

# A Voice Crying in the Wilderness

- The Life of Fr. John F. Trisolini -



The Labour Pastoral Commission of the  
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Seoul

English Translation by Laurence M. Finn

가톨릭출판사

## The Story as it Unfolded

1. Much of this book relies heavily upon the autobiographical work of Fr. Trisolini, which is entitled "*Life Experience in Korea*". This largely unfinished volume covers his years in Korea up to the early 1980's.
2. Consideration is given to those areas not covered in the autobiography mentioned above. A deeper look at fifty years at his pastoral ministry in the Archdiocese of Seoul is the focus of this effort. The sources visited for much of this information are from the published works of Fr. Trisolini for the Labour Pastoral Commission and also relies heavily on testimony offered by those who knew him well, or lived with him over the years. This includes clergy, religious and laity with whom he closely collaborated for many years.
3. The biography of an individual can go in many different directions but in this volume we will look at the affect that Fr. Trisolini had upon the Church and Korean Society through the prism of the Pastoral Labour Commission of the Archdiocese of Seoul.
4. Fr. Trisolini was a faithful member of the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco, and this fact affected his ministry in the Archdiocese of Seoul in a very big way. This is especially true in the way that he approached Labour Ministry and Migrant issues. Despite his being a Salesian, the focus of this book is upon his ministry in the Pastoral Labour Commission of the Archdiocese of Seoul.

5. The Romanization of Korean proper names are transcribed according to the following rules:

A. The names of places are transcribed according to the Romanization rules of the National Institute of the Korean Language.

B. The names of Korean Bishops and the Korean Cardinal are written as reported to the Holy See in Rome.

The proper names of individuals are transcribed as the individual wishes as much as is possible. The proper names of those who could not be contacted are transcribed according to the Romanization rules of the National Institute of the Korean Language.

## PUBLICATION

# For those who gave their love and support...

As one who followed in the footsteps of Fr. Trisolini in the Pastoral Labour Ministry I am very pleased to present this volume dedicated to those who cherished him: a biography of a priest who exuded a deep dedication to his ministry. This story is one of compelling witness of a priest, revealing his deep life of faith and spirituality that supported and sustained him and revealed itself in the rightness of what he taught and the purity of his example. In the photo collection that was released a year after his death this was clearly evident.

Over the past forty years the brief history of the outreach of the Seoul Archdiocese in the Labour Pastoral Commission - later widened its ministry to include Migrant Labour - and indeed the outreach on the wider Asian stage of Labour and Migrant Labour - all were developments in which Fr. Trisolini played a major role. It can only be deeply regretted that he is no longer in our midst to continue being an example of zeal to us all. There was still much to learn from him; his wise leadership continue to inspire to the present day. I had served only one year as the Director of the Labour Pastoral Commission when he died, there was so much more to learn from him.

We have decided that it is important to remember the past in order to sagely continue on into the future. For this reason, within a year after Fr. Trisolini's death, our Pastoral Labour Commission decided that this is the time to begin gathering all of the documentation generated over the past forty years - among the first efforts being the collection of photographs for the first anniversary of his death. For the third anniversary we are releasing this fuller version of his biography.

The Labour Pastoral Commission of the Archdiocese of Seoul, while preparing this volume, spoke with many religious, priests, missionaries and professionals in the area of labour. The conclusion of the Commission was that it wanted to share the life of this Good Shepherd who served as a religious missionary and a professional in the field of Labour and Migrant Ministry. This has been a desire to share his life with as many people as possible so that his memory will be cherished for a very long time. Until his death he was a man who shared the love of God through his own person, serving as an example of how to serve others in the same way.

Preparing this book of Fr. Trisolini's life was done in a relatively short period of time. It is a chronicle of his past deeds - the past deeds of a man who was as wide and deep as the oceans. We are well aware that it is a poor effort on many levels. Despite this fact, we also were interested in keeping his memory before us as an example. In spite of its shortcomings it is meant to be a means of remembering him honestly and clearly as we can.

This is an attempt to reveal Fr. Trisolini for the Good Shepherd that he was - especially in his efforts for the Labour Pastoral Commission of the Seoul Archdiocese. We do this through this very limited effort - bearing in mind that

a longer period of time must pass before a more definitive attempt can be made to record his life and its significance. His contribution to this ministry, as a missionary, a pastor and a professional - inspire us to the present day - and we want to make an effort to being with this man once again - a man who died in God. We are trying to absorb this life lived in loving service to his neighbour and in love of God - until his very last breath. Further delay could risk the possibility that his memory would pass unknown - with that concern in mind we proceeded with this publication.

With some temerity this work was begun, recognizing our limitations more deeply as it was being done. While this was true, we also recognized that, like a flower blooming out of season, something beautiful was unfolding in this story of a gifted and graced life. With this in mind, we realized that Fr. Trisolini's outstanding life and spirituality lived in a very concrete way - was something, we believe, that could help future generations.

We must confess that this effort was not easy to put together, chiefly due to our own limitations. Without the generous contribution of many people this volume would not be published even now. Despite our limitations, we felt that this publication could no longer be delayed. With a deep love for the man that Fr. Trisolini was - we proceeded knowing how he cherished, loved and supported those involved in the Labour Pastoral Commission's ministry.

Despite this being a biography that certainly was not easy to bring to completion, it has safely reached the point where it can now be presented to the general public. We recognize that without the help of so many, it would never have reached this point. Especially those who support our ministry today will recognize how much we have depended upon the early work of Fr. Trisolini

even to the present day.

Fr. Trisolini was one who never counted the cost to himself personally of his ministry - he gave of himself despite being a very busy man. He would give up rest and comfort in order to be of service to those in need. For those who supported him and the work of the Labour Pastoral Commission over the years - our benefactors and friends - we all raise our voices in praise and thanksgiving to the God who protects and loves us all. We ask your continued support as you did for Fr. Trisolini for so many years. Thank you.

November 22, 2013

Fr. Simeon Jang Kyung Min

Director: The Labour Pastoral Commission of the Archdiocese of Seoul

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Simeon Jang Kyung Min' in a stylized, cursive script.

## CONGRATULATIONS

# **Fr. Jack Trisolini: The Lifelong Friend of Labourers**

Three years have passed since Fr. Jack Trisolini died and gone to God. He was a man that I loved and respected. He would often stop by my office, open the door and greet me: “Bishop YEOM, how are you today?” I feel his loss - because I can no longer see his friendly face and smile when I want to.

From the time I was a young deacon I knew Fr. Trisolini as a tireless labourer in the vineyard of the Lord. He did not take a rest but always was working very hard. He faced the difficulties of the given moment with courage and always with a feeling of renewed vigour. As a priest and a religious he did not neglect the basic need for prayer and meditation, obtaining this spiritual energy that flowed through his heart. He never had more than he absolutely needed for his personal use - he was an example of poverty - using only what was absolutely necessary to do a particular task without waste. He was an inspiration to his fellow religious and seminarians in this regard.

For over 50 years Fr. Trisolini was the Godfather of the ministry of Labour and outreach to Migrant Labourers. He was always a Salesian, and over

the years assumed many responsibilities. Always he had a deep love for the working man and woman - displaying his deep interest and love for them. This ministry was something that consumed the majority of his years as a priest. Beginning in 1980, through his efforts, the Korean Church was involved in the pastoral care of Migrant Labourers - and for over twenty seven years served as the Director of the Seoul Archdiocesan Labour Pastoral Commission.

He never allowed his own physical limitations, both great and small, and from which he suffered from a young age and endured to his death, to interfere with his tireless efforts. It is heartbreaking to recall that some accused him of being a communist because of his care and love of the common labourer. This misunderstanding of his motivations provoked misconceptions and personal animosity that led to feelings of intense loneliness and a sense of betrayal that was difficult to endure. Characteristically, he blamed himself and his own shortcomings for these misunderstandings.

When I think of these things, my heart aches. At the same time my respect for him as a man of God can only increase.

Fr. Trisolini, until the day he died, loved God and people. Before God and within the Church he was an example of faith, hope and love - a minister of the Gospel. He was a Christian man - one who had to put the Word into effect - that is the man we must make every effort to remember.

Two years ago I was happy to see the publication of the book of photographs of Fr. Trisolini's life commemorating the first anniversary of his death. I am even happier and thankful to see on this third anniversary of his death the publication of his biography.

I thank the Director of the Labour Pastoral Commission and all those involved in this effort.

To all of our brothers and sisters working in the Labour Pastoral Commission I offer my prayers for a richer and blessed ministry.

Finally, for Fr. Jack Trisolini, who spent a lifetime of service to Korean Labourers, I give my thanks.

November 22, 2013

Archbishop Andrew YEOM Soo-jung D.D.

Archbishop of Seoul

이영수

## The challenge not to be delayed even briefly...

It seems like such a short time, but it is already three years since Fr. Trisolini died. *“Remember that his fate will also be yours; for him it was yesterday, for you today. With the departed dead, let memory fade; rally your courage, once the soul has left.”* (Sirach 28:22-23). Through these words of the Scriptures we receive comfort despite the sadness we feel at his loss.

Up receiving my appointment to the Seoul major seminary in 1970, I met Fr. Trisolini for the first time that year. In order to raise the interest of the seminarians for the working man and woman and to also create an interest in the Labour Apostolate, I asked Fr. Trisolini to help with this undertaking. My own personal knowledge was rather limited at the time. With this beginning over the next 40 years we were frequently collaborators together in this ministry.

The seminarians heard lectures and had direct experience in this ministry for Labour; through this means Fr. Trisolini created partners in this ministry among the future priests of the Archdiocese. By 1980, the Labour Pastoral Commission had advanced to a certain level – but with further experience led

to a time of great suffering for those in this ministry. Accusations were made, fingers were pointed – and Fr. Trisolini and his co-workers had a great deal to endure. I was a witness to all of this during those years. In 1994 I became the chairperson of the Social Services Commission of the Archdiocese of Seoul – and in my assistance to Fr. Trisolini we were able to see the mission of the Labour Pastoral Commission expand to include Migrant Labour as well. After becoming the Archbishop of Gwangju, this sharing of experience continued – helping each of us to work faithfully for our common mission to Labour. We were partners in this great enterprise.

Fr. Trisolini had the gift of speaking clearly and concisely in his one-on-one conversations or through his various lectures and writings on prayer, liturgy and Catholic Doctrine and the Scriptures. At the core of his personal spirituality was the spirit of St. John Bosco, the founder of the Salesians. His evident love and chaste affection for the people he served were a fruit of his close connection to this spirituality. He intuitively knew the true human dignity of all those whom he met. He was one who, as a missionary, developed his pastoral ministry over the years always with the “preferential option for the poor” and for poor youth foremost in his thoughts. He never deviated from the teachings of the Church – and knew that the Church must be in the work-place in Korea – and that was his place as well.

Every day the results of poliomyelitis suffered as a young man were his constant companions. He suffered terribly from the harsh criticisms of those who did not comprehend what he was about – he had a very difficult life by any standards. At the same time, expressing God’s grace in his ministry led him as a pastor to the poor and to a deep and profound happiness. He was happy to continue this ministry, expanding it constantly, seeing new challenges, and

looking for new solutions continuing his interest first begun in his studies in France. He pursued his goals through academia and professionalism for those involved in this ministry – giving a competence that matured this life of service to the poor in this country that was to bear fruit in the future. His hand was a large one that helped change and develop in so many areas simultaneously – the effects of which are felt to the present day. He was a close personal friend to many, especially of Stephen Cardinal Kim Soo-Hwan whose relationship they both treasured. This is true of many other clergy and religious and laity in the Archdiocese as well.

Since the early days of Fr. Trisolini's apostolate in the Labour Ministry, things have changed considerably in our country for the better. Until the positive development began to unfold, much blood was shed and sweat poured from many brows. Their efforts have not been in vain – and they were led by a priest who played a big role in this development. The expansion in to field of Migrant Labour has led to many people happily sharing in this vision of justice and service. I believe that Fr. Trisolini's role in this new arena of service was enormous in its impact on our entire country.

His efforts led to the general improvement of the environmental conditions under which migrants in general and migrant women in particular had to endure in this land. It remains to us who remain to continue this involvement with our working brothers and sisters. We are challenged not to put off, even for a moment, our response to the realities before us today. This is even more urgent for those of us who are Christians. In order for this land to be a happy place to live, we must all be involved in the happiness of our neighbours – our brothers and sisters. We can never forget our commitment to them – because this sense of urgency is the Spirit of God urging us to charity.

I loved and respected Fr. Trisolini. I am pleased that the Labour Pastoral Commission of the Archdiocese of Seoul has chosen to publish this book. I pray, giving thanks to God, that the Lord abundantly bless all those who are involved in this project.

November 22, 2013

Archbishop Andrew CHOI Chang-mou D.D.

Retired Archbishop of Gwangju

최창모

## **In the spirit of mutual respect and cooperation with the local church...**

Speaking as the Provincial Superior of the Salesians in Korea I would like to first offer a word of thanks to the Seoul Archdiocesan Labour Pastoral Commission, its Director and all those involved in this ministry. You give him the same respect in death that you gave him in life. I feel particularly grateful to you all in your kind, warm and loving remembrance of the deceased Salesian priest, Fr. Jack Trisolini.

Not long after the end of the Korean War, Fr. Trisolini came to Korea in 1959 to begin his life as a missionary in this land. He arrived in this poor and desolate land as a Christmas gift – and until 2010, except for the period of his seminary training in Italy and France, he remained in Korea until the day he died in the ministry for youth, migrant workers and multicultural families. Both within Korea and abroad he pursued this ministry dedicated to labour as a shepherd, a father and as a friend to all he met.

For his entire life he attempted to follow the spirit and heart of the founder of the Salesians, St. John Bosco who frequently said: “*Da mihi animas, cetera*

*tolle!*” – That is “*Give me souls, take all the rest away!*” He began his career as a teacher of English and Latin for high school students. After studying abroad, he returned to pastoral duties as a parish priest, the treasurer of our Salesian Region in Korea, a local superior, etc. While assuming all these various roles he became slowly involved in the Labour Ministry – eventually becoming the Director of the Seoul Archdiocese’s Labour Pastoral Commission. In all of these roles he displayed his gift of being always a good shepherd for those whom he ministered.

Fr. Trisolini was able to minister to poor children, foreign workers and multicultural families due no doubt to the deep love of God that was in his heart always. But even more than that there was his personal experience as a priest who grew up in a very particular environment. He was the son of an Italian father and an Irish mother – both immigrants to the United States many years ago. He knew the harsh conditions and dangerous working places that migrant labour had to endure through personal experience. He knew the power of labour unions and their role in disputes with management from first-hand experience. He experienced that migrant labourers clung to their heritage and religious traditions in order to survive in a hostile place. He knew the power of religious faith to unite, to heal and to give hope. He experienced this as a young boy – growing up in a close-knit, loving family. He learned that this human experience could knit together a community that could withstand the pressures they experienced.

During his early years in Europe he was fortunate enough to be led in his studies by a wise professor who insisted that the seminarian Jack Trisolini – after he became a priest – should be instilled with a deep basic knowledge of practical spirituality. During this period he had direct, hands-on experience of

leading groups of Young Christian Workers, migrant labourers from Northern Africa and people living and sleeping on the street – helping to find work for them. He had a keen interest in the disabled because he met them everywhere he went. He looked for ways to solve problems through a cooperative effort.

In France and Spain, he continued this pastoral learning experience – and carried this experience back with him to Korea. Shortly before this, in Korea, he was stricken with poliomyelitis – a fact that influenced the rest of his life and ministry. Even through this experience he gained an experience that helped his pastoral ministry. There is a Chinese phrase - 同病相憐 – which means “*fellow sufferers have mutual sympathy*” for one another. Fr. Trisolini understood that only through mutual cooperation would the minds and wounds of the disabled be healed.

The Salesian Fr. Jack Trisolini occupied not only an important role in our Salesian Society; he also played a part in the rapid growth of the Church during his years of ministry. The Founder of the Salesians, St. John Bosco, always worked in close collaboration with the pastors in every local church where he ministered. He worked closely with underprivileged youth, was active in labour ministry; he worked as well with foreign labourers in a very effective manner. Fr. Trisolini followed in the footsteps of our Founder in mutual respect and cooperation with the local church for these important ministries.

Fr. Trisolini has gone to God, and prays for us left behind on this earth. He was a man who always lived in poverty – he left very little behind. Fortunately, he left behind the deep spirituality that sustained him for us to treasure as a precious gem.

I take this opportunity to thank all those who loved Fr. Trisolini – may the love of God and His Blessings be yours. Thank you.

November 22, 2013

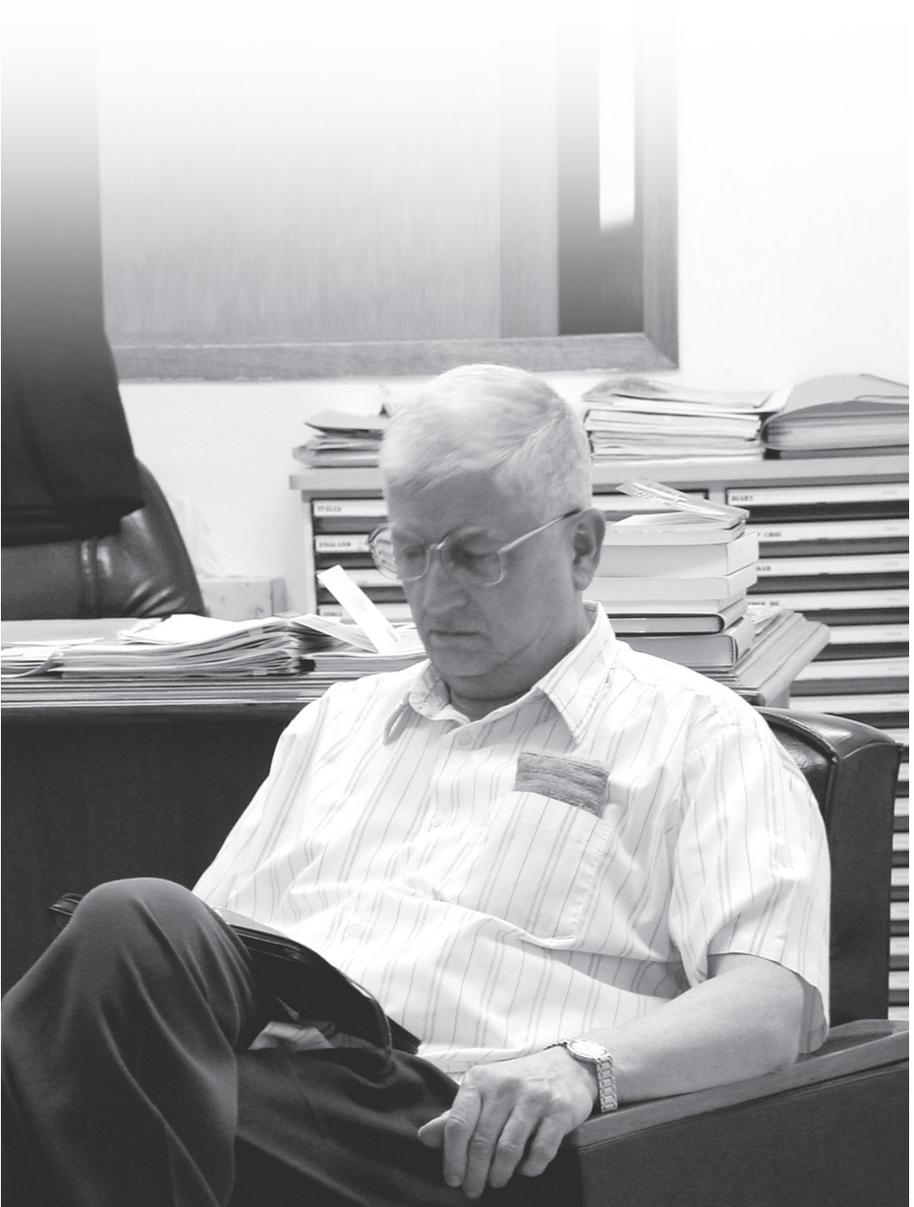
Provincial Superior of the Salesians in Korea

Fr. Stephen Nam Sang Hun, S.D.B.





## Prologue - That Day



Fr. Trisolini walked into the dining room of the rectory, without his crutches, his arms swinging. He was very pale. Preparations were being made for the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the Seoul Archdiocesan Labour Pastoral Commission. Fr. Hur, the Director of the Commission along with members of the Professional Committee and the administrator were meeting and discussing plans. Fr. Trisolini greeted everyone, and handed the Secretary General an envelope.

He said: “Angela, please send this letter by registered post to the Salesian Sisters.”

She replied: “Yes, Father.”

One of the commission members commented to Fr. Trisolini: “Father, your face is so pale. You should go to your room and rest now. I will show you the liturgical book that has been prepared tomorrow.”

Fr. Hur then voiced his concern regarding Fr. Trisolini’s appearance. He said: “Father you look very bad. Please go to your room and rest for a while. After this meeting I will go to your room and speak with you then.”

He returned to his room, the effort it took him obvious on his face. He looked like he was suffering and appeared very lonely. He went back to his room and turned on his desktop computer. There was a controversy at that time regarding the use of condoms – and he was reading a text about this issue. Just before this, he commented to Fr. Hur about this and had asked that there be a delay in publishing a small volume on the social teachings of the Church. The use of condoms in the Moral Doctrine of the Church is a very delicate issue, and there needed to be further clarification about this before the book was published. He told Fr. Hur that he would try and find further comments through a German language news site on the internet.

Fr. Trisolini said: “Fr. Hur, look at this. The news that the Holy Father had commented that the use of condoms in certain circumstances is acceptable is

not true. Of course, the Holy Father would never say anything like that. Isn't that true, Father?

Fr. Hur responded: "Yes, Father it is true. But you seem so tired and pale, please try and get some rest. I will talk with you later at dinner. Take a break until then."

As Fr. Hur left the room, Fr. Trisolini had moved to his bed and stretched out, thinking he would get a nap.



# A Christmas Gift



On December 23, the last flight of the day departed from Tokyo for Seoul. It arrived the next day, December 24th, 1959 at 2:00 AM. The flight was on the carrier Korea National Airlines – the precursor to today’s Korea Air. The plane landed at a lightly snow-clad Gimpo Airport that cold night. This last flight was preceded by the very long flight from New York to Tokyo days earlier – which meant that the last leg of the journey was relatively short in comparison.

In 1959 propeller airplanes were still the mainstay of air-travel in those days. Upon disembarking, seminarian Jack Trisolini was greeted by the frozen cold and wind – with a view of the snow covered pine trees around the perimeter of the airport. This cold night was what first greeted him in his assignment as a missionary in Korea.

Tokyo, of course, was cold – but the cold in Seoul felt even more bone-chilling – and that is what greeted him. The international airport at Gimpo was relatively new – having been opened just the year before. Until 1958, passengers and cargo all passed through the old airport at Yeouido – the current site of the National Assembly Building and innumerable apartment buildings. The building at Gimpo was a prefabricated building – small and crowded each time an airplane full of passengers arrived and faced the gauntlet of Custom’s inspection. The small area and the large number of people made for a very confusing few minutes. Usually there were many family members of the United States Forces in Korea – coming to visit their loved ones from near and far. Two Salesian missionaries working in Korea came out to Gimpo to greet the new missionary – the Argentine born pastor of the Dorim-dong parish in Seoul (Fr. José M. Suárez, S.D.B.) and the assistant pastor of the same parish hailing from Belgium (Fr. Raymond Spies, S.D.B.). Traveling from Japan with the U.S. born Trisolini was the Italian Bro. Delfino Gastadello, S.D.B. and the German born Provincial of the Japanese Province, Fr. Johann Dalkman, S.D.B. – and after greeting and introducing themselves to one another they headed to

the Salesian house in Dorim-dong.

*“It is a Christmas gift.”*

The small group boarded converted U.S. army jeeps that were then serving as taxis – they had earlier been contracted to perform this particular task – for the journey to the Dorim-dong parish. Upon boarding, the taxis seemed to balk at moving forward.

The driver let out the Korean exclamation “*Ai-go, Ai-go*” – a sign of exasperation - a number of times. Trisolini, American born, was introduced to his first Korean phrase. In his innocence of the Korean language – he heard the English phrase “*I go*” which meant something slightly different! The drivers, despite their best efforts, failed to start their engines. The passengers, being faced with a new challenge, descended from the jeep and began to push the vehicle with a view to getting the engines running. It was a very dark night on bumpy unpaved roads, covered with loose gravel. The only sound was passing vehicles that created a deep roar when they passed over the gravel. Finally the engines fired and they were off.

In 1959, Seoul had a population of a little over two million people. The parish of Dorim-dong was in the outskirts of the city, sitting on the top of a hill overlooking the main north-south railroad line. This was the farm-garden area for Seoul – growing rice and vegetables for several kilometers south and beyond. In December, cut rice stalks, covered in snow, was all that was to be seen in the stark emptiness of night. The room that Trisolini spent his first night had neither heat nor running water. For washing, water had to be obtained at an outside well in a bucket. Several hours later, upon arising from his cold bed, he saw the desolate emptiness that surrounded the parish for the first time. More snow had fallen through the night.

Dorim-dong parish was the fourth church consecrated in Seoul. The Ordinary of the Joseon Apostolic Vicariate, Bishop Gustav Charles Marie Mutel M.E.P.,

was looking for a religious congregations or a missionary groups that would establish a high school and technical school in Seoul. In July 1908 he toured Europe on his quest to establish these institutions. During this journey, he met the Provincial Superior of the Southern French Province of the Salesians – asking them to take on this task in Joseon. The Provincial in turn, supporting Bishop Mutel’s request, sent an appeal to the General Superior of the Salesians. This request contained the rationale for the request, describing the current situation of the Korean Church – and the urgency that Bishop Mutel thought that these should be established. This request arrived shortly into the hands of the Superior General of the Salesians, Blessed Michele Rua, S.D.B.

At that time, the Salesians decided that it was not feasible for them to begin this new work. They were unable to respond positively to Bishop Mutel’s request for help. Years later, in 1937, various appeals were made to the Salesian Japanese Province for assistance by the Ordinary of the Gyeongseong Apostolic Vicariate by Bishop Adrien Joseph Larribeau M.E.P. That request was also turned down by the Salesians at that time. While this was the reality, it was also the time when the spirit and charism of St. John Bosco began to be known on the Korean peninsula among the Catholic faithful. Following the canonization of St. John Bosco in 1934, a biography of the new saint was serialized in the Gyeonghyang Magazine.

This biography introduced the new saint and his spirituality for the first time to the Korean Catholic faithful who were until then unaware of him. This biography also influenced the Korean clergy as well. While serving as the Assistant at Myeong-dong Cathedral in central Seoul, the future Ordinary of the Gyeongseong Apostolic Vicariate, Archbishop Paul Marie RO Ki-nam, attempted to apply Salesian spirituality to his early ministry. When he became the Ordinary, he warmly welcomed with the greatest of affection the Salesians to serve in Dorim-dong parish. The early Salesians and the Archbishop had

great mutual esteem for one another – seeking each other’s opinions and help on the many issues that came up over the years. While the Diocese was unable to help the Salesians much financially – he was always ready to collaborate with great enthusiasm when asked to do so.

A new parish in Yeongdeungpo was consecrated on May 10, 1936 under the patronage of St. John Bosco. Yeongdeungpo was emerging as an industrial center, concentrating the emerging industries along with housing for labourers. There was a sense of urgency that the spirituality of St. John Bosco, patron of youth and workers, was needed to meet the needs of the young workers and common labourers that were concentrated there. Because the then parish priest, Paul Roh Gi-Nam, urged action, something was developing. The new parish of Yeongdeungpo has a statue of the new saint in the parish church. The faithful of this new parish, meditating on the features of the saint, absorbed his spirituality and life. In their prayer they appealed to heaven, before the statute of St. John Bosco which also included an image of young child, knowing that St. John Bosco and his disciples were those who loved the young and made them the center of their lives.

In 1934, Monsignor Vincenzo Cimatti, S.D.B., a member of the Salesian Japanese Province, made a journey to Manchuria, putting on musical performances during his stay there. On his way back home, he went to Korea visiting many cities and having the same musical performances in each of them. Later, in the publication “il Bollettino Salesiano” speaking of his visit to Korea, he wrote with great emotion the following phrase: “*St. John Bosco has arrived in Korea before us!*”

The Salesians until then had turned down all appeals for a foundation in Korea. But in 1952 the ever-persistent Ordinary of the Gwangju Apostolic Vicariate, Monsignor Harold W. Henry S.S.C., offered them something that could not be refused. He offered the Provincial of the Japanese Salesian

Province (Fr. Clodoveo Tassinari, S.D.B.) some very good conditions for a Korean foundation, saying “I will buy all the land you will need. I will help you build the school as well. You don’t have to worry about the war, it is now stable. Even in the event the war expands you will be no safer in Japan than in Korea. There is urgent work for you to do in Korea. Come now!”

On August 12, 1954, the first Salesian was assigned to Korea – his name was Archimede Martelli, S.D.B. He went on to found the Salesian Middle School in Gwangju. In March 1958 Fr. José Suarez was appointed pastor of Dorim-dong parish in Seoul. With the arrival of the Salesians in Dorim-dong, where there were already one thousand eight hundred faithful who regularly attended Mass. Later the Salesians were to on and found Guro 3-dong parish, a house for the Salesian novitiate, a residence for seminarians at Daerim-dong, as well as the Technical School and the Don Bosco Youth Center in Seoul. It was a time when vocational animation for the Salesians was begun as well in Dorim-dong where many Salesian vocations originated from.

In the mornings the rectory of Dorim-dong parish was very busy. Everybody was rushing to get to work, but for the young Trisolini there was nothing to do. Fr. Suarez said to him: “Brother Trisolini, there is a U.S. army camp in the neighbourhood here. Today our children from the parish will go there to put on a little show. Don’t sit around the parish today where no one can understand what you say, go with the children to the camp and return with them. You can meet some of the American soldiers there.”

The children of Dorim-dong parish went to the U.S. camp and entertained the soldiers there with song and dance. Trisolini was happy that he had accompanied the children for the day. It was if the bees had escaped their hive and were dancing for joy. Later, they were very busy preparing for Christmas, walking in the deep snow. In those days, so close to the time of war, the curfew was strictly enforced at night. People could not freely walk around – except for

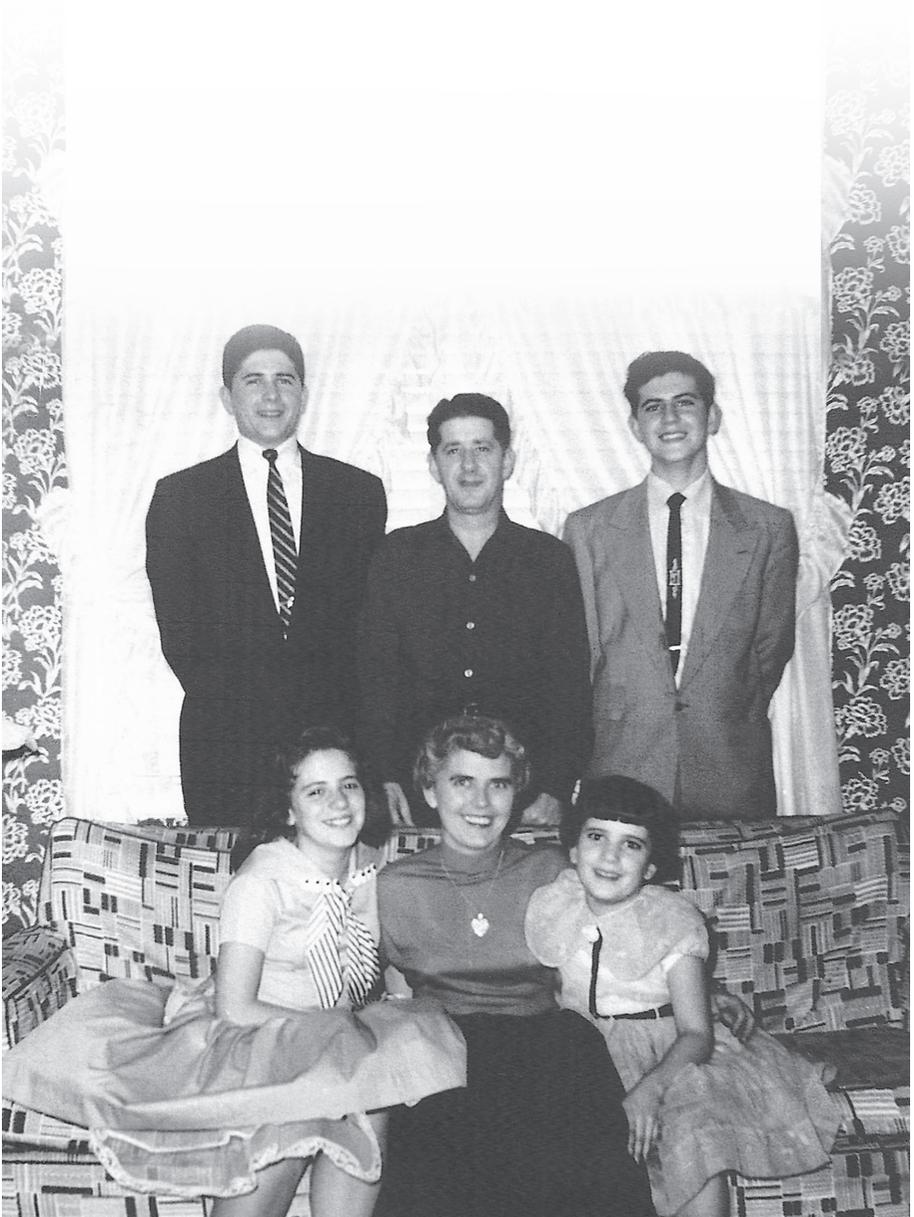
the nights of December 25 and January 1. That night, with all of the faithful in attendance at the Mass, they each held a lit candle. This wasn't because of any particular devotion on their part – but because there were frequent power outages and they had to be prepared for them.

Next to Dorim-dong parish there is located the Yeongdeungpo railway station. In close proximity to the parish church, many labourers were in residence. Their houses were made of abandoned boxes and crates for the most part. While looking for work – most of them were unemployed. The pastor of the parish and the faithful were heavily involved in giving aid to these people. Looking at the statistics of the Korean Catholic Church in 1958, we can see that the total population of Korea was 21,909,472 individuals. Of them, only 350,000 were Catholic in the entire nation. In 1959 Korea was chiefly an agricultural nation. This new area – an industrial park of sorts – which surrounded the parish was a new and very special place in Korea.

For the young Brother Trisolini, the rectory at Dorim-dong felt like home. As a seminarian in training and later as Assistant and then Pastor there, the people he met were young labourers. The young seminarian and the young labourers were actually from similar backgrounds. They were not only similar in backgrounds; they also lived in neighbourhoods that were not all that different. He established an intimate bond with the young labourers living around the parish because of this similarity. Their stories were very similar.



# Depression Baby



John Francis Trisolini was born in the first half of the twentieth century on March 2, 1937. His mother gave birth to him at St. Mary's Hospital near to where his family was living in Hoboken, New Jersey. He would be classified as a Depression baby. Hoboken is located across the Hudson River from New York City. It was a city of migrant workers and their descendants. It was a complex population of labourers – dock workers, train and factory labourers. John Francis was born of an Italian father and an Irish mother. His father was heavily involved in the trade unions of the day. Most of his early friends' parents were common labourers.

In Hoboken, the Catholic, Lutheran and Presbyterian Churches and other Denominations shared the neighbourhood in which John grew up. There was a wide variety of ethnic groups as well – Germans, Irish, Italians, Polish, Norwegians, and British – as well as a sizable Jewish population. It was a time and place where all of these religious traditions and ethnic groups lived together peacefully with a sense of mutual respect for each other's religions and traditions. The local Catholic Church was close St. John's Lutheran Church which was led by the Reverend Erdmann. He was remembered as a kindly man, leading in setting up a neighbourhood vegetable patch on some empty lots. Upon his death, he was remembered by everyone in the neighbourhood with affection and respect for his kindness and cheerfulness. At his funeral the denominational differences were transcended with the whole neighbourhood entering into a period of mourning. John remembered going to the funeral with his mother and younger brother and sister, dressed in their best and his mother bringing flowers as a sign of her respect for the deceased Pastor.

John's parents also welcomed into their home his grandfather on his mother's side when he no longer could take care of himself. They also took care of the same grandfather's older brother after his wife's death. They had no children and he had suffered a debilitating heart attack. These ties of family and kin

were strong and provided a safe environment for those in need. Jack served as his great uncle's official physical therapist. His grandfather always had to be carried from place to place physically because he could no longer walk. When he was a young man, John's grandfather worked in a famous bindery – his stories always interesting to the young boy's ears.

At an early age, John's mother was hospitalized to undergo surgery. His family friends and relatives took one child each into their own homes and assumed the responsibility to watch over them, feed them, and make sure that their needs were met. A divorced woman friend of his mother's stayed with the family until she could find a job and her own place. John was born in the middle of a world-wide economic crisis that cast a pall over everything – he was an elementary school student during the Second World War as well. Be that as it may, in a unique blending of family and friends, a strong sense of togetherness and mutual love developed between them all.

John began his elementary school education at a public school. Due to a problem of excessive corporal punishment, his family decided to enroll him, his brother and older sister in St. Anne's Parish School which was operated by the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth (Convent Station). Later, his youngest sister also studied at the same school. This school was populated by students from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds: Portugal, Scotland, Ireland, Italy and Poland were all represented. Most were the children of migrant workers. Catholic schools at that time provided a very good education for the children of migrant workers. On the first day of school, John's Seventh Grade teacher, Sister Rose Genevieve S.C. before taking attendance, called him to her desk. Looking at him, she asked: "Your mother studied at Our Lady of Grace School in Hoboken didn't she? And her name was Eileen Kennedy and she married a Trisolini? Your Aunt Frances married Freddy Shaw?" He replied, standing before her: "Yes, Sister!" Sister Rose replied: "Very good, John! I taught all of

those I mentioned. By God's good grace I am able to teach you as well. Now sit down, and tonight ask your mother to come to the convent."

As it turned out, Sister Genevieve was friend of his maternal grandmother from childhood. She never forgot a student whom she had taught or their personal history. Now much older and given to strictness and suffering from poor eyesight, she still possessed a good sense of humour.

His Eighth Grade teacher was a Sister Rita Gonzaga S.C., who was missioned to the Virgin Islands as a missionary and teacher. The Sister knew a lot of interesting things – which she shared along with her teaching of good grammar and the proper formation of sentences. They knew how to spark the interests of young adolescents and train them well. Thanks to the influence of these Religious Sisters, four of Jack's classmates became religious themselves, three of whom served until death.

Jack's first encounter with the Salesians was during the summer of his Sixth Grade, before that he had never met them before. Children from three parishes visited the St. John Bosco summer camp run by the Salesians which was located on a hill top close to the Hudson River. This opportunity to leave the crowded urban streets for two weeks, sharing life with the Salesians, left a deep impression upon him. In June of 1951 he graduated from St. Anne's Elementary School. His summer camp experience led him to enter the Minor Seminary of the Salesians – Don Bosco Junior Seminary in West Haverstraw, New York. Of the six students from St. Anne's who attended the summer camp with the Salesians, one other – George Sheehan – also decided to enter the Minor Seminary along with Jack. This school provided an excellent education and an opportunity to live in close proximity with Salesian priests and brothers in a spirit of love and deep faith. However, after a year, missing his family terribly, he decided to return home.

Speaking years later about this time, he said: "After leaving the Minor

Seminary, my parents set their heart on me attending a Catholic High School close to my home as a commuter. My mother and father were struggling labourers. Could they be able to pay for the expensive fees that would have to be paid to fulfill my dream? I decided to attend a state-run high school.”

He ended up at Dickinson High School and was included in the numbers of the sophomore class. With seventy-percent of the students being Catholic, the transition was not overly difficult. This school had two thousand students. It offered courses that included academic, general education, commercial and professional training courses. Going to Dickinson, he was able to meet once again many of his classmates from St. Anne’s. After graduation, despite being separated by many miles, many of the relationships begun during this time continued long into the future. The Principal of the school was a Doctor Connolly who was a former Jesuit seminarian. He had studied at the Gregorian University in Rome. Shortly after being admitted to Dickinson, John was called to meet with the Principal. Doctor Connolly asked him: “John, I know that you studied in a Minor Seminary last year. Would you rather be attending a Catholic High School?” Jack replied “Doctor, thank you for your interest. But now I’m getting used to this school and feel no need to transfer yet again. Please don’t worry about me.”

Doctor Connolly was wise and gentle educator who inspired his students to excel. Weekly he would lectures the students in the school auditorium. He brought to them a deep humanism, when he lectured the students he was able to mesmerize them with his words and example. The teachers at Dickinson were of all faith expressions; Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and atheists. They came from a broad spectrum of ethnic origins as well. They were the normal mixed salad of the American experience, and reflected the reality of their students as well. Doctor Connolly was able to administer this mixed group of peoples with wisdom and prudence. While Public Education in the United

States is not always positively evaluated, Dickinson High School is an example of Public Education that can only be described as successful.

When John glanced outside the classroom window, he could see the skyline of Manhattan and New York Harbour with the statue of Liberty evident. Sometimes the students would joke about seeing the hind quarters of the statue of Liberty from New Jersey. He would have seen the enormous ships that would glide in and out of the harbour as well. He had a wide variety of experiences during the three years that he studied there. He also pursued his interests in track and field, choral singing, commercial subjects – and he also just hung out with his friends. He was able to learn in the school gymnasium the dances current at the time; the Waltz, the Foxtrot, the Lindy and even the Mambo and the Polka.

Over the years there, the pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Marion, a Monsignor Walter Artioli, would celebrate Mass for the students. He would prepare as well two retreats per year for the students - he also provided the Catholic students at Dickinson with a morning snack! A dance was also held for the St. Anne's Catholic Youth Organization on various nights of the year. This was festival that other schools also participated in. Weekly the television appearances of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen were also shown on televisions sets prepared for the students. This was Bishop Sheen's weekly 30 minute program called "*Life is Worth Living*".

