

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Hong Kong, featuring a prominent Gothic-style church with a red-tiled roof in the foreground. The church has multiple spires and arched windows. In the background, a dense cluster of modern high-rise buildings with glass facades rises against a clear blue sky. The overall scene is a mix of historical architecture and modern urban development.

# Bishop John Travel Diary

Hong Kong

## Days One and Two - Sunday and Monday 28th/29th May

The Journey was long. The flight from Manchester to Doha was just short of seven hours. The transfer to the connecting flight from Doha to Hong Kong was only one hour and a half and the second flight lasted seven and a half hours.

Doha is clearly a flight hub, like neighbouring Dubai, with destinations in Europe, Africa and Asia. The airport is expanding with extensive construction sites which we saw in the ten minute bus ride to our next aircraft. It was worrying to see, at 2am in the morning, large numbers of workmen on site and working in badly lit and even unlit areas, often close to large machines.

The dawn and sunrise were spectacular as we crossed from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan and there were clear skies as we travelled over India. I was reminded of the severe climate troubles that this area has suffered in the past year. Thirty million people displaced when one third of Pakistan was flooded, and the six million displaced in Bangladesh through the flooding of the Ganges delta. There was some evidence of it all visible from the plane. Contrast that with the record temperatures of 45 degrees, in Delhi, months before the hottest season of the year. Then there was the time flying over Myanmar, with all its persecution of ethnic minorities.

On the first flight my neighbour was a former British soldier who is now working for an NGO in Somalia. His reports of the suffering due to the five year drought were harrowing. I was hopeful that the young lady passenger next to me for the second flight might have told me about Hong Kong. We exchanged a few remarks as we settled into our places but then she put on earphones and slept most of the way.

The arrival in Hong Kong has been quite dramatic. The place has changed and developed so much since I was here in 1996. The architecture is even more dramatic, with apartment blocks up to sixty storeys, all so slim and closely packed - some look light sheets of paper rising from the ground.

Bishop Joseph Ha and Fr Bruno Lepeu, a French missionary priest, met me at the enormous airport and it was a spectacular ride into Hong Kong, to the Cathedral in the heart of Kowloon. I am staying at the Cathedral Centre, on the sixteenth floor (!) where there are several priests in residence. On the twelfth floor are the offices of Bishop Stephen Chow and the four Vicars General.

Bishop Joseph and Fr Bruno took me to meet with Bishop Stephen and we had an excellent conversation on a range of subjects including, of course, a preliminary discussion about the provision of chaplains for the Hong Kong Catholics who have arrived in the UK.

All three of them have set a lot of time to the side to show me around this week and to



let me get acquainted with this rather unique Diocese and the city it serves.

Supper followed which was in the dining room of the priest residents. What a very friendly crowd. Fourteen came to supper with priests from Ireland, Mexico, France, Italy and mainland China. Both the Irish Columban Father and the Mexican have been here over forty years.

Straight after supper, I was shown the chapel where I will be able to celebrate Mass if I am not in the Cathedral to concelebrate.

Then Bishop James and Fr Bruno took me to the Peak, the tourist destination which gives the best views over Hong Kong. After sunset there is a blaze of lights from this skyscraper city. The density of living must be the highest of any city. The apartment blocks, many over forty and fifty storeys are all packed together so that there is almost room to shake hands from one balcony to another. On the peak there are the super expensive residences, mainly owned by non Hong Kongers but bought for investment.

What an introduction to this place! The itinerary is full and I have already heard some facts and statistics which are both shocking and surprising which I will hope to put in context over the next few days. But having slept very little in the last thirty six hours, and now being seven hours ahead of GMT, I will call it a day.

### Day Three - Tuesday 30th May

It is 7am and already 27 degrees and likely to rise to 33 degrees. There is also a clear blue sky but there is apparently a typhoon on the way which could make things very humid and wet. I woke up to soft siren-like noises which I am fairly sure are birds but will enquire.

The day ahead looks busy with a visit at 9am to the Diocesan Pastoral Centre for Filipinos, to the Korean Community at 11am, a meeting with the eight deans of the Diocese at 4pm and dinner with them and the Curia this evening.

I was pleased with my eventual success in finding the dining room again, after several tries. It is on the 13th Floor. I had breakfast with two of the resident priests. One is in charge of a number of pastoral projects, including the chaplaincy of prisons, which he admits are very grim places here although he has seen worse in other countries. The other priest (and names will eventually get memorised!) is in charge of Caritas. I will be visiting the Caritas offices in these days. He calmly tells me that he has between 4,000 to 5,000 employees! Much of the funding comes from the government which could be fragile in these changing times.

