

# Barquilla de la Santa Maria

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## THE DOMINICAN MISSION TO CHINA, 1923-1956

With the approach of the quincentennial of the Evangelization of the Americas from Europe, it seems an appropriate time to celebrate the part which daughters and sons of the Diocese of Columbus played in passing along the Faith, in the missionary effort to China in the second quarter of this century. They did this as part of the efforts of the Dominican Order, particularly the Dominican Fathers of the Province of St. Joseph and the Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs. The first part of this story is based primarily upon the booklet Kienning-fu Chronicle by Rev. William F. Cassidy, O.P., which was supplied by Sr. Mary McCaffery, O.P., Archivist at St. Mary of the Springs.

### Part I - The Dominican Fathers, 1923-1945

China had attracted Dominican missionaries from the time of St. Dominic and it is one of the glories of the order that the protomartyr of China was a Dominican, Blessed Francis de Cappillas, who was beheaded in the province of Fukien on January 15, 1640. In 1631 the Holy Rosary Province of (Spanish) Dominicans, headquartered in Manila in the Philippines, had entered Fukien Province from the island of Formosa, from which it is separated only by the hundred-mile Formosa Strait. Along the coast of the province, the abundant fruit of the toil of these Spaniards was for many years evident in numerous and flourishing centers of Christianity, especially in the provincial capital and port city of Foochow. Northwest Fukien Province, however, presented no such development. Only a few cities in the interior of the province ever had a resident missionary and the Christian population was very small there.

On February 20, 1922 the Dominican Fathers of St. Joseph's Province accepted Kienning-fu in the northern portion of Fukien province as a missionary field. Kienning-fu (or Kienow) itself was the fourth largest city of the province, with about 35,000 souls. The "highways" which connected Kienning-fu with the capital city were the Min and Kien rivers and the mission territory was essentially the valley of the Kien and its tributaries. The territory was estimated to contain something less than seventy square miles and a population of one million.

A mountainous mass covers nearly the whole of Fukien Province. In the north, the ridges are said to attain heights of as much as 9,000 feet. The mountains are a heterogeneous mass with no pronounced singleness of direction. Here, there, and in every direction they seem to intercept the traveler, and in the days before highways were built one was forced to climb thousands of

steps over mountain passes from one valley to the next. The mountains also bounded the regions of dialect, with the result that there was no such thing as Fukien speech. In the mission territory the dialects varied with countless shades, there being four major dialects in the countryside and others in the cities.

Agriculture was the predominant occupation of the population. After the rice crop, the most abundant products were tea and bamboo shoots. Lumber abounded and great quantities of fir, pine, and bamboo were exported.

The religious lives of the pagans in the mission territory followed the lines of Chinese superstitions in general, but were, if anything, more tenacious of the ancient religious beliefs and practices than those of surrounding areas. The territory's lack of accessibility contributed to the conservation and development of the superstitions of the soil. Newer ideas were later to penetrate here than other parts of China.

The first two American Dominicans left San Francisco in August of 1923 and arrived in Kienning-fu on December 7. These were Very Rev. Adam P. Curran, O.P., Vicar Provincial, and Brother James Murphy, O.P., who was a carpenter. In August of 1924 five additional Dominican priests and one brother departed from Seattle for China. As the priests on the mission became ill or had served several years at a stretch, they were sent home to the United States, either to recuperate or simply to visit and regain their energy. At various times their ranks were supplemented by the addition of other priests sent from St. Joseph Province.

The Dominicans who served in Kienning-fu prior to and during World War II and their years of service were these:

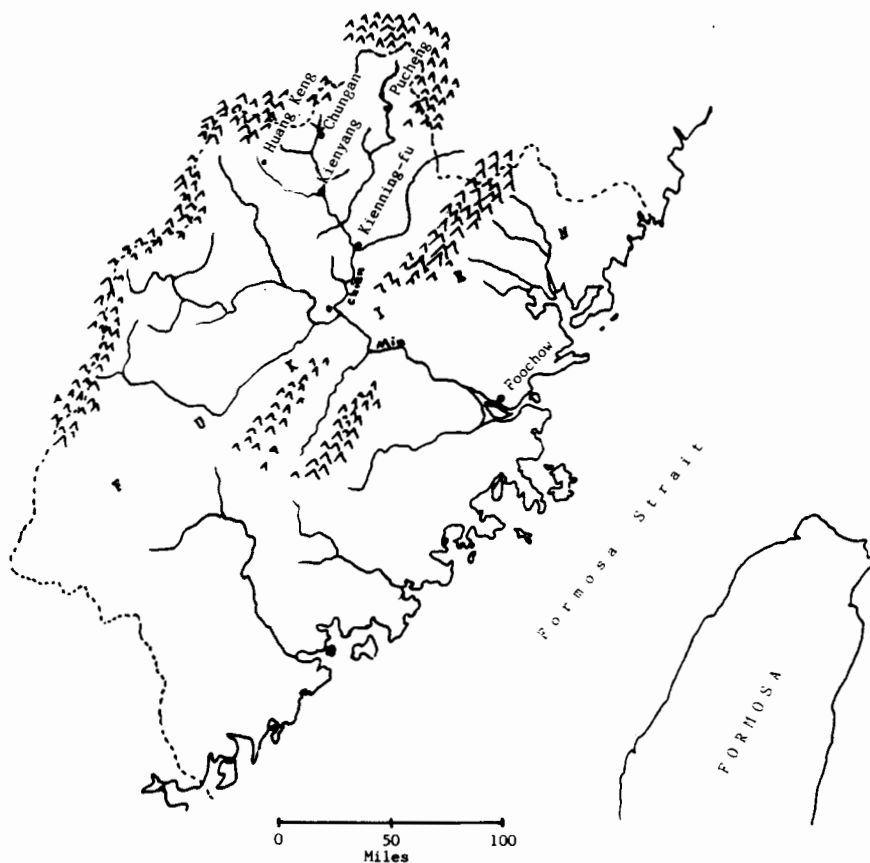
Very Rev. Adam P. Curran, O.P. 1923-1938	Rev. Celestine M. Rooney, O.P. 1931-
Brother James Murphy, O.P. 1923-1941	Rev. Arthur C. Tierney, O.P. 1931-1932
Rev. Bernard C. Werner, O.P. 1924-1945	Rev. Joseph M. Killian, O.P. 1931-1933
Rev. James G. O'Donnell, O.P. 1924-1941	Rev. Michael A. O'Connor, O.P. 1933-1941
Rev. John R. Grace, O.P. 1924-1937	Rev. Raymond S. Gillespie, O.P. 1933-1938
Rev. Thomas H. Sullivan, O.P. 1924-1927	Rev. Peter V. Manning, O.P. 1933-1943
Rev. John F. McCadden, O.P. 1924-1925	Rev. John F. Monroe, O.P. 1933-1941
Brother Jordan Warnock, O.P. 1924-1945	Rev. James G. Joyce, O.P. 1933-1945
Rev. Harry A. Burke, O.P. 1927-1929	Rev. Berchmans H. Scheerer, O.P. 1937-1945
Rev. Robert E. Brennan, O.P. 1927-1931	Rev. Aloysius L. Scheerer, O.P. 1937-1945
Rev. Frederick A. Gordon, O.P. 1927-1945	Rev. Joseph E. Hyde, O.P. 1937-1941
Rev. John M. Barrett, O.P. 1927-1928	Rev. James L. Devine, O.P. 1939-1945
Rev. William F. Cassidy, O.P. 1927-1940	Rev. Bernard G. Schneider, O.P. 1939-1946+?

Fathers Werner, Gordon, and Tierney were from the Diocese of Columbus. Their particular contributions to the missionary effort will be detailed below.

In 1924, Father O'Donnell and Brother Jordan opened the procuration house in Foochow, while the other priests went "up-country" to the existing missions at Kienning-fu (Holy Rosary), Kienyang (St. Joseph's), and Chungan (St. Raymond's). Their missions continued to be part of the Vicariate of Foochow for some years. With the arrival of the larger group of missionaries in 1924, a school building was begun in Keinning-Fu. It was about ready for use in 1927 when it was seized by the Nationalist soldiers.

