Fr. Pasotti and all the Salesian confreres was the death of Fr. Nicola de Vincenzi on 6 August 1928. He was an Argentinian priest, ordained about 13 months before, and had stayed in Thailand for less than a year.

Fr. Pasotti sent a telegram to the Rector Major, and on 10 August he wrote a letter informing him about the death of the new missionary which was a severe test for everyone. Because of the good character of this missionary, Fr. Pasotti, with approval from Fr. Ricaldone, planned to make him rector of the formation house and novice master in order to alleviate him from his heavy load and so that he could have time for other works. So, now he had to look for a new one. Fr. John Cassetta was proposed for this position, but he was still new to the Salesian life since he just made his first profession in 1926, after his sacerdotal ordination as a diocesan priest. When he came to Thailand, he had not yet made his perpetual profession. Besides, Fr. Pasotti intended to have Fr. Cassetta look after two important houses, including the financial administration of the mission.

In the same letter, Fr. Pasotti expressed his gratitude to Bishop Rene' Perros and the MEP missionaries who came to express their

condolences for this loss. Seeing that the Salesian missionaries were tired, Bishop Rene' Perros proposed to send them for 20 days to rest at the St. Gabriel's sea-side house at Sriracha. In the house chronicle, it was noted that they had to take the train at Mae Klong to go to Bangkok, and then boarded the 'Krung Kao' boat to Sriracha. Sea-travel was very tough due to the big waves which caused dizziness and vomiting, feeding the fish in the process.⁹¹ Fr. Pasotti also reported about the good will of the confreres and the seminarians which gave hope to the mission.⁹²



Fr. Pasotti with St. Gabriel's Brothers

On 22 September 1928, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to the Cardinal Secretary of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith to thank him in the name of the Salesian confreres in Thailand for the financial support sent through the Rector Major. At the same time, he confirmed that the sons of Don Bosco were happy and satisfied with the Siam mission in spite of encountering so many difficulties especially from the hot climate. They would try their best to accomplish all things assigned to them by the Congregation and the Society.⁹³

On the issue of administration, Fr. Henri Danieli wrote:

“Fr. Gaetano Pasotti was appointed superior of the Salesians in Siam since he was still in China. He received the letter of appointment in August 1928 as the superior of the vice-Province. He subsequently appointed Fr. John Cassetta, Fr. Joseph Pinaffo, Fr. Raphael Curti and Fr. Alessandro Terpin as his councilors in making important decisions.”

“He assigned duties to the Salesian confreres to receive works from the MEP in early 1929. He appointed Fr. John Cassetta to be the parish priest of the Church of the Nativity of Our Lady, the economer of the mission, and his assistant in important matters. Fr. Emmanuel Almasan was the novice master and rector of the formation house...”

“Fr. Pasotti sent some Salesian priests to stay with the French MEP to familiarize themselves with the missionary work and the faithful...”⁹⁴

On 1 October 1928, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to the Rector Major thanking him for his letter and encouragement on the occasion of the death of Fr. De Vincenzi which he read to all the confreres on the occasion of the annual retreat. He reported that they summarized the retreat with the strenna on faith, which the Rector Major spoke of in his letter. During the retreat, he talked with all the confreres and gave God's blessings to everyone. Besides, every member made a strong resolution to “set up the Sunday Youth Centers in all the places where they were working. In 1929, one

center was put up at Banpong, and another one in Ratchaburi, as a gift to Don Bosco and his successor.”

In the same letter, Fr. Pasotti reported further that Bishop Perros had pointed out that adult baptism was greatly reduced. He hinted on the difficulties of evangelization work in this country, such as the adjustment to the extreme heat which everybody accepted. But the Salesians still held hope through the formation of the young. Fr. Pasotti told the Rector Major that the missionaries were grateful to the superiors for the financial support of the work in Siam, because it was really necessary, especially so that the confreres may have sufficient food for their health. But he also believed that poverty would bring God’s blessings upon them.⁹⁵



Other than taking care of the members, he was also interested in the well-being of the faithful in various parishes. Because he could speak Chinese, Fr. Pasotti helped them in a special way. For example, on 10-11 November 1928, he went to Kok Mottanoi parish with 940 baht in his pocket [a donation from

Khun Viset] to help the Chinese farmers and advised them to form a cooperative. He spoke Hakka Chinese which made everybody happy. He himself was also happy to see the piety of the faithful, to hear the children singing beautifully in the church. He gave them a rubber ball as a reward.⁹⁶

On 1 December 1928, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to the Rector Major with articles to be published in the Salesian Bulletin and the magazine Gioventu' Missionaria. He wrote that he would be away to receive the new missionary group who would arrive in Singapore and that he would be back at Bang Nok Khuek no later than 12 December. At the same time he admitted that there were not enough priests for so many works of the mission, including the formation work which needed one who was well prepared. He understood well that the Congregation also had limitations in selecting such a personnel.⁹⁷

However, the Salesians were blessed by having more members making their profession on 8 December 1928. Their ten-day retreat was preached by Fr. Pasotti and Fr. Martin. Fr. Pasotti presided over the profession ceremony in the capacity of being the superior of the vice-Province.⁹⁸

5.2 Acceptance of the New Mission Province [1929]

On 1 January 1929, the MEP handed over the mission to the Salesians even though there was not yet an official division of the territories. At that time, Fr. Pasotti was 39 years old, and there were other 9 priests-collaborators. The most senior priests were

Fr. Raphael Curti [46] and Fr. Joseph Pinaffo [42], while all the rest were younger than Fr. Pasotti.



Salesian missionaries at Bang Nok Khuek in 1929

On 6 – 20 January 1929, Fr. Pasotti and Fr. Pinaffo travelled to the south to take over the southern mission from the MEP, though this was under the Malacca Diocese. Fr. Pasotti wrote to the Rector Major regarding this trip,⁹⁹ that he went to Penang to observe the activities in the seminary, and that a MEP priest took him to Phuket where he was given a warm welcome by the local governor.¹⁰⁰

In the pastoral care of the assigned churches, Fr. Pasotti advised everyone *“to carry out the activities as they used to be [as previously done by the MEP] and not to change anything, and that the former traditional practices must be followed at least for another year. And if there is a real need to change something, one must consult the superior. And when there is any problem, advice should be sought out likewise. Everyone must follow the formation method of Don Bosco,”* which was the last instruction of Fr. Ricaldone, the vicar of the Rector Major.¹⁰¹

Since the formation house for the members was not in the original plan of the Salesians in Thailand, and there was no agreement with the MEP, yet it was a fact that most of the members who came to Siam were still in the preparation process to be priests, or they were still novices. This brought great concern to both Fr. Pasotti and the other priests because they were still not prepared in several aspects. He expressed this concern in a letter to the Rector Major. However, Fr. Pasotti and his advisors were not discouraged. They were determined to move on. And so, in early 1930, a minor seminary was opened.¹⁰²

5.3 Serious Illness and the Flight to Italy for Medication

Not too long after taking over the mission, Fr. Pasotti was so exhausted that he fell ill on 15 February 1929. It was recorded in the chronicle that he underwent an operation at 10.40 a.m. at St. Louis Hospital on 22 February. On 16 March, he felt very bad and asked for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the sick. Bro. Comaschi stayed with him the whole night. The chronicle of the Salesians at Bang Nok Khuek recorded the following:

“In the beginning of March, all the seminarians went for a walk with Fr. Pasotti to Khok Mottanoi through the paddy field under the hot sun which caused him to get sick. On 17 March, his bed was surrounded by priests and seminarians. He spoke to them with affection as if to say ‘good bye’. He received the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick from Fr. John Cassetta, and Bro. Comaschi stayed with him the whole night. On the 18th, the following day,

*he was sent to St. Louis Hospital by boat provided by the deputy governor of Mae Khlong, accompanied by Bro. Comaschi. “*¹⁰³

The doctor found out that the cause of his sickness was dysentery which he got in 1928, but this disappeared by itself after 15 days. However, this time it was very serious. It caused severe weakness and sent a negative impact to his digestive system. On 6 April 1929, he felt much better and the doctor advised him to return to Italy for further medication for about one year. Also, that he should seek the opinion of the Italian doctors whether it would be advisable for him to come back to be a missionary to the far east or not. If he could come back, that the doctors would also give suggestions on how to treat him.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile, Fr. Pasotti gave his opinion that dysentery could be cured in a short period. Although he did not agree, he would not deny also the doctor's opinion.¹⁰⁵

Finally, he decided to return to Italy on 10 April 1929, to take care of his health, attend the General Chapter of the Salesians which happened to take place at that time, and participate in the beatification ceremony of Don Bosco on 2 June 1929 in Rome. On 9 April, one day before his departure, there was a house meeting to prepare for the General Chapter and to bid good-bye to Fr. Pasotti. Fr. John Cassetta was appointed acting rector while Fr. Pasotti was away. After giving blessing to everybody, Fr. Pasotti promised to take the heart of everyone and offer them at the altar of Don Bosco.¹⁰⁶

On 10 April, the chronicle of the Salesian formation house noted:

*"Fr. Pasotti set out to go to Italy. The novices and all the seminarians went to see him off at the river bank. While the motor boat was leaving, all sang 'Cantiam di Don Bosco' with sad hearts because of his departure. Fr. Almasan, Fr. Terpin and Bro. della Torre accompanied him up to Ratchaburi. On 19 April, a letter from Fr. Pasotti sent from Penang was on the table of the novice master. He invited everybody to respond, and for the novices, that they should write once a month and sign their signatures alphabetically."*¹⁰⁷

When he arrived in Turin on 3 June, Fr. Pasotti sent a telegram reporting the good news of the beatification of Don Bosco. All the members at Bang Nok Khuek gathered in the chapel and thanked God by singing the 'Te Deum'. They began to prepare for the celebration of the new 'Blessed' on 7 July at the Bang Nok Khuek Church.¹⁰⁸

During Fr. Pasotti's absence, Fr. John Cassetta made his perpetual profession on 5 September 1929. This was presided by Fr. Raphael Curti.

It was also during this time that the Salesians in Thailand received the news that Bishop Luigi Versiglia and Fr. Calisto Caravario were killed in China on 4 March. Many confreres, especially Fr. Pasotti who was still in Italy, knew them well because they used to work together.

On 4 April 1930, Fr. Pasotti returned to Thailand from Italy by ship. He arrived on 30 April together with Dr. Gasparini and Fr. Adolfo Tornquist, who came to visit the Salesians in the Far East. The Salesians were filled once more with joy, and they went to the church to sing the 'Te Deum' and received the blessing of the Blessed Sacrament presided over by Fr. Tornquist. On 4 May, there was the celebration of the new 'Blessed Bosco'. They also welcomed Fr. Tornquist and Fr. Pasotti. Fr. Tornquist presented a gift – a Remington type writer – to the Salesian community.¹⁰⁹

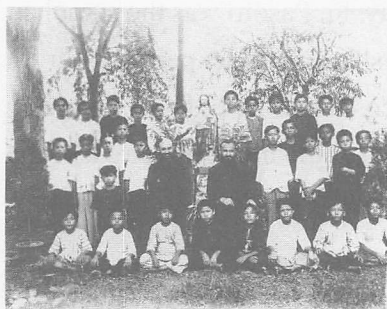
On the monthly recollection of May, Fr. Pasotti was the preacher. It was an opportunity for him to share many experiences from the one year stay at his birth place. When he did not go to any place for business, he would preach at the monthly retreat of the Salesian confreres or of the novices.¹¹⁰

On 14 May 1930, Fr. Tornquist and Fr. Pasotti went to Chiangmai to make a survey of the mission there in the name of the Rector Major.¹¹¹

It was worth noting that to begin the missionary works in China and Thailand, Fr. Pasotti had to undergo severe trials, both physically and spiritually. This time, it seemed that it was more severe because the doctors had to ask about his future, although they could not give a definite word about his missionary work. So, he came back to continue God's work.

Before going to Italy, he sent a report, dated 7 April 1929, [probably copy furnished to the Rector Major] to the Congregation

for the Propagation of Faith, informing about the on-going activities and initiatives in the mission after taking over from the MEP. With advice and cooperation from the priests, seminarians and lay-catechists, catechism was taught in the schools one hour per day, Gregorian songs were also rehearsed every day for the liturgy, the youth center was opened every day and on Sundays. The confreres, seminarians and teachers would look after the youth, both Catholic and non-catholic. This was an initiative at evangelization through the boys and the young, because their



Youth at Bang Nok Khuek



Children at first communion

parents joined them also. Besides, there were health centers already opened even before the presence of the Salesians to welcome everybody regardless of their belief.

In the same report, Fr. Pasotti also mentioned about the establishment of the Eucharistic Group for youth to prepare them to be altar boys, the Catholic Youth Group to lay the foundation for vocations and the Male Catholic Group with the intention to set-up a complete catholic action group on the occasion of Christmas 1929, as a gift to the Pope.

In the last part of the report, Fr. Pasotti gave information about the Salesian personnel at that time. They consisted of 10 priests, 7 seminarians in practical training, 3 lay-Salesians, 10 students of philosophy, 13 novices for the priesthood and 3 for the lay-brotherhood.¹¹²

As for the female sector, the work was assigned to the female religious [Lovers of the Cross Sisters] and the assistant teachers. Fr. Pasotti reminded all the members to be prudent and limit their dealings with the Sisters only on necessary matters, while they were waiting for help from the Sisters from Europe. However, he allowed the Salesian priests to teach catechism to them for one hour everyday. The Sisters were also asked to work on other matters, such as looking after the girls and the young. They were to look after and do pastoral care for the girls just as the male religious do for the boys. This initiative bore good results.

Fr. Pasotti was knowledgeable and aware of the differences between the eastern and western cultures. He talked about the Sisters from Europe because he had initiated contact with the superiors of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Italy. This was the content of his message to them:

*“This country [Siam] also opens the door to our Sisters – the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. This will be a marvelous field of evangelization for the Sisters.”*¹¹³

The Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians would, therefore, be another source of hope to make the mission

work more complete. Further more, Fr. Pasotti began to think about inviting the Clarist cloistered Sisters from Italy to open a house in the Ratchaburi mission, to give spiritual support and prayers for the evangelical activities. This plan became true in 1936.

While recuperating in Italy, Fr. Pasotti went to visit his home town of Pavia. There was an undated memoir in 1930 sent in all simplicity to the superiors telling them that his sick mother was in need of financial help to the amount of 300-400 Lire per year. However, it was up to the superiors to decide whether to let him send this amount or whether the Society will arrange to send the help. We did not know the answer from the superiors, but according to the information from Fr. Castellino who received the news from Fr. Pasotti's niece, the mother of Fr. Pasotti passed away the following year, on 21 March 1931.¹¹⁴

In the report of the Siam mission, Fr. Gusmano, the secretary of the Rector Major, wrote to Fr. Tomasetti, the Salesian Procurator, on 12 December 1929 [while Fr. Pasotti was still in Italy], asking him to contact the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith to quickly consider establishing the Ratchaburi Diocese so that he could solicit help from various institutions. The Rector Major suggested not to appoint immediately a Bishop in-charge, but a Prefect or Apostolic Administrator. However, this was up to the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith to decide.¹¹⁵ The said Congregation sent an official letter N. 2750/30, dated 28 June 1930, telling Fr. Tomasetti to ask the Rector Major to send a name of the would-be administrator of this new diocese.¹¹⁶

On 16 August 1930, the Rector Major, through his secretary, sent three candidates: Fr. Gaetano Pasotti, Fr. Joseph Pinaffo and Fr. John Cassetta, with an opinion that out of the three persons, the superiors favored Fr. Pasotti because he was better prepared than the other two in terms of intelligence, personality and religious life, and he possessed administrative qualities as well.¹¹⁷

Fr. Pasotti used to be a novice master. Therefore, he always gave special interest and attention to the novices and the seminarians. He often visited the Salesian formation house. For the annual retreat on 13-20 July 1930, he gave the conferences, while Fr. Bosso preached the meditation. The strenna he gave at the end of the retreat was: "Make yourself holy by carrying your duties well and by living a good community life. Follow the example of Dominic Savio on these matters." At that time, Dominic Savio was under the process of being canonized a saint.

On the occasion of Fr. Pasotti's feastday on 7 August 1930, after the usual program, he spoke with a loud and loving voice: "I am very happy to be among you, my children. The blessings you extended to me are the hope and the future of our mission." On 7 December, before the evening prayers of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, Fr. Pasotti went to the formation house to announce the death of the seminarian Vincenzo Ardissoni at St. Louis Hospital on 6 December, at the age of only 23 years old, just three years after his religious profession. This was the

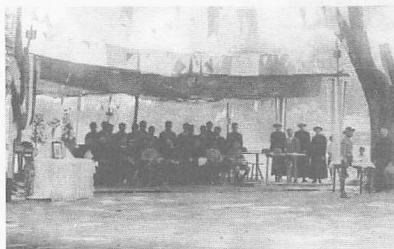
second case in three years that happened in the Salesian mission of Thailand. He told the seminarians not to be discouraged, but to thank God's providence, to pray for his soul, and to prepare for the feast of the Immaculate Conception. So, the feast of that year was a mixture of happiness and sadness. Before the end of the year, Fr. Pasotti went to visit the formation house again. He addressed the members to try to increase their zeal for the salvation of souls. On the last day of the year, all went across the river to the church, and Fr. Pasotti gave them spiritual advice and the annual strenna of the Rector Major: *"Make Don Bosco known better. Talk about him often and find every means to let everybody know our great father who is our model."*¹¹⁸

An incident happened which showed the kind and delicate heart of Fr. Pasotti, always mindful to help everyone and teaching everyone around him to do likewise. While he was still in Italy, he went to visit the Salesian confreres of Monsa and found that they were short of money to build a youth center. When he returned home, he asked donations from the catholic youth of Siam, and got a total amount of 175 Lire. On 2 August 1930, he forwarded that amount to support the youth center, with a letter attached in order to bridge relationship with the youth there. Though the amount was small, yet it created a great impression to the recipient regarding the spirit of solidarity of the Thai youth who were not catholics. Actually, right from the very beginning, Fr. Pasotti and the Salesian missionaries taught the children and the young to share and create relationships without borders.¹¹⁹

In the poor situation of the mission, even a small donation was valuable and meaningful for all. For example, on 30 September 1930, the mission received a second-hand motor boat from Sig. Astello di Phnom Penh which was more convenient and faster than a row boat. On the following day, Fr. Pasotti and Bro. de Ponti used it for the first time to go to Wat Phleng Church. On 12 October, the boat was blessed and named “the Star”, after the donor’s name.¹²⁰



The Salesian missionaries began to see good results and were happy with their formation of the children and the young. Many good things were slowly seeping into their hearts and were showing in their lives. For example, on 9 October 1930, there was a scout jamboree. In the evening, while the boy scouts were taking their rest, students from our mission heard the boy scouts from other schools cracking dirty jokes, and they showed their



dissatisfaction. When Fr. Pasotti heard about this, with prudence he reported the incident to the governor. Other than this, the children also prayed the Angelus before lunch and said grace before meals even without the presence of the superiors.¹²¹

During the year 1930, Fr. Pasotti permitted seminarian Andre Vitrano, who was a mural artist painting sacred pictures over the sanctuary wall of the Sacred Heart Church [Wat Phleng], to show the pictures on 31 July 1931, the feast day of the church. The faithful were full of admiration at the work.¹²² This showed that Fr. Pasotti saw the talent of the confreres and he gave them opportunity to use their skills for the work of God.



Sacred pictures over the sanctuary wall
of the Sacred Heart Church [Wat Phleng]

Chapter 6 : Preparation for the Canonical Establishment of Ratchaburi Diocese

6.1 Official Division of Administrative Jurisdiction

While the mission activities were moving ahead under Fr. Pasotti's administration, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith was also taking action to officially establish the Ratchaburi Diocese. A letter – Prot. N. 27/0/31, dated 28 June 1930, was addressed to the Rector Major through Fr. Francisco Tomasetti, the secretary, informing him that the Holy Father saw it appropriate to establish a new mission by combining five provinces of Siam and giving them for the Salesian Congregation to look after. It asked the Rector Major to propose three names who would be appropriate to lead the new mission. Along with this, a document was attached establishing the new mission [Archivio N. 5-IV-2] which consisted of Ratchaburi, Surattthani and Nakorn Sri Thammarat; these were to be separated from Bangkok Mission. Pattani and Phuket were to be separated from Malacca mission. This received the approval of Bishop Rene' Perros of Bangkok Mission, Bishop Emil Barillon of Malacca Mission, Archbishop Edward Colombani Dreyer, the Apostolic Nuncio for Indochina, Archbishop Edward Mooney of East India and advisor of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Cardinal Pacelli [who later became Pope Pius XII], who was secretary of the Vatican State, signed the approval on 30 June 1930. The letter was sent to Fr. Pasotti who was the Procurator of this new mission.¹²³

6.2 General Situation

On the feast of his patron saint on 7 August 1930, Fr. Gaetano Pasotti showed his abundant joy and expressed his love and happiness at being among his children. The superiors of the MEP seminary also came to participate in the celebration.¹²⁴

We have a draft or photocopy of the letter of the Rector Major dated 16 August 1930 sent to Fr. Tomasetti, who probably forwarded this on to the Vatican. The letter announced that the superior council of the Salesians sent three names who were considered fitting candidates to head the mission, but out of the three, Fr. Gaetano seemed best suited because of his intelligence, character, religious life, including his administrative and management experience.¹²⁵

In the middle of September 1930, the Salesians had their annual retreat. Fr. Pasotti gave the members this strenna: "The Presence of God."¹²⁶ When the news came that there would be 11 new missionaries coming to Thailand in mid-October 1930, all the confreres were very pleased and filled with hope. Fr. Pasotti took the opportunity to talk with the novices to prepare themselves to welcome the new missionaries who consisted of 9 major seminarians and 2 lay-brothers. They left Italy on 12 November and arrived in Bang Nok Khuek on 9 December 1930.

On 29 October 1930, Fr. Pasotti sent a report about the situation of the mission to the superiors, probably the first one. He apologized for being late because he neither received from the Vatican nor from Bangkok the guidelines about the matters to be reported.

So, he took the liberty to make the report himself, and if there were matters to be added or corrected, he would welcome the recommendations. Fr. Pasotti wrote this report before he went to visit Don Krabueang Parish and two catholic Chinese communities on the occasion of All Saints Day and All Souls day. The short report mentioned that everybody was so tired, especially the priests, because the work was always increasing, but everyone was happy.

In the same letter, he asked for some liturgical materials. He also requested for the 1931 calendar, materials for photocopying in temperate countries, religious medals and ball pens, as gifts to be given out...¹²⁷

On 10 November 1930, the Rector Major – Philip Rinaldi – sent a letter on 27 September responding to the request of Fr. Pasotti inviting him to visit the Siam Mission. The Rector Major said that he would very much like to come. He also mentioned about the request for more missionaries for Siam to help in the missionary work and the formation work, which was a big burden for the superiors because many members were sickly and many of them were also advanced in age. He asked Fr. Pasotti to take good care of the members and not let them work beyond their strength, because if they get sick it would make the situation worse. Prudence and patience should be exercised in order to continue the mission work. Meanwhile, the seminarians could be of some help. They should work for God with love and compassion, speaking well of all. At the same time, special attention should also be paid on the formation of the seminarians. Other than prayers, every

one should be steadfast to the spirit of sacrifice and temperance, as advised by Don Bosco. Whoever was not sure regarding the virtue of chastity, they should not remain in the mission land. The Rector Major also said that if he were younger, he would like to join in the Siam mission. Aside from these, he told Fr. Pasotti that it was not yet possible for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to come to Siam that year; it might be possible for the following year. ¹²⁸

On 19 January 1931, the Salesians in Thailand had a special gift because the first Thai seminarian – John Baptist Kimthai – with other missionary friends, made their temporary Profession at Bang Nok Khuek. Later on, on 8 February, another candidate – John Gabriel Prachum Minpraphan – received the cassock to begin the novitiate. The ceremony was presided by Fr. Pasotti.

On 7 February 1931, the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith sent a letter – N. 4971/30 – to Fr. Pasotti thanking him for the mission report and congratulated him and all the collaborators in the new mission because in the past year, through God's help, the work had borne visible, spiritual fruits. He was also encouraged to intensify their zeal so that more progress will come around.



Fr. Pasotti with Salesian Brothers in 1931

The Congregation was pleased with the development of the youth activities and the education in the schools, especially through meaningful recreation [like the youth center] which Don Bosco had smartly initiated. Likewise, special thanks was extended for the good care of the seminarians, especially the native Siamese, who were like the 'apple of the eyes' of the mission. It was a source of joy to learn that before long, there would be two Siamese to be ordained priests. Besides these, it was also good that the mission was interested in the vocational school, especially in agriculture since this would be beneficial to the mission. ¹²⁹

During the Chinese New Year – 16-17 February 1931 – Fr. Pasotti went to participate at the feast of Bangtan Church. On the eve of the feast, there was a requiem mass for the departed catholics. There were about 55 families who came to wish and donate gifts to him. He, in turn, gave them crosses, and chocolates for the children. He gave them the blessings which indicated his interest in those Chinese families. ¹³⁰

The Congregation for the Propagation of Faith wrote a letter dated 28 February 1931 announcing the elevation of Ratchaburi mission, and appointed Fr. Pasotti to be the Administrator. ¹³¹ Within those few years, there were a lot of communications between the Rector Major and Fr. Pasotti, perhaps due to the additional responsibilities assigned to the mission.

The chronicle of Bang Nok Khuek Church dated 4 March 1931 noted that Fr. Pasotti and Fr. Caggaglio went to Photharam,

which was still a jungle at that time, and met a couple of dozens of catholics.

On 12 March 1931, Fr. Pasotti called for a meeting of his council, composed of Fr. Raphael Curti, Fr. Pinaffo, Fr. John Cassetta and Fr. Martin, to consult them about the problems of St. Anthony Parish, Khok Mottanoi. After that they separated and went to visit the confreres assigned in the parishes. Fr. Pasotti worked with his team of advisers by way of sharing ideas and visits to the members. On his part, he himself already made these frequent visits, as noted in the chronicle of Bang Nok Khuek Church.¹³²



The boat 'Liguria – Uea Darun'

The Salesian students and alumni of Liguria, Italy, collected money for one year to buy a motor boat for the Salesian Missionaries at Bang Nok Khuek. The money was received on 17 March 1931. The boat was named: 'Liguria – Uea Darun'. It was an expression of good hearts and sharing in the Salesian mission on the part of Italy. It brought great joy and gratitude to the missionaries in

Thailand, and cemented the good relationship between the Thai youth and Liguria. ¹³³

Fr. Philip Rinaldi, the Rector Major, wrote a letter on 24 April 1931 thanking and congratulating Fr. Pasotti for sending news about the religious profession of the confreres, including a Thai, which brought joy to all. He was pleased with the formation and goodwill of everyone. He also spoke about the first group of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who were preparing themselves to come to Siam. They were doing what they could, though they were afraid that the preparation would not be sufficient enough for this challenging mission. ¹³⁴

On 13 June 1931, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to Fr. Adolfo Tornquist reporting several activities and events which were going on in the Ratchaburi mission. Certainly, poverty was the main issue, which appeared in almost every letter. Beside, with permission from the superior, and with financial support from the benefactors, a new work was began at Saladaeng, Bangkok. What so heart-breaking was personnel needed on the jobs, still hoped that the situation would get better on the following year. However, Fr. Pasotti had a long eye-sight, and said, as if a prediction:

“Just wait and see ... in Bangkok, there will be at least 4 houses, 2 for the Salesians and other 2 for the Sisters, while other houses will come up in the north and in the south, at various important centers.”

Fr. Pasotti saw the importance of extending the work from rural areas to the cities as well. At that time, he thought that Huahin was too far to have a formation house. So, he intended to have it at Ratchaburi, and he also said this like a prediction that:

“Ratchaburi would be the first place to start our work. At least, there must be a youth center for the various celebrations. It would become like a field for hiking and a place to provide convenience for confreres from other mission stations who come for the celebrations.”

The place near the beach for rest and recreation would follow later. He admitted:

“All these are still beautiful dreams...but I do believe that there must be something which makes our present works go ahead without being in much debt.”

Nonetheless, he never forgot to beg for assistance, so much so that his request was almost like a demand on behalf of everyone.

In this lengthy letter, he also wrote about the death of Fr. Ardissonne, after being bed-ridden for three weeks. He saw that the confreres showed good will. The first Thai confrere, John Gabriel Prachum Minpraphan, was about to enter the seminary in November. In the field of education, a retreat was organized for the teachers so that they may have the spirit of Don Bosco in the formation of the young, and help the students and the young to become missionaries among their fellow students.

Fr. Pasotti also mentioned the establishment of the Catholic Youth Association by choosing from the alumni of the Blessed Sacrament Sodality. This was considered to be the first catholic youth association in Siam. The Salesians often had new vocations from this group. He also continued to train teachers and catechists so that they can teach catechism better.

At that time, Fr. Pasotti was still waiting for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to come and help. He mentioned about the MEP priests who decided to work in the north, while he himself was also interested in doing the same. He thought that the Salesians could do a lot of good things in the north as well. ¹³⁵

In another letter, Fr. Pasotti wrote on 5-13 June 1931 to Fr. Adolfo. He mentioned about the difficulties of mission life:

“It was deeply felt that there should be some vacation, perhaps near the sea ... but we have to accept our poor state... There was no commercial bank to give us credit. I was thinking of approaching the Bishop or someone else who would help me with an amount of, say, two to three thousand baht, to make us survive, because the price of coconuts and rice was extremely down, and we could not collect the rental of the land at all... We were waiting for God’s merciful providence.” ¹³⁶

Amidst extreme poverty, and in spite of Fr. Pasotti’s feeling that the mission works were moving too slowly, he still had hope on the formation of the personnel who would be teachers and catechists in the schools, including new vocations to the Salesian

Congregation. He intended to travel till the southern border of the mission, by beginning to find a plot of land at Huahin and prepare to open a work place there for the Salesians.¹³⁷

On the other hand, Fr. Pasotti received consolation and joy from the superiors, especially from the Rector Major who would always send a reply to his letters. He was impressed with his paternal heart who followed in a special way his sons working in a far away place, who provided assistance whenever possible, to support the missionary activities, like, sending a merry-go-round equipment for the Youth Center, providing advice on the supervision of the confreres, looking after them with love, and looking at their good traits. The Rector Major gave advice to Fr. Pasotti in the capacity of his being a rector, in accordance with the instructions which Don Bosco wrote for all the rectors, that they must be a man of sacrifice, in matters of living, patient over their defects, knowing when to keep quiet, and knowing when to speak out. Further more, the rector would do better if they practice these virtues without being seen. God would be their helper. They should think often of heaven and be always cheerful.¹³⁸

During 1-12 July 1931, Bishop Rene' Perros came to visit Bang Nok Khuek. Fr. Pasotti, the priests, seminarians, and the faithful gave him a warm welcome. In his homily during the Mass, the Bishop said:

"As the Laos Diocese was divided in 1899, now the Ratchaburi mission and the south are also separated. All should be obedient

to the new priests who come to take charge. Since I am still the owner of this seminary, I will often come to visit. Not too long from now, I will come to ordain two deacons at this seminary."

Fr. Pasotti thanked Bishop Perros in Thai and proposed that he would send news to the Holy Father, but the Bishop said that it was not necessary. For Fr. Pasotti, he would like the Pope, who was like his father, to be informed always of all the news about his children."¹³⁹

Bishop Peter Carretto used to say that Fr. Pasotti was a humble person, that he never talked about himself or his family, and he did not like to receive honors. For example, and this appeared in the chronicle of Bang Nok Khuek Church, on 5 August 1931, Fr. Pasotti went to Banpong to avoid the celebration of his patron saint, on 7 August. Several years after he became a Bishop, it was recorded that he did not want to have an external celebration. So, there was usually only a small party among the confreres on that particular feast day.¹⁴⁰

In the report of 6 August 1931, Fr. Pasotti indicated his concern over the future and the danger of communism which was slowly seeping into the Thai society. This was another reason to work harder to propagate the faith through various activities, including the dissemination of ideas to the wider public especially by means of good publications. To achieve this objective, he talked about daily prayers to God with the intention of always doing things better no matter how humble it was, doing them with love toward

God, the Church, the Holy Father, by being honestly steadfast to the ways of the Holy See, with the sole intention of saving souls after the example of Don Bosco. ¹⁴¹

At that time, when there was a big feast, such as the annual feast of the parish, Fr. Pasotti would normally be the preacher during the Mass officiated by another priest, for example, in the annual feast of Tha Muang Parish on 15 September 1931. He would send greeting cards to the Salesian confreres and missionaries, including the MEP priests, like, Fr. Matthew Carton on 21 September 1931, on the occasion of their feastdays. ¹⁴²

Fr. Pasotti paid special interest to the teachers and catechists, like Mr. Charan, who passed away in October 1931 at Khok Mottanoi. He himself looked for a replacement of the teacher in the month of November. He celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation at Khok Mottanoi. With a paternal heart, he advised the godfathers and godmothers to help their godchildren to be good, to say their prayers and attend the Mass regularly, if they wanted to receive blessings from God. Some times, he would go to replace the parish priest so that he could go and join the parish annual feast, like the annual church feast of Bang Nok Khuek in 1934. ¹⁴³

6.3 The Arrival of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

After waiting for so long, on 14 November 1931, Fr. Pasotti's dream of having Salesian female religious to work in the mission came true. On 16 November, there was a big welcome ceremony at the girls' school of Bang Nok Khuek. Fr. Pasotti and other priests

participated also in the welcome, including Aunt Lek who was honored to sit at the left side of Fr. Pasotti.¹⁴⁴



Sisters FMA with Lovers of the Cross at Bang Nok Khuek

As Administrator of the Ratchaburi mission, Fr. Pasotti was given the authority to minister the Sacrament of Confirmation. Other than that, he would help visit and provide the Sacrament of the Sick to those who were far away from the church, as noted in the chronicle of 22 November 1931 of Bang Nok Khuek Church. He ministered the Sacrament of Confirmation at Wat Khok Mottanoi, and on the following day he went by the ‘Star’ boat to give the viaticum at Lak Song.¹⁴⁵

Fr. Carlo Braga, a missionary in China, a close friend of Fr. Pasotti, made a visit to Bang Nok Khuek on 26-30 November 1931. He praised him saying: *“The mission in China is pleased to see the Chinese families in Thailand make such progress, surpassing even the mother China mission, because of the many good things which truly reflect the spirit of Don Bosco.”* On 1 December, he went to Banpong.¹⁴⁶

On 9 December 1931, Fr. Pasotti received news that Fr. Philip Rinaldi, the Rector Major, had passed away. On 10-17 December, Fr. Pasotti and Fr. Pinaffo preached the retreat to the Salesians and the novices who were preparing themselves for their religious profession. On 18 December, all the Salesian confreres gathered together to offer Mass for the soul of the deceased Rector Major.¹⁴⁷



Boats procession along the Mae Klong river

Fr. Pasotti was always interested in education. On 20 December 1931, he, with Fr. Cassetta, Fr. Terpin and four FMA Sisters, went to see the educational exhibition organized at Mae Klong during 17-29 December.¹⁴⁸

On 8 January 1932, Fr. Pasotti sent a report to the Rector Major informing him of the solemn celebration of the Immaculate Conception in December to commemorate the 1500th year of the Council of Ephesus [431 A.D.] which proclaimed that Mary was

the Mother of God. There was a boat procession along the Mae Klong river which impressed everybody, including those of different beliefs. He said that he was preparing the picture album with captions, and he believed that the Rector Major would forward this to the Holy Father. He also reported that after the celebration, there would be the retreat for all the confreres, though it was not easy to do so, but everybody had a good will and desired to make progress in holiness. He praised several confreres, but at the same time, there were some others who caused him a heart-ache. They tended to do things on their own, which was detrimental to the parish and to the community as a whole. ¹⁴⁹

In a letter of Fr. Pasotti on 3 February 1932, he informed about preparing Fr. Forlazzini and Bro. Kimthai to study theology in Rome. He had a keen and detailed interest with regards to the candidates who were the outcome of the Catholic Action Group. They were the hope and future of the mission. As for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, he assigned Fr. Almasan to be the spiritual director and preacher in the retreat. As for the other liturgical functions they had to join the celebration at the main church.

Fr. Pasotti also expressed his concern over the unhealthy member, who tried not to show this externally. In a state of poverty and scarcity, every one showed the spirit of sacrifice and trust in God's providence. ¹⁵⁰

6.4 Thorns and Roses



Wat Phleng

On 21 February, Fr. Pasotti wrote another letter to the Rector Major informing him about a problem with regards to the resistance of the faithful against a Salesian priest at Wat Phleng. They closed the door of the church and would not allow the priest to enter. Fr. Pasotti asked him to move back to Bang Nok Khuek, but he refused. Fr. Pasotti said that he had to undergo a week of storms which demanded prudence in taking action. Further more, he sensed that there were problems among some confreres. He accepted every thing, being aware that Don Bosco and the Congregation must have experienced more than this.¹⁵¹

From the chronicles of Wat Phleng in 1932, it could be said that the problem between the parishioners and the priest began in early 1932. The issue was rather complicated and was connected with the 'changes' which occurred during the shift from the former MEP missionaries to the new Salesians. There was a demand to the superior to remove the parish priest. On Sunday, 14 February

1932, the local town official and a group of parishioners put up a poster and closed the door and windows of the church, while another group tried to protect the priest. Fr. Pasotti went there with the police through the arrangement of cleric Vitrano, while some faithful were praying, but the negotiation was not successful. On the following Monday, Fr. Cassetta came to negotiate once again, and they agreed to open the church. But the problem was not over yet, because they put up a condition that the parish priest should be removed.¹⁵² Finally, the said parish priest went back to Bang Nok Khuek and later returned to his home land.

