

My Personal Priestly Vocation: The Influence of Saint Teresa of Calcutta

Speaker: Rev. Fr. Sergio Arturo Chavira Alvarez MG

A brief introduction of the Guest Speaker by Rev. John B. Tsang as follows:-

Fr. Sergio A.Chavira Alvarez 陳永達神父

2016.08 – Present

Rosary Church, TST, Kowloon - Assistant Parish Priest

2008.08 – 2016.08

Annunciation Church, Tsuen Wan, N.T. - Assistant Parish Priest

2002.09 – 2008.08

Mother of Good Counsel Church, San Po Kong, Kowloon - Assistant Parish Priest

2001.09 – 2002.03

Saint Alfred Church, Tai Wai, Shatin, N.T. - Assistant Parish Priest

2001.01 – 2001.08

Mother of Christ Church, Sheung Shui, N.T. - Assistant Parish Priest

1998.12 – 2000.12

Star of the Sea Church , Chai Wan, Hong Kong - Resident, studying the language

1997.11 – 1998.12

Guadalupe Fathers Headquarters, Fanling, N.T. - Resident, studying the language

1997.10.22

Arrived in Hong Kong to start his mission

1997.07.19

Ordination in his birthplace, in the north of Mexico

(A) Personal Background

Rev. Fr. Sergio Arturo Chavira Alvarez studied in a Jesuit school in Mexico. Although he was born into a Catholic family and was a religious child, he never became an altar boy.

He graduated in Civil Engineering in Mexico in 1973, and worked as an engineer for a few years. He applied for post-graduate training in London, U.K. and was granted a scholarship by the Mexican Government. He obtained a Master degree in two years and spent a third year enjoying London. He took his return trip back to Mexico via the Far East in 1985.

(B) Encounter with Mother (Saint) Teresa of Calcutta

While on his trip back to Mexico, he stopped over at Calcutta hoping to meet Mother Teresa of Calcutta, a dream he held dear ever since she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. After he attended the Sunday Mass at 8:00 p.m., he went to the Convent of Mother Teresa by bus and arrived there around 9:30 p.m. Aware that it was already late, he still rang the doorbell of the Convent twice until it was finally answered by one of the Nuns. The Sister told him to come back the next day at 6:00 am. That day was Monday, 30th September 1985. He remembered the exact date because the catastrophic earthquake that hit Mexico fell on 19th September, 1985.

When he arrived on Monday morning at around 6:30 a.m. because of heavy morning traffic, he was told that Mother Teresa was attending a General Chapter of her Congregation and that he should call back two weeks later. However, he was to fly out of Calcutta that afternoon and so he persisted with his request to meet Mother Teresa. On learning that he was from far-away Mexico, and because of the earthquake, Mother Teresa agreed to meet him and asked him to bring a box of Cadbury chocolates and a letter with him, to be handed over to the Sisters of Charity in Mexico City. When departing from Mother Teresa, he asked “what else can I do for you?” out of courtesy, and seeing him fixedly in the eyes, Mother Teresa replied “You should be working with us in Mexico”. He took that as a direct invitation from God; and this invitation remained with him when he returned to Mexico.

The letter that he was to bring back to the Sisters of Charity in Mexico City was unsealed, so he took photostat copies of the letter as a memento. He forwarded the letter to the Sisters from Bangkok. The content of the letter was as simple as: “Dear Sisters in Mexico: please receive in the convent as many victims of the earthquake as possible. May God bless you all”. The chocolates were eaten by him and some fellow travelers as the tablets were melting.

On His arrival in Mexico City, seven months later, he visited the Sisters and handed over some tablets of Hershey’s chocolate to replace the original ones.

He started to work for the National Telephone Company. The Convent of the Sisters was in the opposite side of the City from where he worked. There were 5 branches of the *Missionaries of Charity (MC)* founded by Mother Teresa – two for women and three for men as priests or brothers. A house for brothers of charity was one block from his office, so instead of going to the sisters’ convent, he worked with the brothers as a volunteer. The brothers in the House would encourage him to join the Congregation as a priest. He was by then 37 years old.

(C) Late Vocation

At this time as he was working, he was also considering priesthood at the same time. He decided to have a *come and see* experience with the Priests of Charity in Tijuana, northern Mexico, for 2 weeks before making up his mind. After two weeks, he decided to be a priest rather than an engineer at the telephone company. He joined the Seminary and studied there for a little over two years being the second oldest seminarian there at age 38.

After two years and some months, he was informed by his Superiors that the *MC* style of life was not suitable for him. At around this time, Mother Teresa was in Mexico and was taken ill. She was admitted to a hospital in San Diego, California, for treatment. When she recovered, Fr. Sergio went and visited Mother Teresa and asked her to help, reminding her of their encounter in Calcutta in 1985. Mother Teresa told him “I cannot intervene, but the Holy Spirit will guide you”. He later joined the Mexican Guadalupe Missionaries and was ordained a priest in 1997.