The great and ancient Chinese Empire had fallen in 1911 and the country had broken up into the many domains of petty warlords. By the time of the arrival of the American Dominicans, the Nationalist movement to unite the nation under a new government was under way; unfortunately, in its early years its central leadership was dominated by Communists. It was in 1926 that Mao Tse-tung began organizing the Communists in neighboring Hunan Province, confiscating land, and executing or banishing Christian missionaries. In Fukien Province, churches and residences were occupied and the missionaries forced to leave, or if allowed to remain were confined to restricted quarters and subjected to grievous annoyances. Christians were harassed considerably and the population was stirred up by anti-Christian agitators.

The third group of American Dominicans prostrated themselves in the sanctuary of St. Patrick Church in Columbus on the evening of October 20, 1926 in the impressive ceremony in which they heard the solemn command of their provincial bidding them to go forth to carry the Gospel to China. They arrived in China in January of 1927 but because of the persecution in the country they were unable to proceed to Kienning-fu. They stayed in Hong Kong until the fall, when the Nationalist Chinese government formed by Chiang Kai-shek forced the most aggressive of the Communists to retreat to mountain fastnesses.



Map of Fukien Province, showing the cities in which the American Dominicans had missions.

The missionaries were able to move up-river in the fall of 1927 and, after surveying the damage done by the lawless groups, they took up again their plan for the mission. A primary school was re-organized in Kienning-fu; a new mission (St. Vincent Ferrer) was established at Huang Keng in the west of the province; a mission (Our Lady of the Valley) was re-established in the Kauten region, where a church had been accidentally burned before the arrival of the Americans. During this time the development of a native teaching staff looking toward a well organized educational system was upper-most in the mind of the missionaries. Young men and women were sent to training schools in the larger cities. Vocations for the native clergy were encouraged. Christians in the mission territory numbered 917 in 1929.

The year of 1931 marked an epoch for the American Dominicans in China, for their mission was separated from the Vicariate of Foochow and was named the Independent Mission of Kiennig in China. Father Curran was named Ecclesiastical Superior of the Independent Mission and Father Werner became Vicar Provincial.

The beginning of the 1930s was filled with severe trials for the missionaries, especially in the Province of Fukien. Communists overran the interior of the province and worked great havoc in the mission. The city and countryside of Chungan were devastated. The Provincial of the Province of St. Joseph visited the mission in 1932 and wrote of the conditions in these words:

...Nor can one understand what our missionaries do, the sacrifices they make and the eagerness of the poor, illiterate Chinese to receive the Faith, unless a trip to the interior is made.

Conditions in our Independent Mission of Fukien are far from encouraging. The Northwestern and Northern parts of our district are filled with Reds and Communists who are endeavoring not only to drive out the priests and other Christian missionaries, but also to wipe out all Chinese Christians in the districts controlled by them.

The Chinese people as a whole are not prejudiced against the Church...their love for culture and beauty in any form is manifested in many ways....One of the crying needs for the conversion of China today is schools where the Chinese youth can receive an education.

In spite of the difficulties of the mission, or perhaps because of their dedication to overcoming the difficulties, in 1933 another group of five missionary priests arrived in Fukien. These men, however, because of the condition of the country, were not able to go directly to the mission. They devoted their time to the study of the language until the legendary "Long March" took most of the Communists from the nearby provinces into northern China.

The development of the mission continued apace as soon as conditions permitted. In 1935 the first group of Dominican Sisters from St. Mary of the Springs arrived in China. (Their story will comprise Part II of this series.) In 1936 a chapel called St. Albert the Great was opened in Kienning-fu for the Foochow boat-people, whose language and customs were different from those of the majority population of Kienning-Fu. Also in 1936, a mission named in honor of our Lady's Assumption was established outside the north gate of Kienning-fu. There, a tiny corner was set aside as a burial place for the missionaries. In 1937 a mission named St. Louis Bertrand was established in

the town of Pucheng, which was on a new road which had been built through the far north of the province. The year 1937 also saw the opening of the Fukien regional seminary in Foochow, which was to serve the three mission territories of the Spanish, German, and American Dominicans in Fukien Province.