The morning proved very busy indeed. I met with Fr Michael, the Irish Columban priest, at 9am. Together with Fr Edward, a Hong Kong priest, we were taken in a Tesla car to the Catholic Centre. Before I mention the Centre, I should say that it was quite an experience

to be driven through the business area of Hong Kong with a glass roof on the car. The experience of travelling through these skyscrapers was very dramatic. The land of most of the present business area is reclaimed from the sea and there would be major problems if the sea levels begin to rise here, as predicted.

The Catholic Centre is five floors of a twenty floor building. Although there is a chapel, the Centre is essentially a meeting place for the Filipino community. There are meeting rooms, a library and a bookshop. The Catholic Women's League and CTS meet here, as do the Legion of Mary. There are two Filipino sisters of The Good Shepherd Order in charge. They work with two distinct groups, the Filipinos and the Indonesian workers. There are estimated 193,000 Filipino domestic workers and 140,000 Indonesian domestic workers here. The legal system has protected their rights in employment but, of course, there are many violations involving people trafficking and modern slavery. There are also problems of depression, homelessness, abuse and discrimination. The Centre runs a lot of projects including two homelessness hostels which attend to about 100 residents each year. One of the main projects these days is on the Sunday when very large crowds of Filipinos (normally around 100,000) gather in the park in the business area of Kowloon for their social events, simply for companionship. Catechists mingle with the crowds and have had success in bringing many back to the Church.

The South Korean Chaplain, Fr James Kim, arrived to escort me to the South Korean Centre. It was about a fifteen minute walk but it was very hot and I certainly welcomed the parts of the journey where we went through the open pedestrian areas of air-conditioned buildings.

At the South Korean Centre I met the leadership team and some of the catechists. A very impressive and warmly welcoming group, all ladies but the priest chaplain. They spoke about their community and its activities. While all spoke good English, only one said that she spoke reasonable Cantonese. They are of a fairly prosperous group with husbands moving to Hong Kong in good jobs. I certainly sensed their enthusiasm for their faith and I saw three groups of people here, on a Tuesday morning, for biblical studies.

By 12.30pm we had spent a good time on conversation and there was an invitation to lunch at a Japanese restaurant before an Uber back to the Cathedral centre. The Uber was also another Tesla car with the glass roof.

This afternoon I met with the eight deans of the Diocese of Hong Kong, with the four Vicars General and the Procurator. Bishop Chow and Bishop Ha were also there. I felt very

privileged that they had been summoned to meet with me. The aim of the meeting was to consider the reality of the Hong Kong migration to the United Kingdom and how best we might welcome and serve the needs of the migrants. There was a lot of conversation and, I am very pleased to say, that there was no negativity. The deans had a lot of news from people from their parishes who had moved to the UK and a lot of good news about the sense of welcome. But there were also questions about how other services might be promoted, not just what might be provided for them but what they might provide for themselves and offer to our parishes.

There was much appreciation about the role of the Catholic schools in the welcome extended to the young people. Much was said about the importance of Sunday Schools which flourish here in Hong Kong as ongoing catechesis of the young and their families. Certainly, the Keralan and Nigerian communities give the same importance to on-going catechesis with their frequent meetings for social celebrations and learning. It is something that we had in the Catholic Church in the UK a long time ago but it has all but disappeared. Formal religious commitment is limited to Mass attendance and sacramental programmes. How good it would be if parish groups could meet more socially with that sense of building stronger communities.

There was particular attention given to the needs and expectations of different age groups. The small children are quickly learning English in school and there is concern that they may never learn fluent Cantonese. The elderly group will need a different type of pastoral care as they settle to old age, while the young parents of today may well return to Hong Kong in the future. Distinctions were also made about the Hong Kong Chinese who moved to UK before Hong Kong was returned to Chinese administration in 1997, and the new arrivals who have lived for 26 years under a very different system of government and welfare.

It was interesting that, among the deans, there was a priest from India, one from Indonesia, one from mainland China, one from Argentina. It all emphasises the cosmopolitan nature of Hong Kong which is so evident as I walked between meetings in the business centre today.

