

CHINA PROVINCE

Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan

Official languages: Mainland China, Taiwan - **Mandarin**; Hong Kong - **Cantonese, English**; Macau - **Cantonese, Portuguese**

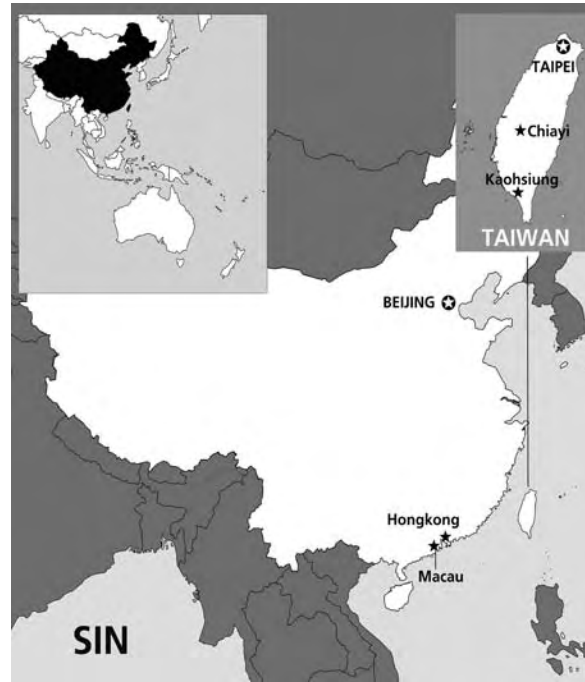
Vision Statement

Called by the Father, sent by Jesus and guided by the Holy Spirit, we share the Living Word in the China Province, the first SVD mission chosen by the Founder Saint Arnold Janssen and where Saint Joseph Freinademetz lived and died as mission pioneer.

Mission Statement

As Divine Word missionaries, we are committed

- *to proclaim the Word to all we meet, in ways that touch the heart of the people, and to lead them to Jesus;*
- *to live prophetically and meaningfully the evangelical counsels to counter the pervasiveness of greed, selfishness and materialism, to the exploitation and disrespect of human life as well as individualism and intolerance of diversity; -*
- *to serve the Church in Greater China, and form communities of Gospel values, and to invite all to share in the mission of the Church;*
- *to serve the people, especially those on the margins of society;*
- *to dialogue with traditional and modern Chinese culture and religions, with non-believers, faith-seekers, the youth, and those*



who search for cultural identity, human dignity and authentic human relationships.

1. Societal Setting

Mainland China: The People's Republic of China is the most populous nation on earth, with a total population of 1,389 million. Of its people, 92% are Han Chinese. The remaining 8% consists of some 55 ethnic minorities that have languages and cultures of their own. Some of these groups have peacefully integrated themselves with the Han majority. But notable exceptions are the Buddhist Tibetans, the Muslim Uigurs in Xinjiang, and the Muslim Hui – who often assert their respective ethnic-religious identities and clamor for political autonomy.

For centuries China stood as a leading civilization in the world. But in the 19th and early 20th centuries the country was beset by western powers vying for occupation, civil unrest, and major famines. After World War II, the Communists established an autocratic socialist system. Within just two decades of intensive industrialization, China grew not only in material prosperity, but also as a weighty influence in international politics.

Consequently, a new “cultural revolution” is taking place in the country – namely, from survival to consumer culture. One can now afford to make various choices in living, clothing, food, work, marriage partner, religion, etc. The values of rural communal living are giving way to individualistic urban lifestyles. As migrations to cities intensify, national fertility is dropping alarmingly below maintenance level. For this reason, the “one-child policy” has now been relaxed.

Taiwan: Taiwan, just off the south-east coast of Mainland China, with a population of 24 million, is functionally an independent country with free press and a multi-party democratic government. Currently, many young men, especially in the countryside, have been unable to find local brides and there are an increasing number of young women from Mainland China, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries who have immigrated to Taiwan to fill the gap. While some of the marriages have been successful, problems of language, cultural adaptation, adjusting to the new family and difficulties in school for the children are common. Finally a large group of foreign workers have come to

Taiwan to work. The largest numbers are from Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines. Most of the Filipinos are Catholic and are a significant presence in the Taiwan Church.

Hong Kong and Macau are Special Administrative Regions (SAR) of the Peoples' Republic of China. Hong Kong returned to China in 1997 after 150 years of British rule and Macau returned to China in 1999 after 450 years of being an overseas Portuguese territory. "One country, two systems" was the slogan proposed by Chairman Deng Xiaoping to define the new political reality of the two former colonies. Both enjoy freedoms unknown to Chinese Mainland citizens. Hong Kong also has a large group of overseas contract workers, mostly women serving as domestics.

2. Ecclesial Setting

Mainland China: The local Church has gone through difficult times since the beginning of Communist rule on the mainland. The government is a self-proclaimed communist-atheist state. However, freedom of religion is also guaranteed in the constitution. Early on all religious entities in China had to renounce ties with any foreign authority. For Catholics this meant renouncing their allegiance to the Pope. And this initiated the split between the underground Church and the above ground government-sanctioned Church. However, currently both the below ground and above ground Church (also known as the open Church) recognize the spiritual authority of the Pope. Government control of the appointment of Bishops has re-

sulted in increasing division between the underground and the official Church.