Jack Trisolini graduated from Dickinson High School in 1955. Because of his family's restrictions on money available, he decided to go to Montclair State Teachers College, choosing English Education as his major. This institution has since become Montclair University. This school was chosen under the guidance of Dickinson's Doctor Connolly. It was a school that provided a sound grounding in education and human relationships and had an excellent reputation for the close relationship between the students and the teaching

faculty. Due to the influence of the teachers at Dickinson, many of the students felt drawn to a life in education. Of course, John's family had to always deal with a shortage of funds, but during his stay at Montclair he was able to clean the dining hall and type letters and papers for the faculty, earning his tuition through his own labour.

This New Jersey State School clung to many of the practices from its earliest years as a Protestant denominational school of learning. There was a time of brief silent prayer before breakfast in the morning. During his first semester of study, Jack studied world history, the Bible, the Koran and a wide variety of courses in classic literature where he read and studied deeply. One of the English Professors encouraged the students to learn the habit of writing briefly and clearly – asking that they write essays using only 900 basic vocabulary words. Later in his life, Jack found this a very helpful skill in learning multiple European languages.

On long walks, John would discuss happily with his friends the various topics they were studying. The school environment itself was non-Catholic, and was not hostile to Catholics. There were speakers invited who encouraged the students in an atmosphere of faith and a belief in the right for everyone to grow into adulthood as principled individuals. Weekly Monsignor Dougherty from nearby Darling Seminary came to Montclair to lecture the students. This time in college was a turning point for John. Being immersed in the great literature he was reading, he was led him to consider seriously and think more deeply; in dialogue with his Christian friends, his faith matured and deepened.

John, for the first time pondered the meaning of what Jesus taught about “true happiness” (Matthew 5:3-10) and listened to all that he heard very seriously. In the 1956 graduation exercises, the chief speaker was Congressman Judd. The Congressman began quoting from the Gospels to the students, speaking about happiness and said to them:

“Graduates, you will very soon leave this school to teach young people. Above all, when you face your charges they must see your sense of devotion and generosity to them in your face. You must instill this same sense in them.” He encouraged them to consider the Gospel in order to recall the real meaning of real and true happiness. These words struck Jack Trisolini forcefully, because he was undergoing a personal struggle within himself about his own future. He became aware that what Congressman Judd was talking about was the very kernel, the key, of the Christian Gospel. The experience at Montclair led John to the conviction that his future was being revealed to himself: the conviction that this quest for “true happiness” in a life of faithful service was the way that he had to follow. This becoming a faithful, poor and zealous missionary was the path before him that he felt compelled to walk down.

Immediately after the celebration of the feast of Easter in 1956, he decided to enter the Salesian Society. He left his dorm room and returned home. This was a clear break with his past, and it immediately led him into his future. The next three months were spent in the Jersey City Montclair Normal University finishing his semester’s work. He would visit the church of St. Paul of the Cross, where he would spend time in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. He begged the Lord for the special grace to be able to separate himself from his family and friends in order to enter a new life.



## Following St. John Bosco



In July 1956, John left home for Newton, New Jersey, along with a group of aspiring Salesians where they entered the Society at Don Bosco College. Since all seminary formation was done that time in Latin the first order of business was to master that language. For many of the candidates, it was the first time they had ever studied Latin. For John and some few others, they had studied Latin for their four years of high school, and thus this was a period of grinding and polishing their abilities. They listened to lectures in Latin all morning and then again after lunch. Those who had studied Latin during their four years of high school began the formal study of college level courses, which included Philosophy.

Life in a seminary in the mid-1950s was simple, yet very busy. There were of course the normal morning and evening prayers, lectures throughout the day, and recreation which normally consisted of softball, basketball or volleyball. Frequently during their free time in the afternoons, seminarians would do manual labour or hike in the hills of Sussex County. The Salesian professed and students were all involved in the various works of the house, such as cleaning, laundry, cleaning the dining room after meals, and even maintaining the buildings. Only two employees were hired – one worked on the farm and another who was a chef. A Brother worked on the small farm where there were 30 cows and many pigs – and thus milk and meat were supplied by the work of their own hands. There were even a few bee hives!

The Salesian professors at the seminary were training future Salesian educators and priests. The postulants learned a pattern of study and work combined with a full liturgical life and mingled with hours of recreation. They were in the process of coming to know and enjoy each other. In September 1957, about forty of the postulants began the canonical novitiate after having completed a ten day retreat. The novice master was Fr. Aloysius Bianchi, S.D.B., and with the help of the professors of the college, the novices were immersed

in courses in biblical history, liturgy and Italian in the mornings. After a work-period in the afternoon, they studied the Salesian Constitutions and Regulations, the history of the Society, and its spirituality. There was a daily examination of conscience, along with the absorbing of patterns of reflection and contemplation. There was frequent opportunity for private conferences with the novice master on a one to one basis, thus providing an opportunity for further reflection on what they were experiencing. There were a number of retreats held during the novitiate year as well.

After the Second World War, until well into the 1950's religious communities and seminarians in the United States were flooded with candidates for the religious and priestly life. This increase in numbers led most communities into building new novitiates and residences in order to train these young persons for religious life following in the footsteps of the apostles. Those same young religious were pressed into doing the maintenance and even landscaping of these hopeful new centers.

The novitiate year ended with a ten day retreat and on September 8, 1958 the profession of first vows. Following this, the Salesian seminarians began the general college course. Because of his previous studies at Montclair, and summer courses taken after that, Jack was able to be fast-tracked into the senior class.

Normally the first Sunday of each month was dedicated to the visits from family members of the young Salesians. Outside of that, Sunday was normally begun with the normal common Mass or by the celebration of a Solemn High Mass. The day was free to spend in study or recreational pursuits. Before the evening meal, there would be a solemn celebration of evening prayer and Eucharist Adoration. At the end of the second semester of 1959, the Salesian seminarians along with students from the Minor Seminary participated in a retreat for young people. Just before the commencement of the summer holiday

– Jack Trisolini’s confessor, Fr. Angelo Franco, S.D.B., showed him a book. He asked Jack: “Have you read the latest best seller, *The Nun’s Story*?” Jack responded: “No, I haven’t been able to read it yet”. Fr. Angelo then gave him the book telling him to “Read it!”

After having read the book, he returned it to Fr. Franco who asked Trisolini: “Do you think the Sister in this book had a vocation to be a religious?” Jack responded “Yes I think she probably did have a vocation”. Fr. Franco then commented “Yes, I agree with you. Yet she lost the vocation that she had. We have to be always careful of the vocation we have received from God. It is always possible that we can lose our vocation – we must never lose sight of how precious that vocation is. Don’t you think so, John?”

The words of Fr. Franco made a deep impression on the young Salesian. It was an occasion for him to commitment himself to safeguarding the call that he had responded to.

The young Salesians, those recently graduated from Don Bosco College, all gathered together for a ten day retreat at Newton. During the last meal of the retreat, the “practical” training assignments for the newly graduated students were read by the Provincial Superior, Fr. Felix Penna, S.D.B. Trisolini’s assignment was to teach and assist at the Don Bosco Agricultural School in Huttonsville, West Virginia.

On a hot September day, Jack and Bro. Ewald Guerken, S.D.B., one of the pioneers of the West Virginia school, took turns driving through New Jersey and Pennsylvania. After passing through Harrisburg, they cut south into West Virginia, arriving in the early morning of the next day at Huttonsville. It was the time when Michael Harrington’s book *The Other America* had recently been published – revealing those pockets of extreme poverty in the midst of rich America. West Virginia was the poorest state in the United States at this time. The Don Bosco “school” what that in name only.

Nine Salesians served as the entire staff for this four year agricultural high school. They were responsible for all of the classes taught, took care of the farm and the recreational facilities that had been already created. There was only one lay employee who worked in the kitchen as chef. This was a residential school – with all of the students being borders there. It was a school where not only did the students learn in the classroom, they also received the love and care of the staff.

There was some discontent among the students, which led to a few incidents of rebelliousness. They had come from difficult home-situations, and for many it was their first experience of living in a clean, well-ordered place. Some had had brushes with the law in their young lives – all were healthy and full of energy. They were given good books to read and challenged with a wide range of academic courses, sprinkled with good sporting activity as well. Shortly after Jack’s arrival there was an incident that took him by surprise. In the course of a class, one of the students took it upon himself to strike Trisolini forcefully in front of all the other students. Besides having his pride hurt a bit – it placed the staff into a quandary. How should they respond to this action of aggression? Fr. Manni, the school’s principal consulted with Jack, saying “The reason the student struck you was to make an impression on the other students. If we attempt to resolve this issue using the legal measures available to us, the other students will become even more rebellious. I think that if you accept a public apology from this student, we can end this situation there”.

Trisolini responded “I understand, Father, That’s what I will do then. Don’t be concerned about this”. And for this Fr. Manni was thankful. It was a time when life was far less complex – and this school was operated with very few resources. It was a concrete example of the hidden problem in a country like the United States – and one which Jack Trisolini observed directly – “You will have the poor with you always”.

Three months later, a letter appeared on Jack's dinner plate from Fr. Penna – his Salesian Provincial. In the letter he was being re-assigned as a missionary educator to the Salesian High School in Gwangju, Republic of Korea. During his time in the novitiate – he had applied to be sent abroad as a missionary – and the Provincial was responding to this request. He had been told to report to the Provincial Residence in New Rochelle, New York where arrangements would be made for his imminent departure.

This involved him traveling by air from West Virginia all the way to New York, Trisolini's first airplane ride! He left from Elkin Municipal Airport – an airfield in the midst of stands of corn and flew up to New York City's LaGuardia airport.

Jack needed to apply for a U.S. passport, and after that was issued, to apply for visas for both Japan and Korea. He had one week to visit New Jersey to say goodbye to his family and friends and his fellow Salesians.

On a clear sunny day in New York he departed from Idlewild International Airport – the future John F. Kennedy airport - for the long journey to Tokyo, and eventually on to Korea. He boarded a Northwest Orient airplane that was to hop across America – stopping first at Chicago for fuel. (The plane was to stop at Seattle and Shemya Island in the Aleutian chain before reaching Tokyo.) He flew over Don Bosco College on his way there – also seeing Niagara Falls from the air. After two more stops along the way, on another bright sunny day, he landed at Haneda International Airport in Tokyo, Japan.

After clearing customs and fetching his luggage, Jack was feeling a bit stunned in this new reality before meeting the Financial Administrator of the Salesian Japanese Province, Fr. Crevacuore, S.D.B. who had come out to the airport to greet the new missionary and welcome him to Asia. Due to delays to the infrequent flights to Seoul, Trisolini was to spend almost a month in Japan before boarding the flight to Korea. His new Provincial, German born

Fr. Johann Dalkman welcomed him to Japan, and introduced him to the other members of the Province. The Provincial in Japan usually made an annual trip to Korea to preach the annual retreat for those members of the Province working there – and the plan was for Jack to travel with him and Bro. Delfino Gastadello, S.D.B. to Seoul.

During Jack's stay in Tokyo, Fr. Dalkman tried to talk him into remaining in Japan rather than going on to Korea, saying "You know, Bro. Trisolini, the place you've been assigned to, that is Korea, is a very poor country, and we have a lot to do here in Japan". Jack quickly responded "Father, I am prepared to work in the Republic of Korea". Fr. Dalkman answered, "I'm glad to hear that – I will pray for your success". "Thank you, Father!" was Jack's only response.

During Trisolini enforced stay in Japan was an opportunity to meet frequently and come to know the saintly founder of the Japanese Salesian community, Monsignor Vincenzo Cimatti. Cimatti was an accomplished musician. Jack, from the time he knew he was going to Korea, wanted to have an opportunity to meet this outstanding senior missionary. He was the first rector of the Chofu Salesian Theological Seminary and was still active.

He told the young missionary "Brother, you are going to a good mission land. If there was an opportunity that arose and I could be of service there I would love joining you in Korea. I would love to be a part of this new beginning. I remember with great fondness going to Manchuria and Korea during the 1930's – putting on musical performances. Before I die it is the one place I would love to see once again."

Monsignor Cimatti, during Jack's apprenticeship in Korea, would often write to the Korean community. When these letters would arrive, the entire community would enjoy hearing them being read aloud in the dining room during a meal.

Few airplanes flew the Seoul – Tokyo route in 1959. Those that did fly were always filled far in advance. This is certainly witness to the fact that Jack Trisolini was twice delayed boarding a Seoul bound flight in Japan.



# The Teacher John Trisolini



On the evening of December 25, 1959, Jack boarded the night train to Gwangju – that chugged and wheezed all the way down the single line that served that city. It seemed as if the train stopped in every small town along the way to allow people to disembark and to take on new passengers. In those days, upon arriving on Taejon, the train would stop and the rear cars going to Jolla would be taken off the train, connected to other engines and the two parts of the original train would go on to Busan and Gwangju respectively. Because the Honam Line – the line going to Gwangju – was single track, the trains going south would have to pull off to a siding to allow north-bound trains to pass them before the south-bound train could continue on. This was a major contribution to the length of the journey.

The journey of 450 kilometers ended up taking twelve hours to complete – thus Jack arrived the next morning of December 26 at the Songjeongni station on the outskirts of Gwangju proper. The superior of the Gwangju community, Fr. Archimede Martelli, S.D.B. was there to greet him at the train station. The journey from Songjeongni to the residence was one made on dirty roads, with the novel experience of whenever they would approach a creek or river; they would cruise down the bank of the creek or river and drive through the water to the other side. The bridges destroyed during the war years had yet to be replaced!

Jack's first impression of Gwangju was the imposing Mudeung mountain which was the backdrop to the city, and ocean of small thatched roof and mud walled buildings that made up the chief means of shelter in the city. Each house had a chimney with smoke pouring out of it. In 1959 there was very little large or moderately sized industry in Gwangju. There were several small Protestant chapels, and just two Catholic parishes – Nam-dong and Buk-dong churches.

Covering the whole of South Jolla Province and the island of Jeju Province, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was a Vicariate Foraine that was staffed chiefly

by Columban Missionaries and a few Korean priests. The vast expansion of Korean industry had not yet begun, and in an underdeveloped country, Gwangju was particularly undeveloped. Bishop Harold William Henry had the responsibility for this corner of the country – and it was he who had asked that the Japanese Province of the Salesian to come and establish a school in this city and other communities to establish other schools and hospitals as well. Because the United States Agency for International Development had already made the decision to establish a technical school in Gwangju, all that was left for the Salesians to do was to found a regular high school for boys.

The site chosen for the new school, which was in Gwangsan-gun, has since been incorporated into the city of Gwangju. It was built in what would now be considered a rural situation. The road that connected this site to the city ran through rice paddies which were fertilized with human waste collected from five public toilets located in the city. These drums stood on the road filled with this potent mixture of human excrement and urine awaiting their turn to be upended onto the rice paddies where the contents would nourish the next crop. Unless you were careful, at night while walking this road there was always the danger you might fall into one of these drums or knock them over.

It was a gray bleak morning when the new missionary arrived at this new school. The sound of construction was in the air, with work being done on the top of the unfinished building. A building being used by the minor seminarians was in temporary use as a dormitory until this construction could be completed. The plan was that this school would serve as a minor seminary for the Gwangju Vicariate Foraine and for the Salesians as well. Postulants for the Salesians would also be housed in the same facility. The Prefect of Studies for the school, Fr. Jesús María Sánchez, S.D.B. and Bro. Richard Stanley Mataconis, S.D.B. were in charge of the project, and would direct the young seminarians, still rubbing the night out of their eyes, to move their clothes, wardrobes, beds

and mattresses to the corner of the large room. This sleeping area became the auditorium for the school during the day.

“Good morning, Father and Brother! I am Brother Jack Trisolini!” They replied “We are happy to see you, Brother Trisolini! You are most welcome here. It’s a little difficult at the moment, but it will soon improve”. John simply replied “Thank you for your warm welcome”.

Most of the seminarians spent the winter living at home in a house that had heated floors. Those that remained at the school for the winter had to endure a large room with little or no heat. Jack Trisolini suffered along with them that winter. With those who remained at the school, Jack would wander through the neighbourhood with the students discovering what this new situation was like. The Gwangju community gave Jack his Korean name. His family name became “Do” or 都 in Chinese characters which was close to the sound of “Trisolini” and his given name “John Francis” became “Yo-an” (要安). Prior to the Second Vatican Council the Apostle John was referred to as “Yo-wang” while John the Baptist was called “Yo-an”. In January 1960, the winter vacation period coming to end, Fr. Martelli gave the teacher in training, Jack Trisolini his first assignment.

“You are here for one year to teach the freshmen in the Salesian High School – and you will be in charge of the English conversation program. Before breakfast each morning you will also teach the minor seminarians Latin. You are also the assistant in charge of the lecture hall, dining room and the recreation periods for the students

Not having learned many words of Korean as of yet, he was busily studying this already. Despite this he already had some heavy responsibilities. There were few schools to learn this language yet created in Korea. He learned basic Korean using the text books that students used in elementary school as a beginning. He was tutored by a student at the Medical College of Chonnam

National University.

Until March 1960, Korea was a relatively peaceful country. From March on a new reality revealed itself, and this peace façade slowly faded. At the beginning of Holy Week, Jack began to feel unwell. He complained of body aches and extreme fatigue – characteristically he ignored the symptoms. Slowly the symptoms worsened, and by Easter Sunday, April 17, he could barely move.

On April 19, the students at the Salesian high school of Gwangju were caught up in the national fervour of revolt. The education department of Jolla province refused to allow students to return to their homes. After the 3 p.m. English conversation class, they began to move to the streets. Jack was still struggling to hang on, knowing he was very sick and desiring only to lie down and rest.

Across the entire country, including Seoul itself, large scale protests were underway. This was due to the fraudulent national elections held just a month earlier on March 15, 1960. Like the uprising in 1928 under the Japanese occupation, the Gwangju students struggled violently against the deeply felt betrayal. The Police and the Department of Education ordered that all students were to return immediately to their homes. Gwangju city was in chaos. The students in their frustration threw stones at the police who in turn responded with physical violence, beating students mercilessly. Seeing this, even more students from the high schools and colleges poured into the streets and began to demonstrate. Elementary school students cheered them on from the sidelines, clapping their hands.

There slogans were “End the election fraud!” and “Another vote!” Responding to the violence they also chanted “Punish those who kill us!” and “Punish the murderers!”

That night, Jack became very ill, not even able to eat. He was sitting at the study hall desk when the 8 p.m. siren sounded indicating that curfew had begun. The whole city fell into silence. The curfew normally began at 11:30

p.m., but because of the situation it was moved forward three and one half hours. For Jack, becoming increasingly ill, he could no longer work, and had to retire early. In the middle of the night, Jack vomited and fell into a troubled sleep – due to the situation outside. Near collapse, he was moved to his bed, a curtained area in the students’ dormitory. No effort could be made to find assistance for him in his plight. From outside, the sound of megaphones and gunfire was all that was to be heard that night. The noise and chaos became unendurable to the young seminarian as he began the struggle to survive.

“Release the arrested student!”

“Do not use students as political pawns!”

The next day Jack Trisolini was in agony from spinal pain, and a fever raged in his body. He thought his head would burst open. In the vicinity of the school was the clinic of the Brothers of St. John of God where the Irish medical doctor – Dr. Carr – was a volunteer working with the Brothers. Jack went to the clinic. Brother Trisolini said to the doctor: “Doctor I cannot possibly continue to suffer this degree of pain.” The doctor replied “I will give you medication to help stabilize the pain. I believe you are suffering from inflamed nerves.” Jack could only acquiesce to the treatment offered.

Jack staggered from the clinic to the nearby market of Imdong, feeling his strength continue to wane. Some of the students whom he was teaching discovered him the market. They said to him “Brother, given the danger of the moment and the situation here, you should go back to the school as soon as possible!” Jack responded “Yes, that would be good, can you help me get there?” They immediately agreed to help him.

At that moment, they saw the Jeep from the Salesian school in the distance. They called the car to come to them and take Jack back to the school. Fr. Martelli had been accosted in the city streets just the day before. They were able to guide the Jeep back into the school compound without incident. In

the meantime, the students were gathered in front of City Hall, demanding democracy and the fundamental freedoms that would give to the citizens of Korea.

“Do not use our schools for your political ambitions!”

“Eliminate the traitors to democracy!”

The police and student demonstrators were still in conflict, the student protestors refusing to disperse. Police fired upon the students injuring 30 of them. Among them were two Salesian students injured and one was killed. The police continued to chase down students and beat them. The playground in front of the Gwangju Elementary School became like a temporary prison for the students captured. About 40 of the captured students were from the Salesian school. They continued to scream out:

“We are trying to defend democracy!”

“Those who accept fraudulent elections defile our country!”

Trisolini, in his early days as a missionary, noticed that many of the students usually did not normally eat lunch. Some of those would faint in the classrooms during class. During the days of protest, this pattern continued. Others, finding a water faucet on the exercise field gorged themselves on water. Finally the nation roared at the top of its lungs:

“President Rhee Syng Man— be gone!”

Local officials summoned an emergency meeting in the middle of the dark night, asking the principals of the schools to gather. This meeting was meant to determine exactly what was going on. Fr. Martelli attended this meeting, and after the meeting, Fr. Martelli was able to bring several of the captured students back with him to the school. Trisolini, who was faring no better, could not sleep at all. Due to the chaos of the situation he was not even able to lie down in his bed to find rest. Some 300 college professors from 27 different universities across the country created a security perimeter around the students, creating a

barrier with their bodies. Thus allowing them to continue their demonstrations peacefully, and not allowing the police to interfere with them.

“The students who have shed their blood will be heard!”

The tottering government was forced to make a decision, the protests being too wide-spread and too compelling to ignore any longer. This chaos led to President Rhee Syng Man’s hasty resignation from office on April 26th, saying to the nation “If the people desire it, I resign the presidency.” In the midst of this chaos, Lee Gi Bung, the fraudulently elected Vice President, committed suicide along with his family on April 27th.

Meanwhile, Trisolini’s condition continued to deteriorate. He could no longer eat nor drink. Doctor Carr recommended that he be taken to Mokpo – he had to get to a proper hospital. The Brothers’ clinic, while fairly well stocked, did not have the medications that he seem to need. He was placed in the Jeep and driven to Mokpo, where the Columban Missionary Sisters had a hospital in this port town on the Yellow Sea. It was better than anything available in Gwangju – at least he would be more comfortable in a hospital.

It was a beautiful spring day, with the hills turning green and coloured with the blossoming purple azaleas. The farmers were preparing the paddies to be planted, with the seedlings forming small islands of lush green in the watery brown landscape. While it was beautiful, Jack could not enjoy it much. The roads were unpaved and filled with pot holes – every bump caused him to wince in intense pain. The cherry and willow trees were just opening their leaves – lined up like soldiers along the rough road and scattered in the hills. The cherry trees were in full bloom, crowned with their white and pink crowns of flowers. In spite of the beauty surrounding him, Jack just felt the pain of his spine and the fatigue of his whole being.

Among the Columbans was a Sister Benignus S.S.C. – a medical doctor with great gifts of observation and clinical diagnosis. She served as doctor and

administrator of the hospital. She listened intently to what Jack had to say – the course of his illness – how it began and how it developed over the past several days. Her observations led her to make the following comments to Jack:

“Brother, I want you to lie quietly in bed for now. Anything you feel you must do, please call someone to help you. You must be on complete bed-rest. You must not walk around. Do you understand what I am saying?” He could only reply “Yes, Sister, I do.”

Because he had been unable to sleep for several days, Sister Benignus prescribed sleeping medication. Soon afterwards, she had to leave her new patient in order to make the rounds of the hospital. Jack slept very well for a good long time, waking up feeling refreshed. While feeling better, things quickly took a turn for the worse. When he woke up he felt recovered from whatever was ailing him, and decided to get up and use the bathroom. He staggered into the toilet, ignoring the Sister’s orders. He attributed his altered gait to the medicines and lack of food and nourishment he had undergone for the past several days. While trying to pass stool, nothing seemed to happen. He just sat there leaning on the tub in the small facility.

When he tried to go back to his bed some minutes later, he collapsed on his way to it and fell to the floor. While he felt fine from the waist up – he could feel nothing from the waist down. He fell on a small rug on the floor, and using this he dragged himself to the door, waiting for someone to observe his plight. One of the nurses saw him there, carrying a tray. She put the tray aside, and rushed to help the stricken seminarian. She could do nothing herself, so she fled seeking some help to move Jack back to his bed. A group of the Sisters arrived and finally were able to move him with great difficulty. He told them of his feeling of being paralyzed below the waist. Later that afternoon, Sister Benignus returned and spoke to him:

“Brother, I have carefully considered what you have told me and observed

the symptoms that you display. It seems to me that you have come down with poliomyelitis. Here in Mokpo at St. Columban Hospital we have nothing that could assist you in your current condition. In order to receive proper treatment, you will have to be moved to a larger hospital.”

Sister Benignus spoke quietly and calmly, sharing this dreaded diagnosis in a frank and open manner. Jack was grateful for her candour. While he dreaded the disease, the candour gave him the courage to face the illness squarely. The cold reality of his situation sunk in. He believed in the love of Christ, and this gave him the courage to accept this provisional diagnosis, as scary as it may have been. He felt he could win the struggle against this disease, with the help of God. Meanwhile, unknown to him, Sister Benignus had been on the telephone to Bishop Harold in Gwangju. The Bishop arranged for a U.S. Army helicopter to move the patient from Mokpo to Bupyeong – west of Seoul, the location of the U.S. Army 121st Hospital.

Within a day or two, he was taken to a playing field of the Mokpo Commercial High School – where the ambulance helicopter was awaiting their patient. He and Sister Benignus made the trip together to Bupyeong. Over one hundred people had gathered on the playing field – the arrival of the noisy helicopter being quite an event in Mokpo at the time. A year later, when circumstances had changed for the better, Sister Benignus was to share with the Salesian Sisters her experience that day:

“Brother Trisolini’s breath was so shallow during that helicopter trip; I was filled with dread at what could happen. I could only pray that he would survive this journey to the large hospital in the north. This journey was fraught with danger to him, but thankfully it turned out all right.”

The U.S. Army 121st Hospital was located in Bupyeong, actually a district of Incheon City. Jack was unable to stomach the medicine that was being given to him, and he suddenly took a turn for the worse. He was in and out of a coma

for days – when consciousness returned he was almost completely paralyzed. He had undergone a month-long agony so far. His mouth was dry, his body paralyzed. He found it difficult even to swallow water, and he continued to have a generalized body ache. He found himself being unable to do anything for himself.

Among those who examined him was Captain Lois McTaggart, and cheerful and competent physical therapist. Unlike the doctors on the staff of the 121st, she was convinced along with Sister Benignus that Trisolini was the victim of poliomyelitis. Further testing meant extended waiting for the results of the examinations. The examination of blood, spinal fluid and tissues was done in Japan. Captain McTaggart recommended that the patient begin physical therapy immediately, despite it being painful and uncomfortable at first for Jack. His only desire was to be able to stand on his own two feet and get back to work. All concurred that physical therapy could do no harm – so it was begun immediately. This involved a lot of pain, but the daily regimen was begun despite the sore muscles. Jack was discharged from the hospital after a few months, after having received confirmation of the diagnosis from Tokyo. His spinal fluid showed evidence of the dreaded diagnosis – poliomyelitis.

Thanks to the regular regimen of physical therapy, he was slowly able to graduate from being bed-ridden, to being able to use a wheelchair and eventually crutches. Being able to move around was a great blessing for him, gaining greater freedom to leave the bustling wards where he was normally to date. He was able to spend time in the silent chapel, praying and recovering his spirits along with his body. He was able to attend weekly Mass in the chapel – as well as receive daily Communion from the chaplain. Being far from the nearest Salesian community and their regular life of prayer, this was a great consolation to the young seminarian.

During Jack's hospitalization, the country remained in a very unstable

situation. Despite being the busy parish priest of Dorim-dong, Fr. José Suarez and his Assistant Fr. Spies frequently made the 20 kilometer trip on a motorbike along the dusty roads to Bupyeong in order to visit Brother Trisolini. They made this trek until he was ultimately discharged from the hospital months later. As a result of his hospitalization the number Salesians at the Gwangju high school diminished. Jack himself only wanted to get better so that he could return to his work in Gwangju. His health slowly improved as summer approached, while he continued the daily regimen of physical therapy. Trisolini began to talk with the doctors about his eventual discharge from the hospital. In order for this to happen, discussions began about how his physical therapy could continue after his discharge.

Captain McTaggart suggested that "... Brother Trisolini, it is important that you remain in Korea to continue your treatment. You are a missionary with an assignment to do something specific. When treating patients with polio, it is very important to that the motivation to recover is maintained. If you return to the United States, you will go back feeling like you have lost the battle with this disease – and thus will be tempted to cease doing the physical therapy. Please stay here in Korea, and continue to fulfill the dreams and responsibilities you have as a missionary."

The physical therapist's advice seemed like sage counsel to the young seminarian. He sincerely wanted to fulfill his assignment and bring this phase of his formation to a successful completion. He felt he could only acquiesce to the suggestion made – thanking Captain McTaggart for her help.

During his hospitalization, Trisolini continued his study of the Korean language. With the assistance of three young KATUSA (Korean Augmentation Troops to the United States Army) – helped him in his efforts to speak, read and write the language along with the study of Chinese characters. Eventually he was able to serve as a translator for Koreans admitted to the hospital – being

of service to the doctors who relied on accurate translations in order to give the proper treatment. This involvement with the KATUSA soldiers formed relationships that were to last for years to come. Not only did they teach the young seminarian the Korean language, they also taught him about the culture and society in which he was destined to serve. These young soldiers were highly educated men, despite the fact that they were from poor backgrounds. Prior to this fortunate meeting with the young soldiers, he had studied Korean only with elementary school textbooks. As he said he had “undergone Korean childhood and adolescence.” He came to understand children – and with their help he was able to appreciate better the adult society in which he was to serve.

But mid-July 1960, thanks to the physical therapy he was undergoing daily at the hospital, slowly the nerves that had become disconnected from his stiff muscles slowly re-established their proper connections. Captain McTaggart helped soothe the stiffness that is associated with poliomyelitis. Because of his quick progress, he was close to being discharged from the hospital. Brother Delfino, his travel companion from Tokyo, took on the task of learning how to do the physical therapy for the patient. He was a quick learner and became in his own right a skilled physical therapist – having learned the techniques in a matter of days.

During his hospitalization in the 121st Hospital, Trisolini learned the deep human values of the doctors and nurses and therapists who staffed the hospital. Their attention to his motivation for the therapy deeply impressed him as well. Being discharged on the 26th of July 1960, he and Brother Delfino left that night for Gwangju.

After returning to the school, during the upcoming months he returned frequently to Seoul to visit the 121st Hospital, in order to have his progress monitored. He would also go with Fr. Martelli to the Severance Hospital in Seoul, which at that time was opposite the central Seoul Train Station. Through

the suggestion of one of the doctors there, who had studied at the Jersey City Medical Center – Sr. Kenny Centre, he eventually was fitted with steel braces that went from his knee to his foot that helped strengthen his legs even more. Brother Delfino continued the physical therapy regularly, and got to the point where Jack no longer had to continually rely on crutches for locomotion.

Early in the 1960 academic year, well prepared classes could be taught, but outside the school, there were wider societal issues brewing. The second part of the year, with conditions far from ideal, teaching became a challenge. When the transitional government of Heo Jeong came to an end, the new government of Dr. John Jang Myeon assumed power. Dr. John Jang Myeon was an upright man. Despite this, the society at large continued to be confused and discontented. An example would be the single occasion one day, when the students at the Salesian High School in Gwangju blocked the entrance to the school of the Principal and staff. While this was a tense moment, through mutual dialogue the issues presented were quickly resolved and classes resumed without much more trouble.

Located in Gwangju were Protestant missionaries from the United States who served on the staff of the Protestant Hospital in town. These missionaries taught Brother Trisolini the advantage of being submerged in hot water, something that augmented his daily physical therapy. Jack found this very helpful. He also came to respect these dedicated, selfless missionaries. They were without exception highly educated, highly motivated missionaries. They could have remained in the United States and had high-paying positions there, but chose instead to be missionaries in Korea. Their Christian witness was much admired by Brother Trisolini.

By March 1961, not only was Jack becoming healthier, his ability with the Korean language was advancing steadily. Fr. Martelli, seeing this, assigned Trisolini to teach Tenth grade (first year high school) English grammar and

reading. In Korea the academic year begins in March. The middle school began with Grade Seven after elementary school and continued for three years, while high school began with Grade Ten and was for a period of three more years of interdisciplinary education. A normal classroom on the high school level had at least 60 students in it, and sometimes as many as 65 to 70 students. Aside from teaching, he assumed responsibility for the Catholic Student Club in the school – thus rounding out a busy and happy life for Jack.

Fr. Augustine Na Sang-Jo, the founder of the National Catholic Student Association, came for a visit to the Gwangju Salesian High School in May 1961 in order to plan a national meeting of Catholic Students in Gwangju. While discussing this project with Fr. Martelli in his office, word was heard of the military coup d'état of May 16. This led to a period of social unrest for a time, but the military quickly assumed control of the government and society. They had a blueprint for the economic reform of the country, which was quickly brought into being. In fairly quick time, the government began to function normally once again, and the unrest dissipated in a like manner. This is true despite being a military coup.

The military, upon seizing power, immediately began an anti-corruption campaign. They seized and jailed black market traders, rounded up suspected communists and their sympathizers, took beggars, thieves and gangsters off the street. They also investigated those who were claiming veterans' benefits and punished those who were doing so under false pretensions.

The road leading up to the Salesian High School crossed an old wooden bridge. One day a group of soldiers appeared, replacing the wood with steel girders. Within a few days the steel girders disappeared, and were replaced once again with the wooden beams! A movie made domestically displayed the noble heroism of Admire Lee Sun Sin, the 16th century of Korea against the Hideoyashi invaders from Japan. The not so subtle aim of the film was

to encourage faith in the military- and it proved to be fairly successful in its intended message.

The National Catholic Student Association met in August of 1961 at the Gwangju Salesian High School. At the time, Brother Trisolini was suffering from severe dysentery, but was well on the road to recovery. Many more students than planned attended this national meeting. Mixed with these students were many refugees who had escaped from the north during the Korean War. The school's classrooms served as the dormitories for the students. Despite being very hot and humid, normal in Jolla in the summer, it was an opportunity for Catholic students to meet and share with one another. They experienced a synthesis of the Korean Catholic Church's student population.

Great numbers of people were coming to the church seeking baptism during the 1960's despite there being a shortage of priests and religious. Fr. Martelli appointed Brother Edward Joseph McNeill, S.D.B. and Brother Trisolini to be of service during this gathering of students – the other Salesians being away for their summer holiday. They ended up being responsible to see that there was adequate bedding, plentiful food and a warm welcome for those attending this conference. They were also able to be present for the lectures and discussions that ensued during its course. There were frank discussions about the Protestant Reformation, birth control, social reform and the unemployment problems that existed – with the young religious being pelted with sharp questions. It was an exhausting experience, but one marked with exhilaration as well in this meeting of young minds. Overall, the young Salesians felt great joy in being a part of this initial meeting of young students of the Republic of Korea.

This meeting was held before the Second Vatican Council. Never-the-less, the students had prepared music and were prepared to speak even during the Mass. They were days of interesting programs, intellectual stimulation and hard work – in a retreat-like atmosphere. These young people departed with a clearer

sense of what the apostolate meant for them than before their participation in the event. Trisolini was to appreciate the importance of education even outside the classroom.

After the Students Meeting, the other Salesian returned from their holiday. Fr. Martelli sent the Brothers McNeill and Trisolini to Jeju-do for a brief holiday. Upon their return, the minor seminarians were arriving back to the school in order to begin the second semester. With this semester, McNeill came to the conclusion of his student training and therefore left immediately for Italy where he would conclude his theological training. This increased the burden on Trisolini – who assumed the responsibility for the study hall, becoming the assistant in the dining room of the students, with added classes to teach in both English and Latin. Jack wrote years later of his missionary experience thus far:

“Dramatic adventures, miracle conversions, courageous sacrifices and the like are rare in everyday missionary life. First impressions of living in a foreign land dim and missionary has to buck up against the same problems faced by people in ministry everywhere. Faces, landscapes and outward appearances change. Only unusual things make their mark and seem worthy of mention. Sometimes an elusive mentality challenges comprehension. In my situation, preparing classes, dealing with young people – helping at times pushing them along were the norm. Fundamentally the problems to be solved were the same. Change of country and customs sometimes only altered the method and approach.

“The worker’s assembly line and the everyday chores of a housewife seldom attract notice unless the little genie of the uncommon comes along and gives an irregular twist of the monkey wrench to the routine of ordinary events. Modern literature is filled with the stories of just ordinary people. An out-of-the-ordinary quirk in that life creates the contents of a story, a theatrical piece or a movie script.

“A mother raising her children vividly remembers her infant’s first smiles or laughs. Parents remember children’s first words, their first faltering steps and illnesses. The ordinary and routine of quotidian events simply put more notable occurrences into relief. Life in a foreign country might be a hundred-and-one humdrum days followed by another cycle of the same. Changes occur only when we’ve really noticed something, pondered it and perhaps written it down in a journal to be remembered. Missionary life succeeds best when missionaries blend in with the surroundings, accept the normality and adversity of what happens with a sense of humour and move on.

“Bishop Walsh of Maryknoll who spent years in a Shanghai prison once wrote that an ordinary missionary, far from ‘joining up to see the world’, usually winds up in one small area of mission, experiencing few adventures other than the ordinary drama of life happening around them. Just being present in a friendly manner and thinking positively of the people one is called to serve and not expecting recompense are probably keys to successful ministry anywhere.”

Jack was coming to the conclusion of his three year internship in Korea. In March 1962, 250 new faces appeared on the campus; 250 new students divided into four classes were the field of battle. For most of the students it was their first experience of meeting a foreigner and missionary. Like an old general, preparing to go to war once again, Trisolini faced this new group and welcomed them. He felt much greater confidence in dealing with the students. Jack, with his dictionaries and grammar books in hand, studied hard. Within a week, he was once again sweating over the Korean-English grammar books – new challenges began presenting themselves.

It proved to be an opportunity to deeply reflect on the teaching and learning process that was going on. Teaching English was meant to be a broadening experience, not something to be mastered only to pass an examination i.e.

something to do to gain entrance into a University. Remembering Professor Lawrence's course of "Basic English" at Montclair State Teacher's College, he was reminded that teaching English should be an opportunity to open oneself to a new culture and a new way of communicating with people.

By 1962, the modernization and urbanization trends in Korea had already changed the education environment in Korea. The relationship between teachers and students has suffered the consequences. Trisolini called into question the significance of teaching something only to achieve a goal that has nothing to do with the broadening process of the human person. This broad humanization effort attempted was placed into secondary importance. Pondering over the course of future years, Trisolini was to develop an aversion to returning to the Korean classroom once again.

Don Bosco modeled the formative structure for Salesian seminarians in a way similar to the Jesuits. In English it was referred to as practical training. Seminarians in practical training started from the bottom of the ladder and learned, rung by rung, to become Salesian educators. Jack knew that whether lay people or members of a religious order or congregation, all live in a world of differing and even conflicting opinions. Higher-up people at times can dispense arbitrary or petty orders.

He recalled once being told by an older member of his community that "clerics (young seminarians) should refrain from speaking during meals." He took that as quite an inhuman injunction then, because the Salesians still adhered to the practice of listening to readings for the first half of the meal. When would there be time for basic human inter-action during the day? The younger seminarians were up at 5 in the morning, said their prayers, attended Mass and were teaching Latin even before breakfast, which was taken alone most of the time. The rest of the day was dedicated to teaching English and/or preparing lessons. There was little or no time for basic human interaction.

Personality clashes and petty posturing for power and position can become the norm. Life in Gwangju was difficult enough for this small band of foreigners, living in relative isolation from their peers. Multi-cultural communities, while motivated by great good will and the same ideals, were not something that happened easily or naturally. As his time drew to a close in Gwangju, these thoughts passed through his mind and were jotted down in his journal.

With the arrival of summer 1962, Jack was drawing to the end of his practical experience interlude. He was soon to leave Gwangju for the journey through Tokyo and New York on his way to Rome. That year there was a severe draught, and the farmers had to water their paddies by hand using buckets. Before leaving on a hot and dusty July morning, his students asked him: “Brother, where are you going? What will you be doing when you leave us? When will you return to teach in our school again?”

He replied to them “I’m going to Rome to continue my studies. When they are finished I will return to Korea. When I come back you will all be grown, have your own families and will be earning money to support them. In order to make a better life for yourselves and your families, study hard! I wish you all only the very best in life!” They thanked him, and told him that they wanted him to return as quickly as possible.

“Yes, I will return to Korea. I want you all to stay healthy, don’t get sick like me.”

The underlying Confucian philosophy that underpins Korean culture places great emphasis on the relationship between the ages of persons, and the relationship between teachers and their students as well. Regardless of the time or distance between meetings, these relationships remain the same.

Travel to Seoul by train had improved a great deal! One of the results of the military coup was that the trains were running on time. This last trip to Seoul

for his departure from Korea, he traveled with Fr. Victor Miller, S.D.B. – who served as the Master of Novices in Gwangju. Fr. Martelli also joined them for this journey, he had finished twelve years of service in Japan and Korea – he was ready for his furlough home to Italy. The last six years he had served as the superior of the Salesian efforts in Gwangju. Fr. Miller was on his way to Japan, where he was to take a break from his normal work. After eating a boxed lunch on the train, the two priests said the Divine Office. This gave Jack an opportunity to reflect on the past three years. Seating behind Trisolini was a Korean Army Captain, reading *The General Dean Story* in English – a recent best seller. Anxious to speak English, he introduced himself to Jack saying “Brother, my name is Captain Lee” in flawless English. Trisolini answered him “My name is Brother Jack Trisolini. I’m happy to meet you.”

Captain Lee continued “Brother, I learned English working at many different U.S. bases around the country. During the Korean War many American soldiers sacrificed so our country would not become a communist country – as a result we are living well here in the south. I don’t think the Army was right in taking over the country by coup. But our country was on the verge of chaos, and the result seems to have stopped that course. We aren’t as well off as we can be. If our society is not stable, we never will live well. I am Catholic as well!”

