

The Pennsylvania Passionist Who Became Chinese: Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P.

Katherine Koch

In 1967, after finishing their annual retreat, the Passionist community of St. Joseph's Monastery in Baltimore, Maryland gathered around two wizened priests who were reflecting upon triumphs and tumult in the mission fields of China. To the younger Passionists, the frail elders in their midst — Frs. Basil Bauer and Jeremiah McNamara — towered like giants. They were veterans of a holy struggle to bring Christ to the mountainous wilderness of Hunan, and they had narrowly escaped Red China with their lives. When the most cheerful listeners tugged both Fathers to a blackboard and prevailed upon them to supplement their recollections with chalk drawings, Fr. Jeremiah scrawled a figure in Chinese garb, complete with a long, scraggly beard. At first his rudimentary artwork prompted gales of laughter, but then he spoke, and the explanation made their chuckling subside into reverent silence. The figure, he said, was Fr. Basil. "During the missions," Fr. Jeremiah remarked, "Bas' became Chinese."¹

Bas became Chinese. Aside from being a touching tribute, it characterized the faith of a missionary devoted to his cause, and the hardy spirit that was required for a China missionary at the time. Flung far from family, homeland, and all reminders of Western culture, he divested himself of his American heritage in the hope that he might forge an understanding with people who hailed from one of the most ancient civilizations in the world. Those who knew Fr. Basil described him as a gentle and empathetic soul with earnest brown eyes, black-brown hair (salted by white in his later years), and a voice like a bass trumpet. He listened more than he spoke, but when he did voice his thoughts, the room fell silent because everyone in his midst knew that he would reveal something of importance.² Moreover, he was direct — sometimes blunt — when speaking his mind, yet he rarely spoke ill of anyone, even if he had justifiable cause to do so.³ Fellow Passionists compared him with the biblical personage of Nathaniel, of whom Christ said, "Here is someone genuine; there is no guile in him."⁴ Trained according to the strict regimen of the pre-Vatican II era, Fr. Basil was conservative in his views, and although he held firm to his own beliefs, he was not intractable. Like the Chinese, he did not believe that opinions were entirely right or wrong. Each perspective was a composite of good points and faulty ones, and therefore all deserved to be heard.⁵

One occurrence recalled by Fr. Basil's second cousin, Gary Koch, tells volumes about his personality. In the 1960s, the priest made yearly trips from Baltimore to Sharon, and would spend several weeks in his hometown, visiting family. Gary was about ten years



Rev. Basil Bauer, C.P. about the time of his ordination (Oct. 28, 1923). Source: Passionist Archives

old, and considered it an honor when Fr. Basil asked him to assist as an altar boy during his Masses at St. Joseph's Church. One day after services ended, Gary and a fellow acolyte were puttering around the churchyard. Weary and bored, they picked up bits of decorative gravel and flung them against the black stone façade of the church. Fr. Basil was talking to parishioners inside, but he suddenly emerged from a side door, beckoning to the boys. He prevailed upon them to stand in the church and wait. Meanwhile, the priest stepped outside and began pelting the facade with stones, just as the boys had done minutes before. To his chagrin, Gary realized that, when rocks hit the church wall, a nerve-rattling clatter thundered through the sanctuary. Fr. Basil knew that the boys meant no harm, and instead of chastising them, he gently demonstrated why their actions caused such offense. This serenity defined his character, even during the worst of times.⁶

Part I: Western Pennsylvania Fr. Basil Bauer's Early Life

His origins were as American as apple pie. He was born on October 11, 1898, in Sharon (Mercer County), Pennsylvania, the sixth of thirteen children in the Bauer family.⁷ The second son born to John and Anna Koch Bauer, he was given the name Joseph. At the turn of the century, the steel industry thrived in the Shenango Valley area. In 1902, Sharon Steel Castings Company merged with Carnegie Steel Company, a subsidiary of United States Steel Corporation.⁸ The resulting economic boom greatly expanded Sharon, brought an influx of new inhabitants, and led to the city's south side becoming the independent borough of Farrell.⁹ Joseph's father supported his rapidly growing family with a lucrative career at the American Steel and Tin Plate Company.¹⁰ As more children were born, he built three additional rooms onto the family's two-story home on Elm Avenue. When they congregated around the dinner table every night, the gathering resembled an organizational banquet.¹¹ The table itself spanned the length of the room. Born into a large family unit, young Joseph Bauer became well-acquainted with the concepts of familial interdependence, mutual cooperation, and reverence for elders — values that he would eventually discover and admire in Chinese society.

The Bauers were not only prolific, they were also deeply spiritual people. As members of St. Joseph's Church in Sharon, all thirteen filed into the sanctuary every Sunday like a parade troop. Anna Koch Bauer hailed from a family that helped found the parish's first church, St. Rose of Lima on Dutch Lane in Hermitage.¹² The Bauer children described their mother as a "living saint" — a woman of grace, patience, and unwavering religious conviction.¹³ Anna's brother — and the family patriarch — was Fr. Victor Koch, C.P., a member of the Congregation of the Passion since 1889.¹⁴ This order, commonly known as the Passionists, has a unique creed: its members vigorously promote the memory of Christ's suffering on the Cross.¹⁵ Priests and parishioners alike are encouraged to contemplate their personal trials, and use them to bond with Jesus as He suffered through the agonies of His Passion. Anna Koch Bauer and Fr. Victor Koch closely identified with this concept, for they had endured painful bereavements and hardship throughout their childhood years.¹⁶ Passionist teaching set the tone for the spirituality of the Koch and Bauer families.



Hunan Province, China, showing Catholic missions.

Source: Katherine Koch

Fr. Victor's zeal for his vocation was infectious. He inspired two of his cousins — Fr. Gilbert Mehler and Fr. Benedict Huck — to join the Passionists, and his influence on the Bauer children was equally powerful.¹⁷ He was eager to motivate the next generation and usher his nieces and nephews into a life of religious service.¹⁸ Victoria, the eldest daughter in the Bauer family, was the first to answer that call and become a Benedictine nun, but the vocation was short-lived. To outsiders, the Bauers maintained that poor health caused her to return home to Sharon, which may have had a grain of truth. However, behind closed doors, it was whispered that the spirituality of the Benedictines was not stringent enough for her taste.¹⁹ Victoria's faith bordered on fanatical. She was infamous for slipping into the confessional to criticize the priest over faults she'd perceived in his sermons.²⁰

A farm existed on the east side of St. Joseph's church, one owned either by a friend of the Bauer family, or possibly by the Bauers themselves. They pastured a cow there during Joseph's early teen years. One day, as he was leading the cow to the field, the boy heard bells tolling from the nearby church and eased into a philosophical state. With a start, he realized that he had just heard his calling: he would devote his life to leading the lost, the suffering, and the forlorn back to the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.²¹

Like the Chinese who he was destined to serve, young Joseph held his elders in reverence, and felt that family defined his very identity. He did not question what religious order he would apply for. Like Fr. Mehler and Fr. Huck, he would follow Fr. Victor into the Congregation of the Passion. By joining the order and consecrating his life to religious service, he would honor his mother and uncle, inspire his siblings, and firmly advance a family tradition into another generation. On

December 15, 1912, Joseph, now age 14, filled out paperwork to enter the Passionist congregation's Preparatory college in Dunkirk, New York.²² St. Joseph's parish priest Rev. Simon Assenmacher had known the boy since the day of his baptism. He vouched for his character, writing a letter affirming that he was a credit to his church and to St. Joseph's grammar school, and confirming that his conduct suited the vocation that he had chosen.²³ A physician's note declared the future priest to be in perfect health.²⁴

Young Joseph entered the Passionist preparatory school in February of 1913, during a time of expansion for the order. Eight years earlier, the U.S. province had split into a western and eastern branch, using the Ohio River to mark the boundary.²⁵ Reforms were being implemented to educational programs.²⁶ Thus, instead of attending classes in Dunkirk, he began his education at St. Joseph's monastery in Baltimore, Maryland. It is interesting to note that Fr. Victor Koch was serving as Rector of St. Paul of the Cross monastery in Pittsburgh at this time, but once his term ended a year later in 1914, he moved to Baltimore and served as pastor of St. Joseph's monastery church.²⁷ The Baltimore parish was thriving. The city's social and devotional life was centered around Catholic organizations. St. Joseph's parish alone boasted four different societies for men: the Holy Name Society, the League of the Sacred Heart, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and the Parish Debt Society. Three more were available for women: the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, the Married Women's Sodality, and the Immaculate Conception Sodality. Children could join the Holy Angels Sodality or the Holy Name Cadets, which accepted boys between ages twelve and sixteen. Men and women could participate in the annual Passion Play, which was managed by the Monastery Dramatic Club.²⁸ An experienced pastor was needed to support this mélange of parish life, and Fr. Victor Koch was surely a man who gravitated toward big enterprises, but he was also the type to pounce upon an opportunity, and he had a keen interest in ensuring that his nephew's introduction into a new vocation went smoothly. As a fourteen-year-old boy that had left the home he knew and loved, young Joseph welcomed a familial presence. If any doubts, fears, or longing for family plagued the future priest, Fr. Victor was only a heartbeat away to help him acclimate. On a brisk autumn afternoon of Sunday, September 16, he traveled to Pittsburgh with Joseph. He was there to watch his nephew profess as a Passionist, don the habit, and take the name that would define him for the rest of his life — Basil of the Cross, C.P.²⁹

A Calling to China: World Events Sweep Basil Bauer From Seminarian to Missionary

Between 1917 and 1923, as Confrater Basil Bauer continued his novitiate studies in Pittsburgh and Scranton, Pennsylvania, and finally in Union City, New Jersey, great changes were taking place in the world, and the aftershocks were destined to change the course of his life.³⁰ Prior to World War I, Roman Catholic world missions were primarily launched from Europe. Once conflict broke out, the countries that had sent the most missionaries abroad — Germany, France, and Belgium — recalled their priests to become chaplains for their national armies. It was estimated that at least one third of French seminarians and missionaries were killed in the war.³¹

The war swiftly became a cause of great concern for American

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Passionists. The conflict had started in July 1914, and initially, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson had taken a firm stance of neutrality, supporting Britain and France with large-scale loans.³² However, after the sinking of the passenger liner RMS *Lusitania* in 1915, Americans increasingly came to see the German Empire as an aggressive nation, and the exacerbation mounted as German U-boats began sinking American ships in the North Atlantic. On April 1, 1917, President Wilson called for war, emphasizing that America had to fight to maintain its honor and to have a decisive voice in shaping the new postwar world. The administration decided to rely on conscription to raise military manpower for the war effort.³³ The Selective Service Act of 1917 authorized a draft of all American men between twenty-one and thirty-one years of age (which was later extended to ages eighteen to forty-five).³⁴ Recognizing that a large percentage of Catholics would be drafted, the Passionists made a call for volunteer chaplains so that the spiritual needs of Catholic soldiers could be met on the front.³⁵ Section Four of the Selective Service Act exempted ministers and divinity students from service, and the Passionists were intent upon retaining students in the novitiate. Provincial Clement Lee acted swiftly, informing all rectors to communicate at once with the bishops of their diocese and ask them to class their monasteries as divinity schools. Instructions accompanied the announcement, providing a standardized response for each seminarian as he registered for the draft.³⁶ Confrater Basil Bauer registered on September 9, 1918, identifying himself as “Basil Joseph Bauer,” recording St. Paul of the Cross Monastery in Pittsburgh as his home address, and stating an occupation of “divinity student.”³⁷

In the aftermath of the war, the Catholic Church turned attention to the disruption in missionary work, and sought a way to revitalize the effort. In November 1919, Pope Benedict XV issued the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud*, calling for a revival of missionary work around the world and encouraging all Catholics to participate by offering donations and prayers.³⁸ With the United States emerging from World War I as a world power, this was largely seen as America’s hour, prompting a surge of mission vocations — especially to China.³⁹ The Passionists were determined to answer this call. When the Twentieth Chapter of St. Paul of the Cross Province occurred between August 20-28, 1920, capitulars unanimously voted to send a band of missionaries to China, laying the foundation for a new province in that distant land, and laboring to bring the message of Christ’s Passion to its people.⁴⁰ The order would share responsibility for a mission district in western Hunan that had been established by Spanish Augustinians.⁴¹

In September of 1918, Confrater Basil completed classes in theology and philosophy at St. Ann’s Monastery in Scranton, and transferred to St. Michael’s Monastery in Union City, New Jersey, to take advanced theological courses. In the Fall of 1921, Maryknoll priests and Columban missionaries visited the adjacent monastery parish and discussed their labors in China.⁴² These mission appeals may have been his first exposure to the idea of missionary work. However, given Confrater Basil’s predilection to follow in the footsteps of family members, two other incidents may have decisively set him on the path to his destiny. The first wave of Passionist missionaries departed for China on December 25, 1921.⁴³ The youngest of the

band was twenty-three year old Fr. Timothy McDermott, his third cousin.⁴⁴ His contemplation of missionary work likely solidified in 1922, when Fr. Silvio Di Vezza, C.P., the Passionist Father General in Rome, tapped Fr. Victor Koch to co-found a new Passionist province in Germany. For Confrater Basil Bauer, missionary life suddenly ran in the blood. He followed their lead and volunteered for the Passionist China Foundation.⁴⁵

In September of 1923, the young Confrater’s hopes were fulfilled when eight students were selected from the St. Paul of the Cross Province to join the next wave of China missionaries, and his name was on the list: Frs. Basil Bauer, Theophane Maguire, Terrence Connolly, Jeremiah McNamara, Rupert Langenbacher, Clement Seybold, Godfrey Holbein, and Ernest Cunningham had been selected from a pool of volunteers. The Holy Cross Province in the west contributed four more missionaries: Frs. Anthony Maloney, Cyprian Frank, William Westhoven, and Gregory McEttrick. At twelve members, it was destined to be the largest wave of American missionaries to commit themselves to China.⁴⁶ Their departure was scheduled for June of 1924, which left only nine months for the future priests to receive the requisite training. Their ordination had to be expedited to meet the timetable.