In July, 1937 hostilities broke out between China and Japan and Kienning-fu suffered its first bombing on August 31, 1937. This was the beginning of eight years of warfare which gradually increased the difficulties of the mission. Development of the mission field continued during the early war years. On January 8, 1938 the Independent Mission of Kienning-fu was raised to the status of a Prefecture Apostolic by letter of Pope Pius XI. In 1939 a residence and church named St. Gabriel's were established in the village of Feng Lo.

Several attempts were made to form a minor seminary in connection with the school in Kienning-fu. It was uphill work, since most, if not all, of the candidates were from distant areas such as Foochow, which had larger Catholic populations but which differed in language, food, and customs. Many became discouraged. The work was continued until forced to be abandoned by World War II. Three vocations to the priesthood, however, came out of the efforts of the American Dominicans. Rev. Thomas D. Chang, O.P. a native of a small town near Foochow, was ordained in 1940 in Washington, D.C.; in 1934 he had been the first Chinese Dominican to make his profession in St. Joseph's Province. Two secular priests ordained for the Kienning-fu mission territory were Rev. Matthew Ch'en of Foochow, ordained in Funing, China in 1942, and Rev. Bartholomew Fu, a native of the mission of San Kan in the Kauten area, who was ordained in Foochow in 1946.

World War II brought the mission to difficult straits. For a long time communication with the United States was cut off. Terrific inflation sent prices to fantastic heights. Air raids damaged several of the mission properties, notably the convent and girls' school in Kienning-fu. This caused the gradual withdrawal of personnel, beginning with the Sisters in 1943. The Japanese took control of the coastal areas and the Communists held northern China, so the missionaries moved inland with the Nationalists to the Allied headquarters at Kunming. (Kunming was tied to the outside world only by a road through the jungles of Burma and by the American airlift over "the hump" of the Himalayas.) Several of the priests served as auxiliary chaplains to the Allied armed forces in Kunming, while others withdrew to the Catholic missions there or in other cities. The Kienning-fu missions were watched over by Father Ch'en, mentioned above, another native priest named Rev. Joseph Lin, and one of the Spanish Dominicans. By the end of the war, all of the Americans had, temporarily, departed from Kienning-fu.

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Rev. Bernard C. Werner, O.P.

Father Werner was born in Wheeling, W. Va. in 1894 but received his elementary education at Holy Name Parish in Steubenville. Among the many schools in which he pursued his higher studies were Aquinas College in Columbus and St. Joseph's near Somerset. He was ordained at St. Dominic's, Washington, D.C. on June 14, 1923. He was sent almost immediately to the mission in China, where his first duty of many years' duration was missionary at St. Joseph's in Kienyang. When the Independent Mission of Kienning-fu was

erected in 1931, Father Werner was named Vicar Provincial, while retaining responsibility for the mission at Kienyang. In 1941 he was named Administrator of the entire mission territory.

As World War II progressed in severity, Father Werner withdrew from the mission and served the Catholic mission at Kunming, which was protected by the Allied forces stationed there. He also was a guardian angel to the Dominican Sisters in their movements as they withdrew from the mission for the duration of the war. He remained Administrator of the mission when the war ended.

Rev. Frederick A. Gordon, O.P.

Father Gordon was born in Somerset, Ohio in 1897, son of William F. and Ida (May) Gordon. He was educated in the Holy Trinity Parish schools in Somerset, Aquinas College in Columbus, St. Joseph's near Somerset, St. Rose's near Springfield, Ky., and the House of Studies in Washington. He was ordained at St. Dominic's in Washington in 1925 and was sent almost immediately to the mission in China, where he arrived on January 1, 1927. He was missionary at St. Raymond's, Chungan. In 1929 he became Procurator of the American Dominicans, in Foochow. In 1935 he went home for a visit and was thus able on his return to accompany the Dominican Sisters when their first group came to China. In the fall of 1937 Father Gordon was relieved of the post of Procurator and was named missionary of the new St. Louis Bertrani mission in Pucheng. He also was rector of St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary, the minor seminary at Kienning-fu which was forced to close as the war increased in intensity. He was able to visit the United States again in 1939.

