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ASIA/HONG KONG - Forthcoming beatification of Fr Gabriele Maria Allegra, the Franciscan missionary who supervised the translation of the Bible into Chinese

Hong Kong (Agenzia Fides) - The venerable Fr. Gabriele Maria Allegra, OFM, founder of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, will be beatified on September 29 in Acireale, Sicily (Italy), his homeland. The Franciscan missionary is known for the first Chinese translation of the Sacred Scriptures. According to the Kong Ko Bao (the diocesan bulletin of Hong Kong in Chinese version), the General House and the Sicilian provinces OFM officially announced the news of the beatification on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary. According to Fr. Joseph Ha, Provincial Superior of the Chinese Province, OFM, "the best way to pay homage to the new blessed is not only to allow one of his relics to arrive in Hong Kong, but to commit to deepening the Sacred Scriptures." On the occasion of the beatification, the diocese of Hong Kong has planned two prayer meetings, on September 29 and October 14.
Fr. Gabriele Maria Allegra (26 December 1907-26 January 1976) entered the Franciscan seminary (OFM) of S. Biagio in Arcireale in 1918. He became a novice in 1923, three years after he was sent to the Antonianum in Rome to study theology. He then developed the idea of a Chinese translation of the Bible. He was rdained a priest in 1930, the following year he was sent on a mission in China. After studying the Chinese language, in 1935 he began the Chinese translation of the Old Testament from Aramaic, which he ended in 1944. Unfortunately, he lost more than half of the translated text during the war events. However, he was not discouraged, in fact, he called several Chinese confreres to help him. In 1945 he founded the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Beijing, he moved to Hong Kong in 1948. After completing the translation of the Old Testament in 1952, he went to Holy Land with his confreres for a permanent formation course. He returned to Hong Kong in 1955, he began to translate the New Testament from Greek. In 1968, the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum published for the first time in history, the Bible in Chinese (Old and New Testament). Fr. Allegra died in Hong Kong in 1976. In 1994, the diocesan phase of the beatification process ended, in recognition of his heroic virtues he was proclaimed venerable. On 23 April 2002 the decree was promulgated concerning a miracle attributed to his intercession. On 29 September 2012 he will be beatified in Acireale, at the Cathedral Basilica of Mary Most Holy Annunciation (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 03/09/2012)

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