Thus, the two happiest occasions of Confrater Basil’s life followed swiftly after he became a selectee for the China mission. First, on Sunday, October 28, 1923, at 8:00 a.m., he and his fellow classmates were ordained by Rt. Reverend Hugh Boyle, the Bishop of Pittsburgh, at St. Vincent’s Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. The ceremony was solemn and lavish, drawing a throng of attendees from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and beyond. To the delight of the newly ordained Fr. Basil, his parents had come to the ceremony, along with a throng of brothers, sisters, and their families. His sister Clara Bauer did not attend, but Fr. Basil likely found the reason highly gratifying: in 1918, she had joined the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and became a nun.⁴⁷ His immediate family members were joined by two uncles from the Koch branch of the family — Albert and Peter Koch — and cousin Fr. Benedict Huck, C.P. Sixty-six priests were ordained at St. Vincent’s that day, but the crowd’s interest keenly focused upon the eight Passionist missionaries bound for China.⁴⁸

The second happy occasion occurred just a week later in Sharon, at Fr. Basil’s hometown parish. On Sunday, November 4, 1923, friends and family filled the pews of St. Joseph’s Church and watched the new priest celebrate his first Solemn High Mass. The event even drew reporters from the local newspaper, *The Sharon Herald*, and made front page news later that week.⁴⁹ Very Rev. Fr. Simon Assenmacher, Fr. Basil’s pastor since childhood, assisted. At the close of Mass, Fr. Assenmacher gave a brief talk, reviewing the life of the young man he had baptized twenty-six years ago, and saying how very proud he was to see his former parishioner become a full-fledged priest and missionary.⁵⁰ A Confucianlike mix of family harmony and a calling to service had shaped Fr. Basil’s identity. As friends and relatives rejoiced in his accomplishments and lauded him for pursuing missionary work in China, he felt contentment to the core of his being. He was ready to begin the next phase of his life.

Part II: China⁵¹

China in the Early 20th Century

Inner tranquility was an asset to a China missionary in the early twentieth century, for his adopted country was a cauldron of political turmoil and revolution. The emperors that had ruled China for thousands of years had been deposed, ending with the Qing dynasty (1644-1911).⁵² Its government had signed treaties ceding Chinese territory to foreign powers, fomenting anti-imperialist sentiments by nationalistic Chinese, and inciting several violent uprisings against foreigners — most notably the Boxer Rebellion.⁵³ The Qing government's apparent inability to defend China against foreign interests compelled young officials, military leaders, and students to rise in protest and advocate creation of a Chinese republic. The leader of this movement was Dr. Sun Yat-sen, a medical doctor who had quit his practice and devoted his life to the cause of transforming China.⁵⁴ In his view, the best way to unify China was to conquer the country's fragmented territories via a military campaign, then unite its population with a period of political tutelage that would eventually result in democratic rule.⁵⁵

The need to unite China with a military campaign was evident. When a republic was formally established in January of 1912, central authority in China was precarious at best. Regional armies and militias seized power over swaths of the country. Two hundred warlords claimed territory, ranging from barons who conquered entire provinces to lesser rulers who had imposed control over isolated valleys and towns, enforcing authority with their own armies. Coalitions of warlords constantly fought one another. A bribe of arms or funds was enough to make militias shift allegiance from one leader to another. To a missionary, China was akin to the American wild west: traveling from one town to another frequently required a military escort to fend off bandits and protect them from the armies of rival warlords.⁵⁶

While Dr. Sun Yat-sen struggled to unify China under a new Nationalist Party, the Guomindang, another revolution was brewing in Hunan.⁵⁷ In 1921, a twenty-eight year old Hunanese man named Mao Zedong traveled to Shanghai to attend the first meeting of the Chinese Communist Party, and returned home to establish a branch in Changsha, acting as the local Party secretary.⁵⁸ Under the instruction of the Party, he promoted Marxist propaganda and strove to organize a movement of urban laborers, urging railway workers to strike against Hunan's governor, warlord Zhao Hengti.⁵⁹ Changsha was a vital link on the Hankou-Canton railroad, a vital stop in which locomotives were switched and train crews were changed. This bold rupture of crucial infrastructure between north and south China snared the attention of northern warlord Wu Peifu, who sent troops to Hunan and massacred workers in the train station yard.⁶⁰ Mao fled, narrowly escaping death or arrest. Disillusioned by the defeat, he trudged through the countryside. Passing through rural villages, he paused to speak with local citizens and perceived a hot current of restlessness crackling through all of them. In his view, the political upheaval of the past two decades had planted within them the seeds of revolutionary potential. Moreover, they represented eighty percent of the nation. They were a power base waiting to be galvanized. The future Chairman of China's Communist Party felt inspired.⁶¹

Perhaps unknown to Mao Zedong, Josef Stalin, Director of the International Communists (Comintern) in Moscow, had learned of the failed strike.⁶² He perceived that the Communist Party in China was weak, claiming only 432 members in 1923, but it was well-organized. On the other hand, Sun Yat-sen's Guomindang Party boasted support from the masses, but it suffered from a crippling lack of organization. The solution to China's ills was to unite both the Guomindang and Chinese Communist Parties, urging them to join forces against the rapacious warlords. Stalin brokered the uneasy peace through Soviet Comintern agent Michael M. Borodin and Adolf Joffe, a diplomat internationally recognized for negotiating the Brest-Litovsk Nonaggression Treaty with Germany at the end of World War I.⁶³

Preparation and Departure for China

Even if Fr. Basil and his fellow missionaries had heard about the political turmoil brewing in China, the news likely registered only on the periphery of their minds. By December of 1923, they were immersed in first aid courses in Pittsburgh. The missionaries would be stationed in an area of China where the population had no access to medical care, and therefore part of their work would involve operating dispensaries and administering medicine for common ailments. Aside from learning how to dispense the proper medication for colds and dysentery, they were also instructed on how to deliver babies. This came as a surprise to Fr. Basil's fellow missionary Fr. William Westhoven, who recalled that none of the Passionists had ever done this, because normally priests needed special permission from Rome to do any kind of surgical work.⁶⁴ The other crucial part of their training — Chinese language lessons — would be conducted after the new missionaries arrived at the central Passionist Monastery in Chenzhou, China.⁶⁵

While the twelve members of the next missionary band completed their medical training, another priest, Fr. Cuthbert O'Gara, was assigned to the band.⁶⁶ In March of 1924, Chinese Passionist Superior Fr. Dominic Langenbacher wrote to U.S. Provincial Fr. Stanislaus Grennan, requesting him to send a candidate in the next wave of missionaries who might serve as an apostolic prefect. A history of misunderstandings between the Passionist missionaries and Bishop Ángel Diego y Carbajal, the Vicar Apostolic Emeritus of Changde, China, convinced Fr. Dominic that the order needed to establish its own apostolic prefecture, and thus manage its own affairs without intrusion.⁶⁷ Fr. Stanislaus acted swiftly, tapping Fr. Cuthbert for the position.⁶⁸

Thus, by May of 1924, thirteen Passionists were bound for China. Aware of the ill omen overshadowing their number, the band dubbed themselves the "Lucky Thirteen."⁶⁹ They comprised the largest band of American missionaries that had been sent to China. Both the eastern St. Paul of the Cross province and western Holy Cross province arranged a series of religious ceremonies that galvanized the public, gained support for the American mission effort, and heightened apostolic zeal for the newly ordained missionaries. Between May 18 and July 22, events honoring the Lucky Thirteen were held in at least ten cities, starting with Union City, New Jersey.⁷⁰ The first three China-bound mission bands had started their departure

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from St. Michael's Monastery in Union City, a fact that connected the Lucky Thirteen with their predecessors. The ceremonies received publicity in local newspapers, and crowds thronged to each event, necessitating the construction of outdoor altars to accommodate their numbers. To show the national scope of the venture, it was common for representatives of Maryknoll, or an ecclesiastical dignitary to be present to induct the departing Passionists into the new foreign mission fraternity. Video footage from the Bauer family's archives indicate that members of his immediate family followed their departing son and brother to San Francisco, watching him board the *S.S. President Wilson* on July 22, 1924.⁷¹ Given the depth of his connection with family, this parting must have struck him like a crucifixion, and yet as the sight of the California shore gradually slipped away, he turned and faced west toward China, putting himself into God's hands. He willingly left everything that he knew and held dear, and vowed to join in the sufferings of China, all in the hope of bringing knowledge of Christ Crucified to the people of that distant land.

China: The Mission District, The People, The Culture

The mission territory that the Passionists shared with the Spanish Augustinians was vast — 15,400 square miles, an area equaling the combined American states of Delaware, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Their district lay in the western half of Hunan, which was tucked in the remote interior of southwestern China. Glorious mountains swept the terrain, making each trip filled with breathtaking scenery — and life-threatening perils. The manner of traveling from place to place remained as it had for centuries: by sedan chair, by mule, on foot, or on the river routes by *sampan*, a flat-bottomed skiff made from three planks of wood.⁷² The seasons were marked by extremes. During summer, the countryside baked like a furnace; according to the Chinese, the heat was so intense that, when a dog chased a rabbit, they both walked.⁷³ Summer gave way to a temperate fall, then surrendered to the biting cold of winter. The torrential rains of spring lasted between six weeks to two months, during which shoes, vestments, clothing, and books were assaulted by black mildew. Hunan was the last Chinese province to admit foreigners within her borders, and thus the Passionist missionaries were venturing into areas where people gawked, having never seen a Caucasian. A blending of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism infused the local culture, and the traditions of each demanded numerous observances. For a missionary in Hunan, life was a cavalcade of material problems discovered and solved, apostolic triumphs and disappointments borne, language barriers encountered and overcome, and privations and bouts of sicknesses resolutely accepted.⁷⁴

Fr. Basil and his fellow Passionists soon learned that the culture itself presented many obstacles to the inculcation of Christianity. The Chinese were meticulous about saving “face” — avoiding public humiliation even in the slightest degree. Fr. Basil Bauer's fellow missionary, Fr. Flavian Mullins, describes the Chinese custom as follows:

“FACE” means a lot of things. If you do anything that is the work of a servant, and are seen, you lose face. If one is corrected... in public... it means losing face. You may never refuse a Chinese anything by saying, ‘no.’ You must go round and round and say, ‘Well perhaps later on.’ This postponement means a refusal, but

saves face.... This is one of the deepest habits of Chinese life, and is probably the most difficult to eradicate, for little children and adults as well, are consistently influenced by it. Many of the better classes will not become Christians because some of the lower and poorer classes belong to the Church.⁷⁵

Thus, a Catholic missionary in China found that part of his work involved instilling a sense of Christian humility, and eradicating the negative perceptions that the Chinese culture cast upon the faith. This was difficult, especially during occasions when anti-foreign sentiment burned hotly in Hunan. Chinese Christians were often referred to as “slaves of foreigners.”⁷⁶

The Lucky Thirteen Arrive in China

On August 12, 1924, after a twenty-one day journey across the Pacific, Fr. Basil and his fellow missionaries arrived in Shanghai, disembarked from the *S.S. President Wilson*, and took their first steps upon Chinese soil. They were greeted by one of their fellow Passionist missionaries from a previous band, Fr. Edmund Campbell.⁷⁷ The new missionaries paused in Shanghai briefly to enjoy the hospitality of a famous Chinese Catholic layman and businessman named Lo Pa Hong. Shanghai was an ideal stop before venturing into the interior because it was a Chinese city with a thriving Catholic population and a Western cosmopolitan atmosphere, and thus it blunted the initial sense of culture shock. Their gracious host was a deeply faithful man who served one or more Masses every day, and assisted at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament every afternoon after leaving his office. He had also instructed and baptized numerous criminals before their execution. A philanthropist who lived his faith, he was able to enlist substantial monetary assistance from both Christian and pagan associates, which he then used to help schools, hospitals, orphanages, and asylums. Lo Pa Hong's piety in word and deed earned him the nickname “the St. Vincent de Paul of China.”⁷⁸

Upon arrival, one of Fr. Basil's fellow missionaries received shocking news. Fr. Cuthbert O'Gara had joined the mission band to serve as an apostolic prefect. He soon learned that the mission Superior, Fr. Dominic Langenbacher, had made the request for a prefect with a burst of enthusiasm, but in a moment of indecision, had hesitated to follow through with the plan to establish a Passionist prefecture. Irritated by the change of plans, but still resolute to carry out God's will in China, Fr. Cuthbert decided to remain in the country as a missionary.⁷⁹

As planned, the Lucky Thirteen remained at the central mission in Chenzhou for a year to learn Chinese. On two occasions, Fr. Basil was introduced to the savagery that the people of China endured at the hands of bandits. First, in September of 1924, Chenzhou was invaded by ten thousand Sichuan troops led by warlord Xiong Kewu, a Chinese name that translated into “Bear Fit to Fight.” The bandits invaded private homes, forcing the locals to sleep outside while they occupied their beds. They also scavenged all the food in town and did what they pleased to the citizens without respect for age or sex.⁸⁰

Just days later, Fr. Dominic Langenbacher received word from Fr. Stanislaus Grennan that five Sisters of Charity from Convent Station, New Jersey, were on their way to China, and the group was due to arrive in Hankou province by October 28, 1924. They were traveling with Fr. Matthias Mayou, C.P., a Passionist visitor sent in compliance

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with requests that a Provincial Consultor accompany them to China. Fr. Dominic took Fr. Basil on the trip as a companion.⁸¹

Hankou was only 200 miles from Chenzhou, but the trip was so fraught with difficulties that it lasted an agonizing nine months. Travel was mainly accomplished via sampan on the Yuan River, which was characterized by dangerous rapids. When the travelers encountered them, a band of coolies swam to the shore and donned harnesses with ropes. In a long, slow, laborious process, they pulled the boats along the turbulent waters to prevent them from capsizing. At times, the rudders of the boats would break, demanding repairs that would halt the journey, or the cables used to haul the boats would snap, and the current carried the ships away, utterly destroying an entire day's progress.⁸² To make matters worse, the party was traveling through bandit-infested territory, and on one occasion they fell into a trap that nearly ended with fatal results for Fr. Matthias:

The bandits immediately hopped into the Catholics' larger boat and demanded three thousand dollars. When the priests explained that they had only one hundred dollars in cash with them, the chief looked them over and quickly concluded that Fr. Matthias (tall, dignified, and in American clothes) was in charge. He grabbed Father's arm, thrust a revolver into his face, and announced, "We'll take this one into the mountains!" [Upon discovering that Fr. Matthias was a stranger who spoke no Chinese, and therefore had no value as a hostage]... the bandits began looting their belongings. This they did three times, taking whatever they fancied....

The looting went on for two mortal hours. Trunks and suitcases and bags of every description lay scattered on the deck; and what the bandits didn't want was strewn everywhere, even in the water. Then, the lookouts on the mountain gave the signal that a boatload of soldiers was approaching from down river, and the bandits hastily gathered their booty, scurried on to their raft, and left in a hurry.⁸³

Fr. Dominic Langenbacher recalled later that, every time the party ventured forth, it seemed that something ominous lay in store. The journey made an impression upon Fr. Basil as well. He commented that the Devil did all in his power to prevent the Sisters of Charity from entering China.⁸⁴ The experience of this trip likely contributed to his preference for traveling through the countryside by mule.⁸⁵ The Sisters of Charity finally arrived in Chenzhou on July 12, 1925, and they received a warm welcome from the Passionists.⁸⁶

The Lucky Thirteen received their first mission assignments in August of 1925. Fr. Basil was first assigned to the mission of Yongshun, which he shared with fellow missionary Fr. Terrence Connolly.⁸⁷ Fr. Basil and the Passionists found more reasons to rejoice after learning that Pope Pius XI had established Chenzhou as a Prefecture Apostolic the previous March.⁸⁸ Thus, their mission territory would be detached from the Vicariate Apostolic of Northern Hunan, the mission of the Augustinian Fathers, and given the autonomy they had craved. This was the first step in eventually establishing their own diocese in Hunan.