Jack asked him “What is your baptismal name, Captain?”

“My name is Simon. I used to believe everything that the Catholic Church taught. But as time went by, my faith began to weaken. I don’t have any family. And the priest who baptized me I have lost contact with. I began military life in the Army College. Often times, because I’m a professional soldier, I often have to change bases and it’s not always easy finding the church to assist at Mass. I used to think that every time I missed Sunday Mass I committed a mortal sin, but as time went by I’m not so sure of that. Now I’ve fallen a long way from first fervour as a Catholic. I’m confused, Brother, would you pray for me?”

Taking his rosary out of his pocket, Jack gave it to this young man. He said “Certainly, Captain. Every time I think of you I will pray for you. I received this rosary as a gift as a child and have used it to pray ever since. It has always been in my pocket or in my hand. Whenever you see this rosary, remember me and pray for me as well. The Lord will certainly look over you in His Love.”

Jack Trisolini had worked and lived from December 1959 until July 1962 at the Gwangju Salesian High School as a teacher.



# Introduction to Labour Ministry



Brother Jack Trisolini left for Italy in mid-1962 in order to complete his theological training. Before departing for Europe he was able to visit his grandmother. She passed on to him the address of her older sister Rosa who was living in the city of Avellino. His relatives were living near the mediaeval shrine of Monte Vergine – living on a mountainside that overlooked the town of Avellino. Upon meeting his family, they proudly showed him the house in which the French writer Emile Zola had once resided. He was the first member of his family who had immigrated to the United States to return to Italy and visit the immediate family. In 1962 his grandmother's older sister was an old woman, already in her mid-90s. She was in good health – being the one who tramped to the bus station alone in order to greet him upon his arrival. He was impressed to see the obvious close bonds of the family members with Aunt Rosa – witnessing as well to a devout Catholic family life.

The professors of theology at the Pontifical Ateneo Salesiano felt that the Salesians who had studied in the United States at Don Bosco College were lacking in their philosophical preparation for theology, and thus required them to study remedial philosophy for one more year before beginning theological studies. As a result, these students who had to make up their philosophical courses, as well as the pre-practical-training students, lived together at the central Roman Sacro Cuore Seminary and were present in the Eternal City for the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Thus armed with sandwiches distributed the night before, priests and seminarians of the Sacro Cuore boarded a large bus at 5 A.M. the morning of October 12, 1962 and headed for Saint Peter's Basilica and the opening of the Council. The young Salesians jumped over the barricades leading into the piazza in front of the basilica, which left Jack at a disadvantage because of his weakened legs due to polio. Some kind Italians helped him into the piazza and thus was privileged to be able to attend the opening ceremonies of the Council.

Among those who resided at the Sacro Cuore during the Council was the Chilean Cardinal Raul Silva, a Salesian and the Archbishop of Santiago. Each evening he would share the events of each day of the Council, sharing with the priests and young seminarians and accepting their questions about the Council in progress. He very kindly answered all of the questions that the seminarians pelted him with. Later, he was to be an outstanding critic of General Pinochet who overthrew the democratically elected President Allende in 1973.

Another resident during the Council at the Sacro Cuore was Archbishop Louis Mathias of Madras, India. This French Salesian had spent most of his life as a missionary in India. He joined in the daily celebration of the Eucharist for the seminarians. He also graciously shared his daily experience of the Council with them. During the first session of the Council, India and China fought a border war – and Bombay's Archbishop, Cardinal Gracias, would frequently come to the Sacro Cuore to discuss this issue with Cardinal Mathias. The young seminarians felt they were in the center of the world, witnessing the daily global changes that were being discussed by men at the center of events.

The special guests at Sacro Cuore during the Council included visitors from Korea as well. Gwangju's Archbishop Harold William Henry and Seoul's Archbishop Paul Marie RO Ki-nam also paid a visit – Seminarians Trisolini and McNeill were able to spend time with them both during their visit. In January 1963, the Sacro Cuore seminarians were able to spend a holiday together near the Holy Father's summer villa at Castel Gandolfo. They were able to spend three days at the Paolini's retreat center that was very close. There they had the privilege of meeting the founder of the Paolini Family – Don Giacomo Alberione, S.S.P. who welcomed them warmly.

Seminarians were often quite taken with the simple, direct and honest charm of Pope John XXIII. In 1963, Sister Vincentine S.C., Jack's Sixth Grade teacher and Sister Gertrude Agnes S.C. were visitors to Rome for the beatification of

Elizabeth Seton, which Jack attended as well. These Sisters were members of the Sisters of Charity (Convent Station) – and were much beloved by Jack. He recalled once seeing Pope John XXIII passing by in a motorcade on his way to receive the Balzan Award that spring. No one was aware that this good Pope had only a month or two left to live at that time. As he spent his entire life, he was a witness to Christian joy until the moment of his death. Jack was able to attend the Pope's funeral despite it being the time of final examinations.

During the installation of Pope John's successor, Pope Paul VI, Jack met the Provincial from the United States, New Rochelle Province, Fr. Augustine Bosio. The Provincial was happy to defray Jack's expenses for a visit to Lourdes as a pilgrim. He took a night train to Lourdes from Rome, which was packed with pilgrims who had been in Rome for the Papal crowning. There he bathed in the miraculous waters and attended the night candlelight procession. Spending just one night in Lourdes, he left the next day for Spain where he was to spend his summer vacation at the Salesian house in Barcelona – the Hogares-Mundet. This was a technical school and orphanage for children from broken homes, where Jack was to assist. Here he learned Spanish during that summer.

A new seminary was being built in Rome, and thus for the 1963-64 school year, he studied in Torino at the Ateneo Salesiano on Via Caboto. Most classes were taught in Latin with heavy emphasis on scholastic philosophy and theology. Jack found the teaching methods very rigid and not particularly energizing. During this year he was sent for training at the Oratorio of San Ludovico, where he was able to meet many young people, the children of immigrants who had come to work in the auto industry coming from the southern part of the Italian peninsula. His second summer in Europe saw him return to Spain where he suffered from an ingrown toenail which required some surgical intervention. The woman who performed the surgery said to him:

“Brother Trisolini, the polio that you suffered from in Korea has caused a great deal of muscular atrophy that is generalized in your body. If you do not do something about it now, you could very well be unable to walk in the future. In order to strengthen these muscles you need to go to a facility where you can receive good physical therapy. I think you should go to Lyon (France) where there is a famous medical facility that specializes in just such a situation – a place where you can receive good muscle rehabilitation. I think you should go there for this treatment.”

Jack was clearly interested, but replied dutifully “Thank you for your recommendation, but I am a member of a religious order, and I cannot just go where I please.” The good doctor replied, “Yes, I understand what you are saying, Brother. But there is a Salesian school in Lyon. I would be pleased to write a recommendation to your Rector Major, Fr. Renato Zaggiotti, making this recommendation to him with letters verifying your medical condition.”

This chance meeting with this doctor significantly changed his future course in life. While returning to Italy for the next semester of classes early in September, he discussed the possibility of going to France with Director of the Crocetta, Fr. Valentini, S.D.B. In turn, this priest sent him to meet the Rector Major of the Salesians for an interview. In entering the office of the Rector Major, Trisolini saw that he had the letter from the Doctor and the documents that she had sent to him. After discussing Jack’s health, he asked Jack “May I see you walk around a bit?” Jack of course immediately responded “Yes, Father.” After watching very carefully Jack’s gait while walking around, he asked him to sit down and went into deep thought about what should be done.” He told Jack that he would write to the French provincial, Fr. Phillipou S.D.B., asking him to admit Jack to the Salesian seminary in Lyon. The Rector Major extended his blessing to Jack, and told him to prepare for his journey to France. Jack remembered the kindness, concern and compassion of the Rector

Major for many years, being deeply touched that he would take such a deep interest in him.

Later in September 1964, Jack left Turin for Lyon where the Salesian House of Studies at Chemen de Fontanières is located. Most of the 100 member student community still had not returned from their summer vacation upon his arrival there. The Provincial Finance Officer, Père Darblay along with a recently arrived missionary from Bolivia and Jack, left the next day for a day trip to Taizé and Pararay le Montial.

Jack's French language ability was quite rudimentary, having studied the language for only one year in high school. Nevertheless, he began to study his fourth language that had been absorbed in the previous five years. Fortunately, his hosts spoke English perfectly well, and among his classmates, Brother Yves Delouche S.D.B., he found a mentor for further studies in the language.

Among the books he read that fall as a French textbook was a small volume written by Paris Foreign Missionary, Père Célestin Coyos in which he related his experience being taken a prisoner of war by North Korean soldiers during the Korean War. This tragic story of death, his forced march to the north and imprisonment, proved fascinating to the young seminarian. This true story, which described those who perished on this forced march, with Père Célestin being among the few to arrive at their prison destination far to the north. Jack eventually met this priest back in Korea before he died, where he served as a chaplain to the Sisters of the Korean Martyrs for many years.

Around this same time, a new superior had been appointed at Fontanières, Fr. Marcel Piot, S.D.B. He instructed the seminarians on their day free of classes, Thursdays, to go directly into the city and visit those young people who were living under unfortunate circumstances. This was following the example of St. John Bosco, who in 19th Century Turin, began his ministry by visiting labourers who were living, working and suffering in desperate circumstances.

Thus, they made it a habit to visit each week the Notre Dame de Sans Abri – a shelter for homeless people – and volunteered to be of assistance to the young people they met there. Many of them had no other shelter at night or regular meals during the day. They observed directly the influence of alcohol and other addictions. Many of them were unable to stay clean living on the streets – coming typically from Algeria and Morocco and other countries in North Africa.

Many of the seminarians volunteered to do the same service, attempting to help those who were sleeping on the street to quit their alcohol drinking. When they were not able to control the occasional incidences of violence that would naturally arise in such a situation, they would go the staff seeking more professional help. The seminarians would go around waking people up who needed to arise early for their jobs. They would arrive at about 8 p.m. in the evening just as the men finished their evening meal in the shelter's soup kitchen. They would return to the seminary, getting to bed late and having to arise early the next morning for Mass, meditation and after breakfast, to study for the rest of the day.

Among the people that Jack met at Notre Dame de Sans Abri was a young man by the name of Barek. He entered the country illegally to find work. He was a young man of about 20 years of age coming from Morocco. At the time a gentleman from Belgium was working on the streets of Lyon – his name being Marcel Waterschoot. He was a member of the Partners of the Salesian Belgian Province. He also met the Belgian Robert Jeuris, who later ended up marrying a French woman. This young couple operated a hostel where young people living on the streets could come and find affordable housing.

While Barek was able to find work, he could not find appropriate accommodations – and much of his time was spent finding a place to sleep at night. That is how he came to be staying at the hostel. For the first time, Jack

became aware of the reality of migrant labourers in France. He saw the wasted potential in these young people as they desperately tried to make a living. There were a great numbers of migrant workers living in France at this time - who came from Italy, Spain and Northern Africa. Most of them were living in isolation and suffered from great loneliness. They were very poor and had few, if any, friends upon whom they could rely.

The summer vacation of 1965 saw many of the seminarians volunteer to be of service in hostels for young workers located in the periphery of the city. They went out on the streets in order to meet these young labourers. By the 1960's Europe was well on the way to becoming a secularized continent. The Christian communities that were alive did not express much interest in the plight of these young people. This experience was a great opportunity to discover the reality of young people in modern Europe. This experience helped them to understand more deeply their vocations to be of service. Most of the young people were indifferent to politics in general, with some being nominally connected to socialist or communist organizations. They were marginally or otherwise not at all connected to the local parishes that surrounded them.

This involvement of seminarians with homeless young people on the streets led to them being introduced to the Young Christian Workers organization which was led in the Archdiocese of Lyon by the Chaplain, Père René Chenet. He helped the young seminarians integrate their experience through this hands-on experience into their particular vocation. Brother Trisolini also began to read in the whole area of the Young Christian Workers movement. He began visioning this type of apostolate in Korea, remembering his first encounter with the YCW in his earliest days in Korea – applying the principles to the people he would eventually serve in Dorim-dong parish upon his return to Korea.

The young seminarians were ready to accept and adopt the suggestions that Fr. Chenet was showing them – training them to work in dialogue at

monthly meetings with the working-class boys and girls whom they met on the streets of the city. Jack also became conversant with the basic principles and methodology of the movement of the Young Christian Workers. The Salesian priest Jean-Baptiste Béraud, pastor of Our Lady of Good Help Parish in Lyon, shared passionately his experience of working for poor urban youth. This helped mature the young seminarians' experience – putting flesh on the bones of their experience.

The seminarians during the summer of 1966 formed the first Young Christian Workers team with the young people they met on the streets of Lyon. Not one of these young people was associated with a local parish. They had no leisure time for hobbies or a personal life because of their poverty. Several times Jack would go on short motor-cycle tours of the countryside with these young people forming close bonds with them. This time spent together was an opportunity for them all to share their personal experience and express what they wanted freely. This simple plan, made together with the young people, was an opportunity for them to form a sense of responsibility for their own plight and to gain the courage to act on this sense of responsibility, recognizing what was wrong with their situation and planning to correct it. A sense of mutual respect gradually was formed, allowing them to plan their futures and prepare new skills that would help them improve their lot. This time of travel together, gave them a sense of joy in living and a new found sense of freedom and the ability to control their futures. The simple act of preparing food and sharing a tent, engaging in deep and serious conversation, added to a new sense of a possibly brighter future.

In July 1966, many of these young people he met on the streets attended Mass for the first time. By this act they confirmed their conviction to change their futures. Their experience was shared with their parents and friends through presentations that they gave themselves, sharing photographs and

slides taken during their time together. These summer camps gradually changed their nature and content – with the young labourers taking on a new awareness of themselves. By the end of the year, the headquarters of the French Young Christian Workers’ organization prepared a brief questionnaire that helped focus their experience. The chance of these young men and women to express themselves began to slowly turn into reality.

The three years of study in France passed quickly for Jack. The French seminary professors always spoke and taught with a confidence that made a deep impression on the young minds before them. Besides the normal textbooks, they also immersed the seminarians in the reality in which people were living in. The lectures were not only well prepared, they were a pleasure to listen to. Dogmatic Theology, while being the traditional subject matter, was taught in a charismatic and enthusiastic way that energized the students. The Old Testament courses were academic in nature, but never failed to inspire. Intensive courses in a variety of other subjects were provided as well as the traditional seminary fare for periods of time each year. These courses could be for several days and sometimes could last for a full week.

Trisolini’s experience in France, when compared to his time in Italy, found the study much less stressful. The method used in Italy relied heavily on memorization of texts. In contrast, the courses taught in France were taught in a much friendlier and gentle atmosphere. That is not to say that Jack was only taking courses he personally enjoyed – he also was challenged by the courses he did not particularly care for. They were taught in a spirit of personal responsibility and stressed a more mature participation in the learning experience. The professors were always well prepared, and always faithful to the teachings of the Church. The seminarians were challenged to ponder the content of what they were being taught and the real implications involved for their future mission. The Liturgy was always celebrated with great dignity and

celebrated with enthusiasm. The seminary was open to the surrounding society. The seminary rector led his local community as a community of faith, using all means at his disposal to challenge and nourish this community of witness.

When the second year of theology began, the rector of the seminary, Fr. Marcel Piot, took the first and second year seminarians on a bus trip. They made the journey to Chartres in order to visit the gorgeous cathedral there. There they also attended a gathering that was meeting in order to understand the new liturgical changes that were on the horizon. For the first time, the Liturgy was to be celebrated in the vernacular. Representatives from the breadth of France gathered to better understand what was soon to come into being – they learned the new ways of celebrating the ancient rites. They came from all the dioceses of France to learn new music that was more appropriate to the historical change. The stained glass windows in the venerable Cathedral spoke to them of the Sacred Scriptures – broadening their experience of biblical history. They were able to glimpse through the magnificent architecture they observed the hands that helped create this house of God.

After their experience of Chartres, a team from the Sorbonne in Paris arrived. They introduced the students to scientific facts and the mystery of human sexuality. For a week Catholic couples shared their experiences and their own life experiences. The discussions that were held were dynamic and vital.

A year later, the Dominican priest, Père Lebret, came with a group of priests and lay people to present a course on economic systems and human reality. They taught every day and night for a week the Social Doctrine of the Church. This team had assisted the preparation of the Encyclicals of Pope John XXIII – *Mater and Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*. They worked for the seminarians every day for a week. They gave the seminarians a thorough workout in the Catholic Social Doctrine of the Church. They connected this doctrine with the reality of labour and the economy – from theory to the practical – based on

then existing papal social encyclicals.

Labour Union leaders and local government officials came to lecture on issues related to labour on a day-to-day basis. Members of the Young Christian Movement and the Catholic Labour Movement came to share their real-life experiences. These opportunities gave the seminarians a fresh and vivid sense of what daily reality was for the people involved in these movements. They learned what worked and what did not through the lived experience of others.

Fr. Marcel gave the seminarians another opportunity to learn how the Gospel can be lived faithfully, in a vital and fruitful way. The hero of the French Resistance during the war, L'abbé Pierre (Henri Marie Joseph Grouès) was invited to share his life story. He spent a week living with the seminarians – sharing his experience with them. He seemed a humble and frail priest – but his commitment to confronting the exploitation of the poor displayed his passion, heroism and dedication to his neighbour. He incarnated his dedication to the poor by living in community with them making concrete his commitment to them.

At the close of the Second World War, due to his work in the Resistance, L'abbé Pierre was elected to the National Assembly of France. His salary earned during his tenure along with all the political influence he could muster was used to support his work among the poor. After assisting at the bedside of a failed suicide of a young blue collar worker – he asked the young man to postpone his suicide and help build a house for a poor widow – the young man recovered and spent the rest of his life with L'abbé Pierre. This chance meeting blossomed into their mutual involvement in the Emmaus movement in Paris. He taught this young man through his words and example how to live in this world, being of service to those too weak or too poor to help themselves.

The Emmaus movement spread from Paris to many parts of the world – even to Korea where poor labourers lived in what was called the “Ant Village” –

reflecting their scurrying for work each morning in order to sustain their poor and hopeless lives. He attempted not only to provide housing and nourishment, but also provided the tools and attitudes that would lead them out of a life of dependence on others to a life lived in dignity – one that was self-supporting and sustaining.

He attempted to instill a sense of human dignity in these urban poor – he taught them that God was present to their suffering and poverty. No matter how humble and poor a man or woman may be, they are children of God and this gave them an inestimable dignity. This simple story affected the seminarians very deeply – hearing this humble priest speak was not something that could soon be forgotten.

He told the seminarians “to imagine a world in which competition to be the strongest, most powerful and possessive being was the only basis for human survival. If everyone strictly applied this principle of competition in every instance, no human child, no weakened or impaired person and probably very few other living human beings would long survive on the planet. The struggle for dominance would reduce humanity to just the strongest individuals possessing the most. They in turn would continue to struggle among themselves to eliminate the weaker ones.

“If this struggle went to the bitter end, only one almighty individual would be left. This meant the end of humanity because when the single remaining person died off then there would be nobody.” Fortunately this is not the case. Societies do not routinely discard the weak, they protect them in love. Families protect those among them who are weak and/or disabled. Our object is to preserve the weak in a world that can be made better – that is the object of service.

Archbishop Paul Marie RO Ki-nam, at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council came to France and visited the seminary in Lyon. Accompanying him was Domina – a member of AFI – the l’Auxiliare Feminique International

– a secular institute present in Korea. After Evening Prayer, the Archbishop gave the traditional fervorino to the assembled seminarians. He spoke of the first Christians in Korea who were lay persons, he referred to the Korean War and the tremendous suffering that entailed, and he continued to speak of the missionaries who had served in Korea for so long and the happiness that existed in the church despite the pain. He concluded with his personal satisfaction in knowing that the Gospel was being preached and lived in his country and the zeal with which ministry was being performed in his diocese.

Prior to his ordination to the diaconate, Jack along with his classmates went to the town of Ars where they were encouraged to become like the famed Curé d’Ars, John Baptist Mary Vianney. The Curé d’Ars was a man immersed in his peasant piety, a deep spirit of faith, intense prayer and humility. He boiled potatoes twice a week for his meals, living very simply. At the time of planting and harvesting he worked alongside his parishioners in the fields. Once he became lost on the road in a very thick fog. He stopped a young boy and said to him “If you tell me the way to Ars, I will teach you the way to heaven!”

When Jongno Catholic Church was first built in the heart of the city on one of Seoul’s main streets, it was adjacent to the city’s notorious Jong Sam prostitution district. The church’s first pastor dedicated the new parish to St. John Vianney and interceded with the Curé d’Ars to rid the parish of the red-light district. In 1968 Seoul Mayor Kim Hyeon Ok (Bulldozer Kim) began redeveloping the area and sin-town began to disappear. The trees of a large park now tower over the nearby church and the immense underground parking lot that lies below. Groups fighting for women’s rights subsequently pushed through laws that ban public prostitution.

Prior to Trisolini’s priestly ordination he made his retreat at the Trappist Abbey of Notre Dame des Dombes. The Abbey’s graveyard was filled with graves from the 19th century. The early Trappist monks in the 19th century

first came into the area and very bravely began the process of emptying the swamplands around the immediate vicinity. Prior to this huge project it was an area infested with malaria and caused many premature deaths.

In the Archdiocese of Paris, the priest in charge of the Pastoral Labour Ministry for migrant labourers was Père Jean-Marie Mossand. He gave the retreat that year to the future priests. He emphasized the importance of human contact and respect for people of all classes, races and nationalities. Fr. Mossand's priestly ministry put him in contact with all kinds of people. He spoke eloquently of friendships made on the streets, subways and buses of Paris. His talks reinforced the pastoral principles inculcated at Fontanières of Christ-like fidelity to all we meet in daily life and ministry. The retreat made them attentive to the possibility of encountering God's presence and the Holy Spirit's action in the hearts and actions of all they would meet no matter where they come from or what they looked like.

The Deacon John Trisolini, having completed all of his seminary training was ordained a priest on 15 April 1967 in the city of Lyon. The retired Bishop of Autun, Bishop Le Brun, presided over the ordination. He was the Bishop who gave the abandoned church in his Diocese to Brother Roger Schütz-Marsauche, the founder of the Taizé community, authorizing him to begin his inter-faith ministry.

Attending his priestly ordination were the couple Madeleine and Jean Blum – Jewish Catholics, who during the Second World War survived because of Blum's abilities as a dentist. Through that skill he survived the Nazi Concentration camps where death was certain. Many of the young people Jack had met on the streets and shared in the formation of the Young Christian Workers movement in Lyon also joined him for his ordination as well. His mother and aunt also joined in the solemn day coming to Lyon for the event all the way from the United States.

His last summer in France had begun. In order to prepare for ministry he spent that summer under the guidance of the Norgent-sur-Marne YCW International Center. This was the center for all of the priests involved in this ministry in Europe and from third world countries. They provided an intense training course for those destined for this ministry. The summer of 1967 was the 40th anniversary of the founding of the YCW which was commemorated by a large gathering in Paris at the event called Paris 1967. A contingent from Lyon also went to Paris for the affair – those involved in the ministry and the young people whom Jack knew. At this event Jack was able to meet the founder of the YCW, Père Guérin.

Another group had come from Brussels, and Trisolini was able to meet the international team. Rienze Rasinghe from Sri Lanka, the Internal President of the IYCW – was happy to meet Jack because he was a native English speaker. At a press conference held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, Jack was asked to serve as a translator as well as at a press conference in October at Paris Pays de Vale (Draveil) at a meeting of the international conversation on Young Christian Labour. That summer he was also able to meet the successor to the Vatican's Prefect for the Laity, Cardinal Gatin - Monsignor Uyenbrooke. He also met for the first time the Australian, Fr. Brian Burke.

Trisolini stayed in France until immediately before Christmas 1967. He had been ministering at the parish of Sainte Foy. He and his ordination classmates had been involved in courses at the Salesian Minimes Lycée the subjects of religion and pastoral theology. He was always very thankful for the three and half years spent in France – years of great freedom and acquiring the zeal for future ministry. He always credited his efforts at being a part of a pastoral team (pastorale d'ensemble) to his experience during those years.

The pastoral team at the Sainte Foy parish had been filled with blessings and tensions. Père Ribes, the old-fashioned and devoted pastor, knew the names,

backgrounds and quirks of everyone in the parish. Timid and hesitant, he balked at going beyond acceptable boundaries and traditional ways. His curate and the seminarians living in the parish wanted to bypass French society's accepted divisions. After the Sunday masses, Jack would accompany the curate and the seminarians into a Café across from the church, considered a fiefdom for those who seldom or never set foot in church and would drink an "aperitif" with that crowd of people.

The team would prepare the Sunday liturgy and sermons every week together to reach out to the whole community by collectively reflecting on and correcting each other's sermons. Meetings were moments of mutual enrichment and exasperation. We criticized and complemented the designated preacher's sermon and adapted it to the liturgy in a meaningful way. This approach to ministry revealed the prevailing system being taught in the French seminaries. Students were encouraged to Observe the present reality, Judge how it can be changed and to form a plan of Action to put it into effect.

The last flight from Lyon to Paris was most pleasant. After a brief stop in Paris, the longer trip to New York was next. The hours spent on the airplane were an opportunity to reflect on what had happened during recent years, and also to look forward to a visit home. It was the first time that Jack was to spend Christmas with his family in twelve years. During his eight years spent abroad, the United States had changed a great deal. Certainly the results of the previous years of civil rights movement were obvious. However, the Vietnam War was now the cause of the moment, slowly causing national consensus to erode.

The 19th Century Catholic immigrant parishes in the United States had unraveled in quick order. During the second half of the 20th century immigrants poured into the country from very different places of origin. The original European settlers and their descendants were replaced with immigrants of Hispanic and Black origins. The media began to refer to the "inner city"

while sex and drugs became readily available. Time-honoured values looked outmoded. Koreans, Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Indians and Pakistanis as well as people from the Middle East would soon have the right to immigrate to the U.S.A. Mosques and Hindu Temples would begin to dot the landscape. Everything was in a state of change.

The newly ordained Fr. Trisolini had an opportunity to work with the U.S. team of the Young Christian Workers during his brief time in the country at this time. This experience almost led Jack to reconsider his place of future apostolate. The experience of the national team soon led him to be able to resist this temptation. The national team, while deeply idealistic, was centered on national and global issues. For example, their focus was being against the war in Vietnam and deeply committed to the civil rights movement. They seemed not be interested in the actual reality of young labourers – the daily struggle to survive in an oftentimes hostile atmosphere. While the national team was very idealistic and spoke with great confidence, it seemed to lack a critical balance between societal issues and urgent personal needs of young labour.

Through many discussions with the members of the YCW in the U.S. he found that while many could discuss the end of the Vietnam War with zeal and enter into dialogue about racial equality – the issues of the young labourer were not being looked at. The strength of the YCW is that it is centered on the reality of the individual – helping him or her come to terms with their given reality. The organization, try as it may, will never be able to be the agent for ending the Vietnam War, for example, or to make racial harmony a reality. While these were then very important national issues – these issues change with time. The mission of the YCW is always the individual labourer. He felt that the underlying approach of the national team leadership was ultimately a cause of conflict and confusion for the organization. In bringing the possibility of remaining in the U.S. for his apostolate, he brought this matter to a private retreat

he made with the Benedictines. During this time of prayer and reflection he decided that it would be best to return to Korea.

While Jack studied in Europe news of the Salesians in Korea was heard intermittently, by way of letter and through what missionaries on leave would share. The small struggling Salesian community in Korea had experienced in the years during his absence there both growth and crises. Tensions between the Salesians, some priests of the Gwangju Archdiocese and some of the teachers at the school erupted into full scale revolt in 1965. The Salesians were temporarily driven out of the school, but came back after Fr. Martelli returned as principal. Tensions subsided and the school began running again normally.

Differences of opinion and approach among the Salesians coupled with the personal health problems had forced Fr. Miller's return to Belgium. From the Turin mother house, the Major Superiors of the Salesians decided to call in a veteran missionary from the Thailand Province, Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu to take Fr. Miller's place in order to direct the struggling Salesian Delegation in Korea and to restore group harmony.

Meanwhile, Fr. Dalkman had been replaced as the Provincial Superior for the Japan and Korea Province with Fr. Stefano Dell'Angela. Fr. Trisolini had been in contact with Fr. Dell'Angela by post, keeping him informed of the unsettled nature of his future course. The new Provincial feared that he would not be returning to Korea. On the flight from New York to Tokyo, as soon as Fr. Trisolini landed at the new Narita Airport, he telephoned his Provincial from the airport. Fr. Dell'Angela was waiting for his call.

The new airport at Narita, being a long distance from central Tokyo, the Provincial decided to go to the returning missionary rather than having him come into the city. Fr. Dell'Angela was a seasoned missionary, who had served in Japan since the 1930's. When the Second World War was in progress, after the ouster of the Italian Dictator, Benito Mussolini, the government of Japan

required those with Italian passports to swear allegiance to the Axis powers. Fr. Dell'Angela refused to do so, and ended up serving those years until the end of the war in a concentration camp. Fr. Dell'Angela's relaxed attitude immediately put Jack at ease. Talking with him was like a fresh breeze on a hot humid day.

Fr. Dell'Angela said to Jack "Fr. Trisolini, I understand your concerns very well. There are issues for the Salesians in Korea that have yet to be resolved. It could be said that these problems and issues as yet unresolved are also the very means we will have to solve them. Every community in its formative years has the same growing pains; the Salesians in Korea are not an exception. I believe that with patience and with great confidence in the God who loves, that these problem and issues will help us mature in Korea. The Holy Spirit is the One in whom we should have great confidence. Do not be afraid of the future. You and your brothers in Korea are always in my heart and prayers."

Jack was relieved, saying "Fr. Provincial, thank you so much. I think I'm ready to go back to Korea now."

The Provincial then got a bit more concrete when he reflected on Trisolini's future post in Korea. "I'm not sure whether it is best for you to go to the parish in Dorim-dong. Perhaps it would be better for you to live in the new novitiate and formation community in Daerim-dong. My delegate, Fr. Mario Ruzzeddu in Korea will, of course, make the final decision about your posting."



# The Last Salesian in Dorim-dong Parish



The following day, May 4, 1968, the flight from Tokyo arrived in Seoul on time, but the telegram announcing Jack's arrival was never delivered. Thus, he flagged down a taxi at Gimpo Airport and went to the Daerim-dong novitiate and formation center. This house did not exist when he had left Korea for Europe. There the Superior, Fr. Ruzzeddu was to greet him for the first time, saying to the young missionary priest:

“Fr. Trisolini, it has been a long trip for you! I'm sorry there was nobody to meet you at the airport. The telegram that was sent from Tokyo unfortunately never arrived here. Please understand! I know you should have a couple days rest, but at the moment we can't afford that luxury. I would be grateful if you were to go to Dorim-dong parish and help Fr. José M. Suárez. Please go there now!”

Jack could only respond in the affirmative. Dorim-dong parish and its environs was formerly an agricultural district. Upon Fr. Trisolini's return it had developed into the largest industrial complex in Korea. Right next to the parish was the Crown Beer factory. Close by was the OB Beer facility and the Jinro Soju factory. In the neighborhood were the huge Bangrim and the Gyeongseong Bangjick textile factories. There was a steel plant nearby as well. There were countless small machine shops – all but eliminating the rice paddies and rural homes that previously dominated the area.

Archbishop Paul Marie Ro Ki-nam had entrusted the parish in Dorim-dong to the Salesians in 1958. For most of the time since then, Fr. José M. Suárez had served as pastor. Ten years later, upon Trisolini's return to Korea in 1968, the Dutchman, Fr. Joop Röttgering, S.D.B. was the curate, thus Jack became the second curate – the third man on the pastoral team. The parish ran a very popular kindergarten and also the Aejeon Civic School, an alternative educational program for girls and boys financially unable to attend regular middle schools. The boys studied at night and the girls studied during the day.

The Provincial Delegate in Korea, Fr. Ruzzeddu, was planning personnel

changes. Fr. Suárez, having served ten years already, had to be changed because of pressure coming from the Bishop's office for a change. Fr. Ruzzeddu was counting on Fr. Suárez's abilities to develop Don Bosco Youth Center and then hopefully assume charge of carrying on the upcoming Salesian work in Korea. Fr. Suárez felt called to parish work and resisted a transfer to another type of pastoral activity.

This already complex situation was further complicated by the problem of moving Dorim-dong's cemetery located near Gwangmyeongni. Although the parish cemetery was in a rural area, it was in the heart of a vast government project to develop Gwangmyeongni as a new satellite city for Seoul. Fr. Suárez and Fr. Röttgering had searched for new land, eventually purchasing a mountainous piece of land in Gyeonggi-do for the new cemetery. The land purchased was rocky and deemed unsuitable for a cemetery. Worse yet, villagers living nearby vehemently opposed the transfer of a cemetery in close vicinity to their homes and planned to block entry. A new plot of land had to be found. Transferring all the bodies from the existing parish cemetery to a new site was already a challenging task. The prospect of looking for a new location only exasperated already difficult human relationships. The small community began falling apart.

Tensions between Fr. Suárez and Fr. Röttgering over running the parish merely added further burdens to the increasingly complex situation. Added to this was the plan of restructuring personnel by the Superior, Fr. Ruzzeddu which added further burdens to this already overstressed reality. Fr. Röttgering left the parish community early in the fall of 1968 and worked successfully for many years in parishes of the Incheon Diocese. Shortly after that, in November 1968, Fr. Suárez accepted the bishop of Busan's invitation to take charge of a parish in his Diocese. Suddenly the young Jack Trisolini was alone trying to hold together one of Seoul's largest parishes. Shortly after this transfer

of personnel, he was faced with his first major challenge with a visit from a representative of the Korean National Housing Corporation, who very abruptly began his conversation:

“Since you people have not cleared up the Gwangmyeongni cemetery as quickly as we had planned, you leave us no choice but to begin work by bulldozing the graves that are there. The responsibility was yours to do so, we cannot be held accountable for the results of your inactivity!”

Rather than engage in long discussions, Trisolini simply told the gentleman that there would be no movement at the site until a top management representative came and listened to the parish’s side of the problem. Until then, he promised that every Sunday when the Catholics of the parish gathered for Sunday services, he would inform them of the bullying tactics being employed by the Korean National Housing Corporation.

Within several days a higher ranking official of the Corporation did show up at the parish rectory. This individual was much more reconciliatory, saying “Father, the last employee of the Corporation who was here a few days ago spoke too rudely to you. We understand your response to him and want to assure you that we want to cooperate as much as possible to solve this problem.” The young pastor simply urged the Corporation to assist the parish in finding a suitable cemetery site acceptable to residents living nearby. Working together with the Corporation, a plot of land was eventually found and purchased in Hwaseong-gun, Bibong-myeon. Thus the transfer of five thousand bodies from Gwangmyeongni to the new site could begin. The Superior, Fr. Ruzzeddu, appointed Brother Moses Kim to be directly responsible for the transfer process.

But, no sooner had the project begun, another problem arose that added more complexity to the situation. There was discontent among the family members who had their loved ones interred in the older cemetery – and the issue

centered on the allotment of plots for individual graves. Fr. Trisolini along with Bro. Moses, decided the best way to handle this situation was to go to the most respected man in the parish and seek his guidance. There they pleaded with Mr. John Kim Seok Chang, an elderly and venerable parishioner who had long served the parish's needs.

They asked him, despite the work it would entail, to help solve the problem that had arisen among the Catholics of the parish regarding the new cemetery and the allotment of graves. Being a good and faithful man he immediately agreed to do the task, telling the two much younger not be concerned – but to pray for him and his fellow Catholics in the parish. Within weeks, this old, cherished man, went about the business of resolving the conflicts that had arisen. The complaints that had arisen slowly began to fade and the process of moving five thousand bodies was brought to a safe completion.

Connected to the parish was the Aejeon Civic School, which met the needs of middle school age youngsters in the Yeongdeungpo area of Seoul. This put a tremendous strain on the finances of the parish. Nevertheless the school kept running with donations and mass intentions provided by the parish. About 500 to 600 student relied on this school for a basic middle school education. Among the students were about 30 mixed blood teenagers born of Korean mothers and U.S. soldiers stationed in Korea. The children were cared for by the Maryknoll Fathers and commuted to school from Incheon. Everyone paid only a minimal tuition fee. Teachers worked for a minimum wage and a few retired parishioners donated their time and skills. Just getting by month to month was an enormous effort.

In the aftermath of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI issued various decrees to apply the Council's decisions and put loose ends in the Church in order. A Roman document ordered religious communities administering parishes to renew or renegotiate contracts with their local dioceses. Despite a minute search in the

Tokyo archives of the Japan/Korean Province and the Generalate Archives in Turin for contracts regarding Dorim-dong Parish, only a letter of invitation from Archbishop RO surfaced. Since the Salesians had no written contract with the Seoul Archdiocese, they knew they would not be able to remain at Dorim-dong. Shortly afterwards, Fr. Ruzzeddu and his Council decided at the end of 1969 that the Salesian would return Dorim-dong to the Archdiocese.

Immediately after being informed of this decision, the administrator of the Diocese, Fr. Paul Choi Seok Ho telephoned Fr. Trisolini asking “Father, are there any problems operating the parish there in Dorim-dong? Is that why you are asking the Archdiocese to take it over?” Jack was able to respond “Father, our parish here in Dorim-dong is doing just fine. The decision to hand the parish back had nothing to do with any problems that are outstanding.”

The young Fr. Trisolini thus was very busy until September 1969 preparing for the orderly handover as the last resident Salesian pastor. Two priests of the Archdiocese, Frs. Moses Choi Gwang Yeon and Ludovico Park Jun Yeong assumed leadership of the parish in late 1969. The rate of entry of new Catholics into the Church was highest in Dorim-dong, with over 500 individuals every year being trained and baptized. With the cemetery issue resolved, and the school coming to a natural end of its usefulness there were no outstanding problems for the new pastoral team to be concerned about.

At this time the Gyeonghyang magazine, ranked the Dorim-dong parish as the best read parish in the country – with the parishioners purchasing the most Catholic books. All outstanding issues, such as the cemetery, the kindergarten and the Aejeon school were all brought to a successful conclusion under the tenure of Fr. Trisolini. Some issues regarding the property line were solved when Crown Beer purchased a small slip of land and erected a high cement wall, thus ending an irritating but small problem of people entering the factory grounds without authorization.



# Working with Young Labourers



The Korean Church, in order to provide training for young laborers so that they could provide for the physical needs of their families, desired to found a technical school. For a long time, the Salesians were asked to assume responsibility for this school. The Salesians had already begun a foundation and school in the Gwangju Vicariate Foraine. Until this enterprise was well established, they felt that they could not begin another apostolate running the Technical School in Seoul, due to their limited resources. They never abandoned the idea of the future development of the Technical School when they were more able. In 1957, the then Vice President of the Republic of Korea, Dr. John Jang Myeon, a devote Catholic, visited Germany where he met the Cardinal Joseph Frings, Archbishop of Cologne, earnestly asking for assistance for this future plan.

He spoke to the Archbishop thus: “In Korea today we need technical schools more than we need universities! Our young people need to develop basic skills thus increasing the employment of our youth. Please help us solve this problem.”

Cardinal Frings shortly thereafter visited the Salesian Technical School in Tokyo. While there he spoke with the Salesian Provincial residing in Japan, carrying the message of Dr. Jang to him, asking for the Salesians to help. The Provincial promised that once they were able, the Salesians would begin this important work in Korea. Of course, the lack of financial resources was not a problem easily overcome.

The end result, of course, was that eventually the Salesians were able to later begin this new apostolate. Years before, the first Salesian to visit Korea, Fr. Angelo Margiaria, had put on musical programs throughout the country in 1934. In order to begin this work he was assigned to Korea in 1959. Shortly after his arrival he purchased land for the project, but it was deemed unsuitable for the future school – thus the property was sold. In April 1964, larger land

was purchased in Yeongdeungpo, Seoul – this land was almost 11 acres in size. Upon this land buildings were planned to be constructed and from 1966 onward the ministry for labouring youth was closer to being realized.

While the land was purchased and building plans were made, there were no funds to move forward. The German organization of Misereor was approached for assistance. Providing the necessary documents, proposed budgets, building plans and all of the necessary information for Misereor to consider the request – the application was prepared in great detail. Fr. Johannes Rauh was dispatched from Germany in February 1967 in order to evaluate the plan, ending with the promise of support for ministry in Korea.

With this positive development, the Salesian pastor in Seoul began the process of accepting application from young people to form the first class for this school. The candidates were between thirteen to sixteen years of age. Visiting each of the candidates' homes, and through a process of entrance examinations and personal interviews, the first twenty-two students were chosen for this first class. From March 1967, students were brought to the playing field of the Daerim-dong Salesian Formation house, where the students practiced for two hours of on-hands training daily. There they were able to practice skills on used equipment from Japan and Korea – industrial lathes, turret lathes, and small lathes – using these old machines. With the help of the Brothers, they were even able to produce products as well.

During February 1969 at the small residence at Singil-dong, the Don Bosco Youth Centre was promulgated formally. Fr. Edward McNeill was appointed as the first Superior of the community. There was a glass manufacturing centre in Yeongdeungpo where many low-waged young people were living under very primitive conditions. It was not only unsanitary – it was a very dangerous place in which to work. Because of the furnaces, workers would flock to this factory in the winter for the warmth that they offered. They were fed poor quality

foods and their sleeping arrangements were hazardous as well – located close to the furnaces. One hundred and twelve people were blowing glass bottles and jars the old fashioned way – using mouth blown pipes to create these products. During 1969, having moved the Postulancy to Gwangju, the Superior invited sixteen of these young people working at the glass factory to reside in the community building, where meals and dormitories were available. During their free time they were given opportunities to study and prepare for a different future.

The Youth Centre was reminiscent of the Valdocco Oratory where young workers were housed and fed. There were principles behind the move to this type of apostolate. First of all, while providing housing for young workers they were also given opportunities for continuing education and vocational training – thus improving their chances of gaining more remunerative jobs. The skills they acquired in the courses offered would help them directly in moving up the ladder of advancement – often at the very places they were working during the day. Of course, there were other workers who did not take advantage of these opportunities while living in the dormitory.

