



## **ASIA / TAIWAN - Brief Overview of the Church and Celebrations for the 150th Anniversary of the Evangelization**

Tai Nan (Agenzia Fides) - The Catholic Church in Taiwan: Population: 22,675,000: 299,000 Catholics; ecclesiastical circumscriptions: 8, 493 parishes, 59 mission stations, 17 bishops, 250 diocesan priests, 443 religious priests, 101 religious (not priests); 1026 religious, 32 female members of secular institutes, 56 major seminarians, 162 kindergartens, 11 elementary, 34 middle and high schools; 10 hospitals, 4 clinics, 27 homes for the elderly and disabled, 13 orphanages, 1 day care; 3 marriage counseling; 16 education and reintegration centers; 14 other charities and assistance (data of the last Statistical Yearbook of the Church).

The 5 points indicated by the Taiwanese Bishops to the Catholic Community on the island, in a Pastoral Letter issued by the Regional Bishops' Conference of Taiwan for the Jubilee Year of Evangelization are: a real improvement of creative Christian evangelization, working deep inside neighborhoods, concern for the continent, prayer with devotion. The letter, signed on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, January 11, 2009, is entitled "Celebrating 150 years of Evangelization, imitating St. Paul, to complete a mission of evangelization in all areas." In the text, the bishops analyze the social and ecclesial situation at present in four chapters: 1. Pain and worries, joys and hopes of the people of the region of Taiwan, 2. Pauline Jubilee Year and the evangelization of the Church in Taiwan, 3. Guidelines of the Jubilee Year of Evangelization; 4. Conclusion. (see Fides 02/02/2009)

The celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the evangelization of Tai Wan were opened May 17, 2008, in the Diocese of Kao Hsiung, with the representation of the arrival of the first missionary who began the evangelization of the island, Dominican Fr. Fernando Sainz, OP, on a "Evangelization Boat" in the Port of Takao (today Kao Hsiung). All the bishops of the island took part in the solemn ceremony, which was ecumenical and interreligious. In fact, the Catholics were joined by representatives of different Christian communities (Protestants, Methodists, Presbyterians) and other religions (Buddhist, Daoist), who wanted to witness this historic moment for the Church in Taiwan. (see Fides 09/06/2008)

The pilgrimage of the Virgin Mary of the image of Wan Jin left the diocese of Kao Hsiung on 8 September 2008 and has traveled throughout the island during the year, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the evangelization, arousing great enthusiasm and devotion everywhere. In the diocese of Tai Nan, when the religious procession with Our Lady of Wan Jin passed by a Buddhist temple, even the Buddhists who were praying in the temple came out with their hands in prayer and bowed before the statue as a sign of great respect.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Wan Jin was built in 1896 and was erected as a Marian Basilica in 1984 by Pope John Paul II. It is also the first Basilica in Taiwan of Pontifical Right. The first and last pilgrimage of Our Lady of Wan Jin occurred 18 years ago. (see Fides 13/01/2009)

On the occasion of the 150th evangelization, "Operation St. Andrew 1 + 1" was launched. It consists in preaching the faith to others, to intercede for them with prayer and fasting twice a week, meditating on the Book of Acts of the Apostles every day, and reciting the rosary once a week. In this manner, every Christian has committed himself to bring a non-Christian to the Church from among his own relatives, neighbors, classmates, or colleagues. (see Fides 28/10/2009)

(SL) (Agenzia Fides 20/11/2009)