In July, Fr. Francis Marchetti Selvaggianti, the Secretary to the Passionist Superior General in Rome, wrote Fr. Stanislaus Grennan and informed him that Fr. Dominic Langenbacher had been

nominated for the office of Prefect Apostolic. Fr. Dominic discussed the matter with Fr. Cuthbert O'Gara, whom Fr. Stanislaus had sent to China for the express purpose of performing that function. Graciously, Fr. Cuthbert encouraged him to accept, and he agreed, although hesitantly.⁸⁹ He was now recognized as "Monsignor" Dominic Langenbacher.⁹⁰

The senior China Passionist missionaries convened in December, drafted resolutions for the new prefecture, and laid out an ambitious program that would govern Fr. Basil's work within various mission towns. The plans for the prefecture were comprised of the following:

A *Seminary* for local clergy under the patronage of St. Joseph;

A *Catholic School System*, with a primary school for each mission, and three high schools, one in each major city, plus a training school for catechists, men and women, who would direct the religious instruction of catechumens at each mission;

A *Deanery System*, dividing the sixteen counties into three subdivisions, or foranes, with a Superior of vigilance and one residential Mission and a dispensary in each;

A *Budget System*, all major construction or expense to be approved by the Prefect and his council. All donations, from whatever source, to be deposited at the Passionist Procuration in Hankou.⁹¹

Chiang Kai-shek and the Northern Expedition

Just as the Passionists made progress in Hunan, a fresh wave of political and social upheaval threatened to impede further developments. On March 12, 1925, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founder of China's nationalist Guomindang government, passed away. The uneasy coalition between the Guomindang and Mao Zedong's Communist Party was left without a leader, resulting in a power struggle. Thirty-eight year old Chiang Kai-shek, the military commander of the Guomindang, emerged as the country's new leader.⁹² As with his predecessor Dr. Sun, the Western media dubbed him *Generalissimo*. Like Dr. Sun, he was committed to the cause of unifying China via military conquest, followed by a period of political tutelage and a democratic government. The greatest obstacles to this vision of China's future were the rapacious warlords and the Chinese Communists.⁹³ Suspicious of foreign intervention, he had misgivings about the alliance that Dr. Sun had forged with the Soviet Union, but China depended upon the financial and military aid that it received from the Communist country. Therefore, he reluctantly maintained relations.⁹⁴

As the Chinese people grieved the loss of Dr. Sun, the Guomindang tapped into the nation's grief and sought to utilize it as a unifying force. The party launched a propaganda campaign in major cities, which was designed to foster Chinese nationalism and vilify foreign "imperial" powers that held territory or exerted influence upon China. The Chinese Communist Party took the opportunity to sow unrest throughout Shanghai. On May 30, 1925, Chinese protestors marched on Shanghai's International Settlement. When the demonstrators

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turned violent, Shanghai municipal police opened fire upon the crowd. The incident sparked a nationwide wave of anti-foreign demonstrations and riots known as the May 30th Movement.⁹⁵ As Chiang Kai-shek marshaled the forces of the United Front and began the expedition to conquer China's bandit-infested territories, his soldiers cried, "Down with the Warlords! Down with Imperialism!" This statement summarized the spirit of the Northern Expedition and the United Front.⁹⁶

Chaos Strikes Hunan

As civil unrest and anti-foreign sentiment reached a boiling point in Hunan, Fr. Basil and his fellow missionaries struggled to maintain the status quo in their prefecture. Msgr. Dominic Langenbacher traveled to the United States in March of 1926.⁹⁷ He returned to China in September with four Sisters of St. Joseph from Baden, Pennsylvania, and a fresh band of Passionist missionaries who dubbed themselves, "The Four Horsemen."⁹⁸

As the new missionaries made their way to the central mission in Chenzhou, and the Sisters of St. Joseph journeyed to their intended station of Yuanzhou, the United Front was thrusting into eastern Hunan. Their goal was to defeat warlord Wu Peifu, who boasted an army of 350,000 men and controlled territory in Hunan, Hebei, and Henan provinces.⁹⁹ The routed bandits became a significant threat to Passionists traveling through the countryside. The Guomindang intended to imprison or kill any bandits they apprehended. Therefore, the brigands had taken to the practice of seizing foreign hostages and negotiating their release to avoid their own capture — or for an agreement to peaceably rejoin the Guomindang.¹⁰⁰ Chiang Kai-shek's success in the campaign rested upon the cooperation of graduates of the Peasant Training Institute in Canton, which was directed by Mao Zedong. Trained graduates organized farmers on behalf of the United Front, eliciting their assistance as guides, porters, and spies. The intelligence they gathered enabled Chiang Kai-shek to disarm 10,000 of Wu Peifu's soldiers and seize strategic areas vital to the warlord's operations.¹⁰¹ The joint venture served to thrust Mao Zedong into the spotlight of Chinese politics.

The union between the Guomindang and the Communists had always been unstable at best, but tensions ran especially high by 1927. After a schism of loyalty formed in the ranks of the Guomindang, Chiang Kai-shek became convinced that the Communists were scheming for a way to undermine his authority and seize power. On April 11, he issued a secret order to all provinces under the control of his forces to purge Communists from the Guomindang.¹⁰² The directive was carried out a day later in Shanghai. The so-called "Shanghai Massacre" drove a rift between both the Guomindang and the Communists.

Early in 1927, hostilities of every conceivable shade — pro-warlord, pro-Nationalist, pro-Communist — were erupting in west Hunan. Communist troops struck first in Xupu, the mission run by Fr. Godfrey Holbein and Br. Lambert Budde. The two fled their mission complex and escaped from a wave of Communist troops with only the clothes on their backs.¹⁰³ Msgr. Dominic experienced a similar event at the mission in Chenxi:

Agitators come to a town... go about the streets preaching everywhere, enlist the students in their crusade, brow beat every trade and every class of individuals of the town into a revolutionary society and then through these crush everything...

the machinery is especially... directed against the Missions.... "Down with!" got to be the slogan for everything that stood for law and order. Down with the Catholics, Down with the Protestants, Down with the Foreigners.¹⁰⁴

Msgr. Dominic was convinced that war was at hand. Upon learning that U.S. citizens were escaping upon the American gunboat *Isabel* to the city of Hankou, he issued a controversial order to Passionist missionaries and the Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of St. Joseph throughout the prefecture: flee their missions at once for Hankou.¹⁰⁵ The order immediately set to flight thirty-one Passionist priests and sisters, including Fr. Basil Bauer. Four missionaries who had not experienced violence in their areas elected to remain behind. Passionist activity in western Hunan came to a devastating halt.¹⁰⁶ The sharp rise in violence in southeast China and the sudden lapse in communication from the missionaries focused world attention on the region. Fr. Basil's hometown newspaper, *The Sharon Herald*, reported that he and his fellow Passionists had gone missing in Hunan.¹⁰⁷ *The Pittsburgh Catholic* published news from the U.S. State Department that missions had been pillaged and burned throughout the Passionist prefecture, except for the central mission in Chenzhou. In Shanghai, Lo Pa Hong, the famous Catholic layman who had received the Lucky Thirteen after arriving in China, was reportedly in hiding from persecutors who wished to kill him for his involvement with foreigners.¹⁰⁸ A whole tedious month would pass before the U.S. State Department confirmed that all missionaries were accounted for in various parts of China.¹⁰⁹

For Fr. Basil and the other missionaries who fled to Hankou, the exodus was a tale of misery, replete with days of travel in the blistering sun and bouts of dysentery that were aggravated by the consumption of unwholesome food. One Sister of St. Joseph, Sr. Clarissa Stadtmuller, contracted malignant malaria and died in Chongqing. Another Passionist missionary from the Lucky Thirteen, Fr. Terrence Connolly, was sent to the International Hospital in Hankou, where he was diagnosed with nervous exhaustion. He would never recover. Upon returning to the United States, he was institutionalized for the rest of his life.¹¹⁰ The weary and solemn band reached Guiyang by May 21, and boarded a steamship, the *Yiling*, on June 20, which carried them to safety in Hankou. During the trip, the boat was packed with Chinese officers and their concubines. Because the Passionists were foreigners, the soldiers were less than civil. They reportedly broke into the cabins unannounced and demanded use the one bathroom that had been reserved for the missionaries.¹¹¹

When the Passionist finally returned to their missions, they found congregations of lapsed Catholics who had abandoned the practice of religion under the fury of Communist propaganda. Those who had resisted Msgr. Dominic Langenbacher's orders were still making excellent progress. The realization fomented a sense of dissent and resentment among the missionaries, which resulted in Msgr. Dominic's resignation as Superior. He continued to function as the Prefect Apostolic. Fr. William Westhoven, C.P., a member of the Lucky Thirteen mission band, assumed the title of Superior.¹¹²

By August of 1928, Fr. Basil was assigned to the town that would become his home mission throughout the remainder of his time in China — Wangcun, "King's Village".¹¹³ He took over for Fr. Anthony

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Maloney, C.P., who originally established a mission there in 1925.¹¹⁴

The mission town of Wangcun was not the usual stone-walled citadel on a plain. The houses crowded closely to a solitary street that twisted and struggled up a steep hill. To Fr. Basil's eye, it looked as though all the houses had played leapfrog down hundreds of "steps" formed by rice terracing, a few houses clinging to each step, until they were halted by the beautiful and treacherous North River.¹¹⁵ It was an isolated place. The people knew very little of what occurred in other parts of Hunan, and far less of what was happening in China overall.¹¹⁶ When Fr. Basil arrived, he had been granted a new tract of property. It was his mission to build a church, a school, catechumenates for men and women, and a permanent residence for himself.¹¹⁷

Fr. Basil Becomes Chinese

Fr. Basil was a product of Western culture. In the Western world view, the individual is the most fundamental element of society. Citizens interact with a democratic state, and harmony is found when widely varied groups of people are capable of pursuing their own interests, providing the whole with freedom and stability. Emphasis is placed upon the rights of the individual. Families are seen as private entities that are wholly separate from the State, acting without interference from the other. Morality is established by religion, with Christianity predominating. According to traditional Christian ethics, peace, harmony, and happiness are found in obedience to God. Within the family model, the husband obeyed God as Christ willingly submitted Himself to the Father. The wife submitted to the husband, and thus, indirectly through him, submitted to God's will. Children respected and obeyed their mother and father and, in turn, the parents brought them up to obey the Lord. These concepts would have informed the missionary's basic understanding of society.¹¹⁸

As Fr. Basil worked in China, he discovered that, *jia*, the family, was considered the core unit of Chinese society. The family was the most important part of a person's life, the foundation of one's identity, one's morality, and the source of the meaning of life. Filial piety formed the root of all virtues, and familial solidarity was essential to a well-functioning society. All institutions of community, from religion to education to politics, were constructed around and functioned on the model of the family. The father was responsible for setting the moral standard for his wife and children via Confucian virtues, and served as a model for them to emulate. As in the West, families were patrilineal, with the prime authority being vested in the most senior male. According to Confucian thinking, individuals were at the center of a web of relationships: ruler and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, older and younger sibling, friend and friend. Three of these ideal "Five Relations" in Confucian doctrine are found within the family. Of all ancient virtues in China, *xiao*, or filial piety — the almost religious respect that children owe to parents, grandparents, and the aged — was the most important. Religious beliefs contributed to the ethics of the Chinese mainly in their belief in karmic rewards or retribution for their actions.¹¹⁹

Even though Fr. Basil had emerged from Western culture, he also came from a tightly-knit family. The fact is underscored by the realization that, when several of his siblings left home — particularly the ones that did not marry or follow him into religious service —

they simply moved a few doors down from their childhood home on Elm Avenue in Sharon.¹²⁰ Hailing from a family with thirteen children, he intimately understood the need for familial solidarity, piety, and cooperation, and thus, a society based upon this model did not strike him as alien. The concept of the eldest male ruling the family and setting an example for emulation made complete sense to him. Fr. Viktor Koch was the eldest male in his own family, and true to Chinese form, Fr. Basil had indeed followed his example. Thus, Fr. Basil found it easy to "become Chinese."

Fr. Basil approached the process of becoming Chinese in Chinese fashion. In other words, he accepted only the parts that appealed most to his nature and cast the rest aside. His innate common sense prevailed in many cases that left him in jaw-dropping dismay. He witnessed one occasion in which a shabby servant girl named Yang Mei got into a shouting match with a child from a wealthy family. The two were abusing each other in language far beyond their years, and drawing the interest of neighbors — an incident that the Chinese call "cursing the street." Yang Mei emerged from the affair with her ego so bruised that she tied her feet to a piece of old wooden matting and cast herself into the river, committing suicide to save face. A young adherent to Buddhism, the child thought that after death, she would be reborn into a new life. Fr. Basil assured his assistant at the Wangcun mission that the *Shen Fu* — Spiritual Father — would have much to say to his Christian parishioners next Sunday.¹²¹

In another instance, Fr. Basil witnessed a case in which a wealthy landowner had built a new house and neglected to invite his bodyguard crew to the celebratory banquet. The men perceived this oversight as a smear on their honor, resulting in a loss of face. Their leader plotted revenge and killed the landowner and his wife, shooting and bayoneting them in a fit of rage. He fled the scene, and authorities failed to find him. As a result, they punished the murderer's family, killing nine of twenty relatives. Fr. Basil was stunned. He did not agree with the wholesale slaying, or the extreme measures that were taken to correct the situation, but acknowledged that the principle, considered from the Chinese perspective, was considered acceptable.¹²²

Perhaps even more baffling to him was the instance in which a *Bonze* — a Buddhist monk — was burned to death.

Religion causes men to do things that, to the uninitiated, seem the height of folly. Witness the belief and act of a Bonze, who last week here in Wangtsun [Wangcun], desired to be burned alive. His wish was granted.... It is a custom that when a priest is very old and is about to die, he expresses a wish to be burned alive. In this case he was a little over eighty years old, and did not have many days of life left.... When the priest can cry out no more [during the burning process] his soul is supposed to leave his body and he does not suffer the pain of death, and some claim that his body also goes to bliss without being destroyed, though how they can believe this when they see with their own eyes the consuming of the body, is more than I can figure out.... Is it religion or fanaticism?¹²³

In April 1929, three Passionist missionaries, Frs. Godfrey Holbein, Clement Seybold, and Walter Coveyou were murdered by bandits. The incident sent shockwaves around the world, for this was the first instance of American missionaries being murdered in China. Readers of *The Sign* became intimately familiar with the dangers that the Passionists faced in the mission fields. Fr. Basil pointed out to

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them one fact that was easily overlooked — the Chinese themselves had suffered more from the armed criminals than the missionaries:

The country was literally overrun by bandits, and unlucky was the man who fell into their hands, especially if he had any money or fields. He was sure to be held for ransom. It was fatal for the man who could not persuade his folks to buy him back....