As Fr. Trisolini ended his time at Dorim-dong, the Salesian Provincial in Japan, Fr. Della Angela invited him to rest for a while in Japan in January 1970. Prior to his departure for Japan he had already received the appointment from the Superior in Korea, Fr. Mario, to be the assistant superior and financial officer for the Don Bosco Youth Centre beginning in March 1970. Jack had long desired to be involved in this very apostolate, and was happy to agree to the assignment. Upon his return from Japan he went happily to his new posting in Singil-dong.

In March 1970, the Don Bosco Youth Centre received an official recognition of the facility as a training centre for young workers from the Ministry of Labour. Training in the use of lathes and welding continued. Fr. Trisolini

received a recommendation from the Minister of Labour that was used for the expansion of the dormitories as courses offered to young workers at the Centre meant that it was recognized as a training center and professional development school. This was a tremendous aid in obtaining even further funding from Misereor in Germany for development of the facilities. The requirements of Misereor, while always generous in their assistance, had to be validated by strict financial and architectural reports. Demands for architectural changes usually necessitated cost increases and had to be explained thoroughly. Fulfilling the requirements proved at times to be a very large task.

With this generous support, construction was able to be started. During the construction phase, the search for new machinery that would assist in training was begun that would be used in the new facility. In March 1972, Misereor provided thirty new lathes to be used for training purposes. All of these new machines were quickly moved to the new facility as it approached completion. As it turned out, the lathes were not produced in Germany as anticipated, but in Brazil! Misereor had farmed out the purchase of the machinery to another agency – and this third organization had decided to save some money by purchasing the machinery at a much reduced rate! At that time, of course, these types of machines made in Germany were vastly superior to what could be made in what was considered a third world country. The rationalization was that, while supporting the production companies in a poorer country, with quality not dissimilar to what was available in Germany, provided help to the third country and at the same time provided needed equipment for the young workers in Korea. It was a case of one stone used to kill two birds – an old Chinese proverb (一石二鳥) brought to life!

During the construction of the new dormitory and training facilities, it was decided that the courses being offered at the Daerim-dong facility would be terminated. Night courses were begun for lathe and welding training and other

courses which were offered only to workers and those who were in residence in the new dormitories. The community at the Don Bosco Youth Centre recognized that their primary mission was pastoral, and thus adjusted the courses being offered. There was as a result a greater interest because of this more centralized concentration on the needs of young labourers and their future advancement.

This job training at the vocational school led to actual products being manufactured. The workers, labouring in the factories during the day and receiving further training at night, thus were receiving a more rounded experience. Not only were manufacturing skills promoted, but courses in agricultural skills were also begun. With new skills developed with the help of the Brothers, the young labourers were able to look for more professional positions in the workforce, having graduated from the program provided at the centre. Providing workplaces for those labourers unable to find work outside, the centre itself, manufacturing simple products, began to supply various factories with machined parts that were necessary for specific products being produced elsewhere. This helped generate income for the centre and for those young workers labouring there.

The dormitory for young labourers was chiefly for those working during the day, but also for those who desired to study specific skills more deeply. These were individuals in need of further training who had either been let go from their workplace because they did not have the required skills for advancement or the company did not supply further training for them. This became a major challenge that the centre had to face. In 1990 a second floor was added to the facility, thus providing increased space for labourers and those in training programs. Later in 1993, using a part of a building no longer used by the Sisters of the Annunciation, thus this program was further expanded into four larger rooms there. Thus slowly, over the years, the character of the

centre slowly changed. Originally a dormitory was envisioned for labourers with simple courses provided at night. Later it became a centre for labourers requiring further training or re-education for employment purposes, including even production units for products ordered by outside companies.

South Korean society was rapidly changing during the 1970's. It became difficult for the coadjutor Brothers involved in this apostolate to be of one mind and heart. The Brothers, used to being involved in the traditional understanding of vocational schools, which they helped operate and run, were asked by circumstance in something very different from the traditional model. Unfortunately this situation, demanding adaptation and adjustment, was not always successful. Attitudes often led to uncompromising positions that became a source of conflict and misunderstanding. Differing cultural backgrounds made cooperation at times very difficult. Considering and adapting the opinions of others in a spirit of cooperation often failed to take place. Some considered their own skills more important, thus leading to a sense of futility on the part of others.

The first Superior, Fr. Edward McNeill, upon the completion of his first term, refused to be appointed to a second term in 1972. He left the centre and was assigned to the parish at Guro 3-dong. Fr. Robert Falk became the new Superior of the Korean Salesians in March 1972. Fr. Falk, recently appointed to the Gwangju Salesian High School, was delayed in his appointment until June 1972. Shortly after this, the Korean Salesian mission was elevated to the status of a Region, thus Fr. Falk became the first Regional Superior in Korea. Fr. Alfredo Moreno was appointed almost a year later as the Superior of the Don Bosco Youth Centre – thus exacerbating the confused situation there.

During this interim period, the Vice Superior and Financial Officer of the Centre – Fr. Trisolini – continued to serve in office. He was heavily involved in the construction projects going on, and managing all of the documentation

that work involved, especially for Misereor in Germany. He oversaw the construction of a new three storey dormitory building and a Retreat Centre – which was completed by October 1974. The new dormitory was built to house between 70 to 80 young workers. With all of the projects underway, fundraising became a major concern for him. Besides the fund raising efforts in Germany with Misereor, he was also heavily involved in raising funds abroad. The recently returned missionary, Fr. Victor Miller, helped raised funds for all of the projects as well in his native country.

In July 1975, Fr. Trisolini was appointed as the Financial Officer for the Salesian Korean Region. While fulfilling this role he continued to be involved in the religious education program offered at the Don Bosco Youth Centre and also the Centre's benefactors' society was a particular concern for him. Fr. Trisolini assisted at the parishes of Daerim-dong, Daebang-dong and others in the area where he asked for help for his ministry – recruiting students for the centre. He created a brochure which sought actively to recruit students for the training centre. Always remembering that “Preventive Education” was a primary concern of the Valdosta Oratory of St. John Bosco, he continued his outreach to young labourers through a variety of programs. Valuing the traditional values of his Congregation, he went of his way to practice these values in a concrete fashion. Fr. Trisolini could be very impatient with those whom he thought did not understand these values that he held so dearly. One Christmas Eve, after having celebrating the Eucharist, returning home he saw that one of the Brothers and several of the employees at the Centre were still working on a project late on Christmas Eve.

He sternly said to him: “Brother, on a Feast Day like Christmas, work is forbidden. Do you think it is all right to continue work like this?” The Brother replied “Father, I know that working on the night of Christmas Eve is not exactly in accord with Church teachings. The problem is that if we do not finish

this project tonight we will not fulfill a delivery schedule we are contracted to do. Please understand.” Fr. Trisolini replied “No matter how busy you might be, today this work is inappropriate!”

Brother responded “No matter how correct what you say may be, Father, it does not apply to the situation before us now.” Apparently, Fr. Trisolini had no answer to this reply!

Preserving a sense of community among young workers was the purpose for the facilities built. However, when those in leadership had different methods of teaching often conflict occurred. Fr. Trisolini was a stickler for the regulations that everyone knew. Other members of the community felt that the regulations had to be interpreted flexibly in order to apply them to realities that were very different. Fr. Trisolini felt that these regulations and rules were not arbitrary, and not following them precisely could be the cause of the loss of the spirit of St. John Bosco and his charism. These fundamental differences in approach to education and apostolate at times made accommodation and compromise very difficult.

The nature of Korean society, based on principles of human relationships, easily viewed people who have a strong, more legalistic approach to life as strong and aggressive. Those in leadership positions in the Korean Salesian Region moreover viewed relationships between individuals as being more important than legalistic interpretations of events. It became apparent that a minority few, more literally minded individuals would find themselves in conflict with a more flexible majority. Thus there developed a sense that Fr. Trisolini was a difficult person to work with. This interpretation, especially by those who did not know him well, persisted among younger members of the Society. Rather than speak of his positive impact in pastoral ministry – the negative experiences that had accumulated at the Don Bosco Youth Centre in his work there became a generalized opinion. Thus, the path that he had to

travel became a much narrower one compared to other members of the Society. This was a very heavy cross that Fr. Trisolini had to bear for many years.

Despite this, he was always a reasonable educator with a passion for the young. He was the son of a poor man, who obtained his education with many financial limitations. Fr. Trisolini did not care for those who were irresponsible. A young man, who had light fingers, once stole from Fr. Jack, who was at that time the local treasurer. He stole once again, and then a third time from Trisolini. On the third robbery, Fr. Trisolini discovered the theft in progress and confronted the young man, giving him a slap across the face. The young man fled – and two years later, the young man finally came to see Fr. Trisolini, asking forgiveness for his bad behaviour. Of course, Jack forgave him everything. This young man lives a faithful and good life to the present day.

### **Ministry for those with Hansen’s disease**

From 1960 onward, the Salesian Fr. Raymond Spies, while living in the Mission Station located in Nok-dong of the Gwangju Archdiocese, had been involved in the apostolate directed towards those with Hansen’s disease (Leprosy). At the time, in Korean society, there was extreme ignorance and prejudice regarding this disease process. The children of those suffering from Hansen’s, through no fault of their own, shared in the alienation endured by their parents because of this disease. Fr. Spies, in order to ease the pain of these young people, created dormitories for them in Sillim-dong and Eungam-dong in Seoul. Because of the distances involved, Fr. Spies could not administer both his own apostolate on the south coast of the country and the dormitories in Seoul. For this reason, Fr. Spies approached Fr. Trisolini for help.

“Fr. Jack, I’ve founded a dormitory for the children of Lepers near the Sillim-dong parish. I can gather the funds to run this place. But as you know, I’m living down in Nok-dong, and I’m finding it very hard to take care of the

dormitory in Seoul. I know you're very busy here in Seoul, but I still want to ask your help with these children."

Jack responded "Fr. Spies, I cannot assume total responsibility for these kids. But I can promise you that I will spend as much time with them as I can. Don't be overly concerned about them."

He was able to visit the dormitory once every week, during which time he would spend helping them with their education problems and further training. In order to run the dormitory, Fr. Trisolini received funds from Fr. Spies regularly. Land was purchased for a new facility for these children in July 1976 in Sinwol-dong, in western Seoul. A purpose-built structure was planned, with the intention that Salesians Fr. José Maria Blanco and Bro. Giacomo Comino were to take over the apostolate. Unfortunately it was impossible to build on this land. A former small hotel was purchased in the area at Hwagok-dong, and was converted into a dormitory for these children. These children were all registered as living in South Jolla and South Gyeongsang Provinces – with their home address being listed as the Leprosy Colonies in both of these southern Provinces. Even if they wanted to study, with that on their personal registration cards, it was impossible for them to enter even a regular school. As a result they were enrolled at the Vocational School, studying subjects like barbering, construction, electronics, carpentry, iron-working and use of heavy equipment, etc., or went to work.

Brother Kong Min-Ho was placed in charge of the education and work placement of these young people. For those studying at the Vocational School or those working in the market-place, they gathered each evening at 6 p.m. for dinner at the school. At night those interested in taking the Middle and High School Graduation Equivalency Examination were helped to prepare for the test. For those working, the daily travel to and from the workplace had to endure many hours on city buses. After returning home from work at the

dormitory, they usually went straight to bed. Sometimes missing their stops the police would at times bring them back to the centre.

The living conditions in the former hotel in Hwagok-dong were not very pleasant, and thus plans were made to move into a new facility in Sinwol-dong where land was purchased for this purpose. When the land was being prepared, rumours about the facility caused the local residents there to protest the construction. During the course of construction demonstrations were held by local a resident, which was further complicated by the collapse of an embankment on the building site. The ignorance and prejudice of the residents of Sinwol-dong could not be ignored. The Salesians decided that it would be best for their Postulants and Aspirants were to live in Sinwol-dong among the poor labourers there – and the children of Hansen disease patients were moved into the former formation centre in Daerim-dong.

### **Establishment of Nangok Parish**

The Nangok area in Sillim-dong was an ancient village originally without many long-term residents. As the years went by the number of original residents diminished and by 1965 there was an influx of new residents from outside the area. Catholics living in this area would routinely attend Sunday Mass on either the parish of Guro 3-dong or Ahyeon-dong. In March 1969, because of the construction of a levee on the river banks, a Mission Station was created in Nangok. Eventually a strong core community of believers developed in the area.

This Mission Station of Nangok was under the jurisdiction of Sillim-dong parish, which had been created on September 11, 1969. Beginning on October 5 the same year, construction was begun on a new parish church. The faithful in Nangok appealed to the pastor of Sillim-dong, Fr. Lawrence Choi Seo Sik and the parish leaders that their Mission Station be regularly served by a priest, saying

“There are many believers in Nangok. Please come and celebrate the Mass for us there. If there is weekly mass there, we will all be certain to receive the sacraments faithfully.” The parish priest responded “Please celebrate the Communion Service without the priest present. When I have time I will come to Nangok and celebrate the Mass when I can on Sunday.”

After the Mission Station was established, Fr. Choi would go to Nangok once or twice a month in order to hear confessions and celebrate the Eucharist. When he could not go to the area, the Communion Service without a priest was held either in an empty hall or in the homes of local faithful. When Father Joseph Kim Sung-Tae was made the second pastor of Sillim-dong, the number of new faithful increased dramatically. This caused the pastor to have even less time to attend to the needs of the faithful in Nangok. It was impossible for him to maintain even a minimal presence at the Mission Station. It was at this time that the Archdiocese asked Fr. Trisolini to take on the weekly commitment to the Nangok community. Beginning with Lent in February 1971, he took on this added responsibility. He would weekly celebrate the Eucharist, hear confessions and assumed the pastoral responsibility for the Mission Station. Salesian Sister Anastasia Min helped him making visits to the faithful in the area. He began a Doctrine program that initiated people into the faith in the Mission Station as well.

Beginning with a small congregation, numbers soon increased to over one hundred. Visiting the homes of faithful and the initiating the catechism programs contributed to a quick growing of numbers among the faithful in the area. This led to a need to have a larger facility to handle the increased numbers. Moving into a new building in May 1971, they didn't have the funds to pay for the first month's rent! Fortunately the Salesians were able to loan them the 150,000 won needed to pay for their rent. After signing the documents, Jack was able to place a sign outside the building with the simple

message: Nangok-dong Mission Station. By Christmas 1971, four of the people taught catechism by Sister Anastasia were able to be baptized by Fr. Trisolini at the Christmas Mass. Travel to and from Singil-dong was a chore for him because of the distances involved and the effects of polio on his crippled legs.

Year later people in Nangok were to say “Fr. Trisolini really worked hard for this community. In the cold of winter, walking on the slippery icy streets to the Nangok Mission Station, he would come every week to celebrate Mass for us. With no concern about himself, he would walk into our valley to be of service.” The faithful of Nangok were much impressed at his zeal for ministry.

The Archdiocese of Seoul, aware of the increasing numbers of faithful in Nangok, eventually decided to create a parish there. In May 1975, Fr. Jack was able to break ground for a new parish Church on land purchased by the Archdiocese. By the end of August the first floor of the new building was finished, and in September 1975 it was elevated to the ranks of the parishes of the Archdiocese. With the appointment of Fr. James Choi Seon Ung, the Salesians withdrew from Nangok parish.

Nangok, not receiving much benefit from the urban improvements evident elsewhere in the local society continued to be a poor and polluted part of the city. The Archdiocese had by this time become involved not only in the development of parish facilities but to pay attention as well to the living conditions of people living in areas that were poor or underdeveloped. In the 1970s, there developed pastoral programs centered on the urban poor which were based on community organization efforts. Among many poor areas in the city of Seoul, Nangok was certainly one of them. In order to organize this activity, Ms. Sarah Kim Hye Gyeong was assigned to work in this area. This woman attempted to solve the various human rights and labour issues that often arose in poorer communities. She made efforts at improving the quality of life in the area, urging those actually in the area to take responsibility for their

homes and neighbourhoods. Health benefits for those injured at the workplace were another area of concern for her. Among the efforts at improving education provided in public schools were examinations of the schools in the area – also providing hands-on experience for seminarians training for priestly ministry with the urban poor. For those seminarians who received this time of training, they spent one week at the Don Bosco Youth Centre listening to lectures by Fr. Trisolini, and attended Masses celebrated by him there.

### **Salesian Cooperators: Establishment and Formation**

The Salesian Cooperators have existed since the time of the Founder, St. John Bosco. The purpose of the Cooperators from their earliest beginnings was to support the work of the Salesians in saving poor and abandoned youth – both physically and spiritually. The Cooperators consisted of lay men and women and diocesan priests from the very beginning. In 1850, St. John Bosco brought all of the various organizations of laity and clergy into one central group of individuals who would assist in the mission of the Salesian Society. In 1876, receiving ecclesial approbation, the Cooperators were given a rule of life and a description of their apostolic involvement with the Salesians. With clear guidelines established regarding life and ministry, the Cooperators swiftly spread throughout the world.

The Salesian Cooperators were first organized in the early days of the Korean foundation - that is since March 27, 1956 in Gwangju, and later in Seoul at the Dorim-dong Parish in 1958. While there was some activity of the benefactors and sponsors of the Salesians in Korea, they were not formally organized until 1976. Until that time, depending upon a specific need or occasion, were the benefactors or sponsors asked to gather together and assist with projects.

The Salesian Collaborators are a religious community that lives in the secular world. A Salesian Collaborator is one who does those apostolates or

tasks that Salesians in religious vows cannot perform; because of their zeal and dedication they reveal themselves as Christians. The objective of the Salesian Collaborators is to assume the spirit of St. John Bosco in his concern for the salvation of young people in the world today. A Salesian Collaborator who, according to his/her talents, enters into the apostolate of the Salesian family according to the individual's ability to do so. A Collaborator may even take an oath to maintain this way of life. While leading an apostolic life, the Collaborator is expected to maintain a simple life of prayer - for this reason the Collaborator must have the time and opportunity for this simple life of faith. They are committed to monthly meetings and the development of the spirit of the Collaborators.

Fr. Trisolini upon receiving the appointment to formally begin the Salesian Cooperators in Korea used much energy to see that the initial Cooperators were infused with the spirit of St. John Bosco, allowing them to be effective ministers as lay persons living according to the principles of Salesian spirituality. Fr. Trisolini made an effort to choose good people from among the Salesian benefactors in order to give the Cooperators a more lively beginning. With the appointment of Fr. Trisolini to this task of organizing the Salesian Cooperators, development was swift. Formal meetings of the Cooperators began in 1976.

With the provisional rule of the Cooperators updated in 1974, the spirituality and mission of the organization was in line with the spirit of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Taking advantage of the living witness of Salesian religious, both men and women, he molded the Cooperators into the Salesian charism and spirituality. In 1979 Fr. Trisolini began in earnest the formation of the Cooperators for the Salesians and by 1981 the first group were able to make a profession of promises (not formal vows as religious make, but promises as made by many Third Orders). In the Seoul Daerim-dong Salesian Residence and the Singil-

dong convent of the Salesian Sisters serving as the centers for the organization, and collaboration with the Don Bosco Youth Center have contributed towards the development of the Cooperators.

The Holy See approved the final version of the Constitutions in May 1986 – with the English version being published in Madras, India by the Salesian Printing Press in July 1986. With fifty copies ordered and received, it was shared with English speakers and work was begun immediately on a Korean translation of the Constitutions by Korean Salesian religious. Introducing the translated Korean version of the Constitutions for the Cooperators in 1987, and given approval by the Provincial Council of the Salesians in Korea, it was finally released for the use of the Cooperators in 1987. Also in 1987 with the Cooperators' Council set up according to their Constitutions, appointed Salesian priests as local coordinators – though not the National Director. In February 1993, a regular newsletter began publication, thus fulfilling a long held dream.

Fr. Trisolini cultivated Collaborators so that they were trained to observe and make judgements so that they could lead good lives as laity, certainly, but also to assume the Salesian identity. After a period of formation, spiritual direction and discernment, the Collaborators take an oath to live their lives guided by Salesian principles. These Collaborators are full-fledged members of the Salesian institute. When Fr. Jack began working with Collaborators, there were just four centers in the Gwangju and Seoul – by 2013 the movement continued to spread nationally. From the beginning in Korea, the Director was referred to as the “companion leader”.

### **One Thousand Marriages**

Among the many concerns that Fr. Trisolini had was the problem of youth and marriage. The Salesian spirit gave him insight that the church first exists in

the family - thus this interest and offering of help to young people as they face marriage is a form of preaching the Gospel and an aid to forming a new Holy Family. He had this special concern not only regarding the youth for whom he worked, but for the Salesian Collaborators as well. Not only those close to him, but even strangers on the street he would meet, would hear his concern about how they married and their understanding of what marriage was all about. He considered the Sacrament of Marriage to be of particular importance. He considered that the sacrament itself provided the beginning of life together in the presence of the Lord Himself. He would preside at wedding in secular venues as well. All told, he presided over the birth of over 1000 couples during the course of his ministry. He once was described in a daily Korean Newspaper thusly:

Myeong-dong's Fr. Trisolini – for someone who frequents the back alleys and many restaurants of this central area of Seoul – few would not know of this American priest who has worked in Korea for many years. This priest, who walks with a pronounced limp due to polio, warmly greets the proprietors of many of the shops and restaurants that dot the landscape. They in turn respond as warmly, feeling that they are dealing with a family member. “Hello there, it’s been a long time! How are you doing?” Speaking Korean fluently he asks “How is your girl/boyfriend?” or “How big is the baby now?” – warmly displaying his great grasp of the personal information shared over time with many people. Friendships formed over fifteen years or more before were warmly recalled and built upon over those ensuing years.

He would meet in his daily walks people with him he lived years before in the Daerim-dong Salesian residence – then they were underprivileged young people – now they were adults living productive and happy lives. Weekly he would walk in the Myeong-dong neighbourhood in order to offer counseling services to young girls who sought out help for their personal problems at

the Catholic Young Female Student Centre– thus providing the excuse for walking through the back alleys regularly. Every spring he would be a bit busier – preparing couples for their marriages. Many of the marriages were performed in churches, and many of them were performed in secular venues as well. He fondly recalls all the couples for whom he presided at their weddings – claiming that he “has a lot of grandchildren now!” He faithfully accepted most invitations to the 100 day parties (100 days after the birth of a baby) – the one-year-old parties, etc. feeling privileged to be a part of this extended family. “There are a lot of people living in Seoul, but not many of them are really your neighbours” he often says. “I have always enjoyed presiding at marriage ceremonies, rich or poor, because of this sense of connection I feel deeply.” This American priest always carries a small pocket calendar, where he would faithfully write down the name, address and time of the next party that he felt he had to attend. People are often amazed that he could find the time in his very busy schedule to accommodate so many couples, Catholic and non-Catholic, and support them on such an important day in their lives.

Fr. Trisolini remembered all of the couples for whom he presided at their marriages – it was never simply performing a ritual and moving on for him. He felt that attention paid to people at this important moment in life helped in the process of sanctifying the marriage for noble purposes through a prayerful personal relationship. Like a loving father, he would happily preside at the weddings of the very poor that had very little. One couple in particular, shortly after giving birth to their first child, were living in a simple apartment. One day, the young bride was waiting for her husband to return home from work. She set up the table for her husband’s evening meal in the living room, and returned to the kitchen. Her very young baby, seeing his mother return to the kitchen naturally moved to be near her and in doing so fell on top of the charcoal heater and stove, burning himself severely.

She rushed the child to the hospital, and from the emergency room she called Fr. Trisolini:

“Father, what can I do? Our baby is dying. Please help me, please help our poor baby. Father, please.....” Fr. Jack responded quickly “Maria! Where are you calling from?” She said “I’m phoning from ooo hospital’s emergency room.” He then said “Maria, please don’t worry – your baby will be fine. Place him in the Lord’s hands! Do you understand?” She tearfully answered “Yes, Fr. Jack, I do.”

He left his office, climbed into a taxi and rushed to the hospital. He found the mother and child together – the baby certainly having suffered severe burns but was then sleeping. With them he prayed for the child and for his parents, to the Lord. It was evident that the child was dying. He helped them through this trauma with compassion and his unshakable cool-headed reason. At moments like this, with a small Lamb of God dying before him, he was simply a Good Shepherd, who stood by this young couple in their pain and loss.



**Local Superior and Resident Priest**

**축  
서품20주년**



On September 19, 1984 Fr. Trisolini was appointed as the Superior of the Daerim-dong community of the Salesians. This community consisted of pre-novitiate postulants, seminarians attending the Seoul seminary, included on the premises was the Salesian Young Workers Center and the center for the formation of young people. He was deeply aware of the need to form students in the spirituality of the founder, St. John Bosco. This was to instil those in formation an intense interest in the spiritual welfare of poor youth, something that was to last throughout their lives as Salesians. He encouraged this spirituality not only for those who were already Salesians, but also those young men who came to him for guidance. If he judged they had the capacity for this life, he would lead them to a consideration of Salesian life as an option for their futures.

During his life, Fr. Jack always paid particular attention to the development of future Salesian vocations. He always provided opportunities for those already working to experience Salesian life through direct experience of common life and mission through a short weekend retreat at the Salesian residence. Of course, there were young people who were not responsive to the introduction offered. He would write to them in Korean handwritten letters, asking them to consider again a life of service to poor youth and the importance of this form of religious life. This impressive personal attention led to many of those who had no apparent interest in the life to respond, returning to try it once again. He considered the professional preparation of future Salesians to be of great importance, insisting upon professional training on the college or university level. He would send those Postulants who had already had work experience to night school at local colleges. One time a Postulant from such a poor background, opposed any further study quite strongly, saying

“Father I really don’t want to study any more. I have already a lot of experience in society. I believe I have acquired enough technical skills as well.

I have professional licenses, why do I have to continue going to college?”

Fr. Trisolini responded to him “You may be able to be of assistance to young people carrying nothing in your hand, but you won’t get far if you have nothing in your head to share with them. Further study may be difficult, but you must prepare yourself to teach even better skills to the young poor whom you will serve.”

Fr. Jack remained adamant. The young man had to continue to prepare himself to enter university. In later years, as a technical teaching Brother, he found the university background very important for his work. For those aspiring to the priesthood in temporary vows, they were sent to the summer camps organized by the community as support personnel. For those going on as lay Brothers, they spent their summers working with young people teaching carpentry skills and making furniture. For the Brother candidates, they found being charged with such heavy manual labour difficult, complaining to Fr. Trisolini:

“Why are you ordering only us to do such difficult carpentry work?”

His response was “Young people have to deal with advanced technology for the rest of their lives. If you intend upon becoming a true educator, you must be aware of all the advances in the fields you teach. You have to be aware of the challenges that young people must face, and how they are thinking. Working in the heat is hard for anyone. For these young workers isn’t the heat and sweat even harder?”

Fr. Trisolini was aware of the issues facing candidates who were older. There are many people interested in the Salesian way of life, but most of them are young and are unable to reach a decision about the future course of their lives. They spend a lot of their time worrying about the future, and eventually most end up giving up on their dream to be religious. For those who are a bit older, and are convinced of their vocation and call to Salesian life, the Postulancy

begins immediately. For younger members, beginning so quickly often times is a source of great confusion. However, this process also helped them to come to important decisions more quickly. In this, Fr. Trisolini displayed his understanding of the inner psychology of those aspiring to Salesian life.

Fr. Trisolini would see to it that morning Mass and meditation were faithfully adhered to, and insisted that the postulants and temporary professed lead a well regulated life. He taught young Salesians, through evening conferences and homilies at Mass time, the life of St. John Bosco and his spirituality, prayer and meditation, religious life, liturgy, etc. No matter how busy he may have been, he never failed to give the evening conference. He sometimes encouraged the Taizé method of prayer, believing that in its simplicity it would be a help to his community.

He believed that the liturgical life had a deep meaning in the life of prayer - thus he insisted that liturgy always be well prepared. For major feast days like Easter and Christmas, the preparation for the liturgy involved the appointment of servers, readers and the choice of hymns. He would personally check beforehand that preparations were well made. He often spoke of the need of the instruments used in the liturgy should reflect the dignity and importance of the liturgical moment. He disliked seeing things prepared that were not appropriate for the liturgy and the atmosphere that should be created for the event. In order for the reader to be heard well, he installed a speaking system, and had a profession announcer come and train the students in speaking and reading publically.

For the postulants and temporary professed who lived with Fr. Trisolini, he was aware of anyone who may become depressed among them. He would immediately take them aside, and guide them through the depression they may be experiencing. He had the ability to speak from his heart with ease. He met every religious and student in residence for a monthly spiritual conference. In

line with the Constitutions of the Salesians, he was solicitous of the spiritual and physical welfare of the members of the community. This would involve concern about academics and the individual difficulties endured and the vocation that they were pursuing. At the close of every dialogue, a warm embrace closed the conference. At times, when he was busy and unable to have a regular conference, he would meet students on the playing field and while walking with them, have a conference. After the evening meal it was the practice to have a ball game followed by the rosary outside.

Fr. Trisolini insisted that postulants and temporary professed work with youth. He did this by assigning them, when it was appropriate, to assist in the night school, work in the carpenter shop, help with farming, visit the Juvenile Detention Center and to attempt to help poor youth that they met. This was a way to encourage and to confirm the Salesian vocation - providing opportunities for each individual to continually grow in the Salesian way of life. He desired each member of the community to grow in this commitment to poor youth as their first priority in life. While he insisted that study was important, he equally emphasized a love of common labour. Every Saturday afternoon he would ask that all help in the farming and carpentry being done on the premises with the young people studying there. He would work along together with everyone else when the kitchen and offices were cleaned, or work was done on the farm or the carpentry shop.

In Fr. Trisolini's method of formation he never strayed from the teachings of the Catholic Church or from Salesian tradition. Thus in both thought and action, he insisted on fidelity to the regulations of the community. He saw this as a means of creating bonds between the students and members of the community. Through an abiding interest in youth and in a continuing spiritual dialogue, he saw the means to encourage them when they felt their weaknesses and to respond to this reality with humility. He sought together with those who

felt their personal weakness to find the cause of it and seek ways to make it a strength. He did this to encourage a young man to become a loving father to those whom they would serve. In order for the community members and laity living in the community to grow, he followed a pattern that is a spiritual and physical resource for their future. Fr. Trisolini led a well regulated life, this is certain. As the leader of a community he offered an example of the faithful Master. This was a particular strength for candidates whom he led.

Trisolini was a spiritual director who did not give up easily, thus was a model shepherd. Those who were unable to pass the school entrance examination he did not automatically send home. He encouraged them to study for another year and to try the examination once again – thus saving them for future Salesian life. He was a source of strength to the many vocational candidates whom he counseled. He not only counseled vocational candidates with problems for his own community but for other congregations and dioceses as well. Through dialogue and counselling he sought for the root cause of the problems they were experiencing and looked for a solution to the problems found. Thus many a vocation of a distinguished priest or religious was redeemed for future service to the church.

At the beginning, the Daerim-dong Community was the Novitiate and house of studies for seminarians. Later, Fr. Luc Van Looy founded the Salesian Young Peoples Retreat Centre. Because of the move of young labourers moved back into the Daerim-dong buildings, living space became an issue. The buildings and equipment were ageing quickly, it was felt imperative to tear down the existing structures and build new facilities. Thus Fr. Trisolini along with Fr. Walter Johann Schmidt again applied to Misereor in Germany for assistance and were able to move into a new building that was dedicated in 1989.

Fr. Trisolini, during the 1980's, lived in Daerim-dong with the young workers. Eventually, the workers who had resided in the Hwagok-dong

residence moved into the Daerim-dong facility. Of those who moved from Hwagok-dong, some learned mechanical skills at the Don Bosco Center, and the remaining ones were working at companies already. Those who had lived originally at Daerim-dong learned carpentry skills at the Center.

Fr. Trisolini would insist that after lunch each day that the young people would go outside and play soccer. Only those who were ill were excused, or when it was winter, he would have charcoal briquette ashes spread on the field to make it less slippery. He believed that this exercise added to a healthy mind by helping in the formation of a healthy body as well. This was also a good time to observe the young people for their social skills and their current psychological condition. It was a time for learning about the young postulants and temporary professed.

Since 1979, Fr. Trisolini had regularly gone to the Seoul Juvenile Detention Center in order to be of service as a teacher of doctrine, administering the sacraments of Baptism and Reconciliation, celebrating the Eucharist, etc. As a result of this ministry he received recognition in the form of a *Certificate of Thanks* from the Minister of Justice on November 11, 1986. Along with his Salesian brothers, Fr. Trisolini founded the “school of faith” at the Seoul Juvenile Detention Center (now called Gobong Middle School). This “school of faith” was set up upon the request of the administrators of the Juvenile Center so that the young people there could learn a systematic and more proper way of life. It was first held from August 10 thru 14 in 1987. Fr. Trisolini considered opportunities like this as real expressions of his religious and priestly vocation.

The local community of Daerim-dong did not depend exclusively upon benefactions from abroad. Through the work of the training centre income was also created through the work of the staff and students. While learning a new skill, the products being produced were actually fulfilling orders for furniture needed at various building sites – and thus this work also provided

income to the local community. Also, from the time that Fr. Trisolini began ministry at the Don Bosco Youth Centre, he was concerned about creating a benefactors society that would support the work of the Centre. Making the move of the Daerim-dong community to new facilities saw an expansion of the help provided by the benefactors' society. As a result, eventually support from domestic benefactors became more than that received from abroad.

Fr. Trisolini also appealed to the City Government for financial assistance for students coming out of juvenile detention centres. The facility administered by the Daerim-dong community was called the Young Workers School – and received recognition from the city as a licensed school training young labourers and former delinquents. Those responsible for juvenile issues inspected the facility, deciding to send delinquents to the new school for training. A dormitory for forty to fifty students was built and housed those attending classes at the Young Workers School. Thus the Daerim-dong program combined with the Hwagok-dong program plus the program for delinquents – brought various efforts together with the students all living and studying in one facility.

Support for those studying and living in this new facility was applied for to government agencies. Those students coming from older facilities had to have their financial needs met by the local community at Daerim-dong. Because of the number of students involved, the community could not afford to resolve all of the financial demands of the increased number of students. In order to help alleviate some expenses, Fr. Trisolini decided to use land on the campus for vegetable gardens, and also began to raise dogs and pigs for food. This was not a matter of catching fish for someone in need, but a means of teaching how to catch fish so that the hungry could eat! This was the methodology behind Fr. Jack's programs.

Trisolini also emphasized very much the virtue of poverty. The meals could be described as being frugal in the community dining room – enough to eat but

not much more. For the occasional Postulant who didn't eat his soup – he was told to consume it. The food that was prepared was to be eaten by everyone – being enough for proper nutritional basics. The local community, lacking many times the financial resources, meant that the food purchased was simple, basic and perhaps a bit monotonous. The food prepared was all there was in the pantry! Using the field of the Daerim-dong residence, a large amount of celery was planted, grown and harvested. One of the Postulants, thinking that it was some type of weed, threw it into the garbage after clearing a part of the field. Fr. Jack, seeing this, went out the field, harvested some other vegetables and along with the discarded celery carried them into the kitchen. There he had a soup prepared using all of the vegetables and the celery – with the end result that a very tasty and nutritious soup was served for the evening meal that day.

Making his own fertilizer, he would create compost piles, throwing none of the bio-degradable garbage coming out of the kitchen away. He would use some food scraps to feed the animals that were being raised as well. Once a year, he would harvest the contents of the septic tanks, using the human waste to enrich the compost piles. The postulants were the ones tasked for this scraping out of the septic tanks and found the challenge very difficult because none of them had ever done anything quite like that before! They were happy to do the task, in the spirit of obedience and trust in the process. They would scour the neighbourhood in search of burnt out charcoal, the common way of heating houses and cooking food. They would carry these precious briquettes as filler for holes that would appear in the fields around the residence, thus saving them the expensive prospect of purchasing soil. Being so thrifty with the use of waste, only non-degradable garbage was put out for collection. These are a few examples of the way that the community lived poorly and frugally in order to save the little money that they had. It was also a means of teaching the young labourers with whom they were living how to live within their limited means.

For the young labourers and for Trisolini, it was not only a matter of simply feeding and housing them, but also teaching them a trade and finally sending them into the workforce. During the training period the students were required to pay a fee of fifty to two hundred thousand won per month. This money was in turn credited to a savings account for each individual. This practice gave the students a basic sum of money that would allow them to take care of essentials during their entry or return to the workforce. Being frugal with their limited resources – purchasing only absolutely items one a week on Saturday - always bearing in mind that they had to control expenses. An economic magazine popular at that time describe the process as follows:

“Students going through the course were able to put aside approximately twenty million won by the time they had completed their training. With the help of Fr. Trisolini seventeen of the students were able to complete successfully the high school equivalency examination. Of the eight hundred young workers who have gone through the program provided at the Centre, most of these young people had gone from lives lived in rampant misery to ones of happy fulfillment. For Fr. Trisolini there was a sense of fulfillment certainly, but given the fact that many of these young people, having had brushes with the law prior to their course, some were unable to stay within the rules of society. Meeting young people once again in the juvenile detention centers was always a very sad experience for Trisolini. He said ‘many of these young people came from broken homes, and would often spend a great deal of time circling their mothers’ homes. They would return to the centre dispirited. I could only offer them encouragement. They really are not orphans, but are the result of irresponsible parenting.’”

Fr. Jack also gave an interview to a newspaper, discussing Korean society’s problems and challenges.

“In the early 1970’s, with big dreams filling their heads, a lot of young people

left the countryside for Seoul, thus creating a new type of social problem for Korean society. Not only did they not have housing upon arrival in Seoul, or even if they did, the environment was not a good one. Many could not find shelter, and if they had been recently released from juvenile detention or from probation they became urban wanderers looking for a good place that was warm and dry. This led to conflict with the established order of things. That is why I began gathering young people in our Salesian residence, training them in carpentry and other skills, giving them a place to sleep and to eat. Many of them ended up being drawn to raw materialism – advancement at any price – and that saddened me, knowing that something was missing. More disturbing was upon asking young people what was important to them; they responded that their personal pleasure and satisfaction was what they cared about most.

“Coming out of a history of financial instability, young people had to struggle to gain skills that would lead them to get better jobs demanding long hours and much sweat for their wages. It was the only way to escape from a very bad environment. It seems that today’s young people, whether students or office workers are all driven to try substances to alter their moods, pursuing pleasure that really only brings shame to them. Even young children going to computer game rooms, lie and steal money in order to pursue entertainment – all of these realities are creating a new list of societal woes. Fashion conscientiousness as displayed on Myeong-dong today, far outweighs the same phenomenon in New York street fashion. This urge to possess luxurious and expensive things is something that we have all felt uncomfortable with.

“Thinking back to the past, 40 percent of children in juvenile detention were serving time or re-education for petty theft. This type of crime has decreased dramatically, but now the crimes of kidnapping, rape and sexual assault by young people are causing even greater concern for Korean society today. Society today and parents are not focusing on these dangers to their children.

Instead, focusing on entrance examinations to colleges and universities, children are left with a warped sense of values, burdening them with values and ideals that really do not serve their human needs. Korean society and parents today have to accept and develop a radically different approach to child-rearing, not focusing solely on preparing our children for the highest paying jobs and materialistic values which leave underdeveloped a whole range of human, more holistic, traits. Very few in positions of authority and leadership in society today seem to be aware of or able to confront this new, contemporary, reality.”

Those many young people who were helped in their lives by Fr. Trisolini’s efforts over the years are an example through the very lives of an opportunity taken advantage of. There was an example of a two murderers sentenced to life who were released for good conduct. Fr. Trisolini accepted them – a decision that required great courage. After serving time in prison, they were able to return to society as positively contributing members. The priest or brother today who has the ability to touch people so deeply like this seems to be very rare indeed.

After the Eucharist of Christmas Eve was celebrated, the young people who attended it were provided with a disco dance. Along with Fr. Trisolini, the formation community’s Postulants, professed Religious, graduates, benefactors, etc. joined the young people for the dance, all sharing in the joy of Christmas together. The next day, all of the members of the formation community made the trip to Myeong-dong Cathedral in order to participate in the Christmas Mass celebrated by Stephen Cardinal Kim, the Archbishop of Seoul. St. John Bosco always desired an intimate relationship with the local Ordinary of the Diocese where Salesians lived and worked, and for the local community this was an opportunity to express this desire. Experiences like this made it natural for those in formation to remember their Ordinary and to continue to pray for him through the year. After the Mass was over, each was given money to

purchase lunch as desired. They formed groups that ate together at various establishments, taking a walk around the area afterwards, thus the Christmas joy continued through the day.

### **A. Resident Priest**

Fr. Trisolini served as Local Superior of the Daerim-dong community from 19 September 1984, and left office on 19 January 1990. This was the last responsibility he had directly serving the Salesian community. From the time of leaving office as Local Superior, he moved into the old main building of the Don Bosco Youth Centre where he lived. In 1992 he was diagnosed with cancer which by the spring of 1993 had moved to the brain. He was advised that he could very well be in the terminal stages of cancer. The cancer diagnosed in 1992 was in his kidneys, having had surgery to treat it. He endured many sessions of chemotherapy during this time. Knowing that he could very well die, he called the young religious and asked a favour of them.

“None of know how things will end up, so please go into my room, gather all the things in it, and give it all away.”

Fr. Trisolini had the habit of keeping his room and office always very neat and clean. He kept only the things that he absolutely needed. Always prepared for the end of life, he was thinking of the next person who would live in his room, and he wanted it easy to clean it up and allow the new tenant to move in with no fuss. The young religious were struck deeply by what Fr. Trisolini was asking them to do – thinking that they were fulfilling his last will and testament. They did not know how to interpret what he was saying to them. Fortunately, before the surgery, it was discovered that the lesion on his brain was not cancerous. Not knowing what would happen to him, with a cool and almost detached manner, he had directed that his living space be prepared for someone else.

He continued to live at the Don Bosco Youth Center, not having a special position that he was filling. He continued his keen pastoral interest in the technical training of the young labourers resident there. When he ran across a student who seemed to be having problems, he would always ask them “Is something the matter? Just don’t try and endure pain, speak with Brother if you are ill. He’ll take you to the hospital or give you some medicine so that you will get well.” - or - “Is there a problem at home? Its ok, you can talk to the priests. There aren’t any problems in this world that can’t be solved!”