The “weather app” has threatened thunder storms today but they have not arrived. The weather is predicted to be quite wild in the next few days but today the temperature reached 34 degrees in a windless atmosphere.

It has been a very good day with meeting so many people and learning about the vibrant Church in Hong Kong. The timetable for the following days looks just as busy.

### Day Four - Wednesday 31st May

Today's activities centre on the Cathedral and the diocesan offices that surround it in this compound. This evening I am invited to supper at the house of the French Missionary priests, on the Peak. Fr Bruno Lepeu came to England in March to make his report on the Hong Kong Chinese and he is being very generous with his time now that I am here. He has been here for thirty years and is very knowledgeable. He is also one of the few people I have met who is fluent in both Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese.

Lunchtime. What a morning. I am feeling rather overwhelmed by the activity of this Diocese. I met with Fr Dominic at 9am. He is the Parish Priest of the Cathedral and he took me on a guided tour of the cathedral and its facilities. The church itself is very impressive and beautifully clean and tidy with some very beautiful artwork and stained glass. There are a lot of volunteers who keep the place spotless, give guided tours and generally run the place day by day. There are three priests officially on appointment to the church. There was a great emphasis in all that Fr Dominic said about evangelisation. It seems that many people come here out of curiosity and they are provided with all sorts of printed material and help in understanding what the Church is all about. I also saw the extensive facilities for children and young people where groups come together after Mass or for social gatherings. There was quite a emphasis on games and educational puzzles to interest children of all age and make them curious about the origins of the Catholic Faith and how they can learn about it.

I went from there to a series of departments with responsibilities for media and the publishing of the weekly newspaper (a version in English and a version in Cantonese), a recording studio, the liturgy department and the catechetical centre. Everywhere there was the emphasis on engaging people and equipping them to help build their communities.

The catechetical office offers a two year training programme with weekly seminars on eight keys areas: Catechism, Bible, dogmatics, liturgy, morals, retreats, spirituality, psychology and Faith and Science.

The training is required if an individual wishes to be a catechist. That department is celebrating sixty years (with over 5,000 graduates) and has trained 500 catechists at present at work in 52 parishes, with 1,200 catechists running Sunday Schools.

The Cathedral surrounded by its parish!



The training also includes a final oral examination. It is clear to me that, here in Hong Kong, life as a Catholic really means an active engagement in the liturgical, catechetical and social life of the parish.

The morning session ended at 12.30pm and I had a quick (and very light) lunch so as to allow a break before the afternoon session which begins with Bishop Stephen at 3pm.

The morning's activities were all in one of the buildings of the Catholic Cathedral compound which comprises the church, a ten storey Caritas building, a sixteen storey Curia office and residential building, a multi-storey complex of primary and secondary schools. And this place is surrounded by a vast curtain of high-rise apartment buildings which are among the most expensive in Hong Kong because of their location in the centre of Kowloon. While a compound, there is a public pedestrian pathway through the grounds and Fr Dominic was keen to emphasise that many people come along the path and stop at the Marian shrine to pray or to look at the various exhibitions in the large windows on the ground floor of the buildings. There is such an emphasis on mission and evangelisation here - with all parish churches open to the public all day, every day.

I met with Bishop Stephen at 3pm and we went to the Education Office. I am no expert about the education system in my own Diocese but this was a presentation of a complexity of rules and regulations by different authorities, (As with every visit until now, I have been hosted by those in authority and there has been a full powerpoint presentation, followed by a tour and the opportunity to ask questions). Education has been an important priority since the modern beginnings of Hong Kong and so many schools were opened by religious orders who came in mission. There are now 252 Catholic schools in Hong Kong; 99 are run by the Diocese with government subsidy, 117 are run by religious orders and 36 run by Caritas. There are about 1,000 schools in the whole of Hong Kong. Many of the religious orders are now relinquishing authority in their schools, mainly due to an increase in vocations to their orders. This causes complications as to future administration and funding. Caritas runs schools mainly for those with special needs. There was great emphasis placed on the Catholic ethos in the schools, even though only about 17% of the students in the schools would be Catholic.

Our next stop was the Diocesan Archive. Another presentation of what seemed to be a very well ordered and complete archive. Peter Lau is the archivist, and a former headteacher. We were shown the secured archive store and some ancient documents.

The final visit was to the Caritas offices, in their ten storey building. I was met by the whole of the senior management and there was another presentation of their work. It was founded in July 1953 and just beginning to celebrate 70 years. It seems to know no bounds! There are currently no less than 6,300 staff, and 10,000 volunteers. They provide 270 different services and work from 150 locations across the whole of Hong Kong. They even have two hospitals in their care.