Fire was feared more than any enemy who lay outside the walls. Knowing this, the bandits, on one occasion, waited until a season when a long drought had withered the very crops in the fields. Then one night they let burning arrows fly on the straw roofs. They did not need to shoot many, for in a short time the entire town was like a blazing furnace. In the confusion, they slipped unnoticed past the guards. What they did that night is too gruesome to relate.¹²⁴

Thus, in his view, the Passionists and the Chinese were united by a mutual struggle to survive against marauding forces. Parishioners from outlying areas were risking their lives to come to Mass and receive the sacraments. Like them, he chose to bear the hardship with patient endurance. It was another way in which he “became Chinese.” His characteristic serenity shines through in a passage he wrote for his article in *The Sign* in 1935. Considering what he and his fellow Passionists had experienced in China thus far, his resilience is extraordinary:

Strange to say, I feel safer among the Hunanese than I imagine I would in any part of China.... Living the last nine years in Hunan, I feel safe with everybody, provide they are not out and out bandits or Reds. Whether in the towns or cities, or along the roads or in country villages, I have no worry. After so long a time in a place, one gets to know what to expect, and experience tells me that, except in disturbed times, I have enjoyed a fair degree of safety, especially in the country where foreign influence has not yet reached.¹²⁵

Fr. Basil and Spiritual Forces in China

During his time in Wangcun and beyond, Fr. Basil also witnessed uncanny incidents that he attributed to spiritual forces in the living world. Belief in demonic forces reverberated strongly through Catholicism back in Fr. Basil’s day, but to family members hearing his stories back in the States, he was so emphatic about his convictions that it shocked them. Chinese culture was steeped in superstition and mysticism. Thus, he found ways to satiate their hunger for paranormal explanations by framing them within a Catholic context. His emphatic convictions in the supernatural are yet another facet in his identification with the Chinese.

In February 1931, Fr. Basil decided to construct a wall around his new mission complex.¹²⁶ Apparently the task was easier said than done. When the wall was finished, for reasons that he could not explain, it would invariably crash down the next day. He assiduously studied the ground and searched for instabilities, and several attempts were made

to rebuild the wall — all with the same result. Finally, he sprinkled each brick with holy water and said a blessing as it was being laid. At last, the wall remained standing.¹²⁷

Another two incidents involve funerals. In the first, a deceased woman who was about to be buried shot up straight in her coffin and demanded a bath. The mourners were horrified, but they complied, and once the deed was done, she eased back into death. Fr. Basil was convinced that the Devil had made her body sit up and speak.¹²⁸

The second occurred in Wa Chang, a small village outside the mission town of Yongsui. A woman gave birth to a child, and shortly after, both mother and infant died of illness.¹²⁹ The woman was a pagan, but Fr. Basil had learned that she was contemplating the idea of converting to Christianity, so he advised her relatives to avoid the superstitious rites normally associated with Chinese tradition. They agreed — except for one condition. According to Chinese belief, a body had to be buried on a date of good omen, and a failure to do so would compel the vengeful spirit to haunt the living. The entire village of Wa Chang demanded that the family let a Buddhist monk select the funeral date, and they capitulated. To Fr. Basil’s dismay, the day chosen occurred fifteen days after the death, and the countryside was baking in the torrid heat of July. The Chinese do not embalm their dead, and he feared that pestilence would soon plague the whole village. He refrained from further intervention, however, since the funeral was being officiated by pagans, in a pagan town. A fervent Chinese Catholic asked him for holy water, a request that he granted. The parishioner prayed over the dead and emptied the vial upon their bodies. When the funeral day finally arrived, to the amazement of the villagers, the coffins were opened and the corpses, though long dead, had not turned odiferous. To Fr. Basil’s delight, twenty families in the village signed up for doctrinal instruction. He, like the villagers, attributed the miraculous event to God’s work.¹³⁰

The impact of Fr. Basil framing odd occurrences within Catholic context is evident in a story told by a Chinese boy in his mission village of Wangcun. The child had been stricken by polio as a youth, and thus remained a cripple for the rest of his life. One day, the boy had accompanied friends who decided to go swimming in a quarry pool, both of whom drowned. The dangers of swimming in quarry pools are well-documented: the water is often surprisingly cold, and swimmers who dive too deep can suffer from shock, and even hypothermia.¹³¹ However, the child’s explanation reveals successful assimilation of Catholic doctrine. He told the grief-stricken parents of the drowned children that he had witnessed the Devil appearing in the water and taking the two boys. The Devil considered taking him as well, but ultimately rejected him on account of his physical deformity.¹³²

Fr. Basil’s most terrifying encounter with spiritual forces likely occurred when he was called upon to perform an exorcism. The afflicted person was a boy, and the most nerve-shredding sign of possession was the fact that multiple streams of voices were emanating from his open mouth, all warning the priest that the child now belonged to the Devil, and any attempt to exorcise him would result in failure. Whether the boy suffered from psychological problems was unknown, but according to Fr. Basil, the exorcism was a success.¹³³

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A Respite in the States

The rigors of political upheaval, and long-distance travel, and dispensary work took their toll on the Passionist missionaries. In the summer of 1934, Fr. Basil returned home to Pittsburgh to undergo an operation that could not be performed in China, and recuperate from his labors.¹³⁴ On Monday, June 18, he went to Mt. Gallitzin, motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Baden, and watched from the church sanctuary as eleven young women received the habits of the order. One was Teresa Long, the first Chinese postulant from the community's mission in Zhijiang, Hunan, China.¹³⁵

Fr. Basil returned home to Sharon to find that many changes had taken place within his family. First, his mother Anna Koch Bauer had died three years earlier, on April 30, 1931. She was attending Mass at St. Joseph's Church, and had just received Holy Communion when she was stricken by apoplexy. She died at home the next day.¹³⁶ To the Bauer family, no ending could have been more fitting for the woman they considered "a living saint." On a happier note, three more sisters had taken up the family tradition of religious service. His sister Clara had already joined the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in 1918. His sister Marguerite had joined a convent of Passionist nuns in Pittsburgh, and his sister Anna had become a Sister of Mercy in Erie.¹³⁷ A fourth sister Helen Bauer was in the novitiate of the Sisters of Notre Dame in Baltimore.¹³⁸ Thus, five Bauer children had elected to enter religious life, and nothing could have pleased Fr. Basil Bauer more. No doubt, he especially found it gratifying that Fr. Viktor Koch, the inspiration for the family, was overjoyed by the number of Bauers following his example.¹³⁹ His uncle had returned home from Germany for Christmas. The 1934 holiday season was a joyous one for both priests — and a state occasion for the Koch and Bauer families, demanding reunions. Feeling both grief-stricken over the loss of his mother, and elated by news of his sisters entering religious life, Fr. Basil returned to China in 1935, making it back to his home mission before Good Friday on April 19.¹⁴⁰

War Erupts in China: the Chinese Civil War and the Second Sino-Japanese War

While Fr. Basil lived in relative peace in Wangcun, two separate wars were brewing in China. First, the rift that had developed between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communists with the Shanghai Massacre of 1927 compelled Mao Zedong to retreat to the Hunan countryside and begin amassing peasants for a rebellion.¹⁴¹ He named his recruits 'The First Peasants' and Workers' Army. Later, this force would become known to the world as the People's Liberation Army, or the Red Army. Its birth was marked on August 1, 1927, when the Red Army occupied the city of Nanchang and first engaged the Guomindang.¹⁴²

The insurrection in Nanchang ushered in ten years of civil war in China. Chiang Kai-shek led the Guomindang on a series of campaigns designed to isolate, envelop, and eventually destroy the Red Army and their Soviet cells developing within China.¹⁴³ By October 1934, the Communists had been nearly decimated. Struggling to rebuild his army's numbers and evade the Guomindang, Mao Zedong led his forces on a year-long retreat through China known as the "Long March."¹⁴⁴ Communist movements disrupted the Passionists

once again in 1935, forcing twelve missionaries and eight sisters to temporarily abandon three mission towns.¹⁴⁵

The Chinese Civil War afforded Japan an ideal opportunity to expand its empire without intervention. The Japanese were especially interested in acquiring Manchuria, a region in northeast China, which was rich in natural resources. They invaded Manchuria on September 19, 1931, establishing the puppet state of Manchukuo and installing Aisin Gioro Puyi, the last emperor of China, as its ruler.¹⁴⁶ Japan would remain entrenched there until 1945, when the country surrendered to Allied forces.

Tensions between Japan and China escalated on the night of July 7, 1937, when troops from both countries exchanged fire on the Marco Polo bridge in Beijing. The opposing armies summoned military reinforcements, and sporadic skirmishes swiftly erupted into a full-scale battle, ushering in the second Sino-Japanese war. By August, Japan occupied both Beijing and the port city of Tianjin.¹⁴⁷ Until that point, *Generalissimo* Chiang Kai-shek had preferred to fight his battles one at a time. He wanted to quell China's internal conflicts with the warlords and the Communists first, and avoid all-out war with Japan until those battles were won — a strategy that was unpopular with the Chinese people.¹⁴⁸ The Marco Polo Bridge Incident jolted him into action. Three days later, on July 10, 1937, he announced the Guomindang policy of resistance against Japan and marshaled Chinese forces for battle in Shanghai.

Unlike Japan, China was unprepared for total war. The country's military strength had been sapped by domestic battles, and it lacked the industrial strength to match Japan's mechanized weaponry. Yet, *Generalissimo* Chiang hoped to eventually win support from the United States and other foreign nations by demonstrating that his country was capable of mounting a defense. Once again, Communist forces called a truce and joined with the Guomindang to fight a common enemy. The Second United Front between both parties was far from unified, however. Both sides were bracing for a showdown once the Japanese were driven out of China.¹⁴⁹

Fr. Basil and the Passionists in the War Years

Despite the darkness of the times, the Passionists had reason to celebrate: On May 28, 1934, the Prefecture Apostolic of Chenzhou had been promoted to a Vicariate Apostolic. On that same day, Fr. Cuthbert O'Gara was appointed as Vicar Apostolic, and on October 28, he was ordained a bishop. In December of that year, the Vicariate's name was changed from Chenzhou to Yuanling.¹⁵⁰

As Fr. Basil had reported in his articles for *The Sign*, Wangcun was tucked away in the remote reaches of Hunan, and news of the political chaos ravaging the country hardly penetrated its borders. In July 1937, as war raged throughout the rest of China, the primary concern for the villagers of Wangcun remained bandits:

Rumors about bandits are persistent, and will not give us peace. Ever since the Chinese Reds came through this place and robbed it right and left, killing indiscriminately, the local people have dug up their old rifles, or taken their spears and gone on a rampage themselves. Gangs from five to fifteen, sometimes more, roam the countryside.... Now in this district we have a gang of about three thousand ex-soldiers who are bandits. These men, traveling

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from place to place, bring havoc and terror among the people.... Such is the humdrum of life here in the North River section of our Vicariate where as yet no roads have pushed through.¹⁵¹

By 1938, Chinese resistance had stiffened, and the Japanese invasion slowed. At the height of its aggression, the Japanese army reached only the extreme northeastern tip of Hunan, and thus the Passionist Vicariate in the western part of the province was spared the trauma of Japanese occupation.¹⁵² After Japanese forces captured the city of Wuhan in Hubei province, the Chinese government fled to the interior city of Chongqing, establishing a provisional capital there.¹⁵³ In an effort to break Chinese resistance, Japanese Imperial General Headquarters ordered the air branches of its army and navy to launch massive air raids on Chongqing, as well as civilian targets in major Chinese cities. As a result, the central mission of the Passionists in Yuanling endured bombing raids. Around this same time, the Passionists received startling news: Lo Pa Hong, the Catholic layman and philanthropist from Shanghai, had returned from a banquet and died of poisoning.¹⁵⁴ His assassination had been attributed to a suspected collaboration with the Japanese, an accusation that was hotly refuted by missionaries who knew him.¹⁵⁵

Chinese refugees fled the coast, seeking shelter in the remote and mountainous area of Hunan. The first refugees began flooding into the Passionist vicariate by boat, bus, and on foot. The first waves mainly consisted of the educators of China, along with their students, all of whom had been urged by the government to take flight. They were accompanied by the wealthy classes who were trying to protect their businesses and possessions. Deciding that they only had their lives to lose, the poor remained where they were and struggled to endure amid Japanese aggression. By February, Yuanling had been bombed on numerous occasions.¹⁵⁶ In August 1939, incendiary bombs were dropped on the city for the first time.¹⁵⁷ Rolling up his sleeves to assist with relief work, Bishop Cuthbert O'Gara earned the nickname, "The Stretcher-Bearing Bishop."

In 1939, Fr. Basil was transferred to Yongsui, the old mission of Fr. Theophane Maguire, who had returned to the United States.¹⁵⁸ The mission town was predominantly occupied by an aboriginal Chinese population known as the Miao. They had their own specific dialect, which was a departure from the mandarin Chinese that Fr. Basil and his fellow missionaries had learned upon their arrival in the country, and speaking was the only method of communication, since the Miao had no written language.

While war erupted along the Chinese coast and the mission in Yuanling endured Japanese bombings, the village of Yongsui, "Lasting Peace," lived up to its name. The closest experience that its citizens had to the war was the frequent wail of air alarms. As the children in town liked to say, "They have dropped no eggs here."¹⁵⁹ The mission town boasted a Catholic following so large that Masses in the mission chapel were said for capacity crowds. Bishop Cuthbert O'Gara ordered a new church built in Yongsui and Fr. Basil served as an overseer during its construction. An avid videographer, Fr. Basil tape-recorded footage of the construction process.¹⁶⁰ In addition, he established a men's and women's catechumenate, and both brick buildings were frequently crowded with citizens learning the teachings of the Church. Bishop O'Gara also granted permission for Fr. Basil

to build another rectory in Yongsui and devote the existing mission house entirely for dispensary work.

By 1941, Fr. Basil commented that Passionists throughout the district were doing double-duty, juggling both their ordinary mission activities with the added strain of relief work. He also noted the influx of Chinese refugees coming into Yongsui:

Since the beginning of the war we have had a refugee camp to care for the many homeless ones who flocked here from the war-torn districts. The refugee children have been attending a school in the camp, organized and conducted by the mission. As soon as opportunity and funds permit, a school will be added to the buildings of the mission as a crowning feature.¹⁶¹

Fr. Basil remained at the mission of Yongsui until 1945, when he was transferred again to assist the mission at Wuxi.¹⁶² After bombings had started in Yuanling in 1940, the mission's orphanages had been moved there.¹⁶³ A mission station of the Sisters of Charity, Wuxi was remote, far from highways, and sequestered by rolling hills. While the sisters saw to the care of the children, the Passionists conducted religious teaching. Fr. Basil also visited orphanages that were a part of Madame Chiang Kai-shek's ambitious social welfare program to care for the orphans of Nationalist soldiers.¹⁶⁴ Wherever Madame Chiang placed the children, and in whatever number, she never relinquished control. She would often visit unannounced to check on their care.¹⁶⁵ Fr. Basil visited one such orphanage in Zhijiang to teach religion classes.¹⁶⁶ Passionist involvement in the care of Chinese orphans and refugees is a point of interest because it demonstrates that Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government could not provide for its own people and relied upon the Catholic missionaries of west Hunan to provide basic services and needs. This involvement would later serve as a justification of persecution by the Communists.