If a particular student was facing a problem, he would speak with the Brothers in charge, keeping them informed of the status of the students, thus providing an invaluable service. He also served as a confessor for the students who desired to take advantage of the sacrament. Among the graduates there are many stories of memorable encounters with Fr. Trisolini.

## **B. Confessor at Myeong-dong Cathedral**

Myeong-dong Cathedral in Seoul has the practice of providing a religious or missionary priest to be in the confessionals one day per week rather than Diocesan clergy. The Salesians usually have supplied a priest for this purpose, and from the 1990’s onward, Fr. Trisolini had this responsibility. His methodology in the confessional was in the model of discussion or counselling. Oftentimes, when young people came for sacramental confession, he would continue the relationship, assuming the role of a spiritual counsellor for many - thus forming a spiritual bond that often developed into a much deeper relationship.

As with this process with younger people, Fr. Trisolini attempted to match his advice and spiritual counselling to the given reality of the individual. That was true for clergy, religious and Salesian Cooperators - leading them in ways that would be appropriate and effective in their personal lives. Many of those

with whom he formed this spiritual bond later went on to become religious and/or priests. He also applied the same methodology to married people who came for confession, encouraging them in their faith lives and commitments. He made no distinction between the individual's state of life - only attempting to guide them appropriately along the paths already chosen.



## **The Beginnings of Labour Ministry: Young Christian Workers**



Upon returning to Korea in 1968, the new priest Jack Trisolini was appointed assistant pastor at the Dorim-dong Parish. After finishing the evening meal, he went into his bedroom to unwind a bit. He heard being sung the stirring words of the Young Christian Workers' theme in the distance:

*Rouse up, rouse up young workers all  
Throughout the world a voice resounds  
'Tis Christ the Workers trumpet call  
To win for him our youth, our towns  
Stand steadfast comrades for your rights  
Your work, your dignity, your pride  
Come march along, we'll conquer all the world  
Young workers, side by side  
In this, our native land we find  
A mighty standard which we greet  
His blood-stained cross round which entwined  
Behold a golden ear of wheat  
Stand steadfast comrades!*

After his first night's sleep, Fr. José M. Suárez assigned duties to the newly ordained Jack Trisolini.

“Fr. Trisolini, from now on you will be taking care of the Young Christian Workers in the parish. Fr. Spies, with great zeal, has already planted the seeds of the movement among the Catholic workers in the community. I would like you to nurture this young plant – allowing the branches to grow strong and to bear great fruit.”

## **Together with Diocesan Clergy**

In Seoul, workers were concentrated in Yeongdeungpo. Those attempting to form trade unions were under constant police surveillance and investigation. Many of the Catholic workers were regularly attending the Eucharist celebrated at Dorim-dong parish. They were the core members of the Young Christian Workers movement, consisting of about one hundred individuals. For most of the Sections of the movement, development was promising. Near to the parish was a textile factory, from which some of the female labourers would attend the morning Mass in the parish, and were involved as well in the Young Christian Workers movement. Being night workers, after breakfast, they would soon go to bed for their rest.

In the nearby parishes of Dangsan-dong and Daebang-dong, there were also many members of the movement. During Fr. Trisolini's first week of ministry in the parish he visited Dangsan-dong's pastor Fr. Peter Song Gwang Seop and Daebang-dong's pastor Fr. Joseph An Sang In. They discussed the Young Christian Workers movement in the Yeongdeungpo area. Both of these pastors were actively engaged in the training of young workers in the movement. They explained to Fr. Trisolini:

“Fr. Trisolini, in the contemporary Korean church, the Young Christian Workers movement is an organization that is very important. While we were seminarians, we have both received training for the Young Christian Workers movement from Fr. Francis Park Seong Jong. After becoming priests we have both worked to develop the movement and train young people for it. We know that you have studied the labour movement in Europe – particularly the Young Christian Workers movement. We believe that you are the best prepared among us. We would like you to assume the role of Chaplin for the Seoul Southern District of the YCW movement and be involved in its development.”

Fr. Jack responded: “Yes, I understand what you are asking. I will try and do

my best. I am most thankful that you both, fellow priests, have considered me capable of assuming this important role, even though I have been ordained just a short time.”

### **Fr. Francis Park Seong Jong: Pioneer of the Korean Young Christian Labour Movement**

The first director of the YCW movement in Korea was Fr. Francis Park Seong Jong, and was an excellent guitar player. He would often entertain the young workers with his music, instilling a sense of joy and confidence. YCW meetings would often end with songfest, dancing and a trip to the local wine house. Often there was a sense of tension between the joy of the meetings and the grim reality in which these young people had to work for a living. Pressing through their efforts for the rights of workers, they found that they had to struggle mightily.

Fr. Park had attended the seminary at Issy-les-Moulineaux near Paris in the 1950's. There he came into contact with the priests, seminarians and activists connected to the vital French Church's Mission Ouvriere, Cardinal Suhard of Paris' project to re-evangelize the alienated working masses. Returning to Korea, he taught at the Holy Spirit Seminary in Seoul – today's Seoul Catholic University - from March 1958 until June 1964. He lectured in Ascetical Theology.

In 1958 already, the Korean YCW movement had already been begun. Korean Foreign Languages University Professor Lee Hae Nam and Seoul National University Hospital nurse Park Myeong Ja served as the guiding spirit of the movement in the early years. Park Myeong Ja, receiving help from AFI (l'Auxiliare Feminique International), first began YCW activity among the nurses at the Seoul National University Hospital. Within a few months, Seoul Archbishop Paul Marie RO Ki-nam appointed Fr. Francis Park Seong Jong

as the first Director of the Young Christian Workers Movement. At the same time, Monsignor Joseph Cardijn, the founder of the YCW movement, was on a world tour promoting the movement. In November 1958, he visited Korea during the course of his swing through Asia. In the chancery of the Seoul Archdiocese, he was present for the first meeting of the Korean YCW – thus planting the first seeds of the movement on Korean soil. During the course of this meeting, the YCW was recognized officially as an ecclesial entity.

### **Tenth Anniversary Celebration**

For the celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Korean YCW, the National Team needed a venue to stay during the celebration as well as a large hall and rooms for various events. During an entire weekend in the fall of 1968, Dorim-dong's Ajeon School facilities were at the disposal of the YCW. Members from all over Korea gathered at Dorim-dong Catholic Church and celebrated the achievements of its first ten year period. Dorim-dong was also a centre for local young labourers already. Fr. Trisolini had a presentation on his experience of the Young Christian Workers movement in France during his studies there.

Among the accomplishments spoken of was the group's effort at bettering the quality of life for young rag pickers all over the country. Some of the YCW even chose to live and work with the rag pickers. The second bright spot was the 1967 struggle for worker rights carried out by a group of female workers on Ganghwa Island's Simdo Jikmul textile factory. Awareness gained through the YCW encouraged the women to organize a labour union. The Ganghwa incident ushered in a period during which YCW female members became acutely aware of their dignity as women in the workplace. After this, in the 1970's and 1980's female YCW members were very much in the forefront of the struggle for workers' rights.

When Fr. Jack was appointed to the Don Bosco Youth Centre – the office for the YCW movement for the Southern District of the Seoul Archdiocese moved there with him. While there his efforts centered on providing basic training for young Labourers using the YCW method. When the Pastoral Labour Commission of the Seoul Archdiocese was formally established in 1971, the Don Bosco Youth Centre provided a vital centre for technical training for members of the Young Christian Workers movement.

When Fr. Trisolini began his ministry at the Don Bosco Youth Centre, the Southern District of the YCW consisted only of members in the Dorim-dong, Dongsan-dong and Daebang-Dong Catholic parishes. Fr. Jack made an all-out effort, along with the priests and members involved in the YCW apostolate, to increase membership in his region. It was thanks to the ministry performed already at the Don Bosco Youth Centre that members were enrolled from the Majarello Centre, Guro 3-dong Parish, Mok-dong Parish, Oryu-dong Parish and Bongcheon-dong Parish where many of the graduates of the Don Bosco Youth Centre were living.

### **The Kim Jin Su Crisis**

During the 1970's in Korea, often time the labourer was reduced from being a human being to being a cog in a machine. Environmental problems in the workplace and low wages all added to the sense of anger and frustration for many workers. In 1970, when Fr. Trisolini was first assigned to the Don Bosco Youth Centre, workers from the factory located across the street from the Centre – the Hanyang Sweater Factory – came to him asking for help.

“Father, we want to organize a union in our factory. Because the owners and managers of the company are so vigilant in watching our every move, there is no place in which we can meet easily. Would you mind if we met here in the Centre?”

Fr. Jack responded graciously, “I understand. I will arrange for you to use our dining room here at the Centre. You and your friends can meet here so that you can organize a union – we can easily go elsewhere to eat.” They left, thanking him for his kindness.

Shortly after this meeting with these people, the local police came to investigate what was going on. All of those involved in the union organization effort were summarily fired from their jobs. All of this was done in order to intimidate the other workers. Shortly after this, one of the labourers who was not involved in the union plan was assaulted in the factory. He had not joined the union, nor was involved in the union creation efforts. When he jokingly made a comment about the appearance of one of the goons hired to terrorize the workers, the man viciously hit Kim Jin Su in the head with a screw driver. Mortally wounded, Jin Su was rushed to Severance Hospital and remained in a coma for a few weeks before dying.

The circumstances of Kim Jin Su’s death and enraged public opinion forced the company to recognize the union and rehire the fired workers. Fr. Trisolini, through this incident, came to know the Yeongdeungpo Protestant Urban Industrial Mission Office – forming a deep relation and frequent cooperation with them in the future.

### **Jeon Tae Il’s Tragic Death and the Garment Workers’ Union**

A few months later, on November 13, 1970, Jeon Tae Il, a young garment worker held up a copy of the labour law, poured gasoline on his body and immolated himself in protest against government indifference, the exploitation of young workers and the Korean garment industry’s dreadful working conditions. This incident provided a catalyst for increased activity for young labourers.

Shortly after this suicide, Fr. Jack was in Germany, very close to Brussels in

Belgium. He sought out the International Secretariat of the Young Christian Workers, seeking guidance about what should be done following the incidents outlined above. He was encouraged by the assistance received by young workers coming from similar environments. Thus, upon his return to Korea he met with the representatives of young female labourers working in the garment industry. They asked for his assistance in setting up a labour union for them. Having nothing to guide them, Fr. Trisolini instructed them in Gospel principles and the Church's social teachings. Their chief concerns were the problems of impersonal treatment of the labourers and very dangerous workplace environmental issues were looked at very closely. Electing officers for the nascent labour union, the YCW member Agnes Jeong In Suk was elected as the President of the Garment Workers Union. She immediately joined with the efforts of the YWC and the objects of the Garment Workers Union – thus activating the beginnings of a Labour Union.

The Don Bosco Youth Centre, newly built in 1972, opened their doors to the Garment Workers Union – among the first to use the new facilities. There they held training programs for the new union over the next three years. The government and the Korean Federation of Trade Unions did not at first recognize this new union. Renowned labour activist Ignatius Kim Mal Ryong, the Urban Industrial Mission Pastor Jo Seung Hyeok and former YCW National President Ms. Susann Yun and other labour activists and priests involved in the Labour movement joined forces. Everyone shared a desire for Jeon Tae Il's sacrifice to be seen as a seed that promoted worker consciousness and workers' rights in Korea's rapidly industrializing atmosphere. Short, content-rich courses were offered for training, forming workers to eventually take control of their own union and destinies.

The early 1970's was a time for the Young Christian Workers movement which had to struggle to find their own identity, struggling to find the factors

that made them unique. At the same time, Korean Labour itself was going through the growing pains of trying to organize and to become effective for Korean Labour in general. Many of the young labourers were transplants from the country-side, coming to the big city to find work – they were part of the equation as well. All the groups in the work-force were going through the same process – identifying who they were and what they wanted to accomplish. This of course included Young Christian Workers as well. The trade union movement is a movement inspired by the Church – which provoked much religious discussion among participants. Young people without exception welcomed the challenge presented to be a participant in their futures.

In a training course held in 1972, young Catholic workers were asked the following questions:

“Do the trade unions represent the common workers?”

“Do the trade union leaders and business owners just meet with the police in order to eat and drink well?”

“Is the cause of the unions going rotten because we are too ill-informed?”

“Should you claim a sense of responsibility for creating and supporting a trade union in your workplace?”

“Should new members be welcomed into our group?”

“What is the YCW movement working towards?”

“As we are active in the movement, what is it that motivates us?”

“How do we develop the ability to judge people and situations well?”

Each reflected as members of the YCW movement, and found the answers to the questions through training and reflection. The movement was not centered on particular workplace issues as much as labour issues in the broader context. The understanding that they were in solidarity not only with their fellow workers, but with labour everywhere, slowly emerged. Workers from many backgrounds had the opportunity to share with those who had a common life

and work experience. The groups continued to meet reflecting on these and other topics. They slowly became sensitive at welcoming new members into their midst, opening themselves to new possibilities as they organized the YCW. If the YCW closed the door to new members, they risked becoming a small, exclusive club that would only be ineffectual.

### **Hanguk Mobang**

The labour union at Hanguk Mobang, a large textile producing factory located close by the Don Bosco Youth Centre had for years been strictly controlled by management. At a YCW meeting that grouped girls working at the factory, the review of life revolved around a young male worker who had been fired, beaten and left in the gutter outside the factory because he naively went to the labour union office to urge the union leader to make the union more representative.

Several of the young women came to the Centre, telling Fr. Jack the story of the young man, to which he replied: “Please ask the young man to come and talk with me if he would like to.” They replied “Yes, we will tell him that you are interested in meeting with him.”

A few days later Lee Gil U knocked on the Don Bosco Centre’s front door, asking to speak with Fr. Trisolini. “Hello, Father, I am Lee Gil U. A few of the girls at the factory told me that you wanted to speak with me, that is why I am here now.”

Fr. Trisolini responded “Thank you for coming to see me. My name is Fr. Jack Trisolini. I’m happy to meet you. We have to find what you are and what we need to do, because we are going to try and do something about the situation at Hanguk Mobang. I’m going to need your help. I think we will be meeting each other often in the future.”

The young man responded “We all thank you for your interest. We are more

than happy to have your help. Please help us, we need it!”

Women members of the YCW movement, Catholic members of the YCW who worked at the Hanguk Mobang Company, and members of the Protestant Urban Industrial Mission joined hands in 1972 in the effort to drive out the corrupt union leaders associated with the company. They were the chief driving force behind the changes that were sought. Many former military personnel were hired by the managers of Hanguk Mobang that were charged with harassing and threatening workers, attempting to control the situation. They seized the leader of the union agitators, Ji Dong Jin, whom they beat severely causing his hospitalization. The management were summoned to the Police Headquarters and investigated thoroughly. For the first time in the history of the Korean labour movement, the instigators of the beating, retired military personnel, were dishonourably dismissed from employment at Hanguk Mobang.

Later the Korean International Group bought the factory and renamed it Wonpung Mobang. Wonpung Mobang’s new management was as intolerant of the labour unions as the former managers and tried to weaken the union’s power. YCW members together with their counterparts in the Protestant Urban Industrial Mission played an essential role in maintaining their union’s autonomous and democratic stance in a military controlled regime.

### **Crown Electronics**

In the early 1970’s, President Park Jeong Hui’s government set up industrial areas in various parts of the country. One of the first and largest industrial estates, the Guro Industrial Park was already functioning not far from Don Bosco Youth Centre. YCW girls and boys, as well as many boys living in the hostel, found jobs there. Among many companies there was Crown Electronics (originally Crown Electric), manufacturers of cassette players and radios, where

they were organized trade unions. Management at this company blacklisted and fired employees who were involved in the organization of the union. These individuals, being poor young workers, found it difficult to find new jobs because of being blacklisted by the company.

Many of the young workers working in the Guro Industrial Complex were active in the YCW movement through the Guro 3-dong Parish for many years. One young YCW member, a young Catholic girl, decided that she would become involved in organizing a union at the Crown Electronics factory by first obtaining a job there. Two other fellow workers there, tried with her to form a union, using a very interesting strategy. During the lunch hour, she would sit down and appear to be reading a newspaper. Other workers, wondering what she was reading about gathered around her and asked:

“What are you doing?” She replied “As you can see, I’m reading a newspaper.”

She would then read to them small articles on labour issues, and they would discuss them. As a result of these innocent discussions, many of the women workers joined the YCW movement.

### **Faith and Reality**

During the 1974 meeting of the young trade unionists where reorganization was the chief topic, members of the Young Christian Worker movement had a discussion regarding the attitude of Christians in society. One of the organizers of the Hanguk Mobang trade union reflected as a member of a trade union on his experience.

“Before I became interested in becoming an activist in trade unions, the owner of the company saw me only as a person, perhaps a naïve one, who worked hard. I thought he was quite receptive to people in general as I was of him.” After seventeen months of union activism, his reflections changed. “Being

the owner of a company or having shares in one does not entitle anyone to reap all the benefits and profits of labour. All people, including the worker as well as the owner of the company, possess an inherent human dignity. Jesus chose to be born as a poor man. He did not choose to be born a King and live in a palace. Like us, Jesus was born in a poor country and chose to live a poor way of life. Living in the midst of poverty was Jesus' choice. I was chosen by God to work for and alongside other poor labourers, not by trampling their basic rights as human beings and workers. Was it not God calling me to this life? A life of faith does not mean always seeing things as beautiful, because so much of life is anything else but that. I believe as a person of faith that God is with me, and he will give me the strength to accomplish what must be done. I live in hope. Unfortunately, my life is a hard one, both mentally and physically. I do not have time to read the Bible as I would like."

During the 1970's was the age of Yusin or Revitalizing Reforms. That was soon followed in the 1980's, when the government attempted to take control of the labour unions in Korea. Fr. Trisolini had to make interventions on a number of occasions to prevent this from happening. The imposed unjust requirements on union membership and those who did not submit to these regulations were made to suffer. The struggle of the YCW was based on the teachings of the Gospel and the Church – a living faith. Nobody wanted an eternal struggle always fighting off being overwhelmed. A friend of Jeon Tae Il from Cheonggyecheon where the Garment Workers Union was formed said the following:

"Most believers do not really know or understand what is going on in society today. However the experience of working in the garment industry as a member of the YCW trained young people to observe critically what was going on around them. More than most workers, they develop the ability to look at things a bit more deeply. They live according to their ideals. For the

YCW member this is the way of expressing their faith. However, personally I am very critical of religions. I never go any church.”

The military regime in the 1980’s imprisoned him for his involvement in the labour movement. In prison, he was baptized a Catholic, becoming familiar with Catholic doctrine. During those years in the 70’s and 80’s Fr. Trisolini was heavily involved in labour issues, always looking for practical ways to solve problems. Cardinal Cardijn said the following regarding the dignity and pride of those involved in the labour movement:

“A young worker, only one of them, is worth more than all the gold in the world. They are sons and daughters of God!”

As the Director of the Young Christian Workers’ movement, Fr. Trisolini continued to foster educational programs and deal with labour problems but never arbitrarily. Not only did the Catholic labour organizations work with labourers; the Protestant Urban Industrial Mission and the Korea Christian Action Organization for Urban Industrial Mission all cooperated with the South Korea Confederation of Trade Unions together in harmony. Never did he stray from the teachings of the Gospel or of the Church.

The events before and after 1980 saw the Republic of Korea suffer through tremendous crises and disasters. Shortly following labour unrest in the Republic in 1979, President Park Jeong Hui was assassinated. 1980 was a time of violent unrest throughout society. The Korean people themselves were coping in a very mature way. Following the student protests of May 1980, and most particularly the Gwangju Uprising on May 18 that year, these events led to several major changes.

After the May 18 uprising, labour underwent tremendous changes as well. This was a period when trade unions and those who were activists for them underwent severe persecution and continual surveillance. All trade unions had been severely weakened. The principal leaders in the labour movement were

all arrested and forced to go through the Samcheong re-education program. Many became fugitives, living in hiding. The unions that did survive were subject to strict monitoring and tight control. Phones were tapped and all mail was being intercepted and read. They were limited in their use of telephones and their letters were inspected without permission. Many of the leaders of all the Christian denominations were monitored and tightly controlled.

In the 1980's, the law preventing 'third party interventions' was implemented. As a result, union leaders, who were not co-workers, could not offer advice to their membership involved in strikes against companies. The agents for the labour movement were not allowed to exceed a certain legal limit. One is surprised to see that religious activity among workers was discouraged by certain conglomerates in the 1970's. A wall was placed between churches and labour organizations under the pretense of enforcing the 'third party intervention' prohibition. Beginning in 1986, this law was even more strictly enforced.

Under the Yusin security forces, churches and unions participating in labour issues were further weakened by intimidation and scare tactics. Priests and pastors working for the betterment of farmers and workers were arrested and imprisoned. Foreign missionaries involved in these issues were handled in the same manner. They were told they were not wanted in Korea any longer – there were agents of dissention and unrest. For a period of years Fr. Trisolini, along with all foreign missionaries, had to renew their residence certificates through a long and complex process every two or three months. Pastor George Ogle and Fr. James Sinnott were deported from the Republic of Korea for their activities. Under the Fifth Republic (1979-1987), the trend continued to worsen. Fr. Trisolini was concerned that left-wing materialism – in other words, - Communism - could become an influence.

During the 1980's, the Catholic Church in Korea was much taken up with

preparations for the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Church in Korea and the 150th anniversary of the Chosen Diocese. In the middle of these preparations, the Archdiocese of Seoul and the Auxiliary Bishop Joseph KYEONG Kap-ryong became wrapped up in the Control Date incident. Beginning on July 22, 1982, and for a period of ten days, workers occupied the office of Bishop KYEONG, demanding justice. Thus, reluctantly, the Church entered into the center of this dispute. The leaders of the Korean Corporation of Control Data negotiated with Bishop KYEONG, Kim Mal Ryong (director of the Labour Counselling Office) and Fr. Trisolini in his role as the Director of the Labour Pastoral Commission. During this negotiation, while both sides did not achieve 100 per cent of their goals, the dispute ended peacefully, finding a solution to the majority of the issues being discussed.

In December 1983, coming to a deeper understanding of the importance of the labour ministry, the Archdiocese of Seoul created the office of the Labour Pastoral Commissioning located in the old Bishop's Residence at Myeong-dong.

Since 1972 the Southern Association of Labour Youth of the Seoul Archdiocese along with the Urban Industrial Mission Church had been involved in the building of democratic trade unions under the influence of the Wopung Mobang struggle. From 1972 until the early 1980's, this became a prime example about how to go about creating, maintaining and administering a labour union. In order to establish a democratic trade union, members had to have confidence in their own abilities. However, after the May 18, 1980 uprising, this became increasingly difficult due to oppression and persecution. Many of the leaders of the labour movement ended up living in hiding. They struggled not become secret societies living in fear. There were instances of mutual distrust among the leadership – a sense of paranoia. It was harder and harder for unions to manage their own internal affairs that only became harder

with the passage of time.

Church people were not so deeply affected as those in the secular realm. However, there was a wide variety of opinion about how to respond to this new reality. What was possible and what actual action to support was difficult to discern. Within the trade unions themselves an antagonistic atmosphere prevailed. Various government agencies continued to divide union members from fellow union members. Worker groups had to give up the practice of self-reflection and the 'review of life' because it caused or revealed such dissention. It was a period when it was extremely difficult to continue faithfully to follow the principles of trade unionism – the salt and leaven of a democratic movement. The light shining on the four objectives was dimmed almost completely.

During the crisis with the Wopung Mobang, the incidence of emotional and volatile statements and actions was misleading, causing misunderstanding and were actually attempts at manipulation. At the same time the female employees of the Wopung Mobang flocked to the parish of Daebang-dong. The pastor of this parish, Francis Kim Byeong Do, was confused by the issues being discussed. He quickly sought out Fr. Trisolini. Fr. Jack, along with the newly appointed Director of the Southern District of the YCW organization, Fr. Peter Ju Su Uk, quickly went to Daebang-dong Parish together. Fr. Ju, meeting these women workers for the first time, was confused for a government official by these women – a case of mistaken identity.

From the 1970's onward and thru the 1980's the foreign missionary priests who had responsibility for Catholic Action groups, slowly turned over their positions to diocesan clergy after the formation of the Labour Pastoral Commission. In 1982, the new Director of the Northern District of the YCW organization of the Archdiocese of Seoul, Fr. Gu Yo Bi, was appointed. At the same time, the new Director of the Southern District of the YCW, Fr. Ju

Su Uk, was also appointed. The Diocesan Director of the YCW changed a number of times during these years. The Labour Pastoral Commission was interested in providing formation and training to young priests who were interested in labour ministry, and who would later assume responsible roles in the YCW movement. Fr. Trisolini had served as the Director of the Southern District of the YCW since 1968, leaving that office in 1982. With the urging of Stephen Cardinal Kim, Archbishop of Seoul and Bishop René Dupont, Bishop of Andong Diocese, Fr. Trisolini served as the National Director of the YCW movement from 1983 until 1985.

The International Young Christian Workers (JOCI) and the International Council of Catholic Youth Labour (CIJOC) due to their internal conflicts in the 1980's did not have a major impact on the Korean Young Christian Workers movement. However, the Korean YCW movement could not help being influenced by other activists acting in the domestic arena. Often times these other groups worked on principles contrary to Gospel and Ecclesial values and teachings. Due to these conflicts, there was a tendency for young Catholic workers to suffer from confusion and to interpret situations and make sound judgements because of their lack of experience.

### **The Teachings of the Church: Trisolini's Confidence and Anxiety**

As the Yusin regime unfolded, it coincided with increased pain for Fr. Jack. First of all, the ever increasing mechanization of the workplace caused even poorer working conditions for most labourers. Secondly, the ideological confrontation of the Yusin regime and labour often led to confrontation. Many YCW members suffered persecution and/or were killed. Thirdly, political repression of workers, often with extreme violence, became commonplace. The labour movement in this period was indeed a titanic struggle for justice. Unfortunately, in the Catholic community there were large numbers of faithful

who did not know or understand the Church's teaching on social issues. There were tough struggles in the effort to effect social change in a more just direction.

Fr. Trisolini was often criticized for his work, both outside and within the Church. Attempting to read the signs of the times correctly and to seek the Will of God through a deep understanding of Gospel values and guided by the social doctrine of the Church, led to deep misunderstandings on the part of the many, especially those who did not want to follow this path. He was not immune to the psychological suffering that such criticism can cause. Moving from tyranny to democracy is a process of empowering people, and the Christian perspective is guided by prudent judgement and decision making.

Some claimed that the Gospel method of correcting social evils was too slow and inefficient of fostering change. They claimed that through violence, problems can be resolved much more quickly and that is inevitable to use violence as a means of creating social change. There was a fundamental difference of opinion on the models to effect change by Church leaders. The use of violence generally causes a vicious cycle to be created that is very hard to stop.

However, the Church remained steadfast and firm in its commitment to peaceful and non-violent change. Through an understanding of the symptoms of the problem and a course of action that would correct or heal the underlying illness in society, was the way of the Church. Young people in the Church are often unaware of the richness of the Church's doctrine. This lack of knowledge often led to the wrong decisions being made. Moreover, most were living in a non-Christian environment.

Labourers who were Catholic usually would just attend Sunday Mass in the practice of their faith. There were some, though few, who attended daily Mass. The long working hours and poor working conditions meant that for many,

even attending Sunday Mass, was almost impossible. In the reality of life the will of God must be found. The object of a life of faith should have at its centre a sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the daily realities of life. Few were capable of making this important step in their lives of faith. In the struggle for their human rights as labourers, they must sense that Jesus is joining them in their struggle. However, people of all ranks and types were struggling for the same object, though with different motivations.

In this difficult and challenging environment, Fr. Trisolini's teaching of young labourers followed the teachings of the Church and the Gospel, attempting to instill them the spirit of the teachings for those involved in the struggle. For all of them, including the YCW, the goal of their lives was to improve the lot of working youth. Fr. Trisolini always taught clearly that the Gospel and the Church's social teachings were the basic principles of this struggle for justice for Christian men and women labourers. He taught that the Christian worker must be positive influence in his or her workplace for the betterment of all labourers.

In the workplace it is not a priest or religious, but they young labourers themselves who must effect the changes in society as they matured into this more responsible role in life. The ones who must judge the problems and come up with solutions for labour issues must be the labourers themselves. Priests and religious were merely cooperators with them in this whole process. All must be aware of their proper role in the process, thus fulfilling properly the mandate of the Decree on the Laity of the Second Vatican Council.

From 1993 until 2010, Fr. Trisolini was the International Director of the International Asian Council of Catholic Young Labourers. In this role he attempted to expand the scope of the ministry to labour to include labourers from all of the diverse parts of Asia, always recognizing that the reality differed in each country, and thus different paths had to be traveled to obtain the

same results. His knowledge was wide, and always his judgement was clear. He made a deep impression upon Young Catholic Labourers far beyond the boundaries of Korea. He was well respected around the world in the Catholic Workers movement, having many who followed him for many years.



# Overall Labour Ministry



### **Stephen Cardinal KIM Sou-hwan's Call**

When Fr. Trisolini was appointed parish priest of the Dorim-dong parish in Seoul, it was around the same time that Archbishop Stephen Cardinal KIM Sou-hwan was enthroned as the Archbishop of Seoul. He had previously served as the Bishop of Masan Diocese, at the same time serving as the Bishop concerned with Pastoral Labour issues of youth for the Korean Bishops Conference. During his tenure, the Ganghwa Island incident of the Simdo Textile Company took place. Archbishop KIM was a great influence on Fr. Jack, with his outspoken support for the protection of labour rights and dignity. At the time of the self-immolation of Jeon Tae Il, he was very helpful in having treatment for this victim at the Seoul St. Mary's Hospital. Through this incident the Archbishop's interest increased sharply.

The new Archbishop said to Fr. Trisolini one day: "Father, I am creating a research committee centered on labourers for urban-industrial pastoral issues. I would like you to attend these meetings. Would you be interested in attending?"

Fr. Trisolini responded "Certainly, your Eminence. I am not sure of my own capabilities, and I am a religious priest. But if your Eminence wants me to attend these meetings, of course I will be there."

Cardinal Kim along with the Chancellor of the Archdiocese, Fr. Barnabas Kim Cheol Gyu had appointed twelve priests to the Urban-Industrial Pastoral Research Committee in 1971. This was the Korean Church response to the 1967 Encyclical of Pope Paul VI *Populorum Progressio* (The Progress of Peoples). The crises of the Shin-Do Textile Company and the suicide immolation of Jeon Tae Il stirred the Korean Church to respond in a practical and visible way to the dark side of Korean progress and industrialization. Fr. Trisolini, despite being a member of a religious congregation, was appointed the chairperson of the Urban-Industrial Pastoral Research Committee. Cardinal Kim had an abiding trust in Fr.

Trisolini from this time onwards. Later, Fr. Trisolini was recalled in the media:

“Not yet having died then, Professor Thomas More Park Young Ki or Professor Kim Mal Ryong and other professionals in labour issues, or pastors and others involved in labour ministry always listened with an attentive ear to what Fr. Trisolini had to say. At the time there was always danger of authorities eavesdropping and/or surveillance on meetings and conversations and with this in mind, he took advantage of speaking with Cardinal Kim during mealtimes. He was called to speak with the Cardinal one day at lunch time. Because of his age, he could not recall what exactly the subject of the conversation was, but it was to discuss about some labour issue current at that time. This was during lunch time, and he had not been able to eat anything yet. He said that to the Cardinal, who also had not had time to eat lunch. The Cardinal called down to the kitchen, and asked for two bowls of ramyeon (noodles), and they had their conversation while eating. Cardinal Kim was a touchingly simple man.”

Park Jeong Hui’s military regime had an economic policy that was described as “Making Choices, Growth, and later Redistribution”. Farmers, fishermen and labourers were forced to make sacrifices for future, hoped for, economic development. One of the results was the breakdown between rural and urban poor – with the rural poor being given priority over urban poor. This led to even greater deterioration of the working and living conditions of the urban poor. This was reflected in the increasing discontent of the suffering urban-industrial labourers. From 1970 onward this led to various manifestations of their discontent. The Bishops Conference, on the Peace Day celebration of November 14 1972, held a Mass Seoul’s Myeong-dong Cathedral, which was attended by priests, religious and faithful. A pastoral document of the Bishops Conference was announced with the title: “Let us ignore the absurdity of it all...” This document was prepared by Fr. Trisolini and five members of the Urban-Industrial Commission. This document proved to be of great

significance and was founded on the social doctrine of the Church and the right to human dignity, as proclaimed both within and without the Church. In the document the call to fight against the injustices and falsehoods found in Korean society were underlined. The corruption, absurdity, abuse of human rights and political tyranny were condemned and called upon to be corrected.

The Urban-Industrial Pastoral Research Committee of the Archdiocese of Seoul held a meeting of the Standing Committee in October 1972. Until this meeting, members of the Urban-Industrial Pastoral Committee were limited to priests, but henceforth would include laity, sisters and seminarians as well. Thus, the priest members were: Fr. Trisolini, Fr. Park Seong Jong, Columban Fr. Noel Stephen Ryan, Fr. Andrew YEOM Soo-jung, Fr. Thomas Park Byeong Yun, Fr. Francis Xavier Choi Yong Rok, and the directors of both the Northern and Southern Districts of the YCW movement. Five Sisters were appointed as members, while two seminarians and twelve laity also joined its ranks.

The work of the Committee was centered upon practical activities, attempting to serve as a leaven in society. It changed its official name to the Urban-Industrial Pastoral Committee. At regular monthly meetings, all of the organizations involved in the urban-industrial sector met in order to unify the various activities of the groups, and also to exchange information that may be helpful to other sectors. Each year two General Meetings were held, in which there would be a deeper exchange of experiences – often looking at deeply specific case studies. Also a common budget was created.

In the 1980s the name of the Committee was changed to the Labour Pastoral Commission of the Archdiocese in order to respond to the serious social problems that were arising, attempting to bring to resolution the issues that existed. Documents on the Church's social teaching were prepared and shared, which had a greater impact as time passed. At the time, fifty percent of labourers were receiving approximately 100,000 won or less in monthly wages.

At the same time, the cost of basic commodities were increasing in price at a fast pace. Due to the restrictions applied by various government organizations, activism was almost impossible in this whole area. It was recognized that unless the issue of workers' rights' violations were confronted – labour would soon get out of hand in their demands for greater recompense for their work. The Bishops Conference released the document “*On the humanization of society*” and was released on July 5, 1985.

This document, prepared by Fr. Trisolini and the then Fr. Andrew CHOI Chang-mou, president of the Catholic University, Labour Counseling Centre's Kim Mal Ryong and Sogang University's Industrial Problems Research Director Thomas de Aquino Kim Eo Sang plus others were given permission to create this document by Cardinal Kim. It was centred on the solving of problems in a practical, realistic manner. It was centred on Christ and the fundamental union that we share with him – seeking for common means of cooperation, facing the problems that existed in Korean society.

This document became the focus used by the Church in Korea, analyzing and interpreting the specific problems and issues faced by society. This document was a reasoned reflection of the Church, and was used widely in preaching and teaching. After the release of this document, the Labour Pastoral Commission began the process of releasing various church documents centred upon labour issues. In order to share the fruit of this research, seminars were organized for priests and religious working with marginalized labour in order to research and study these various documents. The YCW movement held various study programs, retreats and monthly masses during which these various documents served as points of study centring on labour issues.

Fr. Trisolini also continued to use resources he had learned of in France during his days of seminary study – such as the work of the French Fr. Rubure's “*Economy and Humanism*”. The methodology used then was one

of class work, study and workshops which were coupled with actual factory visits reinforced the knowledge of students in the real life situation of labourers and the conditions under which they were forced to work. He thought it very important for Korean seminarians to have the same experience of labourers' lives and problems. Sogang University's Fr. Basil M. Price, S.J. and his Labour Management Institute, along with Professor Park Young Ki collaborated with him in this effort, giving him much encouragement. The history of labour, labour law, the functioning of labour and the market, etc. were some of the topics lectured upon.

The Labour Pastoral Commission offered pastoral courses for deacons in 1971. They were taught so that they would see reflected accurately the reality of labour in its actual situation. They were sent to observe the working conditions of labourers in various factories. They were also taken to see and experience the Changsin-dong slum apartments where many common labourers lived. Visiting the offices of labour unions and also the various other Catholic and Protestant youth groups was part of their on-the-job training. The then Fr. Andrew CHOI Chang-mou set up "Pastoral Industry Teams" where seminarians received experience and training in working conditions in factories, trade unions and the industrial mission apostolate. This training was centred on the development of consciousness so that the future priests would have a good understanding of both labour theory and also have experienced directly the issues in the field.

As the Yusin era came into being, it became very difficult to provide these types of direct experiences for the seminarians. When the Prado priest, Fr. Benedict Lee Yong-Yu, completed his studies in France, and upon his return to Korea, he began this type of training in earnest for the young seminarians. After Fr. Lee's sudden death in 1981, Fr. Ju Su Uk founded and worked hard to develop the *Wheat Seed* meeting. This *Wheat Seed* meeting, begun

in the Seoul Seminary, eventually expanded to the Gwangju, Taegu and the Suwon seminaries as well. From 1984 onwards, Sogang University's Labour Management Institute directed every two years a living experience program for the seminarians.

Beginning in 1986 these two programs were replaced by a new program more tailored to the seminarians needs. After completing the training phase of the program in the field "*God-Human Beings -Labour Issues*" was used as an outline of a training kit that was eventually published. In 1990 at the Pastoral Labour Centre in Jongno these training courses continued. This program was eventually absorbed by the Seoul Archdiocesan Social Services Department. These courses helped to actively support the ministry of priests and seminarians, and they usually lasted for two days duration.

### **Korean Prado Priests Collaboration**

The response to the programs offered to priests and seminarians, offering a pastoral opportunity to be involved in and become aware of the issues of industrialization and labour, were positive. However, at that time it was difficult for the Archdiocese of Seoul to have a full time priest involved in this apostolate. A priest who is a labourer himself, living with other labourers, working for the development of Gospel-valued labour required the presence of the Prado Society of priests. Two seminarians, among them being Lee Yong-Yu, were sent to France for studies. Upon finishing his studies, Lee Yong-Yu returned to Korea with Fr. Olivier Berrangar, a French member of the Prado Society. Upon Lee's ordination to the priesthood he did so as a member of the Prado Society, pledging to spend his life as a labourer, living with poor labourers and working with poor labourers. With this the Prado Society of priests was begun in Korea.

When Fr. Lee and Fr. Berrangar first came to Korea from France, with Fr.

Trisolini's help, they stayed for a long time in the Don Bosco Youth Centre. Fr. Berrangar spent many years working as a member of Prado in Korea, being involved in formation, and informing the local Korean church of their life and charism. Later he was to return to France as a Bishop. As a member of Prado he trained many followers in this charism to live with poor labourers and urban dwellers. After Fr. Lee's untimely death, Fr. Gu Yo Bi was of assistance to Fr. Trisolini in the Labour Pastoral Commission. As the Prado Society they have had a central influence to the present day in this ministry.

Immediately following Fr. Trisolini as the Director of the Labour Pastoral Commission was Prado Fr. Paul Yong Dong Jin. He had, through the Don Bosco Youth Centre, formed a relationship with Fr. Trisolini years before. After serving as the national President of the Korean YCW movement, he went on and became a priest. After his ordination, he served in a parish and while doing so remained involved in the YCW and the Catholic Labour movement and later was the Director of the Catholic Youth and Children's Apostolate for the diocese as well. Joining the Prado Society, he continued his labour ministry and was an influence and sometimes in charge of these groups as well. His pastoral ministry was always directly or indirectly related to Labour Ministry.

### **Religious Sisters Working in Collaboration**

Working conditions for women in Korea were very poor. Among them were the ubiquitous female bus attendant who were in a particularly bad situation. These young women mostly came from the countryside to Seoul looking for work, and ended up living in cramped dormitories. Despite the cold of winter and the heat of summer they put in long days of work. Dealing with the issues of harassment and violence and sexual exploitation at the hands of their employers, bus drivers and male employees – it seemed that the problems of wages, food, clothing and shelter were too difficult to solve as well.

The pastoral involvement of Religious Sisters in the Korean Church is a very big factor in the Church's development. The pastoral work of Sisters in the Labour Ministry is even more significant. The Sisters, who began working with these young female bus attendants, began their attempt at understanding their reality by taking a close look at the living conditions they were forced to endure. At first, the Sisters set up programs for the bus attendants to study things like reading and writing, flower arranging and arts and crafts. They also provided programs that would assist the attendants to take charge of their health needs – providing a variety of programs.

Obviously there was a limit at how much these programs of education in cooking, flower arranging, etc. offered to the bus attendants in a way that would help them directly. Most of them were very young girls, with limited resources to support themselves given their backgrounds. They needed to live in a safe and nurturing environment, protecting them from predators prior to their marriage and raising their own children. The quest for allowing these young girls to live in dignity and safety was an ongoing project. The first move was to set up a residence for these young women. In 1971 the Salesian Sisters in their Singil-dong property, opened the Majarello Center. It was a residence for bus attendants and a centre for training for female labourers. In 1974, the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of Mary opened a dormitory for female labourers in Garibong-dong, providing a safe haven for them.

However, the residences operated by the Sisters were not simply a place to sleep at night. They offered programs in catechesis, community living through liberal arts courses, emphasis on forming good relationships was also taught. Through regular meetings of workers in their area and lectures and retreats, they were led to appreciate their inherent dignity. Emphasis was placed on the formation of good relationships that would lead to changes for the better for themselves and for others. They were not just taught about better ways of

making money or doing clever things, but placed themselves in relationship to Christ. Through a relationship with him, their personal relationships changed and matured.

In August 1975 the Prado Sisters came to Korea in order to train Korean members and work in factories or the workforce. In 1986 the Missionary Sisters of St. Columban created a residence and school targeting young people in the workforce. The bus attendant problem solved itself in many ways, with the buses all being automated and only a single driver on board. The direction of the ministry for young workers has changed with time, with dormitories and working conditions being much improved. The Sisters have adapted to changing times through more diversified activities.