As World War II progressed, Father Gordon was one of the priests who withdrew from the mission and went to Kunming, where he served with the Catholic mission. He eventually was evacuated to India, from which he obtained passage to the United States late in 1945. He would later return to the mission, as will be reported in Part III.

Rev. Arthur C. Tierney, O.P.

Father Tierney, born in 1896, was a native of Martin's Ferry, Ohio, where he was educated in St. Mary's elementary school and the public high school. He served in World War I. After the war, he attended Aquinas College in Columbus before going on to the other educational establishments of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph. He was ordained at St. Dominic's Church, Washington, in 1930 and was sent at once to the mission in China. He was recalled to the United States after serving in China for only about one year.

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#### Orthographical Note

In the Pinyin system, which is insisted upon by the present government of China (even though it does not conform to the English alphabet), these are the names of the cities of the Kienning-fu mission territory which are found on most modern maps: Kienning-fu or Kienow is Jianou; Kienyang is Jianyang; Chungan is Chongan; Huang Keng is Huangkang. The Kien or Chien River is the Jianxi and Foochow is Fuzhou.

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HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, SOMERSET, OHIO  
REGISTER OF BAPTISMS AND MARRIAGES, 1827-1851  
(Continued from Vol. XV, No. 4)

(page 51)

1839, continued

- May 9 Mary, daughter of James Handibo and Mary Welch; spon. Michael Mahar and Mary Keenan. F.J.H. Clarkson  
May 25 Mary Ann, daughter of Michael Walsh and Catherine R\_\_\_\_da; spon. Timothy Maher and Elenor McGrath. N. D. Young  
June 5 Margaret, daughter of John Conlin and Mary Roney; spon. Patrick Corigan and Margaret Galligher. NDY  
June 7 Christopher, son of Charles and Catherine Seibert(?); spon. Christopher Seibert and Mary Sibert. NDY  
June 7 Frederick, son of Catherine Congler and Ann Gonloff; spon. George Dugart and Mary Dugart. NDY  
June 7 Margaret Kesler, daughter of Nicholas and Mary Kesler; spon. Francis Kesler and Margaret Shorr. NDY  
June 7 Margaret, daughter of Garking(??) Cunkler and Mary Congler; spon. Nicholas Dumolt and Margaret Goble(??). NDY  
June 16 Martha Ann, daughter of John Guysinger and Elizabeth Guysinger; spon. Michael and Susan Guysinger. NDY  
---- 23 Louisa, daughter of Levi Dean and Hester Owens; spon. James Dean and Mary Dean. FJHC  
---- -- Mary, daughter of Joseph Keim and Rose Keim; spon. Erdolph Keim and Mary Keim. FJHC  
---- 11 Jane, daughter of James Dillon and Eliza Wade; spon. John Wade and Ann Carr. FJHC

(page 52)

- Aug. 11 Sarah, daughter of Alexander Bond and Sarah Brady; spon. Michael Cary and Elizabeth Doyle. FJHC  
Aug. 12 Henry Anthony, son of Alexander Irwin and Elizabeth Adams; spon. Andrew Murphy and Mary Bu----. NDY  
Aug. 16 Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Cuniham and Emma Cull; spon. Daniel Carval and Mary -----. NDY  
Sept. 8 Mary Catherine, daughter of Enos McGary and Elizabeth M'Clung (?); spon. Patrick Mulrine and Mary McNulty. FJHC  
Sept. 18 Albert Joseph, son of Joseph Elder and Elizabeth Dittoe; spon. William Wiseman and Elizabeth Dittoe. NDY  
Sept. 22 Thomas Ewing, son of Samuel Denman and Susan Boyle; spon. Henry Dittoe and Elizabeth Dittoe or Dugan. FJHC  
Sept. 22 Clara Cord., daughter of John J. Jackson and Mary Grate; spon. John Wiseman and Elizabeth Wiseman or Gordon. FJHC  
Sept. 22 Eliz. Emil., daughter of Patrick Coony and Mary Brady; spon. Martin ----- and Julia Whitehead or Corny(?). FJHC  
Sept. 29 William, son of A---- Fridinger and Rebecca --iday(?); spon. Lynard Fridinger and Ursula -----. NDY