In February of 1946, Fr. Basil again returned to the United States, apparently to receive another operation that could not be performed in China.¹⁶⁷ During a sojourn in Pittsburgh, he met with Thomas Cardinal Tien of Beijing and Sr. Catherine Davenport, S.S.J., who also worked in the mission fields of China. Fr. Basil was present at the Motherhouse in Baden when several Sisters of St. Joseph received their habits in March.¹⁶⁸ He visited Sharon, and learned that his sister Gertrude had entered the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and had taken her vows in 1938. Thus, a total of six Bauer children had been inspired to pursue religious vocations.¹⁶⁹

Fr. Basil's visit to Sharon also coincided with the second return of his uncle Fr. Viktor Koch. Germany was reeling from the aftermath of WWII, and Fr. Viktor had traveled home to America, vowing to return with a new band of Passionists willing to serve in Germany. A Mass was celebrated at St. Joseph's Church honoring Fr. Viktor's golden jubilee — fifty years as a Passionist priest. Fr. Basil co-celebrated the Mass along with other priests in the family: cousins Fr. Benedict Huck, C.P., Monsignor Joseph G. Mehler, and Fr. Rowland Flaherty, C.P., who had been ordained a month earlier.¹⁷⁰

In 1948, Fr. Basil returned to Hunan and his home mission of Wangcun. He returned to learn that, shortly after his departure in 1946, the Vicariate of Yuanling had officially become a diocese.¹⁷¹ The happiness over that development would be short-lived, for the new diocese would find itself besieged by Communist influences.

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Within another year, Fr. Basil would experience the most devastating events of his life as a missionary.

Part III: Fr. Basil in Communist China The Communists Take China

When Fr. Basil left China, World War II had ended. Japan had unconditionally surrendered to the Allies, and Japanese forces remaining in China were surrendering to the troops of Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang. However, the civil war between the Guomindang and the Chinese Communist Party was still ongoing. In order to diffuse hostilities between the warring parties, Patrick J. Hurley, the U.S. Ambassador to China, negotiated a treaty known as the Double Tenth Agreement (the name referred to the fact that the conference concluded on October 10, 1945).¹⁷² According to the terms, the Chinese Communist Party would acknowledge the Guomindang as the legitimate government of China, and in turn, the Guomindang would recognize the Communists as a legitimate opposition party. Large-scale military confrontations did cease, but only for a brief time. On November 15, 1945, Chiang Kai-shek launched a new offensive intended to prevent the Communists from strengthening their power base. By the summer of 1946, China plunged back into civil war.¹⁷³

By the time that Fr. Basil returned to China in 1947, the balance of power in the country had shifted in favor of the Communists. After Japan surrendered to the Allies, Russian forces occupied Manchuria, which had formerly been under Japanese control. Joseph Stalin, the leader of Russia and head of the Comintern, intended Mao Zedong to have firm control of the northern half of Manchuria after Russian forces had departed. The Soviets therefore delayed their withdrawal, allowing Mao Zedong's forces enough time to secretly slip behind their army. The Chinese Communists benefited greatly from the discovery of Japanese weaponry that had been abandoned, though they had difficulty mastering the hardware until well-trained troops from the Guomindang began surrendering and switching sides.

The United States offered aid to embattled Guomindang forces. Over 50,000 U.S. marines were sent to guard strategic sites, and 100,000 U.S. troops were sent to quell Communist forces in China's Shangdong province.¹⁷⁴ The U.S. equipped and trained over 500,000 Guomindang troops and transported their soldiers to Communist-controlled areas, where they could proceed to drive out the enemy. Despite the advantage of more manpower and weaponry, the Guomindang still could not defeat the Communists. Mao Zedong employed a "passive-defensive" strategy, withdrawing Communist soldiers from contested areas to preserve their numbers. He also favored tactics that wore out the Guomindang forces as much as possible. Communist history records this phase of the Chinese Civil War as the "war of liberation."¹⁷⁵

The Communists Enter Wangcun

As the Communists swept through China, their *modus operandi* became evident to inhabitants of liberated regions. The process was formulaic. The first arrivals were fighting men in the Communist army, stopping within towns only briefly for a respite before moving onward. In their wake they left behind a propaganda corps comprised of idealistic youth recruited from colleges and high schools in Communist-controlled regions.¹⁷⁶ The Nationalist army had planted spies within

these areas, and officers who had befriended American missionaries in Hunan made numerous attempts to warn them of the hardships to come. One Guomindang officer described the Communist process as follows:

For four months it is the *kao t'leo* (the traditional Chinese bow, or politeness); for another four months it is *ta t'eo* (bang heads, or punishment); and after that it is *ke'an t'eo* (cut heads off, or execution).¹⁷⁷

The Red Army first entered Fr. Basil's mission of Wangcun in November. Just as Nationalist spies had predicted, their arrival was peaceful. The Nationalist Army and the town militia offered no resistance. Fr. Basil was impressed by the discipline of the soldiers. Unlike the bandits and soldiers he'd grown weary of encountering throughout his time in China, these troops refrained from storming into the homes of civilians, demanding food and quarter. Instead, they slept outdoors, beneath the eaves of houses, lulling the population into complacency with a sense of security. When they approached local farmers for food, they offered payment. The Communist occupiers who remained behind encouraged the locals to continue with their ordinary business, keeping shops and schools open. They promised to change nothing in the normal course of the Chinese life.¹⁷⁸ From Fr. Basil's perspective, they came in "like wolves in sheep's clothing." During the *kao t'leo* (politeness) phase, Fr. Basil noted that Communists focused special attention on the youngest citizens of Wangcun. They beguiled them with weekly parades in which all children participated in the famous 'stilt-walker dance.' It was an exciting spectacle, complete with the beating of drums, the clash of cymbals, and, to Fr. Basil's distaste, the shouting of slogans derogatory to the U.S. The children were often joined by members of the Farmers' Union and the Young Women's Guild. The latter were decked up in exaggerated makeup and flashy red costumes. Throughout these events, Fr. Basil noted that everyone seemed engaged in a competition to see who could shout the loudest, or appear the happiest.

The missionary's first indication of the *ta t'eo* phase — punishment — occurred when the Communists called regular meetings of the townspeople. In all the schools, one class period was devoted to intensive propaganda.¹⁷⁹ By design, they coincided exactly with doctrinal classes, and thus eliminated religious instruction. Children were organized into "youth battalions," small groups of eight to twelve members, each with its own elected chairman and managed by an official propagandist. Chinese tradition demanded that young people show deference to their elders, but within six months of the Communist arrival, children and teenagers took to calling elders over age forty the *muh-yu-ming-tang-tih ren*, the "no-brains-generation." Parents were baffled by the complete absence of *xiao*, the traditional reverence that the Chinese held for their mother and father. Moreover, they discovered that they had to be extremely mindful of what they said at home. Their children were being urged to report people who had "wrong thoughts" about the regime, resulting in accusations of misconduct, and eventually incarceration.¹⁸⁰ Fr. Basil empathized with the anguish of the parents, and like them, he grieved at the breakdown of traditional Chinese culture.

Fr. Basil witnessed one case in which a 14-year-old boy reported anti-Communist sentiments uttered by his father, who was sentenced to

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ten years in jail. The following day, the local paper gave the boy front page publicity, heaping praise upon him, and urging other children to follow the example of their compatriot. Another case sent chills of horror through the citizens of Wangcun. In a neighboring town, two young miscreants who reported their parents were murdered the next night by incensed villagers. The incident roused the attention of the Communist military, and the perpetrators of the killings were swiftly executed.¹⁸¹

The students in Fr. Basil's mission school had always adored him. Within six months they turned openly hostile, deriding him as a "foreign devil."¹⁸² Communist propagandists compelled the children to tease, torment, antagonize, and insult him, making life as miserable as possible. It was not uncommon for the youth battalions to stop at Fr. Basil's residence on a nightly basis, sometimes after midnight, awakening him and demanding to see books, papers, or other records. By day, they invaded his house to see what kind of food he was eating. The invasions were authorized by local police, and Fr. Basil's protests were consistently ignored.¹⁸³

Town meetings increased in duration and frequency until every evening involved a long indoctrination period from which no townsman dared to be absent for fear of being ridiculed, reported, or incarcerated. With his classroom empty and church attendance whittled down to a hardy few, it became clear to Fr. Basil that the Communists were methodically stripping the Catholic Church's influence from the lives and minds of the people of Wangcun — and China as a whole. The town's Communist leader issued a stern warning, ordering the missionary to suspend all religious activities. Fr. Basil had been teaching religion in Wangcun for fifteen years, and therefore the demand shocked him to the core. He reminded the town leader that the Chinese government had promised religious freedom in China. The latter affirmed that religious freedom was indeed assured — but only within his mission compound.¹⁸⁴

Within weeks, however, this last haven was wrenched from Fr. Basil as well. The school was seized for Communist use, and the chapel confiscated. The crosses were stripped from all buildings, and signs betraying names of Christian origin were obliterated.¹⁸⁵ The Communist leader also demanded control over the dispensary where Fr. Basil had been distributing food and medicine to 100 people every day. Defiant and indignant, the missionary pointed out with characteristic bluntness that the supplies were for all the people in need, and if he couldn't spread them accordingly, it would displease God to see him offering it only to one person. The Communist leader consented to let the dispensary remain open, and distribution of medicine continue unhindered.¹⁸⁶ Fr. Basil himself was relegated to a minuscule Chinese house within his mission compound. He conducted Mass there, but none of his parishioners dared to attend.¹⁸⁷ Had they done so, they would be reported to the Communists. All of his religious activities in Wangcun were finally curtailed.

For the people of Wangcun, the feelings of security inspired by the Communist arrival gave way to fear and a harrowing realization that they were being enslaved. Their conquerors redistributed the land, and each farmer received a share. Under the Nationalist regime, farmers found the taxes oppressive. After the Communist regime dawned over China, they soon discovered that half their harvest was

being hauled away for taxation. All supplies and property — rice, salt, oil, livestock, wood, vegetables — were being levied.¹⁸⁸ The remaining food supply was hardly enough to sustain them for five or six months. They were not permitted to sell any of their produce, for that would give them a certain reserve of funds. Moreover, the goods sold in the government stores were always priced cheaply, making it unfeasible for farmers to even make the attempt.¹⁸⁹

Fear finally shifted to abject terror as the Communists began the final stage of assimilation, *k'an t'oo* — execution. A meeting was held for members of the former National government, and to the horror of Wangcun's inhabitants, nearly all of them were shot. The same happened to former Chinese army officials. Those who were not shot immediately were jailed for long periods of time, then sentenced to death. The Communists eliminated every individual who could pose the slightest threat to their authority. Those who were declared "dangerous elements" were sent to jails that were already jammed to capacity.¹⁹⁰ Throughout Hunan, skilled workers were incarcerated simply as a method to induce them to perform work for the regime. In one instance, when Party officers were in need of uniforms, Communist members made a tour of tailor shops throughout the province. About ten tailors were arrested on trumped-up charges, and told to bring their sewing machines with them. They were jailed for two or three weeks, sewing new uniforms in their cells, and released only when the work was complete. Carpenters, masons, and stone-cutters received similar treatment. During the occasions when Fr. Basil traveled through Hunan, he observed long lines of prisoners being led to public construction sites, or performing road maintenance.¹⁹¹

The older generations who knew Fr. Basil well commiserated with him in their shared plight. Chinese friends and parishioners could no longer attend religious services and ceremonies, but they readily made their way to his dispensary. Every day, he heard the same woeful refrain from merchants, farmers, housewives, and coolies. "Father, how long is this going to last? Is there any hope that, if we suffer for two or three years, the situation might make a turn for the better? It would not be so bad if only there were more food. If this keeps up for two more years, we shall have nothing to eat." Fr. Basil was a forthright soul, gentle, yet unsparingly honest. He assured them



Rev. Basil Bauer, C.P. with puppy and children in Hunan, China (ca. 1930s).

Source: China Historical Collection, Passionist Archives

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that he saw no hope in sight, and felt pangs of sorrow as he watched them plod away in despair. One remark from a merchant named Mr. Wang reveals the depth of emotional turmoil experienced by the citizens of Wangcun. A friend of Fr. Basil, he came in the guise of needing medicine, but in reality, he simply needed a willing ear to hear his troubles. He confided that he was in a state of suicidal ideation. The only thing that prevented him from carrying out the act was the thought of his children.¹⁹²

Fr. Basil's Final Years in China

The Communists were adept at engineering situations that would goad a missionary — or one of their parishioners — to react to persecution, and thus furnish evidence that might justify eventual arrest. One common tactic involved hanging posters on the walls of a mission compound, each denouncing foreign missionaries as spies and imperialists. When Communist officers found that the posters were missing, the missionaries were immediately held suspect of committing the act themselves, or forcing their Chinese followers to tear them down. A public trial swiftly ensued, an event that the Communists dubbed “Confession Day.”¹⁹³

Given anecdotes passed down through the Bauer family, this scenario played out at Wangcun. Posters were hung on the mission walls, most likely denouncing Fr. Basil. In a fit of sheer indignation, a young boy from the town tore them down, and when the Communists arrived on the scene to arrest the guilty party, Fr. Basil covered for the child by claiming responsibility.¹⁹⁴

A public trial ensued in the spring of 1950. The Communist propagandists cowed several hundred villagers into gathering at the town square for Confession Day, and demanded that they tax their memories for the slightest detail that might be construed as a “sin” against Communism and the Party. They fully intended to contort the information leaked from the townspeople into evidence of espionage. Their plot was foiled by an 11-year-old Chinese girl, Lung Teh Lui. Slim and roughly clad, she stepped forward and proclaimed that Fr. Basil was a good man, and she would not lie, regardless of what the Communists would do to her.¹⁹⁵

Though the effort was courageous, Lung Teh Lui's response did not exonerate Fr. Basil. The Communists had failed to extract incriminating evidence from the submissive crowd, but they were determined to expel him from Chinese society. The town's communist leader placed him under arrest and banished him to the rectory of his former mission compound. Fr. Basil wrote to his sister, Sr. Anne Marie Bauer, R.S.M. of Erie, Pennsylvania, telling her of his turns of fortune.¹⁹⁶ That letter was the last communication that he would send outside Red China for twenty-two months.