### **Foundation of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit – Cooperation with the Prado Sisters**

One day in the early 1970's, a group of female members of the YCW movement, visited Fr. Trisolini and shared with him a long held dream with him.

“Father, we want to continue living as factory workers. We would like to pursue the ideal of the YCW movement more aggressively as well while working as labourers. This is what we would like to dedicate our lives to. Those among us who share the same dream are not religious but we would like to have a life in common while spreading the gospel to and for labourers.”

Trisolini replied “That is a very good idea. I will try and think about this whole concept more deeply. After consulting with other informed people, let us decide about this project later.”

Fr. Jack consulted with Maryknoll Sister, Jean Maloney, regarding this possibility.

“Sister, there is a group of women, active in the YCW movement, who want

to continue working as labourers while at the same time have a common life together as religious. Sister, what would be the best for these young women? I would like to hear your thoughts.”

Sister Jean responded “Father, I think that is something that is coming about naturally. People working in the field should be encouraged, and I hope you will assist them to live their dreams. Anything that I can do for them, I would assist them happily.”

Fr. Trisolini continued to discuss this project with several people, including Stephen Cardinal KIM Sou-hwan. It was eventually decided that one community would be formed as a test. In May 1973, at the Don Bosco Youth Centre, Fr. Trisolini, Maryknoll Sisters Jean Maloney and Mary Lou Herlihy and the young women destined to form this community met to set up concrete plans in fulfillment of their dreams. They had received all of the necessary permission for this experiment from Cardinal Kim already. On the evening of June 10 at 6 p.m., at a Chinese restaurant in Myeong-dong, the final decision was reached to found the “Sisters of the Pentecost.” From October 4 of the same year, in a rented house next to the Garibong-dong market area, these young women began community life, changing the name of the new institute to the “Sisters of the Holy Spirit”.

Sister Jean Maloney, receiving permission from Cardinal Kim, went to Garibong-dong in order to live with this fledgling community. Originally, three young women of the YCW movement were living together. Each of them, while continuing to work, would return to a life in common together. Their poverty was little different from the other poor labourers in Garibong-dong. They would visit their neighbours, sharing their worries and struggles of life as labourers. The purpose in gathering together in a community was to live more closely in accord with the Scriptures. Their way of life was simple, preparing meals together and sharing the daily issues in their various workplaces.

Cardinal Kim was convinced that the Prado community was necessary for the Korean church – feeling very positive warmth of this charism – and deciding to begin formation of priests in this way of life. In order to begin this community in Korea, Cardinal Kim paid a visit to the General Headquarters of the Prado Society in Lyon, France. During his visit there he discovered that the Prado charism also included a women’s community, of which he quickly informed Fr. Trisolini. His Eminence invited the Prado Sisters to make a foundation in Korea. Immediately after this, the former Superior General of the Prado Sisters, Sister Marie-Thérèse Anselme paid a visit to Korea from May 7, 1974 in order to ascertain the needs of Korea in the factories and work places of women. Deciding that the community could make a contribution in Korea, Sisters Marie-Thérèse Anselme and Monique Doitrand entered Korea on August 28, 1975. They resided in the Garibong-dong community of the Holy Spirit Sisters.

After this initial beginning of the Holy Spirit Community - of the original three Korean candidates, two had decided to leave the community. On April 28, 1977, the first Korean postulant entered the Prado Sisters, and thus they began to grow the first roots of the Congregation in Korean soil. Among the early candidates for the Prado Sisters was a young woman who was active as a teacher at the Don Bosco Youth Centre, a member of the YCW movement. Other members of the YCW later would join the Prado Sisters. These women, living as common labourers and as vowed religious women simultaneously, live a life that is in the midst of their neighbours and act as a leaven of evangelization for those whom they minister.

### **Myeong-dong Labour Counseling Office**

Until the 1970’s, through the experience of the Young Christian Workers movement, the Christian Labour movement and the Labour Pastoral Committee, the Catholic Church in Korea had gained a great deal of

experience and knowledge of the reality of Korean labour. However, there were obstacles to establishing legal protection of labour within Korean labour law, and as a result there were large restraints on what could be accomplished. Thus “Labourers, working through the Church, seeking for true human values through a deeply spiritual life and having a desire for a more just society” a Labour Counseling Office was established.

The Board of Directors for the Counseling Office was established in September 1979 by the Archdiocese of Seoul for the Labour Counseling Office. The system, based on the Dutch Bishops’ “Cebemo” method, a Labour Counseling Office was established in November of 1979. Until the 1961 military coup, the former President of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Kim Mal Ryong, was appointed as the first Director of the Office. Those who took advantage of this new effort were not limited to only Catholics; it was open to all labourers who needed help. Enforcing existing laws became a priority, thus this small effort had a large impact on the reality of Korean labour from the beginning. Soon, a broad outline of the sufferings of labourers through Korean society became apparent and verifiable. With this experience the Church could respond more effectively to the living reality of Korean labour.

There was a generalized attempt to restore democracy to the Korean Republic – frequently defying the military junta that had assumed power. For this they received much criticism and attempts at controlling their activity through negativism were frequent. Attempts to solve labour issues through existing labour laws in this struggle for justice often met with great resistance. Legal issues that, at the time, had no chance of being approved were pursued. This struggle in itself was an important contribution to society. These efforts resulted many times of businesses and government agencies to comply with the law and protect the interests of labourers.

Due to the activity of the Counseling Office, the labour force became aware of what the office was offering, and thus labourers took more frequent advantage of its services. Soon those staffing this office, due to the heavy workload and demands of the workers who came to it, became both mentally and physically exhausted. Eventually, a Prado priest in 1987 opened another Counseling Office in June 1987 at Guro 1-dong, meeting the same issues as the Myeong-dong office. In 1989 a third office was opened in Chang-dong as well.

Fr. Trisolini was always on the lookout for people, whether priests, religious or laity, who could participate in this new form of ministry. He paid particular attention to the role of the laity in dealing with social issues – charging them with the responsibility of actually implementing social justice. He taught that the greatest work is to be on the side of the poorest and weakest in society in order to protect and defend them against exploitation and injustice. He believed it was the responsibility for lay ministers to be the primary mode of planting the seeds of evangelization in society and overseeing its growth and development.

During the course of any ministry, because of the ever-present human weaknesses found in all people – including priests - there were instances of disagreement and confrontation. Fr. Trisolini's strength was his unfailing loyalty to the teachings of the Church in his training of labourers. The process of evangelization continues despite the dilemma of conflict among good people who have polar differences in opinion and experience. Thus the cooperation of Catholic labour workers with various Protestant organizations, while not sharing a common doctrine or church tradition, cooperation was possible because of the common love of Jesus and a common love for the poor in their midst. While we may never settle the differences that we have, we can still work for the common good together in fellowship and the love of God. It is the Holy Spirit that brings us together. It is the Holy Spirit that guides us to a life of service – together with those with whom we may share little in human terms.



## Brothers and Sisters in God



When Fr. Trisolini was assigned to the Dorim-dong Parish, he was visited by Pastor George Ogle.

“Fr. Trisolini, I’m glad that we are meeting in Korea! My name is George Ogle and I am a Protestant Minister. I am involved with the Urban Industrial Mission in Yeongdeungpo.”

Fr. Jack responded “Reverend, I’ve heard a great deal about your involvement with Korean labourers. I am very pleased to meet you. I’ve just been ordained a priest a short time, and I must confess that I know little about the situation of Korean labour. Please inform my ignorance and guide me through this.”

The Pastor replied “No, there’s not much that I could teach you, Father. I think you will easily understand and determine the cause of problems that you come across here in Korea. You will also find a solution quite quickly to the problems you discover. What I am interested in is joining hands and working together as we work in this field in a spirit of openness and mutual respect. We need to share our opinions without fear. If we work together in a spirit of cooperation, we can save each other a lot of time and effort. That is all that I ask you, Father Jack.”

“Pastor Ogle, I thank you for speaking so openly and frankly with me. When we work together we will speak to each other frankly and openly – just as you are speaking now. I will accept your opinions and to the extent possible incorporate them into my own thoughts and actions.”

“Korea is becoming an industrial nation and making very quick progress, Father. However, compared to the rate of industrialization, the work environment of labour and the actual working conditions are very poor. Efforts to correct unsafe working conditions which threaten the life of workers are ignored. There is no effort to establish a healthy relationship with labour on the part of management. There are labourers who have no concept of what

a labour union is or what it can do for them. Many labourers are unaware of how poorly they are being treated, and have no idea of how to appropriately agitate for increased wages. Ten thousand workers are in this situation as we speak. Our political leaders and bureaucrats are only interested in increasing the productivity of industry across the country. The rights and living conditions of workers are always the last consideration for them. Father Jack, we are of a similar mind – we cannot resist the urge to be of help to these poor people. We will have to cooperate with each other a great deal in the future.”

“Reverend, many thanks for your frankness, I appreciate it very much. I feel unprepared for this task and I hope that you will help me as I learn.”

Thinking that his activity with workers could extend even to ecumenical sharing across denominational boundaries, he walked to the nearest Presbyterian Church. His naïve expectation was soon crushed!

“Hello, Pastor! My name is Jack Trisolini, and I am the pastor of the Catholic Church here in the neighbourhood. I wanted to give each of the members of our Young Christian Workers movement a bible as a gift. Would it be possible to obtain them through you?”

“Father, you have come to the wrong place. For us, giving Catholics copies of the Bible is something we would not do carelessly. Excuse me. But please, just leave now!”

Beginning in 1971, the Protestant Urban Industrial Labour Mission and the Catholic Urban Industrial Pastoral Commission began collaboration in their efforts for Korean labour. Many member of the YCW movement were in solidarity with the Urban Industrial Labour Mission. Members of both organizations, in their involvement with workers, shared many experiences and equally solved many problems together. This cooperation between denominations was as a result of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) that opened the doors to acting together for justice and peace. The young Catholic

workers in their work with the rag pickers and in their collaboration with other groups were able to bring about significant changes for these poorest of the poor. Beginning in May 1962 the police began to investigate and intimidate both Catholic and Protestant programs for labourers. As a response, the Religious Leaders Committee, which cut across the denominations, was formed with Reverend Jo Hyang Rok being the chairperson and Fr. Francis Park Seong Jong being the vice chairperson.

In the 1968 at Simdo Fabric Company factory on Ganghwa Island, there were major labour disputes that erupted into conflict. The then Bishop of Masan, Bishop Stephen KIM Sou-hwan, in his capacity as the Director of the Young Christian Workers movement, the Protestant Pastor Jo Seung Hyeok and the Anglican Fr. Richard, sat down and discussed counter-measures in response to the situation on Ganghwa Island. In October 1969 a seminar was held, sponsored by the Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches involved in labour issues, with the title "Development of Society and Labour Problems". The lectures were given at the Seoul Citizens Hall. In this instance, Catholic and Protestant hands were joined in a common effort to protect the rights of labour, pledging to continue this cooperation until the issues affecting workers were brought to resolution.

In May 1971, there was an eruption of labour at the violent death of Kim Jin-Su, a worker at the Hanyeong Fabric Company. Catholic labour groups and the Protestant Urban Industrial Mission joined hands once again in a common effort. In November 1971, business owners attempted to use undue interference with their workers who wished to form a trade union. The inter-religious groups attempted to help the workers bring to fruition their longed for trade union. Fr. Trisolini, along with the pastor of Jeongneung Parish Fr. John Jang Ik and Pastor Jo Seung Hyeok of the Christian Society Action Association, worked together for a good conclusion to the confrontation.

The following February, those Protestant Pastors, Sisters and laity working in labour issues from Yeongdeungpo, Anyang, Myeonmok-dong and the Urban Industrial Mission met in the Don Bosco Youth Centre. Here they heard those involved in the labour dispute with the Crown Electronic Company, listening to the testimony of those directly involved in the action and what the government policies regarding this issue were. Thus, Catholic and Protestant labour activists responded to the violations of rights of workers, protesting together the injustice. Training courses for workers were co-hosted by Catholic and Protestant groups – many efforts were made to cooperate closely together.

As time passed, slowly it was discovered that either the practice or goals of the two groups were often at odds with each other. The difference of perception in viewing the reality of labour was often very different. The Catholics seemed to be more interested in acting together as a united front. There were times when the Catholic name was used without permission which caused some discontent on the Catholic side. As issues between the two faith-traditions became apparent, in March 1972 the Catholic Urban Industrial Committee decided to study the joint efforts with the Protestant Urban Industrial Mission. As a result a set of guidelines were drawn up in response to issues that had arisen. Fr. Trisolini summarized the problem as follows:

The problems that were felt to exist as a result of our joint activities were, first of all, the Protestant Urban Industrial Mission, being involved in many activities along with Catholic activists, often would list only their organization as the prime-mover of events that were actually common to both. To put it in a different way, the members of the Young Christian Workers, though involved in a given activity, felt that they were not being treated as equal partners in the activities, and thus differences of opinion came to surface. For example, several times there would be public statements made without consultation with the YCW movement, and these statements released to the press. Secondly, Catholic

and Protestant institutions are operated in a different way. Protestant groups can come to quick decisions and act accordingly. For Catholic groups there is a longer process of discernment, meetings and sharing, etc., that precludes quick decision making. These differences were cause of some discomfort. The Urban Industrial Mission, acting as one Church, could quickly make decisions regarding activities. They could immediately begin implementing those decisions. However, the structure of the Catholic Church is that all the groups, parishes and committees involved in a specific ministry, would meet, discuss and come to a slow consensus. These differences were cause of friction between Catholics and Protestants.

Thirdly, decisions made by Protestant groups were immediately implemented. It was difficult to operate at two different speeds as it were. The Catholics could seem quite plodding at times. At times the Industrial Urban Mission's education programs could be quite intrusive. However, Catholic methods would be much more involved in analysis, in order to obtain a deep understanding of the underlying conditions or causes of a given problem. This takes time and effort. These different approaches to education were also a cause of some friction and discomfort between the two groups. Ultimately these differences were not anything that could be helped – Catholics and Protestants just work differently.”

There was a general agreement that Catholic and Protestant activists would continue to work together in education programs, but only when necessary. Catholic efforts centred on meetings of Catholic business owners, the education of the clergy, the activities of the Young Christian Workers, continuing support programs for labour, involvement in labour disputes, etc. When it was possible for Catholic and Protestant groups to work together on a specific program, the effort involved was happily undertaken. Each had to be aware of the differences between them.



# Formation of Apostolic Groups



## **Christian Labour Movement**

In 1964, Fr. Francis Park Seong Jong, gathering more mature labourers or those who had married, created the Adult Young Christian Workers Movement (*or the MOFC Mouvement Ouvrier de Families Coréennes*). These individuals had previously no way to be active in the labour movement. Fr. Francis Park Seong Jong, upon founding the Catholic Adult Labour Movement, found the organization quite active at first. Unfortunately, a group of the early members formed a construction company that led to the decline and eventual collapse of the organization. Fr. Trisolini stepped into this unfortunate situation, and with former members of the YCW movement, created the Christian Workers Movement on February 28, 1972. This organization continues to function to the present day.

This organization had grown in Daegu, Busan, Jeonju and Daejeon, with teams in each of these cities who were actively involved in labour issues. Because most of the members were married, their activity became more limited, because of the effect of their position in the labour force. Until the national meeting on June 6, 1974, their labour activity was limited with the result that their efforts stagnated. While great efforts were made to sustain the group, even initiating a newsletter, their activity continued to diminish. They attempted to form new plans and recruit new members, but with mixed results. Just being a Catholic in the work force was often times reason enough for dismissal, with no recourse. This experience was shared by members of both the YCW and CWM. The very means of judging, dialoguing and the like came in to disuse. Fr. Trisolini searched for ways to help these individuals through group prayer meeting and a sharing of the burdens they were carrying.

Fr. Trisolini set up a relationship with the Japanese Christian Workers Movement, and invited Fr. Edouard (the director of the JCW) to Korea to provide education courses to members of the Korean YCW and CW on labour issues.

In early October 1975 there began a regular exchange of meetings between the Korean and Japanese CW Movement. Through meetings on the international level, i.e. the International Conference East Asian representatives, helped to broaden the horizons of the Korean Labour movement with involvement with people involved in the same issues in East Asia. The Korean Catholic Workers movement continued to struggle for growth. Unlike the YCW movement, the Catholic Labour movement, there was no consistent level of growth and maturity in the organization. Despite that, due to the efforts of zealous members and partners of the movement, there were consistent opportunities for development offered – regular meetings, training sessions and retreats were held routinely. These efforts continue to the present day. Fr. Trisolini served as the Director of the Christian Labour movement from 1972 until 1979.

### **Pastoral Care of Urban Poor**

While Fr. Trisolini's work concentrated on young workers, he did not ignore others in the work force. That was because his interest was always with the poor urban workers, whatever their age. Many people came from the rural areas of the country to the cities in order to find work. Most of them could be counted among the new class of urban poor. It was inevitable that the Church would become involved pastorally with these individuals in their new setting.

The response of the Korean Catholic Church until 1980 was centered on the efforts of Sarah Kim Hye Gyeong and her "Community Organization Group". In the 1970's Ms. Kim found labour activists frequently detained for their work among the urban poor. With the help of the Archdiocese, she was able to purchase a house in Sillim-dong (Nangok Urban Village) where volunteers from the Seoul National University Medical School, both professors and students, would offer a free weekly clinic to give care to the urban poor.

Fr. Trisolini, always concerned with urban poor issues, appointed Ms. Kim

as the administrator of the Urban Pastoral Commission. Their primary goal was to make known the problems facing the urban poor and seek solutions to the problems observed. Also, this became a training ground for seminarians to observe firsthand the plight of the urban poor and to further establish interest across a wider spectrum in the Church. For many this experience gave a direction to their future ministries.

In May 1980, following Fr. Trisolini in this role was Fr. Lee Yong-Yu as the second chairperson of the Urban Pastoral Commission. Fr. Lee, believing that the title of the commission was somewhat misleading, decided to rename it as the Labour Pastoral Commission. Thus with this clarification of name and roles, it can be said that the Community Organization Groups envisioned originally, later carried on this ministry under the title of the Catholic Urban Poor Pastoral Commission.

### **Ministry for Children**

Using the methodology of the YCW movement, a program was developed for the children of YCW members, with the founding of a nursery and study hall for their children. The founder of this facility was Katherine Mun Gyeong Su, which was located in Banghak-dong. Another feature of this facility was that it provided training for marriage and motherhood for the young female workers. Another effort was the centre founded by Anna Kim Bong Sun at Mangwon-dong, following the spirit of the YCW movement that was a Catholic Youth Labour Cooperative centre. Here they held courses on sustainable consumption, the proper disposal of refuse and recycling methods. They also ran a program for children while doing these education courses.

In 1985, the Prado Sister Monica started a meeting at the community's Incheon convent for children every Saturday. These children, used to living on the streets and alleys in their neighbourhoods while their parents worked, were

often hungry during the day. Here these children were given food and love in abundance, while the parents were free to work. Besides food and shelter, they were also taught basic skills such as house cleaning, cooking and the care of their younger brothers and sisters. This was open to any children, regardless of their religion. Within the first month, thirty children were coming regularly. Other centres similar to this one spread, with it appearing in Seoul in 1990.

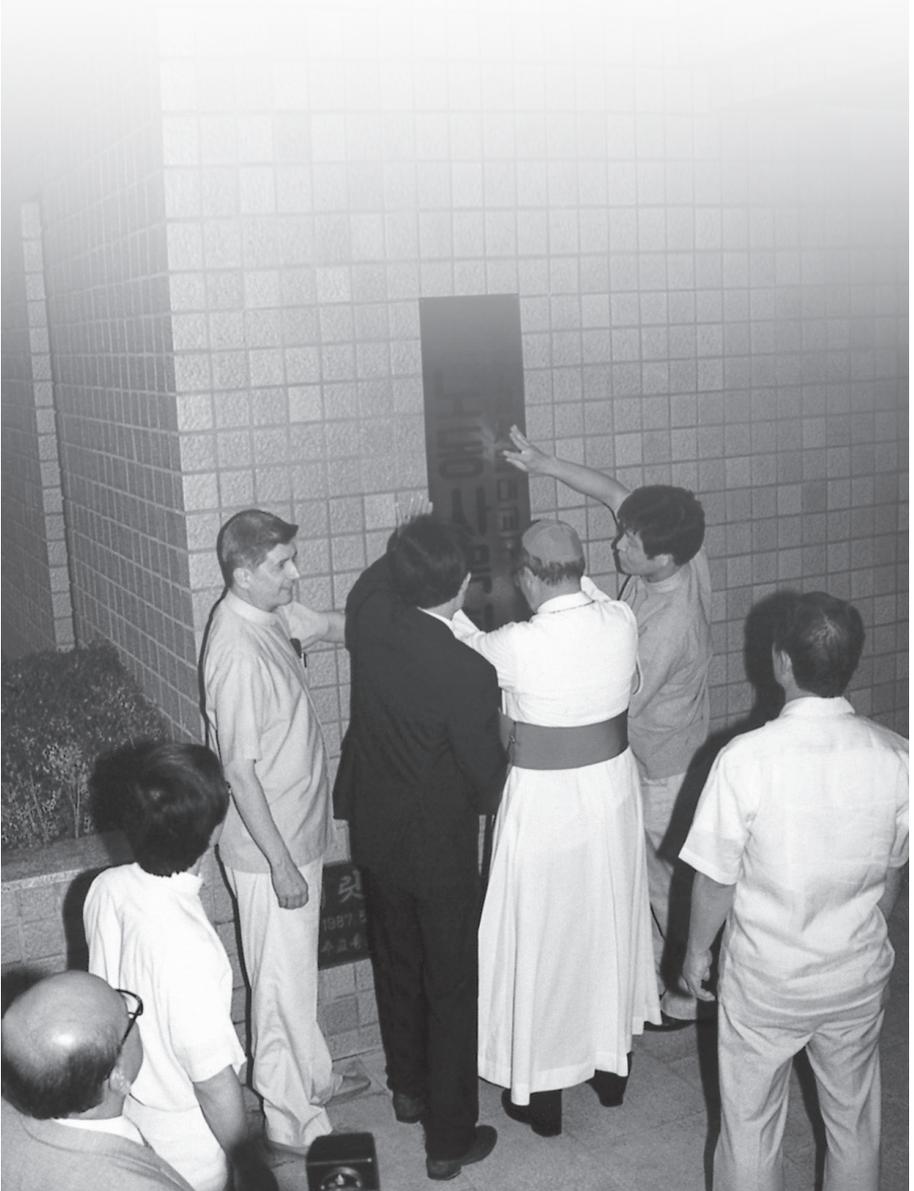
In 1991, the General Headquarters of the Prado Sisters in Paris sent Sisters to study the program that was being offered in Korea. This apostolate was formally approved by the General and Council as an appropriate apostolate for the community in February 1992. Fr. Jack met with the partners in this undertaking many times, hearing often the methodology used in this approach for child support and education. At one of the meetings of the Labour Pastoral Commission of the Archdiocese of Seoul he spoke of the challenges:

“In all of these efforts in accompanying children, rather than simply giving them food to eat we should train them in the preparation of food for their future good. We have to learn how to serve with humility and patience, teaching children so that they learn useful skills they can use in the future.”

While attending meetings at the international level of the YCW movement, he would often speak of this outreach to the children of labourers, and encourage other areas to follow the example. It was an appropriate expansion of the Labour Pastoral Commission’s mandate to minister for young labourers. This was something not easily accepted at first by some involved in the labour ministry. However, Bishop Andrew CHOI Chang-mou, while Auxiliary Bishop of Seoul, judged that it was an appropriate ministry within the ministry to labour, and should be considered part of it.



# At Jongno



## **Labour Pastoral Centre**

In 1972 the Columban Missionaries purchased a building on Euljiro 5-ga to create a center for individuals coming from the countryside to the capitol in order to find work. This building was a convenient place for members of the Northern Region of the YCW members to meet in, plus it was close to the Pyeonghwa Market. Aside from social meetings, classes were offered in the classrooms, called the Cardijin Night School. The offices of the Northern Region of the YCW were located in this building. This building served for many years as a temporary dormitory for young workers coming up from the countryside, and a place for meetings of those involved in YCW activities. Because the building was such disrepair and on the verge of collapsing, the Columbans gave it to the Archdiocese of Seoul, which later tore it down in 1982.

The Archdiocese of Seoul proposed that a new building be constructed on this site for the use of the Northern Region of the YCW, but because of subway construction and other factors, this plan was not realized. With the loss of their building, the Northern Region of the YCW found itself in a very difficult position. As a result, Fr. Trisolini, along with the new leader of the Northern Region of the YCW, Fr. Peter Ju Su-Uk, went to discuss this issue with the then Vicar General of the Archdiocese, Bishop Joseph KYEOG Kap-ryong.

The Bishop, upon hearing of the needs for the labour ministry, proposed a collaborative effort with a parish building being planned already for the Jongno Parish in Central Seoul; they discussed the matter with the parish priest there. With few projected parishioners in this parish, the parish priest – Fr. Louis Jang Dae Ik – graciously consented to include a third and fourth floor which would house the Labour Pastoral Commission. With the sale of the unusable building on Euljiro 5-ga, this money was dedicated to the expanded plans for the new Jongno Parish complex. Thus a new home was created for the Christian Workers movement and the YCW movement in Seoul.

The Don Bosco Youth Centre originally was the centre of activities for the Southern Region of the YCW – Fr. Trisolini was in residence there from 1970 onwards. From January 1972 it also served as the temporary office of the Seoul Archdiocesan Labour Pastoral Commission. This centre was used for labourers in the Yeongdeungpo area for classes, meetings, singing programs, cultural programs, recreation and other uses. The Salesian Sisters, at their nearby Majarello Centre, accepted young girls coming from the countryside as well. This facility served as a meeting place for young bus attendants and workers at the Wonpung textile factory (later the Hanguk textile factory).

When Fr. Lee Yong-Yu became the Director of the Seoul Archdiocesan Labour Pastoral Commission, he had begun research on creating a Centre for Labour Ministry near the Dorim-dong Parish Church. He had already submitted a plan to the Seoul Archdiocese. However, he suddenly died, and this plan was abandoned. Upon Fr. Lee's unexpected death, Fr. Trisolini again assumed the office of Director of the Seoul Archdiocesan Labour Pastoral Commission. Shortly after this, the occupation of the Seoul Archdiocesan Vicar General's Office occurred by the workers of the Control Data Corporation. On this occasion Bishop KYEONG, in December 1983, moved the Labour Pastoral Office to the third floor of the old Bishop's House at Myeong-dong, and was then moved to the Catholic Centre in December 1986 temporarily.

Finally in April 1987, when the Jongno Parish building was completed, the Seoul Archdiocesan Labour Pastoral Commission finally had a home in the buildings third and fourth floors. There was space for the YCW movement's Northern District offices, a lecture hall, dormitory space and a room also for the Christian Workers' Movement – which was immediately put to good use. The Ordinary of the Seoul Archdiocese, Stephen Cardinal Kim, introduced this new facility to all of the clergy and organizations of the Archdiocese. He encouraged all parishes to invite labourers into their communities. He asked

all to encourage and support this ministry to labour, with love and brotherly affection. In the event of labour issues became known, he urged that efforts at reconciliation be coordinated through this office.

Upon the completion of the construction of the Jongno Parish facility, Fr. Trisolini began immediately his pastoral ministry in this new location. After June 29, 1987 Programs were offered to union organizers, labourers for conflict resolution, and the study of labour law. With this followed programs on Philosophy and History, and social problems were offered. All of the efforts of all those involved in this ministry were combined under a single roof, which allowed for easier dissemination of information. The Center was used by young labourers as a place to share the life-experiences, their faith and activities, the family lives and also for the purpose of forming unions in the work-place. From 1989 courses were offered on the Church's social doctrine annually. From 1993 onwards, all church groups, social programs, even to regional social outreach groups were included.

### **Labour Pastoral Centre - the Centre of Activity**

In 1987, along with the then Fr. Chang-Mu Choi, Fr. Trisolini was involved in the preparation for a seminar for laity and the Synod of Bishops, attempting to explain the theme and lead discussions on it. In 1988, the Encyclical "*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*" – released on December 30, 1987 – was lectured upon by Fr. Trisolini. Fr. Choi gave a special lecture entitled "*the confusion of ethical values and the road to overcoming it*". In reply to the June 29, 1987 challenge of the Democratic Party to Ruling Party Presidential candidate Noh Tae-U in which he was called upon to amend the labour laws because they did not meet the basic demands of a democratic political system.

In the news of 1989, there were incidents regarding the Catholic Peace Newspaper, the abuse of clergy and laity in the Incheon Diocese, and the

continued labour unrest in the Ulsan facilities of the chaebol Hyundai – led the Labour Ministry to reassess its activities and objectives. The June 29, 1987 Declaration of the Democratic Party became a frequent rallying point of striking workers. While there were calls for the dissolution of the current government – cooler heads called for patience and toleration. Labour unions were demanding that due process be observed, in compliance with existing laws.

In April 1991, in celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the release of the labour encyclical “*Rerum Novarum*” of Pope Leo XIII, a debate was held at Myeong-dong Cathedral on the subject of labour. Cardinal Kim celebrated the memorial Mass commemorating the event on May 15, 1991. Frs. Trisolini, CHOI Chang-mou and Gu Yo Bi prepared the homily preached that day. In May 1996 was the 105th anniversary of the document “*Rerum Novarum*”. The Labour Pastoral Commission along with the Justice and Peace Commission of the Archdiocese of Seoul released in December 1996 and January 1997 a joint statement regarding the labour unrest in the country. This statement encouraged early and amicable problem solving whenever labour disputes arose. It went on to stress that the over-reaction of authorities do nothing to address the underlying problems behind the labour issues. The stance of government and management at that time served to exacerbate the problem rather than solve the outstanding issues that labour legitimately had. The statement encouraged all sides to seek mutual understanding, exercise great patience with one another, and above all to exercise great restraint in discussion and action.

The financial crisis of 1997, commonly called the ‘IMF Crisis’ caused a great shock and confusion to ripple through Korean society. Many families came to the brink of financial collapse as a result of it. The government did not or could not offer a clear interpretation of events, and thus there were no

other alternatives that were presented clearly. The church, through various media released a document entitled “*The Current Economic Crisis and the IMF Bailout: Our Opinion*” – a clear document that stood in solidarity with the pain of workers at that time. Active and concrete measures were called for to respond the crisis of labour and the family. In February 1998, the Archdiocese of Seoul, in each of the districts of the Diocese, provided shelter and listed employment opportunities for those who had lost their homes and jobs. Study halls for students were set up that were free of charge for those parents who could no longer afford to pay fees. A parish by parish study was made on the impact of the crisis in each parish and district. At Myeong-dong Cathedral, celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of its consecration, the “House of Peace” was set up. This was a facility set up by the Labour Pastoral Commission to assist the unemployed to find jobs and to provide counseling and training. Free lunches were provided to those participating in the programs.

### **Expansion of Labour Counseling Centres**

In 1991, the director of the of the Myeong-dong Labour Counseling Centre, Kim Mal Ryong, left this position, having been elected to the National Assembly. The centre funded by the Church of Holland was closed due to lack of continued financing. In 1992, Fr. Trisolini found himself called to lead the Labour Pastoral Counsel – chiefly to deal with the financial problems that had arisen. He was challenged from the beginning of his term of office, dealing with the question of whether or not the Church and its institutions should intervene forcefully in labour issues. Fr. Jack immediately sought the support and active cooperation of the local Church in these issues. The Labour Pastoral Commission is not meant to replace the efforts of those involved in the Church’s Social Welfare outreach, but to complement those efforts. It was evident that the Labour Pastoral Commission needed professional assistance to

map out its future strategy.

In the area of Chang Dong in northern Seoul, there was a concentration of small and medium sized industries. Various transportation companies were concentrated there more than any other area in the city. Unpaid labourers and summary dismissals were commonplace. Civil actions against employers were frequently long and dragged out over periods of years. Individuals with labour issues were more than half of those who frequented the Counseling Centre located in this area. It was not supported by the local parish in Chang Dong, and due to budgetary shortages, it had to be eventually closed down in January 1997. Until then all expenses were paid for by the Prado Society of priests.

In September 1990, at the Guro 3-dong Parish, whose pastor was Salesian Fr. Jesús María Sánchez, S.D.B., a labour counselling centre was founded. This centre dealt with many issues of labour – among those being civil and criminal litigation, accidents, health care, youth issues, housing and many more. By 1996, the outreach of the centre gradually expanded to include youth counselling, and to be more involved in the urban poor in the immediate area. Their outreach expanded through counseling by telephone where they interviewed workers. They began to focus on recuperating the back pay of labourers, retirement funds, workers released from work and other legal issues. Courses in human relationships and dialogue were given as well.

In March 1993, Fr. Song Jin, the pastor of the Shi-Heung Parish, established a labour counseling centre as well. They dealt with issues as diverse as workers' wages, industrial accidents, unjust terminations, unfair labour practices, etc. offering counseling services for those workers. They also ran a gamut of courses to help those in difficult situations. In addition, they visited local hospitals where they would also do consultations with workers who were sick or had been injured in accidents.

After the 1990's, the YCW movement concentrated on the vocational

training of future labourers, giving courses to senior high school students and others. The students suffered during these years, being often in conflict with various other social institutions. However, the YCW did provide accurate reporting of the situation of young labourers where YCW members were working. They offered telephone counseling as well, assisted young workers, and also provided onsite counselling services at their offices at and training centre at Noryangjin where the national headquarters was located. They offered assistance to young workers in a friendly nonthreatening atmosphere. In 1994, in a building close to the YCW movement headquarters, the Cardijn Youth Counseling Centre was opened. Here there were possibilities for private and group counseling, psychological testing, various aptitude and personality testing opportunities were offered as well. It was a centre where through deep sharing; an understanding of life could unfold.

The twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the formation of the Labour Pastoral Commission was held in October 1996. Those foreign priests and laity involved with labour ministry were invited to attend the festivities. There were seminars and presentations on various aspects of pastoral work – including visits to factories and trade unions. There were also meetings of the YCW and Christian Workers movements to commemorate the event. Tours of the Myeong-dong counseling centre were provided. A memorial musical concert and a renewal of the commitment to labour were also part of the multiple events. Cardinal Kim, the Archbishop of Seoul, being present for all of the events himself personally also encouraged participation of the Diocese.

During the course of 1998 the Archdiocese of Seoul, in accord with the regulations for the Apostolate, there was a gathering of over 300 members of the YCW and Christian Workers movements, Youth Apostolate workers, plus clergy and religious women gathered at the Don Bosco Youth Centre for the celebration of the Eucharist. During this celebration a document entitled

“*Sharing Our Vision of the Family*” was released. The celebration concluded with a sports festival on the playing fields of the Centre – celebration a grand “Family Day”.

In March 1999, due to a lack of operating funds, the three Labour Counselling Centres in the Southern District of the YCW – that is Guro 3-dong, Siheung and Gurobon-dong Parish centres had to be combined into a single unit. This single unit was named the Guro House of Peace. The clientele using this facility expanded accordingly, helping those young workers facing problems in the workplace or on the personal level. A benefactors group was gathered together who continued to support this important work. A shelter was opened in this unit as well, providing temporary housing for the unemployed. Counselling for recently unemployed continued as well for those workers losing their jobs or looking for new ones. It was a networking centre for labour and those looking for workers in various companies.

Fr. Trisolini, during the years in Jongno, had developed a vigorous publication arm of activity. Since 1993, the quarterly magazine *Quarterly Labour Conditions* had been published. Over the years the name of the publication changed with some regularity, i.e. “*Realizing Peace and Justice*”, “*Labour News*”, “*People who Reclaim the Land*”, “*God, People and Labour*”. This quarterly also contained articles on the social doctrine of the Church, and provided a place for an exchange of opinions always concentrated on labour issues and how they could be looked at through the eyes of Catholic doctrine. Since 1998 various articles in other languages were translated and published as well.



# The Poorest of this Age



### **Migrant Workers Counselling Centres**

The Republic of Korea during the 1960's and 1970's was a net exporter of labour to Germany, Vietnam and the Middle East. They earned foreign currency abroad by filling those employment opportunities. Besides providing a way to work out of poverty, these so-called 3D jobs also supplied working positions for those with various levels of skills in a relatively straightforward manner. However, beginning in the 1980's, the Korean labourer was able to earn as much in the domestic workforce as abroad, sometimes even more. The number of Korean labourers in the 3D industries plummeted since then. By 1987 Korea had become a net importer of foreign labour in massive numbers. Despite this type of 3D labour supplementary system being in place, there still developed a severe manpower shortage in the workforce domestically. Because of the demand for workers, the number of foreign workers in Korea without proper papers increased dramatically, and became a cause of serious concern.

However, the Korean government and the companies employing these illegal foreign workers were concerned about filling work positions more than with their legal status. Infringement of the rights of migrant labourers, legal and otherwise, was compounded because of their propensity to remain passive before the authorities. There existed no agency or community that spoke for the needs of migrant labourers and was active for their rights. This meant that the Church in Korea, seeing the issues clearly, began to be involved in the whole area of migrant workers of a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, thus broadening the pastoral horizons of ministry.

Fr. Trisolini was born in the United States, the son of migrant workers. He was already intimately aware of the problems and issues such people had. As a young person, he was always interested in the struggles of the European migrants to the United States and how to solve their problems. It was almost predictable that he would become involved in the same struggle in Korea. He

felt that the Church's involvement in this problem of poor migrant workers in Korea was a problem that could not be postponed. He requested permission of Cardinal Stephen Kim to found a Counseling Centre for Migrant Workers – a place where these individuals would be listened to and helped in a concrete manner with their problems and the various issues they faced as labourers in Korea. Cardinal Kim readily agreed that this was an excellent idea. Thus in August 1992, a Counseling Centre for Migrant Workers was established in Jung-gu Jeo-dong, with Cardinal Kim appointing Fr. Trisolini as its first Director.

He was soon to discover that migrant labourers were coming from China and other Asian countries, from Africa and from Eastern Europe as well; workers were coming to Korea to find employment. The Counselling Centre began to work with these workers, hearing the familiar tale of unpaid wages, industrial accidents, beatings, lack of medical care and immigration problems that these migrants had to face daily. The programs offered to these migrant workers included cultural aspects as well, with classes in which Hangul (the Korean script) were taught. A shelter was opened for those who could not find or afford housing. Day care centers were provided for young mothers. The whole issue of the exploitation of undocumented workers, so easily abused because of their legal status, providing counselling for them as well and making interventions on their behalf was initiated. Attempts were made to gather statistics, documenting the reality of migrant labourers – providing a means of evaluating the scale of the problems before them and how they could be concretely helped. Health care was provided at little or no cost. Attempts at creating opportunities for migrant labourers to learn about Korea, visiting various historical sites on planned outings were initiated as well. Another Counseling Centre was opened in March 2000 in Euijeongbu – north of Seoul – to meet the needs of workers in that area.

## **Bethany House**

Naturally, migrant workers in Korea, as their numbers increased over time, were subject to work-related injuries or became ill with various diseases. These numbers of sick and/or injured among the migrant workers increased proportionately to the numbers working. The government, corporations or other organizations were not prepared for this very concrete reality. Fr. Trisolini felt that the Church had to step into this breach and begin offering health services for those in need. Oftentimes, migrant workers were among the poorest members of this society, and were unable to meet this urgent and important need themselves.

With the help of Stephen Cardinal Kim, in December 1991, Fr. Trisolini was able to establish Bethany House as a shelter for foreigners with disabilities at Hawolgok-dong. In December 1996, by the order of Cardinal Kim, Bethany House was founded in Mia Dong. Bethany House is a place where migrant workers with disabilities or diseases could go and receive professional medical treatment, and spend the period in which they received treatment in cost-free housing with meals provided as well. In March 2003, Bethany House was moved to a house at the rear of the Labour Pastoral Commission's office building. Bethany house provides housing for those who have been hospitalized and require a period of time in a safe environment. This facility serves the needs of both those injured in the workplace and those who suffer from some disease process. Afterwards, they returned to their homes or workplace.

## **Ethnic communities**

Fr. Jack, aware of the precedent of the Church's in the United States and Europe, helped to form small communities of workers from the same country or ethnic backgrounds. This was done for the purpose of maintaining their self-identity while working abroad. Leaving their native countries and working long

hours each day, they needed the resources that only such a community could provide. The zeal for life, a firm sense of self-reliance, and their common faith needed to be defended in a sometimes hostile environment. Being in solidarity with one another, and through mutual cooperation, they could withstand the rigours of work and life abroad. Forming strong human relationships, this allowed the migrant workers to thrive and were given encouragement to continue to grow.

Secondly, the community of faith, through the power of the liturgy and the sacraments helped in the healing process for Christians, regaining a sense of self-esteem as Christian men and women. For many of the migrants, they faced long separation from their families, which many found devastating and enervating. The good shepherd, always concerned with the happiness of his flock, always attempts to lead his people as children of God, striving to help them lead healthy and wholesome lives without the danger of losing the precious faith that sustains them. The migrants, having tired bodies and minds after long days of work, should find spiritual sustenance to help them continue their efforts with the hope that they would have a better tomorrow for themselves and their families. In order to help the migrant workers, missionaries and priests from their native countries were invited to help in this ministry in Korea.

