

EVENT RUNS FOR THREE DAYS, STARTING ON MONDAY

# Macau holds International Congress of the Houses of Mercy

MARCO CARVALHO

DELEGATES from all over the world will meet next week in Macau for the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Congress of the Houses of Mercy. The event, which will be held for the first time in the territory, will bring to the Special Administrative Region delegates from countries such as Portugal, Brazil, Italy, France or Mozambique.

The Congress will run from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> of May and is the highlight of the celebrations of the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Holy House of Mercy of Macau. Founded in 1569, even before the Diocese of Macau and the Loyal Senate were established, the institution celebrates next week four and a half centuries of charitable service. Starting from



Monday, more than two hundred participants will discuss the common challenges by the Houses of Mercy in a world which is growing old and unequal: "This Congress will last three days. It is the first time that Macau will host the representatives of several Holy

Houses from countries as different as Portugal, Brazil, Italy, France or Mozambique. This gathering is a good opportunity for us to discuss together some of the aspects of the work that is carried by the Houses of Mercy, such as care of the elderly or other im-

portant areas of social welfare," António José de Freitas told *O Clarim*. The "ombudsman" of the Holy House of Mercy of Macau completes his tenth term as the head of the centuries-old institution next year.

The 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the Houses of Mercy should also provide an opportunity for the Holy Houses around the world to discuss how can they strengthen cooperation and reinforce the exchange of experiences: "It is something that will be debated and that will surely be done in the future. This Congress will bring together about two hundred people, among them the 'ombudsmen' of several of the Houses of Mercy that will be represented. The participants will travel to Macau with the purpose of celebrating with us this anniversary," Mr Freitas explains.

The Holy House of Mercy received last week the visit of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. The Portuguese Head of State concluded in Macau a three-day state visit to the People's Republic of China and began his brief visit to Macau with a stopover in the Holy House premises, where he highlighted the Institution's ability to keep alive its "founding spirit" and sustained that it embodies perfectly "the Portuguese way of being in the world".

In addition to more than two hundred delegates, the 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the Houses of Mercy also brings to Macau the Choir of the Holy House of Mercy of Vila Verde, a municipality located in northern Portugal. The group will sing at Saint Joseph's Seminary and Church and pay a visit to the Portuguese School of Macau, where it will hold a brief performance. ■

## POPE FRANCIS PROCLAIMS OCTOBER AS AN "EXTRAORDINARY MISSIONARY MONTH"

# St Paul's Ruins to host first Mass in fifteen years

MARCO CARVALHO

THE ruins of the *Mater Dei* Church will host the Mass once again, a decade and a half after having been the venue for the Eucharistic celebration for the last time. The information was provided to *O Clarim* by Father Manuel Machado, who explained that the celebration will take place on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, the third Saturday of the "Extraordinary Missionary Month" proclaimed by Pope Francis.

The Comboni missionary, parish priest at the Church of Saint Joseph the Worker, told *O Clarim* in the beginning of the year that the Diocese of Macau was planning to hold liturgical activities in the Ruins of Saint Paul, as part of the celebrations of the centenary of the promulgation of the *Maximum Illud*, the

apostolic letter that defined the missionary role of the church.

In January, Manuel Machado explained that the Diocese was dependent on the endorsement of the local authorities to conduct a Eucharistic service in the remains of the *Mater Dei* Church, an authorization that has recently been granted: "The Government already gave us the green light. It is already a certainty that we will have a celebration of the Eucharist in the Ruins of São Paulo. It will be held on the day before World Mission Day. I believe it will take place on the 19th. On October 19th, around 8 pm, we will have the celebration of the Eucharist. This will be announced with further detail by the Diocese in a timely manner," the chancellor of the Diocese of Macau explained. "I am talking about an evening Mass whose main intention is to mark the Extraordinary Missionary



Month. The location is very significant, in a historical sense. Many missionaries started their mission in Macau. With this celebration, we want to remember this vocation and encourage the local Church to keep its missionary vocation alive," the minister says.

In addition to the Eucharist in the Ruins of Saint Paul, the program of

the "Extraordinary Missionary Month" also features a festival in Tap Seac Square. The event will bring together the local parishes and dozens of entities affiliated with Macau's Catholic Church. The aim? To bring the Word of God closer to the local population: "The Diocese has programmed two activities to be held in October. The Pope asked that October be dedicated to the *missio ad gentes*. One of those initiatives will take place on October 6<sup>th</sup> in Tap Seac Square," recalls Father Machado. "It will be a kind of carnival, a fair that will bring together the parishes and many of the organizations affiliated with the Church. Each will have its own stand, so that people can get to know the work they develop. We will also set up a stage for a few musical and theatrical performances," Father Machado added. ■