During the recent decades of rapid economic growth, there has been massive migration of Chinese youth to the cities, leading to weakening of the traditional Catholic rural communities. With rising affluence and a tendency toward small families, Catholic families yield fewer and fewer vocations to the religious and priestly life. There have been significant improvements in the training of formators and professors in the seminaries and houses of formation. But there are still problems, especially for small communities of diocesan women religious. Lay people are becoming more actively involved in evangelization, catechesis and social apostolates. The number of the Catholic faithful is estimated to have doubled since the rise of the Communist regime.

Taiwan: Though the majority of Taiwan's people profess to be non-religious, many in fact practice a religious mixture of Buddhism, Taoism and various folk traditions. The aboriginal tribes are 3% of the population, with most being Christian. About 30% of the aborigines are Catholic. Descendants of the first wave of Han-Chinese migrants from southern China constitute more than 80% of the island's settlers, with less than 4% being Catholic. The second wave of Chinese immigrants (often referred to as mainlanders) came after 1949 and constitute on the order of 15% of the population. More recently, many Catholics have come as migrant contract workers and foreign spouses. Local vocations are few. Hence, the Church in Taiwan is still heavily dependent on

foreign personnel, more than 50% of whom are religious and priests from other countries.

Hong Kong and Macau: The Church in Hong Kong and Macau enjoys the same freedoms as in Taiwan. In Hong Kong, the percentage of Christians (Catholic and Protestant) is on the order of 10%. The Christians of Macau are mostly Catholic, on the order of 15% of the population. In Hong Kong there are a large number of Catholic and Protestant schools, a presence well beyond the numerical presence of Christians. The schools are both Chinese medium and English medium institutions and the schools are in general financed by the Hong Kong government. Recently several small Catholic educational centers have been combined to form the Hong Kong Catholic University.

3. Intercultural Life – *Ad Extra*

Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Parish	57	47.5	36.4	29.7
Education	12	10.0	12.7	21.2
Schools	2	-		
Universities	10	-		
Formation/ SVD Vocation	5	4.3	4.2	8.5
Administration/ Support	13	10.8	9.5	5.7
Other Apostolates	9	7.5	5.9	9.0

JPIC	0	-		
Bible	1	-		
Communication	0	-		
Mission Animation	0	-		
Others	8	-		

Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/Orientation	10	8.3	18	13.7
Retired/Sick	10	8.3	5.9	6.6
Others	4	3.3	7.6	5.7

Mainland China: Mainland China comprises the largest district of the province with 48 members. All but three are local vocations. The largest number work in parish ministry, where they are “officially” diocesan priests. The second largest category is “other ministries,” primarily retreat ministry. The confreres are divided in far-flung “communities” from Gansu in the West to Shandong in the East, Manchuria in the Northeast to Hubei in south-central China. The center of the formation program is in the Hebei province. International religious congregations are not recognized in Mainland China and there are restrictions that make the life of confreres more difficult.

Taiwan: In 1958, the SVD began in Taiwan. At present the southern SVD district serving the dioceses of Chiayi and Kaohsiung adminis-

ters on the order of 10 parishes, including the Alishan parish ministering to the aboriginal Tsou tribe. More recently the SVD has also assumed parishes in Taipei and the surrounding New Taipei City. Five of them are by contract long term SVD parishes and with several other parishes taken on as personnel is available.

A key mission enterprise of the province was the re-founding of Fu Jen Catholic University, which the communist government in Beijing closed as a Catholic institution. In its early phase this first Catholic university in Taiwan was a joint-venture in which the SVD, together with the SSpS, the Jesuits and the Chinese clergy semi-autonomously managed its diverse academic departments. Today it has a unified administration under the leadership of a lay president. The board of trustees of the university consists of the seven Bishops of Taiwan, representatives of the three founding sections, and a good number of lay persons. Several SVD and SSpS members, many of whom hold doctorates, work in the university as professors, in student services and as campus ministers.

In Chiayi the China province founded Fu Jen Catholic High School in 1962 that has won for itself a prestige for quality education. A precipitous drop in Taiwan’s birth rate has led to a decrease in the number of available students. Fu Jen Catholic High School has been able to maintain a healthy student enrollment, but there are financial difficulties.

Hong Kong and Macau: Sing Yin (Divine Word) Secondary School is the flagship SVD

institution in Hong Kong. There is one full-time SVD teaching in the school and the supervisor is an SVD. The 24 priest confreres in Hong Kong primarily work in parishes as well as manage the schools attached to them. Several others work full or part-time among migrant contract workers (Filipino, Indonesian and Vietnamese) and for seamen.

Our recent entry in Macau began in 2007 on the invitation of the previous Bishop to help in parish and school ministries. Two confreres administer Our Lady of Fatima Parish and one teaches full time at the University of St. Joseph, a recently founded English-medium Catholic University.