Their motto, in English, is expressed: “Last, least, lost - loving, leading, learning”.

We were given a tour of much of this building which included a play area for children with special needs, with therapy opportunities, a kindergarten, a centre for the elderly, a conference venue which holds 800 people, three floors of offices for staff, a restaurant, and much more. I spoke about my pride in the work of Salford Caritas but had to admit that it was tiny in comparison.

The afternoon tour took us to 5.30pm - a total of six hours of visiting today. The day has been excellent and so informative but also exhausting as it is all related in quite highly accented English, often spoken by people wearing face masks. But it has been fascinating. The day was not over. I met with Fr Bruno and the Director of Caritas, Fr Joseph. I had been invited to Fr Bruno’s community house for supper with some members of his missionary society (MEP - Missionaires d’etrangers de Paris). The group included a French priest working in Cambodia, A Vietnamese and three French priests working in Hong Kong. The house is on the Peak which is the most sought after and expensive place in Hong Kong. When the house was built, Hong Kong was tiny and the Peak was not of special interest. But recent sales of houses have been beyond belief. The house next door to the missionaries recently sold for 80 million U.S. dollars. A businessman recently bought two houses next to each other for 85 million dollars. The French mission are intending to sell their house as they are building an entire retreat house for about half the amount that they are likely to get for their sale. I have to admit that the views were magnificent but hardly worth that amount.

The threat of the typhoon has passed as it has bypassed Hong Kong and is heading for Taiwan. Only after the threat had passed did I realise how worried people were about the possible impact it might have had. The heavy rain and thunder was isolated to just a part of Hong Kong and we remained in sunshine and hot weather throughout the day - though heavy rain is still forecast. Apparently weather can be that localized, with different extremes within a few miles of each other.

The end of another busy day. Tomorrow I am to visit the seminary (although the seminarians are not there during their vacation) and a parish.

### Day Five - Thursday 1st June

I was woken a little before 6am by some very loud claps of thunder and torrential rain. The centre of the storm was very close with the thunder and lightening almost simultaneous. It all seemed very dramatic and the news today has reported that over Hong Kong Island there were more than 10,000 instances of lightening this morning. Also in the news today has been the concern that the temperature is persistently high for this time of the year. There is news that Vietnam is reducing street lighting in order to conserve electricity for the air-conditioning as the temperatures there are high and rising. I have certainly found it uncomfortably hot here and Vietnam will be hotter still.



Back to the activities of the day. I concelebrated Mass with Fr Gabriel, a Mexican priest, in the Cathedral at 7am. There was a good number of people there but many more for the second Mass at 7.45am. The storm had caused a traffic jam so Bishop Joseph was a little late in collecting me for the drive to the seminary.

The Holy Spirit Seminary was built about 90 years ago, before the major building development began. It has Chinese traditional architecture and is close to the bay and the open sea. While it has some fairly extensive grounds which include trees and gardens, it is now overlooked by some enormous apartment blocks which are particularly expensive because of their location on the waterfront. Bishop Joseph Ha is the Rector of the seminary and assisted by a President of the seminary and its college. There are only nine seminarians at the moment but the seminary college offers degrees in philosophy and theology (accredited to the Pontifical Urbanianum University in Rome) and there are about 200 lay students. There is a fine library (Chinese on the ground floor with English above). One of the most interesting visits here was to the Holy Spirit Study Centre where I met the retired Cardinal Tong. The Study Centre researches relations of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong with that of mainland China, where there are an estimated 10 million Catholics, 68 bishops authorised by the Chinese government and about 30 bishops of the underground church. The Cardinal described the progress of the work and how it is trying to promote good relations.

We had a pleasant lunch at the seminary with a couple of the priest professors and then made our way to the east of Hong Kong Island, to the Parish of the Holy Cross. There are three priests here and a Maryknoll sister, native of the Congo who had found her vocation to religious life while in Brazil! It is one of the most vibrant parishes but it has suffered from the migration to the United Kingdom. They estimate that about 200 of the parishioners (of a total of 1,750) have left in the last two years. It is highly organised with a parish council of 20 people who run a wide variety of pastoral projects and ministries, including a food bank.