Thirdly, the Church in Korea sought out opportunities to be in deeper fellowship and pastoral cooperation with the Churches from which migrant workers were coming. Efforts were made to approach the Churches in other countries to provide missionaries and priests to meet the needs of migrant workers in Korea. Because of the ever increasing number of migrant workers from the Philippines and Vietnam, Fr. Trisolini along with his successor Fr. Andrew Hur Yun Jin, gathered together benefactors from the community in order to provide expanded facilities for these two communities. He did not

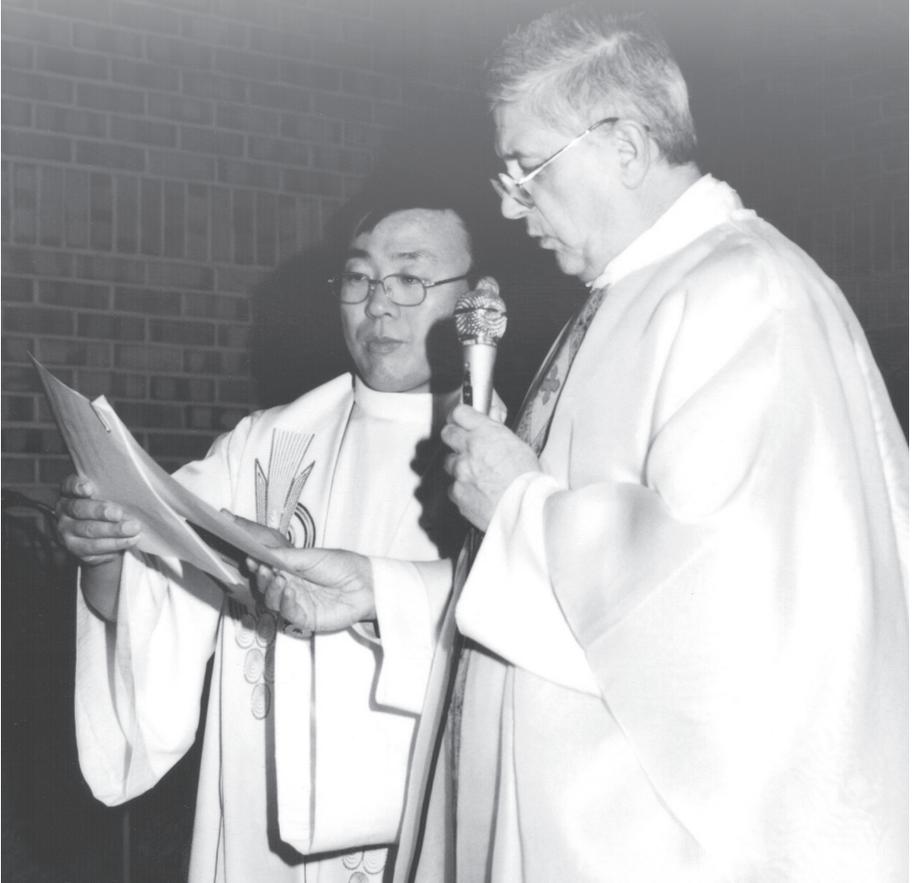
ignore the smaller communities of migrant workers, such as Mongolia and Thailand, who also had vibrant groups in Korea, providing them with a variety of pastoral care as well.

In 1992, in the Jayang-dong Catholic Parish, the Filipino community of migrant workers was formed. However, this facility soon proved inadequate. In December 1996 they moved to the Hyehwa-dong Parish where there is a weekly mass celebrated for them. The Philippine Centre was eventually built in Seongbuk-dong, with two priests of the Philippine Missionary Society providing pastoral care. There are large numbers of Korean volunteers helping their ministry as well.

Fr. Trisolini was well aware of the poorest in our era – and felt that migrant workers deserved the protection of law and the benefits of the social welfare system. He felt it was unreasonable to simply criticize the government for its inaction, but felt strongly that all citizens have the obligation to act politically, applying all due pressure, in order to improve the system through the enactment of better laws. He was a man who looked for better, more concrete ways to be of service to the poor migrant worker. Before there was government intervention for these unfortunates, he began being of service to them well before that. He believed in informing everyone about each situation that he was observing and working in among the poorest of the poor. Once a secure pattern of service had been established for one group of migrant workers, he would move on to the next poorest in the effort to meet their needs as well. He did this in a spirit of inner zeal and maturity, always encouraging the migrant labourers to seek self-reliance and not to lose faith. The poor need a lot of things, but the more urgent problem, after their stomach is fed and their bodies clothed, is the healing of the inner person and spirit that lives in the physical body. The Good Shepherd is the one who works without ceasing or rest for the good of his poor flock.



## **Outgoing Chairman and Bomun-dong Move**



### **Fr. Trisolini's Spiritual Son**

In March 1999, Fr. Jack turned over the office of Director of the Labour Pastoral Commission to Fr. Paul Yong Dong Jin. He took over the administration of the offices of the Labour Pastoral Ministry, assisting Fr. Yong whenever he wanted help. As a youngster, Fr. Yong was born into a poor family, and was unable to obtain any higher education. On a visit to the Don Bosco Youth Centre when he was just seventeen years of age, he met Fr. Trisolini for the first time. In 1975 he received baptism from the hands of Fr. Jack. While studying at the Don Bosco Youth Centre, he became involved in the YCW movement. He had studied machine technology and mold-making engineering at the Centre, and even after finding work suitable to his training, he remained active in this apostolate. While a young worker, remaining committed to the apostolate, he slowly became aware of why he was born and clearly had a vision what his future destiny held for him. In order fulfill his destiny; he never ceased to look for ways to fulfill it.

He also continued to hone his skills, continually developing them. Even when he was very busy at work, he continued to study English and the humanities. The future Fr. Yong had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, and perhaps of an inferiority complex he did not pursue higher education at first. He read and meditated over the book by Deacon Kim Jeong Hun "Mountain, Wind, God and I". He realized slowly that his thirst for knowledge and experience was actually a call to become a priest.

His father died at a young age, and Yong Dong Jin was then the head of the family. Without the money earned by him his family would have very hard time surviving. Moreover, his academic background was entirely insufficient. He felt the huge gap between his deepest desires and current reality – and it troubled him that he could not decide in favour of his dream for many years. Upon the death of the first priest ordained for the Prado Society, Fr. Lee Yong

Yu, he decided to act decisively to realize his dream. Prior to his death, Yong Dong Jin had spoken by telephone with Fr. Lee sometime in 1981 late one night. Fr. Lee shared with Yong Dong Jin his desire that he assume the National Directorship of the Young Christian Workers Movement.

“Dong Jin, I know that your family is in pretty tough circumstances, but I wanted to tell you that I think you are better prepared than anyone to become the new National Director of the YCW movement.

Dong Jin did not immediately reply. Fr. Lee, a bit concerned, said:

“What’s the matter, Dong Jin?”

“Fr. Lee, I’m thankful for your opinion, but I don’t think I’m capable of doing that job.”

“Why do you say that? Clearly not everyone is capable of being the national Director you know. Actually, of all the candidates, you were the only one I thought capable of handling the job.”

“You know very well, Father, how difficult it is for us involved in the labour movement just to survive at the present time. You are aware of that, aren’t you?”

“I understand why you are concerned, Dong Jin. I also know that you won’t die doing this job. I believe in you.”

“Father, there are a lot of members of the YCW movement who are a lot smarter and more able than I am. I am not well educated, and filled with a lot of fear, how can you expect me to take up this heavy burden?”

“No, I know you have the strength to do this, Dong Jin. The Lord will sustain you.”

“I’m flattered you think so well of me, Father, believing I can do this work, but please think again. Please, I beg you, find someone else!”

One March 14, 1981 at the Noryangjin Catholic Youth Centre all of the Diocesan Directors of the Young Christian Workers movement, both men

and women, were gathered in order to elect the 10th National Director of the Korean YCW movement. The YCW movement in Korea was going through a very troubled period, and this choice of a new National Director had proved to be a very difficult problem, it was not easy to make a decision. The next day, after three in the early morning, a decision was finally reached. The former Director of the Southern District of the YCW movement of the Seoul Archdiocese, Yong Dong Jin was chosen as the National Director.

Knowing that Yong Dong Jin was at that moment at the Dorim-dong Parish, the current Seoul Archdiocesan Southern District Director of the YCW movement, Eom Seok Yong telephoned the Dorim-dong Parish at around 4 A.M. There he spoke with the Seoul Archdiocesan Director of the YCW movement and current pastor of Dorim-dong Parish, Fr. Lee Yong Yu, informing of the election of Yong Dong Jin as National Director. However, since Yong Dong Jin was not at the parish that night, but rather sleeping at a friend's house near the Parish. At around 5 A.M. Eom Seok Yong went to this house and informed Yong Dong Jin of his election. Shortly after hearing this news, he received the crushing news of a sudden death.

The associate pastor of the Dorim-dong Parish, Fr. Olivier Berrangar, celebrated the 6 A.M. mass in the church. Before beginning the mass he felt strangely, and as he celebrated the mass the feeling did not go away. Usually at the communion time Fr. Lee Yong Yu would assist with the distribution of communion to the faithful, but that morning he did not appear. Fr. Olivier, after the mass was finished, went to the parish house and had breakfast alone. It was already after 7 A.M., and Fr. Lee had still not appeared. Fr. Olivier went to Fr. Lee's room and with trepidation opened the door and went into Fr. Lee's room where he received a shock. He discovered that Fr. Lee had died sometime during the night of a cerebral hemorrhage. Just the night before at the evening meal, Fr. Lee had been lighthearted and laughing. Dong Jin, being in Dorim-

dong, was devastated upon hearing the news. His dear and close friend, the one who treasured Dong Jin more than anyone, had departed this world.....

He prayed “God, you have gone too far. You have taken Fr. Lee, a man whose only dream was to work with and for the poorest workers of this country with his whole mind and body. Why did you take him from us so suddenly?”

There was no response.

Accompanied by a fellow member of the YCW – Yong Dong Jin went to the parish at Dorim-dong to confirm the news of Fr. Lee Yong-Yu’s death. Eom Seok Yong, being informed of Fr. Lee’s death, went Dorim-dong parish as well to speak with Fr. Olivier Berrangar. Fr. Olivier, not knowing the precise time of Fr. Lee’s death, wanted to know about the telephone conversation Fr. Lee had with Mr. Eom and the approximate time they had spoken. In all likelihood, Mr. Eom was the last person that Fr. Lee had spoken with. After sharing the details of the telephone conversation with Fr. Olivier, he went to Myeong-dong in order to inform the Ordinary, Stephen Cardinal Kim, of Fr. Lee’s death and share the same information with him.

Yong Dong Jin became the National Director of the YCW movement during the severely repressive Yusin era, with the government under the control of military dictator Jeon Du Hwan. He attempted to follow the teachings of Fr. Trisolini, using the basic spirit and principles of the YCW movement, encouraging those he led along this path of life. He used the methods outlined in the publications of the movement as tools to educate not only his fellow workers, but the Catholic faithful as well. He based his leadership for his brothers and sisters on the love of God for the human family. This leadership role, in which he served, proved never to be burden to him.

Haunted by Fr. Lee’s death, he asked himself: “Why did Fr. Lee go to the Lord at that moment? What does it mean to my destiny that I was almost the last person he ever spoke with? Will I ever make any sense out of his death?”

Over time, he came to appreciate the significance of Fr. Lee's death for himself. It took a long time for him to finally come to the conclusion that "Could it be that the Lord is leading me through Fr. Lee's death to become a priest? No, that can't be! I am an ignorant man and a coward. If I leave home and become a priest, what will happen to my family? How will they eat? Who will take care of my old mother? My older brother is so sick that he cannot even use his hands. Who will take care of my younger brother and sister?"

"Why do I keep thinking about becoming a priest?"

"I shouldn't think such useless things. Given my current situation, it is something that can never happen."

"With Fr. Lee's death, I ended up serving as the Director of the national YCW. I kept thinking that this was a sign that I should become a priest and work for workers myself. Could that be true? I wondered. Looking at things dispassionately, I knew that I was not a well-educated man. That was for certain! But if there was any possibility of becoming a priest, I as a worker, becoming a priest... A working priest like those in France, would that be possible?"

Worrying over this, he paid a visit to the Prado Sisters one day and spoke with Sister Elisabeth Gang Yeong Ja about what was troubling him, opening his heart to her.

"Sister, no I mean my older sister; I don't know what to do. I want to become a priest, and I know how presumptuous that is of me. After Father Lee's death, I feel that I am called to follow him and become a working priest like he was."

"I think you would be a good priest, Paul (Paul being Dong Jin's baptismal name). You'd be one of the first here in Korea, but I honestly think you could live as a working priest. That is a very good idea."

"No, why do you speak of something that can never be?"

"I disagree. I think it is possible. You really would be a good priest. I believe

that sincerely. Wait and see what happens. I believe you will be a priest one day.”

“No. I will never have that type of freedom, though I keep dreaming that one day I will. Does just wanting something make it possible? You know very well that I never was able to go to school properly. You have to be prepared to study, and be admitted to the seminary. Before that you have to pass the college entrance examination. I have no ability to take that with any hope of passing.”

“It’s hard but with your native abilities and stick-to-it attitude, it is possible.”

“Maybe that would be possible, but what about my family? What would become of them?”

“It is hard for me to respond to that but I believe that the Lord will also show you the way to solve even that problem. Go and speak with Fr. Trisolini and talk about it with him. There is bound to be a way to resolve all your issues. I will pray for you always. You will certainly one day be a priest.”

Dong Jin visited Fr. Trisolini; he spoke openly about his desire to be a priest and the obstacles that stood in the way of that dream. He spoke of his frustrations in dealing with his current reality openly.

“I do not see any way of resolving these problems, and that is why I came to you today.”

“Paul, what is really going on with you now?”

“I have a dream that can never be realized. No matter how much I think about it, I only find obstacles to fulfilling that dream.”

“Try and be more specific.”

“Ever since the day before Fr. Lee Yong-Yu died, my dream has never left my mind. It has been several years already. I feel that I should take his place that has remained vacant since he died. That is what I am thinking, but I see no way of fulfilling this highly improbable dream.”

“Only God knows if there is a relationship between Fr. Lee’s death and your

desire to become a priest. I know you, Paul, and I know that you are well aware of the plight of workers today. I also think you would be a very good priest. If it is God's will for you, it would be a great gift to this country – a great gift to workers and to the Church. I would really like you to go down that path, Paul.”

“Thank you, Father; your words are very helpful. But you know as well I do, I'm already over thirty years of age.”

“Age is no barrier to becoming a priest. If you look at St. John Vianney, you can easily see that. Someone who is older is not blocked from becoming a priest. There's nothing wrong with being older.”

“I've only finished elementary school, Father. I wonder if I would be able to study....”

“I don't agree with you, you seem to be very capable of study. Certainly you are capable enough to become a priest. If you can pass the (high school) graduate equivalency examinations, there is nothing preventing you from doing the course for priesthood. Somehow we can work out your tuition bill. Don't worry about that. If you have really heard the call from the Lord, don't delay any longer. Just answer that call with firm conviction.”

“If it were possible for me to answer the call of God, I would do so. But there are obstacles to that. If only studying hard and doing as you suggest, Father, I suppose it would be possible. I would do whatever it would take. But I'm the only source of income for my family. Who will feed them?”

“Of course, it is not going to be easy, Paul. But God would never lead you to do something you were not capable of doing. I believe that if it is God's will for you, the problems you speak of, with God's grace, will resolve themselves. If it is God's will there is nothing that can prevent it from happening. I believe you would be a good working priest. Let's pray and try hard together.”

Dong Jin remained troubled, unable to make a decision. He knew a

Maryknoll Sister, Sister Jean Maloney, who was involved in various group activities with the YCW movement. She was convinced of his priestly vocation.

“Paul, I believe you will be a very good priest. I know it will happen. I am praying for you.”

Eventually, he did make a decision, and once again, he went to see Fr. Trisolini.

“I will soon enter the seminary, Father.”

“I am so happy for you, Paul, it is the right decision. From now on, don’t think about anything else, just prepare for the entrance examination!”

Fr. Trisolini felt a certain amount of confidence in the desires that Dong Jin expressed. While preparing for the entrance examination to the seminary, he invited Dong Jin to reside in the Daerim-dong Salesian residence. While Fr. Jack provided all the support for him in his studies, he never pressured him to enter the Salesians.

Fr. Jack and Cardinal Stephen Kim both supported Dong Jin’s dream, and in 1987 he was admitted to the seminary, he was already well over thirty years of age. The then Fr. Andrew CHOI Chang-mou, the president of the seminary became Dong Jin’s spiritual director, helping this delayed and vocational candidate develop those areas in his life that needed polishing. Dong Jin, in a spirit of true humility, willingly accepted help from the much younger seminarians as he became used to the life in the seminary. He was recognized as a gentle older brother among the seminarians, getting along well with all.

With the love and support of those who loved him and helped him overcome all of the hardships that he had to endure, he was ordained a priest in July 1993. He began his priestly life as assistant pastor at Jongno Parish, as well as assuming the Directorship of the Northern District of the Seoul Archdiocesan YCW movement. His next assignment was as assistant pastor of Sindaebang-

dong parish, and assumed the Directorship of the Southern District of the YCW movement; he became the vice Director of the Labour Pastoral Commission, as well as the Director of the Seoul YCW movement's Association, and later assumed the post of administrator of the Labour Pastoral Commission. He became the Director of the Labour Pastoral Council of the Seoul Archdiocese in March 1999.

Upon Fr. Yong's appointment as the second Director of the Labour Pastoral Commission, Fr. Trisolini was very happy in this turn of events. He always remembered that his life as a missionary and as a religious was to begin a work and hand it over to his successor. He sincerely believed that turning over responsibility to local clergy was a clear Gospel imperative. He believed that as a religious, his job was to work in collaboration with the diocesan clergy. With this transfer of responsibility he showed his maturity in moving aside with grace. The development of Labour Ministry was able to begin in earnest under new leadership. As a missionary and as a religious he could only be pleased that he was able to turn over his post to Fr. Yong.

The sudden death of Fr. Lee years before was quite traumatic and painful for Fr. Trisolini. Fortunately, with Fr. Yong assuming this new role for him, Fr. Trisolini's pain was mitigated considerably. Of course, for Fr. Yong the sudden load of a very large responsibility was not easy. Due to the paternal concern and love of Fr. Trisolini, his load was lightened a great deal, helping him get used to his new responsibility. In a sense, Fr. Trisolini's involvement from the earliest days of Fr. Yong's priestly calling was one of his most fruitful endeavours. The close relationship, built over many years, was a sign of the importance of friendship between clergy and religious – and for Fr. Jack and Fr. Yong this relationship was almost a father and son relationship.

## **New Labour Pastoral Centre**

Because the Labour Pastoral Commission and the Jongno Parish were sharing the same building, there were instances of disturbance of one to the other. As time went by, these instances increased in number. The young workers of the YCW movement were used to coming and going freely at the former facility, and this caused issues as well. At Jongno, they were forced to follow a list of rules that they found burdensome at times. Fr. Trisolini tried to find a solution to these problems, but to no avail.

Among the faithful of the Jongno Parish was a Ms. Columba Lee Jeom Hong. She was born in a poor household, and through her frugal life style she was able to overcome poverty and gather a considerable fortune. She saved her money by continuing to live frugally. One day, the Pastor of Jongno Parish, Fr. Emilio Jeong Ung Mo asked her to donate land in Bomun-dong, Seongbuk-gu - some 170 pyeong(562m<sup>2</sup>) - for the use of the Labour Pastoral Commission's work for poor urban workers. Bishop CHOI, in charge of the Social Welfare outreach of the Archdiocese, as well as the Ordinary, Cardinal Kim – encouraged her to make this donation as well.

She readily agreed to this, being moved at the prospect of supporting poor urban workers by this gift to those who were ministering to them. She gave as a gift the 170 pyeong(562m<sup>2</sup>) of land she had in Bomun-dong, Seongbuk-gu for this enterprise.

Fr. Trisolini, upon receiving the gift of the land in Bomun-dong, immediately began setting up plans for the construction of a new Labour Pastoral Commission office and facility. The Archdiocese returned the seven hundred million Korean Won, gleaned from the sale of the Euljiro 5-ga property towards the cost of construction. This was not going to be enough to build a new space for the Commission, and thus Fr. Trisolini was given a new challenge as a fund raiser. Selling calendars – over 30,000 of them – they were able to gather some

funds. Each year in 1996 and 1997, the printing and sale of calendars became a fund-raising tool. He also had printed up a prayer card for the “Bomun-dong Labour Pastoral Commission’s New Facility.”

A benefactors’ society was formed, that eventually came to 200 to 250 members – Fr. Trisolini was heavily involved with this group as well. 1996 saw the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the Labour Pastoral Commission – and the celebrations surrounding this event saw a marked increase in numbers of Benefactors. Raising funds proved to be very difficult, using these rather simple methods. Taking advantage of the fact that Fr. Trisolini was to turn 60 and also to celebrate the 30th anniversary of his priestly ordination, these celebrations were also events used to raise funds!

Fr. Trisolini recalled: “In 1997 I turned 60 years of ages – the Hwan-gap celebrated in Korea. I prayed that my mother would be able to come to Korea for the celebration – her first and only trip to this part of the world. The celebration was held on June 25, 1997, at the same time that Cardinal Kim was due to celebrate a mass commemorating the beginning of the Korean War at Imjingak. We were making the final preparation for the mass for my 60th – while suddenly a telephone call came from Cardinal Kim. His Eminence said “I’m only 10 or 15 minutes away, don’t start the mass without me!” He wanted to celebrate my Hwan-gap Mass along with me. He had already said an early morning mass at Imjingak, and after that, his driver flying like the wind, drove back to join me for the celebration. I was deeply moved at his thoughtfulness.”

However, raising funds for the construction of a new building was very difficult – even with all of his efforts. There was a big shortfall of funds to complete the building. He decided to make an appeal to the Chancellor of the Diocese, Bishop Paul KIM Ok-kyun.

“Your Excellency, I have tried as much as I could, but I still have not gathered all the funds needed for the new facility for the Labour Pastoral

Commission. This is the last big project I have to do. However, even with all of my efforts, they seem to be not enough to do the job. I ask of you, Bishop, a great favour. Please help me this one time!”

“Fr. Trisolini, I know how you have lived for a long time very well. I know how much effort you have put into raising funds for this project as well. I can only be thankful as a Bishop for your ministry. Gathering funds for the building is not easy, I know. I will try and raise the funds you need to the best of my abilities. Please do not worry about this matter further, just continue to work for the Archdiocese in the Labour Pastoral Commission as hard as you have always done.”

“Thank you, Your Excellency!”

Bishop CHOI, in charge of the Social Services of the Archdiocese, came to Bomun Dong in November 1998 in order to bless the land upon which the building was to be constructed. The next month construction began in earnest, and on May 1, 2001, Archbishop Nicholas Jung Jin-suk, the Archbishop of Seoul, blessed the completed building. Thus was the long-held dream of Fr. Trisolini finally had become true. All of the work by the sweat of his brow was brought to completion by the concrete generosity of the Archbishop of Seoul, Bishop CHOI and of all the Church Leaders. Before the blessing and dedication, the offices of the Labour Pastoral Commission and of the administrators of the facility, the Myeong-dong Labour Counseling Centre and the Migrant Workers Apostolate were moved in March 2001 into the new facility. In April 2001 the offices of the Christian Workers Movement were moved into the facility.

Needless to say, all of these offices moving into one facility at Bomun-dong, various difficulties arose. Different ministers working in a wide variety of apostolates must be united by the commonly held evangelical values and by the spirit of the Church. In order to make prudent judgements, a clear

understanding of the status of labour was needed. And in order to respond appropriately to the wide spectrum of social problems that exist, practical skills were needed as well. Above all, an evangelical understanding of labour issues was a prerequisite for this ministry. This gathering of offices under one roof showed that there were many agencies doing the same job. Many different organizations were working in the same area – leading to duplication and a bureaucratic bloating of agencies. After the move to Bomun-dong the number of visiting workers decreased dramatically, and during 2002, many of the employees were retired. Previously research was begun on the condition of migrant workers in Korea, with consultations taking place with professionals and lawyers familiar with the actual situation. Due to financial restraints, from December 2002 onward the efforts at the Guro House of Peace and the Southern District Labour Counseling Centre had to be eliminated.

### **Expansion of Migrant Workers Ministry**

In March 2001, the Myeong-dong Migrant Workers Counseling Centre moved to the new Bomun-dong facility. In doing so, activity for each of the migrant workers' nationalities in Korea expanded quickly. Dividing off of the Seoul Archdiocese, the Euijeongbu Diocese operated its own counseling centre for migrant workers. In June 2003, the Chinese Migrant Workers in Garibong-dong, where the Chinese are densely populated, created a new facility for migrant workers. The much experienced Salesian Fr. Francis Xavier Kim Jeong Su was appointed to work in this apostolate. Following the example of Jesus, it was felt that it was better to seek out migrant workers rather than waiting for them to come for help. The Garibong-dong house for migrant workers moved to new facilities at Yeongdeungpo, Singil-dong in July 2009. The "Chinese Migrant Workers Counseling Centre" expanded its mission to include serving migrants coming from North Korea or from China and were of Korean origins.

In order to support these various efforts, Fr. Trisolini had to continue his work of gathering benefactors. This was an effort also to allow the wider Church to be actively involved in this ministry.

Bethany House, formally located in Mia Dong was moved into a house located at the back of the Bomun-dong facility of the Labour Pastoral Commission in March 2001. The mission of this centre was expanded to include long-term health care and provide free room and board to those in need. In addition, education and culture courses were offered at the Bomun-dong Centre and made available for them. In addition, the Commission supported an apostolate of hospital visitation of migrant labourers as well. The Commission also offered service to migrant labourers in need of medical care, introducing them to hospitals, showing them how to take advantage of outpatient services, how to obtain emergency medical service, etc. They also expanded the educational programs to include courses in the use of cosmetics, the Korean language, and other subjects that could prove useful to the migrant workers.

The number of migrant workers continued to increase. Of these some women entered the country using “artistic” or “performing arts” visas. Many of these women ended up being involved in the sex industry – in other words, prostitution. As the numbers of these women grew larger, the problem ensuing became a societal issue. Despite the problem growing in importance, there was no agency that took it up seriously. Seoul Archdiocese Auxiliary Bishop Peter KANG U-il asked the Labour Pastoral Commission to begin operating in this area. Frs. Yong and Trisolini, in March 2001, used the former facility used by the Bethany House for this purpose, changing its name to Friendship House for the use of women coming out of the sex industry. They asked the Sisters of the Good Shepherd to take over this ministry – healing their spiritual and physical traumas. They did this until these young women were ready to return to their

native countries. Until 2004 the vast majority of these women came from Russia, under the guise as performing artists. Later they had been forced to work as prostitutes. In 2005 this facility was changed into a centre for women who had entered into an international marriage, requiring shelter and care, including their children.

Bishop Peter KANG U-il was responsible for forming a Pastoral Task Force in the Korean Conference of Bishops responding to the needs of migrant workers and those women who are involved in a multicultural family. This was formed in order to sensitive diocesan clergy nationally to the needs of these individuals, working and caring for them with the mind of Jesus Christ – that is with an attitude of love and compassion. This was also done in order to lay down a foundation nationally that would face the issues and problems of migrant workers.

Service to those migrants coming from Latin America consisted of a weekly Mass celebrated in Spanish at the Jayang-dong Parish, by Fr. Gerardo Carbral. From May 23, 2001 Fr. Michael Roncin of the Paris Foreign Mission Society has worked at the Labour Pastoral Commission Office where he provides counselling and assistance to Spanish speaking migrants. From June of that year, he celebrated Spanish Masses in Dongducheon and Geumchon Parishes. This is for migrant labourers and their families, and women who speak Spanish, as well as for international couples. From 2002 the number of migrants from Latin America increased, which has seen a larger outreach to this community, especially for women. Many of these women had entered into multicultural marriages.

In September 2000, a community of laity of Vietnamese migrant workers was established. As this community grew, on April 9, 2003, Salesian Fr. Phạm Thanh Bình was assigned to the Korean Province for the purpose of serving this community. In order to meet the needs of this group of migrant

workers, space was provided for them in another building near the Pastoral Commission's building in Bomun-dong, where an expanded apostolate was begun for this growing community

In October 2002, the Bishops Conference of Thailand sent a lay missionary to Korea for the purpose of working with migrant labourers from Thailand. This missionary provides services to this ethnic group which include counselling and other forms of assistance. Even though 85 percent of Thais are Buddhist, the Thai Bishops' Conference felt a responsibility for them as well. They desired that labour disputes be resolved in a Gospel-oriented manner.

From April 2004 another ethnic group, namely those from Mongolia as well as for Russians, are being served by a native lay Mongolian missionary, who provides counselling services for this group as well for ethnic Russians residing in Seoul. This missionary visited Dongdaemun in the textile district in Seoul, passing out printed brochures advertising the services available to Mongolians. The Mongolian Catholic community is small; however those few are attempting to form a community in support of one another.

As the Labour Pastoral Commission developed these ethnic-centered services, it also encouraged each group to tell the story of their particular people to Korean Society at large - looking to diminish the tensions that naturally arise when people from different backgrounds live with each other. They were encouraged to solve their own problems and heal their own wounds when possible. Fr. Trisolini also believed it important that each ethnic group come to know the customs and celebrations that are part of the foundation of Korean society - celebrating them appropriately with the larger Korean society in which they find themselves. They were also encouraged to share their own native celebrations, adding another perfumed scent to the plethora of cultures unfolding in Korea. To the extent that each ethnic group was open to another group, responding in interest and love was the same extent to which they

would receive the same interest and love in return. Fr. Trisolini believed that this was an essential ingredient for the various ethnic groups to live together in harmony. The effort was to focus on the needs of the small and infirm among the migrant workers in a context of care and consideration for their needs that was sorely lacking.

Often working in harsh conditions, female migrant workers, especially those in multicultural families with children, found childcare to be difficult. Besides the cost, the language barrier was immense. In August 2003, Bethany House was formed for the needs of these women. A nursery was opened in Seongbuk-dong the following April, thus giving working mothers a place for their children during their working day. Slowly the child care benefits were improved for these migrant workers.

By 2005, ten percent of the women migrating to Korea came for the purpose of entering into an international marriage with Korean men. The social and cultural adaption to Korean society has proven a particular challenge. Due to the collapse of the domestic relationship and/or the difficulties of the education of children, it was felt that this was an area that needed particular attention. The rights of women in these situations were considered many times to be a matter of respecting gender equality. Hence husbands and their parents needed education and understanding in order for there to be a sustainable atmosphere for a stable relationship. Fr. Trisolini was insistent on these points, especially with the Ministry of Women and Families. As a result nationally many centres for multicultural families came into existence.

In February 2007, on the fifth floor of the Seongbuk-gu building operated by the Labour Pastoral Commission, a multi-cultural family support center was created. This ministry expanded its services very quickly, on June 8, 2010, and was moved to the entire second floor of the Bomun-dong office building of the Labour Pastoral Commission. In this space, foreign women are trained in the

Korean language and culture, emphasizing those areas where foreign women who marry Korean men need to be informed of their new lives' needs and the expectations of Korean society. All of this in order for the new multi-cultural family to live happily in mutual understanding and respect.

Migrant workers usually, after a period of years, return to their native countries. But those women who enter into international marriage with Korean men, even in the case of divorce, usually continue to reside in Korea. They continue to live in Korea as citizens of this country - and thus have a whole area of issues that migrant workers do not have to deal with. Without speaking fluently Korean, or unable to integrate into the normal flow of Korean civil life, their lives are particularly difficult. Until they possess these skills of survival these women are in need of special education and training so that they can more easily integrate into Korean society - whether in the local parishes or local civil agencies. For this reason, with the help of benefactors, Fr. Trisolini established the Marie Community and Love House which serve the purpose of training foreign women to live independent, integrated lives in Korean Society.

Fr. Trisolini had the uncanny ability to see pastoral situations, and see how they would develop in the future and the problems that would unfold. This is a sign of a great pastor. When he arrived in Korea decades before, within two weeks of his arrival he was already involved in labour issues. Until he articulated the problem of migrant labourers in Korea, there was no one in the country involved in this important ministry – let alone trying to solve the various problems that had arisen. Korea is a nation made up of a single ethnic group – and overlooking the problems of foreigners was easily understood. By the 1990's the problem of migrant workers was already large, and continued to grow through the early 2000's. He foresaw that this problem was much more diverse and complex than originally thought. He always approached these issues from a pastoral perspective. Through his ability to predict the future,

he naturally came to approaches that would solve the problems of migrant workers, multicultural families and other issues – thus exposing the problem for the benefit of the entire Korean Church in every diocese.

Beginning in 2005 and thru 2006 Fr. Trisolini's physical condition deteriorated noticeably. He no longer could move about as he wished – causing his co-workers to feel very sorry for him. He went about putting his life in order, straightening out the many aspects of his life and ministry. He introduced the Scalabrini Society to Bishop Peter KANG U-il, Bishop of Jeju Island and the Chairman of the Bishops' Committee on Migrant Workers. The Scalabrini Missionary Society, coming from the Philippines and originally founded in Italy, is a society dedicated to the professional service of migrant labourers around the world. Listening to Fr. Trisolini's opinion carefully, the Bishop organized many and various courses about Migrant Workers and their problems that was provided to representatives of all the Dioceses in Korea. Many priests, religious and laity involved in this ministry were encouraged to go abroad to study this area more deeply. The KCBC in its Pastoral Education program, equipped seminarians, priests, religious and laity with special skills needed to work in this area of migrant workers. This has been a big help in the effort to reach out and help migrant workers and their families and to form networks with multicultural families. Fr. Trisolini, always focused on the common good so that labour ministry and pastoral commitment would remain firm, became an example to younger members of the clergy.

Knowledge of Fr. Trisolini's work and commitment to the working poor is well known in Korean society. The graduate school for Labour of Korea University and Daily Economic Newspaper awarded Fr. Trisolini on November 11, 1999, the first-ever prize given for involvement in labour issues, citing his 30 years of involvement with labour problems and his efforts to improve the lot of the common labourer. Especially noted was his effort to obtain human rights

for labourers and the creation of social benefits for those who suffer the lack of them. It was reported in the local press as follows:

“The history of the Labour Movement in our country cannot be spoken of without mentioning the role of the Catholic Seoul Archdiocese and the administrator of the Labour Pastoral Commission, the Salesian Fr. Jack Trisolini, and their historical involvement in labour issues as activists for this community. Thus Korea University, Graduate School of Labour (Director, Shin Su Sik) choose as the first recipient of the special “Labour Welfare Award” Fr. Trisolini. On November 11, at 5 p.m., in the Incheon Memorial Hall of Korea University, in the First Auditorium of that Hall, Fr. Jack Trisolini received the award. Following the award ceremony, speaking as a witness to his own and others’ efforts, he responded to the reception of the award before the assembled audience. “I accept this award, standing in for all those who have laboured in this area for so long and for those who called me to minister in this special area. It is their award more than mine. I especially thank Stephen Cardinal Kim who originally called me to serve in the labour ministry and all those who have worked with me in the Labour Pastoral Commission of the Archdiocese including Kim Mal Ryong who served the Labour Pastoral Commission after the death of Jeon Tae Il - I thank you in their names for your great honour.”



## **With Lay Professionals**



During the summer of 1968, Fr. Trisolini translated into English the lectures of Fr. Francis Park Seong Jong , who was then the Diocesan Director of the YCW. He was also preparing for a presentation at the Catholic International Brotherhood's Female Student Centre which concerned the problem with the rights of the labourer, which was to be given in English. It was during this summer that he met for the first time the famous leaders in the labour movement Kim Mal Ryong and Professor Park Yeong Ki (Director of Sogang University's Industrial Problems Research Centre), plus others. Especially these two mentioned were to be a big influence on him over the coming years. Their experience and wisdom led them to be his faithful partners and precious sources of valuable information.

When the Archdiocese of Seoul founded the Urban Industrial Pastoral Research Committee in 1971, the original membership was made up exclusively of priests. However, just as Cardinal Cardijn always taught "We must send the laity to the places where priests and religious cannot go" the committee members desired to expand the membership to include the laity, knowing that they had to work with them. They needed to hear the voice of labour – and hear it clearly.

From the days he was a seminarian in Europe, he thought that the pastoral role of the laity was an absolutely essential element in any consideration of the issues surrounding labour. Only with this collaboration with the laity was it possible for the Church to teach and announce the Gospel effectively to labourers – and this had to be done in full harmony and collaboration with lay professionals. Thus, the Ordinary and his Auxiliary Bishops in order to make informed judgements on evangelical objectives, must base their decisions upon the advice gleaned by professionals.

In September 1987, a discussion was held under the leadership of Director Kim Mal Ryong which was entitled "The need for labour law reform." It

was a consideration of the future direction and role of labour, and the desired relationship in industrial relations – and the necessary amendments that were needed to accomplish this. Beginning in 1988, Professor Park Yeong Ki published an annual evaluation of labour relations and attempted to forecast future developments – under the title “*New Year Labour Forecast*”. After these beginnings, the collaboration of Professor Park and Director Kim brought about the centre of the professional team of laity that would assist the Labour Pastoral mission of the Diocese. This collaboration, based upon the social teachings of the Church, combined both analysis of social problems and offered directions of the correct way to influence effective labour ministry. This was an invaluable contribution. The Ordinary of the Diocese and his Auxiliary Bishop in charge of the Social Welfare outreach of the Diocese were able to judge clearly in labour matters based upon this advice of these labour professionals. This gave them the necessary information – Bishops, priests, religious and laity – for their work.

Fr. Trisolini not only was listening to professionals in Korea, he was also listening and seeking advice and suggestions of experts around the world. He sought out other members of the Salesian Society working in the same area in other countries; seminary alumni and lay consultation with scholars seeking their advice and guidance. Professor Park Yeong Ki introduced him to scholars in Japan and Taiwan – professionals who were working and researching in the field of labour problems in Asia – who formed in 1993 the Social Asia Forum. This Forum was dedicated to seeking a fair and just society in East Asia. Judging that this Form was consistent with the social teachings of the Church, he became an enthusiastic supporter and participant in it. The Professional Committee of the Labour Pastoral Commission has also participated in this forum as well. He highlighted for the Labour Pastoral Commission the forum’s quarterly publication “*God, People and Labour*” which confirmed fair play

for labour and society through the realization of the importance of the common good of all.

Professor Park Yeong Ki, followed by Sogang University's Kim Mal Ryong and his colleague Professor Thomas de Aquino Kim Oh Sang and Hanyang University Professor Augustine Son Chang Hi joined and assisted the Professional Committee. Fr. Trisolini also sought out other collaborators as well after the closure of Sogang University's Industrial Problems Research Centre – namely Doctor Thomas More Kim Jung Han, Professor Paul Jung Young Hoa, Doctor Achilles Moon Moo Gi, Doctor Thomas de Aquino Cho Eun Sang, Professor Stephen Park Yong Seung, Doctor Joannes Bosco Lee Kyu Yong and other lay professionals, inviting them to join the Professional Committee and to participate in its discussion and help form the recommendations that it would eventually make. He gathered these professionals together, each expert in their own field, to serve the needs of the church and help establish the standards for labour activity. Through meetings and opportunities provided as time went by included lectures on the social teaching of the church for one night and two days, providing opportunities for sacramental confession and spiritual counseling – helping to form the committee members as true servants of the church.

Fr. Trisolini also involved non-believers, such as Dr. Lee Kyu Yong, asking their help on particular aspects of labour activism. This involvement of many non-Catholics led, through indirect evangelization, to the birth of new believers in more than one instance. He used a method with which he was familiar and comfortable with, slowly leading people to the church and nurturing their talents at the service of the church. He was always very grateful for their contribution on the Professional Committee and always attempted to maximize their contribution to the church.

In 2003, the members of the Professional Commission discussed the

formation of labour unions among church employees and the countermeasures that seemed appropriate. In February of 2004 during the course of a meeting, the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Seoul – Bishop Andrew YEOM Soo-jung and the staff of the Chancellery approached the Labour Pastoral Commission’s Director Fr. Andrew Hur Yun Jin, asking him for concrete countermeasures to prevent the formation of labour unions for church employees. The Professional Committee, looking at each agency under consideration and accordance with their character, to analyze the problem in the spirit of the church, offered alternatives to the responses being considered.

The church attempted to put in order its hiring practices based upon the 2004 laws and regulations regarding the diversification of the forms of employment – using the category of non-regular workers for which the church received a certain amount of misunderstanding by outside observers. Concretely, employees are hired by church agencies on a temporary basis. The criteria used in this choice were the attempt to minimize the various problems this category of employees have to cope with. In an effort to improve the situation, the effort minimizes the arbitrary judgment of a priest who hires an employee and to make the process more transparent.

In December 2006 the Pastoral Office of the Seoul Archdiocese proposed the “Labour Personnel Payroll Management System” – and sought further advice on this system. Doctor Kim Jeong Han, leading the Professional Committee’s consideration of this system, was able to resolve the major issues regarding the proposed system, and make recommendations to the Seoul Archdiocesan Office, thus bringing the revision of the labour policy to a close. In addition, courses on the new system were provided to the clergy, religious and lay employees of the Archdiocese, explaining the step-by-step implementation of the new system, and also to provide a forum to discuss and resolve the various conflicts that were outstanding for church employees. An effort was made to

discover the root causes of a given conflict, and the appropriate measures that would be taken to resolve them.

Fr. Trisolini proposed the publication in 2008 of the book commemorating the 50th anniversary of the labour ministry in the Archdiocese with the publication of *“The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Labour Ministry in the Seoul Archdiocese: A History”*. In 1986 a book had been printed regarding the foundation of the YCW in the Archdiocese for its first quarter century with the title *“The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Young Christian Workers Movement: A History”*. The second volume mentioned was specific to the history of the YCW movement, and was explicit in the enumeration of the various problems that existed at that time. In addition, since this book was dedicated more to the pastoral work done in that twenty-five year period of time, many of the resources had disappeared with the passage of time. Thus the first volume mentioned above attempted to collect concrete data and present it in an organized fashion was considered important. Those who led the labour movement in previous years, and their pastoral commitment to this ministry, were underlined. Emphasizing the pastoral commitment to themselves, to others and to society of those who had gone on before was seen as a model for current workers in the vineyard of labour – thus serving a valuable tool of recalling the Gospel orientation of the mission to labour.

The role of the Professional Committee continued in earnest through 2005. In preparation for the 50th anniversary of the church’s commitment to labour ministry, they organized a seminar. Outside of the basic work done by the Professional Committee, Simon Park Myeong Jin and Fr. Trisolini began the research for the writing project. As the writing project came to an end, the materials were given to Archbishop Andrew CHOI Chang-mou of Gwangju; the retired Bishop of Andong, René Dupont; the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Seoul, Bishop Andrew YEOM Soo-jung and other individuals who had been

involved in the ministry over the years – religious and laity – asking them to read and reflect on the materials prepared. With the corrections offered by these individuals, adjustments were made to the text prior to publication. In October a special mass was offered in thanksgiving for the 50th anniversary, during which the book was offered.