On 12 March 1932, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter informing the superiors that the problem in Wat Phleng was not settled yet. He felt that some members misunderstood him, but he still hoped that God's providence would help clear the violent storm. Aside from this, during the summer that year, he permitted the students of theology to take a 'vacation' in Banpong, the students of philosophy to Tha Muang, and the minor seminarians to Tha Wah; their poor state did not allow them to have a vacation by the sea. He had special hope in the Chinese catholics in Thailand, but there was the language barrier, and he thought that it would be of great help if the China mission would help in this.¹⁵³

Fr. Pasotti's letter, dated 1 April 1932, reiterated about the problem at Wat Phleng. He felt sad about the situation which was rather difficult to solve due to the involvement of several parties. He reported that he and the other missionaries tried their utmost to solve the problem without hurting any one. He tried many times to

find solutions with prudence together with the council. The faithful accused the Salesian missionaries of abusing the use of money, without understanding that the missionaries had to use the money collected from the land rentals for activities of the churches, the schools, the poor, the orphans, etc. Meanwhile, the missionaries themselves were already living a scanty life.¹⁵⁴

There were several rounds of negotiations involving many concerned parties, and on 29 May 1932, there was another meeting. It was concluded that the party who closed the church would receive penalty directly from the Apostolic Nuncio.

After that, on 2-4 June 1932, there was the triduum prior to the annual feast of the church which Fr. Pasotti participated right from the first day. Both adults and children came to help prepare for the celebration on 5 June, when the church was once again officially opened. Everything proceeded smoothly, a great number of the faithful came to attend the feast more than on the previous years. After that, there still seemed to be undercurrents of mistrust. There were suspicions on various issues and people were afraid that there might be the closure of the church again. Such was the atmosphere until the Papal Nuncio came on 17 December 1932 to listen to the protesting side and to the priest. After that, he asked the protesting party to change their mind. They said that they had no intention to close the church again. People were simply imagining. Finally, they made an apology to the ecclesiastical authority and the priest for the sake of reconciliation. Fr. Pasotti

gave an order to ring the church bells as an external sign of joy on that occasion. ¹⁵⁵

During the time of conflict between the faithful and the parish priest, Fr. Pasotti had to go back and forth to Wat Phleng, because he chose to walk the middle path and not to react violently. On the other hand, he sent other priests whom the parishioners trust to negotiate in an amicable manner. During that period, some young boys from Wat Phleng entered the minor seminary. Due to this, a saying came out: *“both thorns and roses arose from that difficult situation which should make us give thanks to God.”* ¹⁵⁶

On 20 May 1932, the Salesians in Thailand received the good news of the election of the new Rector Major – Fr. Pietro Ricaldone. ¹⁵⁷ Fr. Pasotti was so happy because Fr. Ricaldone was the one who accompanied the missionaries to Thailand in 1927. So, he understood very well about the situation in Thailand. Fr. Pasotti sent a congratulatory note to him, and the Rector Major answered back in September 1932. ¹⁵⁸



Fr. Pietro Ricaldone

6.5 The Diocesan Seminary – The Hope of the New Mission

In the month of May that year, there were five Chinese boys who entered the seminary specifically for the Chinese at Tha Wah It was the result of the catechetical formation there. Fr. Forlazzini was the temporary person in-charge.¹⁵⁹ Fr. Pasotti send a report to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith on 1 August 1932: *“Other than the 22 minor seminarians at Bang Nok Khuek, there was another group of 8 boys who came from good Chinese families. They stayed temporarily at Tha Wah – Mary Help of Christians House. They stayed with the teachers and had to undergo a special formation. The Chinese in Siam had a special characteristic, and, therefore, we tried to promote vocations among them.”*¹⁶⁰

In June of the same year, there was a revolution to replace the monarchy with democracy. On 24 June 1932, without any bloodshed whatsoever, the King set his signature approving the first Democratic Constitution.¹⁶¹

On 1 August 1932, Fr. Pasotti sent a report to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith about the arrival and initial work of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in 1931: *“It is an important step with regards to the formation of the girls. It begins with the administration of a School at Bang Nok Khuek with about 200 students. Along with the school, there was the Sunday Youth Center. The Sisters were attentive in studying the Thai language. They did not only laid plans well according to*

the spirit of the Congregation, but also hoped that there would be closer cooperation in order to lay down solid foundation for the native Sisters.” ¹⁶²

“In the teacher training school at Bang Nok Khuek, the curriculum to prepare catechists was also started. The Rector would give instruction once a month on moral principles with a specific objective to train personnel for this important task.” ¹⁶³ In consonance with Fr. Pietro Ricaldone’s intention, Fr. Pasotti began to let the seminarians study for a teaching degree – ‘Primary Teacher’. ¹⁶⁴ The first group of eight persons passed this exam in 1935. ¹⁶⁵

Fr. Pasotti gave a detailed report about the seminarians...

“I remember that the minor seminary began almost immediately after we started the work. It is not because it was our duty to do, but because Providence sent the children to us. They themselves came to ask to be trained to become priests. They were a dozen last year, and this year they are 22. They are specially chosen from the ‘Friends of St. Louis Group, the Blessed Sacrament Group which was a preparation for the altar boys. With God’s help, in three years, we will have the first group of seminarians vested with the cassock and start to study philosophy. It looks as if Don Bosco directly talked to us when he said:

“With regards to the native seminarians, it is the issue that we pay special attention to since we started the mission work.” ¹⁶⁶

“Other than studying Latin for one hour everyday, the seminarians



must also study teaching degree subjects according to the curriculum of the government. It is necessary that the seminarians must have the teacher's certificate regardless of being a native or foreigner. Everybody should be capable of being a teacher, and some may pursue a higher degree. Our Rector Major has continuously demanded from us to abide by this idea, and we must fulfill this mandate no matter how much it will cost. It is necessary as well to master the Thai language in order to be prepared for the media apostolate. We feel dejected when we see evil media and dirty publications which are translated from foreign languages."

"The piety of our seminarians come from their sincere and honest hearts, which we can sense. They follow the house rules, read religious books after Mass, and read it for ten minutes more in the afternoon. We have formation every Sunday, and there is the monthly exercise for a happy death."

"They make special progress in their studies. They learn the Thai language every day and practice to speak English. We expect that in

studying philosophy they will learn also how to use the dictionary and be able to read English texts. In the future, they will be able to develop their own culture... Besides, to make the study of Latin easier, the Salesian members looked for ways to make a Latin-Siamese handbook for use in high school ... I think that in Siam, a simple attempt, as well as simple available equipments for our printing work, will become a stepping stone for collecting good text books." ¹⁶⁷

On 7-8 August 1932, Fr. Pasotti did not run away from the celebration of his feastday. There was a big celebration for two consecutive days at Bang Nok Khuek, on both the parochial and community level. On this occasion, the confreres arranged for the printing of the first 'bulletin' in honor of Fr. Pasotti. It was printed with the artwork done manually by the practical trainees – Prachum and team. Fr. Pasotti was very pleased with this initiative. He gave them all blessings and thanked Fr. Savio for allowing the team to use his typewriter. ¹⁶⁸ [The first thousand copies of the weekly paper 'Udomphan' was out on 7 August 1937, on the occasion of Fr. Pasotti's feastday because he supported the print apostolate since the beginning.]

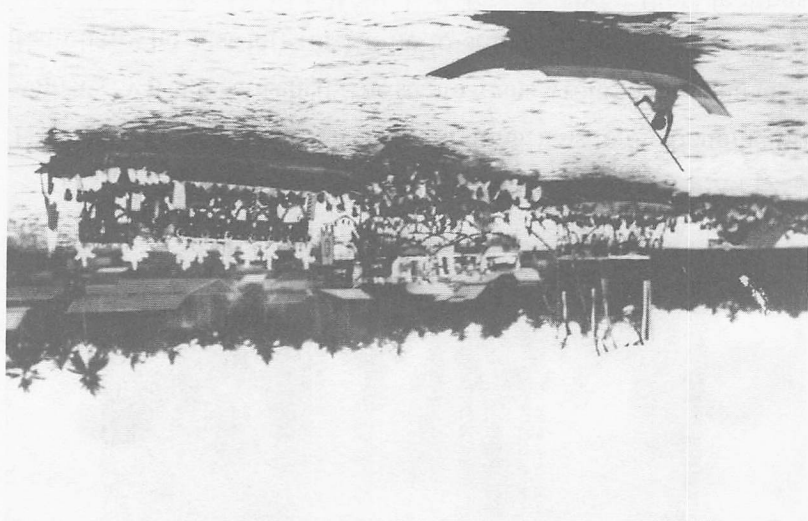
On 8 August 1932, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to Fr. Ceria ¹⁶⁹ after being informed of the election of the superiors during the General Chapter, and being the fourth death anniversary of Fr. Nicola de Vincenzi. He expressed his special remembrance of Argentina which gave a missionary to the Thai mission. ¹⁷⁰

On 5-7 September 1932, the missionaries and the faithful of Bang Nok Khuek Church prepared the triduum for the parish annual feast by means of prayers and mortifications according to the spirit of the encyclical “*Caritate Christi Compulsi*”, with the intention to ask for the gifts which would enable them to solve all the problems confronting the society at that time. This probably meant the political situation after the revolution to change the administration. This included the problems and works of the Salesians in various parishes. On 7 September, on the eve of the feast, Fr. Pasotti accompanied seminarian Kimthai and Fr. Forlazzini to Ratchaburi, on their way to pursue their studies in Rome. The two students were the joy and hope of Fr. Pasotti and of every one.¹⁷¹

On 3 October 1932, feast of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, Fr. Pasotti made a report concerning the condition of Bang Nok Khuek Church – that the walls and some posts needed repairs. He had an Italian engineer to check and to estimate the repair cost. He was quite alarmed at the big amount because the mission had no money left at that time, while other activities of the mission must also go on. The repairs could not be delayed as the Church might crumble down any time. He, therefore, solicited help from the Rector Major and the benefactors in the name of the faithful who were mostly poor. Bang Nok Khuek Church was the outcome of great sacrifices on the part of the MEP missionaries, and so it was necessary to maintain it, to make it a suitable place for God and the Blessed Mother to dwell. He assured the benefactors that the missionaries would always remember them in their prayers.¹⁷²



He then sent letters written by the seminarians to the benefactors with his own letter attached. The seminarians wrote about seminarian Kimthai who just left for Rome to study, and that he would be their representative to tell the benefactors about their feelings. From the seminarians' letters, we knew that in 1931, there were 12 seminarians, and in 1932 they increased to 29; there was also hope that this number would still increase, along with a life of prayer, study and work. They also wrote about the recent celebration of the 1500th anniversary of the Council of Ephesus at Bang Nok Khuek on 8 December 1931, and that there were people of different faiths who participated in the boat procession, etc.¹⁷³



Chapter 7 : Zealous Missionary

7.1 For the universal and local evangelization

On 23 October 1932, being the annual 'Mission Sunday', Fr. Pasotti wrote a circular letter to all the faithful through the parish priests stressing on the intentions of the Holy Father for this occasion:

1. It is the day to pray, go to confession and receive Holy Communion, offering to God all our good acts for the conversion of our brothers and sisters of different faiths. This should include praying the rosary during the month of Mother Mary, asking her to bless the missionary activities of all the Missions, especially that of the Ratchaburi Mission.

2. It is the day to demonstrate our generosity in giving donation so that the Mission can make use of it for the benefits of the Kingdom of God. The collected donations will be given to the Apostolic Nuncio who will send it to the Holy Father. It is the symbol of piety on the part of the faithful, on the occasion that the Holy Father completes the 10th anniversary of his Papacy.

He understands the poor conditions of the faithful, but he invites them to make donations in accordance with their capacity, because God will always reward what is done with love toward Him.

3. It is the day of thanksgiving. He reminds everybody to remember the great gift which the Sacred Heart of Jesus gave by making

us become Christians. It is a privilege that many people have not yet received and have not even known Him. He admonishes all the faithful to live a life according to the commandments of God and of the Church, to give good examples to one another in every thing and at every place.

4. It is the day to receive plenary indulgence for those who receive Holy Communion and pray for our brethren of other faiths. One can receive this plenary indulgence and can offer it for one's departed relatives or friends.

He then gave an example. On 15 May 1932, about 200,000 sick persons in Italy offered their sufferings for the Holy Father's intention for the sake of the missionaries, the believers and non-believers so that they will return to walk on the path of faith. He asked: isn't this an inspiration? And what would the believers of Ratchaburi Mission do to reciprocate their solidarity?

So, he made the announcement that on Sunday, 30 October 1932, which was the Feast of Christ the King, the priests would offer Mass for all the sick persons, and the faithful should come to Mass and receive Holy Communion and pray specially for those sick people. He ended with these words: "I am sure that you will not forget to pray for me every day as well." ¹⁷⁴

In his letter of 12 July 1932 to Fr. Braga, the Provincial of Hong Kong, Fr. Pasotti expressed his obedient submission to the superior and would always follow the superior's advice. He received a Fiat car from Hong Kong and he offered Masses in response.

At the same time, he asked to change the gasoline powered car into a diesel one, which would cost less. In that same letter, it told us also that Fr. Pasotti taught missiology and pastoral theology to the newly ordained priests, and he requested the superiors to send him some text books as well. He was of the opinion that no additional novices should be sent to Thailand unless additional financial support would be given because at that time the missionaries in Thailand were living quite poorly. At the same time, he mentioned about his intention to receive Vietnamese candidates to be Salesian seminarians because there were a number of such request. He believed in God's providence. Besides, the Youth magazine was very famous and much wanted at that time. In July, 660 copies were distributed.

At the end of that letter, Fr. Pasotti expressed his deep feelings to Fr. Braga about the cross of being a superior which was being borne by Fr. Braga as well. For Fr. Pasotti, who was finishing his 6th year of being a vicariate, he hoped that God would have compassion on him. He also enquired about Fr. Cimatti as to where he got so much funds to launch so many good activities. He admitted that Fr. Cimatti was a living saint.¹⁷⁵

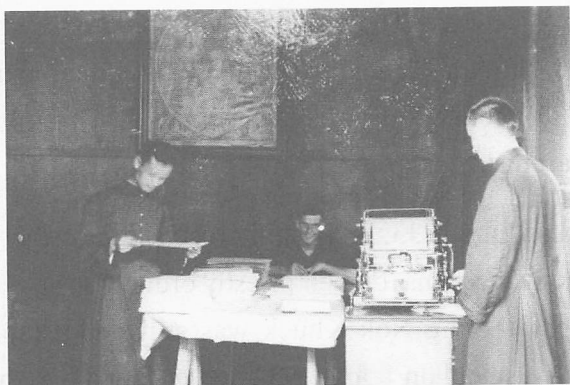
On 18 December 1932, there was the opening ceremony of the first Salesian school in Thailand, at Banpong. H.E. Dreyer, the representative of the Holy Father, who was making his second visit to the Salesians, honored the celebration with his presence, together with government officials and other distinguished guests like Bro. Hilare and Bro. Michael of the St. Gabriel Brothers.

Everybody was impressed by the faith of Fr. Pinaffo who built this school. ¹⁷⁶



At the end of 1932, Fr. Pasotti gave an annual strenna to the Salesian confreres: “May everybody live in love”. The letter and strenna of the Rector Major must have arrived late. Fr. Pasotti would share it with the confreres during the monthly retreat of 9 January 1933. ¹⁷⁷

The “Matchimawai” [Youth] magazine, meant to benefit the youth, was born in February 1933, initiated by the working team of Bro. Prachum, Bro. Carretto and Fr. Terpin. The first issue of 200 copies was printed on 10 February. Fr. Pasotti gave long words of congratulations and hope for the future. On the following day, the feast of the Apparition of Our Lady at Lourdes, Fr. Pasotti offered the Holy Mass with a copy of the youth magazine on the altar to offer this success to God through the Blessed Virgin Mary. The second issue would come out in March of the same year. ¹⁷⁸ Later, on 1 December 1936, the name ‘Matchimawai’ was changed to ‘Yaowasarn’ [meaning: the message for the youth].



Udomphan Press in 1933

At the beginning of March 1933, major repairs of Bang Nok Khuek church began. Hence, every Sunday, there would be a Mass at the chapel of Mary Help of Christians at 08.30 a.m. while repairs were still going on.¹⁷⁹

In the middle of March, the seminarians went to spend their 'vacation' at various churches. Due to poverty and to save money, instead of going by train, some of them took the boat, others went on foot. Some walked from Don Kra Bueang to Banpong. This expressed both their strength of spirit and their stamina.¹⁸⁰

On 11 May 1933, Fr. Pasotti recorded in the chronicle that on that day there was a meeting of the councilors about the seminary at Bang Nok Khuek of the Bangkok Mission. The council decided that at that time, and even looking out to the future, it was not yet necessary to buy this place. The council saw that this matter should be an agreement between the Bangkok Mission through Bishop Rene Perros, who wanted to sell, and the Rector

Major, Fr. Ricaldone. The Bangkok Mission proposed the price of 44,800.- baht for the seminary which the council thought was too high. The councilors at that time were Fr. Curti, Fr. Pinaffo and Fr. Casetta.¹⁸¹

At the end of June 1933, Fr. Pasotti preached the 6-day retreat to prepare the six deacons for their priestly ordination at Wat Phleng. The church at Bang Nok Khuek was still under repairs. The ordination was held on 1 July 1933 and presided over by Bishop Rene Perros. It was an occasion for the Church to arrange a big feast after having gone through the catastrophic storm of the previous year. On 9 July 1933, all the six newly ordained priests went to offer their first Mass at Bang Nok Khuek Church, presided over by Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu. The church had recently passed through some repairs. Later, in the month of August, Fr. Pasotti took the opportunity to celebrate his feast day [7 August] at Wat Phleng, in the presence of the six new priests. He took that occasion to announce that Fr. George Bainotti would be the new parish priest of the church. This brought great rejoicing among the parishioners. On the following day, the seminarians celebrated also his feast day at the seminary.¹⁸²



Bishop Rene Perros ordained 6 priests on 1 July 1933

7.2 A Siamese for the Siamese People

On 1 August 1933, in the annual report, Fr. Pasotti mentioned about ordination of the new Salesian priests with a group of government officials present who admired the sacrifices of the missionaries who dedicated their lives for the good of the Siamese people. He reported that there were 43 major seminarians who were in formation, 11 of them studying theology, two others finished the first year at the Gregorian University, and one of them was a Siamese.

He also mentioned about the minor seminarians of the Mission, who, he said, were special ones. There were only 10 seminarians who were in Mathayom 4, and if everything would go on well, in the following year this group would solemnly receive the cassocks after which they would start learning philosophy. They would be like the budding flowers of the new Mission.

As for education in the Mission, the academic curriculum followed that of the government, with Latin added to it last March. There were 8 ordinary students and 7 teacher training students who passed the government exams. Everybody was happy and it was a source of 'encouragement' for all. *"Fr. Pasotti expressed his confidence that among this group of students, there were some of them who would open their generous hearts for evangelization, and that they had good characters which gave hope for the future and would win over the hearts of their fellow countrymen. They would be 'Siamese for the Siamese people'."*¹⁸³

He always made regular visits to the Salesian confreres and the faithful in various churches. Wherever he went, if there was an opportunity, he would give a sermon in Thai and Chinese language, to give new vitality and hope to the people there. For example, it was found out in the chronicle of Wat Thawa that on 13 August 1933, the members felt more lively because of his simplicity, his encouragements, and he would often solicit prayers for his work.¹⁸⁴ After returning, Fr. Pasotti would share the experiences of his travels and visits in the 'Buona Notte', such as the one on 1 October 1933 after he returned from Wat Phraeknamdaeng.

Fr. Pasotti's dream to open a house in Ratchaburi began since 1927. Later, he talked with Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu during the feast of Christ the King [27 October 1933] that he would open a new house in Ratchaburi, but that everything has its own time. On 14 November 1933, he made an official announcement that the next Salesian house to be opened would be in Ratchaburi and that Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu would be assigned to pioneer this plan. That was the beginning of the work of Fr. Mario there in early 1934.¹⁸⁵

On 16 November 1933, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to Fr. Braga, the Salesian Provincial in Hong Kong, expressing his regret that Fr. Emmanuel Almassan, rector of Bang Nok Khuek seminary, would be transferred back to China where there would be a new novitiate. He obeyed the will of the superiors with a serene heart, though it was a mid-year transfer which caused him to make new adjustments, including adding more burden to some of the members. But he hoped that God would put everything in place. He, however,

made a request to Fr. Braga that, if it was possible, an appropriate person be sent to replace Fr. Almassan because there were works to be done with the Chinese Catholics, the management of the teacher training school for the catechists and the care of vocations. In that letter, Fr. Pasotti informed us that he planned to participate in the meeting of Bishops in the Indochinese Region in 1934 in which he hoped to find out what he could do more for the Mission. ¹⁸⁶

Fr. Pasotti always encouraged the seminarians and novices to prepare themselves, both internally and externally for the feasts like Christmas of 1933. He invited them to prepare an artistic crib in the main church. At that time, seminarian Vitrano was the head artist. ¹⁸⁷

Later on, also in a letter to Fr. Braga dated 30 January 1934, Fr. Pasotti wrote, as if to warn himself, that he must use faith to follow the desires and the administration of the superiors who knew all things well and who managed everything for the good of the congregation and the members. Besides this, he also expressed his deep concern for the need of a huge amount of money for the needs of the formation house. He hoped that the superiors would be sympathetic by sending a confrere to replace Fr. Almassan. He would prefer that the person knew Chinese and has a kind heart, in order to bring the Good News to the Chinese in Siam. ¹⁸⁸

7.3 Prediction about the Future of Ratchaburi

In early 1934, Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu, who was assigned by Fr. Pasotti to pioneer the work of opening a new house in

Ratchaburi, asked permission to create a good relationship with the people of Ratchaburi by organizing a friendly football match between the seminarians and the teachers of Benjamarachuthit School on 8 February 1934. The team of seminarians won



by 2-1 goals. It was a good opportunity to create a good and cordial friendship. The governor, who presided over the match, congratulated the winning team and invited the Salesians to quickly start the work in Ratchaburi to help the youth. This event became news in the front page of the ‘Srikrung’ newspaper of Bangkok. Fr. Pasotti intended to open a house in Ratchaburi on Easter, 1 April 1934, the canonization day of St. John Bosco and would make him the patron saint of this new house. But up to that day, a location could not be found. Hence, the opening of the house had to be postponed.¹⁸⁹ Fr. Henry Danieli wrote that there was only a rented house available at Voradej road, at the water side, south of the railroad bridge. On 23 April 1934, Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu and seminarian Andreoni took residence in this house, and they prepared to open it on 26 April. In the inauguration Mass, Fr. Pasotti spoke like a prediction: “*Although this place is small,*

but we are here like Jesus who sows a seed and when the time comes, Don Bosco himself will find an appropriate place for us.” At noon of that day, a group of Salesians and youth with a band went to pay their respect to the governor of Ratchaburi. He gave an encouraging address and had A photo taken together as a souvenir.



After that, this place became a guest house for members who were passing through. In June 1934, a request was made to the authority to open evening English classes which continued until 1939, when the rental contract expired. The house was also temporarily closed due to the fact that there were complaints from the neighbors, that they were disturbed by the noise of the children. Later, on 5 January 1941, a house near the railway station was purchased to make a temporary chapel. On 20 October 1947, a large piece of land of 48.5 rais [1 rai = 1,600 square meters] was bought to build a school and a seminary.¹⁹⁰ Later, this place became the center of the Ratchaburi Mission, as mentioned by Fr. Pasotti on 13 June 1931.

7.4 Father of the Chinese Catholics

Bang Tan [St. Margaret Church] was another church for which Fr. Pasotti paid special interest. One reason was that there was a good number of Chinese faithful. He used to go there during the Chinese New Year, the annual feast of the church, plus other feasts. The youth and children there were lively and joyful when he went to visit them. The chronicle of 13-14 February 1934 recorded that when Fr. Pasotti arrived at the railway station, both the Catholic and non-Catholic children went to welcome him. He gave them a foot ball and immediately they would go to the paddy field to play soccer. On the following day, which was Ash Wednesday, after the Mass, he gave an address in Chinese inviting all the parents to send their children to study at the parochial school. If Catholic parents were poor, they did not have to pay the tuition. On that occasion, students from a Chinese school at Banpong came to play the traditional lion dance for the public to see. Fr. Pasotti gave them some gifts. In the evening, the youth accompanied him to the railway station and bid him goodbye. So, Fr. Pasotti went back to Banpong with a jubilant heart. On the following Sunday, which was Palm Sunday [25 march 1934], he and the major seminarians came from Banpong to celebrate the feast and to thank the Lord on the occasion of the release from prison of Luang Sith Theppakarn [a rich Catholic benefactor of the Mission].¹⁹¹ After the Mass, there was a party for all. In the afternoon, the major seminarians played a soccer match with the youth with quite a big crowd of spectators. After the match,

Fr. Pasotti gave sweets to everyone and invited the Bangtan youth soccer team to play a match at Banpong as well. Luang Sith used his bus to send Fr. Pasotti and the major seminarians back to Banpong. Normally, he and the seminarians used to travel by train. ¹⁹²



Fr. Pasotti and Luang Sith Theppakarn at Bangtan

Fr. Pasotti had a continuous interest in bringing the Good News to the Chinese. He never stopped finding ways for this purpose. On 14 march 1934, he again wrote to Fr. Braga, the Salesian Provincial in Hong Kong, that in April, Luang Sith Theppakarn had the intention of sending one of his sons to study Chinese and English in Hong Kong, and that Luang Sith would accompany his son to Hong Kong by himself. Fr. Pasotti asked if it was possible to allow the boy to stay with the Salesians while the accommodation and food would be borne by Luang Sith, or would it be better for him to stay somewhere else. Fr. Almassan [already in China at that time] knew Luang Sith well. In the same letter he also gave the information that in the month of April, the Salesians would open a new youth center in Ratchaburi. ¹⁹³

During the weekend of 5-6 May 1934, Fr. Pasotti went to Bang Tan again. He brought a lot of joy to the confreres and children because they had their beloved superior present among them. He spoke of many good things and gave encouragement to everybody. While the parish priest offered the first Sunday Mass, Fr. Pasotti sat at the confessional patiently to listen to a lot of penitents. He offered the second Mass, preached a rather lengthy sermon in both Thai and Chinese, with the same content that God really exists. Everyone kept silence, listened intently and reflected on what came out from the mouth of God's representative. On that occasion, there were some government officials who came to tell him that it was necessary to have a hospital in Banpong to promote the quality of human life, and that the local government would consider how they could be of some help. Once again, Fr. Pasotti returned back from Bang Tan with a joyful heart. Later on, on the 12th of the same month, he aired his opinion that he wished to further expand the evangelization among the people of other faiths in accordance with the intention of the Holy Father. ¹⁹⁴

7.5 The Holy Year - 1934

In April 1934, he wrote a circular letter of some pages length to announce the Holy Year on the occasion of the 1900 anniversary of the death of Jesus Christ which the Church started in 1933-1934. He informed the faithful that the Holy Father extended the Holy Year up to April 1935, and he was convinced that: "the Catholics of Ratchaburi will not be second to anybody in faith, piety and love towards God, and will try to avoid sins."

He informed the faithful of the Holy Father's intentions for this Holy Year as follows:

- “1. That the Church enjoy freedom and that every nation will love peace, friendship, harmony and make positive progress.
2. That the ardent prayers of the faithful strengthen the endeavor of missionaries in helping the stray sheep to come back to the one fold of Christ.
3. That sinners and lost people be converted back, and that all be united in special prayers for those who make themselves the enemies of Christ.”

Aside from explaining the necessary conditions to receive the plenary indulgences, Fr. Pasotti also expressed his desire to let the faithful willingly unite themselves with the parish priest to organize procession from one church to another, while praying and singing along the way. He believed that with an open expression of faith would certainly be pleasing to God and will also be a witness to the brethren of other faiths.

Further more, he proposed to the faithful to make the Stations of the Cross every first Sunday of the month, and find the opportunity to make the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for one hour, on certain occasions as determined by the parish priest.

At the end of the circular letter, he admonished the faithful to remember that “Holy Year is Holy Life”. This summarized his love and concern towards all the faithful.

“Holy Year is a reminder of our holiness. Being Catholics and children of God, we must keep His commandments, the precepts of the Church, and adapt our conduct in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel.”

“Jesus said: ‘if you love me, keep my commandments...you are my friends, if you do whatever I command you’” [Jn 14, 15; 15,14]

“Just as we know a tree by its fruits, we likewise know well a Catholic by his/her life. We must be a good example to everybody. We live in this world but do not live a worldly life. Do not allow yourselves to be dragged to the desire of the flesh. Remember that God has created us for heaven. Love the commandments, respect the civil authority, love all human beings and do good to everyone. Christianity will find obstacles in the proclamation of the faith if the behavior of the Christians do not coincide with the teachings he holds, especially avoiding gambling which will bring untold calamities to the family. Cursing and bad words should not be allowed in your household because it is expelling God from you and your family. Do not read worldly and dirty books, and if found in your house, burn them. These kinds of books are like venomous snakes, and when you get bitten the poison will penetrate into your blood veins, causing fatal pain to the point of death. Such books will leave poison in our mind and heart, leading us toward evil ways and sins.”

“Finally, I emphasize that we should be very devout to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mother Mary.”

“We, and all the priests of Ratchaburi Mission, are most willing to help the brethren in all matters to the best of our abilities so that you will receive special blessings this year, a source of joy from the Holy Father who is our supreme head and representative of Christ on earth. Please pray for him so that he will be able to extend the Kingdom of God to the ends of the world, especially in our Mission. We pray and make sacrifices for the tepid Catholics and those who have left the Church so that they will come back to the fold. We must set good examples with our words and actions to make this Holy Year a way for our brethren to come to know God, because Jesus had shed his blood for them as well. Whoever saves a soul does a great job. God will give him/her a great reward, according to the words of St. Augustine: ‘If you save a soul, your soul will also be saved.’ I shall be very pleased to be able to tell the Holy Father at the end of the Holy Year that the faithful of Ratchaburi have done very well in the Holy Year. How joyous it will be to the heart of your heavenly Father!”

“Please remember that all the good things you have done will receive superfluous reward in the next life as St. John Bosco used to say: ‘at the end of life, God will collect the results of all our good deeds.’” 195

7.6 Inauguration of a New Office in Ratchaburi - 1934

As for the inauguration of the new house in Ratchaburi on 8 March 1934, Fr. Pasotti assigned seminarian Francis Andreoni to be the assistant of Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu. On 24 April of the same

year which was the feastday of Mary Help of Christians, both of them offered the first Mass at the newly purchased house near the Ratchaburi railway station. The Mass was celebrated on an altar made of corrugated milk boxed...on that poor altar, the Holy King deigned to come down; both of them were deeply touched. After that, they started to prepare for the official opening of the house. Some confreres came also to help. Fr. Pasotti arrived on the 25th of April. He informed all the houses and told them to make a special adoration to ask God's blessings for this new work in Ratchaburi. Aside from this, on 18 May, he also asked those who came to make a retreat to pray and make sacrifices for the activities in Ratchaburi. ¹⁹⁶

On 26 April 1934, there was the opening of the chapel in Ratchaburi. It was the one in the house near the Ratchaburi railway station. Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu was in charge of the activities of the chapel and the Sunday youth center. In the evening, after school, there was a special English course as well. ¹⁹⁷ The chronicle of the seminary recorded that it was the feast of St. John Bosco [at that time the feast was in the month of April] that the new house was opened in Ratchaburi with the participation of the faithful, the teachers who just finished the seminar, and representatives of the seminarians from Bang Nok Khuek. Boat transportation was provided by Luang Sith. ¹⁹⁸ Two Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, together with some teachers and students, also came to join in the ceremony. The Mass was of the feast of St. John Bosco in order to offer the new house and the new activities in Ratchaburi

under the saint's patronage. Fr. Pasotti made the announcement that though the place was small, yet it was under the protection of the divine providence of God. We are ready to sow the seeds of good works because we do not trust in human strength.¹⁹⁹



Chapel in the house
near Ratchaburi railway station

Chapter 8 : The Administrator of the Apostolic Prefecture

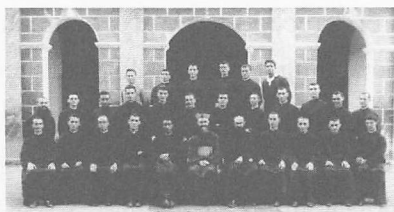
8.1 The Establishment of the Apostolic Prefecture of Ratchaburi and the Appointment of the Apostolic Prefect

Pope Pius XI, through the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, issued an apostolic letter dated 28 May 1934 establishing the Apostolic Prefecture of Ratchaburi. This was signed by Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi. At the same time, there was the appointment of Fr. Gaetano Pasotti to be the Apostolic Prefect.²⁰⁰ The Congregation for the Propagation of Faith announced this to Fr. Ricaldone, the Rector Major of the Salesians, with the following text:

“With great joy we wish to inform you that the Holy Father deems it appropriate to raise the status of Ratchaburi Mission under the care of an Apostolic Prefecture, and appoint Fr. Gaetano Pasotti to be the Apostolic Prefect.”

*“While we join together in congratulating Fr. Pasotti for the successful activities in the past which earned the satisfaction of the Holy Father, and especially in this year when Don Bosco would be canonized, may the Ratchaburi Prefecture be fruitful in its work, may there be more conversions. We wish to sincerely convey our blessings and hope to the first Apostolic Prefect, that he may serve the Church efficiently and in a holy manner.”*²⁰¹

The Rector Major sent all these papers to Fr. Pasotti on 10 July 1934 along with advices and blessings for the new assignment.²⁰²



Apostolic Prefect Gaetano Pasotti with Salesian missionaries
at Bang Nok Khuek Seminary

Being appointed the Apostolic Prefect did not change Fr. Pasotti's activities. When he visited various parishes, he would willingly hear confessions, especially on the eve of a feast, like on the eve of Corpus Christi, at Wat Thamuang in 1934. Besides, his presence would make the feast more solemn. He would take the opportunity to visit the parishioners at their homes along with some Salesians and the youth. He would watch the games of the children and the youth, bringing joy to the faithful who see a Salesian who love their children. They hoped that they would have a school for their children. At that time, Fr. Pasotti had a plan and looked for a location to build the school at Thamuang. He remained there until the feast of the Sacred Heart. He invited the faithful to love and have devotion to the Sacred Heart. There was also the announcement that Fr. Pasotti was appointed Apostolic Prefect of Ratchaburi. On 24 June 1934, after the solemn Mass, the Church bells were rung, with drums beating like that on the feast of Mary Help of Christians. In the month of the Sacred Heart, they wished to present a gift to the Holy Father through the new Prefect by forming the Eucharistic Group, as a token of their love and gratitude to the representative of Christ on earth.

As for the official reception, Wat Thamuang organized it on 14-16 September, being the annual feast of the parish. A band and students from Banpong were swinging small flags, standing in two rows, while Fr. Pasotti was walking through, and the students and faithful were shouting “welcome”. After all had entered the Church, the ‘Te Deum’ was sung, followed by the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. In the evening, there were stage presentations in the presence of the district officer and other government officials. Fr. Pasotti was very happy to be among his faithful, especially with the children and the young. On the day of the church’s annual feast, there was a solemn and pious procession of the statue of our Blessed Mother Mary.²⁰³ However, as for the plan to build a school at Thamuang, this would have to wait another three years, until November 1937.

On 7-8 July 1934, Fr. Pasotti went to celebrate the feast of St. John Bosco at Bang Tan. The students in their uniform welcomed him at the railway station. As soon as he stepped out of the train, the students shouted joyously to welcome him. At the same time, the church bells were ringing the whole way as they walked from the railway station to the church. After entering the church, they all sang a Thai song in honor of St. John Bosco. On the following day, which was the feast day itself, there was a solemn procession into the church. After the Mass, there were some stage performances, with government officials from Nong Hin and Phrong Maduea who came to join the celebration on this auspicious occasion.²⁰⁴

8.2 The Preparation of Personnel for the Mission Work

Fr. Pasotti took pride in preparing personnel for the works of the Mission, be it the preparation of diocesan priests, the catechists and teachers in the diocesan schools, as he reported to the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith in 1934. It seemed that the Ministry of Education [called 'Thammakan', then], after visiting the activities of the Mission at Bang Nok Khuek, started to take special interest in the work of the Mission, especially with regards to education. On 10 July 1934, Phra Phanitchayasarnviset, the acting Minister, sent a letter to Fr. Pasotti asking him to send the project of the elementary and primary education of the Mission to the Ministry. Fr. Pasotti readily responded to the request and he asked the Ministry of Education to forward the rules/regulations and the teacher training curriculum, as earlier requested, in order that the Mission would adapt and comply with the current ministerial curriculum.²⁰⁵

We did not know the reasons for the subsequent results. We only knew that finally the government did not approve private teacher training school. After 4 years of our teacher training school, we had 30 graduates, out of which about half of them were Salesians, Thai and expatriates.²⁰⁶ It was a matter of great regret that such a useful course would be closed down.