The church has an eight storey administrative building which houses all its own offices and also four diocesan Commissions, all of which we were to visit. We went first to Central Council for the Laity which concerns itself with evangelisation and adult formation. Next was the Pastoral Commission for Marriage and the Family, whose work began in 2000 when the Diocese had conducted its own synod and its conclusions prioritised care for this subject. It established five ministries: Pastoral ministry, Pro-Life, Theology of the body, same sex care, pastoral care. The resources provided for each were all explained in some detail. The next office was the Diocesan Commission for Integral Human Development which was only established in January of this year, replacing the work of the Justice and Peace Commission.

It is committed to the teaching of Pope Francis and works on the principle that “everything is connected” and promotes individual formation, care for the environment, human rights, social and economic issues. It has particular care for the marginalised, for adequate housing, working conditions, social security and care for the elderly. The final visit was to the office of Commission for Labour Affairs which promotes the rights of marginalized workers, helping 43,000 workers in 2021.

I was concerned that many of their descriptions of their work overlapped and was assured that there is continual communication between the offices and good collaboration, ensuring that “everything is connected”. There is no doubt that the Diocese of Hong Kong has a well integrated pastoral outreach and I was impressed to hear that there are 400 diocesan employees for these pastoral endeavors, and about 10,000 lay volunteers many of who are trained for their particular contribution. There does seem to be a clear understanding of social needs, and concern was frequently expressed for the Filipino and Indonesian domestic workers who can so easily slip into poverty.

It was now 5pm and we had the drive back to the Cathedral. I had asked Bishop Stephen for a little time alone with him so that I could ask questions about his immediate priorities and concerns. We had over an hour together and I am very grateful for the discussion. It contained reference to the loss of the migrants, with their many qualifications and skills, to the UK. There were his concerns about this new stage of the political life of Hong Kong in relation to China and the constant need to review priorities for the Diocese in fast-changing times. He also spoke about himself and his first eighteen months as a bishop, having been Jesuit Provincial and president of two Jesuit colleges at the time of his appointment.

Tomorrow we travel to the “New Territories” which have developed greatly in the last twenty years, to visit two parishes and meet with priests. The Diocese is in the process of building two new churches for new parishes in a fast developing landscape. The price of land is shocking.

We have heard so much about the training of the laity and their willingness to embark on study courses for up to two years in order to feel qualified for the particular task for which they have volunteered. Courses can be as demanding as Tuesday and Thursday evenings for two hours each and all of Saturday afternoon. What generosity!

### Day Six - Friday 2nd June

I have been at the Mass in the Cathedral and the celebrant this morning was a priest originally from mainland China. He is a Divine Word Missionary. He has just begun a new appointment here and is a bit concerned that, as a Mandarin-speaker, his Cantonese must be clear for the people’s understanding. We had breakfast together and he showed me

a picture of the church in his village in central China. It is cathedral-like. An enormous building which dominates the skyline. The village is very Catholic, with over five thousand at Sunday Mass. He has a brother and four sisters. One sister is a medical doctor and a nun who is working in Taiwan. As a missionary, he has just returned from thirteen years in Paraguay. At breakfast there was also a Polish priest who has been in Hong Kong for ten years, after twenty years in Paris. The mix of priests is truly extraordinary. I still have not worked out how many priests live in this Cathedral residence - probably about fifteen but I will keep counting.

Friday evening: It has been another long but very interesting day. I left the Cathedral House at 9am and have just returned at 10.15pm. I will give a quick account and see if I can add some detail tomorrow. I went with Bishop Chow and Bishop Ha, and one of the V.G.s, Fr Joseph, in a car to the New Territories. This is land that lies north of the main urban areas of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon and reaches the former border with mainland China. We went to a place called Tien Mun.

There is not such thing here as a village or small town, Tien Mun is a little Manhattan, maybe twenty miles from the main city. We went first to meet with priests of a deanery who were having a deanery meeting with the bishop. Bishop Ha and I then went to a primary school and then to a secondary school, returning to meet with the priests for another sumptuous meal (my priests would be so jealous if they compared that meal with the meal they have after their deanery meetings!)

I then went with the two bishops to meet with Fr Bruno, the French priest, who had suggested that we walk to see a few things, before my next scheduled meeting.

We travelled to the Taoist Temple area which is also the worship space for several Buddhist and Confucian sects and then to one of the most modern business skyscrapers on Hong Kong Island. The building is 75 storeys but there is a little known secret that there is free access to the 45th floor with magnificent views. From there we travelled again on the train to St Jude's parish where I was met by the assistant priest, Fr Dominic, and had an hour in conversation with the young adult group about their experiences in these changing political times.