By late October in 1952, Fr. Basil had lost nearly 50 pounds. Normally, the five-foot-nine missionary weighed around 180 lbs. He was now a gaunt 130. The dramatic weight loss had not resulted from abuse or neglect. The enlarged heart and overactive thyroid conditions that had developed from hardships in the mission fields were returning in full force, and the stress of confinement had left him withered. As his strength ebbed, Fr. Basil warned the Communist leader of Wangcun that, if an American died on Chinese soil, the Party would be held responsible. Shaken by the warning, the normally obstreperous man issued a permit for Fr. Basil to travel to the Passionists' central

mission in Yuanling, and ordered coolies to carry him over 35 miles of mountainous terrain.¹⁹⁷ Thus, in a state of physical anguish, and with a heavy heart, he left the mission town where he had spent the majority of his 28 years in China.

After visiting Yuanling and telling his brethren of his intention to leave China, he began the journey, arriving in Changsha.¹⁹⁸ There, Fr. Basil made a concerted effort to apply for an exit visa and return to the United States. He first confronted the town police and argued for the right to return home based on his failing health. The police escorted him to the hospital for medical examination, where he was placed under guard. Doctors confirmed that he was suffering from heart ailments, along with kidney stones. They prescribed digitalis, a medication derived from foxglove.¹⁹⁹ Unfortunately, it only exacerbated his condition, causing his enlarged heart to race, and his hospital stay lengthened to an agonizing eleven days. Twice during his convalescence, he “raised the roof,” again demanding an exit permit, resulting in calls to the police. The second appeal was successful. They issued his permit and told him to leave for Hong Kong the next day. With his health still precarious, he pleaded to have one of his fellow Passionists accompany him on the long road through bandit-infested territory. His request was denied.²⁰⁰

Teetering between life and death, he staggered into a train that took him from Changsha to Canton, where he boarded a boat and crossed into Hong Kong — and freedom — on November 7, 1952.²⁰¹ Fr. Basil looked back to the shrinking Chinese coastline, at distant green hills rising beneath veils of fog. He prayed for Passionist brethren who remained in Red China, as well as friends and parishioners he'd left behind in Wangcun. No resentment tarnished his thoughts of them. He could not conceive of Chinese Communism as a “revolution,” because that implied an acceptance of circumstances by the majority of the people. In his mind, Communism was a massive flood that had surged down from northern China, ravaging Hunan, and the people of that enchanting land had no other alternative but to let themselves drift along with the tide of fear. They would find themselves inundated for years to come.²⁰² That prospect anguished him to the marrow of his weary bones.

Part IV: After China

A series of hospitalizations peppered the next two months of Fr. Basil's life. First, he spent twelve days in St. Francis Hospital in Hong Kong. After boarding the *S.S. President Madison* and disembarking in Los Angeles on November 23, he made his way home to Sharon, spent Christmas with family, then checked into the Sharon Hospital, where he convalesced for another nine days.²⁰³ Next, he ventured to Union City, and after meeting with Fr. Provincial Ernest Welch, he traveled to the Leahy Clinic in Boston and received treatment for his heart and thyroid condition.²⁰⁴ The state of his health remained a concern for the rest of his life. Fr. Basil's family members vividly recall that he drank wine to ease his heart condition, and if he drank coffee, by necessity, it was always Sanka.²⁰⁵ The caffeine would aggravate his enlarged heart.

Between 1953 and 1955, Fr. Basil accepted a transitional assignment in Florida. While recuperating from the rigors of his experience in China, he performed pastoral duties at the Lantana Chapel in the Boynton Beach Area. In August of 1957, he received a new passport

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Rev. Basil Bauer, C.P., tells reporters: “I came out of Red China empty-handed.”

Source: China Historical Collection, Passionist Archives

and joined the Passionist missions in Mandeville, Jamaica.²⁰⁶ Despite the change in venue, China remained with him. Occasionally, he made headlines in newspapers from Florida to Mandeville, Jamaica, and the reason was inevitably a keynote speech or interview about his experiences in Red China. When pressed for an opinion about the political upheaval that had afflicted the country, Fr. Basil was quick to praise Chiang Kai-shek:

Chiang was surrounded by gullible, greedy, grasping men, but Chiang is a sincere, honest man with China's future at heart. He is one of the staunchest friends America has in the Orient. We should not let past failures guide us in supporting him in the future.²⁰⁷

The impact of China on Fr. Basil's life is evident in stories relayed by relatives. As a child, Laurie Miller, his great niece, would beg him to teach her how to count in Chinese — a matter that required a special arrangement, since Laurie's mother did not like the sound of the foreign words. Fr. Basil would prevail upon the girl's mother to make a Manhattan for him, and while she was occupied with the preparations, he indulged Laurie with lessons.²⁰⁸

His second cousin Gary Koch remembered Fr. Basil teaching him how to write his name in Chinese. He also recalled a time when the Koch family drove Fr. Basil to the spillway at Pymatuning State Park in Linesville, Pennsylvania — famous as the “Place Where the Ducks Walk on the Fishes' Backs.”²⁰⁹ A railing overlooks the deep well full of writhing carp, and visitors are apt to toss bread in pieces and slices, watching with glee as ducks and fish squirm about, vying for food. A child at the time, Gary and his sister bought a loaf of stale bread and skipped over to the railing, turning giddy at the spectacle that awaited. To their shock, Fr. Basil gaped at the sight of visitors flinging bread over the railing. During his time in China, he had witnessed hundreds of people die from famine, and hundreds more swallow mouthfuls of dirt to alleviate gnawing hunger. The former missionary was not about to stand by and let his kin waste food on

fish. He permitted both children one slice each to feed the carp, but they were taking the rest of that loaf home, stale or not!²¹⁰

Fr. Basil returned home from Jamaica to the USA in September of 1959 to attend the funeral of Mother Genevieve Ryan, former Mother Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph in China.²¹¹ He was assigned to St. Paul's Monastery in Pittsburgh and remained there until 1962, when he was transferred to Baltimore. During that time, he served as a chaplain at the Jenkins Memorial Hospital, and also for the Patapsco Council of the Knights of Columbus. He never let a meeting conclude without reminding the men of their eternal destiny — of what life was about.²¹² Every year he made it a point to visit family back home in Sharon, and in 1968, he even celebrated his golden jubilee of profession as a Passionist in St. Joseph's Church, the same parish where he had been baptized, received First Communion, and said his First Mass as an ordained priest in 1923.²¹³ During one such visit on July 10, 1970, he suffered a heart attack that was destined to end his earthly life.²¹⁴ The Passionists who knew him best consider it a great coincidence that on that very day, Bishop James Walsh, a fellow China missionary, was freed from twelve years of captivity in communist China.²¹⁵ Fr. Basil was admitted as a patient in Sharon General Hospital the day of his heart attack, and on July 18, after a weeklong struggle to recuperate, he passed away.

To friends and family who knew Fr. Basil, he left a deep impression on the mind and heart. A true Passionist, human suffering resonated within the core of his being. Sharing the pain of the human condition was the way in which he connected with God. He had made himself a human bridge between Christ and China, which was extraordinary. In 1924, he set sail with no training in the Chinese language or culture, yet he intuitively understood what was required to succeed as a missionary.

Eighty Passionists and five religious communities of Sisters had struggled to sow the word of God in western Hunan, and when Communism swept away all that they had struggled to build in that mountainous province, they concluded that they had failed in their mission. However, all things are possible in China — provided that they are accomplished in Chinese fashion. Sr. Mary Carita Pendergast, S.C., a Sister of Charity who had worked in Hunan, returned there in April-May of 1989. Joined by Passionist Fathers Marcellus White and Robert Carbonneau, she discovered that the seeds had taken root amid the storm of political and social turmoil. In Chinese fashion, the Catholics of Hunan patiently endured the onslaught of Communist propaganda and waited for a time when persecution of Christians eased enough to permit open practice of the Catholic faith. Over time, the Church of China is slowly but surely strengthening its foundations.²¹⁶ May God reward Fr. Basil Bauer for the amazing part that he played in that valiant effort.

Endnotes

- 1 *Homily for Mass for Father Basil Bauer*, Passionist Historical Archives, Union City, NJ [hereinafter PHA], (July 21, 1970), 1.
- 2 Author interview with Gary Koch (May 31, 2015).
- 3 In 1927, when violent clashes between the Communist Army and the Nationalist Army forced several Passionists to temporarily flee their missions, several missionaries bitterly criticized Prefect Apostolic Msgr. Dominic Langenbacher for indecision at issuing evacuation orders. When pressed for his opinion of the Prefect, Fr. Basil concurred that his fellow missionary had faults, but would condemn anyone who openly opposed him. Caspar Caulfield, C.P., *Only a Beginning: The Passionists in China, 1921-1931* (Passionist Press: Union City, 1990), 195.

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- 4 The Passionist comparison of Fr. Basil to Nathaniel was stated by the (unknown) Passionist Father who delivered his funeral homily. PHA, *Homily for Mass for Father Basil Bauer*, loc.cit.
- 5 Chinese ways of dealing with seeming contradictions result in a dialectical or compromise approach—retaining basic elements of opposing perspectives by seeking a “middle way.” Kaiping Peng and Richard E. Nisbett, “Culture, dialectics, and reasoning about contradiction,” *American Psychologist*, Vol. 54 (September 1999), 741-754.
- 6 Author interview with Gary Koch (May 31, 2015).
- 7 Joseph Bauer birth certificate, St. Joseph Church Records, Sharon, PA [hereinafter SJCR].
- 8 The Carnegie Steel Company was sold to the U.S. Steel Corporation in 1901, and became a subsidiary. Find details in the article “Sale,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnegie_Steel_Company.
- 9 An overview of the Sharon Steel corporation and its role in the expansion of the city of Sharon, PA, appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharon_Steel_Corporation.
- 10 John F. Bauer Obituary, *The Record Argus* (September 2, 1941), 5.
- 11 Mairy Jayn Woge, “5 Bauers in Religious Orders Reunited Here,” *The Sharon Herald* (June 8, 1968).
- 12 The assertion that the Kochs helped found St. Rose of Lima is part of the oral tradition passed on through three generations of the Koch family. This has been confirmed by *The History of Mercer County, Pennsylvania, 1888* (Chicago: Brown, Runk & Co), 539-540. St. Rose of Lima was established in 1860, but changed its name to St. Joseph after a new church was constructed in the city of Sharon in 1893. All references to St. Joseph’s prior to 1965 refer to the old site of the church on State Street. In 1965, new property was purchased on Case Avenue in Sharon, and the present St. Joseph’s Church was built on that site.
- 13 Woge, “5 Bauers in Religious Orders Reunited Here,” loc. cit.
- 14 Details are found in the biography of Fr. Victor Koch, C.P., appearing at the Passionist Historical Archives website: <http://cprovince.org/archives/bios/12/12-15a.php>.
- 15 K. O’Malley and C.J. Yuhaus, “Passionists,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume 10*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Thomson/Gale, 2003), 931-933.
- 16 Anna Koch Bauer and Fr. Victor Koch’s infant brother Fadius died on October 31, 1880, the day he was born. See SJCR, death record for Fadius Koch (1880). Their father Nikolaus Koch died on April 7, 1881. See SJCR, death record for Nikolaus Koch (1881). Their maternal grandmother, Anna Barth Koch, died on June 14, 1882. The cause of death on her death certificate is illegible, as the ink is worn. See SJCR, death record for Anna Barth Koch (1882).
- 17 See the biography of Fr. Benedict Huck, C.P., appearing at the Passionist Historical Archives website: <http://cprovince.org/archives/bios/9/9-30a.php>. Joseph G. Mehler professed as a Passionist on February 20, 1891, was ordained Gilbert of St. Joseph on June 4, 1898, and dispensed of his Passionist vows on July 10, 1906 due to illness. He was later accepted into the Columbus, Ohio, diocese. The Diocese of Steubenville was erected on October 21, 1944 out of territory taken from the Diocese of Columbus. Father Mehler, who had been serving within the territory that became part of the Steubenville diocese, was automatically incardinated into the new diocese. He became Right Reverend Monsignor Joseph G. Mehler on December 20, 1945. Koch Family Archives, Estelle Mehler Kidson, *Mehler – Cook Family Legacy: 1700’s to 2003* (2003), 7.
- 18 Fr. Victor’s eagerness to see the next generation enter religious service is revealed in a letter he wrote to his niece Teresa Bauer. He mentions a newspaper clipping stating that the John Bauer family has matched the record for the number of children joining religious orders, and is overjoyed by the prospect that it might be broken. Bauer Family Archives [hereinafter BFA], Letter from Fr. Victor Koch, C.P., to Teresa Bauer, Schwarzenfeld, Germany (November 25, 1935).
- 19 Email from Laurene Miller to author (March 31, 2015).
- 20 Victoria Bauer’s potent religiosity is recounted by both Gary Koch and Laurene Miller. Gary recalled stories about Victoria confronting parish priests about their sermons in the confessional. Laurene Miller recalled Aunt Victoria chiding her father for letting his wife and daughter wear shorts and exposing their legs, and claimed that they would all go to hell for the indecent display. Author interview with Gary Koch (May 31, 2015), and second email from Laurene Miller to author (March 31, 2015).
- 21 Woge, “5 Bauers in Religious Orders Reunited Here,” loc. cit.
- 22 PHA, Application of Joseph Bauer into the Passionist Preparatory College (December 15, 1912).
- 23 PHA, Letter from Rev. Simon Assenmacher to the Passionist Congregation, St. Joseph’s Rectory, Sharon, Pennsylvania (1912).
- 24 PHA, Physician’s Certificate for Joseph Bauer (March 17, 1912).
- 25 O’Malley and Yuhaus, “Passionists,” loc. cit.
- 26 PHA, Acts of the Seventeenth Provincial Chapter of the Province of Saint Paul of the Cross, October 4 to October 13, 1911 (October 13, 1911), 180-186.
- 27 For reference to Fr. Victor being Rector of St. Paul of the Cross Monastery in Pittsburgh, see “Victor Koch,” *Superiors and the Highlights of their Administrations, 1905-1953, Volume II Historical Record, St. Paul of the Cross Monastery, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh: Passionist Community of St. Paul of the Cross Monastery, 1996), 10. For references on his transfer to Baltimore, see Fr. Victor Koch’s biography appearing at the Passionist Archives website: <http://cprovince.org/archives/bios/12/12-15a.php>.
- 28 Rev. Robert E. Carbonneau, C.P., *Life, Death and Memory: Three Passionists in Hunan, China and the Shaping of an American Mission Perspective in the 1920s* (Ph.D. Diss., Georgetown University, 1992), 24.
- 29 PHA, [Profile record of Fr. Basil Bauer]. See also “Fourteen Received the Passionist Habit,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (September 20, 1917), 8.
- 30 “Confrater” is a title used for a member of the Passionist order who is a novice. After finishing the novitiate, a Confrater assumes the title “Brother,” or becomes ordained as a priest and receives the title “Father.”
- 31 Angelyn Dries, O.S.F., *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 86.
- 32 Information on World War I appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I. The entry of the United States into the war appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_entry_into_World_War_I.
- 33 For information on the Wilson Administration’s decision to use conscription in World War I, see “Military draft,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_home_front_during_World_War_I.
- 34 Confrater Basil Bauer was affected by the third draft held on September 12, 1918, for men ages 18-45. He was 20 years old at the time. Previous drafts affected men aged 21-31. See “National registration days and termination,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Selective_Service_Act_of_1917.
- 35 Carbonneau, *Life, Death, and Memory*, op. cit., 34-35.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 33-34.
- 37 Fr. Basil (Joseph) Bauer draft card, U.S. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, appearing at the website: <http://www.ancestry.com>.
- 38 A summary of the Apostolic Letter *Maximum Illud* appears at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maximum_Illud.
- 39 Dries, *The Missionary Movement in American Catholic History*, op. cit., 108.
- 40 Acts of the Twentieth Provincial Chapter of the Province of St. Paul of the Cross Held in the Retreat of St. Paul of the Cross, Pittsburgh, PA, from August 20th to August 28th, 1920, appears at the Passionist Archives website: <http://cprovince.org/archives/chapters/chapter-1920.php>.
- 41 A summary of the Passionist Order’s mission history in China appears at the Passionist Archives website: <http://cprovince.org/archives/histsummary/china-sum.php>.
- 42 Carbonneau, *Life, Death, and Memory*, op. cit., 54.
- 43 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 3.
- 44 Fr. Timothy McDermott was related to the Koch/Bauer family line through Anastasia Elser Ziegler, the sister of Viktoria Elser Koch. Viktoria was the mother of Fr. Victor Koch and Anna Koch Bauer. Unlike Fr. Victor and Confrater Basil Bauer, Fr. Timothy did not start out in the Passionist priesthood. He originally entered St. Vincent’s Archabbey in Latrobe, PA, with the intention of becoming a diocesan priest. In 1918, he transferred to the Passionist order. This decision hints at the strong bonds and influences that existed within the family tree. See Fr. Timothy McDermott’s biography appearing at <http://cprovince.org/archives/bios/4/4-8a.php>.
- 45 Passionist documentation does not make it clear whether selectees for the China missions were volunteers or nominees. However, Basil Bauer’s decision to volunteer is supported by the article, “Sharon Youth is Ordained to Priesthood; Rev. Basil Bauer Volunteers for Mission Service in China,” *The Sharon Herald* (October 30, 1923), 5.
- 46 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 88. The assertion of this band being the largest in American history is reported in the article, “Thirteen Mission Workers for China,” *The Scranton Republican* (June 6, 1924), 12.
- 47 Woge, “5 Bauers in Religious Orders Reunited Here,” loc. cit.