On 13 August 1934, when the superiors of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians visited the Salesian Sisters at Bang Nok Khuek and travelled on to China, Fr. Pasotti took the

occasion to send another letter to Fr. Braga in answer to the latter's letter from Yunan, near the northern border of Thailand. In this letter he seemed to think of a chance to work together there in the future. He mentioned that he received some consolations from the Pope, sent through Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, who showed satisfaction at the evangelization activities which the Salesians were doing in Siam. This was an encouragement in the midst of various unavoidable trials. This consolation made other matters quite light. He expressed his gratitude over everything that the Provincial always did to help him and the Mission in Siam. ²⁰⁷

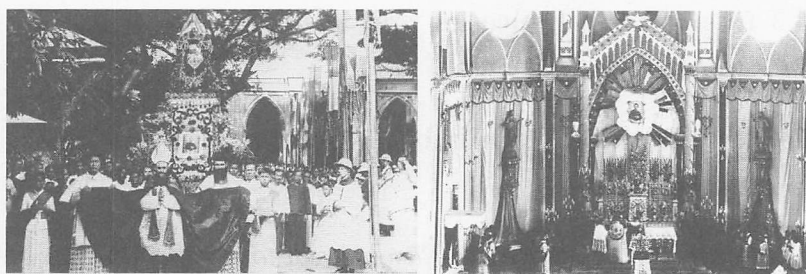
On 13 August 1934, Fr. Pasotti went to Wat Pleng on official visit to prepare the children for Confirmation on Assumption Feast. There was a solemn reception. Those who once had problems with him and the priests were the reception organizers. He expressed his love like a father to everyone and every family. When he arrived in the church, they sang the 'Te Deum'. He met the children who would receive Confirmation, assisted their confession. On the feast day, there was a solemn Mass followed by a welcome ceremony for the superiors and priests, together with stage performances. On 16 August, he returned to Bang Nok Khuek with the sound of the bells and loud cheers of the faithful who felt like they were saying 'goodbye' to their departing father. He would occasionally go to Wat Phleng to substitute Fr. George Bainotti, who was usually alone, so that he could take some rest. ²⁰⁸

8.3 Interested in Education and in the Preparation of its Personnel

Fr. Henry Danieli wrote in the book “Don Bosco – The Salesians in Thailand” that:

“In September 1934, Bishop Pasotti went to see the Minister of Education to solve the problem of St. Joseph School – Banpong [at present named – Sarasit Pithayalai]. The Minister asked why did the Salesians not open a vocational training school in Bangkok as well? At that time, the Salesians worked only in the Ratchaburi Mission and did not have enough personnel to open a vocational school. Later, on 6 June 1935, the Rector Major wrote to Bishop Pasotti stressing that the opening of a vocational school in Bangkok is still an urgent project of the Salesians in Thailand. However, on 19 July 1935, Bishop Pasotti replied that at that moment, there were still many obstacles for starting a new operation in Bangkok.” ²⁰⁹

On 14 October 1934, there was once again a solemn celebration of the feast of St. John Bosco, at Bang Nok Khuek, with representatives from various churches and schools. Fr. Pasotti was the celebrant of the Holy Mass. It was the first time that he used the vestments of a Prefect. At the beginning of the Mass, there was the investiture of 8 diocesan seminarians. After the gospel, Fr. Pasotti gave a sermon in Thai expressing his love for the Thai people and his hope for St. John Bosco, who was just canonized, to bring those who have not yet known God to come into the



Solemn celebration of St. John Bosco, at Bang Nok Khuek

Church of Christ. At noon, the governors of Ratchaburi and Mae Klong came to join the feast, had lunch and watched the stage performances. After that, there was the Eucharistic Benediction at 14.30 hrs., followed by the procession of the statue of St. John Bosco, and the kissing of his relic. After the reception of the superiors in front of the church, the priests and representatives of each church came to pay their respects to the Apostolic Prefect. When the presentations were finished, seminarian Prachum Minpraphan invited the faithful to support Catholic printing and good media. Aside from this, bad books were burnt in front of all the visitors. Fr. Pasotti summarized in his good night talk, thanking everyone for their cooperation in celebrating the feast of St. John Bosco successfully

During breakfast, on 16 October 1934, which was before the feast of St. Margarita, Fr. Pasotti proposed to let the seminarians of theology go to Bang Tan for the annual feast. Everybody was so excited and prepared to travel immediately to catch the noon train in Ratchaburi to Bang Tan. On the following morning, they participated in the feast, and on the 19th, They

took further trip to Nakorn Pathom, Nong Hin, Donz Krabueang and Phrong Maduea. Luang Sith drove them to Kanchanaburi, Thamuang, Thawa and Banpong. Then they returned to Ratchaburi and arrived at Bang Nok Khuek on 23 October.

Fr. Pasotti was interested in the formation of the personnel at all levels. With regards to the formation of the confreres, he wrote to Fr. Gusmano on 23 October 1934 that: *"In our council, there is only Fr. Herero in the formation house, without a catechist and a rector. It is believed that the Rector Major will find the means to solve this problem. In March 1935, the eight teacher training students from Bang Nok Khuek will come to join with the seminarians studying philosophy and theology in order to begin their first year theology. As for the year 1934, we have tried our best over and above all not to have the on-going formation to be too much affected. But we are in a position that we cannot do much because of our work-overload and concern over all things. We hope that the Blessed Virgin Mary will bestow her blessings over us."*²¹⁰ At this said period, Fr. Pasotti had to act as a temporary rector of the seminary.

8.4 Participate in the Indo-Chinese Synod of Bishops in Hanoi - 1934

In the same letter, he informed that he had to travel on 6 November 1934 to join the first Synod of Bishops of the Indo-Chinese region in Hanoi. He would be absent for about one month. He also reported that the feast of St. John Bosco on 14 October at Bang

Nok Khuek was a real success. Several civil and ranking military officials from Ratchaburi and Mae Klong, including many faithful from Bangkok, came to participate in the feast. He said that he would write an article about this in the Salesian Bulletin.²¹¹

On 6 November 1934, he went to Bangkok to prepare himself to participate in the Indo-Chinese Synod of Bishops which would start on 18 November in Hanoi. He returned on 17 December.²¹² From 6 November up to mid-December 1934, while he was



Synod of Bishops in Hanoi

attending the Synod, Fr. Braga invited him to visit any mission in China. However, he refused on the ground that he was concerned with his Mission due to the fact that he had left it for more than one month. The meetings of the Synod, on the other hand, were very useful.

8.5 Interested in the Pastoral Care and in the Collaborators Responsible for Evangelization

From the chronicle of 20 November 1934, we learned that Fr. Silvio de Munari and Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu were appointed to be confessors of the confreres and the seminarians to replace Fr. Almassan who was transferred to China.²¹³ Fr. Pasotti followed the practice of having the same confessor like the other confreres who had Fr. Silvio de Munari as their confessor until the last minute of his life at St. Louis Hospital, Bangkok.

We could not find any evidence of the annual report of 1934 of the Ratchaburi Mission, but there was a letter from Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi to Fr. Pasotti, mentioning about that report:

"I am so much impressed by your annual report which was lively, filled with missionary spirituality, and plenty of initiatives running in line with the marvelous formation of Don Bosco."

"I see that there is much progress and a delicate victory this year, which resulted from your father being given the highest honor by the Church. St. John Bosco must have followed the mission of his children from heaven, and must have given encouragement and Christian joy to you even when you are amidst difficulties and concerns over both the material and moral issues."

"May you all hold fast to your enthusiasm and learn how to effectively carry out the already initiated activities and new projects for the glory of God and for the salvation of many souls."

*The Salesian activities started from zero. Thanks for your generous love and your unfathomable faith which enriches our holy Mother the Church and wins her a miraculous victory. I see that your Mission is still very young, but it gives us a tremendous hope. I wish to congratulate you and your collaborators. I wish to really express my warm congratulations to the first Prefect Apostolic of Ratchaburi. May God bless your undertakings to always be sustainable and effective. ”*²¹⁴

As the Prefect Apostolic and the Provincial of the Salesians in Thailand, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to all the parish priest on 29 January 1935, attaching also the letter of Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, to give encouragement to everybody. Aside from this, he also gave some directions for the new year, derived from the General Chapter of the Salesians. The following are some excerpts:

“2. I enclosed herein the strenna of this year for the faithful and the youth. I decided to make the tradition started by Don Bosco to be promoted in a special way, among them, the devotion to the Eucharist, well-prepared reception of Holy Communion, frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. It was the idea of the Rector Major which appeared in the documents of the Chapter of 24 September 1934, n. 67. I firmly believe that in every house, other than explaining and mutual admonition about these matters, there is also a real determination to put them into practice. What an untold blessing will go to our souls and our Mission.”

“3. May I remind all my beloved confreres about the strenna of our Rector Major: “Be honest in following the teachings of Don Bosco.” May St. Francis de Sales, one of the Patrons of our Congregation, whose feast we are celebrating today, help us to step out to seek souls with an ardent heart, with a spirit of dedication, goodness and tenderness.” ²¹⁵

On 2 February 1935, the faithful of Bang Tan were waiting to welcome Fr. Pasotti in a fitting way, with the bells ringing and the band playing, with the youth waving the papal flags. They were waving these as Fr. Pasotti was coming. And as a token of their love, the youth accompanied Fr. Pasotti until he arrived at the priests’ residence. On the following day, there was the solemn reception of Holy Communion of the first communicants. During the Mass, Fr. Pasotti reminded the children to receive Holy Communion often and well-prepared, And to frequently visit the Blessed Sacrament. He also asked this to be the strenna for both the faithful and the youth for the year 1935. On that day, the Chinese community took the opportunity for confession and benediction of the Holy Eucharist in preparation for the Chinese New Year on 4 February 1935. Fr. Pasotti stayed with them on the Chinese New Year. He offered the Mass and ministered Confirmation to 71 Thai and Chinese children. After the services, there was a reception to honor him. A Chinese catechist delivered congratulation speech and a band played some music. Fr. Pasotti answered in Chinese and gave sweets to all. On the following Chinese New Year, he again came to Bang Tan on 24 January

1936, before proceeding on to Banpong to participate in a priestly ordination on 26 January.²¹⁶

From Fr. Pasotti's letter to Fr. Braga written from Wat Phleng on February 1935, we are informed that at that time there were 1,626 students under the care of the Salesians.²¹⁷ And on 7 July 1935, Fr. Pasotti reported from Ratchaburi that there were 40 minor seminarians, 1 student of theology, and 6 students of philosophy. His dream in 1930 become to be true.

8.6 Need of Supporters in Prayers and Sacrifices

Fr. Pasotti was aware of his great responsibility in managing the new Mission assigned to him by the Holy See. Other than the Salesian confreres, he also tried to seek the help of other collaborators, beginning from the Sisters, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who were taking direct care of the girls. There had been lay formation for catechists and teachers in the schools of the Mission, organized Catholic action in various parishes, paid attention to children and youth who would be the future of the country and the Church. In 1930, seminary of the Mission was established to prepare personnel for the Church. He realized that, other than the above-mentioned people, it was also necessary to have a 'back-up' force to support the activities of the Mission with prayers and sacrifices. He, therefore, got in contact with the Clarist Capuchin monastery of Florence to send some members to establish a convent in his Mission, because there was no Clarist Capuchin monastery in Thailand yet.

We do not have any original documents, so we do not know exactly when he made the first request. We only had some letters which he wrote to the monastery in Florence. The first letter available, dated 24 April 1935, showed that there was an earlier contact, and steps were taken to establish a monastery in Thailand. There were political problems both in Italy and in Thailand, especially in terms of the economy of the country and that of the Ratchaburi Mission. He confessed to the Mother General that: *"The poor Prefect Apostolic [Fr. Pasotti himself] had done everything within his reach, but still he was heavily burdened with debt..."* Anyhow, those obstacles did not impede his intentions or those of the Sisters. He encouraged those arduous Sisters who were waiting for their departure, and who felt that the waiting was too long. It was not until 24 April 1936 that five Sisters from the monastery of Florence finally arrived in Banpong, Ratchaburi and set up the first monastery there. Members had been regularly increasing, until 36 years later the second monastery was opened in Baan Saeng Arun, Thapsakae, Prachuabkhirikhan. Then other branches were opened in several places.

On 2 September 1945, Fr. Pasotti wrote to the Clarist Superior that: *"I would like to tell you about my great joy to have these Sisters living among us like efficient supporters. They were loved by the faithful and respected by the people of other faiths as well."*²¹⁸

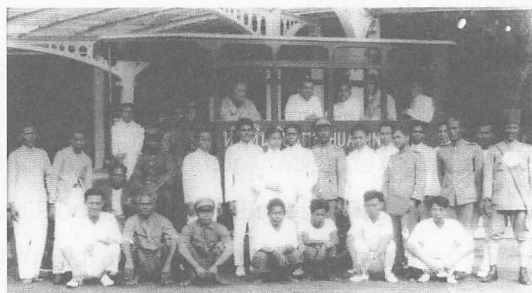
8.7 Good Relationship with the Government Officials at Various Levels

In 1935, Fr. Pasotti and the Salesians had the opportunity to welcome many government officials who visited the mission. Among them was Phra Riam Viratchapak – the first Vice-President of the House of Representatives in B.E. 2476 (A.D. 1933) and the Minister of Foreign Affairs From B.E. 2479 - 2488 (A.D. 1936 - 1945) who came to visit Hua hin on 21 April attending the Easter Mass. Later, on 10 June, he, together with the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and wife, went to visit our house in Bang Nok Khuek. On 28 July, the day before Phra Riam would go to Paris, Fr. Pasotti took him to visit the various Salesian houses. Finally, on 15 August, Fr. Pasotti, with some Salesian confreres, Children and a band, went to bid farewell to Phra Riam at the railway station of Ratchaburi where he would be on his way passing to the south further his journey to Europe. Fr. Pasotti offered Phra Riam a garland of flowers when the train stopped at the station. All these indicated that Fr. Pasotti, with the Salesians, had a good relationship with all the government officials at all levels.

8.8 Visitation and Dream of the Future of the South in 1935

Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu, who was stationed in Ratchaburi, went to make a survey and found about 50 catholics at Hua hin. He baptized 9 babies, and began to build a small church dedicated to St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus from the donations of generous faithful. About six months after that, a large piece of land was

purchased. The priests, brothers and seminarians constructed the residence. Fr. Pasotti wrote in the chronicle: *"We think that not so long, we will be able to have a school, a high educational institute and a youth center at Hua hin. Here, there are so many youth, the robust children of the fishermen...We might set up a settlement on the seashore for the poor and sick youth...if it were the will of God and Mary Help of Christians."*



Christian at Hua hin 1935

In the same letter, Fr. Pasotti told us that during 9 October and 6 November 1935, Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu went further to the south, to Chumphorn. He had an appointment with Fr. Pasotti that together they would take the train from Huahin, stop at Khan-kradai and walk through the forest to offer mass for two catholic families there. Then they would proceed to Prachuapkhirikhan to meet the provincial education officer who was familiar with the Salesians in Bang Nok Khuek. The education officer invited them to go to his home for a chat. Then both continued their trip and arrived in Chumphorn at the middle of the night. There two catholic faithful were waiting to welcome them. On the following morning, they

visited about 40 catholics living in that area and offered a mass at Koh Khote Kra. Fr. Pasotti was impressed by the faith and devotion of some faithful who had travelled a long way, risking danger, in order to fulfill their annual paschal obligations. He built a small missionary station at milestone no. 484, dedicated to St. Francis Xavier as the light to the southern peninsula. The construction was supported by a generous Italian lady. Fr. Pasotti was a kind and friendly person who could converse with every person even while traveling on the train.²¹⁹

Later, on 27 October 1935, Fr. Pasotti wrote to Fr. Braga from Hatyai, telling him about his long journey to the south with Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu, to bring consolation to the catholics who were scattered in the area. He believed that the schools and the youth centers were as important and necessary for the south as for the central plane. He found that in the main center of Nakornsri thammarat there was not a single catholic, but there was an alumnus of Assumption College. Besides these, he also related the good news that 22 teacher training students passed the examination, out of whom were 7 Italian Salesians, 8 diocesan seminarians and 7 young men. They would be the future hope of the Mission. He congratulated Fr. Pinaffo who returned back to Thamuang, and Fr. Terpin who worked very well at Banpong.²²⁰

On 16 November 1935, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to Fr. Gusmano, proposing names of the directors and advisers of the Prefecture. He also gave a briefing of his long visitation to the south and the general situation of the Mission:

"It is a very vast field of work for the kingdom of God and in the name of Don Bosco, with so many difficulties. We are fully loaded, yet we are arduous and enthusiastic. We have schools and playgrounds full of youth. We have not yet seen the immediate results, but certainly we will. On 26 January 1936, there will be priests ordination 8 in the new church at Banpong. We will also organize a youth day. Besides, in April of the following year, we will have about 10 Thai novices." ²²¹

On 28 October 1936, Fr. Pasotti took his journey to the south. once more On 2 November 1936, he wrote a letter from Betong to Fr. Braga, informed about his visitation and blessing of a house and a new small chapel on the feast of All Saints, which coincided with the 80th birthday anniversary of Pope Pius XI. ²²² There were about 60 catholics in that community, most of them were Chinese who migrated from China. This reminded him of his life in China once more. Because the Rector Major repeatedly said that he did not want a Salesian to live alone, and Fr. Pasotti has understood this quite well due to his experiences in China, so, the Mission could not yet send a missionary to stay alone at Betong. This has to wait for at least two years more, yet still the visitation would be done twice a year. would still be made. In another undated letter posted in the Salesian Bulletin of October 1937, Fr. Pasotti mentioned hope for a youth center and a school at Betong. ²²³

In the same letter, Fr. Pasotti also expressed his interest in some means for evangelization. ²²⁴ He asked for films which he used

to have in Macao, because these were not available in Thailand. Besides, he also mentioned about going to Manila with 3-4 Thais. He planned to let them study or to observe the works there. He returned back from the south and arrived at Bang Nok Khuek on 10 November. Then he went to Manila, Philippines together with Fr. Herrero, for a general meeting, from 27 January to 21 February 1937.²²⁵



Fr. Pasotti and Deacon Peter Carretto
visited Betong in 1938

8.9 Grand Celebration at Banpong - 1936

Fr. Pasotti wrote in detail about the new church at Banpong, which was designed and supervised by Fr. Terpin. The construction was done by the Salesian confreres and volunteers. The consecration ceremony was held on 6 October 1935. After that, in January 1936, there was the ordination of the second batch of 8 priests at Banpong. This was followed by the scout jamboree and youth meeting. The Catholic Action groups from various parishes, who

gathered at the Military Engineering Department of Ratchaburi, would take the train to Banpong. They were given a warm reception by the military engineering personnel, and the youth reciprocated by playing band music and warm cheers. In that celebration, the Prime Minister, Phraya Phahol Pholphayuhasena [vacationing at his home in Kanchanaburi] also came to participate, because it was a very grand event. He arrived at the venue since Saturday evening of 25 January, together with many other honorable guests, like the Italian Ambassador to Thailand and his wife.



Other than the ordination of new priests, there was also a show of gratitude for Bishop Rene' Perros on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee of Episcopal consecration. Fr. Pasotti rendered address of gratitude for many good things done by Bishop Perros for the Siam Mission. In the evening, there was a candle-light procession, going along the streets of Banpong, which so impressed the onlookers. On the following day, there was a meeting of the youth, with a good number of non-catholic youth present. Some elementary school teachers were given the opportunity to participate in the formation process. Fr. Pasotti said: *"It is the first initiative in evangelization by the laity, which certainly will not be the last."*

Further more, the Mission also invited Fr. Richard, who, as Fr. Pasotti said, was a capable person, a missionary who used to work at Banpong as well. Fr. Richard stayed the whole day of the celebration.

At the end of the letter, Fr. Pasotti said:

“There are yet other objectives...we are ready for other risks as well, with two arms opened, stretching towards the South... This desire will become like a flame, and with this flame, we are ever prompt to any sacrifices...” This showed that his mind was concentrated on the expansion of the Kingdom of God towards the South.²²⁶

Regarding the feast of St. John Bosco in Ratchaburi, it was postponed to 7 February. After receiving permission to conduct special classes in French and mathematics, there was a plan to establish a youth center. Fr. Pasotti was interested, and promised special gifts for youth activities at the center.²²⁷

Chapter 9 : Giving Practical Guidelines in Difficult Times

9.1 Guidelines for the Salesian Rectors

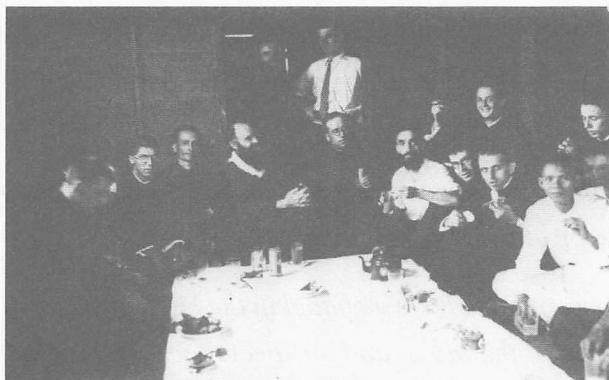
Fr. Pasotti requested and accepted advices from the superiors on various issues, and he would always inform the confreres about them. For example: on 6 March 1936, he wrote to the rectors of all houses informing them about stage plays performed by the major seminarians, referring to the Rector Major's letter...

"I would like to express my idea that I do not like the major seminarians to perform plays for the young or the public. Don Bosco, and his successors, would like the major seminarians to make stage performances that are well-prepared, and are really useful." ²²⁸

With prudence, and endorsement from the council, Fr. Pasotti wrote guidelines about the kitchen of the religious institutes, in accordance with the Canon Law of the Church, as follows:

1. *"Let the kitchen workers go to confession at the chapel of the institute, or at the church, if there is one."*
2. *It is permitted to have a chapel in the kitchen area only for the celebration of the Mass, and on special occasions which should receive the permission of the Bishop; there can be the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on Sundays and other feastsdays."*

3. *The kitchen should not have a parlor.*
4. *Teaching catechism to the kitchen workers must be carried out in the public hall and should not be done in the kitchen.*
5. *Whenever a female religious is available to supervise the kitchen, let her take this responsibility. Hence, the Salesian Rector or diocesan priest will take an overall supervision through that female religious.*
6. *The spiritual direction for the kitchen workers can only be done in confessional. In exceptional cases, this can be done with prudence in the reception room of the institute, not in the kitchen. After praying the Angelus in the evening, one should not enter the kitchen any more, unless there is a serious reason, and in this case, two persons should always be going together."* ²²⁹



Salesian missionaries took vacation at Huahin

On 6 April 1936, during the vacation at Hua hin, Fr. Pasotti took the opportunity when some members would be returning home to admonish the confreres to be true Salesians like Don Bosco. In the 'buona notte' on the following day, he instructed all to work with the spirit of self-sacrifice. Aside from that, he advised them to avoid curiosity about the twisted political news; even the superiors should be careful not to take side with any political party. The chronicle of the formation house on 17 April told us that Fr. Pasotti was present to encourage the novices and the confreres during their vacation.²³⁰ Whenever convenient, he would instruct the novices to love the Rector Major, and to pray for the evangelization in the South.²³¹

On 1 July 1936, the Udomphan newspaper was officially approved, with Fr. John Casetta as editor and Fr. Carlo Casetta as proprietor, with endorsement from Fr. Pasotti. The "Matchimawai" bulletin was also approved.²³²

In that same month, Fr. Pasotti was bed-ridden for several days, from 7 July, because of influenza. The fever continued to get higher. So, on 14 July, he went to see a doctor in Bangkok, and he was not cured until 18 July. During that time, he asked the novices to pray for the opening of a new house in Phuket, specifying the names of the novices who must pray for this purpose. He returned to Bang Nok Khuek on 9 August after one month of treatment. On 12 August, the Salesian community, including the seminarians and the novices, celebrated his feastday which was postponed from 7 August. On that occasion, the confreres presented him with a gift as

a token of their relationship with him. This was much appreciated by Fr. Pasotti. The gift was the 'Udomphan Magazine' which was printed with 800 copies. Twelve picture-albums of historical activities in the various Salesian houses, with maps attached, and an 'harmonium' for use in the house, were also given.²³³

On 1 September 1936, Fr. Pasotti wrote a circular letter to the Rectors of all houses, giving practical guidelines about food and other matters, as follows:

1. "I suggest our traditional practice with regards to food consumption which are taken from the guidelines given by Fr Ricaldone in 1927, which was the year when we arrived here, and which received the endorsement of the Council.

Breakfast = coffee-milk, bread, side dishes [meat, egg, or fish], fruits

Lunch = soup and side dishes [meat, egg or fish], vegetables, fruits

Merienda = tea, one piece of bread, fruits

Dinner = soup, side dishes, vegetables, fruits

*Note: on Fridays = coffee, no fruits for breakfast and dinner.*²³⁴

2. To support the intention of our Rector Major, we will have a meeting on 6 October [and you are all invited] to 'examine the various aspects of the strenna' [sanctity, chastity, and honesty to Don Bosco]. There will be an important decision on the practice, in order to avoid faulty actions, and to promote the religious

spirit. The Rector Major made it clear that 'I will accept your comments and suggestions with gratitude, not only with regards to the strenna, but also all the matters which you deem appropriate'.

3. In the meeting, we shall talk about the Catholic Actions. It is necessary that these activities must be supported according to the intentions of the Holy Father. I want you to read the two books written by Civardi, which I have sent to every house.

4. To promote the request from the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith and of the representative of the Holy Father, including the inspiration from the examples of our father, the founder of our Congregation, from now on, we will 'celebrate the feast of the Pope' every year. There will be a conference about the Holy Father, the reception of Holy Communion, prayers and sacrifices for the intentions of the Pope. The date fixed for the feast will be 29 June. However, for the year 1936, this will be celebrated on the 25 October.

*5. Let every member pay special attention to Mission Sunday [18 October]. There should be a good preparation, a solemn feast, which aims at the spiritual and material effects. I would like to see that every church organizes a holy hour, with an hour of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, with a specific purpose for the expansion of the Kingdom of God in the mission world, and especially in our own area of evangelization.*²³⁵

Fr. Pasotti had a special affection and interest in the seminarians. On 21 September 1936, he sent a message to Fr. De Munari, the

rector of the seminary, on the occasion of the memorial of St. Silvio, his patron saint.²³⁶ In the message, he asked the blessings of God and Don Bosco to enable Fr. De Munari to do all good things for the seminarians who were 'the apple of our eyes'. Aside from this, he also reminded Fr. De Munari to remember the teachings of Don Bosco and Don Rinaldi about being a real Salesian by imitating Don Bosco's life and using his methodology of formation. Fr. Pasotti also enclosed the text from Fr. Rinaldi's letter so that the rector can use this for himself and for the community. At the end of this letter, he expressed his regret ['my heart is hurting'] over the words of some confreres which conveyed distrust in him... We understand that Fr. De Munari was Fr. Pasotti's confessor. So, he trusted him and could confide his secrets to him.

Fr. Pasotti was interested in the formation of priests. On 6-8 October 1936, there were 12 priests who joined the seminar on the topics 'Chastity is Sanctity' and 'Honesty to Don Bosco'. The seminar was closed with the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Fr. Pasotti led the members in renewing their self-offering to the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the formula composed by Fr. Ricaldone since 1927, when he accompanied the Salesians to Bang Nok Khuek for the first time.²³⁷

The chronicle of the Salesian formation house at Bang Nok Khuek recorded on 24 December 1936: "*Because of evangelical poverty, we have no money left in the house...*" but they celebrated Christmas with piety. Priests at the formation house went to hear confessions at the various churches who needed their services.

That year, Fr. Pasotti stayed for Christmas at Bang Nok Khuek. He also went to hear confessions at the Nativity church. The New Year stenna of the Rector Major was “The Salesian Style of Piety to the Holy Eucharist”. On the New Year, Fr. Pasotti gave a talk at the formation house on “honesty in the personal conversation with the superior”. On the following day, he went to Ratchaburi to welcome the MEP Superior General who traveled by train through the province.²³⁸

What Fr. Pasotti wrote to the Rector Major on 20 January 1937 about the competition of agricultural products at Thawa and Bang Nok Khuek indicated that the Salesians in Siam were interested in agriculture, which was the way of life of the local people. This event was meant to provide knowledge for the development of the land and to increase the quality of the farmers’s product. By this the missionaries were also encouraged to be close to the villagers and to help the young to value their work. Aside from this, there was the inauguration of the new printing machine of the Udomphan Press on that occasion as well.²³⁹

9.2 Fatherly Concern towards All

In his letter to one of the superiors [no name was provided] dated 11 April 1937, Fr. Pasotti asked for prayers with a novena to Mary Help of Christians, for his special need. He was urgently in need of a special favor from the Blessed Mother, especially for every one to have the spirit of self-sacrifice, atonement for sins, obedience, and a life of chastity – a kind of accompanying in

advance Jesus Christ in his sufferings. He expressed his opinion that as a man in the front line, it is essential to possess virtues at a heroic level, not making compromises that would lead to danger, which eventually would bring losses to our missionary activities. The Blessed Virgin Mary herself told Don Bosco in his first dream to be strong, and she said the same thing to the missionaries. He concluded his letter:

“It frightens me to think that we have come here to bring salvation to the souls, but we may become a scandal to them instead.” ²⁴⁰



Visitting Hua hin in 1937

On 26 April 1937, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to the Rector Major, telling him that on 13 April, there was a surprise visit to the Salesian house at Hua hin of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Luang Pradit Manutham with his wife, Phra Riam Wiratchaphak, and Fr. Candela, the Salesian superior who also came to visit the confreres at that time. The Salesian confreres and seminarians were spending their summer vacation. There was a simple house that

could accommodate about 50 persons. Some time before this, the house had no proper roofing yet. When there is rainstorm at night, all, including Fr. Candela, have to find a place to hide in order not to get wet. At that time, the Salesians had the opportunity to report to the royal government through the Minister of Foreign Affairs about the purpose and the works of the Congregation, including the special project to open a school of arts, technology and agriculture. ²⁴¹

There was also an entry in the chronicle of the Salesian Congregation at Hua hin, dated 26 April 1937, of an additional report about the formation of personnel in the Prefecture:

“On 18 March, the last day of the scholastic year, at the Salesian seminary at Bang Nok Khuek, 14 novices – out of which 7 seminarians and 2 brothers were Thai – made their first profession in the hands of Fr. Pasotti, using the Thai formula for the first time...All who were present, especially the missionaries, were very impressed at the fruits of their past hard works.” ²⁴²

Other than the above information, the report mentioned also the initial work of the female religious in the Mission:

“It has been two years since there was the initiative started to give life to the ‘native sisters’. It can be said that the work is likely to be successful. It is believed that sooner the first group of candidates will begin their official novitiate.” ²⁴³

“At Bang Nok Khuek, the formation house for the native sisters was moving forward step by step. They were called “Ausiliatrices”

[Sisters Helpers] “Xi Song Khro”. This year seven aspirants would begin the novitiate under the care of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who were requested by Fr. Pasotti to provide assistance at the initial stage of the new Congregation.”

*“During the summer vacation, there was a retreat for the male teachers and the youth at Banpong, while the female teachers and youth made their retreat at Bang Nok Khuek. The activities of both groups were a great success. After the retreat, a letter expressing their filial loyalty was sent to the Holy Father, who replied through Cardinal Pacelli. The retreat ended with the formation on Don Bosco’s preventive system, which was much appreciated by all the participants who were assigned to take care of about 2,000 students in various schools.”*²⁴⁴

With regards to the preparation of personnel, on 19 August 1937, Fr. Pasotti reported to the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith about the people being trained in the Prefecture:

“Our hope lies in the fact that we now have 10 Salesians studying in the 3rd year of theology, 15 in the first year of theology, and 14 in the 1st year of philosophy.”

*“As for the diocesan seminarians, we have one person in the 3rd year of theology, one in the 1st year of philosophy, and 40 minor seminarians. This is considered to be a large number when compared with the number of the catholic population. Aside from these, we also have four teacher training students.”*²⁴⁵

Fr. Pasotti reported about the difficulties and obstacles of evangelization in the Mission. There were few adult baptisms due to the fact that though the Buddhists appreciated Christianity, yet they were of the opinion that both religions were comparatively good. The works that gave us hope were those among the children, the youth, and the promotion of agriculture.²⁴⁶

Fr. Berruti visited Salesians in Thailand via Hatyai on 7 May 1937. He eventually joined Fr. Candela who came earlier. There was an official reception for them on 19 May. Fr. Berruti instructed the community on “Don Bosco – God’s Envoy”, that God sent the saint to be among the faithful and did so many miracles. We must likewise try to do what Don Bosco wants from us, like being one sent by God as Don Bosco. A few days later, he talked about the necessity of spiritual direction and personal colloquy with the superior. Fr. Pasotti accompanied Fr. Berruti to various places up to the northeasternmost border of Thailand.²⁴⁷

The chronicle of the Salesian formation house at Bang Nok Khuek recorded on 30 June 1937 that Fr. Pasotti travelled to the south again and returned back on 10 July. The celebration of his feastday was postponed to 11 August because of the flood. The same chronicle noted that: “*what impressed everyone was that it was an event which all sensed his deepest love.*” Representatives from every house came to join in this feast, and they had to prolong their stay because the flood prevented them to travel back to their respective home.²⁴⁸

On 30 October 1937, Fr. Ziggiotti, the vicar of the Rector Major, wrote to Fr. Pasotti, in the name of the Rector Major that he was sorry about the three German confreres who could not stay in Siam. He was afraid that they might not have received enough sympathy or assistance.²⁴⁹ Fr. Pasotti must have been reasonably affected. He reported back so that the superiors would understand the real situations. He requested also some advices from them.²⁵⁰

In the Salesian Bulletin of October 1937, Fr. Pasotti reported about the youth center in Ratchaburi which organized a presentation of awards to the youth. This event was honored by the honorable presence of the Governor, the head of the Military Engineering Command, and the head of the Provincial Education Department making the Salesian activities among the youth well known to the government sector. He also reported about the retreats of the youth group which took place on 25-29 April, at Banpong and Bang Nok Khuek, as previously mentioned.

In the same magazine, he also expressed his joy about special visit of Fr. Candela and Fr. Berutti, who animated a retreat and chaired a meeting of the confreres. Fr. Pasotti expressed his gratitude for their visit which brought blessings, advices, and encouragement to all.²⁵¹

9.3 The Financial Crisis of the Mission

The chronicle written on 29 December 1937 in Ratchaburi noted that:

“It is my duty to report to the Superior Council about our financial situation because of unbalance of the income and expenditure. Our debt is increasing – including higher interest. The Prefecture is in a state of bankruptcy and unable to keep on necessary activities such as the formation of the Salesian personnel and diocesan seminarians, the existing evangelization activities, including the needed expansion works.”

The above-mentioned problem was due to the fact of shortage of donations and the closure of the revolving bank account in Italy, which led to no interests, then, there were also no mass stipends. During the past two years [1935-1937], there were more expenditures, which included the acquisition of the seminary from the Bangkok Mission. The collection of land rentals was small sum, and no income from the various houses; on the contrary, the Mission had to financially support those houses. Besides, we had to pay for the migration taxes of the Salesian missionaries and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, including travel fares for some confreres who returned home.²⁵²

On 14 May 1939, Fr. Alessandro Terpin gave an additional report to Fr. Ricaldone, the Rector Major, on the financial status of the Mission and that of the Salesian province. The bank to which the Salesians were indebted did not want to give any more credit loan. Bishop Rene’ Perros of the Archdiocese of Bangkok occasionally extended a helping hand. However, the catholics, the French missionaries and even the government officials slowly began to lose confidence in the Salesian works. Aside from these,

because of poverty, some Salesian confreres began to get sick due to lack of substantial food. This accounted for the reduction of confidence from many confreres, so much so that some of them even requested to return home. This further increased the expenditures in travel fares. On this issue, the Province hoped that the superiors would give help. A plan was laid down to open new schools at Hatyai and Bangkok in addition to the one at Banpong, for the purpose of evangelization among the young, and, hopefully, to provide some income to make up the financial shortage.²⁵³

Chapter 10 : First Decade : Obstacles, Challenges and Hope

In the first decade of Fr. Pasotti's life and mission [1927-1937] he was responsible for the administration of the Salesian vice-Province and the new prefecture. There were some rather heavy problems which challenged him and the Salesian confreres at the beginning of their missionary activities in Thailand. There were various causes that could sum up to the following:

1. There was not sufficient time to prepare the missionaries prior to their missionary work in Thailand. From the end of 1925 up to the beginning of 1926, they began to collect data and contacted the ecclesial authority of the Thai Mission. In April 1927, the superiors of the Salesians began their planning for the new work. In July 1927, there was an agreement to send Fr. Gaetano Pasotti to lead a group of missionaries to Thailand. In the middle of August of the same year, Fr. John Casetta and seminarian George Bainotti were sent to Bang Nok Khuek to prepare for arrival of the first missionary group. Then in the middle of October 1927, the first group of missionaries arrived in Thailand the 25th of October.

2. They had not enough information of the task. Fr. Ignacio Canasse, who came to survey the situation in Thailand, made a proposal for the Salesian superiors to first send about 7 priests and some lay-salesians to learn from the MEP priests, which would take some time. In reality, however, only Fr. John Casetta and seminarian Bainotti were sent only two months ahead, prior

to the arrival of the first big group of missionaries. Hence, they were not yet ready in several aspects.

3. The personnel were not yet prepared. In fact, it already began in China. Fr. Canasse did not agree either with sending the novices or letting the seminarians learn philosophy in the mission land. In his opinion, they should receive formation and get prepared in their own country, especially at having a true missionary spirit. So, he suggested that the expatriates who began their novitiate in Macau should follow their novice master to Thailand together with the members who were studying philosophy and theology. China would then be left with their own novices. All these had both positive and negative outcomes. The Thai mission would have missionaries full of energy and enthusiasm, but they might not be ready in several other aspects, especially with regards to the proportion of the few experienced priests and brothers, compared with the number of major seminarians and novices. These two groups were in formation phase even though the practical training was already included. The priests had the parishes as their main work, which they inherited from the MEP Fathers. From the comparative chart below, we can see the number of missionaries who came within a period of 10 years, when Fr. Pasotti had taken the responsibility of the administration.

Year of Entrance	Priests	Brothers	Theology- Philosophy	Foreign Novices	Thai Confreres	Dead/ Repatriated
1927 [Aug + Oct]	3	-	3	10	-	-
1927 [Dec]	4	2	-	-	-	-
1928	2 + 2 newly ordained	3	2	12	-	+priest
1930 [Mar]	1	4	-	10	1 novice	1 repatriated
1930 [Dec]	-	2	-	8	1 novice	+priest
1931-1932	1	-	-	-	-	1 repatriated
1933-1934	1 + 6 newly ordained	-	-	-	-	2 repatriated 1 transferred
1935 [Jan]	-	-	7	-	-	2 repatriated
1935 [Oct]	2	1	1	4	-	-
1935 [Nov – Dec]	1	-	2	-	-	-
1936	8 newly ordained	2	1	-	-	1 ordained
1937	-	-	2	-	-	1 repatriated
Total up to 1937	15 + 16 newly ordained in Thailand	14	18	42	2	Dead – 2 Repatriated -8

Aside from this, the majority of the missionaries were Italians, with a few other nationalities. Other than making life more colorful, it was natural that it was more difficult to adjust oneself to living and working together. Hence, the superiors had many more burdens and responsibilities to handle.