We all went to see the apartment of a married couple of the group as I had requested the possibility of seeing a modern apartment. It was considered a high standard but is really tiny.

There is quite a lot of detail to be added but I think I need to take a break and come back to this tomorrow if and when there is time. Tomorrow has its own timetable, including a visit to Catechesis class, a meeting at the Caritas Institute of Higher Education, a visit to another parish and a Sunday School.

### Day Seven - Saturday 3rd June

I managed to forget to mention what was probably the most important meeting of yesterday which was with the Commission for Youth Ministry. This was the first stop of the afternoon, having had lunch with the deanery priests and been driven back to Kowloon by the bishops. The office of the Commission is attached to a parish. There had been a school here but it had outgrown the available space and moved and there was office space available and other space for parish activities. The Commission is just five people but the activity is impressive, particularly including various projects on social media and the organising of youth events, such as World Youth Day when over 200 young people will be traveling to Portugal this year. I spoke with the Director of the Commission, a Mexican priest, and was interviewed, at some length, by the communications person about the reasons and objectives for my visit to Hong Kong.

The visits to the schools yesterday were important. The Catholic Church here has 249 schools. 99 of them are run by the Diocese, 36 by Caritas, 46 by men's religious congregation and 66 by women's congregations, and 2 by the laity. They all have a rather different impact. The schools I visited yesterday were diocesan. They seemed to be very well equipped (For instance I was shown a technical workshop where several 3D printers were being used by students) and there were clear signs of all the computerised assistance to learning. What was remarkable was the identity of the pupils. At St Mark's Secondary School there are 750 students but only 23 are Catholic. I am told that the schools run by the religious orders would have a higher percentage of Catholics but still only a minority. The Church has always provided Catholic schools in mission territories. They bring the Catholic ethos and certainly, here in Hong Kong, they have an impact as each year there are some 3,000 adult baptisms and that must surely reflect the impact of schooling on non-Catholic pupils.

At St Mark's school I sat with the Principle, the religious studies teacher and a 15-year-old pupil called Clare. She had volunteered to introduce me to the school. Her English was very good indeed but hampered by her shyness and the fact that she wore a mask. But she had a lot to say about the school and the school's Catholic Society, of which she is the President this year. In the corridors we were met with great courtesy with hands clasped, as if in a prayerful salute, and a bow from all the students who passed by.

The weather is causing concern here. This week's thunderstorm was unusually strong and these temperatures, of up to 35 degrees this week, are only very occasionally felt in the peak of the summer season, still two months away. I have spoken with various people about the environment and climate change awareness. In every case, people have been concerned that, while there is general information readily available and publicised, there is little or no action. The steep hills of this coastline mean that there are large areas, surrounding the densely populated urban areas, that are green and wilding but the energy required for this city is not in general renewable and climate change is having an impact.



There is concern that much of the business area is on reclaimed land, very close to sea-level. The government recently announced plans to build a large number of apartments on higher ground but people consider this as only a gesture.

The visit to the temple area was fascinating. It is a complex of classical Chinese-style religious buildings, richly decorated in gold and red, which is surrounded by apartment blocks of up to forty and fifty storeys. There are many statues of dragons, holy men and women, creatures of all kinds, both mythical and real. It was explained to me that the original temple is Taoist but it has become a place where many oriental religious rites come together. It has a very strong tradition here as the place where prayers are answered, problems resolved and the future is foretold! There were many people kneeling before one shrine with cups of small (chopstick-like) sticks. They shake the cups until three sticks are separated and fall to the ground. Each stick has a number. The individual then takes the three numbers to a fortune-teller who interprets them. It was interesting to see the variety of people using this form of prayer, young and old. The temples also had some beautiful, but small, gardens.

I always enjoy wandering around markets. Fr Bruno was keen to demonstrate two very distinct forms of market here. We went to some street markets, teeming with people. There was lots of Chinese medicine stalls, an abundance of vegetables, meat and fish. The concern for me was that this was early afternoon and much of the meat and fish was simply displayed in the heat of the day and had been there for some hours. Then there were the new shopping malls which resemble our own with designer goods and spacious areas. Fr Bruno explained that these places are always so busy simply because people have so little alternative space. They live in small apartments and there are almost no parks within the city with all its traffic. Outings on boats seem to be increasingly popular. There may be some beaches but I have not seen any. The additional constraints of the Covid lockdown must have presented additional problems of movement.