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- 48 “Sharon Youth is Ordained to Priesthood: Rev. Fr. Basil Bauer Volunteers for Mission Service in China,” loc. cit.
- 49 “First Mass is Celebrated by Sharon Priest: St. Joseph’s Church Thronged For Service by Rev. Fr. Basil Bauer,” *The Sharon Herald* (November 6, 1923), 1.
- 50 SJCR, Baptismal certificate for Joseph Bauer.
- 51 A note on Chinese names. There are two systems for transliterating Mandarin Chinese characters to the Roman alphabet: (1) Wade-Giles (1859, modified 1892), which would have been used during the time of the Passionist China missions, and (2) pinyin, which was developed by the Chinese government and approved as the standard in 1958. In still other cases, the missionaries used their own versions of Chinese names. This paper will use the pinyin system. If primary sources use Wade-Giles or missionary terms, the standardized pinyin version will follow in brackets.
- 52 An overview of the Qing dynasty appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_China#Qing_dynasty.
- 53 The territories ceded to foreign powers by Imperial China were called concessions. For further information, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concessions_in_China. For the history of the Boxer Rebellion, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boxer_Rebellion.
- 54 A profile of Dr. Sun Yat-sen appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun_Yat-sen.
- 55 Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s plans for Chinese union and democracy are found under the article, “Carrying out Sun Yat-sen’s will,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiang_Kai-shek.
- 56 For an overview of the Warlord Era, see “Origins,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warlord_Era. A description of conditions during the Warlord Era is also found in Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 54-56, 75.
- 57 “Guomindang” is the pinyin spelling for the Chinese Nationalist Army. In Wade-Giles, it is transliterated as “Kuomintang” and is often abbreviated to KMT. Wikipedia tends to employ the Wade-Giles spelling. The pinyin spelling is used in this paper.
- 58 Mao Zedong’s early involvement in the Chinese Communist Party is found in “Founding the Communist Party of China,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mao_Zedong.
- 59 A profile of warlord Zhao Hengti appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhao_Hengti.
- 60 A profile of warlord Wu Peifu appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu_Peifu.
- 61 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 56.
- 62 “Comintern” is an abbreviation for “Communist International,” an organization that advocated worldwide communism. Information appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communist_International.
- 63 A profile of Comintern agent Michael Borodin appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Borodin. For information on diplomat Adolfe Joffe, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolph_Joffe. The involvement of Borodin and Joffe is also mentioned in Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 75-76.
- 64 Passionist medical training in Pittsburgh is stated by two sources: Fr. Robert Carbonneau, C.P.’s interview with missionary William Westhoven, C.P., who was in the same mission band as Fr. Basil, and also Caspar Caulfield’s statement that the missionaries readying for departure were attending classes in first aid at a Catholic hospital in Pittsburgh. There is no mention of which hospital offered the courses. See Carbonneau, *Life, Death, and Memory*, op. cit., 63, and Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 88.
- 65 Fr. Basil and his fellow missionaries studied Chinese for a year in the monastery at Chenzhou. Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 99. A note on spellings: Chenzhou, the pinyin spelling, is used in this article. In Wade-Giles, it is spelled “Ch’en-chou.” The missionaries often used their own spelling of “Shenchow.”
- 66 Fr. Cuthbert O’Gara initially traveled to China as a missionary. Later on, once the Passionists established their own diocese of Yuanling, China, he was ordained Bishop Cuthbert Martin O’Gara. Information appears at <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bogara.html>.
- 67 Early on, the Passionists in China had considerable difficulties managing their own affairs. The instance that prompted the communication to Fr. Stanislaus involved missionary Fr. Raphael Vance. Fr. Dominic Langenbacher, the Passionist Superior in China, ordered Fr. Raphael to leave his mission at Baojing for Hankou, where he would greet the fourth wave of China missionaries coming from America. Just days later, Fr. Raphael received a letter from Bishop Ángel Diego y Carbajal, O.S.A., the Vicar Apostolic of Changde, China (1917-1938), informing him that he had left Baojing without permission, and therefore his appointment in that mission was revoked. See Bishop Ángel Diego y Carbajal profile appearing at <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bdica.html>. Also note that “Changde” is the pinyin spelling used for the Chinese city. In cases where the Wade-Giles Romanization is used, it appears as “Change.” At times, missionaries used the spelling “Changteh.”
- 68 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 88-89.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 99.
- 70 The 1924 departure ceremonies were held in Union City, NJ, on May 18; Boston, MA, on May 25; Baltimore, MD, in early June; Scranton, PA, on June 8; Dunkirk, NY, in mid-June; Pittsburgh, PA, on June 15; Cincinnati, OH, on June 19, Louisville, KY, on June 29; St. Louis, MO, on July 3, and finally in San Francisco, CA, on July 22, when the missionaries departed for China. See Carbonneau, *Life, Death, and Memory*, op. cit., 63-72.
- 71 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 89.
- 72 Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P., “In Journeying Often,” *The Sign* (July 1933), 735. Information on the *sampan* boat appears at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sampan>.
- 73 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 57.
- 74 Sr. Mary Carita Pendergast, S.C., *Havoc in Hunan: the Sisters of Charity in Western Hunan 1924-1951*, (Morristown, NJ: College of Saint Elizabeth Press, 1991), 7.
- 75 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 202.
- 76 *Ibid.*, 136.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 89.
- 78 Fr. Theophane Maguire, C.P., *Hunan Harvest* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1946), 11. Fr. Theophane refers to “Loh Pa Hong,” but judging from articles in *The Pittsburgh Catholic* and other sources, the most common Romanized spelling appears to be “Lo Pa Hong.”
- 79 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 89-90.
- 80 *Ibid.*, 100-101.
- 81 *Ibid.*
- 82 *Ibid.*, 119.
- 83 Pendergast, *Havoc in Hunan*, op. cit., 11-12.
- 84 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 117-120.
- 85 Bauer, “In Journeying Often,” op. cit., 736.
- 86 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 120.
- 87 For references to Fr. Basil’s assignments in Yongshun and Wangtsun, see Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 121 and 195, respectively.
- 88 Establishing a prefecture apostolic was the first step toward establishing a diocese. The Prefecture Apostolic of Chenzhou (est. March 13, 1925) became a Vicariate Apostolic (May 28, 1934), which — following the name change to Vicariate Apostolic of Yuanling (December 10, 1934) — became the Diocese of Yuanling (April 11, 1946). The history of the Yuanling diocese appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Diocese_of_Yuanling.
- 89 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 123-125.
- 90 A profile of Monsignor Dominic Langenbacher, C.P., Prefect of Chenzhou (1925-1930), appears at <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/blange.html>.
- 91 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 129.
- 92 The emergence of Chiang Kai-shek as the leader of China is described in the article, “Chiang Kai-shek assumes leadership,” appearing at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuomintang>.
- 93 Chiang Kai-shek’s acceptance of Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s philosophies and his title of “generalissimo” is mentioned in the article, “Carrying out Sun Yat-sen’s will,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiang_Kai-shek.
- 94 Chiang Kai-shek’s mistrust of the Soviet Union is mentioned in the article “Preparation,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Expedition.
- 95 An overview and general description of events concerning the May 30th Movement appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_Thirtieth_Movement.
- 96 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 128-129.
- 97 *Ibid.*, 131.
- 98 *Ibid.*, 139.
- 99 *Ibid.*, 139-141. Also see the profile on warlord Wu Peifu, appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu_Peifu.

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- 100 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 137.
- 101 Ibid., 141.
- 102 The Communist purge from the Guomindang is described in the article, “The Purge,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai_massacre_of_1927.
- 103 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 144.
- 104 Ibid., 145.
- 105 The transliteration “Hankou” is pinyin. The missionaries referred to this large city as “Hankow.”
- 106 Ibid., 149.
- 107 “No News of Sharon Priest in China,” *The Sharon Herald* (May 13, 1927), 1.
- 108 “Grave Fears Felt For Safety of Pittsburgh Priests and Sisters Assigned to Interior of China; Western Hunan Missions Have Been Pillaged and Burned by Chinese — Nineteen Religious Flee,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (May 19, 1927), 1. Lo Pa Hong’s predicament is mentioned on the same page: “Native Chinese Philanthropist is in Great Danger,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (May 19, 1927), 1.
- 109 “Pittsburgh Priests And Nuns in China Reported Unharmful,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (June 5, 1927), 1.
- 110 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 170.
- 111 Ibid., 169.
- 112 Ibid., 179, 209.
- 113 The spelling “Wangcun” is pinyin. The Wade-Giles Romanization is spelled “Wangts’un,” but in all his letters and articles for *The Sign*, Fr. Basil used the missionary spelling of “Wangtsun.”
- 114 Caulfield, *Only a Beginning*, op. cit., 131.
- 115 Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P., “New Plans for Wangtsun [Wangcun],” *The Sign* (February 1931), 442.
- 116 Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P., “Calendar of Toil,” *The Sign* (January 1935), 353.
- 117 Bauer, “New Plans for Wangtsun [Wangcun],” op. cit., 443.
- 118 Tai P. Ng, *Chinese Culture, Western Culture, Why Must We Learn From Each Other?* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2007), 125-126.
- 119 Ibid., 127-129.
- 120 Fr. Basil’s childhood home was 35 Elm Avenue. His oldest sister Victoria moved to 154 Elm Avenue, and shared the house with her sister Mary and brother Vince. His sister Theresa married and lived in Masury, Ohio, just across the Pennsylvania-Ohio border. Woge, “5 Bauers in Religious Orders Reunited Here,” loc. cit.
- 121 Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P., “Yang Mei Saves Her Face,” *The Sign* (August 1931), 57.
- 122 Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P., “Wangtsun [Wangcun],” *The Sign* (April 1929), 570-571.
- 123 Ibid. The citation respects the missionary spelling of the town’s name, “Wangtsun.” The pinyin spelling is used in brackets for consistency.
- 124 Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P., “They Also Suffer,” *The Sign* (June 1934), 669-671.
- 125 Bauer, “Calendar of Toil,” op. cit., 353.
- 126 Bauer, “New Plans for Wangtsun [Wangcun],” op. cit., 443.
- 127 Email from Laurene Miller to author (March 31, 2015).
- 128 Ibid.
- 129 The pinyin transliteration of the name “Yongsui” is used in this article. Fr. Basil used the Wade-Giles Romanization “Yungtsui.”
- 130 Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P., “The Mission of Lasting Peace,” *The Sign* (September 1941), 92-94.
- 131 The dangers of swimming in pools and lakes that originated from abandoned quarries are noted in an article appearing at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quarry>.
- 132 Email from Laurene Miller to author (March 31, 2015).
- 133 Author interview with Gary Koch (May 1, 2015).
- 134 According to a news article from 1952, Fr. Basil had returned home twice for surgery. The nature of the operations or his ailments is unknown, but likely related to the heart and thyroid issues he suffered later in life. “Rev. Basil Bauer Resting Before Return,” *The Pittsburgh Press* (Nov. 12, 1952), 8. See also “Missionary From China In Hospital: Father Basil Here To Regain Health After Years Spent In Remote Mission,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, (May 17, 1934), 14.
- 135 See “Sisters Receive Habits at Baden: Chinese Postulant Among 11 Invested at Motherhouse of St. Joseph Order,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, (June 21, 1934), 12. Note that the postulant’s name has been changed from the Wade-Giles spelling to “Teresa Long,” the pinyin Romanization. Also, the article in *The Pittsburgh Catholic* cites the Chinese mission town of the Sisters of St. Joseph as Yuanchow. Originally the town was called Yuanchow [Yuanzhou]. The missionaries — and the reporter who wrote the article — called it Yuanchow. The town’s name was later changed to Chihkiang [Zhijiang].
- 136 See “Mother of Priest, Three Nuns, Dies: Mrs. John Bauer is Stricken in Church After Receiving Holy Communion,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (April 30, 1931), 1.
- 137 Clara Bauer joined the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Pittsburgh, taking the name Sr. Veronica, S.G.S. Marguerite Bauer joined the Passionist Sisters in Pittsburgh, and became Mother Sylvia Bauer, C.P. Anna Bauer joined the Sisters of Mercy in Erie, PA, and became known as Sister Anne Marie, R.S.M. Woge, “5 Bauers in Religious Orders Reunited Here,” loc. cit.
- 138 Helen Bauer (Sister Mary Basil, S.G.S.), had entered into religious life by this point, but she had not yet taken her final vows. Woge, “5 Bauers in Religious Orders Reunited Here,” loc. cit.
- 139 Fr. Victor reveals his joy in a letter to his niece Theresa Bauer, whom he was hoping might follow her brother and sisters into religious life. BFA, Letter of Fr. Victor Koch to Theresa Bauer, Schwarzenfeld, Germany, (November 25, 1935).
- 140 Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden Archives, Baden, PA [hereinafter SSJBA], Letter from Sr. Rosario Goss to Sr. Rose Angela Goss, Hankow [Hankou], China, (April 25, 1935).
- 141 Information on the Communist insurgency that disrupted the Passionist missions can be found in the article, “Communist insurgency (1927-1937),” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Civil_War.
- 142 The founding of the Red Army is described in the article, “Formation and Second Sino-Japanese War”, appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Liberation_Army.
- 143 A listing of Chiang Kai-shek’s encirclement campaigns against soviet cells in China appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encirclement_Campaigns.
- 144 Information on the Long March appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_March.
- 145 “Priests From Here in Danger in China; Consul Says Hunan Officials Protecting Missions From Communists’ Attacks,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (December 5, 1935), 1.
- 146 Information on the Japanese invasion of Manchuria appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_invasion_of_Manchuria.
- 147 A summary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marco_Polo_Bridge_Incident.
- 148 Chiang Kai-shek’s desire to quell internal conflicts first, then handle external conflicts with Japan appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chiang_Kai-shek#Second_Sino-Japanese_War. The Chinese population’s distaste for this policy is mentioned in “Background,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_United_Front.
- 149 A description of the Chinese methodology for resisting the Japanese invasion is found in the article “Chinese Resistance Strategy,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War.
- 150 The Prefecture Apostolic’s promotion to Vicariate Apostolic and the name change to Yuanling appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Diocese_of_Yuanling. Information on Fr. Cuthbert O’Gara’s ecclesiastical career appears at <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bogara.html>.
- 151 Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P., “Beatings and Bandits,” *The Sign* (July 1937), 738-740.
- 152 The extent of the Japanese invasion into China is described in the article, “1939-1940: Chinese Counterattack and Stalemate,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War.
- 153 A description of the Chinese Nationalist government’s transfer from Wuhan to Chongqing appears at Wikipedia page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War#1938. The city’s name also occasionally appears as “Chungking,” which the missionaries used.
- 154 Fr. Theophane Maguire, C.P., describes Lo Pa Hong’s death in *Hunan Harvest*, op. cit., 12. Lo’s death was also reported in *The Pittsburgh Catholic*. “Lo Pa Hong, Noted Chinese Catholic, Deeply Mourned,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic*, (January 6, 1938), 1.
- 155 “Denies Lo Pa Hong Was ‘Pro-Japanese’; Former Protestant, Who Knew Of His Charities, Pays High Tribute to Character,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (January 20, 1938), 3.
- 156 Pendergast, *Havoc in Hunan*, op. cit., 85-87.
- 157 Ibid., 97.