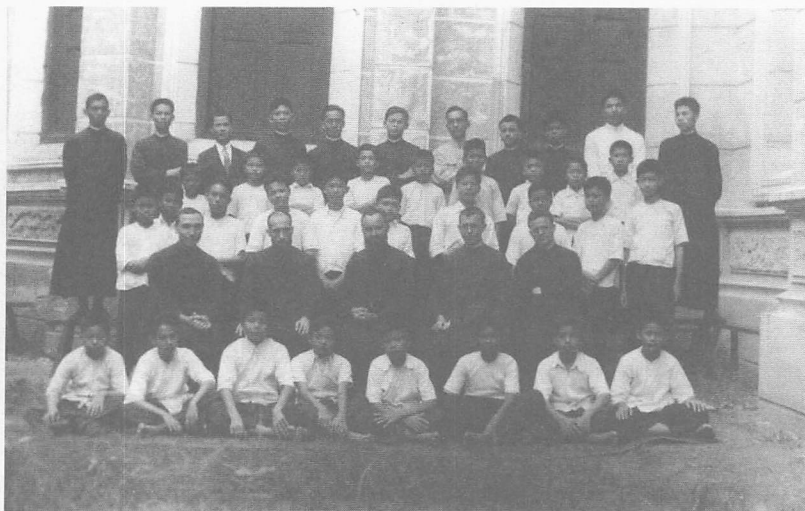
4. Due to the fact as mentioned above, that most members were still in formation, but lacked professors and formators at various levels, initially, Fr. Pasotti had to be both rector and novice master responsible for every matter. Later on, there was an assistant, but still it was not enough to cope with the number of candidates, Which led to incomplete formation. However, looking at it with optimistic eyes, they also learned more from practical experiences.

5. The most difficult problem for the Salesian missionaries was financial insufficient problem regarding food, daily needs and materials for formation. The financial crises in the country since 1929, the political situations, the change of government in 1932 which affected Thai society...these also affected the lives and works of the missionaries. The superiors could not provide proper health care for the members, as it should be, which caused both physical and mental weakness, sickness, and even death, or repatriation to one's country in some cases.

6. In a way, the death and repatriation of some members brought distress to some members, but at the same time, it also helped them to strengthen their faith and hope. The main reason of repatriation was poor health because of the inability to adapt themselves with the present living conditions and with the persons around. This would include also fatigue and distress because of heavy work load. Another reason might be that the superior did not have enough time, or was not in the situation to take enough good care of all the members.



PART III
COLLABORATORS IN THE MISSION
AND IN THE SPIRIT



Pioneer Local seminarians
Fr. Barbero as Rector of the seminary

PART III

COLLABORATORS IN THE MISSION AND IN THE SPIRIT



Chapter 11 : The Seminary – the Apple of the Eyes of the Mission

11.1 Fr. Pasotti's vision in evangelizationa

In 1930, after receiving the new mission from the MEP, and prior to the transfer of the seminarians of Bangkok Diocese from Bangkok to Sriracha, Fr. Pasotti, a Salesian religious with a special vision, established a diocesan seminary for the future of the new Mission, i.e., the Diocese of Ratchaburi which was taking shape. With the assistance of the Salesian confreres, the seminary became the first important initiative of Fr. Pasotti and the Salesians in Thailand. They saw that the preparation of personnel to carry on the work of the local Church was the first task that should be done immediately because it would take time and vast investment. This was in line with Don Bosco's teaching referred to by Fr. Pasotti:

“Native seminarians must be the issue that we must pay attention to right from the beginning of our mission work. The formation of seminarians must be achieved at the shortest possible time.” ²⁵⁴

The Rector Major also gave his full support for this project to start and develop, even if this would need a vast investment.

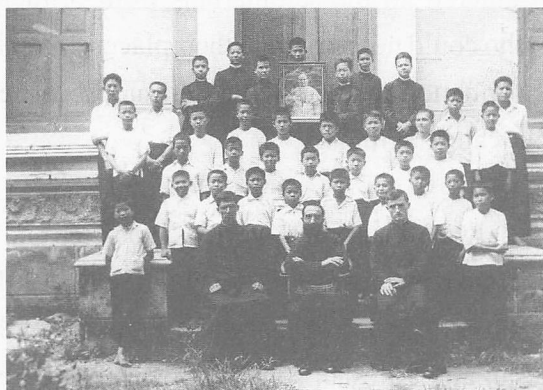
11.2 The Birth of the Seminary

On 16 February 1930, Fr. Gaetano Pasotti sent news about the seminary: *"This seminary was opened on 11 February 1930, the same day as the first anniversary of the papacy of Pope Pius XI, the head of all the Missions."*²⁵⁵ They began with two minor seminarians. The Salesians had just started their work in Thailand for about two years. They were not yet ready in several aspects. They were not yet proficient with the Thai language, Their place was not well-prepared. They had to buy a house on the river bank in front of the Church of the Nativity in order to accommodate the seminarians, while the Salesian seminarians used the house for the sick and the elderly. At that particular time, the Salesians were living poorly. There were not enough personnel and only a few priests. Fr. John Casetta, who was the parish priest was also assigned as Rector of the seminary. But God was sending more and more interested children each year. In 1931, there were 12 seminarians.



Pioneer Local seminarians

In the following year, the number increased to 22, which was considered by Fr. Pasotti as God's providence. Aside from that, there was another group of children who belonged to the Chinese families. They received initial formation at Tha Wa, from the teachers and a priest who resided there.



Fr. Barbero as Rector of the seminary

When the seminarians of Bangkok Diocese moved from Bang Chang [Bang Nok Khuek] Seminary, leaving behind its 62 years of history, to establish a seminary at Sriracha, Fr. Pasotti bought that Bang Chang Seminary on 24 December 1934, and moved in the Salesian seminarians who were living across the Mae Klong River. The seminary has been called 'Bang Nok Khuek Seminary' ever since. The diocesan minor seminarians then moved into the home for the elderly, where the Salesian seminarians used to live before. Due to the ever increasing number of seminarians each year, Fr. Barbero was assigned as Rector of the seminary replacing Fr. John Casetta.

The Salesian seminarians had been staying at Bang Nok Khuek Seminary until the end of 1940 before they moved to their new seminary at Hua hin. Then, the diocesan seminarians moved in to the Bang Nok Khuek Seminary. During World War II, and especially when there was the Indochinese conflict in 1941-1945, Fr. Pasotti gathered all the seminarians from Sriracha and the north-east, who could not remain in their places, to come to study and receive formation together with the Ratchaburi seminarians at Bang Nok Khuek Seminary.

Fr. Pasotti had always been attentive to the vocation and formation of the seminarians. He always reported to the Rector Major and the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith about the matters in the diocesan and Salesian seminaries. Fr. Pasotti considered the seminarians as the “apple of the eyes” of the Mission.²⁵⁶



11.3 The Way of Life that Fr. Pasotti Gave to the Seminarians and the Priests of Ratchaburi Mission

Since 1927, prior to the entry of the Salesians into Thailand, every minor seminary in Indochina had been using the new curricula as approved by the Apostolic Nuncio who also had visited Bang Nok Khuek Seminary in 1923. When Fr. Pasotti and the Salesians started the Ratchaburi Diocese Minor Seminary, they followed the same curricula, making some adjustments where appropriate.

Most of the minor seminarians were selected from the sodality of 'The Friends of St. Louis' and the 'Holy Eucharist Sodality', which mostly consisted of the altar boys. He emphasized on language study; Thai, English and Latin. Furthermore, he let the seminarians study for the government teaching certificate. *"Every day the seminarians practice speaking English. He expects that when they study philosophy, they will be able to use the dictionary and English texts."*²⁵⁷

As for the spiritual dimension, Fr. Pasotti was pleased that the seminarians expressing their piety with the simplicity of their hearts. He set up the time table for daily pray, sacred reading after Mass, and reading again in the afternoon for about ten minutes. There was a special formation every Saturday and monthly recollection.²⁵⁸ The formation of the seminarians of Ratchaburi Diocese had been under the care of the Salesians for several decades. Fr. Pasotti himself would always find the time and

opportunity to be among them and instructed them such as what was recorded in the diary of the Rector's sermon on 24 August 1942, when he mentioned about the strenna given by Fr. Pasotti:

"Last year he came to give us a strenna on the last day of our retreat to live like the lily. So, this year we grow a lot of lilies... Now we have lily flowers to decorate the altar... This year, he gave us another strenna: make yourself strong, brave and chaste. The Church wants us to be strong, brave and chaste." ²⁵⁹

Later on, in 1946, there was a record of his instruction [no date given] to the seminarians:

"The Church wants a priest to be like a strong soldier, not discourage, not expecting comfort in eating and living. A priest must be ready to accept difficulties...must be like a soldier in doing anything, in recreation, study, learning one western language, a soldier in the dining room, in the chapel, in sleep, in crossing the river [to study and to church]...a soldier who likes the truth, walks in truth, whose mouth and heart are one, one who follows the advice of the superiors...truth is the word of God...Whoever opens his heart to the superior loves the truth, and whoever does not, prefers darkness. The seminarians must hold fast to the truth as their path and consider their superior as the leader of their path." ²⁶⁰



From these two pieces of evidence, it is enough for us to see clearly how he wished the seminarians and the future priests of Ratchaburi Mission to be. At the same time, it showed how he instilled his priestly way of life and spirit to his spiritual children. Subsequent seminary rectors also followed his mentality, enabling



Pioneer Local priests

the priests of Ratchaburi Mission highly qualified, with their own special identity.

Seventeen years after the establishment of the Ratchaburi Diocesan Seminary, in 1947, we saw the first two priests, namely, Fr. Somkit Nunthavisut and Fr. Chun-eng Kokkhrua. In 1948, there was the ordination of the second batch, namely, Fr. Sumet Vacharasakphaisal, Fr. Visit Sinsomrot and Fr. Bunnak Thong-amphai. For the third batch, in 1949, we had Fr. Rat Bamrungtrakul, later the Bishop and the third ordinary of the Ratchaburi Diocese. Bishop Pasotti was more pleased than anyone, and together with the Salesian members, they were satisfied with the fruits of their labor right from the beginning of their work in this Mission.²⁶¹ And the seminary has produced several priests in subsequent times.



Ordination of Fr. Rat Bamrungtrakul in 1949

Chapter 12 : The Father, Founder of “Xi Song Khro” [Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, SIHM]

12.1 Fr.Pasotti’s Desire and the Needs of the Mission

We do not know exactly when Fr. Pasotti began to think of establishing a female religious congregation. The fact is that he foresaw the necessity of having a female religious to help in the pastoral care for women. In Thai culture, it is not convenient for the male Salesians to work closely with girls and women. So, he contacted the congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, to send missionaries to his new Mission. In 1931, the first 6 sisters initiated their work at Bang Nok Khuek. In the beginning, these sisters had to help in the various activities of the church, but their direct mission was to work with children and female youth by living in a community. Fr. Pasotti and other Salesian missionaries, scattered in various churches, had the same idea that each parish should have female religious to help in the activities of the parish, as the sisters of The Lovers of the Cross used to do. However, they had less members and were getting old. Meanwhile, the Salesian Sisters could concentrate on the work according to the charism of their Congregation.

As evidence to indicate that Fr. Pasotti had the intention of establishing a female religious congregation was that in his report to the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, dated 1 August

1932, he mentioned about the arrival in 1931 of the Salesian Sisters: *"...it is an important step for the education of women, beginning with the administration of a school at Bang Nok Khuek with 200 students. Together with this, there were also activities at the Sunday Youth Center. They were very attentive at studying the language. They did not only plan to do good works according to the charism of the Congregation. We expect that there will be a cooperation to lay down the foundation of a congregation for the native nuns as well."* ²⁶²

12.2 Fr. Della Torre's Special Charism

The seminarian Carlo della Torre intended to establish a female religious congregation as advised by his confessor, and inspirations from several visions; this was also enhanced by the assignment to take care of the female kitchen staff given to him by Fr. Pasotti. This convinced della Torre that it was time to actualize his intention. There was no record when this activity began. The chronicles at the Salesian Formation House and the church of Bang Nok Khuek did not mention anything about this, including the subsequent events – such as the permission from Fr. Pasotti allowing della Torre to start the work of establishing the Society, the time when Fr. Pasotti changed his mind not to support della Torre at establishing this congregation, that Fr. Pasotti did not allow the seminarian to study theology but to wait for 3 years more and continue to take care of the kitchen workers as narrated by Fr. Della Torre in the book entitled "The Souvenirs of Love".

However, della Torre, together with his classmates were ordained priests in 1936. So, we cannot depict how long he had been with and prepared those girls, especially after being given a green light by Fr. Pasotti.

There may be someone who think that Fr. Pasotti did not want Fr. Della Torre to establish a religious congregation because he wanted to do it himself, since he used to tell the seminarian della Torre ‘to do it together with me’, since he was still a seminarian [not yet ordained priest and, being the novice master of della Torre before, Fr. Pasotti would have liked to support and make this project a success. But when the other priests around did not agree, so he had to put it on hold. There are recorded evidences of the meetings of the councilors on this matter.²⁶³

In the beginning, one practical reason for the Salesians , which was of special concern for the superiors, was to allow the confreres, especially those who were still in formation, to work closely with the girls. We noticed this set up from the wall separating the kitchen and the seminary. For receiving food from the kitchen, this had to pass through a revolving cabinet. Hence, to establish a female religious congregation by a seminarian in formation, or a young priest, was not favorable to the confreres, and many superiors did not support this.



12.3 The ‘Xi Song Khro’ [Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, SIHM] Took Origin in the Form Desired by God

Fr. Pasotti decided to establish ‘Xi Song Khro’ Congregation from the group of girls formed by the seminarian della Torre only when he was able to find the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to stay and help in the formation of the candidates. Fr. Pasotti would give the guiding principles for living and the main guidelines for the management of this new congregation.

After della Torre’s priestly ordination, he left the Salesian formation house. Fr. Pasotti and the superiors did not want the work initiated by Della Toorre to break up. so they returned to the idea of getting the cooperation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, as already mentioned above. Here began the process of establishing a new religious order. The work proceeded smoothly because it was

supported by the councilors and approved by the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith. Fr. Pasotti assigned Sr. Antonnieta Morellato, FMA, to provide formation for the young candidates as of 24 May 1937. Fr. Pasotti announced the establishment of the 'Xi Song Khro Congregation' on 7 December of the same year, with 7 candidates who would begin their novitiate. On 9 December



1938, there were 6 members who made their first profession, the foundation for the future development of the Congregation. From the kitchen of the Salesian seminary at Bang Nok Khuek, opposite the cathedral of the Nativity of Mary, the Congregation slowly went out to help in various works of the Ratchaburi Diocese and in other places.²⁶⁴

12.4 The Spiritual Way of Life – The Spiritual Heritage Given by Fr. Pasotti to the ‘Xi Song Khro’ [Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, SIHM]

Fr. Pasotti paid special attention to this new female congregation especially with regards to the spiritual life. When he was at the rectory, he would always offer Mass at the chapel of the SIHM. He would preach at their monthly recollection, provide counseling and instruction on various occasions, including giving continuous guidance to Sr. Antonnieta and Sr. Luigina Di Giorgio, the first superior. He would decide on the various practices of this new congregation; he showed continuous concern over them until the last moment of his life.

Prior to the Golden Jubilee of the Congregation’s foundation, the SIHM Sisters had not been so interested about their ‘core identity’, and when asked, many members were often doubtful as to who was the one who founded the SIHM Congregation’, in spite of the clear evidence indicating the name of the founder. Such questions from outsiders awakened the members of the Congregation to start collecting data from various sources until they found the essential documents indicating the identity of the Congregation which was the heritage from the founder – Mons. Gaetano Pasotti, namely, the 14 guidelines written and submitted to the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith while he was seeking advice to establish this Congregation, especially with regards to guideline number 9: *“In doing good, let love and compassion be*

the only motivation. They shall make themselves all things to all people. They shall make themselves outstanding in meekness and humility..." ²⁶⁵ "Be All Things To All People" was the motto he chose for his Episcopal consecration. He wished all his children to have such a heart and to do the same as he did. This was an important proof that the real founder of our Congregation was Mons. Gaetano Pasotti. All the doubts should then disappear. ²⁶⁶ All the guidelines, including his teachings on various occasions recorded by the members, though not extensive, made the SIHM Sisters realize how he wanted his daughters to be. What he stressed most was to make oneself holy, intimate with God, obedient and docile to the superiors, and fraternal love within the community. As a Salesian, he instilled the devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, including filial loyalty to the Holy Father. The exhortations recorded by the SIHM Sisters ²⁶⁷, and well memorized were:

"The Congregation will prosper when the members are holy."
[30 January and 27 April 1950]

"There is nothing more joyful than being present in front of the Blessed Sacrament." [20 October 1946]

"When founding the Congregation, the inspiration from God was to choose the Blessed Virgin Mary as our patroness to show that the SIHM Congregation belonged to Our Lady ... I have entrusted you all to Her...including the Congregation's future and the

holiness of the members ... all come from Her ... I confess that what would make the Congregation prosperous would not be me or anyone, but Our Lady Herself." [22 August 1949]

Like the seminarians and diocesan priests, he wished all the SIHM Sisters to be strong. [13 November 1938, 10 May 1944, 7 August 1944] *"In your words, let no one say: it is hard; I cannot bear it anymore; the word 'cannot' means 'I don't agree; so, let no one say these words."* [8 December 1943]

With an understanding heart, he always encouraged the Sisters... *"The superiors see your good will in doing good; may you continue to have a good will ... many members of the Congregation have so little strength."* [3 May and August 1950]

From heaven he is praying and watching over his daughters!

Chapter 13 : The Opening of the Salesian Province and the Division of Responsibilities in 1938

13.1 The Visitation and the Installation of the Salesian Province of Thailand and the Appointment of the First Salesian Provincial

Fr. Candela made an official visit to the Salesian confreres in Thailand from 13 April to 22 May 1937. He was joined by Fr. Berruti, the vicar of the Rector Major. There was a meeting with the rectors and parish priests of various parishes at Hua hin. Among the topics, there was the issue of the division of properties between the Diocese and the Salesian Province which the Superiors were preparing to do. When the two visitors returned to report to the Rector Major, he issued a document instituting the Salesian Province of Thailand on 20 December 1937. Later, on 30 January of the following year, Fr. John Casetta was nominated the first provincial.

The installation of the new Salesian Province, to a very great extent, reduced the work and responsibility of Fr. Pasotti. However, there was also the necessity to set agreements on several practical issues.

In order to clarify the division of the administration between the Mission and the Salesian Province, on 28 April 1939, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to Fr. Braga, the Provincial of the Salesian Province

of China, asking for a copy of the agreement between the Bishop and the Salesian Provincial there especially with regards to the issue of finance, assistance to the formation house, the stipends of the missionaries working in the Mission, etc., so that he could draw an agreement with the Salesian Province of Thailand in order that every activity would move on smoothly in the spirit of love. He also expressed his concerns on two issues, namely: the personnel of good quality and the financial situation.²⁶⁸

After studying all the available information, and consulting for several months, an agreement was reached based on the principle that everything which the Salesians received from the MEP would belong to the Mission, while the lands and houses obtained later would be considered by the objective of their possession. Finally, it was concluded that St. Joseph School [Sarasit Phithayalai], Banpong, the house at Sala Daeng, Bangkok, and the land at Hua hin, which would be the site of the Salesian seminary, belonged to the Salesian Province. Other than these, belonged to the Diocese of Ratchaburi.

Fr. Henri Danieli wrote about this issue that both the Salesian Province and the Diocese of Ratchaburi agreed to endorse the said document on February 1939. Meanwhile, the Salesian superiors in Turin approved that document in August 1939.²⁶⁹

Aside from this, the Salesian Provincial and the representative of Fr. Pasotti drafted also the guidelines for the Salesian priests

who were working in the Mission of Ratchaburi on 5 December 1939, with the endorsement of both parties.

Later, on 2 July 1940, Fr. John Casetta, the Provincial, gave a 'good night talk' at the seminary and announced that an agreement between the Salesians and the Diocese had already been done.²⁷⁰

13.2 Golden Jubilee of Don Bosco's Death – 1938

Fr. Pasotti sent news to the Rector Major which was also printed in the Salesian Bulletin of July 1938. He reported about the activities to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Don Bosco's death. The Salesians in Siam announced his merits in the 'Youth Newsletter' and in the Catholic Newspaper. A family tried to propagate the saint's biography by printing 2,000 books, and had a project to print this in Vietnamese as well. The Golden Jubilee was celebrated at Bang Nok Khuek from 12-16 February 1938. There was a formal reception of the representative of the Holy Father. During the festival, there was also the commemoration of the enthronement of Pope Pius XI. There was a special address on the encyclical letter on the Holy Rosary. The faithful were invited to pray the rosary, and other practices of piety, for the intentions of the Holy Father.

The Golden Jubilee celebration of the death of Don Bosco began with meetings of the Catholic Action groups. The Sodality of the Blessed Sacrament of the Salesian seminary organized the preparation

and the implementation. The main topic of the meeting was: “The Salesian Mission in Siam and Catholic Action”. This coincided with the practical guidelines given by Fr. Pasotti on 1 September 1938, No. 2 ²⁷¹ with the following sub-headings:

1. The Salesian Province and Catholic Action
2. The Salesian Seminary and Catholic Action
3. The Pious Movements and Catholic Action
4. Youth Centers and Catholic Action

After the celebration at Bang Nok Khuek, the delegate of the Pope went to visit Banpong. On that occasion, he blessed the corner stone of a school of the FMA Sisters. ²⁷²

The feastday of Fr. Pasotti on 7 August 1938 fell on a Sunday, and he was at Bangtan. In spite of his prohibition for any external celebration, Luang Sith Tephakarn spoke up to express the joy of the faithful. Fr. Pasotti then expressed also his thanks before closing the ceremony. ²⁷³

13.3 Visitation to the South – the Land of Hope

On 10 November 1938, Fr. Pasotti wrote a letter to Fr. Ricaldone, the Rector Major, from Bang Nok Khuek, telling him about his long visit to the south of Siam [28 October – 12 November 1938] with stops at Hua hin, Chumphorn and Suratthani; the last one was only a small railway station at that time. He had to travel by motor boat to reach Bandon. There he visited the provincial

governor whose son was an alumnus of a catholic school in Bangkok and was about to graduate in medicine from a university in Manila. While walking along the streets of Suratthani, he saw children every where. So, he thought: *"One day God will call us to come here ... with opened eyes I dream that I will soon see a school full of students."* While being there, he visited a few catholics, baptized and blessed the marriage of two young couples.

From Suratthani, he went on to Nakorn Srithammarat where he met the governor, visited some important places and continued to visit a village in Ronphiboon. His guide was a young man whose father died recently. He had only one younger brother, and both of them intended to build a school as a memorial of their father who left them with a huge heritage, such as lands, shopping houses, and rice barns. Fr. Pasotti proposed to him to build a catholic school and put up a 'fund' to maintain this. He promised to consult his younger brother. He also introduced Fr. Pasotti to the chief of police and a young businessman. Both of them were alumni of St. Gabriel College – Bangkok.

On the following day, an American Protestant doctor invited him to visit his leprosarium [Phud Hong] where there were six wooden houses and a chapel. In almost every house there was a sign of the cross painted by the leprosy-infected patients themselves.

At the Khuan Nieng railway station, Fr. Pasotti met with Prof.

Thuan Komkris, director and headmaster of an agricultural school at Hatyai. When he finally arrived at Hatyai, he met Prof. Thuan's wife. After dinner and some conversation, Fr. Pasotti spent the night at Prof. Thuan's house. He offered Mass and baptized Prof. Thuan's first son, Tassanai Komkris [now Fr. Tassanai Komkris of Bangkok Diocese]. Fr. Pasotti intended to offer this first son to the Blessed Mother, Help of Christians, and christened him Pius, after the name of Pope Pius XI.

Prof. Thuan took Fr. Pasotti to visit Songkhla Province. They visited the educational institutes and met the governor as well. From Hatyai, he continued his pastoral visit to Pattani where a young catholic offered to drive him around to see the town. From Pattani, he returned to Hatyai then went by car to Betong on 31 October 1938. He spent two days there to meet the catholic group. Some of the catholic businessmen requested Fr. Pasotti to start some catholic activities there. Fr. Pasotti was certain that if it were God's will, it would be accomplished as they wished. He offered Mass on the feast of All Saints in a small chapel filled with the faithful. On the following day, he visited the small cemetery, prayed the rosary and blessed the tombs. ²⁷⁴

13.4 The People Who Played Important Roles in the Mission

Almost the whole text of the letter of Fr. Pasotti to the Rector Major, dated 12 March 1938, spoke about the awareness of the government to promote education in Siam. The catholic

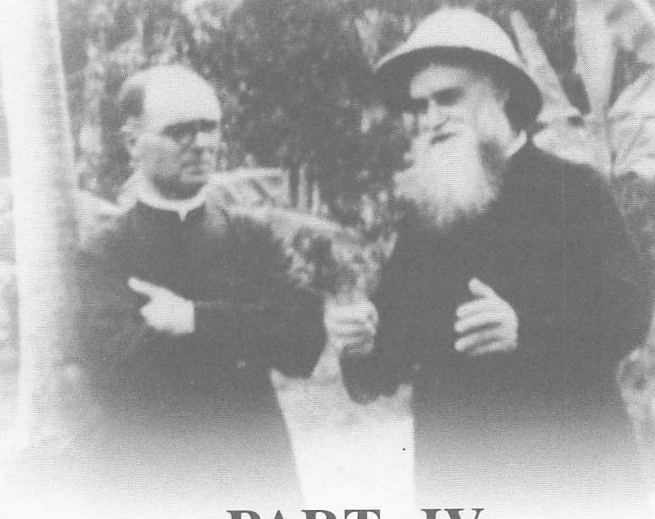
schools belonging to the Mission and to the religious were quite popular among the people. The Salesians who took over the activities from the MEP had been trying to comply with the policy established by the school founders. What pleased Fr. Pasotti most was the teachers training school which began four years ago. This school prepared the teachers and catechists for the Mission and for the Salesians as well. Later on, around 1937, the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians began the female teachers training school at Bang Nok Khuek. This was a good foundation for the girls' school. Besides Bang Nok Khuek and Banpong, there was also a school at Tha Muang. This was done through the hard work of the Salesian missionaries, with Fr. Peter Jellici as the architect and construction foreman, while the other missionaries became carpenters, masons, electricians and interior decorators, until the building was completed.²⁷⁵

In the annual report of 1938 to the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, Fr. Pasotti mentioned about the progress of the diocesan seminary. The first group of native Sisters made their first profession in December and another group of candidates would enter the novitiate. The Sisters of Mary Help of Christians have two Thai members. They opened a kindergarten school at Banpong, with the intention of expanding up to high school level on the following year. Some missionary Sisters received the certificates to be teachers. Besides these, the Mission also had a convent of cloistered Capuchin Sisters to offer prayers and mortifications for the evangelization of the Mission. They arrived in 1936 from Italy

at the request of Fr. Pasotti to pray for the Mission. At that time, they had three novices and two aspirants. They were all loved by the faithful and admired by the people of other faiths as well.²⁷⁶

According to the same report, there was also a mention of ‘The Catholic University of Siam’ within the circle of the Catholic Church of Thailand. But Fr. Pasotti was of the opinion that there were still other immediate problems and more important work in the field of education for the children and the youth.

On 16 January 1939, Fr. John Casetta, the Salesian Provincial, wrote from Bang Nok Khuek to the Superior Council that on 11 January 1939 he accompanied Fr. Pasotti for an audience with H.M. King Anandamahidol, who had given special privilege to the representatives of the Catholic Mission for a private audience.²⁷⁷ Aside from this, a group of school teachers of Assumption and Fr. John Ulliana were also included in the group for the audience on the occasion of His Majesty’s return from his study in Europe. In the name of the Salesians, Fr. Pasotti presented to His Majesty a special, colored issue of the “Youth Bulletin” with articles about the Thai Kings. When His Majesty took residence in Lausanne, Switzerland, every year he would send the payment for his subscription fee.²⁷⁸



PART IV
IN THIS WORLD YOU WILL
HAVE SUFFERINGS
BUT DO NOT BE AFRAID,
I HAVE ALREADY CONQUERED
THE WORLD

PART IV



In This World You Will Have Sufferings But Do Not Be Afraid, I Have Already Conquered the World

Chapter 14 : A Bishop In a War Situation

14.1 The Atmosphere of War – At the End of 1938

The chronicle of the Salesian formation house at Bang Nok Khuek, dated 29 September 1938, noted: “*We have heard rumors about the war. Bishop Perros invited us to pray for peace.*” In October, there was severe flood at Bang Nok Khuek. So, after the examinations, Fr. Pasotti allowed the seminarians to go to Hua hin to rest for 15 days. On the evening of 26 October, they went to Hua hin railway station to thank Fr. Pasotti for his kindness in giving them this opportunity.²⁷⁹

In the annual report of 1939, Fr. Pasotti mentioned about the attempt of the Catholic Action groups to promote the printing media.²⁸⁰ The consequent result was the printing press and “Udomphan” newspaper in 1937, and the “Matchimawai” which began in 1933²⁸¹ which, in 1939, was renamed “Yaowasarn” a magazine for youth. As of 2 January 1939, the printing press was under the responsibility of Fr. Pasotti, and all the staff of the press were moved to the side of Bang Nok Khuek church.²⁸²

In 1938, General Phibulsongkhram was the Prime Minister who tended to be a dictator. Through Luang Vijit Wathakarn, the Minister of Education as close collaborator, he issued an announcement to change the name of the country from Siam to Thailand, with a nationalistic policy. He enacted a law to let the state have full responsibility in the administration of primary education, to count the new year in accordance with the universal practice, i.e., on 1 January, starting from 1941 onwards. Many other rules and regulations were also issued.

Private schools, therefore, began to encounter problems. For example, in 1939, Viravit School at Tha Muang met problems with the government officials because the Chinese school was closed down. The problems were complicated. that caused negative impact on the Mission schools to close down as well. There were contradicting opinions between Fr. Pasotti, the priests and the teachers, about the process of asking permission to reopen the schools. While waiting for the approval, the students had to go to study at the government schools. This faced another problem because the catholic students had to go to school on Sundays and had to learn catechism at their free time. The parents, too, saw the negative effect on the studies and behavior of their children. It was only until December 1939 when a way was found to reopen the schools again.²⁸³ The other schools of the Mission, such as at Bang Nok Khuek, Mae Klong, Wat Phleng and Tha Wa, met the same negative effects. St. Joseph School at Banpong changed its name to Sarasit Phithayalai in 1941, and was safe from being closed by the Japanese who wanted to

use the school as their military outpost. This was made possible through the coordination between the Italian Ambassador and the Japanese Supreme Commander.²⁸⁴

On 6 August 1939, Fr. Pasotti appointed councilors of the Mission. They were Fr. George Bainotti, as assistant, and Fr. Carlo Casetta, as adviser. On the 24th, Fr. Pasotti led the brothers for a hiking, from Ratchaburi to Wat Phleng. Everybody was happy to have the opportunity for a physical exercise. On the 29th, he called for a meeting of all the parish priests and the rectors of the houses, at the seminary. The members took the occasion to celebrate Fr. Pasotti's feastday and expressed their filial gratitude towards him.²⁸⁵

On 6 September 1939, the Salesians got the news about the war in Europe between Germany, on one side, and France, Great Britain and Poland, on the other. Fr. John Casetta, the Provincial, prohibited the members to discuss about this issue because of its sensitiveness, and that if anybody wanted to know anything about it, they should ask the superiors.

On 12 December 1939, Fr. Pasotti wrote to the Rector Major, Fr. Ricaldone. He told him about the severe flood of Mae Klong River which brought great disaster to the farmers. He felt their pain and pitied them so much. So he requested for help in behalf of those affected by the calamity.²⁸⁶

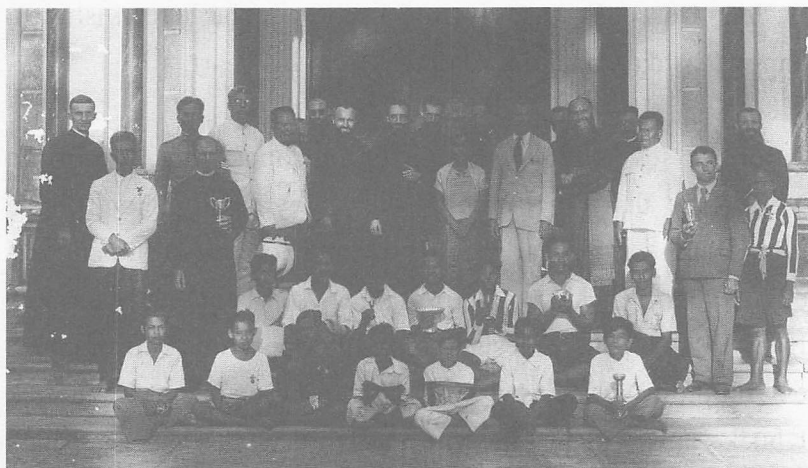
In early 1940, Fr. Pasotti went to visit Tha Wa Parish. He expressed his joy for the fruitful activities of the parish, blessed and encouraged them to do more good for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls. Later, in May, he went there again, three days before the parochial feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians. He was pleased to see the preparations for the solemn feast. On the feast day itself, there were so many children and parishioners from various churches who came to join in the celebration. He gave a short homily in Chinese before the Mass, and during the Mass, he preached in Thai. From that year, the parishioners wished to have a small chapel at Luk Kae in order to teach catechism to the children and to have the Mass celebrated there. Fr. Pasotti agreed to the idea and gave his green light to start the work. Aside from this, in October, he stayed at Tha Wa for 4-5 days, to celebrate Our Lady of the Holy Rosary feast. During the Mass, in his homily, he warned the faithful to avoid gambling because it would destroy the family; he also advised them to settle their marriage life in accordance with the Canon Law of the Church. He was talking straight on these matters in order not to damage the Church. A few days later some couples came to see him to religiously legitimize their marriages.²⁸⁷

On 13 January 1940, Fr. Pasotti and the seminary rector went to the railway station to meet Mr. Thuan Komkris, a benefactor from Hatyai, who was on his way to Sawankhalok because he was transferred to a new position. On 30 January, prior to the feast of

St. John Bosco, Fr. Pasotti wrote a short circular letter wishing a happy feastday to all the confreres from his heart.²⁸⁸

After the severe flood, Luang Phibulsongkhram, the Prime Minister at that time, ordered that every family should have a backyard garden and poultry raising for self-sufficient and enjoy working which would promote well being and morality. In early 1940, the Salesians took the opportunity to organize exhibition of agricultural products for the people at Bang Nok Khuek. This was in line with the spirit of the Church which encouraged that missionary activities would go hand in hand with the government policy on community development. The event attracted the people and government officials at all levels to participate in this initiative, with trophies sponsored by the ex-Prime Minister, Phraya Phaholpholphyayuhasena, Chaofa Phra naris, and others. There were various kinds of exhibits displayed around the church which Fr. Pasotti described: *“To reach the hearts of the people and enable them understand the dignity of work – these are expressions of respect and love of God.”* The inauguration ceremony was carried out on Saturday evening, 17 February 1940. On the following Sunday Mass, we celebrated the feast of St. John Bosco. The event lasted late until midnight and ended with the presentation of prizes to the winners of the various events.²⁸⁹

On 12 July 1940, Fr. Pasotti wrote to the Provincial of Hong Kong:



“We learned from the newspapers that on the 26th of July all the Salesian missionaries must leave Hongkong. We would like to know about the situation of our confreres there, how we can help alleviate your plight there. We would like to help as best as we could, and at the same time, if there are some missionaries of good will who know Hakka-Chinese and want to join us minister to the large number of Chinese in Thailand, we would welcome them wholeheartedly...” ²⁹⁰

In early August 1940, Fr. Pasotti made a personal retreat at Khok Mot Tanoi Church, from 2-9 August. On his feastday, since he did not want any external celebration, he asked for prayers instead. Thus, all the priests invited the faithful to offer special prayers for him, and some others sent best wishes to him. As for the minor seminarians, they would celebrate his feast at a later date. On 23 October of the same year, he went to the luncheon

arranged on the inauguration of the Italian school at Chulalongkorn University where a Salesian was teaching.²⁹¹ Fr. Peter Carretto was the first confrere who taught there.

After establishing the Salesian Province in 1938, Fr. Pasotti planned to set up a clear system of administration for the Mission so that each priest would know his role and work in harmony with each other. On 7 October 1940, Fr. Pasotti went with Fr. Constantino Cavalla to Tha Muang, and in the meeting of priests, he announced that Fr. Cavalla would be the rector responsible for the northern zone on his behalf.