I have had three different conversations with young people about the migration of Hong Kong Chinese, especially to the U.K. A mother of two small children (6 and 4 years) was so worried about the decision to move, or not. She is keen for the children to have good Catholic education but she is also worried about leaving her parents in Hong Kong at a time when they are beginning to need some care and attention. Her husband is clear about the merits of moving to England and the employment possibilities. Another couple were more concerned about the growing impact of the Chinese Central Government. Should they just get away? Or would it be better to stay and be part of the call for more freedom and democracy? Everywhere I have been, I have been meeting with people who know friends and relations who have left Hong Kong in the last couple of years and in almost every case the reports from those who have moved have been positive. It must be a dilemma for them. The impact of the migration has been felt by the parishes who have lost so many volunteers, catechists, teachers etc. One parish priest said that at least 200 of his congregation had gone.

I think the above just about brings me up to date and I am ready for Saturday! I concelebrated Mass in the Cathedral again this morning and I am waiting for my first appointment which I believe is at a parish catechetical class in one of the parishes.....

I wasn't ready for Saturday at all! Another full day and I have had to rethink a lot of my comments about Hong Kong! I was met by Fr Peter Chow, one of the V.G.s, at 10am and we set off to one of the new suburbs called Tsang Kwano.

As I suggested yesterday, developments here are not as we would know it but another little Manhattan, all constructed within the last twenty years. Surrounded by towering apartment blocks of 50 floors, we entered a mere 10 storey administrative building of The Caritas Institute for Higher Education to meet its President, a Mexican Guadalupe priest, Fr Raphael. The Institute has 4,500 students, of whom only 140 are Catholics but the presence of the Catholic ethos is important. The Institute has three patrons: St Francis of Assisi (humanities), Francis Xavier (evangelization) and St Francis Savio (learning). The Institute is striving to have full university recognition, with a decision even in the coming few months. The place was most impressive. We made a visit to a Saturday session lecture for two hundred aspiring catechists (on their two year qualification course). As we entered the lecture hall, Fr Raphael said "of course you might like to address the students, perhaps for ten minutes"! Fortunately, Pope Francis and "Missionary disciples came to mind, along with St Paul's "So we are ambassadors for Christ".

Fr Peter then drove about 30 miles to the town of Sai Kung. This is where some of my impressions of Hong Kong must change. I had been told that only 20% of Hong Kong is urbanised and developed and that leaves 80% wooded hills. These hills were now fully in sight with magnificent steep hills which are apparently very popular for walking. So my comments about people having no space for recreation needs to change - although these walks are a distance from the dense residential urban areas.

Sai Kung was a great surprise. There are no high rise buildings, most houses and shops are just a couple of floors. It is a resort. There are beaches and boats for hire and a marina full of private yachts. We visited Fr Raja, an Indian PIME priest, at the Parish of Sacred Heart. There was a crowded Filipino Mass in progress and we met in the spotlessly tidy presbytery and spoke about the parish. It is the oldest parish in Hong Kong. Founded in 1864 by the PIME Missionary Fathers. There have been 50 parish priests in its history. It boasts 4 martyrs during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong. The present church was built in 1959. There are both a primary and a secondary school with notably more recreational land than I have seen in the city. Set on the coast, the parish has ten chapels, which are pilgrimage shrines. About 500 people attend Sunday Masses.

We drove back to Kowloon, to its eastern side, to visit the Parish of St Andrew. Rebuilt only a few years ago it is a magnificent space, with bright church for over a thousand people, halls and offices. The parish priest, Fr Jacob, welcomed us and spoke about the

Sunday School of the parish which was finishing today for the summer. Before Covid and the migration, there were 650 children attending, aged six to eleven. After Covid and with the impact of migration, the number is now 400. Two hundred families have migrated, mainly to UK but some to Canada and Australia.

Back to the Cathedral so that I could celebrate a Vigil Mass for Sunday (as I am traveling all Sunday).

At 6.30pm, having organised boarding passes and journey to the airport for the morning, I met with Bishop Stephen and other members of his leadership group, for supper at the hotel run by the Diocese. Fortunately, we are back at the hotel by 9pm and I must be packed and ready for the departure to the airport at 5am tomorrow.