(page 53)

- Sept. 29 Cecilia, daughter of [blot] Fridinger and Rebecca Rider; spon. ---- Evans and Elizabeth Fridinger. NDY  
Oct. 6 Michael Nathaniel(?), son of James Costigan and Cecilia Elder; spon. William Walter and Mary Ann Frick(?) NDY  
[same ?] Michael, son of Anthony Clansy and [blank]; spon. Henry Dittoe and wife Elizabeth Dittoe. NDY

Oct. 20 Sara, daughter of William Jackson and Mary Hoge(?); spon. Adam Fi[n]ck and Frances Huit. NDY

Oct. 23 Peter Spurck, son of Peter Dittoe and Anne Spurck; spon. Henry Dittoe and Martha Spurck. NDY

Oct. 26 or 27 (over-written) Benjamin Philip Franklin, son of Nicholas Walthien and Henrietta Mitchel; spon. Robert Mitchel and Elizabeth Bond. FJHC

Nov. 1 Rebecca, daughter of Nicholas Boor and Catherine Boor; spon. Christina Smith(?) NDY

Nov. 1 Mary McDonnell, adult; spon. Mrs. Bond. NDY

Nov. 4 (or 9?) Lucy Gordon, adult, wife of William Gordon, conditionally; spon. William Gordon Sen. and Elizabeth Wigman(?). NDY

--- 24 George, son of John McGonigle and Mary Dougherty; spon. Daniel McGonigle and Mary McColgin. FJHC  
(page 54)

Dec. 29 James, son of Thomas(?) Gesth--- and Elizabeth M-----; spon. Philip Miner and Alice Gertha---. NDY

1840

Jan. 1 Conditionally, Elizabeth Trunnel, adult, wife of Francis Trunnel; spon. Mrs. Alice Fink. NDY

Jan. 5 Joshua(?) William, son of John Bertrin(?) and Ann Barber; spon. Andrew Doyle and Mary Ann Doyle. NDY

same Conditionally, John Henry, son of M. Burcheau and Mary A. Miller; spon. Minerad Burcheau and Mary Moretz Burcheau. FJHC

Jan. 9 Bernard, son of Anthony Fink and Mary Spurck; spon. William Fink and Eliza Fink. FJHC

Jan. 19 Francis, son of Martin Maguire and Ellen Masterson; spon. Peter and Ann Maguire. NDY

same Elizabeth, daughter of Patrick McDonnel and Elizabeth Fink; spon. Alexander Bond and Sara Brady. FJHC  
(page 55)

Jan. 20 Michael Joseph, son of Adam Finck and Alice Dugan; spon. John Finck and Elizabeth Finck. NDY

Jan. 22 Sara Jane, daughter of Jacob Dittoe and Rebecca Dittoe; spon. Michael and Barbara Dittoe. NDY

Jan. 23 Susan Boyle, adult, daughter of Michael and Mary Boyle; spon. Mary McNulty. NDY

Feb. 10 Nicholas Dominic, son of John Elder and Mary Snider; spon. Jacob and Cecilia Costigan. C. P. Montgomery

May 19 Sara Jane, born 29 April, daughter of Benjamin Hordin & Ann Trunnell; spon. Jacob Perong and Sarah Perong. NDY

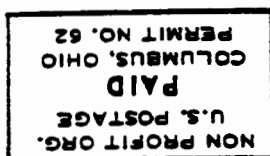
1839

Oct. 4 David, son of David Fancher and Catherine Thurly, born 25 Feb.; spon. Francis Ant. Gonloff and Jane Elder. NDY

Oct. 4 Thomas, son of Thomas Power and "C.", born 26 April; spon. Jacob Moor (?) and Mary Rian (?). NDY

(To be continued)

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197 E. Gay Street Columbus, Ohio 43215 Donald M. Schlegel, editor  
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CHANCERY OFFICE  
DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS  
198 EAST BROAD STREET  
COLUMBUS, OHIO 43215