The Udomphan printing press produced several books in Thai, and among them was the Gospel by St. Luke. On 24 October 1940, Fr. Pasotti gave each member a copy and asked special prayer for his visit to the south.²⁹² On 12 November, Fr. Pasotti left to visit the south for 20 days accompanied by Fr. Van der Voort.²⁹³

According to the chronicle of Tha Muang Church on 23 November 1940, after Sunday Mass, the parish priest read Fr. Pasotti's message asking the faithful to pray together with the Holy Father who offered Mass for the dead and for the victims of war. So, after Mass, the faithful recited the prayer given by Fr. Pasotti. Since most of the people who came to church were adults, it was requested that the children be brought to attend the Eucharistic benediction, so that they could also recite the prayers requested by Fr. Pasotti.²⁹⁴ The chronicle of Bang Nok Khuek Church recorded on the 24th that:

“After Sunday Mass, the faithful prayed six times the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Glory be to the Father..., and the Hail Holy Queen...for the Holy Father’s intention. On this same day, at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Rome, the Pope offered Mass for the departed, the refugees, and the prisoners of war. This was heard from the radio announcement at 15.00 hrs. [09.00 hrs at the Vatican]. At the seminary, they turned on the radio to listen to the Holy Father’s speech at 15.15 hrs., but the voice was not clear, perhaps due to the unfavorable weather.” ²⁹⁵

On 29 December 1940, when Fr. Pasotti presided over the solemn renewal of Holy Communion at Bang Nok Khuek, he gave the instruction that from that year on, the parish prepare the children who completed their 14 years and who completed the elementary school to receive solemnly the Holy Communion. This important task must not be overlooked. ²⁹⁶

1 January 1941 was considered to be the first New Year of Thailand. ²⁹⁷ On that day, Fr. Pasotti told every parish to consider it a feastday, with two Masses like on Sunday. After the second Mass, there was the Eucharistic benediction with the renewal of the baptismal vows and the singing of the ‘Te Deum’. After the ceremony, there was mutual expression of New Year’s greetings, ²⁹⁸ as was recorded also in the chronicle of Tha Wa Church. In the middle of January of that year, Fr. Pasotti went back and forth between Tha Wa, Tha Muang and Luk Kae, where he always was warmly welcome. He proposed to the faithful to establish an

agricultural settlement with members helping one another. At Luk Kae, prior to having a church, there was the teaching of catechism for the first time on 12 March 1941. ²⁹⁹

14.2 Thailand Entered into a War Mode in 1941

At Bang Nok Khuek, there started an atmosphere of war because on 12 January 1941, there was an order from the government to cover up all the lamps in order not to let the light out. This was to prevent an air attack from the opposite side. There was news that the war already reached the Thai-Indochinese border. On Sunday 9 February, Fr. Bainotti gave a homily referring to the words of Fr. Pasotti: "All the Siamese must behave themselves like Siamese." He told the parishioners that Fr. Pasotti advised them to pray and visit the Blessed Sacrament so that all the catholics would receive light and strength from heaven. ³⁰⁰

Meanwhile, at Tha Muang, on 19 January 1941, Fr. Pasotti offered the morning Mass and preached in Thai and Chinese in the second Mass. After Mass, he was invited to meet the youth of Catholic Action group because they wanted to make a retreat. He allowed them to decide the date and time, then let him know, so that he would assign a retreat master for them. On that day, a messenger came to report that the headmaster of a government school ordered all the students to pay respect to the statue of Buddha, threatening that those who disobeyed would be caned. The parents and the students came

to ask him whether they could pay respect to the statue of Buddha. He recalled the instruction from the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith given on 8 December 1939 to adapt the practice of faith deemed best, with prudence, because there was a group of catholics who left the faith. However, there were also some who had strayed away but then came back. It was necessary for Fr. Pasotti to give approval for them to return. He considered the cases with love and compassion. As for the youth who wished to make a retreat, they had this on 2-6 April 1941 at Tha Muang. They were very happy, and they were allowed to use the empty classrooms because the school was closed down.³⁰¹

Since January 1941, the chronicle of Bang Tan Church recorded that Fr. Pasotti and Fr. Ceccarelli went to Nong Hin to look at the house where the latter would live while taking care of Nong Hin Church and Bang Tan Church, because the French priests could no longer stay there. On 31 January, it was recorded also that there were voices against the catholics and the Salesian missionaries because they were mistaken to be friends of the French. But after the dialogue between Fr. Ceccarelli and the high ranking government officials at Nong Hin, a good understanding was reached, especially that the catholics do not discriminate against any nationality or ethnicity. The Salesian missionaries were Italians and were friends of Thailand. So, the situation at Nong Hin became better. However, on 10 February, at Bang Tan, there was a rumor that Fr. Ceccarelli would be caught. Some catholics left their faith and were willing to pay homage to the statue of Buddha making the government

officials not to launch any action against Fr. Ceccarelli. Yet, there was an advice that Fr. Ceccarelli should go to a remote place and let Fr. Bottain to stay at Nong Hin, because, at least, nothing was happening there yet. Some catholics started to leave their faith. Fr. Pasotti wrote a circular letter and printed leaflets to remind and encourage the catholics to remain faithful in their faith until the difficult times would be over.

On 10 February, Fr. Ceccarelli wrote a letter reporting the general situation to Fr. Pasotti. On the following day, Fr. Bainotti, the Episcopal vicar responded to the letter in behalf of Fr. Pasotti. The response noted that Fr. Pasotti was one with him in his sufferings and those of the faithful. He requested Fr. Ceccarelli to personally give his encouragement to the faithful, that they should stand firm against these events, with the thought of everlasting life foremost in mind. He also told Fr. Ceccarelli to encourage the faithful in his sermons and meeting with the various groups. And, if he noticed any serious incident, he should immediately report to Fr. Pasotti. At the same time, there was also a written record that the local government officials were worried that they might do something wrong against the law, especially articles 1 and 3 of the Constitution.

On 12 February, Fr. Bottain brought another letter of Fr. Bainotti, written on the previous day, saying that in that evening there was a meeting called by the government officials to sign a certification

that there had been no pressure on the people to reject their religion, but there was an attempt to look for proofs to fault Fr. Ceccarelli, who had ordered not to listen to the authorities, by presenting the leaflets of Fr. Pasotti as evidence because these were distributed without the permission of the authorities. The authorities were trying to find fault in order to close the Bang Tan Church. Fr. Bainotti, therefore, asked Fr. Ceccarelli to meet Fr. Pasotti immediately and asked one priest from Banpong to reside at Nong Hin to give support to the faithful, because in such a situation, the presence of a priest was most important. Finally, it was Fr. Constanzo Cavalla from Tha Wa who came to Nong Hin as a temporary replacement. Later, Fr. Bottain from Bang Nok Khuek came and Fr. Cavalla returned to his former post.³⁰²

On 24 February 1941, the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith sent a letter to Fr. Peter Ricaldone, the Rector Major, informing him that Fr. Pasotti sent a telegram on the 22nd to report about the religious persecution in Thailand during the Indochina conflict. The faithful and the missionaries, especially the French, were put in very difficult situations. The Congregation sought the opinion of the Rector Major whether it would be better for the Salesian missionaries to take refuge at some safer place if the situation would need it.³⁰³

14.3 Appointed to Be a Bishop

On 1 March 1941, the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, who had not yet received the response from the Salesians, wrote another letter referring to the opinion of H.E. Drapier, the Apostolic Nuncio for the Indochina Region, that the opposition to the French missionaries had still no sign of calming down, and that it was deemed appropriate to raise the status of Fr. Pasotti from Vicariate Prefect to Bishop so that Thailand would have another Bishop. But prior to making the decision, the situation should be evaluated and the opinion of the Rector Major should be sought about this matter by requesting him to answer the questionnaires attached to the letter,³⁰⁴ because the Congregation wished to have confirmation about the external qualities, biography and spiritual life of Fr. Pasotti before making the official appointment. The Rector Major replied on 15 March, with answers to the questionnaires, as mentioned above.³⁰⁵

Other than his biography and education, the superiors gave also other important characteristics of Fr. Pasotti, and we would like to mention some:

“Besides Italian, Fr. Pasotti knows Greek, Latin, English and French. He can also speak Chinese and Thai quite well.” [No. 16]

“He always stands firm on the beliefs of the Church with a fervent heart, and demonstrates his loyalty to the Holy See with filial

love, always respecting, obeying and practicing the Church's teachings." [No.17]

"The administration and growth of the Mission that gives hope even in the midst of hardships and various crises are ample proofs of the leadership of Fr. Pasotti." [No.18]

"He always takes special care of the pastoral services; he knows and practices the liturgical functions with fidelity." [No.19]

"He has steadfast piety and fervent care for the good of souls; he takes special care of the poor." [No.20]

"His assignments, both in China and Thailand, demonstrate that he has the wisdom and the ability to lay out good plans." [No.21]

"He does not get involved in politics and secular matters." [No.22]

"He is humble, friendly, patient and steady in his good intention and strong when confronted with difficulties." [No.23]

"He is moderate in food, clothing, and maintains good reputation with blameless personality." [No.24]

"He is open and reports everything to the superiors, either directly or through representatives who come to visit him, whether in Italy or in Thailand." [No.25]

"From the above data, it is believed that the appointment of Bishop Pasotti will be welcome with joy and sincerity by the missionaries and the faithful." [No.26]

"It is appropriate to add here that sometimes Fr. Pasotti is inclined toward eagerness which sometimes leads to sadness [because of unfulfilled expectations], but this happens only occasionally and remains only for a short time." [No.27]

Over all, Fr. Pasotti is the one prepared for this Mission. ³⁰⁶

The war situation prompted Fr. Pasotti to request the sacrifices of the Salesian confreres to assist in Bangkok Diocese. Fr. Cavalla, who was about to be the parish priest of Tha Wa, was requested to make a visit to the faithful of Prachinburi, together with Fr. Delfino Crespi. With the approval of the Bishop and Vicar of Bangkok Diocese, they left on 13 March 1941. On the following day, Fr. Cavalla parted ways with Fr. Crespi to take a boat to Tha Kwien. He was met by the lukewarmness of the faithful who had left the Church, and he saw the situation of the church which was destroyed. That very night, Fr. Cavalla was stormed by a group of people, defrocked, his valuable things taken away; he was severely beaten, taken outside and was tied up to a tree, and the gangsters went away. A Chinese saw it all, but dared not come to his rescue. Fr. Cavalla tried to help himself, until he was able to untie the rope. He slowly went back to the residence where he met with a group of policemen who tried to search for evidence that he was one of the rebels, but they could not find

anything. So, they left him. On the following day, 15 March, Fr. Cavalla took the same boat to Bangkok. The superiors advised him to rest and to take medical care at St. Louis Hospital until he could recuperate. On 21 March, he returned to Tha Wa.³⁰⁷

On 5 April 1941, during these crucial times, the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith informed the Rector Major about the Papal Document dated 3 April 1941, appointing Fr. Pasotti as Bishop of Barata, ordinary of Ratchaburi Diocese. Aside from this, in such a critical situation, the Holy Father assigned him to administer the whole Mission of Thailand. Along with this, the Congregation donated also financial help as much as it could, though not quite sufficient to respond to the needs, due to the fact that the Holy See received less financial support, and there were many other offices which have to be supported.³⁰⁸ On 9 April, a telegram arrived at Bang Nok Khuek informing about the appointment of Fr. Pasotti as Bishop. The news was forwarded to every parish, bringing joy to everyone. On 27 April, Fr. Bainotti, the vicar general, made the announcement that the Episcopal consecration would take place at Bang Nok Khuek. So, he solicited help for the improvement of the sanctuary and other preparations, including the preparation of the residence for the new Bishop. Donations were secretly requested for the coming event.³⁰⁹ Later, because of some other reasons, the place for the consecration was changed to the Carmelite Convent in Bangkok.

At Tha Muang, there was a disheartening event when the catholics were forced to leave their faith. A catholic teacher in Kanchanaburi was ordered to change his religion, or he must have to leave the government service as a teacher. Somebody told him to consult Fr. Pasotti who advised him to resign and be faithful to God; and he promised to help him. ³¹⁰

Fr. Henri Danieli wrote: “In the middle of April 1941, Fr. Paulo Srinuan Srivorakul, the vicar of Laos Diocese, after being jailed for almost three months, travelled from Nong Saeng to Bangkok to seek the advice of Bishop Perros who referred him to the Salesian Office at Saladaeng to meet Fr. Pasotti. Fr. Srinuan gave a brief account of what happened in December 1940 and January 1941. The situation was that several diocesan priests were either imprisoned or expelled from their residences, which were confiscated. Fr. Srinuan requested that Salesian priests be sent to Laos to protect and support the local priests and sisters.

These problems were taken to consideration in the councilors meeting of the Salesian Province on 20 May 1941. The Salesians showed their generosity by assigning this responsibility to Fr. Pasotti who just received the appointment as Bishop of Ratchaburi, but has not been consecrated yet. ³¹¹

14.4 The Episcopal Consecration and the Simple Celebration



The Episcopal consecration of Fr. Pasotti was quietly taken place at the chapel of the Carmelite Nuns in Bangkok on 24 June 1941, due to being in a war situation [same as when he was ordained a priest at the war frontline in Udine]. Bishop Rene Perros was the consecrating Bishop. Other than the many priests and St. Gabriel Brothers, there were also the faithful who filled up the small chapel. It was a rather secret ceremony as advised by the Vatican through a telegram. There were representatives of the Ministers of France and Italy who joined the celebration. The St. Gabriel Brothers hosted the luncheon at the Assumption College with expenses paid by Bishop Pasotti [about 125 baht]. There were about 50 guests.³¹² The chronicle of Sriracha recorded that Fr. Delfino Crespi who helped in Phanatnikhom came to Bangkok to participate in the consecration ceremony and went back to inform the confreres that the ceremony had a very deep spiritual significance. The Provincial sent sweet cakes for the confreres and children as a token to his participation in the event.³¹³

The chronicle of Tha Wa Church noted that Fr. Cavalla went to join in the consecration ceremony. Bishop Perros presided over the ceremony. Most of the participants were Salesians, MEPs, and the diocesan priests. The chapel was filled with friends and dignitaries, such as Cav. Brugnoli, the Consular Secretary of the Italian Embassy, and the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France. It was very solemn and peaceful ceremony, with no external formalities, but filled with family atmosphere. In the evening, there was a dinner party hosted by the Italian Consul. Fr. Cavalla, upon his return to Tha Wa, related his experience, what he had seen and heard during the event. On 28 June, he went to Bangkok again to accompany Bishop Pasotti back to Bang Nok Khuek. There would be a welcome reception from the Salesian confreres and the faithful, and the offering of the Holy Mass which coincided with the feast of the Pope.³¹⁴

The reception of Bishop Gaetano Pasotti at Bang Nok Khuek was on 28-29 June 1941. Two taxis were arranged to take the Bishop from Bangkok to Ratchaburi. A motor boat ferried him down to Bang Nok Khuek at 15.00 hrs. After he got off the boat, Fr. Bainotti and the Salesian confreres, together with a large number of Catholics, came to welcome him. Meanwhile, the musical bands of Darunanukhro Bang Nok Khuek, and Sarasit Phithayalai Banpong, played solemnly the welcome song. The councilors of the Diocese and a boy offered a garland of flowers to the Bishop. He blessed everyone then entered the church while the choir sang "Christus Vincit". The Bishop presided over the solemn

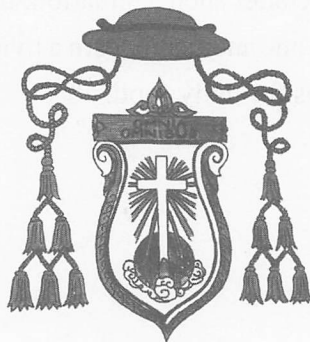
benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and sang the “Te Deum” in thanksgiving to God. That evening, a vehicle fetched four St. Gabriel Brothers from Assumption College to participate in the celebration at Bang Nok Khuek.

On the following day, 29 June, at 09.00 hrs., there was a solemn Mass. Before the Mass, the members of various Catholic Action groups walked in procession with flags parade the Bishop from his residence. The seminary choir sang beautifully during the service. After the Mass, there was a group photo in front of the cathedral. The faithful, then, came to greet him and offered the donations they collected. There was free lunch participated by the faithful from various parishes invited by their parish priests. The St. Gabriel Brothers returned to Bangkok at 13.30 hrs. In the afternoon, there was a solemn Benediction. Then, the stage performances followed moment of joy and happiness in a fraternal atmosphere. On 30 June, Bishop Pasotti went to another celebration with the seminarians, who expressed their special love for him.³¹⁵

At Tha Muang, an invitation was extended to all the faithful to demonstrate their devotion to the Eucharist. All were invited to attend the Mass and to pray for Bishop Pasotti on his consecration day. Further more, on Sunday, 3 August, the faithful were invited to come to Mass and donate some money to help the poor and to ask for special blessings for Bishop Pasotti. And, on 7 August, being the Bishop’s feastday, a lot of people came to Mass and

received Holy Communion. The parish priest and parishioners of Tha Muang Church, like the other parishes, always obeyed the Bishop's wishes. For example, on 7 December 1941, the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Bishop Pasotti made it a day of prayer for vocations of the Diocese, and of praying the rosary for the same purpose. During this event, it was noticed that there were some strangers who attended the Mass. It was believed that they were sent by senior government officials because, when some representatives went to see the district officer, they were asked for the reasons of the fund raising. They answered that it was to show love and compassion for the poor in line with the catholic teaching. This meant that the district officer had doubts that prompted him to send representatives to observe at the church.³¹⁶

On the occasion of his Episcopal consecration, Bishop Pasotti chose this strena written on his logo: "To be all things to all people" which was taken from the letter of St. Paul: "I have made myself all things to all men in order to save at least some of them. In fact,



I do all that I do for the sake of the gospel in the hope of having a share in its blessings.” [1 Cor 9, 22-23] We can see from his life that Bishop Pasotti had already lived his life according to that teaching and he might want the *strenna* be a special inspiration for him as a pastor. We also found that “to be all things to all people” was the *strenna* of St. Francis de Sales, a great Bishop who was the example and the source of the Salesian spirit. The selection of this *strenna* relayed the message to us that he had a clear ideal of being a good pastor after the footsteps of St. Paul and St. Francis de Sales amidst the various situations at that time.

During the war, Bishop Pasotti was interested in the children, and he asked all the Salesians to be interested in them in a special way. For example, in Chonburi, he asked the confreres to welcome the children who asked for help so that they would be able to study in the school of St. Gabriel Brothers, could go to church and learn catechism at Hua Phai, Phanasnikhom or in Chonburi. He asked that the teaching of catechism be the most important duty of the Salesians, which at that time needed some expenses that he had to bear the burden. Under such a situation, the Salesians and the children should help one another to ‘earn a living’, such as catching fish, clams and crabs for daily food.³¹⁷

14.5 Care For the Laos/Northeast Diocese [within the Thai border] in 1941-1945

On 23 August 1941, the Holy See appointed Bishop Pasotti to administer the Laos Diocese [within Thai territory], meanwhile acting also as the Apostolic Nuncio of Thailand [instead of H.E. Anton Drapier who was French]. He assumed the latter position for only one year.

Though during war time, Bishop Pasotti had to travel around for pastoral visits, both inside and outside the Diocese of Ratchaburi, he always had time for the various groups. For example: on 4 October 1941, he presided at the closing of the retreat for girls at Bang Nok Khuek. He gave them the strenna: “Do good always without stopping.” He also presented to all the girls the biography of Mamma Margarita in Thai as a souvenir. After that, on 7 October, there was a meeting of the Catholic media. Those who attended were Bishop Perros, Bishop Pasotti, Fr. Perudon, Fr. Large, Fr. Louis Chorin, Bro. Monfort, Bro. Theofan, Fr. Joachim, and Fr. Andre from Bangkok Diocese. Other than Bishop Pasotti, the Salesians who attended the meeting were Fr. Casetta, the Provincial, Fr. Peter Carretto, Fr. Ulliana, and Fr. Bainotti. The result of the meeting was the establishment of a joint committee consisting of six priests who were interested in the printing media and would be capable of sending articles to publish in the daily newspapers which at times had texts against Christianity. The appointed committee members were Fr. Perudon,

Fr. Carretto, Fr. Joachim, Fr. Andre, Bro. Monfort and Bro. Theofan. On the following day, 8 October 1941, Bishop Pasotti took a trip to Hatyai because Fr. Mario Ruzzdu was waiting for him to bless the Salesian house there. As Bishop Pasotti had many other additional works, so he ordered Fr. Bainotti to represent him visit the various parishes, such as on 16 October he went to visit Kok Mot Tanoi Church.³¹⁸

From a letter of Bishop Pasotti dated 27 October 1941 to seminarian Anelli who was studying in Shanghai, China, we learned that at that time Fr. Pinaffo, Fr. Vitrano, Fr. Crespi and Fr. Forlazzini were working in the Laos Mission [in the Thai territory] to help in everything they could. Meanwhile, Fr. Frigerio and Fr. Girlanda were in Sriracha. Aside from these, the Salesians also took care of the faithful at Nong Hin and Nakorn Pathom. Bishop Pasotti said: "I am writing from a new place. Some call this 'Bishop's House' – poor father! Please pray for me that I may be able to carry the cross."³¹⁹

On that very same day, we could feel the friendship between Bishop Pasotti and Fr. Braga. Bishop Pasotti wrote about matters from his heart to Fr. Braga:

"God desires me to be confused. I need help, with prayers and sacrifices, from everybody. Other than the heavy responsibility of the Thai Diocese, it is already two months that I have to administer the Laos Diocese [on the Thai territory]. So, I turn to you. It is

only for the love of God that I am able to accept this. It enable me to understand how much obedience is demanding. I don't know how the future will be. At the moment, God's providence is looking after Don Bosco's children who are in a situation of passing through the storm. In the future, we will do what is God's will."

Though being in the midst of the storm, there were also hopeful events. Bishop Pasotti informed us that on 14 October 1941, he blessed a Salesian house at Hatyai, 945 kilometers from Bangkok, a part of which was a chapel. Fr. Mario Ruzzedu, another priest, a brother and an aspirant, were taking care of this place. Special classes in English was also opened. Bishop Pasotti was happy to be able to visit the Chinese catholics there once again.³²⁰

Working among the faithful was rather delicate, especially when money was involved. In some parishes, such as that of Bang Nok Khuek, there was an association for the souls in purgatory where money lending was involved. It was found that at Bang Nok Khuek, there were some people who demanded that the church be responsible for the payment of those who were unable to pay back for one reason or another. This has brought problems to the parish priest. Bishop Pasotti, therefore, sent a letter requesting the committee to send all the papers of the association to the parish priest for examination and review, for the reason that it must be reported to Rome as well. This allowed a complicated situation to pass by in peace, solving the problem somehow mysteriously. On 1 December 1941, Bishop Pasotti invited the said committee

members to come for a meeting on 3 December. A committee member brought a document about money lending to the parish priest, as requested by the Bishop. On 3 December, the Bishop appointed the parish priest to be the chairman of the meeting who read the revised paper of the Bishop with his additional comment and ideas about the various rules of the association since the time of Fr. Paulo Salmon. After hearing and seeing the rules, most of the members were happy, with the exception of some. So, the problem came to an end with Bishop Pasotti's clear cut process.³²¹

14.6 The Advent of the Japanese War and Its Subsequent Problems – 1941

*On 8 November 1941, Fr. Carlo della Torre sent a message from Tha Muang to Tha Wa that the Japanese army has penetrated Thailand. Two days later, they arrived in Banpong and headed for Kanchanaburi. On 14 November, the Royal Thai Government gave the order to hoist the Thai flag along with the Japanese flag as a sign of friendship. So, the British government declared war against Thailand. On the same day, there was an official order not to light fire in the open area.*³²²

On 8 December 1941, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, at Bang Nok Khuek, there was a radio announcement that the Japanese had attacked Hongkong, the Philippines and Thailand. At 17.00 hrs., the radio broadcasted further that the Japanese army already occupied certain areas of Thailand. The district officer ordered

not to light fire from that day until further notice. In the morning of 9 December, the radio announced the news that the Japanese army wanted a pass through Thailand, and that the Royal Thai Government agreed. The province announced also the canceling of the celebration of Constitution Day [10 December]. On the 10th of December, the head of the government explained the situation to keep the people calm. The Royal Thai Government made an official statement that it was in friendship with Japan. There were also several other admonitions in order to be safe.³²³

“On that day of 8th December, every Thai citizen, who did not belong to the Axis group, gathered in Bangkok for the sake of safety. Furthermore, on 25 January 1942, Thailand declared war against Great Britain and its alliances. Hence, the French priests were again put in a difficult situation. Fr. Robert Coste affirmed that Bishop Pasotti reported the war situation to Rome several times, and Rome advised him to find the possibility of establishing the Bangkok Diocese, and hand down its care to a diocesan priest.”³²⁴

14.7 Varying Opinions about Helping Bangkok and Northeast Missions

Since 1930, there has been discussion on dividing Bangkok Mission, but Thailand was not prepared yet. Because of the war situation, the Holy See had been pushing for this issue again.

“On 19 January 1942, Bishop Pasotti was advised by Rome on this issue and was allowed to choose the person to head this. He added his own words on this matter, like a father: ‘We are certain that the Holy See has understood this cross that they asked from me and the confreres. We are also convinced that the MEP priests would be willing to commit themselves as they used to do in the Japanese capital, whereby Rome is awaiting us to follow the same footstep.’” ³²⁵

Bishop Rene Perros was a man filled with virtues and obedience. He was preparing himself to go to Chiangmai, but there was a petition to Rome through the French Embassy. Finally, in July 1942, Bishop Anton Drapier returned to Thailand to resume the position of Apostolic Nuncio. In that same year, Rome established the Diocese of Chantaburi, appointing Fr. Jacobe Jaeng Kerdsawang as its first Bishop. He was consecrated on 11 February 1945 by Bishop Rene Perros.

In December 1941, there was Deacon Inthee of the Laos Diocese who returned from Penang but could not proceed to his Mission because of the war. So, he stayed at Bang Nok Khuek and was ordained priest by Bishop Pasotti at the seminary on 13 December. ³²⁶

During the difficult time of war, there was also the problem of the schools. On 27 January 1942, government officials came to inspect the girls’ school and charged that it was acting against the law, so

the school must be closed down. There were people who advised Bishop Pasotti to seek the help of the Provincial Governor. So, he wrote a letter and sent Fr. Vitali to meet the governor. However, he came back disappointed. He reported that the government officials were displeased with some articles in Udomphan which criticized the local authorities who prohibited the children from attending catholic schools. Finally, on 2 February 1942, the school was closed down.³²⁷

As the administrator of the Northeast Mission during the war, Bishop Pasotti wrote several articles with many pronouncements. One circular was written during Easter in 1942 and was rather lengthy. The content was like a catechetical synopsis which gave assurance, sowed faith and consolation in time of difficulties. He assured us that we were God's creation who belonged to Him, and, therefore, should put ourselves under His protection, like a child to his father. Christ redeemed us on the cross because of His love, though He had no sin. So, we must bring all souls to Him in order that they would not perish eternally. We must have a strong faith because we are heirs of the martyrs. We are in the same family of God. Let us always live a life of faith, hope and love, which leads to heaven.³²⁸

As an Ordinary, Bishop Pasotti wrote a circular letter to all the parish priests on 30 April 1942 informing them about a project to celebrate the third anniversary of the Pontificate of Pope Pius XII [2 March], providing broad guidelines. As for the details,

these would depend on the creativity of each individual to make the celebration a spiritual event, and, at the same time, with an appropriate external festivity, such as inviting the faithful to make a special collection to be sent to Rome, inviting all the children of Ratchaburi Diocese to have a real part. He also informed that, if it was the will of God, he would go to visit the Northeast Mission in May, and he requested their prayers. During his absence, Fr. George Bainotti would take the responsibility in his place.³²⁹

14.8 Visiting Laos / Northeast Mission [within Thailand]

In reality, Bishop Pasotti went to visit the southern part of the Northeast Mission, i.e., Ubonratchathani and its vicinity from 11 May – 14 June 1942, after a rather difficult process to obtain approval from the government authority. He set off from Bangkok by train together with Fr. Delfino Crespi. While on the train, he was suspected to be French because he had a beard. Nonetheless, they were received with a warm welcome by the Sisters and the parishioners in Ubon, with drums beating, bells ringing, and a candle light procession from the river up to the church. He paid a courtesy visit to the provincial governor and police. He visited various parishes, both in the city and the outskirts. He officiated the confirmation of children from some churches of Champasak. He donated 150 baht to the governor to help the poor. This gesture actually saved Fr. Crespi from being held for criticizing the police who destroyed some equipments and materials belonging to a parish while the parish priest was away.

While in Ubon, Fr. Pinaffo came from Nong Saeng to report the event that occurred during the previous year amidst so many obstacles. Twelve new houses and holy places were opened. There were visitations to the catholic communities, and many catholics, who previously abandoned their faith, were brought back to the fold. Then Bishop Pasotti went to Amnatcharoen, Nong Khu Yai, Nong Khu Noi, Song Yae and Se Song. Fr. Srinuan Srivorakul accompanied Bishop Pasotti all the time in this trip. On 14 June, he had to return back to Bangkok to meet with the Apostolic Nuncio.³³⁰

During the year 1942, Bishop Pasotti used to receive telegrams to go to Bangkok urgently due to the political situation and the needs of Bangkok and Northeast Missions. In June 1942, H.E. Drapier visited Bangkok, and Bishop Pasotti had to be called from the Northeast [he was making his pastoral visit as mentioned above] to be informed that he would come to resume his duty at the Apostolic Nunciature in July. At times, it was Bishop Pasotti himself who had to call Fr. Bainotti to come urgently to meet him in Bangkok. However, on 20 July, he was called, through a telegram, to come to Bangkok immediately because Fr. Pinaffo was jailed in Nakornphanom. He went with Fr. John Ulliana and returned back with Fr. Pinaffo. On 7 August, which was the feastday of Bishop Pasotti, there was a celebration with the confreres and two priests from the Northeast, one of whom was Fr. Pinaffo's co-prisoner. When Bishop Pasotti had the occasion to preach, he used the events at that time as part of his homily. For example, on

5 July 1942, in Bang Nok Khuek Church, he preached about the eternal church, explaining about the persecution of the Church in the Northeast. On the other hand, during the monthly retreat on 10 August, Fr. Pinaffo would have the opportunity to share his experience in the prison.³³¹

While the war situation was getting critical, at Tha Muang, for the celebration of Bishop Pasotti's feastday on 7 August 1942, a group of children and adults were invited to join the Mass and receive Holy Communion, to ask for blessings for the head of the Mission. On that day, the district officer of Tha Muang issued an order prohibiting foreigners to cut wood or make charcoal near their homes, and also prohibited others to buy firewood from the foreigners. This was limited to their rights.³³²

On 24 September 1942, though in the atmosphere of war, Bishop Pasotti wrote another letter to the parish priests advising them to celebrate solemnly the Mission Sunday through prayers and donations for the universal missionary works.³³³ He always gave importance to Mission Sunday every year.

The chronicle of Bang Nok Khuek Church dated 23 October 1942 noted that Mae Klong River was the main route for the Japanese soldiers to transport supplies to Kanchanaburi.

Since the month of January 1943, the missionaries received special good news from Mary Help of Christians and St. John Bosco that

all the male and female Italians could stay in their residences. This was good news especially for the Italian Capuchin cloistered nuns who had to take refuge at Bang Nok Khuek.

Fr. John Casetta, the Salesian Provincial, went to visit the Laos Mission on 20 November -25 December 1942 because Bishop Pasotti had sent four priests and one lay-brother to help the mission works there. Since 1941, the Provincial has been reviewing Bishop Pasotti's intention to have one Salesian Rector to take care of the confreres working in the Northeast. After the priestly ordination of two priests from the Northeast, namely, Fr. Wandee and Fr. Khan, on 29 January by Bishop Pasotti, he met with Fr. Srinuan, the vicar of the Northeast Mission. He came to know then that Bishop Pasotti had already announced that Fr. Carlo Casetta, the parish priest of Banpong Church, be the rector to look after the confreres in the Northeast Region, i.e., Nakornphanom, Sakornnakhon, Udornthani, Nongkhai and Loei, as was requested from him, with the official letter of installation dated 1 February 1943. Aside from this, Bishop Pasotti also said that he would go with the new rector to start the work there. However, he must first deal with some business with the government officials before leaving; he must receive permission from the Minister first in order to facilitate contact with the local government officials. On 8 February 1943, Fr. Carlo Casetta departed by train from Banpong to Bangkok, and proceeded to his final destination. He was of the opinion that he would be away only for one year, and so there was no official farewell ceremony. From Bangkok, Bishop Pasotti

and Fr. Casetta took a train to Korat, proceeded on to Udonthani and arrived in Nakornphanom on 11 February. From there, some parishioners brought them to Tharae, Phonesoong, etc. Several churches were closed, some others were turned into government offices. Everywhere they went, they would meet with the government officials. When the parishioners knew of their arrival, they would come to meet them with joy, group by group. They would offer them some gifts from their actual situation with love and simple devotion.

On 13 February 1943, Bishop Pasotti went to Sakonnakhorn with Fr. Srinuan to submit the Minister's letter to the governor to negotiate about the confiscated land and church buildings. However, this was refused. Bishop Pasotti had to write another letter to the Minister to inform him of what had happened. He would not give up; he stayed on to wait the response of the Minister. Wherever he went, he would say Mass and preached with a zealous heart, giving encouragement to the faithful. Before going to the next station, he would notify the place by telegram in order to meet with the faithful, including the students. Nonetheless, in certain places he was refused by the government officials, but he had clear proofs to the contrary. He knew that the local officials were ordered to give him a warm welcome, but he was polite and did not want to embarrass anyone. He only wanted justice, believing that those who hold fast to justice were honorable people. In certain schools, the students were allowed to come to meet him only outside school time. In some places,

the catholics were indifferent and were not interested in coming to see him. Bishop Pasotti concluded that the most important thing was to save souls, and temporal, material things were secondary. At Nong Saeng, he went to visit the cathedral, the seminary and the Bishop's house, which was destroyed. He wrote in Latin on the ground: "Risurrectura" meaning "it will be reconstructed".

On 7 March 1943, Bishop Pasotti sent a telegram saying that on the following day he would visit the catholics at Song Khon.³³⁴ Two more people accompanied them – Fr. Khamphong and Fr. Carlo Casetta. Their boat trip started in the evening of the 7th and sailed the whole day of the 8 March. On 9 March, Bishop Pasotti, Fr. Srinuan and Fr. Khamphong began to visit and provide pastoral care to the faithful. Fr. Casetta was assigned by Bishop Pasotti to begin the investigation about the martyrdom at Song Khon. According to the report of Fr. Carlo Casetta, Bishop Pasotti went to Song Khon three times: the first time was on 9-12 March, the second on 26 April – 3 May, and the third one on 12-19 July 1943.

Upon returning back to Bang Nok Khuek, Bishop Pasotti began his usual pastoral work in Ratchaburi Mission. He went to visit the various parishes. Wherever he went, he would promote the devotion to God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary among the Salesian confreres and the faithful, such that on 24 July 1943, when he visited Don Kra Bueang Church, he commemorated the memorial of Mary Help of Christians with the Salesian confreres,

even though in that church there had been no tradition to celebrate the feast of Mary Help of Christians on the 24th of every month. However, he did not ask for any special external celebration. He stayed on for another day which was a Sunday, so that he could say Mass and gave a homily. In his homily, he reminded the parishioners to be faithful in attending the Mass and receiving Holy Communion, including keeping God's commandments and following the Church's teachings. He must have noticed that at the left side of the church, the pews were filled up with women, while at the right side, for the males, so many pews were empty. All the men and boys were only 94 persons. Anyhow, after Mass, the faithful gathered round to greet him. Bishop Pasotti was paying special attention to the youth. ³³⁵

In the month of May 1943, H.E. Drapier came to visit Bangkok again, and expressed his concern over the situation in Thailand. Bishop Pasotti went to see him and stayed in Bangkok for two days. This month, the schools just opened for the new scholastic year. There was a problem at Bang Nok Khuek again. The district officer did not permit the children to go to the catholic schools claiming the long distance, etc. . . . , in spite of the fact that parents insisted to send their children to the catholic school. But up until the opening day, they did not give the permission. The parents would not send their children to study at the Buddhist school either. Fr. Vitali then went to see the provincial governor to report how the district officials were creating impediments. Finally, the governor at Mae Klong called the education officer to make a reconsideration

and allow the catholic school to accept those students. ³³⁶

27 May 1943 was the golden jubilee of sacerdotal ordination of the Rector Major in Turin. Bishop Pasotti and the Salesian Provincial sent a telegram to congratulate him on behalf of all the Salesians in Thailand. ³³⁷

Fr. Henri Danieli noted that at the end of July 1943, Mussolini, the Prime Minister of Italy, was deposed and put under arrest. On 8 September 1943, there was a negotiation with the alliances with the result of Italy accepting defeat. So, there was a turn-around of the events. The Italians in Thailand were ordered not to make contact with anybody for a certain period. This incident lasted for about two months, but the order to restrict travel lasted more than one year. So, it was the turn of Bishop Pasotti! He wrote a letter to Bishop Rene Perros ³³⁸ asking him to send priests to stay at important parishes and added that if the bad situation lasted longer he would put all things in the hands of Bishop Perros alone. However, by the end of that year, everything returned to normal as would be mentioned later.

The Congregation for the Propagation of Faith sent a letter, dated 18 November 1943, to the Rector Major informing that the Papal envoy of Indochina sent a report about the Salesians in Thailand through two telegrams, one on 23 September and the other on 12 October. They arrived at the Congregation, but the message was not clear. The first telegram gave the information that the

Salesians who were invited to help the Laos Mission could only stay at home, could not communicate with one another, could not receive any news from Ratchaburi, or from the Bishop, or even from the MEP priests. The second telegram gave information that the Salesians were still under house arrest and that the situation was not getting any better.³³⁹ That was the result of Italian politics which caused a negative impact on the missionary life of the Salesians in Thailand as mentioned above.

At Bang Nok Khuek, the situation was still usual because on 26 October 1943, Bishop Pasotti wrote a letter from there to all the parish priests about printing prayer books for Bangkok Mission, and to use them in Ratchaburi as well. The priests were asked to report to Udomphan Printing the number of books they needed, including the catechetical books of Bangkok Diocese which was printed in 1942. The letter on 23 November informed them that it was the intention of the Apostolic Nuncio to let every Mission dedicate itself to the Immaculate Heart of Mary because the Holy Father had already done so at St. Peter Basilica together with a crowd of people, in December 1942. As for the Ratchaburi Mission, they would do it on 5 December 1943, and prayers should coincide with the current situation in a spirit of penance, praying the rosary with filial piety toward the Immaculate Heart of Mary.³⁴⁰

On 24 November 1943, the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith sent news to the Rector Major once again that they had

received a telegram from Bishop Pasotti giving an encouraging information about the Salesians in Thailand. He reported with gratitude toward the authorities in Thailand who facilitated the missionary activities while being under the scope of war, that now this has ended and that they are now free since 6 November 1943. The Salesians need not have to help in Laos anymore, and they hoped to return to Bang Nok Khuek. All the missionary Sisters were also safe.³⁴¹

14.9 Dedication of the Churches and the Diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

On 5 December 1943, Bang Nok Khuek celebrated the feast of the Immaculate Conception. This was the day when all the churches in Ratchaburi Diocese dedicated the Mission to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as requested by the Pope, for peace, in accordance with the wish of Our Lady when she appeared at Fatima. Bishop Pasotti preached during the Mass and led the prayer of dedication in front of the statue of Our Lady in the church.³⁴²

After that, Bishop Pasotti continued to promote the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as recorded in the history of the “Xi Song Khro” [now Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary]. On 18 June 1944, Mother Antonietta Morellato announced in the meeting of the “Xi Song Khro” several matters. One of them was the change of names of the chapel and convent, from St. Theresa to the chapel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Furthermore, the following year, on 18 June 1945, seven days after the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the convent organized the celebration of the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the first time. All these were the desires of Bishop Pasotti because his heart was filled with the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and loyalty to the Holy Father. This initiative and devotion were then passed on to his children.³⁴³

On the feastday of Bishop Gaetano in 1943, Bang Nok Khuek Church organized a solemn Mass on 8 August. During the Mass, Fr. Bainotti, the Episcopal vicar, preached about the two pillars [according to Don Bosco's dream] and he also mentioned about the Mission in which Bishop Pasotti was the captain with a heavy responsibility. Hence, all the faithful must help the captain by living a good life according to one's state, by staying in his ship, being united in obedience, cooperating through prayers and activities of the church. After the Mass, there were stage presentations by the various church groups and offering of gifts and donations to the Bishop. There were also many congratulate telegrams from several confreres as well.³⁴⁴

Bishop Pasotti was always grateful to the benefactors. At that time, Peter Yooseng and his wife donated pews to Bang Nok Khuek Church to the amount of 3,979 baht, which was already a very large amount at that time. On 8 September 1943, and thereafter, he requested the church to offer Mass for the said benefactor every year even after their death. On the feast day of the Church

that year, Bishop Pasotti noticed that there were too many stage shows, and that the number of parishioners went home before the end of the show causing ill-feelings to the stage performers. So, he declared that there should not be too many items so that everyone would still be around till the end of the show. This indicated that he was a sensitive person and understood the feelings of others.³⁴⁵

On the New Year of 1944, Bishop Pasotti gave a strenna to the faithful: *"Let the faithful live an authentic catholic life, sacrifice and devote to pray the Holy Rosary lovingly."* An article on this issue was published in the Udomphan newspaper. The parish priest should read this strenna to the faithful on the New Year.