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- 158 Yongsui has been changed to the pinyin Romanization. The missionaries used its Wade-Giles version, “Yungtsui.”
- 159 Bauer, “The Mission of Lasting Peace,” op. cit., 92-94.
- 160 BFA, 1939.
- 161 Bauer, “The Mission of Lasting Peace,” loc. cit.
- 162 The transfer is noted in the 1945 Membership Statistics, Vicariate Apostolic of Yuanling, Hunan, China from *The Official Catholic Directory* appearing at <http://cprovince.org/archives/sesqui/statistics/chinastats-1945.php>. Also note that the spelling of the mission name, “Wuxi,” is the pinyin version. The missionaries called it “Wuki.”
- 163 Pendergast, *Havoc in Hunan*, op. cit., 98.
- 164 Madame Chiang Kai-shek’s orphanage program is described in the article “Warphans,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soong_May-ling.
- 165 Pendergast, *Havoc in Hunan*, op. cit., 87.
- 166 Photographic evidence of Fr. Basil’s visit to one of Madame Chiang’s orphanages appears in the Passionist China Collection. See PHA, China Collection Photo Archive, photo 800.05_003.002e, the caption of which reads: “Fr. Basil Bauer teaching religion to Madame Chiang [Kai-shek]’s orphans in Chihkiang [Zhijiang]. These youngsters are favorites of everybody, and are called ‘Angels’ by all. All are refugees from all parts of war-torn China.”
- 167 “Rev. Basil Bauer Resting Before Return,” *The Pittsburgh Press* (November 12, 1952), 8. The newspaper incorrectly states that he left China in 1945. According to the passenger manifest of the *S.S. James Bowdoin*, he departed from Shanghai on February 1, 1946, and arrived in Seattle, Washington on March 8. See Washington, Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1961, appearing at the website: <http://www.ancestry.com>.
- 168 The meeting with Thomas Cardinal Tien and Sr. Catherine Davenport, S.S.J., is documented in “China Reds Free Sharon Priest,” *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (November 12, 1952), 8. Fr. Basil’s attendance at the ceremony in which Sisters of St. Joseph received their habits is documented in *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (March 21, 1946), 8. A profile of Thomas Cardinal Tien appears at <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/btienk.html>.
- 169 Gertrude Bauer’s entry into the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, and her religious name, Sr. Gabriel, is documented in Woge, “5 Bauers in Religious Orders Reunited Here,” loc. cit. The year that she professed her vows (1938) is documented in the Bauer Family Archives.
- 170 “Father Victor, C.P., Observes Jubilee,” *The Pittsburgh Catholic* (Thursday, July 3, 1947), 12.
- 171 The Vicariate Apostolic of Yuanling was promoted to a Diocese on April 11, 1946. Information appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Diocese_of_Yuanling.
- 172 The “Double Tenth Agreement” was officially known as the “Summary of Conversations Between the Representatives of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China.” An overview of the agreement and its terms appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_Tenth_Agreement.
- 173 An overview of the Chinese Civil war appears at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Civil_War.
- 174 Shandong’s history during the Chinese Civil War appears at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shandong#History>.
- 175 The “War of Liberation” reference and Mao Zedong’s tactic to preserve the Red Army is explained in the article “Outbreak of War,” appearing at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Civil_War.
- 176 Pendergast, *Havoc in Hunan*, op. cit., 178.
- 177 Ibid.
- 178 “Rev. Bauer Tells of Life in China Under Red Regime,” *The Sharon Herald* (December 24, 1952), 10.
- 179 Ibid.
- 180 Pendergast, *Havoc in Hunan*, op. cit., 183-184.
- 181 PHA, [Fr. Basil statement on conditions in Hunan, typewritten personal notes], 1.
- 182 “Passionist Veteran of China Missions Describes Red Terror,” *The New World* (December 26, 1952).
- 183 “Rev. Basil Bauer Says Chinese Will Remain Under Red Yoke Many Years,” *The Sharon Herald* (December 23, 1952), 1, 5.
- 184 “Rev. Bauer Tells of Life in China Under Red Regime,” *The Sharon Herald* (December 24, 1952), 1.
- 185 Ibid.
- 186 “Years of Work in China And Battling Reds Have Left Their Mark on Passionist Priest,” *The Palm Beach Post* (May 22, 1955), 22.
- 187 “Passionist Veteran of China Describes Red Terror,” loc. cit.
- 188 Pendergast, *Havoc in Hunan*, op. cit., 179.
- 189 PHA, [Fr. Basil statement on conditions in Hunan, typewritten personal notes], op. cit., 4.
- 190 “Rev. Bauer Tells of Life in China Under Red Regime,” loc. cit.
- 191 PHA, [Fr. Basil statement on conditions in Hunan, typewritten personal notes], op. cit., 1.
- 192 “Rev. Bauer Tells of Life in China Under Red Regime,” *The Sharon Herald*, loc. cit.
- 193 An incident similar to Fr. Basil’s occurred in Yuanling, where fellow Passionist Fr. Caspar Caulfield, C.P., was subjected to a public trial and house arrest. An irate Chinese parishioner tore down posters denouncing the priest, several Sisters of St. Joseph, and Chinese Catholics as spies. See Pendergast, *Havoc in Hunan*, op. cit., 199-201.
- 194 Email from Laurene Miller to author (March 31, 2015).
- 195 The public trial allegedly occurred in either April or May 1950. “Years of Work in China And Battling Reds Have Left Their Mark on Passionist Priest,” loc. cit.
- 196 “Sharon Priest Held in Custody by Reds,” *The Record Argus* (July 21, 1951), 2.
- 197 “Years of Work in China And Battling Reds Have Left Their Mark on Passionist Priest,” *The Palm Beach Post*, loc. cit.
- 198 PHA, [Handwritten notes on Fr. Basil’s ordeal in Hunan, author unknown] (June 1952), 2.
- 199 Information on digitalis appears at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digitalis>.
- 200 PHA, Letter from Fr. Basil Bauer to Fr. Provincial Ernest Welch, St. Francis Hospital, Hong Kong, China (November 15, 1952), 1.
- 201 PHA, Press release by Rev. Ronald Norris, C.P. Passionist Publicity Director, Union City, NJ (November 10, 1952).
- 202 “Priest Returns to Union City, Sees Communist China ‘Glued’ by Fear,” *Hudson Dispatch* (January 28, 1953), 8.
- 203 Fr. Basil’s departure is documented by the passenger manifest of the *S.S. Madison*. California, Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1959, appearing at the website: <http://www.ancestry.com>. See also PHA, [Handwritten notes on Fr. Basil’s ordeal in Hunan, author unknown], loc. cit.
- 204 “Priest Returns to Union City, Sees Communist China ‘Glued’ by Fear,” loc. cit.
- 205 Author interview with Gary Koch (May 1, 2015), and email from Laurene Miller to author (March 31, 2015). An explanation of Sanka appears at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanka>.
- 206 PHA, Letter from Ernest Welch, C.P. to British Consulate Service, Union City, New Jersey (August 13, 1957), 1. See also PHA, Letter from Fr. Ernest Welch, C.P. to US Passport Division, Union City, New Jersey (August 13, 1957), 1.
- 207 “Years of Work in China And Battling Reds Have Left Their Mark on Passionist Priest,” loc. cit.
- 208 Email from Laurene Miller to author (March 31, 2015).
- 209 An explanation of the Linesville spillway is found in the article, “Pymatuning Lake,” appearing at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pymatuning_State_Park_\(Pennsylvania\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pymatuning_State_Park_(Pennsylvania)).
- 210 Author interview with Gary Koch (May 1, 2015).
- 211 SSJBA, [Community Newsletter], (October 31, 1959), 1.
- 212 PHA, *Homily for Mass for Father Basil Bauer*, loc. cit.
- 213 This reference to St. Joseph’s Church refers to the building presently on Case Avenue in Sharon, PA. The old church on State Street had been abandoned and demolished by the time of Fr. Basil’s golden jubilee in 1968.
- 214 “Fr. Bauer, 71, dies; ex-prisoner of China,” *The Sharon Herald* (July 18, 1970).
- 215 PHA, *Homily for Mass for Father Basil Bauer*, loc. cit.
- 216 Pendergast, *Havoc in Hunan*, op. cit., 219-228.

The Pennsylvania Passionist Who Became Chinese: Fr. Basil Bauer, C.P. (continued)

| Timeline of Rev. Basil Bauer, C.P. | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|---|
| 1898 | October 11 | Joseph F. Bauer is born to John F. and Anna Koch Bauer in Sharon, PA |
| 1912 | December 15 | Joseph Bauer, age 14, applies to enter Passionist Preparatory School |
| 1913 | February | Joseph begins studies at St. Joseph Monastery, Baltimore, MD |
| 1917 | September 16 | Joseph receives Passionist habit at St. Paul Monastery, Pittsburgh, PA |
| 1918 | September 17 | Confrater Basil Bauer professes as a Passionist |
| 1923 | October 28 | Pittsburgh Bishop Hugh C. Boyle ordains Basil of the Cross a priest at St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, PA |
| 1924 | July | Fr. Basil and twelve other Passionists, after selection for missionary work in China, leave USA |
| 1925 | August | After a full year of training at Passionists' central mission in Chenzhou Fr. Basil receives his first assignment (with Fr. Terrence Connolly): mission at Yongshun |
| 1927 | Summer | Anti-foreign sentiment and Nationalist-Communist hostilities force Fr. Basil and fellow missionaries to flee western Hunan for Hankou |
| 1928 | | Fr. Basil is stationed in Wangcun, which becomes his primary mission in Hunan Province |
| 1929 | April 29 | Passionist missionaries Godfrey Holbein, Clement Seybold, and Walter Coveyou are murdered by Chinese bandits in vicinity of Huajiao |
| 1930 | | Fr. Basil is temporarily stationed in Gaocun |
| 1931 | | Fr. Basil returns to his primary mission of Wangcun |
| 1934 | May | Fr. Basil departs for USA to receive medical care |
| 1935 | | Fr. Basil returns to China and, after Easter, to Wangcun |
| 1939 | | Fr. Basil is transferred to mission at Yongsui |
| 1943 | | Fr. Basil is transferred from mission of Youngsui to Wuki. He occasionally travels to mission at Zhijiang to teach religion classes to Chinese children in orphanage of Madame Chiang Kai-shek. |
| 1946 | February 1 | Fr. Basil departs Shanghai and returns to USA to receive medical care |
| 1947 | July 3 | Fr. Basil assists at Mass of his uncle, Rev. Victor Koch, C.P., who is celebrating Golden Jubilee as Passionist priest |
| | Fall | Fr. Basil sails for China and returns to his mission of Wangcun |
| 1949 | November | Communists enter Wangcun |
| 1950 | Spring | Communists seize Fr. Basil's mission compound. He is subjected to a public trial, which fails. Communists place him under house arrest and curtail all religious activity in Wangcun. |
| 1952 | late October | Fr. Basil leaves Wangcun for Changsha, where he is hospitalized for 11 days |
| 1952 | November 7 | Fr. Basil is released from Communist China and crosses border to Hong Kong. After another hospitalization, he leaves Hong Kong for USA. |
| 1953-1956 | | Fr. Basil convalesces at Boynton Beach, FL. Performs pastoral duties at Lantana Chapel. |
| 1957-1959 | | Fr. Basil joins Passionist mission in Mandeville, Jamaica. Serves at St. Elizabeth Parish. |
| 1959 | September | Fr. Basil returns to USA and serves at St. Paul Monastery, Pittsburgh, PA |
| 1962 | | Fr. Basil is transferred to St. Joseph Monastery, Baltimore, MD |
| 1968 | September 17 | Fr. Basil celebrates his golden jubilee (50 years) of profession as a Passionist |
| 1970 | July 10 | Fr. Basil suffers heart attack while visiting family in Sharon, PA |
| | July 18 | Fr. Basil dies in Sharon, PA |