Characteristic Dimensions

For the four Characteristic Dimensions, a province-wide coordinator is appointed as well as coordinators for the other geographical areas

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component in our parish work, particularly in northeastern China and our confreres there

of the province. There are really no full time coordinators for the Characteristic Dimensions and most efforts, especially in JPIC and communications, are carried on in cooperation with other religious congregations or with the diocese. Bible is an important

are hoping to develop a Center for the Biblical Apostolate. In Taiwan and Hong Kong-Macau, the mission secretaries are working to make local Catholics aware of world-wide mission. JPIC in many ways dovetails with province efforts for migrants.

Priorities among Congregational Directions

While the three areas of the China Province are quite different, interestingly all three chose almost the same *ad extra* priorities from the Congregational Directions proposed at the 2012 General Chapter: a) Primary and New Evangelization, b) Family and Youth, c) Migration, d) Education and Research and Promotion of Culture of Life. These *ads extra* priorities fit very well with historical and current priorities in the province, and therefore they have been viewed as instruments to focus and fine-tune the work and activities of the China province. While there have been no large-scale changes in province personnel or budget allocation in response to the Congregational Directions, the directions have provided guidance in making specific decisions.

Evangelization has always been a primary focus of the SVDs involved in parish apostolate. Essentially all the parishes in the province have vigorous programs to bring non-Christians to the faith and adult baptisms are a hallmark of the SVD parishes. Since a majority of the people in the province have no clear religious affiliation, vigorous programs in direct evangelization can easily proceed alongside dialogue with

other Christians and as well as with adherents of Buddhism and Taoism.

Family and youth ministry are central to parish ministry across the province. In northern Taiwan a center for family ministry was established and a center for youth apostolate serves the SVD parishes in southern Taiwan.

Migration: In Hong Kong-Macau several confreres are involved full time in migrant ministry, primarily focusing on contract workers from the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam. Part time ministry to migrants is a hallmark of parish work in Taiwan and Hong Kong-Macau. In Taiwan, ministry to recent immigrants from South East Asia is an important focus. On the Mainland, migration is primarily internal migration, from the countryside to the cities. This is a challenge both in urban parishes ministering to new migrants and rural parishes where many of the young people have left for better employment in the cities.

Education and research: Fu Jen Catholic University is a priority for the China province. Currently among the founding groups of the university, the SVD has the largest number of young confreres involved in university ministry – academic, administration, student services and campus ministry. The SVD also has individuals working in universities in Beijing and Macau as well as in high schools in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Several individuals in Mainland China are teaching in the Catholic seminaries.

Relationship with Women Religious and the Laity

In the universities and schools, the leaders are lay persons and the SVD work with other colleagues as equals. Lay participation in parish activities is very strong, especially in Taiwan and in Hong Kong-Macau. In the China province there are three women's congregations that have a special relationship with the SVD: the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS), the Oblates of the Holy Family (OHF) founded by Bishop Henninghaus and the Sisters of our Lady of China (OLC), founded by Thomas Cardinal Tien. In Taiwan north the SVD cooperate with sister congregations in accompanying two lay organizations. A lay partner group also is being nurtured on the Mainland.

4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Bishop	3	3	2
Clerics	105	103	93
Brothers (final vows)	13	13	11
Brothers (temporal vows)	1	2	7
Scholastics	17	29	35
Novices	4	1	8
Total	143	151	156

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	48.6	47.7	42.0
Nationalities	22	20	22

Spirituality: The SVD missionary must first of all be a person of God and a person of prayer. While secularism and Marxism are strong currents in contemporary Chinese society, the great spiritual traditions of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism must be our dialogue partners.

Community: The main challenge in the China province, especially for those in parish ministry, is keeping our religious and missionary identity. A second challenge is to lead a frugal or simple lifestyle in the midst of a relatively affluent society.

Leadership: There have been suggestions over the years to divide the province into two provinces (Mainland China and Taiwan) and one region (Hong Kong-Macau). It is a complicated question and how it will develop remains to be seen.

Finances: The province in Taiwan is financially self-reliant and offers a modest annual support to the worldwide mission of the Society. Parish priests in the China province generally receive their living expenses, either directly from the parish or from the diocesan Bishop.

Formation: There are three semi-autonomous formation programs in the province Taiwan, Mainland China and Hong Kong-Macau. In Taiwan and Mainland China, there are postulant and novitiate programs. For various reasons, the number of vocations to the religious life in all areas of the province has been decreasing. Since 1980, Taiwan and Hong Kong have been welcoming confreres in the overseas training program (OTP) from different countries all over the world. After completing two-year Chinese language study and a one-year regency, a large percentage have chosen to remain in the province for theology. Thanks to this program, the province has remained young in membership (average age 50.6) and the SVD is one of the largest male congregations in both Taiwan and Hong Kong-Macau. On the Mainland, despite a one-year hiatus in 2016, there continues to be a robust postulant and novitiate program. A large percentage of those who takes first vows on the Mainland come to Taiwan or go overseas to study theology.