On Palm Sunday, since so many parishioners attended the liturgy in every church, Bishop Pasotti set up a rule that only one priest would say the Mass with the seminarians or altar boys assisting, so that the other priests could hear the confessions of the faithful, or be present among them, either inside or outside the church, during the liturgical service.

14.10 Pastoral Care for the Soldiers

On 3 April 1944, at Bang Nok Khuek, the parish priest organized a Mass for the youth who had been recruited for military service. Almost everyone went to Holy Communion. After the Mass, he gave them the blessings of Mary Help of Christians, handed a medal of St. John Bosco to every one, and prayed the Our Father,

the Hail Mary and the Glory be. Most of the military candidates were members of the various catholic action groups. So, the group president prepared coffee and biscuits for them in the meeting hall. The parish priest and other catholic action members met them to encourage them to be faithful to God and to the country. After that, they went to ask blessing from Bishop Pasotti who gave his support to this kind of initiative. He encouraged the other parishes to do the same. On 3 April 1945, there was a similar function for another youth group.³⁴⁶

In the summer of 1944, Bang Nok Khuek Church organized catechism classes for two months for the children who attended non-catholic schools, starting from 7 February to Easter on 9 April. Bishop Pasotti was much interested in this activity. He presided over the closing of the catechetical camp of that year where there were more than 300 students.

In 1944, the renovation of the Salesian residences at Hua hin started, and set a section aside for the 'Church of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus'. The inauguration Mass was celebrated on 16 July 1944.³⁴⁷ This was considered the beginning of the Salesian activities at Huahin.

On 17 December 1944, Bang Nok Khuek Church rang the church bells as a sign of joy for the appointment of Fr. Jacobe Jaeng Kerdsawang as Bishop of Chantaburi Mission, the first Thai Bishop there. Later, on 7 February 1945, Bishop Pasotti, Fr. John Casetta,

the Provincial, Fr. Forlazzini, and a group of seminarians, went to Mae Klong and continued to Hua Phai to participate in the Episcopal consecration of the new Bishop on 11 February 1945. The new Bishop came to visit and participate in the annual feast of Wat Phleng on 5 June 1945.³⁴⁸

14.11 Relieved from the Activities outside Ratchaburi Diocese

Bishop Pasotti had submitted his resignation as the administrator of Laos Mission as indicated in a document dated 29 January 1945. Most Reverend Anton Drapier, the Apostolic Nuncio, stationed at Ve, Vietnam, wrote this letter to Bishop Pasotti:

*“When the religious situation in Thailand has changed...we believe that it is proper to accept Bishop Pasotti’s resignation, who, with his collaborators under the difficult times, has dedicated himself so well for the benefits of the Church beyond any suitable words of praise. With regards to Thailand, in which a part of it belongs to the Laos Mission, we would like to say that Bishop Pasotti is already released from the administrative responsibility of this Diocese which he has received temporarily. The responsibility will be returned to the real administrator who is Bishop Tomin, the ordinary of Tha Khaek.”*³⁴⁹

Not long after that, the Japanese army took over Indochina, and all the Frenchmen were under arrest. On 21 March, Bishop Tomin was shot dead. Fr. Bayet, who was his Episcopal vicar, was not

there. He went to Pak Se, so he was saved. After that event, in 1946, Bishop Pasotti, with advice from the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, tried to establish the Diocese of Tharae, under the leadership of the local priests. They refused to cooperate, declaring that they were not yet ready to receive this obligation. They preferred to continue to cooperate with the MEP priests.³⁵⁰

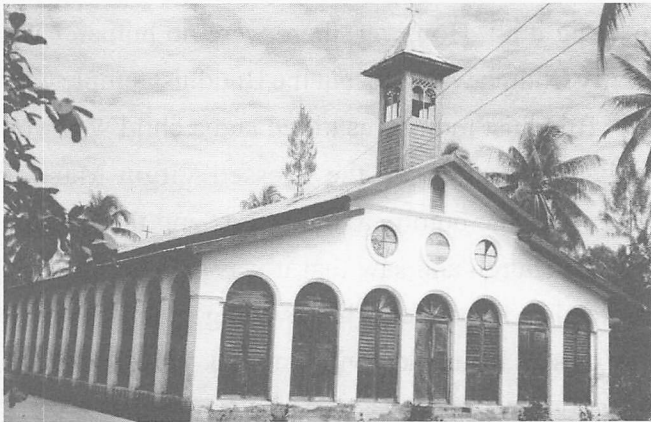
During the time of war, the Ursuline Sisters and their students moved temporarily out and stayed at Hua hin. They received the help of Bishop Pasotti. On 19 March 1945, he officiated the Sacrament of Confirmation to a group of students of Mater Dei College at Hua hin as well.³⁵¹

Chapter 15 : Practical Guidelines on Pastoral Care

15.1 Practical Guidelines about Evangelization for Priests and Confreres

On 11 April 1945, Bishop Pasotti called for a meeting at Bang Nok Khuek of all the priests including the Salesian Provincial, in order to give important guidelines about evangelization which would be announced later at each parish. In those days, it was well known to all that several aircrafts bombed the office of the electricity authority and the metropolitan water works of Thailand causing operational stoppage. On 18 April, a group of British aircrafts flew round and round for more than half-an-hour over Bang Nok Khuek Church and bombed the water gate of the town and damaging it all. However, there were no human casualties. The Nativity Church was safe, but the Buddhist temple was hit by a bomb. A Buddhist monk was killed and a child was wounded. Everybody was grateful to the Blessed Virgin Mary for her protection. After the bombing, the priests and the faithful came to inspect the church and saw that it was safe because they had asked protection from Her. That evening, many faithful came to ask for masses of thanksgiving to God. Later, on 1 June, the railway station in Ratchaburi was also bombed, but there were no detailed records.³⁵²

The souvenir book of the centennial celebration of the Cathedral of Bang Nok Khuek noted: *“In 1944, the dangers of war came to its highest peak in which one could not find a safe place. There was bombing at the water gate of Bang Nok Khuek. Bishop Pasotti asked for the protection of Our Lady so that the church and the faithful will be safe from war. He would dedicate the church, “Wat Nai” under the patronage of Mary Help of Christians. After the end of the war, there was the renovation of the Wat Nai Church. The Bishop consecrated and dedicated the church in gratitude, and celebrated a thanksgiving Mass to Our Lady on 24 May 1946. So, this church is the souvenir of the Blessed Mother’s protection over the parishioners of Bang Nok Khuek ever since.”*³⁵³



“Wat Nai”, Mary Help of Christians Church

On 8 June 1945, the feast of the Sacred Heart, Bishop Pasotti wrote some guidelines for the priests who were working in Ratchaburi Diocese [probably in consequence to the meeting on 11 April as related above]. He requested the members that they should not seek donations from the houses without the permission of the parish priest, that their homilies should promote faith, that the diocesan office would prepare a formation course dealing with these issues, that they should be more delicate in understanding the language, tradition and way of life of the people, so that they could bring God to them.³⁵⁴ To promote interreligious dialogue, he requested that the derogatory term 'yintiu = gentile = pagan' should not be used and should be replaced by the word 'people of different faith' or 'people who adhere to Buddhism'. The pastoral work he asked the priests to pay a special attention was the care for the Sacraments, especially Confession and Holy Communion. Special pastoral care should be extended to the youth who were in need of a special attention, including the pastoral care for the soldiers. The interest on the above-mentioned issues might have come from his experience as an ex-soldier. He asked the priests and requested others to write to the soldiers, sending them news and asking for news in order to relate to their parents. Some material help should also be extended to them if required. They should go to visit them and give them encouragement. They should offer them Mass before they would go to the front line. After the Mass, they should be offered some biscuits and beverage. This idea came from the experiences at Bang Nok Khuek in 1943 and 1944, as earlier mentioned. He encouraged the parish priests to

visit the homes of the parishioners at least once a year, for the purpose of pastoral care. This should be done with a pastoral heart and a paternal gesture towards the children under their care. He should take interest in the spiritual well-being and their material needs as well.

Further more, Bishop Pasotti also asked the clergy to take special care of vocations for the diocesan priesthood, because the future of the Diocese would depend on their vocations. Preaching in the Church, animating the various catholic activities, or even at the confessional these were means to help the young find and follow their vocations. Aside from these, Bishop Pasotti also recommended that they provide material help for the seminarians whose parents were poor; he requested that the parish priest and the parents should cooperate with one another in assisting to the best of their abilities.³⁵⁵

The war had been lingering for several years up to 15 August 1945, feast of the Assumption, when the radio announced that the Japanese declared their defeat, thus ending World War II. Everybody was happy and gave thanks to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary.³⁵⁶

On the feast of the Epiphany, 6 January 1946, at Bang Nok Khuek Church, Bishop Pasotti gave a homily reminding the faithful to carry out their Christian duty as the light of the world, like the star leading the three Magi to Jesus.³⁵⁷

15.2 Condoling with the Thais for the Big Loss

The Catholic Church of Thailand joined in the sorrow of the Thai people for the death by assassination of King Rama VIII on 9 June 1946. On 25 June, all the three Bishops of Thailand, with a group of priests, went to pay homage to His Majesty's remains in Bangkok. From Ratchaburi Diocese, there were Bishop Pasotti, Fr. Bainotti, Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu and two major seminarians.

15.3 The After-Shocks of the War and the Persecutions in Thailand

Fr. Henri Danieli wrote that, between 1930-1935, the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith was considering to divide Bangkok Diocese into three dioceses, according to a letter written by the Rector Major to Bishop Pasotti. At first, the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith wanted to give Chiangmai to be under the care of the Salesians. However, after the war, the jurisdiction over Chiangmai was given to the Betharam priests who migrated from China due to the persecutions, of them had to go out of the country. Bishop Rene Perros sent a letter inviting the Salesians to go to help in the various places where there were persecutions. Bishop Pasotti's report to the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith indicated that when the Japanese army entered Thailand in 1941, there was a problem once again between the French and the Japanese. The Congregation for the Propagation of Faith asked Bishop Pasotti to find out the possibility of assigning the Bangkok Diocese under the care of the native priests. Bishop Pasotti

received this notice for Bishop Rene' Perros on this matter, But there was a request to the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith through the French Embassy. Finally, H.E. Drapier returned back to assume his position as the Apostolic Nuncio in Thailand once again. He stopped the idea of assigning the Bangkok Diocese to the care of the native clergy.

An incident occurred in 1945 when a Bishop and three other priests were assassinated in the Laos Diocese which included Ubonratchathani, Sakonnakorn, and Nakornphanom of Thailand. Again, through the guidance of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith that asked Bishop Pasotti to establish the Diocese of Tharae-Nong Saeng and put under the care of the native clergy. However, there was an objection from the French priests. As for the diocesan priests, they also refused to accept the offer because they felt that they were not ready yet for the responsibility.³⁵⁸

In 1946, when the political war was over, there began a dark shadow occurring among the Salesian confreres and the superiors in Thailand. There was resistance and non-acceptance of each other which needed the deliberation and solution from the major superiors from the mother house, among them Fr. Peter Ricaldone, the Rector Major, Fr. Berruti, the vicar and the one in-charge, the local ordinary, Bishop Pasotti and the Provincial, Fr. John Casetta; these last two could hardly be separated from each other. It seemed that the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith had received some information which caused uncomfortable feelings on the part of the Rector Major, and he was waiting for the real facts.

This was also the time when the Rector Major was contemplating to appoint a new provincial to replace Fr. John Casetta who had been in this position for almost a decade.



Darunanukul School , Mae Klong

In June 1946, when Fr. Ceccarelli went to Mae Klong, he remembered Bishop Pasotti's words which said: 'take good care of the youth and their education.' So, Fr. Ceccarelli began to secure a land, build a school and apply for a permit to open the 'Darunanukul School'. This was finally done on May 1948.³⁵⁹

Though Bishop Pasotti already left China for almost two decades, he still made a regular contact with Fr. Carlo Braga, the Provincial of China. In a letter dated 10 October 1946, the Bishop indicated the intimate friendship between the two of them. Bishop Pasotti recalled the fond memory with some confreres in China, like Fr. Ignatio Canasse, who later became Bishop and died in 1946. Bishop Pasotti never forgot that China had sent many missionaries to the Thai Mission.³⁶⁰

15.4 Don Bosco Takes Care of His Children in Thailand

In January 1947, St. John Bosco had performed a miracle for his children in the Thai Mission – Fr. Natale Mane was saved from the ‘Baan Ko Phai’ bandits of Wat Phleng area. He was kidnapped by the bandits on 28 January and on Don Bosco’s feast [the 31st of January], he was released without paying ransom of 8,000. Baht as demanded [a very large amount at the time – equivalent to about three million baht at present].

With prudence, Bishop Pasotti sent a telegram to the Salesian Provincial in Bangkok who consulted Bro. Hilare of St. Gabriel about the matter. The latter brought him to see the Director General of the Police Department to seek advice on what to do. He also consulted the Salesian confreres and some elders among the faithful. They finally decided not to pay the ransom in order not to start a detrimental precedent for the Mission and the Church. For the meantime, they looked for a way to contact the bandits. Aside from this, what was decided was to ask each parish to pray for the safe release of Fr. Mane. Many policemen came, but they could not do anything. Finally, at about 02.00 hrs. of 31 January, the bandits decided to release Fr. Mane. He arrived at Wat Phleng around 05.15 hrs. When the church bells were ringing to celebrate the feast of St. John Bosco, the parishioners of Wat Phleng cried with joy. The miracle which just happened was a token of love and devotion of Bishop Pasotti, the Salesian confreres and the faithful, especially the youth who took turns in perpetual prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. After that, Fr. Mane went to Bang

Nok Khuek and received a warm welcome from the confreres and the young. After that he went to Ratchaburi to meet Bishop Pasotti who was presiding the celebration of the feast of St. John Bosco at the chapel there. The local newspapers printed the news about this incident, including the release without any ransom. God turned this sad event into a chance to propagate the Salesian activities there. Thanks be to God! ³⁶¹ Bishop Pasotti made a brief report to the Rector Major before leaving the details for Fr. Mane to enumerate. The Rector Major joined with them in thanking God and St. John Bosco.

15.5 A Comprehensive View of The Mission in the South: 1929-1947

In February 1947, from Hatyai, Bishop Pasotti discussed with Fr. John Casetta, the Provincial, about opening a Salesian work there. Bishop Pasotti requested Fr. Casetta to think about sending at least two Salesian confreres who could also take care of the church there. Consideration should also be made to see if the location of the school and the church could be in the same place. On 17 May 1947, Bishop Pasotti went to visit the Catholics at Hatyai, Sadao and Betong. On that occasion, he saw the necessity of pastoral care for the faithful. So he sent Fr. Job Carnini and Fr. Natale Mane to provide earnest pastoral care to the south. The Bishop thought of making Hatyai the center of pastoral care for the south, and also the center for the activities of the Salesians and the Mission. ³⁶²

To summarize, since 1929, Bishop Pasotti visited the South ten times:

1. On 6-20 January 1929, Fr. Pasotti and Fr. Joseph Pinaffo went to survey the South, namely, Pattani and Phuket. He assigned the MEP priests from Malacca, with headquarters in Singapore, to take the temporary responsibility of the pastoral care of these two provinces because the Salesians did not have enough priests.³⁶³
2. On 9 October – 6 November 1935, Fr. Pasotti and Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu went to Chumphorn and down to Hatyai and Betong via Malaysia.
3. On 28 October – 10 November 1936, Fr. Pasotti went to visit Hatyai and Betong.
4. On 30 June – 10 July 1937, Fr. Pasotti went to Betong and consecrated a chapel there.
5. On 6 November 1937, Fr. Pasotti went to Singapore to meet Fr. Berruti and Fr. Candela, and brought a FMA Sister with him so that she could follow the two priests to study in Madras, India. On the way back, Fr. Pasotti also stopped over at Betong.
6. In May 1938, Fr. Pasotti and Fr. Job Carnini went to visit the South, but they made a separate trip.
7. On 28 October – 12 November 1938, Fr. Pasotti and Deacon Peter Carretto took a trip to the South starting from Huahin, Chumphorn, down to Betong via Malaysia, with the Salesian seminarians coming to the Huahin railway station to greet them on their way to and from there.

8. On 27 October – 10 November 1939, Fr. Pasotti and Deacon Peter Carretto went to Hatyai, Yala and Betong by car. There were so many obstacles and they could not go via Malaysia. On this occasion, businessman Loalib and his wife Sikimpheng of Betong offered to Fr. Pasotti a plot of rubber land and a shop house next to the church.

9. On 15 October 1941, Fr. Pasotti went to Hatyai and blessed a new house built by Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu and proceeded to Betong through Yala.

Between 1942-1946, there was no visit to the south due to war. Fr. Pasotti and the Salesians had to help in the Northeast.

10. On 17 May 1947, Bishop Pasotti went to Betong for the last time. ³⁶⁴



Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu and Fr. Job Carnini visited Ronpiboon in 1939

Chapter 16 : The New Salesian Provincial and the Changes in Ratchaburi Diocese

16.1 Fr. Peter Carretto – The New Provincial



In one of Bishop Pasotti's letters to the Rector Major, dated 5 September 1947, he announced that he had already received the telegram appointing Fr. Peter Carretto as the new Provincial. He also reported that the Mission had sent three seminarians to study theology in Madras, India. Being in the atmosphere of a Salesian house, Fr. Louis Jellici [probably a relative of Fr. Peter Jellici] wrote that they were cheerful, polite and docile. When Bishop Pasotti talked about the confreres in Thailand, he used to say that they possessed the spirit of self-dedication like a true Salesian, worthy to be Don Bosco's children.³⁶⁵

On 13 October 1947, there was a letter from the Rector Major to Bishop Pasotti informing him about the election of the new major superiors during the General Chapter. It seemed that the former set was re-elected. Along with that letter, the Rector Major also expressed his opinion about the problem that existed among the

members, and he believed that this must have come about from the lack of fatherhood on the part of the leader [the name was not mentioned]. The Rector Major gave a straight forward warning to Bishop Pasotti because he thought that the matter could be discussed like between a father and son. He gave advise about personal colloquy between the superior and the members, to appear being a father, welcoming every one, keeping secret of what was heard from the members, taking care of not talking about the faults of the members, being prudent and ready to listen to the opinions of every confrere in order to foster unity.³⁶⁶

In a letter on 29 December 1947, which was given to Fr. Peter Carretto to bring to Turin, Bishop Pasotti renewed his intention to work for the Kingdom of God in the Thai Mission in accordance with the Salesian spirit. He thanked the Rector Major for his admonitions in the letter of October which he received on the day of the Immaculate Conception, reminded him of the motherly concern of the Blessed Mother through the Rector Major. He asked the Blessed Mother to help him accept God's will requested from him. He also told the Rector Major of his annual retreat before Christmas which he did every year at the seminary where the atmosphere would be conducive for his spiritual renewal. There was also a good news that on 1 February [actually 31 January 1948], the feast of St. John Bosco, there was the sacerdotal ordination of three diocesan deacons, namely – Fr. Boniface Visit Sinsomrot, Fr. Paul Sumeth Vacharasakphaisan, and Fr. Peter Bunnak Thong-amphai; two others were ordained deacons the fruits of the Immaculate Conception Seminary. Finally, he asked the Rector

Major to continue to advise him in matters which would promote the good of all. ³⁶⁷

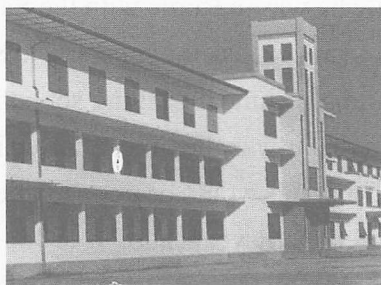


Ordination of diocesan deacons and priests

On 15 January 1948, Bishop Pasotti replied to the letter of the Rector Major dated 6 December 1947 which referred to another letter dated 13 October 1947, as mentioned above. He took the opportunity to once more assure the Rector Major that he had been trying to do everything with supernatural reason. He repeated that he prayed that the Rector Major would tell him everything which he believed would be for the good of the Mission. Though by nature he was suffering because of various reasons, yet he believed that everything would pass by with God's providence, and the objective attained at the appropriate time. He asked the Blessed Mother to let him do things which would bring happiness to the superiors and all the confreres, without exception. He expressed his anxiety for the bitterness which occasionally came upon him quite severely, but he offered them all willingly as sacrifices to God, hoping that all those things would bring good. At that time, he felt weak and needed God. He asked for prayers and blessings

from the Rector Major so that God would put His hands over him and help him carry out his duty well, till the end.³⁶⁸ Fr. Peter Berruti responded to the letter, in the name of the Rector Major, informing him that the Rector Major was relieved because of the good will and the gesture that the Bishop has toward him. He gave the hope that the new provincial, Fr. Peter Carretto would help the confreres to have a good, mutual understanding, aware that each one had human limitations.³⁶⁹

As head of a poor diocese, he saw the necessity to invest in the formation of personnel for the Mission. Hence, from the letter of the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith sent to Bishop Pasotti through the Rector Major in Turin, we learned that the Bishop who must have received the approval of his council got the permission from the Congregation to sell 200 rai of Mission land in order to build the diocesan seminary in Ratchaburi, according to a document dated 20 October 1947. The diocese bought a large piece of land at the Amphoe Mueang of Ratchaburi to construct the seminary for the diocesan seminarians, and to build a large school, the present Daruna Ratchaburi School.³⁷⁰



Daruna Ratchaburi School

16.2 The Last Visit to Italy

On 22 October 1948, Bishop Pasotti wrote a letter from Bang Nok Khuek to the Rector Major that the Bishop of Pavia, his birth place, sent him a telegram, inviting him to come for the celebration of Mission Sunday there. So, he started his trip from Bang Nok Khuek on the following day, with a schedule to spend a few days with his relatives, to visit Turin Youth Center on 27 October, and to go to Rome on the 28th – 29th because he had some business with the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith. He would return to Bangkok on 5 November. In that letter, he expressed his feeling as if that might be the last time he would visit his birth place and his relatives.



Though he was no longer the superior of the Salesian Province of Thailand, yet while he was in Rome with the Salesian Superiors. Bishop Pasotti could not but ask the superiors to help the Salesians in Thailand to build a technical training school in Bangkok. He was of the opinion that it was the time, after waiting for so many years. He believed that this would be a consolation for everybody, since this idea started many years ago. In 1930, when H.E. Krom Phya Damrong Rachanuparp came to visit the Salesian technical school in Turin, upon the invitation of the Salesians, He expressed

his desire to have such a school in Thailand as well. ³⁷¹

From the letter of Bishop Pasotti on 30 October 1948 to Fr. Peter Carretto, the Salesian Provincial, we learned that instead of returning to Thailand on 5 November as scheduled, he had to postpone it so that he could attend the funeral of Cardinal Hloud, as advised by the Rector Major. He took the occasion to talk with the superiors about the technical school project in Bangkok. The Rector Major agreed; he believed that some help might come from the Holy Father. He asked Fr. Carlo [probably, Fr. Carlo Braga of China] about personnel who could come to work at this school. They should be prepared beforehand. At that time, the students of theology would either go to China or India. ³⁷² In a letter to the Rector Major on 14 December, Bishop Pasotti informed him that he arrived in Bangkok on 30 November. During the trip, he and Fr. Carretto stopped over in Shillong, Krisnagar and Madras India, for a period of two weeks. ³⁷³ It was on that occasion that Bishop Pasotti met his old friend, Bishop Louis Morrow of Krisnagar. This meeting was recorded in the guest book of the funeral wake of the late Bishop. ³⁷⁴

From Fr. Peter Carretto, Bishop Pasotti learned that the general situation in Thailand was getting better, and he thanked the Lord. The Bishop himself intended to visit all the parishes, and, through the intercession of the Blessed Mother, he hoped to be able to help the missionaries in the various evangelical activities, which was the highest goal of everyone. He admitted that his heart was still attached to Turin. He was deeply moved when he had to say

goodbye to the superiors whom he loved, and he expected that there would be some superiors who would come to bring news and blessings to the missionaries in the Thai Mission.³⁷⁵

16.3 Always with a New Hope

In March 1949, Bishop Pasotti sent good news to the Rector Major about the opening and blessing of Darunanukhro school building at Bang Nok Khuek, the center of the Ratchaburi Mission. The celebration took three days – from the 5th-7th February. The first day was to welcome important guests, three bishops, namely: Bishop Louis Chorin of Bangkok, Bishop Jacobe Jaeng Kerdawang of Chantaburi, and Bishop Pasotti himself.



He recalled that Bang Nok Khuek had the honor of welcoming three bishops way back in 1910 [when Bishop Pasotti was not yet in Thailand] on the occasion of the Episcopal consecration of Bishop Rene Perros, who later welcomed the salvians in 1927 with a warm heart.

In 1949, the Salesians began to build Don Bosco Technical School, Bangkok. So, there were new Salesians who were working in that school and who also came to participate in the celebration at Bang Nok Khuek.

On Sunday, 6 February, the feast of St. John Bosco, which was postponed from 31 January, the cathedral was filled with faithful and members of the various catholic action groups. Bishop Louis Chorin presided over the ceremony assisted by Fr. Rat Bamrungtrakul,



a newly ordained priest [he was ordained at the seminary on 31 January]. Fr. John Casetta preached about St. John Bosco, stressing on his love for the Holy Father. This impressed everyone, because the people loved the Holy Father and was ready to listen to him.

After the liturgy in the cathedral, there was the blessing of the school presided over by Bishop Jacobe Kerdsawang, the first Thai Bishop. This school was built by the sweat of the Salesian missionaries, and it would later be given to the diocesan priests, with no other intention than for the love of the new Diocese. Bishop Pasotti mentioned about Sarasit Phitayalai, Banpong, of which many students came to participate in the celebration, that in that year the first group of students would finish their second

year high school. The school was well appreciated by the local community including the nearby provinces, because the students themselves were the advertisers of the excellence of the school. Hence, there was a need to expand the buildings to accommodate more students.

On Monday, 7 February, there was an official inauguration ceremony of the school building with the presence of the provincial governor, the police and several government officials. The governor thanked the missionaries for what they had done and would be doing for the good of the country, especially in the field of education for the children and the young. The guests joined for lunch and stayed on till evening to watch the stage performances. Many people came to join on this auspicious occasion. The celebration ended at around midnight with splendid fireworks prepared by Fr. Andre Vitrano.

Bishop Pasotti also expressed his idea in a letter that religion was necessary in preparing teachers and catechists, in caring for the orphans and youth, it was necessary to rely on religion. He wished to help good but poor children to have the opportunity for high education so that they could help in of evangelization ministries.³⁷⁶

Bishop Pasotti was rather detailed on several issues. In the letter to the Rector Major, dated 24 April 1949, he mentioned about Fr. Bunnak Thong-amphai, who was studying in Rome at that time and was lodging at Saint Petern Institute. The latter wrote to

the Bishop: "I do not take siesta after lunch, I do not smoke and will never smoke, even though other people are doing it every day and, at times, they invite me to do the same." This indicated how Bishop Pasotti wanted his diocesan priests to be, and he was proud that Fr. Bunnak was interested in his advice.³⁷⁷ At that time, together with the letter hand-carried by Fr. Silvio Provera, he also gave some mangoes from Bang Nok Khuek to the Rector Major with instructions on how to keep and make them ripe.³⁷⁸

In August, Bishop Pasotti wrote a report to the Rector Major about the Golden Jubilee of the sacerdotal ordination of the Holy Father on 2 April 1949. Ratchaburi Diocese postponed this to 3 June because April was the time of summer vacation for the schools. He enclosed letters from the faithful of Bang Nok Khuek which expressed their loyalty. They offered prayers and donations for the Holy Father gathered from their mortifications during the month.³⁷⁹ This event indicated the spirit of Don Bosco which was deeply rooted in the hearts of Bishop Pasotti and the Salesian confreres in Thailand concerning their loyalty to the Holy Father. They were earnestly interested in relaying this to the young and the faithful of various parishes.

Bishop Pasotti's letters on 21 July and 20 August 1949 demonstrated that he was concerned with the personnel who were few and exhausted because of heavy work load. So, he was worried about letting the members return to visit their families. However, he hoped in the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the same time, the Rector Major must have advised him about promoting the

devotion to Mary Help of Christians which was a decision of the last general chapter. This document, however, did not arrive at Bang Nok Khuek. Bishop Pasotti gave the assurance to the Rector Major that he would do everything possible to let the devotion to Mary Help of Christians take deep roots in the hearts of the Thai people.³⁸⁰ After that, on 23 September 1949, having read the documents of the General Chapter, Bishop Pasotti thanked the Rector Major about this issue because the documents increased the motivation, the consolation and hope in Our Lady. He informed the Rector Major that he was determined to spread the devotion to Mary Help of Christians in Thailand through the Bishops of other dioceses. As for Bang Nok Khuek, on the 24th of every month, there was a special commemoration at the chapel of Mary Help of Christians 'wat nai'.³⁸¹

16.4 Seeking the Will of God in Difficult Matters



While Bishop Pasotti was still in Italy in 1948, the superiors of the Thai Province were trying to find a way out for Fr. Carlo della Torre about establishing a new religious order. Bishop Pasotti had given permission for this ‘ad experimentum’ in Bang Nok Khuek, while Fr. Carlo was still a seminarian. Later, however, the Bishop told della Torre to put it on hold. Several years after being ordained a priest, Fr. Della Torre was still confident to push through with this matter, but the superiors could not make a decision yet, and were waiting for a clearer sign until after the war and persecution.

In Bishop Pasotti’s letter to the Rector Major on 1 December 1949, he expressed his opinion about establishing a secular institute that since Christianity in Thailand was still in its childhood stage, it would be difficult to find quality vocations to announce the Good News in the world and in the environment where even the

missionaries and diocesan priests had to consider many aspects and must have a strong faith.

The origin of that letter must have come from the long-standing intention of Fr. Carlo della Torre to establish a religious order. He was convinced that it was God's plan which was relayed to him through a vision. After the disapproval of Bishop Pasotti and his council, while della Torre was still a seminarian, and even after his priestly ordination, In 1937, the Bishop began, found the 'Xi Song Khro' (Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary), with the cooperation of the Sisters Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Yet, the idea of establishing a religious order was still in the mind of Fr. Carlo della Torre. In 1945, after the war and the persecution in Thailand, he and Fr. Carlo Casetta proposed a project along this line, with details that showed initiatives beyond the scope of simply establishing a female religious order. He also thought of having male religious, or consecrated laity, both male and female, like religious belonging to the parish priest or the church, with the male in one church and the female in another church. They would dedicate themselves to serve the sick and the poor after the model of Cottolengo Turin, Italy. He encouraged also 'temporary consecration like that of the Buddhist'.³⁸² So, this was rather a complicated project, and although the initiative was good, yet for some people this was still so new and too challenging for the time. Bishop Pasotti, therefore, expressed his disapproval as mentioned above.³⁸³

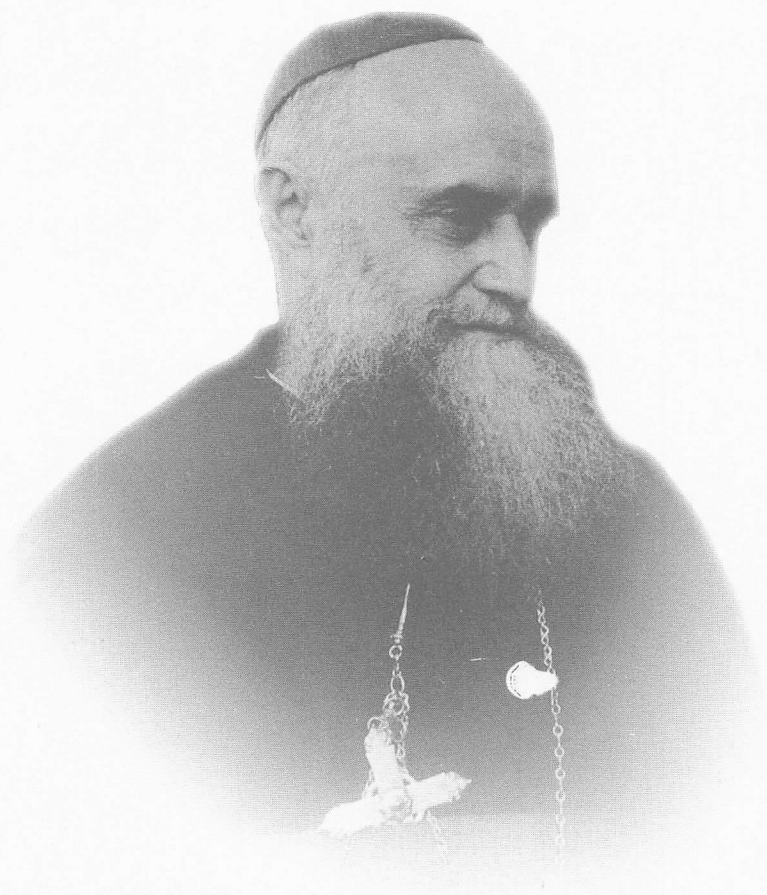
Though the Salesian Province in Thailand had been established since 1938, the Salesian confreres would depend on the Provincial in various matters, except for the Mission activities assigned to them. Nonetheless, there was no distinctive division of responsibility as to what belonged to the Mission and the Salesian Province. In the case of Fr. Carlo della Torre, it seemed that Bishop Pasotti had a high influence due to several reasons:

1. Bishop Pasotti was the superior of the pioneering groups of missionaries. In the case of Fr. Carlo della Torre, it began with the first approval to let him make an attempt to establish a religious order, but when Bishop Pasotti began to have a different opinion, he stood on his conviction with a firm mind.
2. When Fr. Della Torre's project got more and more complicated, the Bishop became less and less convinced of this.
3. Bishop Pasotti was a man who likes clarity. He would make the report and gave his reasons on every matter especially with the superiors, in order to receive their advice, as he used to do right from the very beginning when he was assigned to lead the missionary work in Thailand.

It was probable that the superiors at the Congregation level would trust and believe in Bishop Pasotti more than the others. There was not much opportunity for the superiors to listen to other different opinions. This was a weak point which usually would happen, with subsequent unfavorable results.

In the case of Fr. Carlo della Torre, this was the issue which the Provincial, starting from Fr. John Casetta and, later, Fr. Peter Carretto, should take action to find out the will of God. Both the Salesian superiors and Bishop Pasotti were involved in this matter. Finally, in early 1950, with the assistance of Bishop Chorin of Bangkok Diocese, and Fr. Peter Carretto, the Provincial, Fr. Carlo della Torre's dream began to be realized with stipulations from Bishop Chorin that the new order must be a 'secular institute' since Bangkok had already many religious orders. The 'institute' was officially recognized by Bangkok Diocese on 3 December 1954.³⁸⁴

It can be said that God's plan is unfathomable. It can do every thing, including human mistakes and limitations can become God's instruments to do good. If Fr. Carlo della Torre succeeded in the beginning, there might be only one order, but now we have two.



PART V
THE PEACEFUL, FINAL STAGE

PART V

THE PEACEFUL, FINAL STAGE



Chapter 17 : Now...if this your will

17.1 The Final Step

During Bishop Pasotti's last year of life, if we were to consider the many letters he wrote to contact the Salesian confreres in China, we could see that he had a very good memory of them and his nine years of mission life there. He reviewed, from time to time, his experiences and closeness with his friends. From the letter on 26 October 1949, which should be one of the last few letters that he wrote to China, he thanked the Rector and all the beloved confreres in Hongkong, whom we even have not heard of. He gave thanks for the newsletter 'Inter Nos', which gave news of the Salesian Family at the world level, sent to him from Hongkong for the second time. He was grateful for the generosity and concern even in small matters. He was missing them and did not forget them in his prayers. He was proud of them for having done so many good and marvelous things in China; in Thailand, though, the Salesians must be contented with what they were able to do. At the end of the letter, he signed his name in Chinese [Olim]... and +Gaetano Pasotti. At the P.S. he added: 'this is a good name.'³⁸⁵

in his letter to the Rector Major on 1 December 1949, Bishop Pasotti expressed his concern over his confreres in China where Communism was expanding its influence. The Rector Major replied with a short letter on 14 January 1950, giving him encouragement and said that he wrote a short letter because Fr. Bellido was coming to Thailand. The Rector Major asked Bishop Pasotti to be strong and united in loving mercy. He informed him that Fr. Berruti was seriously sick; he asked for prayers and entrusted him to the care of Fr. Philip Rinaldi.³⁸⁶ On 8 January 1950, after the visit of the representative of the Rector Major, Bishop Pasotti wrote to him that the visitor had given things to be remembered by all the members, and that it was a visit that gave encouragement to all the members to step forward to announce the Kingdom of God in Thai soil. With the thought and heart of Don Bosco, Bishop Pasotti spoke of the Rector Major with filial love, because he himself had accompanied the first group of Salesian missionaries to Thailand in 1927.³⁸⁷

On 26 April 1950, Bishop Pasotti wrote a letter to the Provincial in China Fr. Carlo Braga which must have been the last one he sent to China. He thanked Fr. Braga for his letters of December 1949 and April 1950 in which Fr. Braga mentioned about the difficulties in doing his duty. Bishop Pasotti gave him encouragement and told him that he had kept him in his prayers, especially said for those who were in the most difficult situations, because they deserved to receive our prayers. He also said further that some members in China who were in practical training may come to Thailand.

He also assured Fr. Braga that the storm would pass away and we could move forward, continue to do the good things which Don Bosco said. At the end of the letter, Bishop Pasotti teased him amicably and asked if he was about to cut the friendship with him? And, again, he signed his name in Chinese. ³⁸⁸

One of the last activities of Bishop Pasotti was the blessing of the new Damnoen Vithaya School at Khok Mot Tanoi on the annual feast of St. Anthony 13 June 1950. The new school was built by Fr. George Bainotti to replace the former small building built since 1925, and to which Fr. Raphael Curti had added some classrooms. ³⁸⁹



Damnoen Vithaya School at Khok Mot Tanoi

The letter on 15 June 1950 was probably the last one of Bishop Pasotti to the Rector Major, Fr. Peter Ricaldone. He sent his best wishes to the Rector Major on his feast day in the name of the Salesian missionaries of Ratchaburi Diocese. He also recalled fond memories of Fr. Berruti, who had died, but who the missionaries

dearly respect as an example, and now also as intercessor. In that letter, Bishop Pasotti reported also that Hatyai began to have a school which would be a memorial of the Rector Major, on the occasion of his feast day.³⁹⁰

The very last letter of Bishop Pasotti would probably be the one on 30 June 1950 to Fr. Modesto Bellido [who has just visited the Thai Province]. Bishop Pasotti sent good news that the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith donated \$2,500.—for the construction of the school at Hatyai. He thanked the Blessed Mother, Help of Christians for this assistance. Besides, there was news about the results of the provincial examinations of the students of Darunanukhro who got top ranks in the various levels. At that time, there were 400 students at Darunanukhro, with a group of boarders. Bishop Pasotti entrusted all these under the protection of St. John Bosco. Another joyful news to Bishop Pasotti was that together with Fr. Peter Jellici, who just returned from his home visit, was Fr. Bunnak Thong-amphai [a diocesan priest of Ratchaburi] who returned back from Italy after his studies there. For the Bishop, Fr. Bunnak was one of his beloved sons. Further more, God also sent some consolation to Bishop Pasotti. Fr. Ceccarelli who went to Italy for his home visit... wrote to ask him to rapidly arrange for his return to Thailand. This showed that he had a true missionary spirit. In the same letter, Bishop Pasotti asked the superiors to make a follow-up of the confreres who were missionaries in Thailand, believing that their words would always be effective.³⁹¹

17.2 The Peaceful Final Stage

By the end of August 1948, Bishop Pasotti visited his family in Italy during a period of three months. At that time, he had the occasion to perform several important functions, including one at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. He returned to Thailand in good health. On 5 December 1948, he told the Sisters: "When I was at home, my relatives did not want me to come back. But I told them that my life belonged to all, and not only to myself."³⁹² One reason his relatives wanted to hold him back must have been his poor health. He had to go to the hospital several times. However, at that time, there were no indications yet that he would not live long.

In June 1950, he began to feel something unusual at his throat and often feverish. Until on 14 July, he went to St. Louis Hospital in Bangkok for necessary treatment. At first, everybody thought that it was his personal chronic sickness. That was why, in the beginning, there was no record of his sickness. In mid-August, his condition improved slightly, hoping that he would soon return to Bang Nok Khuek. However, on 27 August, his condition deteriorated. Fr. Peter Jellici, who just arrived back from Italy, wrote a letter on 27 September (after the Bishop's death) to inform the Rector Major:

"When I arrived in Bangkok on 27 July, I met my beloved Bishop in the hospital. It did not seem to be a serious case, but I did not feel comfortable. After that, the symptom was getting from bad

to worse by the day. The Bishop entrusted all things, one by one, to me. Then, he left me on my own..."

*"On 29 August, he called me to come closer and told me several things. He asked me to do well to every one, to love the Congregation, to love the superiors and the confreres, and to love the Provincial. He added: 'whatever you do, you must do it with the approval of the Provincial, and you must be united together in one heart. If you can do this, I can assure you that everything will go well. I speak from my experience. You must tell all the confreres to always help one another.' He spoke with the heart of a father, a pastor and a missionary."*³⁹³

*On 28 August 1950, the Sisters at Bang Nok Khuek received news from Bangkok that the condition of the Bishop was becoming very serious. At that time, Sr. Maria Yisoon Lona was also very ill and stayed in the same hospital. Other than that, Sr. Agatha Praphai Thossaphaisonthi also had an intestinal operation at the same hospital, with Sr. Urai Thapsart accompanied them. On the following day, the 29th, the Sisters and aspirants took turns for the whole day to pray before the Blessed Sacrament for the intention of the Bishop.*³⁹⁴

The Bishop remained serene and said to the confreres around: *"I am ready."* When he was asked to pray for his recovery, he answered: *"I ask only for one thing...to do the will of God."* He repeated several times to Fr. Carretto: *"Now I feel that I am ready... why should we wait any longer? For how many more years? This time is better..Please, come Lord, Jesus Christ..."*

On 30 August, Sr. Luigina di Giorgio, who finished her retreat at Banpong, came to visit the Bishop and the Sisters Servants at the hospital.

We have a letter written by Fr. Peter Carretto, who was the Provincial at that time, to Fr. Ziggiotti with the following text:

"I intended since long ago to write a letter to you. I never thought nor desired to inform you of this sad news. You may already know that Bishop Pasotti has gone for treatment in a hospital for fifty days already. It seemed as if he was getting better, but then it was the contrary. He was getting worse and worse. After several check-ups, it did not appear for sure what was happening. At first, we thought that his previous bout of malaria has come back, causing his throat glands to swell. The malaria symptom has disappeared, but the swelling still remained. The medical check did not find any noxious lump, but the fever and the swelling were still there. He was getting weak, and the doctor was suspicious that he might have cancer, but could not determine exactly where and in what condition. Last week, we were discussing whether to bring him back to Bang Nok Khuek or Huahin for climate change, but last Sunday, his heart was beating irregularly, and he could not be moved. He asked again and again for the sacrament of the sick, which I thought was not yet necessary, although his condition was getting serious. He had several bouts of malaria and dysentery which weakened him physically and causing the medication to be ineffective. What he wanted me to write to you was: "I am not worried about anything. I am at peace. I send my filial respect

to Fr. Ricaldone and all the councilors. I also ask for blessings from Fr. Ricaldone."

"We try to do everything we can, especially with our prayers. If it is possible to let him go back to Italy, we will try. But at this moment, the hope of doing so is very distant."

"I am informing you of the present situation and of our suffering, but God will look after him and will arrange things for the better."

"I will write you again if there is something new comes up, and I hope that things will become better. If there is anything worse than this, then it is something we cannot predict. That time will come...but I feel that at present, we are looking at a lamp which is slowly extinguishing. Now, the hope for medical treatment is very slim. We only trust and look to God above."

"...We entrust our beloved Bishop to the intercession of Our Blessed Mother." ³⁹⁵

On the following day, 31 August 1950, Fr. John Casetta sent a telegram to Turin informing that Bishop Pasotti was seriously ill, ³⁹⁶ and in the afternoon, Bishop Pasotti, with a lucid mind, asked for the sacrament of the sick. He welcomed everyone who came to visit him.

On 1 September, Fr. Peter Carretto wrote a letter to the Rector Major, hand carried by a person who was leaving for Italy: *"Bishop Pasotti's condition is getting worse and worse, and we are losing all hope for his recovery, unless there is a miracle."*

In that letter, Fr. Carretto enumerated in detail the medical treatment given:

"Initially, there seemed to be nothing serious. There were two doctors who took care of him. One was French and the other was German. The results of the blood and gland tests did not find anything serious. In July, he caught malaria, but it has been cured in a very short time, which gave us hope that every thing would be better. Instead, the symptom got worse. On the feast of the Assumption, the doctor announced that he was recovering and they permitted him to go back to Bang Nok Khuek first. Later he could be taken to Huahin to recuperate. The Bishop himself hoped that in the spring of 1951, he would be able to take a rest in Italy. However, on Sunday, 27 August, he became suddenly weak, his feet were swollen, his heart was pumping slower...the medicine for the heart helped only a bit, but the other parts of the body was not responding anymore. The general symptom indicated that he had leukemia, but there were no clear details.

The Bishop received the Sacrament of the sick on 31 August, though I thought that It was not yet the time. But since he asked for it, we simply granted his request. He was very serene and repeated always that we should not worry. We did not know how much his heart really suffered. It seemed that he surrender in the hands of God.

He had already arranged everything. He requested me to convey his love to you, as that of a son to his father; he also asked for

your blessings. Yesterday [31 August], he said to me, 'I have done everything I could. I always loved every one including those who have hurt me. I am peaceful.'

A few days ago, we still hoped that we could send him to Italy by plane, but now, this was no more possible.

You can imagine how much our hearts were suffering. We prayed and accepted the will of God..." ³⁹⁷

On 1 September, at the convent of the Sisters Servants at Bang Nok Khuek, there was a monthly retreat with no available priest to preach, because Fr. Silvio Demunari, the preacher, went to stay with Bishop Pasotti at the hospital, in authority as the Bishop's confessor. That morning, Mother Luigina returned back from Bangkok. She spent the night in Ratchaburi before proceeding on to Bang Nok Khuek on the following morning. She informed all the Sisters about Bishop Pasotti's sickness. She had visited and talked with him; that he was ready to go to heaven; that he received the sacrament of the sick from Fr. Demunari in the presence of Sr. Maria Yisoon and Sr. Theresa Urai [both stayed in another building, but the Sister Directress of the hospital often took them to visit the Bishop]. She said that the Bishop was serene, as if there was nothing to worry, and that he desired to come back to Bang Nok Khuek to die among his children, but could not do so. Nonetheless, the Bishop told the Reverend Mother: "*Do not cry... our lives are like movie filmstrips, and when the time comes, we have to go. God has already defined my destiny, and even if I am*

cured, I may live not many years longer before I will be gone, because I am already old. Do not be afraid. I will certainly go to Bang Nok Khuek. Please put my body under the main cross in the cemetery of Bang Nok Khuek reserved for priests. I have to come to stay with my children. Look, the Bishop of Bangkok Diocese went to Rome, but I could not. I will go to heaven."

Bishop Pasotti further consoled the Reverend Mother:

"Do not be afraid and do not be frightened...I have already confided the SIHM congregation to Fr. Jellici [the parish priest of Bang Nok Khuek Church at that time]. He will help you in everything like I used to do, and in the future, when there will be a new Bishop, he would love and take good care of you as much as I have done."

He gave a strenna to his SIHM children after lifting up his weak hand to bless Mother Luigina and all the SIHM Sisters with a few final words:

"All of you have a good will...continue to have this good will."

Finally, he said with a real paternal heart to Mother Luigina:

"Let the members have fairly food...let them work a little less, and let them take fairly rest, because many members have so low strength."

When Mother Luigina said goodbye to him, the Bishop said:
"This is the last farewell...we will not meet in this world again!"

On that very same day, Mother Luigina let some Sisters pack the Bishop's clothes to be sent to Bangkok. On the following day, she gave it to Fr. Kim Hieng [Somkhit] Nanthavisut who went to visit the Bishop with some of the teachers of Darunanokhro School.³⁹⁸

On the night of 2 September, Bishop Pasotti was breathless. In the afternoon of 3 September, his condition deteriorated. The Bishop followed the prayers up to his last breath.

Fr. John Ulliana, who was a witness at the bedside of the last moment of Bishop Pasotti, wrote:

"...two weeks before passing away, Bishop Pasotti was aware that he was seriously ill, but he was not afraid to die. He accepted the will of God with the self-dedication of a hero.

He asked the Episcopal vicar Fr. Jellici to come to his bedside and gave him his testament, telling him about the administrative situation of his beloved Mission. At that time, he still had a sound mind. He did not forget to give his spiritual will which he desired to give to all of his children in the Diocese...[please read the last Chapter].

I think that it is not necessary to explain this will because by itself it shows the great spirituality of the giver while his eyes are fixed at the approaching eternal life. He wants to receive the sacrament, anointing of the sick, though everybody thinks that he is not yet in that critical condition. He wants to be administered from Fr. Silvio Demunari, his personal confessor.

...After learning that Bishop Pasotti wants to see me for the last time before his last breath, I hurried to be at his bedside. It was on the afternoon of Sunday, 3 September.

After entering the room, he stared at me for a while. I felt that he was suffering at that moment. After that, he signaled me to come closer saying: 'Please come...' and I added 'Jesus Christ'. The sentence, 'Please come, Jesus Christ', was my slogan on my first Mass which the Bishop also liked.

'I still have a sound mind, but my body...' he said, 'I feel strange, I need air...still several more days...what I have been suffering is minor in comparison with what I will have.'

'Your excellency,' I told him, 'we are trying to suffer everything for God. Now is the time of our crucifixion. Please remember the great merits which will come from our acceptance of the cross like Jesus.'

'No, no...it is not like that of Jesus...it is only a little bit the same...'

'Your excellency, please think of the faithful, the children and us, who are your confreres. All your priests are praying for you with faith, asking for a miracle. You might know how much we are praying for you. Please join with us in the prayers for this miracle.'

'No!' he responded with the highest pitch he could. 'I do not ask for this, and I do not join you, but I ask that it be the will of God and not my will, but God's will!'

'What a great value of this sentence when it came out from the mouth of one who was approaching death and while his body was suffering the pain. It made me dumb while my tears oozed from my eyes in front of his heroic act like that of martyrs. He possessed a very high degree of spirituality. How many times that he repeated to me with confidence: 'my dear, Fr. Ulliana, if our lives are not in Jesus, our lives would be meaningless. It is He and He only whom we must seek in everything we do, and He must be our motivation in everything.'

He then fixed his eyes on me a little while. He called me to come closer and said: 'you should not do any more else for me; you cannot help me any more...with the exception of your prayers... please pray much for me.'

'Your excellency, you can be assured that we are wholeheartedly helping you.'

'Good, good!' Then he smiled like an angel.

When he was in coma and could not speak anymore, he fixed his eyes often at the statue of Mary Help of Christians which was at the opposite end of the bed. He smiled, which indicated the peace of his spirit facing death that would soon come his way.

The morning of 3 September was his last day on earth. He wanted to receive the viaticum and plenary indulgences. When evening came, he waited for the time to be united in communion with Jesus, to whom he dedicated his whole life. After his

confession with Fr. Demunari, he called me to come close to lead the prayers of Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be...in a slow and loud voice, for the intentions of the Holy Father, in order to receive the plenary indulgence, and also in thanksgiving to the representative of Jesus Christ on earth, for the last time.

A brief description of his spiritual life would make us understand that Bishop Pasotti has prepared himself very well to meet his death. What a joyful event it was! It invited us to imitate his soul's great virtues in a spirit of faith and affinity to Jesus who was the font of all good which he carried out through a long period of his missionary life..." ³⁹⁹

The Udomphan magazine , Issue No. 38 of 1950, printed the following news:

"In the afternoon of 31 August, Bishop Pasotti received the sacraments of reconciliation and anointing of the sick. It seemed that his strength began to go down especially in the evening of 2 September. Fr. Peter Carretto, the Provincial, with Bro. Benotto, went to visit him at 10.30 a.m. of 3 September. At that time, he was trying to speak to the two visitors with much difficulty, and he also allowed a parishioner from Bang Nok Khuek to visit and receive his blessings.

In the same afternoon, his condition became so serious that it was doubtful if he could live through that night. A Sister-nurse was of the opinion that he would die within that night. At 20.00 hrs.,

he went into agony. Around his bed were the Salesian Provincial, several priests and sisters praying together.

At 20.15 hrs., Fr. Casetta, Fr. Ponchione, Fr. Demunari and Fr. Raphael Curti, joined in. Later the Sister Directress of the hospital, with two other sisters, also came in to see the Bishop. There were 4-5 times when his pale face became bright with a sweet smile, as if he saw something he loved, while his eyes were staring at the statue of Mary Help of Christians. Several times, his eyes became bright as if he had a heavenly vision.

At 20.30 hrs., his body shook twice after which his breathing and pulse began to weaken...and one minute later, his lovely soul went to heaven, while outside it was raining.”⁴⁰⁰

Fr. Cesare Castellino recalled history for our knowledge that when the first group of Salesian missionaries came to Thailand on 25 October 1927, Bishop Rene' Perros let them reside at St. Louis Hospital, Bangkok before proceeding to Bang Nok Khuek on the following day. And this time, on 3 September 1950, St. Louis Hospital again became the last residence of Bishop Gaetano Pasotti, the leader of the first group of missionaries before going to meet God in eternity.⁴⁰¹

Chapter 18 : Like a Father among His Children

18.1 The Funeral Procession from Bangkok to Bang Nok Khuek and the Solemn Funeral



The same issue of Udomphan magazine noted further:

“The dead body of Bishop Pasotti was dressed with the full vestment of a Bishop, and his coffin was put up at the reception room of the Sisters working at St. Louis Hospital on the night of 3 September and on the following day. [Sr. Theresa, the hospital directress, took good care of everything.]

With the announcements through radio and newspapers, many honorable guests, both Thai and foreign, came to pay homage to

the departed Bishop during the whole day of Monday, 4 September. Students from Don Bosco, Soi Ruam Jai, came in groups to pray and bid good bye to their beloved Bishop for the last time." ⁴⁰²

On 4 September, Fr. Peter Carretto and Fr. Jellici sent a telegram to the Rector Major in Turin asking him to send news to Bishop Pasotti's relatives. Fr. Ricaldone, the Rector Major, then had a telegram sent to Fr. Ernesto Pasotti who was the Bishop's cousin and Rector of the Reginaldo Giuliani College, Stradella, Pavia, to inform the other relatives as well. On the same day, Fr. Ricaldone received an immediate answer that the relatives would join in the mourning. ⁴⁰³



Among the visitors, there were Mr. G. Vovo, the Italian Consul, who came on 4 September. In the evening, the French Ambassador came with his wife, together with Phra Riam Viratchaphak,

to pay homage to the deceased. Mr. Mongkol Wangtan and Mr. Yong Huat undertook with great generosity to arrange a truck to take the coffin to Bang Nok Khuek, including the arrangement of necessary matters related to this.

Aside from this, on 5 September, there was a telegram sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome, with information of Bishop Pasotti's death and funeral, with a brief biography of his life.

On 8 September, the Holy See, through Cardinal Montini, the representative of the Holy Father, sent a telegram to the Rector Major, through Fr. Tomasetti in Rome, expressing their condolence with the Salesian family for the death of Bishop Pasotti, and sending the blessings of the Holy Father.⁴⁰⁴

The same issue of Udomphan further said:



“On Tuesday of 5 September, the funeral procession started from St. Louis Hospital at 08.00 hrs., with Fr. Perudon, the representative of the Bishop of Bangkok, and Fr. Franchineau, of the Northeast Mission, as the celebrants of the ceremony. The Salesian Provincial

led the coffin to Banpong [using Mr. Yong Huat's truck]. One of his sons sat in the first car with Fr. Perudon, Fr. Andre Franchineau, Fr. Demunari and Fr. Egidio Bottain. The coffin was put on the second truck, with the wreaths and the six youth from Ratchaburi. After that, there was a private car belonging to Mr. Vincent with Fr. Cesare Castellino, followed by a 'Srinakhon bus' and another one belonging to Mr. Yongyuth Wangtan. In the bus, there were catholics from Bangkok, Bang Nok Khuek, the FMA Sisters, and youth from Soi Ruam Jai. The procession arrived at Banpong at 11.00 hrs."

"At Banpong, there were cars of the faithful and the parishioners of the vicinity, with Fr. Frigerio and Fr. Provera as leaders, to meet the funeral procession from Bangkok at the intersection, and proceeded on to the town of Banpong."

"The church of Banpong was filled with the faithful from the nearby parishes, the district officials, the municipality officials, the police force, superiors of the churches and schools. They all lined up to welcome the funeral procession led by Luang Sith Thephakarn and other officials."

"The procession stopped in front of the church, and the coffin was opened for the people to view Bishop Pasotti's face for the last time. The mourning speech was delivered by the district officer who represented the provincial governor and the police chief."

"At 11.30 hrs., the parish priest officiated the solemn requiem mass in the church. Fr. Silvio Provera and Fr. Frigerio, the rector

of the salesian community, were the celebrants as appeared in the invitation cards. They were assisted by Fr. Louis Fogliatti and Fr. Domenico Della Ferrera.” [The ceremony was originally scheduled at 09.00 hrs., but the funeral procession arrived two hours late.]

“After the mass, the funeral procession left Banpong at 13.00 hrs. The faithful wanted still to see the Bishop, and they tried to touch the coffin with their rosaries, the cross or the medal of Our Lady. It was a scene filled with various emotions, with many people shedding their tears. There were about twenty big buses in the procession. Along the route where the procession was passing, the love for Bishop Gaetano Pasotti was expressed with different emotions, according to the simplicity of the rural people. For example, at Banpong church and along the road from there to Ratchaburi, there were small and big groups of catholic faithful waiting to pay homage to the Bishop at intervals. The people consisted of both adults and children from the various villages. The procession could not stop because of the already delayed schedule. It was a pity...the people could not view their beloved Bishop’s face for the last time!”

“The rows of cars from Bangkok were joined by rows of cars from Banpong, heading on to Ratchaburi.”

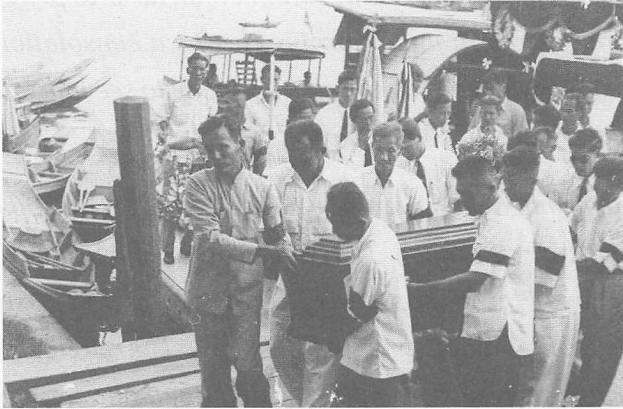
“The procession hurried to Ratchaburi due to the fact that boats from Bang Nok Khuek to receive the coffin already arrived in Ratchaburi before noon. The boats and the river banks of Ratchaburi

market were filled with thousands of people, both catholics and non-catholics ...The coffin was loaded on a barge at the riverside of the military camp; the followers from Banpong would not want to leave. The faithful from Ratchaburi and Bang Nok Khuek found it difficult to believe that the Bishop, who was so strong and healthy two months ago before leaving them, would come back in this condition. Fr. Peter Jellici, the Episcopal vicar, Fr. Bainotti and Fr. Vitrano arranged a large barge to receive the coffin. There were also other eight barges that joined in the river funeral procession, with a large white cross in front led by Mr. Nive."



"We could not elaborate on the consternation of thousands of people, both catholics and non-catholics, who came to witness the most honorable procession, and who poured auspicious comments on the catholics in general...but there were some catholics in

the procession who commented: 'this is not the procession of a dead person, but a procession of great victory of Bishop Pasotti!' Everybody sincerely agreed."



"The fluvial funeral procession arrived in Bang Nok Khuek at 16.30 hrs. A great multitude of priests and laity were waiting to welcome their beloved Bishop. The mournful sound of the church bells rang for a long time like that at Banpong church."

"The coffin, carried by the priests, was taken to be kept at the Bishop's residence, while a choir sang the 'Miserere'. The coffin was opened for the people to pay their respects. The first group to come were the SIHM Sisters. No one was afraid of him. Mothers carried their kids to touch the coffin to receive the last blessings from his hands which used to give them blessings before."

"At 18.15 hrs., Bishop Jaeng Kertsawang, the ordinary of Chanthaburi, arrived with Fr. John Casetta who went to give him the news with the invitation to come."

“The prayers offered for his soul was done since the previous night...For tonight, with the presence of the coffin, it appeared that the church was filled up with people who came to pray for him.”

“At the Bishop’s residence, the faithful took turns to pray for him throughout the night until morning. It was a consolation to see many people, who had left the church, came to see him and asked for apology from the lovely pastor.”

“On 6 September, there were two masses, at 05.00 and 06.00 hrs., celebrated by Fr. Perudon. The coffin was taken into the cathedral presided over by Bishop Jaeng Kerdsawang and assisted by Fr. Casetta, Fr. Bainotti and Fr. Ponchione. The religious, priests, seminarians, aspirants, members of all the catholic action groups, teachers, students and the faithful of every parish of Ratchaburi joined in the funeral procession from the Bishop’s residence to the cathedral. The coffin was carried by the priests, the same as that in Banpong. There were about 4,000 participants in this ceremony.”



“The cameramen who followed the event since Banpong had to work very hard at this time.”

“The homily of Fr. Peter Carretto, in his capacity as the Provincial of Thailand and in the name of the diocesan priests, the FMA Sisters, the SIHM Sisters and all the faithful, made many people cry. On this occasion, he read the spiritual testament of the departed Bishop as well.”

“At the end of the ceremony in the cathedral, the procession, led by Bishop Jaeng Kerdsawang, went round the cathedral and proceeded to the cemetery. On the way, the ‘Miserere’ was sung, alternated by the praying of the rosary of various groups.”

“The cemetery was filled with people. His coffin was laid down at the foot of the big cross. After Bishop Jaeng Kerdsawang blessed the tomb and the coffin, Mr. Prawat read a farewell address in the name of the faithful of the Mission: ⁴⁰⁵



“Your Excellency, our beloved and respected Bishop,

Today we are in deep sorrow because you are leaving us without returning. Before the disappearance of your body from our eyes, we, your children and faithful of the Ratchaburi Mission, would like to say for the last time that we will have no more opportunity to see your smiling face, we will have no more opportunity to see you kneeling among us on Sundays and feastdays, to listen to your admonitions, especially for the youth to be strong and chaste; and we will have no more opportunity to admire your meek and compassionate personality. Oh, who can stop the tears! The faces of all of us here express our feelings better than any words. Every heart is missing and longing for you, and it is beyond any description.

Our beloved Bishop, we are consoled a little bit when you have desired to be among us, though in this silent cemetery. This inspires us to remember all your good wishes which wanted us to be really good Christians because you have a big concern on this matter during the time of your administration of God’s Mission in Thailand. We are all aware that this concern of yours will never stop, though you have already left us. In front of God’s altar in heaven, you will continue to pray for this gift for us. This is also our consolation, that we have another patron in heaven.

Before you leave us, you also wish us to be obedient and to follow the advices of God’s representatives. We accept this admonition with a unanimous voice, that all of us will follow it and we will be your good children forever.

You are about to leave our eyesight, but nonetheless, we assure you that you will never depart from our hearts. We now wish to say goodbye to you. Oh, our beloved Bishop! Please give us your blessings for the last time, so that one day we will all meet again, that we will follow your footsteps for the glory of God in this world, and one day will become a glorious crown for you in heaven. Let not a single person be missing.” ⁴⁰⁶

Finally, his coffin was laid down in the tomb under the big cross located in the middle of the cemetery, with the inscription, as he had wished: ‘Like a father among his children’.



That evening, a great number of faithful came to pray for his soul.

18.2 Eulogies and Witnesses from Various Places

People from all sectors and regions wrote eulogies for Bishop Pasotti and sent to Fr. Peter Carretto, the Salesian Provincial. The following are some excerpts:

Mother Augustin of the Ursuline Congregation wrote from Mater Dei – Bangkok:

*“We join with the Salesian family for the loss of the Bishop and beloved Father of your Congregation. We are deeply sorry and sympathize with you for this great loss. But we know that from heaven, the Bishop will pray and watch over us. He will be able to help us more than before in time of necessity. He is also our father and benefactor, especially when we evacuated to Huahin during the war. We owe him the gratitude, and we will reciprocate him with our prayers and mortifications to the best of our ability.”*⁴⁰⁷

Dibrugar from India wrote:

*“We receive the news of Bishop Pasotti’s death with sadness and surprise because when he came to visit us here recently, he looked very strong and full of life. His departure would be a blow to you and the Mission. We join with you in mourning and in praying for his soul and for you, so that you will have a suitable successor to continue his work.”*⁴⁰⁸

Bishop Louis Chorin of Bangkok Diocese wrote:

“Your telegram arrived on 4 September morning, informing me of the unexpected sad news. Our beloved Bishop Pasotti has already

left us to get his reward in heaven. This news is like a thunder to me and I have never thought of it...and I can never find a good friend like him any more. Nonetheless, let us accept the departure of Bishop Pasotti to eternal life as the will of God. This morning, I offered mass for the repose of his soul. I join my grief with you and all the Salesian confreres with whom I would like to express my sincere condolence. Dear Fr. Provincial, be assured of my sincere respect and loyalty towards him.”⁴⁰⁹

Bishop Louis Morrow, SDB, from Krisnagar, India, wrote:

“We are all very sad about the news of the death of Bishop Pasotti. We still remember his kind visit in November 1948 while he was on his way back to Thailand. I met him for the first time in 1922 in Macao, when both of us were still young priests and have never thought that we would be Bishops in difficult Missions like this.

We feel that even if we are far apart, yet we are working with the same objective and ideal...”⁴¹⁰

Fr. Carlo Braga, the beloved friend of Bishop Pasotti, wrote:

“I join in the fraternal mourning of the sad loss of the Mission and of the Salesian Province. I pray and tell everybody to pray... I feel guilty looking at the world with a pessimistic view when I met him in the hospital. His image still remained in my eyes. He opened his arms and told me: ‘we are in the hands of God and if He desires a sacrifice, I am ready’. This was not mere words.

I still remember his bright eyes and smiling face. He has left our Mission, and he has given us a valuable souvenir. So, his death leaves us with a valuable impression.

...We all feel this great loss. Don Bosco will select a good successor and let us all pray for this intention. We will be most happy to be informed of all the details of Bishop Pasotti's death so that we can join you in mourning... ” 411

Bishop Michael Arduino, SDB, ordinary of Shiu Chow, where Bishop Pasotti used to work, wrote:

“Bishop Pasotti was a missionary in the Diocese of Shiu Chow for nine years. So many people know him, and they still remember him. May I join you in mourning. It is a great loss to both the Church as well as our Society in Thailand.

I, in the name of the missionaries and the faithful of the Diocese of Shiu Chow, wish to join you in mourning. You have lost a pastor and father in this world, but you have another patron in heaven.

...This evening, I will offer Mass for him and will inform also Ham Kuong and Lin Chow where Bishop Pasotti used to work with ardent dedication... ” 412

A Sister from the Carmelite Convent – Bangkok, where he received his Episcopal consecration, wrote:

“...I do not have any doubt that God will embrace this faithful servant who has been working for His glory with a generous and ardent heart... ” 413

A Sister, representing the FMA Sisters from Turin, wrote:

"...It is a great loss to the Congregation and the Mission... We all remember the ardent Bishop who opened the mission field for our Sisters in Siam. He is a beloved father to our Sisters..." ⁴¹⁴

The Congregation for the Propagation of Faith sent a letter of condolence:

"...His work in announcing the Gospel is well-known to our Congregation. He is a real son of St. John Bosco. His successful activities in the Ratchaburi Mission are witnesses of his zeal in evangelization. The priests in his Diocese love him as their father. May all of them remember and follow his footsteps..." ⁴¹⁵

Fr. Peter Carretto, the Salesian Provincial, wrote a letter on 10 September 1950 to the younger brothers and sister of Bishop Pasotti with the following content:

"I think that what I write will bring sadness to you, but I have to do this as your brother and my spiritual father has instructed me. Bishop Pasotti gave a message before his departure to heaven, from document attached herein, by which you will know his holy death and the funeral which shows his victory.

When his sickness seemed to be getting serious, nobody was thinking that it would be the end of his life, given his age. For this reason, I did not write to you when he was sick because I was afraid that you will just get sad. May God have mercy on you, and on all of us, and the missionaries in Siam.

On the first of this month, I went to visit my beloved patient at St. Louis Hospital, a catholic hospital in Bangkok. I heard the Bishop talking about you. So, I asked him if he wanted me to write something to you. On that occasion, he told me to tell you: 'I bless you all from the bottom of my heart as the elder brother. Tiredness has made my body resist all forms of medication. Humanly speaking, there is no way of being cured. May all of you live a good Christian life. From this bed in the hospital, I bless you all. You must be courageous. I am very peace of mind. I would be happy if God were to call me to go to meet Him and our parents.'

'I wrote down every word from his mouth. We were with the Bishop till his last moment. We saw his peaceful countenance while he was speaking, and we saw his joy in the face of the forthcoming death. I don't want to repeat what have been said by the other Salesian confreres which you can read in the attachments to this letter. His funeral was a real victory. I believe that only a few Bishops would be honored like this. Prayers for him will continue and we can say that we have another powerful intercessor before the divine throne. With the enclosed pictures, you will see a part of the grand funeral, but the most important thing was the serenity of the late Bishop.

We have lost Bishop Pasotti, our first rector and the first Bishop of Ratchaburi Diocese. We buried him in the cemetery amidst his children, just as he requested. We are, therefore, sure that he will care and help us from above. This is our consolation while we are still in sorrow... " 416

On 15 September 1950, Fr. Peter Carretto wrote a letter, with picture and other information enclosed, to the Rector Major so the superior general could write the Lettera Mortuale [Mortuary Letter] of Bishop Pasotti. This was hand-carried by Bro. Ambrogio Mariani, who was going home after 22 years in Thailand, and cleric Vira Jenphasuk, who was going to study theology in Turin. It was a Salesian tradition that the Provincial would write this kind of letter for a departed confrere, but in the case of a Bishop, this would be written by the Rector Major.

Having given the bio-data of Bishop Pasotti, Fr. Peter Carretto wrote:

"I believe that there is no need to provide any other details about the spiritual qualities of our late Bishop. In his breviary, I found the slogan of his first Mass and his resolutions during the 1949 and 1950 annual retreats." Here are some excerpts...

His slogan on his first Mass was : "On this earth, you will have sufferings, but do not be afraid, I have already conquered the world." [Jn 14,33]

"My retreat, January 1949: 'love everyone... [St. Paul], and now, oh God, if it is your divine will, please accept my sacrifice." [11 July 1950 is the date under the resolution, i.e., three days before he was admitted into the hospital where he never had the chance to come out.] He wrote it with a shaking hand "I hope that you will remember my promise...you know that this sacrifice of yours is ready..."

"My retreat on 17 February 1950: Love wins everything... [St. Paul]; strong faith; blessed love; true happiness."

'His close union with God was apparent to everybody especially during the last few months. He always prayed his breviary in the church, and he sat on the bench meant for the faithful, because he loved to be among them, in particular, on Sundays...During his painful sickness, he did not want morphine injection. He was happy to accept the sufferings.

He always showed his love toward his Congregation, to Don Bosco and the Holy Father. His priestly life was always clean and chaste...and finally, he was serene at the last stage of his life. His death was really honorable. We felt that we have lost a father, but we also have one more new patron..." ⁴¹⁷

Fr. Franchineau from the Northeast, who came to Bishop Pasotti's funeral, wrote to Fr. Peter Carretto:

"Finally, I have returned to the Northeast, to Tharae, and I wish to express my condolence in communion with you.

Your telegram arrived in Tharae on 5 September, and the funeral took place on 6 September at Bang Nok Khuek where there were three solemn requiem masses, at the church, the seminary and at the convent, at the same time. Last Sunday I did the same thing, with the same intention, both here and in the remote parishes, in the forest as well.

The news of Bishop Pasotti's death caused great sorrow in our Mission, especially for those who were acquainted and who loved the Bishop. Upon my return to Tharae, I talked about the funeral ceremony of the Bishop, making the major seminarians, who were in the probation period, and the elderly who came from Bang Nok Khuek, cry.

As for the Siamese priests, their gratitude was so great because several of them were ordained by Bishop Pasotti. One of them was Fr. P. Inthi, who confirmed that he was the first priest to receive the sacerdotal ordination from Bishop Pasotti.

The priests and faithful in the Northeast wished to be in prayer for the intention of the one who was their teacher, and for the intention of all the Salesian priests who are working for your Mission.

In union of prayers, together with Our Lady of Seven Sorrows.

*P.S. Please convey our best wishes to Fr. Casetta and the others with whom I have acquaintance.*⁴¹⁸

NB: Every priest, both French and Siamese, whom I have met during these days, offered their masses for the late Bishop, at their respective parish."

Fr. Peter Carretto wrote further:

"...I still regret the loss of Bishop Pasotti. I am sure that at this moment, his beautiful soul is already in heaven. Today, I received a letter from a priest representing the Northeast Mission [Laos] which would give consolation to all the Missions taken cared of

by Bishop Pasotti who acted as the representative of the Holy Father for a period of one year. He offers his sincere condolence and prayers together with us for the soul of the Bishop.

We all say 'it is a real celebration of victory' ...for the poor Bishop who received very little consolation while on this earth. Now it is evident that the love he always gave has conquered the hearts of all. " 419

Fr. Peter Jellici, who was very close to Bishop Pasotti, wrote about him:

"It was the time of tears. I have been close to him for several years. He loved me very much. He gave me advice in the work of evangelization like a father. We used to share our joy and pain together, including cooperation in the work of the Mission. And now he is no longer with us...I feel that I suffer a great loss...

Our good and beloved Bishop is no longer with us. We have prayed a lot and will continue to pray so that he will take care and help us, his children, from heaven.

My heart has been suffering a great deal last week. Thanks be to God that now I am able to compose myself and start working again.

Dear Fr. Ricaldone, we pray with fervor begging the merciful God to quickly give us a new pastor who will be as good a father like Bishop Pasotti... " 420

Fr. Cesare Castellino, another confrere close to Bishop Pasotti, wrote:

"Along with Bishop Pasotti, we have lost the most important person, who is both a Bishop and a missionary. His joyful personality, together with his white beard and regular smiling face, made him conquer the hearts of the people. His simple and lovely gesture invited respect and trust right from the first encounter. He was a man of dedication, zeal, diligence. His way of evangelization of the Good News was so simple: 'to be all things to all people.'" ⁴²¹

can have a general view of his life, especially during his 25 years of missionary work in Thailand.'

Bishop Gaetano Pasotti's death brings great sorrow to all the catholics, especially those who were acquainted with him. It is like the day when the sun is darkened by the clouds, especially for the faithful of Ratchaburi Diocese which was under his jurisdiction.

Bishop Gaetano Pasotti has given his last testament as follows:

- 1. I wish to be buried in the cemetery under the big cross. Write on my tomb: 'Like a father amidst his children'.*
- 2. I give my blessings to all the faithful. May all of you live a life of real faith. Be obedient; I will pray for all of you.*
- 3. Please pray for me also.*
- 4. I want to tell everyone that I am very pleased because I am sure that I will go to be with God.*

The phrase 'like a father amidst his children' is so sweet and impressive. He is not only a 'father' in his position, but a 'father' in affection, sweetness and humble meekness. He is 'amidst his children' not only on this earth, but 'a father amidst his children' in the cemetery as well.

It is apparent that people of every walk of life [especially the poor and the suffering] go to meet him and consult him about their lives and families. He would welcome everybody with a smiling face, with a warm welcome and with advice and/or assistance

to the best of his ability. The warm affection and deep mutual understanding are like that between a father and his children. This is a sign of the 'administration' which Bishop Pasotti upholds as the ideal of his whole life.

The children and the young get his special attention. He tries every means to make them 'strong and chaste'. They all understand and trust in his advices as from a father. It can be said further that Bishop Pasotti can solve the problem which the children would not open up to their parents, or when even the parents would not be able to solve.

His wish 'that all should live their faith and be obedient' indicates his deep personal love for the souls of his children.

We believe that God hears and grants the prayers and blessings which the Bishop gave at the last moment of his life...through the advices he gave to the parish priests, through his personal visit, through kneeling down in the midst of the faithful while praying together with them, giving the homily and meeting them personally.

Bishop Pasotti understood and initiated the 'catholic action' in his Mission even before this word got used in Thai. In every parish of the Ratchaburi Diocese, there were parochial 'catholic actions' which developed, both for men and women, and for the youth... Each unit was like his military post at the front line. When he went to visit any parish, he would take the opportunity to call for a meeting of the members to give his advice and special formation.

Those who went to his funeral would have noticed the flags of the catholic action groups from different parishes carried during the funeral procession in honor of the founder.

He realized that the printing press was one of the catholic actions which was significant and necessary to fight and maintain the propagation of faith. So, he decided to establish the Udomphan printing press at Bang Nok Khuek amid the storm of misunderstanding and criticism of many people. Fifteen years ago, Udomphan was printed monthly and distributed free to the faithful in general...however, the parishes paid for the subscription. But some of the faithful were not interested and said, 'why do they send this to me?', and some even said, 'good, now I have papers to wrap up things!'

Nonetheless, Udomphan made progress, from publishing monthly to a weekly issue, even up to this date. And during World War II, it undertook the responsibility of bravely maintaining its duty, so much so that it became a staunch protector against those who resisted the Church. At the same time, it became the source of inspiration for the Catholics and a beacon at making the people understand Christianity. Udomphan reached out even to the court of justice and various other communities. It was an unforgettable event!

Bishop Gaetano Pasotti was a friend who shared his 'happiness and suffering' with the priests under his jurisdiction. He was prudent and experienced in his governance, making all his subordinates to be patient and willing to carry out their duties even when they

were under difficult situations. In normal times, he would provide more facilities and better convenience. He was open-minded, kept the rules as any other religious, and maintained persevering equilibrium both through his letters, official and personal contacts.

A secret that made him know and understand the administrative mechanism of each parish like that of the parish priest was that he made frequent visit to all the parishes...So, he was very close to each parish priest, and at the same time, he also alleviated their burdens.

Bishop Pasotti reserved his special love for the seminary because the 'seminary' was the place to produce priests to work in the Diocese; it was the place where the youth called by God gather. During World War II, all the Thai seminarians came to gather temporarily together at Bang Nok Khuek, under his care.

If there was a time when Bishop Pasotti expressed his deep joy, it was when he was among the seminarians.

For the sake of fast progress in various apostolic activities of the Mission, Bishop Gaetano Pasotti invited the FMA Sisters to run the school for girls, as the Salesians do for the boys. He also invited the Capuchin Nuns, who live a contemplative life, to the Mission to support the apostolic work with their prayers. Aside from this, he also established 'Xi Song Khro' (Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary) which was an important force,

as a bridge between the priests and the laity, to teach catechism to the faithful with their good examples and words. Hence, they became a kind of living monument of Bishop Pasotti that would last forever.

The FMA and 'Xi Song Khro' (Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary) came to pay their homage to Bishop Pasotti's corpse with sad faces, and not a single one could hold her tears!

'I go to live with God!'"

Bishop Gaetano Pasotti's various activities as ordinary of the Ratchaburi Diocese indicated that his whole life has been dedicated to souls, according to the Salesian motto: 'Da mihi animas, cetera tolle' [Give me souls, take away the rest]. It seemed that he himself felt that it was the will of God that enabled him to say his last farewell: 'I am happy...I am most happy, because I am sure that I will be with God!'

These words make us realize his genuine mind. All his life and activities bring confidence that God would bestow on him suitable rewards. Nonetheless, we are most willing to follow his request: 'pray for me'. This is a sign of gratitude in so far as we are under his care, and because he is our personal benefactor as well. ⁴²²

HE WAS ALL THINGS FOR ALL PEOPLE

Your Excellency Bishop Pasotti, I, as the writer, and most of the readers, have neither met nor known you personally, because we were born late. We have followed, though with not much detailed information, your life from childhood which informers had given us, allowing us to see the portrait of a little lovely kid, like an angel to his parents and the parish priest, a lovely friend who brought joy and happiness to his other friends, a seminarian and a Salesian religious, a soldier and a young priest who was really serious in following his vocation. He was ready to offer his life in the situation where God leads him to.

His vivid life might encounter with clouds while he was serving God and his country in the battle field. He had been dreaming about his priestly ordination, that bright part that had been delayed. And when that day came, the 26 years old chose a motto for his ordination 'In this world you will suffer, but do not be afraid because I have conquered the world' [Jn 16, 33]. We do not know yet why he had chosen this passage.

After a lapse of 34 years, when his last moment was approaching, we saw the picture of his going through a missionary life in China. His health began to be problematic, his life and work met challenges. He encountered loneliness, all mixed with hope and joy in God, his responsibility as a Rector and Novice Master which began in China and extended to Thailand, at Bang Nok Khuek, coupled with being the leader of the first group of Salesian missionaries

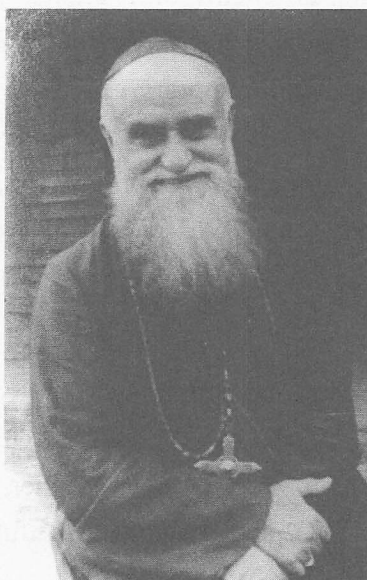
in another foreign land which was quite different from his home land, and even from China where he had been working for nine years. The continuation of work from the MEP, though having the same objectives but with different policies and mentality, met with so many obstacles. As delegate of the vice-Province reporting directly to the mother house in Turin, at the beginning, he had most of the members still in the formation stage preparing themselves to be priests. There were only few priests, and later as the first vicar of a Mission separated from the Mission of Siam, his territory extended down to the southernmost part of the Thai peninsula. Furthermore, he met with the crisis of World War II which covered Thailand. This was coupled with the 'Indochina' conflict between Thailand and France, causing intermittence of the missionary work, because in both cases, the French was in the state of being an enemy of Thailand. Thus, the French missionaries were unable to work. So, Bishop Pasotti was given more responsibility as a temporary envoy of the Holy See in Thailand for a period of about one year, taking care of the Laos Mission [in Thai territory] for about four years, and he was also responsible in sending some Salesian confreres to help the various parishes in the Laos Mission and Bangkok Mission who asked for help.

As a Salesian, he loved the children and the young in a special way, including the various Catholic action activities in each parish. He loved to be with all his children as a father, while praying in the church, visiting the priests and the faithful in the parishes.

Aside from these, he had a broad vision of preparing the personnel to continue his apostolic activities and his spirit. He began with the diocesan seminary and the local female religious 'Xi Song Khro' (Sisters Serv ants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary).

He had been loaded with heavy responsibility throughout his priestly life. He had to go to the hospital for treatment several times. Once he had to take leave from his work and stayed in Italy for almost a whole year. But his will and hope were very strong because Christ's love impeled him and inspired him to dedicate his whole life to God and his neighbors till the end.

We can summarize Bishop Pasotti's life as really **"All Things to All People"**.



APPENDIX

CIRCULAR LETTER OF BISHOP GAETANO PASOTTI

Message of the Bishop to the Faithful of Ratchaburi Mission

MISSION SUNDAY 1946

My dear children,

I write this kind of message every year to remind you of the important day, i.e., Mission Sunday, which is celebrated by all the catholics of the world with deep sentiments of the sacredness and high dignity of the action in which God demands us to participate with the spirit of sacrifice and love toward this sacred duty.

For this year, the Mission Sunday falls on 20 October. As I realize your good will and care for everything concerning with the propagation of the Holy Name of Jesus and His teachings, I wish to tell you to celebrate this feast. You must celebrate it in the best way you can. You must respond to the petition of the Holy Father with generosity and be willing to collaborate with his request which extends to all the catholics of every nation and language, to offer prayers, donations, and participation in announcing Christ all over the world.

The report on the Mission Sunday last year, which I have sent to every parish so that all will be informed, brings joy to everybody with regards to the amount of the donation and the cooperation of all, including the Dutch catholic prisoners of war of Petchaburi and Thamuang camps.

Thus, the catholics of Ratchaburi Mission have been successful in their joint endeavors to help the needs of the Catholic Missions all over the world. It must be considered that we have participated in the good things done by those Missions, and this action is a great honor to those who do this.

It is, therefore, requested that you join in this meritorious act on 20 October, in communion with the prayers of all the catholics in the world. Let your pious prayers be included, and all the charitable acts of that day, including the reception of Holy Communion. Try to be always in the front line with your generous donation in order to show that we are second to none among the catholics, especially the ones in the far east, in the love of God and the souls.

May the Mission Sunday be the witness of the highest value of the gift bestowed by God – to be united in His kingdom...a kingdom of genuine light and perfect truth of life and happiness.

May God help you all to live the life of light and truth of His commandments, especially living a 'christian life' according to our faith, so that you will arrive at the highest and eternal goal which

is brought to us by Christ through His sufferings and death on the cross, and is made sure through His resurrection.

Finally, may God give you His most abundant blessings.

With love in Christ,

+ Gaetano Pasotti

Bishop of Ratchaburi Diocese

Bang Nok Khuek, 30 September 1946

MISSION SUNDAY 1947

My dear children,

When I hold the pen and write to remind you of the forthcoming Mission Sunday, which falls on 19 October this year, I feel that I must first thank you for the zeal you demonstrated on the Mission Sunday of last year. I feel very happy to be able to inform the Holy Father about your zeal, and I am happy to let you know that the Holy Father had a response, expressing his paternal delight over his children in the Ratchaburi Mission for the strong faith and generosity in the donations for the universal evangelization.

It is certain that the understanding and cooperation in the expansion of the Kingdom of God bring honor to you and joy to my heart and to all the priests working among you and for you.

I and all the priests working in this Mission come from afar to carry out the mandate of Jesus Christ – ‘go and preach the Gospel to all mankind.’ Now, 20 years have already gone by since we came to Thailand which we love in a special way, and we wish to see it prosperous and respected among all the nations.

It is certain that the Catholic Church will send more missionaries to propagate the faith as long as there are souls to be saved. Those priests consider that the salvation of souls is the sole objective of their lives.

But the above matter also includes you, as said by St Peter: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people he claims for his own to proclaim the glorious works of the One who called you from darkness into his marvelous light.” [1 Pt 2: 9]

While you have become children of God and heirs of heaven through the graces which you have received at baptism, you have to try every way you can, especially by living a good exemplary life, so that the other children of God will come to be in the house of the heavenly Father.

As members of Jesus Christ, our head, and as his soldiers, in a way you are God’s priests, and you must also be His servants, so that the results of His redemption and teachings will spread to all of your brothers and sisters.

As children of the Catholic Church established by Jesus to lead and teach us in the truth, you must also help others to know the church which is the lighthouse and font of life. In the Catholic Church, through prayers and sacraments, you will receive graces which will give help and necessary strength to uphold our weakness to overcome our human instincts and passions so that we can live a dignified life as a human being and as a Christian.

This is our duty. This is the duty of everyone who is a soldier under the flag of the cross. And it is a special duty of the members of the various catholic action groups. Is it not an honorable duty

to continue to carry out the work of our Redeemer by leading all men to see the path of salvation through accepting the truth and the sacramental assistance which God alone can give?

The catholic laity all over the world who are cooperating in the activities of the priests are so many. Therefore, let us try to work to give Christ to mankind, to destroy the evil one, for the victory of virtue and goodness according to the teaching of the Gospel. Thus, we will destroy the cause of divisions, hatred, power abuse, selfishness, corruption, injustice, peace and solidarity of all nations regardless of ethnicity and colors. All men are children of the same divine Father. Jesus redeems all and He calls everyone to come to the same goal of eternal life.

I really wish that you remember this important truth especially on Mission Sunday, and I wish all of you are aware of the great honor to be able to cooperate with God in the expansion to the ends of the world the kingdom of the Redeemer who rose from the dead. It happens that I have read an impressive example of the catholics in Africa where thousands of people are converted each year. The report of the Church in Africa says that a group of youth go to catch fish in the river for the whole day with no attention to the heat or sun in order to sell the fish and donate the money to the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith.

In some villages, many poor people agree to work on some projects to collect some money for the Missions. A sick boy received a box of sweets as a gift. He did not take it, but told his mother: 'Mommy, please sell this and send the money to the parish priest on Mission Sunday. God will bless us.'

On the occasion of Mission Sunday this year, shall we not make some sacrifices by cutting off some of our needs in order to help the Mission? I hope that God's providence will fulfill this need.

If you have more than the others, will not your heart tell you of the necessity that you must be more generous to promote God's work? Not long ago, a Spanish priest, after offering all his money to help the diocesan seminarians, remembered that he still had a wrist watch and a golden chain. He did not hesitate to send them to the Holy Father to help the seminarians in the Missions.

A few years ago, an old man of 91, sent a large amount of money to the Holy Father and wrote: "I wish to crown myself in the last stage of my life with an act of charity toward the Missions and the Holy Father."

On this Mission Sunday, 19 October, may all of us join in communion. Let us pray to God to send many holy priests to our Mission, and may He call many young men to be candidates for the priesthood in every Mission, so that there will be more holy diocesan priests. Let us be generous in donating money on Mission Sunday so that the catholic missions will live on and develop further.

I hope that I will be able to tell the Holy Father once again that his children in Ratchaburi Mission express their praiseworthy zeal in the propagation of faith.

Finally, may God give all of you His abundant blessings.

With love in Christ,

+ Gaetano Pasotti

Ordinary of Ratchaburi Diocese

Bang Nok Khuek, 1 October 1947

FOOTNOTES- END NOTES

- ¹ Gaverini, Enrichetta, *Data from the niece, daughter of Immacolata Regina Bonfoco, in a letter to Don Cesare Castellino*, 22 October 1989, Rome [SIHM 02.1001]
- ² Gaverini, Enrichetta, *Letter to Don Castellino*, SDB, 28 September 1989. [SIHM 02.5011]
- ³ Alessi, Antonio, SDB, *Mons. Gaetano Pasotti, Elogio funebre tenuto a Pinarolo Po, 2 October 1950*, p.5 [SIHM 02.5001]
- ⁴ cf. Ricaldone, Pietro, *Lettera Mortuale*, Torino 24 November 1950, p.1 [SIHM 02.5002]
- ⁵ Alessi, Antonio, SDB, *Mons. Gaetano Pasotti, Elogio funebre tenuto a Pinarolo Po, 2 October 1950*, p.6 [SIHM 02.5001]
- ⁶ cf., *ibid*, p.6
- ⁷ *ibid*, p.6
- ⁸ Ricaldone, Pietro, *Lettera Mortuale*, Torino, 24 November 1950, p.1 [SIHM 02.5002]
- ⁹ Pasotti, Gaetano, *Undated letter to the Superiors of the Salesian Congregation, written at the Youth Center of St. Francis de Sales, Turin* [SIHM 02.1017]
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- ²⁰ cf. *ibid*, pp. 12-13
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- ²² *ibid*, p. 5
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- ⁴³ Rassiga, Mario, SDB, *Opera Salesiana in Cina, Cenno Storico Parte Prima: 1906-1930*, p.43 [SIHM 2.2014]
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- ⁴⁸ Cf. Pasotti, *Letter from Yen Tak, July 1920*, in *The Congregation of the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, "Like A Father Among His Children"*, Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd., 3 September 2000, p.36
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- ⁵⁰ *Ibid*. pp. 48-50
- ⁵¹ Pasotti, Gaetano, *Ying-tak Municipality, 30 March 1922*, in "Like A Father Among his Children", Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd.[2000], p.37
- ⁵² Polu, a Chinese way of measuring a distance
- ⁵³ Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *Ying-tak Municipality, 30 March 1922*, in "Like A Father Among His Children", Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2000], pp. 37-39
- ⁵⁴ Cf. p. 39

- ⁵⁵ Cf. *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to Fr. Barberis in Gioventu' Missionaria 2 [1924], pp.4-5 [SIHM 02.2007]*
- ⁵⁶ Cf. *Rassiga, Mario, SDB, Opera Salesiana in Cina, Cenno Storico Parte Prima: 1906-1930, pp.67-68 [SIHM 2.2014]* and Letter 'Electio del Confirmato Directoris' N. 1777, 1-3-1924 [SIHM 02.1043]
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- ⁶⁰ Cf. *Rassiga, Mario, SDB, Opera Salesiana in Cina, Cenno Storico Parte Prima: 1906-1930, p. 30 [SIHM 2.2014]*
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- ⁶⁴ Cf. *Rassiga, Mario, SDB, Opera Salesiana in Cina, Cenno Storico Parte Prima: 1906-1930, p.72 [SIHM 2.2014]*
- ⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid*, pp. 56-57
- ⁶⁶ Cf. *ibid*, p. 31
- ⁶⁷ *Danieli, Henri, Don Bosco – The Salesians in Thailand, Book I, p. 71*
- ⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid*, pp. 78-80
- ⁶⁹ Cf. *ibid*, pp. 71-72
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- ⁷² Cf. *Chronicle of Nativity House, 26 October 1927 [SIHM 01.2190]*
- ⁷³ *Pasotti, Gaetano, News from Siam [Salesian Bulletin, April 1929], in "Like A Father Among His Children", Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2000], p. 53*
- ⁷⁴ Cf. *Chronicle of Nativity House, Bang Nok Khuek, 27 October – 2 November 1927 [SIHM 01.2190]*

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- 165 Cf. *Bang Nok Khuek, La Culla della Famiglia Salesian nella Tailandia, accenni cronologici del primo XXV, p. 2* [SIHM 01.2191]
- 166 *Ceria, Memorie Biografiche, Vol XII, p. 279, No. 5* [SIHM 01.2015]
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- 169 One of the historical writers of the Salesian Congregation
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- 184 Cf. *Chronicle of Thawa Community, 1933/1-3 November 1934 / 10 January 1938* [SIHM 01.2198]
- 185 Cf. *Chronicle of Ratchaburi Community, 1933-1937, p.1* [SIHM 01.2193]
- 186 Cf. *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to Fr. Braga – Hongkong, 16 November 1933* [SIHM 02.3033]
- 187 Cf. *Chronicle of the House of Formation, Bang Nok Khuek* [SIHM 01.2195]
- 188 Cf. *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to Fr. Braga – Hongkong, 30 January 1934* [SIHM 02.3034]
- 189 Cf. *Chronicle of Ratchaburi Community, 1933-1937, p. 1* [SIHM 01.2193]
- 190 Cf. *Danieli, Henri, Don Bosco – The Salesians in Thailand, Book I, pp. 166-170*
- 191 *The reason must have been political because he has a lot of lands and is widely influential.*
- 192 Cf. *Chronicle of Bangtan Church, recorded on 8 June 1934* [SIHM 01.2197]
- 193 Cf. *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to Fr. Braga – Hongkong, 14 March 1934* [SIHM 02.3035]
- 194 Cf. *Chronicle of Bangtan Church* [SIHM 01.2197]
- 195 *Pasotti, Gaetano, “Amnesty” (Jubilee), 1934* [SIHM 01.2020]
- 196 Cf. *Chronicle of Ratchaburi Community, 1933-1937, pp. 3, 10* [SIHM 01.2193]
- 197 Cf. *Bang Nok Khuek, La Culla Della Famiglia Salesiana Nella Thailandia, Accenni Cronologici del Primo XXV, pp. 2-3* [SIHM 01.2191]
- 198 Cf. *Chronicle of the House of Formation, Bang Nok Khuek* [SIHM 01.2195]
- 199 Cf. *Chronicle of Ratchaburi Community, 1933-1937, p. 3* [SIHM 01.2193]
- 200 Cf. *Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, Decretum, 28 May 1934* [SIHM 01.2025]
- 201 *Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, Letter to the Rector Major – Ricaldone, 30 May 1934* [SIHM 01.2025]
- 202 Cf. *Ricaldone, Pietro, Letter to Bishop Pasotti, 10 July 1934* [SIHM 01.2026]
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- 205 Cf. *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to Phra Phanitchayasarnviset, Minister of Education, 19 July 1934* [SIHM 01.2027]
- 206 Cf. *Danieli, Henri, Don Bosco – The Salesians in Thailand, Book I*, p.116
- 207 Cf. *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to Fr. Braga, 13 August 1934* [SIHM 02.3036]
- 208 Cf. *Chronicle of Wat Phleng Community, 1934* [SIHM 01.2203]
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- 210 *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to Fr. Gusmano, 23 October 1934* [SIHM 01.2028]
- 211 Cf. *ibid*
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- 214 *Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, Letter to Bishop Pasotti, 16 December 1934* [SIHM 01.2029]
- 215 *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to the Parish Priests, 29 January 1935* [SIHM 01.2030], no. 2-3, we have only a photo-copy of the letter; the one sent to Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu which has the title “Father” added to it...this shows that there must have been other copies sent to the Parish Priests or other confreres
- 216 Cf. *Chronicle of Bangtan Church* [SIHM 01.2197]
- 217 Cf. *Pasotti, Gaetano, Wat Phleng – The Ardor of Christian Life, in “Like A Father Among His Children”, Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2000], p. 150*
- 218 Cf. *ibid*, pp. 260-264
- 219 Cf. *ibid*, pp. 158-166
- 220 Cf. *ibid*, pp. 175-176
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- 224 Cf. *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to Father Provincial From Betong in “Like A Father Among His Children”, Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2000], pp. 186-187*

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- 238 Cf. *ibid*
- 239 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *Agricultural Competitions in Bang Nok Khuek in "Like A Father Among His Children"*, Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2000], pp. 188-190
- 240 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *Letter to Salesian Rectors, 11 April 1937* [SIHM 01.2039]
- 241 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *The Minister of Foreign Affairs Visited Huahin in "Like A Father Among His Children"*, Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2000], pp. 191-194
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- 245 Pasotti, Gaetano, *Annual Report 1937*, 19 August 1937, no. 6 [SIHM 01.2037]
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- 251 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *Good News in "Like A Father Among His Children"*, Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2000], pp. 196-199
- 252 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *Letter to Fr. Braga*, 29 January 1936 [SIHM 01.2042]
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- 256 Cf. Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, *Letter to Bishop Pasotti*, Prot.N. 497/30, 7 February 1931 [SIHM 01.2012]
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- 258 Cf. *ibid*
- 259 Thabping, Sompong, *The Father's Teachings*, November 2002, p. 24
- 260 *Ibid*, p. 26-27
- 261 Cf. *Year Book of the Cathedral of the Nativity, Bang Nok Khuek*, 100 Years Anniversary, Bangpakok Printing [1996], pp. 158-159
- 262 *Ibid*
- 263 Cf. *The memorial of love which the father gives to the children, or the life which has been weaved together*, Fr. Carlo della Torre, the Servant of God, P.T. A. Best Supply Co. Ltd, First Printing 1 December 2547, pp. 32-55 [When Fr. Della Torre related stories about his life which were put together in his autobiography, he did not specify the day, the month and the year of the event. This made it difficult to arrange the events in their proper order, making it also impossible the look at the reason and the result

of some events] *The chronicle of some houses where Fr. Carlo worked did not record anything about the progress of establishing a congregation.*

264 Cf. *The Historical Committee to prepare for the 75 years of "Rooted in Charism", Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2011] pp. 14-42*

265 Pasotti, Gaetano, *The Way of Life, sent to the Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, 12 June 1937 in "Rooted in Charism", Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2011], p.41*

266 Cf. *Thabping, Sompong, Document that prove who is the founder of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary by H.E. Gaetano Pasotti, SDB (gathered and arranged on January 2004) [SIHM 03.4021]*

267 Pasotti, Gaetano, *The Father's Teachings, collected by Sr. Sompong Thabping, printed by the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for use within the Society, November 2002*

268 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *Letter to Fr. Braga, 28 April 1939 [SIHM 02.3048]*

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270 Cf. *Chronicle of Nativity House, Bang Nok-Khuek [SIHM 01.2190]*

271 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *Letter to the Parish Priests, 1 September 1936 [SIHM 01.2036]*

272 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *Remembering Don Bosco in "Like A Father Among His Children", Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2000], pp. 207-211*

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- 281 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *The Joyful News in "Like A Father Among His Children"*, Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2000], pp. 127-128
- 282 *Chronicle of Nativity House, Bang Nok Khuek* [SIHM 01.2190]
- 283 Cf. *Chronicle of Thamuang Community* [SIHM 01.2199]
- 284 Cf. Danieli, Henri, *Don Bosco – The Salesians in Thailand, Book IV*, p. 171
- 285 Cf. *Chronicle of Nativity House, Bang Nok Khuek* [SIHM 01.2190]
- 286 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *Letter to the Rector Major, 12 December 1939* [SIHM 02.3049]
- 287 Cf. *Chronicle of Thawa Community, 1940* [SIHM 01.2198]
- 288 Cf. *Chronicle of Nativity House, Bang Nok Khuek* [SIHM 01.2190]
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- 290 Pasotti, Gaetano, *Letter to Fr. Braga, 12 July 1940* [SIHM 02.3050]
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- 293 Cf. *Chronicle of Bang Nok Khuek Church* [SIHM 01.2200]
- 294 Cf. *Chronicle of Thamuang Community* [SIHM 01.2199]
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- 296 Cf. *ibid*
- 297 Cf. *Chronicle of Nativity House, Bang Nok Khuek* [SIHM 01.2199], *Chronicle of Thamuang Community* [SIHM 01.2190]
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- 339 Cf. *Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, Letter to the Salesian Rector Major, 18 November 1943 [SIHM 01.2061]*
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- 342 Cf. *Chronicle of Bang Nok Khuek Church [SIHM 01.2200]*
- 343 *The Historical Committee to prepare for the 75th Anniversary, “Rooted in Charism”, Star Boom Interprint Co. Ltd. [2011], pp. 154 and 171 (Pope Pius XII established the 22nd of August as the feastday since 1944, 7 days after the feast of the Assumption of Mary. During the time of Pope Paul VI, a new calendar was arranged. This feast was kept on the Saturday after the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.*
- 344 Cf. *Chronicle of Bang Nok Khuek Church [SIHM 01.2200]*
- 345 Cf. *ibid*
- 346 Cf. *ibid*
- 347 Cf. *Yearbook , 75th Anniversary of the Salesians in Thailand, p.30*

- 348 Cf. *Chronicle of Bang Nok Khuek Church* [SIHM 01.2200]
- 349 *Danieli, Henri, Don Bosco – The Salesians in Thailand, Book I, p. 345. H.E. Henri Tomin received the Episcopal consecration at Tha Khaek by Bishop Gaetano Pasotti on 12 November 1944. Fr. Bayet was the Episcopal vicar, ibid, p. 344*
- 350 Cf. *ibid*, p. 346
- 351 Cf. *ibid*
- 352 Cf. *Chronicle of Bang Nok Khuek Church* [SIHM 01.2200]
- 353 *Yearbook of the Cathedral of the Nativity, Bang Nok Khuek, 100th Anniversary, Bangpakok Publishing [1996], p.130 (Fr. Paul Salmon constructed this church in 1914 by using the materials taken down from Nativity Church which was being renovated); cf. ibid*
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- 363 Cf. *ibid, Book III, p. 12*
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- 365 Cf. *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to the Rector Major, 5 September 1947* [SIHM 02.3055]
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- 367 Cf. *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to the Superiors in Turin, 29 December 1947* [SIHM 02.3058]
- 368 Cf. *Pasotti, Gaetano, Letter to the Superiors in Turin, 15 January 1947* [SIHM 02.3061]
- 369 Cf. *Berruti, Pietro, Letter to Bishop Pasotti* [SIHM 02.3063]

- 370 Cf. *Yearbook, 75th Anniversary of the Salesians in Thailand*, Prachachon Publishing Co. Ltd., 1977, p. 35
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- 372 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *Letter to Fr. Peter Carretto – Provincial*, 30 October 1948 [SIHM 02.3065]
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- 374 Cf. Morrow, Louis, *Letter of Condolence to Fr. Peter Carretto* [SIHM 02.4017]
- 375 Cf. Pasotti, Gaetano, *Letter to the Rector Major*, 14 December 1948 [SIHM 02.3066]
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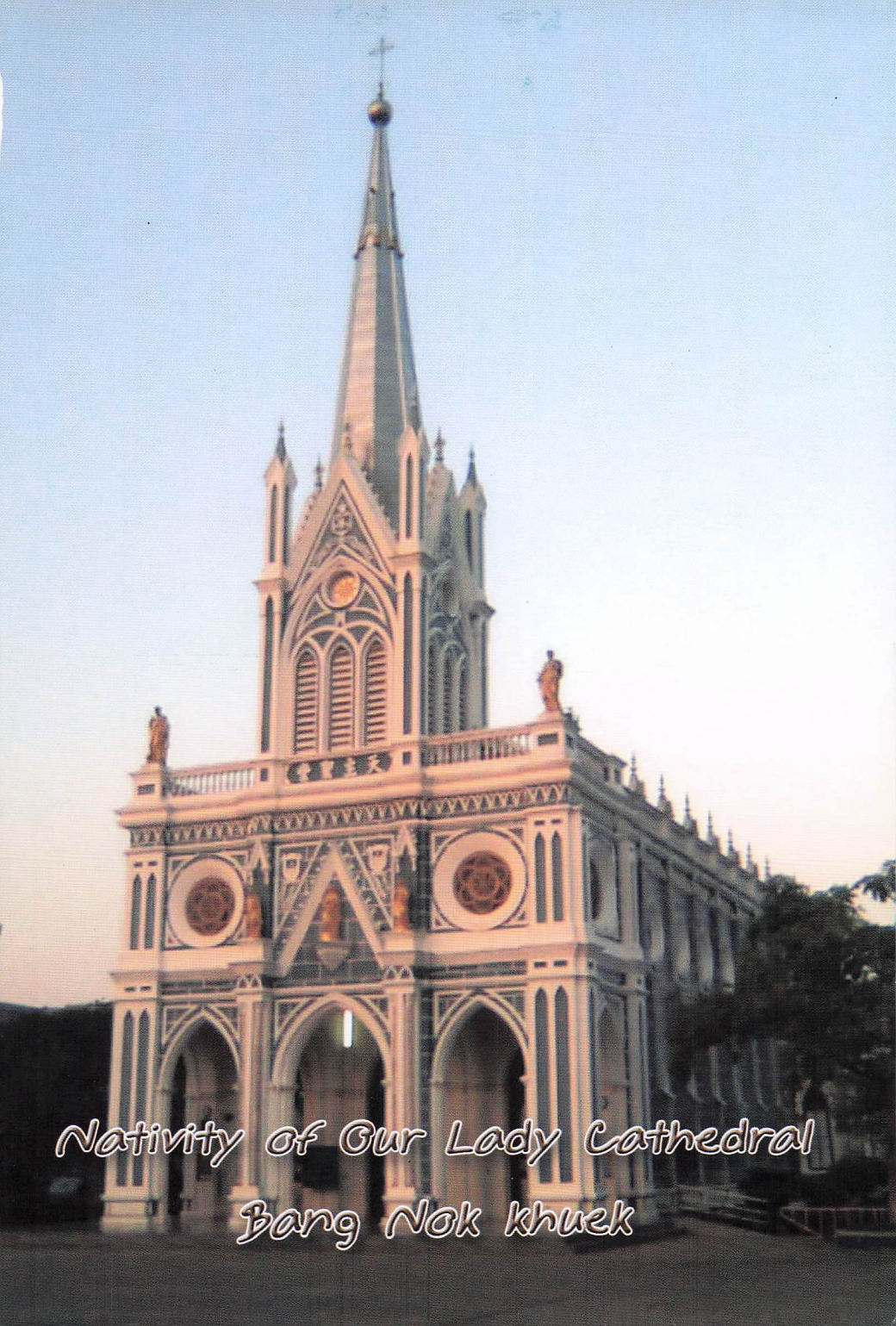
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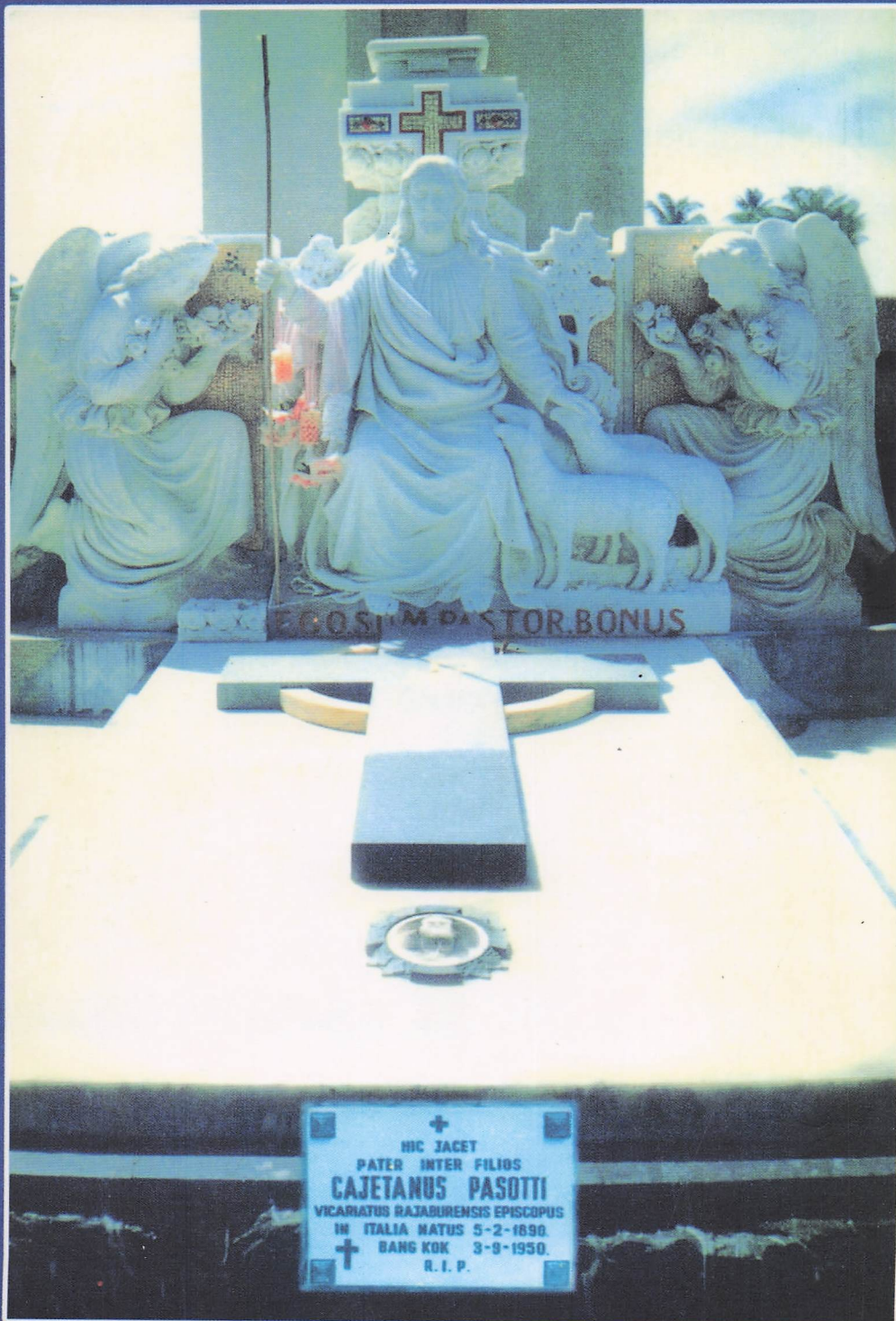
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NB. SIHM = Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary – used as the abbreviation before the code number of the documents of the Congregation which have been gathered from various sources, mostly letters or excerpts from documents about Bishop Pasotti and the Congregation



Nativity of Our Lady Cathedral
Bang Nok khuek



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HIC JACET
PATER INTER FILIOS
CAJETANUS PASOTTI
VICARIATUS RAJABURENSIS EPISCOPUS
IN ITALIA NATUS 5-2-1890.
+ BANG KOK 3-9-1950.
R. I. P.