At the same time, Fr. Trisolini wrote *“The First Look at Labour”* and in 2010 he began another volume called *“Sharing of Labour Issues.”* These were reflections of the Professional Committee on the various issues dealt with over the years, analyzing them and researching them, always comparing them to the teachings of the social doctrine of the church. These two works were published in one volume entitled *“A Series of Labour Relations”* in 2010. By sharing this publication with all Catholic organizations of course, and also with University Libraries and various NGO’s involved in labour work, the position and teaching of the Catholic Church were available to a much wider audience. Until his death, Fr. Trisolini continued his work with the Professional Committee, always referring the various issues and problems they were dealing with to the teachings of the church and the social doctrine as the chief tools used in reflection and planning. Through this methodology Fr. Trisolini led the committee, certainly deepening their own spiritual lives, but also helped to improve their professional competence as believing members of a faith community.



# Background



In December 2001, the Labour Pastoral Commission began discussing seriously the results of the then current economic crisis – they noted the widening gap between the rich and poor, job insecurity, unemployment and other labour problems. The most serious challenge seemed to be the unemployment of youth and extension of human rights to include migrant workers. They came up with a series of positions that could possibly alleviate the situation, sharing their reflections in a paper called “*Our View of Recent Labour Problems*”. The economic situation of Korea was very serious – with labourers satisfied just to hang on to the jobs they had already.

According to Fr. Trisolini’s long held desires and the regulations of the Seoul Archdiocese, there were efforts towards creating an integrated Labour Ministry. An unexpected problem regarding the situation of Fr. Yong arose, which occupied a great deal of the attention of Fr. Trisolini for some time. Upon making the move into the new facility at Bomun-dong, certain personnel resisted transfer to this new centre. This situation was a cause of much tension for Fr. Yong, which he found more difficult to endure as time went by, eventually leading him to near collapse.

“Father Jack, I’m just too sick. I cannot possibly continue here. I’m sorry to say this to you Father, since you are much sicker than I am. But I’ve reached the limit of my ability to continue. There are times I just want to die...”

“Father Yong, look at the example of Pope John Paul II. He is a symbol of our times. No matter how hard it is, we must somehow endure. As priests, we cannot avoid this fate. I’m sick, but the Pope inspires me to keep going.”

However, Fr. Yong’s condition continued to worsen every day – leading to mental and physical illness that was not improving. He was becoming unable to control himself physically or mentally. Fr. Yong asked his trusted friend from his seminary days, Fr. Andrew Hur Yun Jin, to come and help him. Other clergy in the area also supported this request, asking Fr. Hur to give Fr. Yong

the help that he desperately needed. He had served as curate of Gueui-dong and Gireum-dong parishes after his ordination in 1995. In 1999 he was assigned as Assistant Pastor of Guri Parish, where he was serving when Fr. Yong made his appeal. In December 2001, he was appointed as Assistant Director to the Pastoral Labour Commission as well as the Director of the Seoul Archdiocesan Christian Workers Movement.

Fr. Hur, faced with the daunting labour challenges, dealt with them one step at a time. He was able to resolve the issue of the personnel who were resisting the move to the new facility by improving the working conditions in the new facility. Living with Fr. Yong, he was able to observe that his condition was much worse than he had originally thought. Fr. Yong wanted to lay aside temporarily any pastoral work so that he could have an extended period of rest and recuperation. He continued to live with the desire to serve as a working priest – this was his guiding principle by which he had lived. He thought that with an extended rest, he could recover enough to return to the Labour Pastoral Commission and continue his ministry there. Fr. Hur was opposed to this proposal of Fr. Yong.

“My brother, I understand what you are saying to me. I think that if you do this now, nothing will be resolved for you. You are a pastor, my brother, do you think without any pastoral role anything would improve for you? Do you think your weakened body and mental exhaustion will improve by doing nothing? The pain and suffering you have endured doing labour ministry will not come to an end that way. I know how well you did in the parishes you worked in before. Go back to a parish, live and work for the people there, forget everything – the pain, the suffering – and then you can think about coming back to this ministry here. I believe you will get better staying active and connected in service to people. Please don’t think you will get better just ‘resting’, instead go to a parish, work and leave everything in God’s hands. If you do that, you’ll

be fine. And when you do get better, then you can think about returning to Bomun-dong, can't you? And if your condition doesn't improve, it won't be too late to think again about taking time off from ministry.”

Fr. Yong had nothing to say to this.

Fr. Hur was well aware that when Fr. Yong worked in the parishes, he was a good shepherd, much loved by the people he served. He was deeply aware of the respect and deep trust the people held for him. He also knew and believed that this atmosphere of service and mutual love and respect was the very place that Fr. Yong had to be in order to be healed in mind and body. Fr. Trisolini, convinced of the same thing, encouraged Fr. Yong to heed his friend's advice. Fr. Yong was appointed the pastor of Galhyeon-dong parish in March 2002. Fr. Hur succeeded Fr. Yong as the Director of the Labour Pastoral Commission with Fr. Trisolini becoming the Director of the Migrant Workers Apostolate for the Archdiocese of Seoul.

The faithful of Galhyeon-dong Parish knew the heart of Fr. Yong well; they knew that he was always ready to warmly welcome the poor. While suffering from an exhausted body and mind, the faithful joined Fr. Yong in his ministry to the least, cooperating and helping him in his ministry. Fr. Yong, receiving this unconditional love from those whom served, he was able to continue to be of service to God's people. Over time, the wounds healed, and he was able to lead a more normal life.

In March 2002, Fr. Trisolini moved into the Salesian house in Samseon-dong, a Salesian formation centre that had been purchased for this purpose. He received an invitation from the Salesian Provincial in the United States, asking Fr. Jack to become the superior of the U.S. Don Bosco Youth Centre. The Provincial in the U.S. suggested that given the current state of the Salesians in the United States, it was a right move for Fr. Trisolini to consider. But Fr. Jack, who had long lived as a missionary, wanted his bones buried in the soil over

which he had walked for so many years – he wanted to continue the cup that he was currently drinking from. He kept the invitation from the U.S. Provincial in his desk drawer, and was drawn to consider the suggestion for a long time. The Provincial of the Korean Province as well as the Bishop in charge of Social Welfare in the Archdiocese, also urged him to consider returning to the U.S. Fr. Paul Yong Dong Jin went and spoke with the Bishop, and said to him:

“Your Excellency, please do not consider sending Fr. Trisolini back to the United States. We have no one in Korea who can match his knowledge of the labour ministry and the spirituality to support it. If the church wants to continue ministering to labour and migrant workers in Korea, we need him here. I beg you not to consider sending him back to the United States.”

The Bishop could not respond to this expression of respect and love.

Due to ill health, Fr. Yong could no longer work in the labour ministry and had left for the parish; Fr. Hur had succeeded him in his role. Fr. Trisolini, meanwhile, became afflicted with a variety of diseases and was in a slow decline. As Fr. Jack faced the age of seventy, it became necessary to consider a replacement for Fr. Yong. Fr. Simeon Lee Sang Bum had served after his ordination in 1998 at Hagye-dong and Eungam-dong parishes, and in December 2003 he was appointed to be the administrator of the facility at Bomun-dong. He joyfully fulfilled his role as administrator while at the same time was involved in children’s ministry as well. Through a weekly mass celebrated every Thursday, he was able to develop the spirituality of the employees of the Labour Pastoral Commission deeply.

During his residency at Samseon-dong in July 2004, Fr. Trisolini had two surgical interventions for cancer that had developed on his spine. The doctor had told him previous to the surgery that there was a very good chance that he would expect a full recovery. However after the first surgery and while preparing for the second intervention, there was a shortage of blood that was

needed to be prepared prior to the second surgery. Fr. Hur immediately sent out to ask for help from many people – collecting blood prior to the surgery. Due to the love and concern many had for Fr. Jack, the surgery was a success, having collected the necessary amount of blood. Later, he reflected on this experience in a newspaper article:

“I had spinal surgery to remove cancer in July 2004. Since several bones had to be removed and the spine exposed; it was a very big intervention. After the surgery, I was in the Intensive Care Unit to recover from the surgery – and the next morning, very early, suddenly Cardinal Kim appeared on my bedside. He was my first visitor! “Fr. Trisolini,” he said, “are you all right?” I will never forget that dark hospital room, the door opening, and seeing Cardinal Kim standing there. I will always remember the expression on his face. He is indeed a good shepherd, looking out for his sheep.”

Fr. Jack had beat the odds against cancer, but the surgery left him with residual pain from the waist down. He had to walk with great care, and once while walking outside; he fell because his legs were so weakened. He ended up injuring himself quite a bit. The daily commute from Samseon-dong to Bomun-dong was proving to be more than he could handle as his condition slowly continued to deteriorate. Rather than speaking about him returning to the United States this time, it was a good opportunity for him to return to the Bomun-dong centre and take up residency there once again. Fr. Hur went to the Chancellor of the Diocese, Bishop YEOM Soo-jung, asking that Fr. Trisolini be allowed to return to Bomun-dong and continue being the Director of Migrant Workers apostolate as well. He also received permission to hire an extra staff member as well.

### **Apostolate to Injured Labour**

Even while he was physically in much pain personally, he never forgot the

plight of many sick people spread throughout the community. Because he was a shepherd, suffering physically every day, he knew the plight of people who were sick, considering them his own sheep. He often said that we should not ignore these people and neglect their very real needs. These patients, homebound and/or hospitalized, are often the most severely ill patients – and neither the government nor any other social service group had started anything for them medically or financially. He continuously spoke about these hidden sick, and thought that the Labour Pastoral Commission should hurry and help them out. Because of their being scattered around the society, they had no united voice to protect their right to medical treatment. St. Mary's hospital, while a good facility, but many patients could never afford to receive treatment there. It is even difficult to estimate how many patients would fall into this category. There is a tremendous need for rehabilitation, both physical and mental for these patients and their families. The church needs take care of their spiritual needs as well. There was no one listening to what he was saying, and thus nothing was being done about these injured workers.

Fr. Trisolini had been studying the problem of injured labour since 1988 in an attempt to prepare for this ministry. However, since he was not able to find someone to take responsibility for this ministry, nothing was seriously accomplished in response to the clear need. In February 2003, with a facility on the fifth floor of the Labour Pastoral Centre, he asked one of the Prado Sisters to begin this ministry to injured workers. Some months later, in July 2004, a lay person was appointed to take care of homebound patients with respiratory diseases. The same year, the Paris Foreign Missionary Society's Fr. Emmanuel Kermaal was appointed to be in charge of home visits of these homebound patients, and thus the ministry was fully begun. Moving from the Bomun-dong Labour Pastoral Centre to the Migrant Workers house in Garibong-dong, it was easy for patients to seek out help when needed.

The development of ministry to homebound sick was not the only development in ministry that occurred. The counseling needs of workers who were victims of industrial accidents and the concurrent economic difficulty and physical illnesses they had, including the psychological trauma that comes with work-related stress and disintegrating families, was another area that needed attention. In another building, formerly used by the Prado Society of priests in Seoul's Garibong-dong was used from December 2007 used as a centre for the ministry to industrial accident victims in the Archdiocese. The National Assembly passed the landmark "Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance Act" of 2007, which went into effect in July 2008. This new office helped in the promotion and eventual passage of this act of the National Assembly. The benefits were expanded to include those individuals who were ill because of work-related injury or trauma.

The work of this office was expanded to include pastoral visits of hospitalized patients, education courses, press released and newsletters and many other works. Laws were eventually passed that expanded coverage to those suffering from work-related respiratory diseases, giving these patients the protection of the law. While this is true, there are still many patients who are not covered by the law. This ministry continues its role today, with an ever expanding role, working from the centre.

### **Friendship Between Priests and Formation**

Fr. Trisolini was always searching out ways of working with diocesan clergy without harming the existing church structures. He was always respectful of and responsive to the opinions of the clergy in doing his work. The founder of the Salesian, St. John Bosco, always taught the necessity of obedience to the Pope and Bishops; likewise Fr. Jack was also an obedient man to his religious superiors, even if it proved difficult at times. If he came upon a problem that

was difficult to judge, he would always bring it to the Bishops, seeking their guidance, and inevitably followed their instructions carefully, thus being fully accountable in his ministry. Likewise, when working with younger priests – unless they raised a question about a particular subject, he would never volunteer his own opinion. If they displayed an interest in his thoughts, he would share them liberally. He was always very careful to never assume a superior position over a fellow priest, thus never considering them his inferior.

His successors as the Director of the Labour Pastoral Commission, Fr. Yong and Fr. Hur learned this pattern of behaviour from Fr. Trisolini especially regarding the formation of staff members of the Commission. The most important investment of resources is always centred on people, and Fr. Jack enjoyed investing in people – most especially in their formation. Whenever he would meet the Chancellor of the Diocese, Bishop YEOM Soo-jung, he would always say to him:

“Bishop, I will always be involved in the formation of people as long as I work in this country. Only then will the future of the Labour Pastoral Commission be strong.”

“Fr. Jack, if you do that, I could not ask for anything more. Please, continue to do so!”

Whenever he asked to employ more people, the Bishop responsible for the Commission never refused his request. The Bishops have always shown this same degree of trust in those who succeeded him in this ministry to labour. Fr. Jack never tried to interfere with his successors in the ministry, never pushing himself forward to garner their attention. He always allowed a person to learn through their mistakes and successes. He was a most patient teacher. He never interfered in the work that was the responsibility of others. He always approached those who worked with him, especially the younger priests, in the same way.

Fr. Trisolini knew that the contribution he could make to the mission of the local church had been accomplished already. The Provincial of the Salesians in Korea asked Fr. Jack to return to ministry within the community numerous times. He was being asked to help in the formation and training of young Salesians who would continue his work to the local church. In this effort, the Salesian Provincial in Korea assigned Fr. Mark Kim Pyung An, S.D.B. to the community at Samseon-dong in order to be trained in youth and parish ministry. This was an effort at training someone to take Fr. Trisolini's place in labour ministry and in migrant workers' issues. To this end, Fr. Jack asked Fr. Kim to work in the Seongbuk-gu Multicultural Family Support Centre in order to learn that special apostolate as well.

Fr. Trisolini and Fr. Hur were asked by the Chancellor of the Diocese, Bishop Andrew YEOM Soo-jung to draw up a future perspective for the Labour Pastoral Commission – especially regarding the appointment of personnel to the Commission. Because of the circumstances in the Diocese at the time, this was not an easy issue. Fr. Simeon Jang Gyeong Min, ordained in 2005, an after having served in Daebang-dong and Myeong-dong parishes, was assigned to work in migrant workers ministry in December 2009, assuming the role of Director of that department. Fr. Trisolini did not immediately put Fr. Jang to work, but rather sent him abroad to the Philippines and to Rome so that he would have an opportunity to study in depth the issues regarding this ministry to migrant workers.



# A Voice Crying in the Wilderness



Fr. Trisolini, since being stricken with poliomyelitis in 1960, when he was a seminarian in the midst of his training period, until the day of his death on November 22, 2010, had over 30 surgical interventions in his lifetime - including the final surgery for hernia. He suffered from a wide variety of other illnesses over the years. He knew what physical suffering was all about. Until his death, when being treated for any illness, he was always particularly faithful to the health-regime imposed upon him by medical doctors. His last year of life, while he was given chemotherapy for the renal and spinal cancer he was suffering from, he faithfully consumed the various drugs that doctors had prescribed up until the time he could no longer tolerate them - determined to overcome this new challenge to his physical health. Until his last day of life he continued to exercise, taking walks around the neighbourhood of the offices of the Labour Pastoral Commission building. On rainy days or when it snowed he would walk on the first floor of the building or in his room, so that he would always have his daily exercise. Fr. Hur, seeing Fr. Jack one day said:

“Father, it’s too hard for you to do this. Just walk a little bit.”

“I have to do this, because until the day the Lord calls me home, I want to be able to help you with your work, even the little I can do. Just let me do what I have to do.”

Fr. Hur had no response to this statement of fact.

Outside of the times when Fr. Trisolini was hospitalized for surgery and he could not physically move, he was one to plan his every moment. He planned his days in full, his weeks and months and years were all outlined. He arose every morning at 4 a.m. so that he would have sufficient time for his Mass, the Divine Office, the Rosary, praying for his benefactors, meditation, etc. From the time he arose until he returned to his bed at night - every moment was planned: meeting people, telephoning people asking their help, writing memos to himself about the next project he was to undertake. His life was a very full

one. Salesian Brother Peter Choi Deok Gyeong reflected on this aspect of Fr. Trisolini's life:

“Whenever Fr. Trisolini was ill, the most impressive thing about him was certainly his heroic ability at being patient, but even more than that was his ability to remain totally rational. Following every surgery, during the recuperation phase, the physical pain he was suffering was evident by the expression on his face. He would do the necessary exercises, twisting his body and stumbling to do what he had to do that day, as well as perform the necessary functions of his priesthood, before he would ever consider resting. Whenever I witnessed this, I thought ‘This man is a bit scary!’ but at the same time I realized that he had the ability of creating separate worlds for his emotions and his reasoning abilities. For those who would every try to imitate him, it is precisely this point that would be most difficult to replicate for most normal people. Because we are human beings, we all experience negative emotions, but Fr. Jack's ability to separate the world of emotion from his clear headed, clinical rationalism was a most striking fact of his life. This ability to face reality so rationally meant that he led a very serious life. For us Koreans this aspect of Fr. Jack's life was the one thing that was always difficult to understand and to accept. Certainly, he had his warm human side as well, but he could also present a cold and unapproachable face as well. Probably for this very reason he was able to accomplish so much in his lifetime.”

He practiced this life of intense interest in the lives of others, especially those who were seriously ill, this in spite of his own physical limitations. He displayed this same human interest in those whom he met on the streets or the gas station attendant, or the person working behind the counter in a shop, or the waitress in a restaurant. He was everyone's friend. He kept a notebook in which he jotted down all the pertinent information about everyone he met. Until shortly before he died, Fr. Simeon Lee Sang Bum, lived in the room next

to Fr. Trisolini's. He recalled:

“Even when Fr. Trisolini was very ill, he would always awaken with the bell at Bomun Temple at 4 A.M. every morning. He would first take care of his priestly responsibilities. He would sometimes ask if the sound of his coughing when he first woke up prevented me from sleeping, and with his special brand of humour would always say “Sorry about that, Father!” When he was on chemotherapy, one of the side effects was that large blisters would form on the palm of hands and on the soles of his feet, often with more than one in each place. This caused great difficulties with locomotion for him, but he would usually decline being helped as he clung to the walls for support as he moved around. He was able to give help to others freely, but he was always hesitant in receiving it from others. He would say something like “I can do it. I’m fine. Thank you.” in response to offers of help. As he would slowly recover, he was anxious to return to work as soon as possible and pushed himself to return to his old habits. He often said while laughing “The day I don’t work is the day that I die!” and he would throw himself into his work as before. When there were only a few of us home for a meal and not too busy, he would share the jokes he received from a Brother in the U.S. If when he was ill he continued his practice of walking through the neighbourhood for his daily constitutional. Sometimes I would join him and he would go all over the place, it seemed like there was no one he didn’t know. Stopping at a local petrol station, he told me “that young man working at the pumps is the owner’s son” or stopping at a fruit stand greeting the old man who was working there, whom he said “told me that when the fruit got a little too ripe I could buy a lot of fruit and bring it home and ask them in the kitchen to make jam out of it.” I often had to eat out, and sometimes I would invite Fr. Trisolini to join me, he would invariably respond “What an honour, Father! Thank you for asking!” I can hear his saying that now, with his unique voice, as if he was still with us. On Saturday and Sunday,

our kitchen staff had the day off. Fr. Trisolini knew all the local restaurants. The owners of these places all knew him well. When Fr. Lee wanted to pay for the meal, Fr. Trisolini would insist on paying for it. He would always say to him that he had to pay his own bills! The day before he died, he told me “I don’t have much energy these days. Today I think I’d like to eat something spicy though. Let’s go to the restaurant across from the Centre and have kimchi stew and rice.” Fr. Lee said I’ll pay this time!” He answered “That’s fine Father. You pay this time.” He laughed, and little did I know that was to be the last time I would pay for a meal with him. He told me that if he could be of any help with the work I was doing, that his door was always open. That was Fr. Jack – while always hesitant to ask for help, for those around him he was always ready to be of service, always in good humour. This was a man who had suffered more than most his entire life long, and still he could keep his good humour in order to make us feel good.”

Many people sought him out frequently, whether it was to just say hello, or perhaps to go to confession or have a counseling session with him. No matter what his physical condition may have been at the moment, he always greeted those visiting him with great joy. Receiving invitations to go out for a big meal, he would normally decline with regret expressed to the one inviting him.

“Thank you so much for asking! My back is very sore, and I just cannot manage going out at this time. Please stop by for a visit then instead. I would be happy to see you.”

Those who knew him well, whether through his work or people he had known for years, couldn’t help but be surprised at his attitude. He would not give into the terminal cancer that was consuming him through sheer steely determination, displaying always great patience with everyone, despite the fact that his days remaining on earth were becoming fewer and fewer. However, the predictions of his imminent demise were often proven to be false alarms.

So many times he was able to beat the odds that seemed insurmountable. He was completely faithful to the doctors who prescribed the medications and chemotherapy that kept him alive his last year, in the end the cancer cells were gone, but his body was left vastly weakened. Those with whom he worked expected him to recover completely and to live longer. Knowing that his condition was not good did not diminish Fr. Trisolini's desire to be of service. Two days before he died, he met with the priests assigned to the pastoral ministry for migrants by the Korean Bishops' Conference, with his light shining until the last drop of oil was consumed in the lamp of his body.

In many ways, Fr. Trisolini was very different from the founder of the Salesians, St. John Bosco. He was more in the line of Blessed Michael Rua, the second Rector Major of the Salesian Society. He modeled his life on this holy Salesian's witness - choosing to live by the Gospel and the teachings of the Church, which became his very heart and soul. Fr. Trisolini was a determined man, who never wanted his weak physical body to be an obstacle to the work in which he gave his life and energy. He died writing his last book. After his last surgery for hernia, upon being discharged from the hospital, Fr. Andrew Hur Yun Jin, with whom Fr. Trisolini had worked for over ten years - and was as close to him as his own son - asked him:

“Fr. Jack, what will we do the next time you have to have surgery?”

Fr. Trisolini responded: “I will never have surgery again. I have prayed to the Lord that this be the last.”

Fr. Trisolini was a man of prayer his entire life. Even undergoing the rigors of pain and disease, he left everything in the hands of God. Did not the God he loved so deeply give him the grace of beginning a new life without pain on the day he left this world?

Fr. Trisolini, despite his full days of work, during which he would often counsel those with serious problems, would always take time to read a book,

the newspaper and watch the news. He always noted the important topics in the news, writing them down so he would not forget them. As a result of this habit there are many notebooks filled with his memos to himself, regarding talks he heard in the seminary, notes on his friends and family, notes on the Salesian Society, the Young Christian Workers Movement, the Christian Workers Movement and the Labour Pastoral Commission.

On the basis of all his written notes over the years, Fr. Trisolini and Mark Lee Geon were able to publish the following books:

*By the Sweat of Your Labour Shall You Get Bread to Eat and The Church, Ideology and Labour*

Besides these he was able to write and publish as well books with a more spiritual theme:

*The Source of Life is Really With You, and The Father's Will – as It is in Heaven, and God Who is Always with Us and the book The Poor you Will Have With you Always.*

Books that Fr. Trisolini had written were published after his death as well. On December 1, 2010 a book on the Liturgy was released – I Worship and Liturgy as well as for the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Labour Pastoral Commission the book *Catholic Social Teaching* was released on May 1, 2011. That latter book was compilation of his sermons and talks over twenty years for clergy, religious and laity as an introduction to and summary of the basic labour social doctrine of the church. The former Archbishop of Gwangju, Archbishop Andrew CHOI Chang-mou praised this book as an excellent resource. For the laity and especially for seminarians, this book was also published in the original English as a tool to learn English while coming to know the church's social doctrine as well.

It is understandable that for all the people that Fr. Trisolini met and knew during his lifetime - their individual memories of him, of his failings and

human weaknesses are quite diverse. As a priest, a missionary, a religious he was always the same - but according to the needs of the individual persons he met his response could be very different. He was consistent in always wanting to be of service - even those who continued to make the same mistake he never dismissed nor harangued - he was a father who waited for his child to return to the right path of life. While he could be uncompromising on matters of principle - he also would be the last to close his eyes to possibilities and to new ways of looking at problems. Before arguing on the basis of principles, he would look at a person's individual needs and situation with compassion and understanding.

Fr. Trisolini had the gift of seeing right through an issue, even when he turned 70. Seeing human weaknesses and human failures - he was a man who was capable of infinite patience, even when confronted with burning anger or personal failure in another or himself. It would be difficult to estimate at what personal cost this posture was to himself. He tried to repent of his own mistakes, and was always anxious to try and correct those parts of his life he felt needed correction. He had a sense of himself that resonated with John 1:23-24: *I am, as Isaiah prophesied: A voice of one that cries in the desert: Prepare a way for the Lord. Make his paths straight.* These are the words of his patron saint, John the Baptist, and like him; Fr. Trisolini felt his call to mission to change the world deeply - despite knowing all too well his own personal limitations.

Because of this sense of being called, he knew how to maintain his energy. He had the capability of setting targets and objectives that he was capable of fulfilling. Despite the times of failure and discouragement, he had the tenacity to try again until failure was turned into success. He even wanted his body after his death to be given to science through the Medical School of the Catholic University of Korea. This despite his many illnesses and diseases that he

suffered over the years – giving his very body away so that he would go to God with absolutely nothing in his hands. Those who were closest to him did not realize that he was determined to give everything away, even his own body. The Salesian Community, aware of his decision to give his body away, did that, thus fulfilling Fr. Trisolini's desire. After all of his desires were fulfilled, his remains were laid to rest on April 16, 2011 in the Gwangju Archdiocese Garden Cemetery near Damyang. While he was alive, he would sometimes say to people:

“When I die, don't bury me in Damyang! It is too far for people who know me to go. Maybe it would be best to put my remains in the Mausoleum of St. Mary's Hospital, which is easy to get to. Bury me there.”

The Mausoleum that Fr. Trisolini was talking about is not located in the Hospital proper, but is located in Gyeonggi Province near the town of Yongin. That is the location of the Seoul Archdiocesan Cemetery. While closer than Damyang, it is still a fair distance from Seoul. Fr. Jack was not a member of the clergy of the Seoul Archdiocese, but rather was a Salesian. Thus for the future care of his remains, it was felt that the Salesian Community's common grave in Damyang was the best location for them. He has truly left us, and is with the Lord. Yet we feel his presence through the prayers that he is no doubt offering for our benefit. Fr. Hur wrote regarding the love and training that Fr. Trisolini passed on to him during the ten years that they lived together:

*Fr. Jack Trisolini was a man who, humanly speaking, suffered a very great deal. From birth he was poor. When he was appointed to Korea, he came to a very poor country. He left his native land to live with us for over fifty years. From a very young age he knew the challenge of physical suffering. During the time of the dictators, all of his activities were monitored because he was a foreigner. Everything he did was questioned and examined. During the*

*1980s and 1990s, because he was an American and a priest he was despised. Anybody who saw him then knew that he had suffered a very great deal.*

*That may be true, but he lived as a priest with great happiness. Perhaps we cannot compare him to Jesus in the crib at Bethlehem, but he was drawn to those who suffered infirmity and injustice. For him to serve poor workers as they came and left this country was a grace. Carrying the cross of illness himself, he was able to offer consolation and courage to those who suffered themselves in body or in spirit. Without time to eat, he was busy as Jesus Himself, welcoming those to the confessional, offering spiritual direction, he never refused anyone who came to him. He remembered all those who came to him, a priest who prayed for the people he served. With the face of a father, he would encourage couples to seek reconciliation, and to raise a Holy Family. He rejoiced in people, with a welcoming smile he would greet them. Whether he was walking or on a bus or train, or hearing confessions, the people he met became his friends. Whether man or woman, or of whatever faith, whether rich or poor, he did not care, Fr. Trisolini welcomed everyone. He was a true fisher of men.*

*He was a faithful son of the Church, always obedient. His zeal in action was balanced by his perfect obedience. He was a man who sought God's will, wanting always to know more deeply the teachings of the Church, seeking renewal through respectful obedience to the Bishops, he was rewarded with support and respect himself by them. He lived a simple and honest life, without bending to popular opinions. He lived as John the Baptist, speaking of God's teachings, as a man of faith, wanting others to live uprightly in society.*

*Fr. Jack Trisolini was a priest immersed in the love of God. He wanted only to live in the midst of the poor and be of service to them and a loving God heard his prayer. A loving God led him to be prepared by a deep study of theology and spirituality, sociology and liberal arts, he drank at the well of*

*social doctrine, being led by God to prepare his future. He was able to learn to speak five languages, along with accumulating a large measure of wisdom and learning. Fr. Trisolini was given ample opportunity to live and work among the poor, seeing and hearing their stories, which added to a vast store of experience. He was finally sent to live and work in a Korea that was very poor, and lived in the midst of people with great difficulties. He became a partner with these people, looking for ways to move forward, becoming their friend.*

*“You have the poor with you always.” (Mark 14:7) is Jesus’ promise to be with us always and Fr. Trisolini’s life gives witness to that. What greater happiness can there be for a priest than to live in the love of God?*

*To the last moment of his life, walking on crutches so many times, he did not cease his apostolic life. Until the moment he died, he continued writing on the Word of God and the teachings of the Church. God answered by giving him eternal life. Fr. Jack Trisolini was happy as a priest. Now, in God’s land he is hearing: You are my beloved son, the son upon whom rests my favour. (Matthew 3:17) A happy priest, a father, a friend - I pray for the eternal rest of Fr. Jack Trisolini.*

Monday, November 22, 2010 was a day that wasn’t much different from any other day, but there were slight differences to the normal pattern. Usually, twice every week on Monday and Friday Fr. Trisolini received kidney dialysis at St. Mary’s Hospital. But this week, his normal dialysis was scheduled for Tuesday. Because of the oral medication used for a scheduled CT scan that Monday is not good for the dialysis – the following day had been scheduled for the dialysis.

However, when Fr. Jack got the hospital, the decision was made to do the dialysis that day rather than the CT scan. That morning his condition was not good, and the doctors, after consulting with one another, decided that the

dialysis was more urgent. Thus Monday morning he had the dialysis. While it was a different Monday morning – it ended up being the same. After the dialysis, he returned home by 2 p.m. and had a late lunch, during which he had an hour's conversation with Fr. Hur.

“Next May is the 40th anniversary of the Labour Pastoral Commission and I'm a bit concerned about what to do about it.”

Fr. Jack replied “Fr. Hur, don't be overly concerned about it now. We can talk about it at leisure later – let's do it that way for now.”

“That should be ok. During your years here you have taught the church's social doctrine to many seminarians, clergy, religious and laity. We are planning on publishing your book in commemoration of the celebration. I see you look tired, please go and take a rest. When you get up we can talk about then.”

“I just finished the book on the Liturgy for our benefactors' Christmas gift. There is something I'm a bit concerned about though. Recently Pope Benedict XVI issued a new document, and I would like to make some changes to the book on social doctrine that reflects that. I hope we can hold off on publication for a bit longer.”

Fr. Hur responded “Of course, I am happy to do as you say. I have a meeting now with the administrator and the Professional Committee about the 40th anniversary celebration; we will be talking about these very things. Please take a rest now, Father.”

“Certainly, Fr. Hur, that's what I will do.”

Thus they parted, and Fr. Hur went on to the meeting with the administrator and the full-time members of the Professional Committee to discuss the 40th anniversary celebration of the founding of the Labour Pastoral Commission.



## Epilogue: And on that day...



As soon as the evening meal was prepared, the cook went to the door closest to the entrance to the kitchen, Fr. Simeon Lee Sang Bum's room, calling him to the meal. Next she went to Fr. Trisolini's room. She opened the door and, as sometimes happened, he seemed to be sitting at his desk with his legs crossed – and appeared to have fallen asleep. She said

“Father, it is supper time.”

Normally, he would respond

“Yes”

Arise from his desk and go to the dining room. But this time, he remained silent. She said a bit louder

“Father it's time to eat!”

Still he did not reply – and for the third she called out

“Father, please, it is time for supper.”

Still there was no response, so she approached Fr. Trisolini. Taking a closer look at him, his head seemed to be at an awkward angle, and appeared to have no strength in it. She stepped back – feeling surprised and a bit afraid – she stepped back a bit. Since his surgery and the chemotherapy that followed it, he had frequently fallen asleep while working at his desk, and the cook would wake him up with no problem . . . .

“Father Lee! There's something strange about Fr. Trisolini!”

Fr. Lee heard the urgency in her voice and realized that something unusual was happening. He hastened to Fr. Trisolini's room, feeling an intuition that it could be a serious situation. He put his hand under Fr. Jack's nose, he said to the cook

“Fr. Trisolini is not breathing, Please go to Fr. Hur and him to come here quickly.”

Going to the meeting room she said “Fr. Hur!”

“Yes, what is wrong?” he replied.

Hearing what the cook had to say, he jumped up and ran to Fr. Trisolini's room. Entering Fr. Lee said to him in a small weak voice

“Fr. Jack seems to have died.”

On the computer monitor was an article outlining the Pope's views on condoms, something he had been discussing with Fr. Hur that morning. His last work on earth was double checking the church's social doctrine – and suddenly he was in the arms of God. This sudden transfer to a new life was so quick it was obvious that he had little discomfort. On the front and side of the desk, within easy reach, was an emergency bell which he did not use. He was in his normal working posture before the computer, sitting on his crossed legs, looking at the monitor when the end came. His facial expression was peaceful, his glasses still in place on his nose, like he had bowed his head and was squinting. His hands were on the arms of the chair, and anyone would have thought he was sleeping. The moment of death came in an instant, and perhaps even he was not aware of it. The death desired by most priests – that of dying when sleeping in silence and quickly – seemed to be God's grace at work for him. The emergency services were called (119) and arrived within five or ten minutes. A female medical assistant lowered Fr. Trisolini's from the chair on to the floor and attached electrocardiogram leads on his chest.

“It has been two or three hours since the time of death. Let's move him to the bed.” Three police officers had arrived and said:

“Since it is a sudden death an autopsy must be performed.”

Fr. Simeon Lee Sang Bum, with his face reddening questioned this.

“What do you mean? If he had died in an accident someplace outside, or died suddenly for no obvious cause, that is understandable. But this man has been undergoing cancer therapy for a long time now, and has died peacefully. I do not believe an autopsy to be appropriate.”

The police asked to speak with Fr. Lee outside of the room.

“An autopsy must be performed on anyone who has suddenly died, that is standard operating procedure. Please understand.”

Fr. Lee responded “Yes, I understand what you are saying. However, this just does not seem right to me.”

“Father, if we can confirm that he died receiving therapy from the doctor, we can move more quickly here. That seems the best thing to do.”

“Really?”

“Yes. If you can go to the hospital and receive a transcript from the hospital and doctor where he was being treated for cancer, just give that to us. We will accept that.”

Fr. Lee contacted St. Mary’s Hospital in Yeouido and explained the situation thoroughly to them there, asking them to prepare a transcript verifying that Fr. Trisolini had been a patient there receiving cancer treatment. Meanwhile, Fr. Hur phoned the Chancery office and spoke with Bishop Andrew YEOM Soojung informing him of Fr. Trisolini’s death.

“Your Excellency, I have some sad news for you. Just a little bit ago Fr. Trisolini died.”

“What did you say, Fr. Hur?”

“Bishop YEOM, you were the first person we wanted to speak with.”

“Fr. Hur, you are to bring Fr. Trisolini’s body to Myeong-dong Cathedral quickly. Also prepare to have the funeral mass celebrated in the Cathedral as well.”

“But Bishop, Fr. Trisolini is not a diocesan priest; he belongs to a religious congregation...”

“Yes, that is correct Fr. Hur. But he has done work for the Archdiocese that a diocesan priest had been unable to do for so many years. He is someone who is certainly worthy of being treated honourably. Just do as I say.”

“Certainly Bishop you are right. Fr. Trisolini spent many years of his life

working for the Archdiocese of Seoul, but still it would not be correct if we did not contact the Salesians at this time, because he was a Salesian. I will contact them now, and after listening to what their intentions are – and if they decide that the funeral will take place in their Church, that is what we must do. I will ask them about whether or not the funeral mass can be held at Myeong-dong Cathedral, and I will get in touch with you afterwards.”

“Yes, of course you are right, Fr. Hur. I can only guess at how hard it is for you now. You must be very upset and your heart very sad. The Lord has taken Fr. Jack, and he no longer has to suffer. Please don’t be too sad about this.”

“Yes, your Grace. Thank you.”

Hanging up, Fr. Hur immediately phoned the Provincial of the Salesians in Korea.

“Fr. Provincial, I have the sad duty to inform you that Fr. Trisolini died just a short time ago.”

“Yes?”

“Bishop YEOM, the Chancellor of the Diocese has suggested that the viewing and the funeral mass should take place at Myeong-dong Cathedral. I am phoning to ask you thoughts and what you would like us to do.”

“Father, please thank the Bishop for us. But he is one of us, and the viewing will take place at our church. The funeral mass can be held at the Cathedral as the Bishop suggests.”

“Thank you, Father. That is what will be done then. We will prepare things and bring his remains to you.”

Fr. Paul Yong Dong Jin was staying in Jecheon, Chungbuk Province, on a rest leave. He was in Seoul at that time, getting the results of some medical examinations he had received some time earlier. He was eating a late dinner at the time he heard about the death of Fr. Trisolini. He rushed to the Centre, deeply distressed. Frs. Hur and Lee comforted and calmed him and brought

him into Fr. Trisolini's room, where his body was laid out on the bed, wrapped in a sheet. They prayed together quietly. The three priests accompanied the body to the Yeouido St. Mary's Hospital, where the physician who had provided care for him for many years was asked for the document that confirmed that Fr. Trisolini had died of kidney cancer. This was graciously prepared by Fr. Trisolini's attending physician. Afterwards, the same three priests accompanied the body to the Salesian Provincial House. Fr. Mark Kim Pyung An, S.D.B., a member of the Salesian Samseon-dong community and Director of the Multicultural Family Support Centre in Seongbuk-dong, had gone ahead and made arrangement for the placement of the remains at the Salesian Provincial House.

The Chancellor of the Diocese, Bishop YEOM Soo-jung, directed the secretariat in the Chancery office to inform all clergy of the diocese of the funeral arrangements for Fr. Trisolini. Many of the diocesan clergy went to the Singil-dong Provincial House of the Salesians to pay their respects. Having been informed of the death Gwangju Archbishop Andrew CHOI Chang-mou and Daejeon Bishop Lazarus You Heung-sik, chairperson of the Bishops' Conference Office of Migrant Labour, came the next day and celebrated the mass, and offered their prayers before the bier.

During the three days that Fr. Trisolini's body was available for visitation, a great number of people passed through the doors. These people had all been touched by Fr. Jack over the years: graduates of the Salesian High School in Gwangju, former students at the Don Bosco Youth Centre, Salesian Laity, members of the YCW movement, and many others. People from all walks of life came in an unending stream to pay their respects. They all came to offer their condolences, express their sorrow and to pray for the eternal repose of his soul in God.

The funeral mass was held at Myeong-dong Cathedral on November 24 at 10 a.m. – and likewise was attended by great crowds of his friends and colleagues. Those assisting at the mass were: the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Seoul, Bishop Andrew YEOM Soo-jung; the Bishop of Euijeongbu Bishop Joseph Lee Han-taek; the Bishop of Chuncheon Lucas Kim Woon-Hoe; the Director of the Seoul Archdiocesan Labour Pastoral Commission Fr. Hur Yu-Jin ; the Provincial Superior of the Salesians in Korea Fr. Stephen Nam Sang Hun plus many Diocesan and religious priests also participated in the funeral liturgy. Many religious and laity also attended the funeral mass, united in one heart filled with affection for the deceased. It was the first time that a funeral liturgy for a religious had been celebrated in Myeong-dong Cathedral since it was founded. Fr. Hur offered the parting prayers over the body, said through tears flowing:

“Fr. Trisolini has left us, though he had much more to do here on this earth. The last words I ever said to him were that he should rest, though I didn’t realize at the time it would be last I would ever say to him. If I had known it was the last opportunity to speak to him I would have said ‘Father, you are a good man.’ or ‘I love you’ or ‘Thank you’ and I would have said that tens of times every day. I regret that I did not say these things to him when I could. I know all too well that I will never have a chance to do this. Father Jack, the time of your pain and suffering have come to end. You no longer have to suffer because you are in the arms of God. The last time I saw your face, you were so much at peace, thank you for that memory. I have one favour to ask of you still, and hope that you will hear what I say now. Do not forget us here on earth from your place in heaven. May we once again one day meet again and spend eternity together. Until then, I remain grateful. I appreciate very much having been there at your final moments of life. It was a great honour for me, more than I could ever say.”

The funeral mass and final blessings ended. There was sorrow and some regret, but also the hope for eternal happiness on everyone's mind. His body was placed in the ambulance for his last act of offering of himself to others. Just before the ambulance departure, holding the casket, Fr. Hur reflected "Father, when I saw you collapsed, I didn't hear your last wish and I was not with you at the moment of your death. I'm sorry that I was not your faithful son. Go in peace. Remember us all."

After the funeral mass, the priests and staff of the Labour Pastoral Commission returned to the Centre and went back to work. A large turkey was being cooked. It was for the yearly celebration of Thanksgiving. Each year, Fr. Trisolini would buy a turkey, cook it and share it with his close friends. This year, Fr. Jack was not at the table. All ate the turkey in silence.



# The Ones Left Behind



## **“You’re going to be fine. Have hope!”**

On November 22, 2010, I had come up to Seoul to obtain the results of some medical examinations. I had just begun eating a late supper, when I received word that Fr. Trisolini had died. I rushed to the Centre. It appeared that he had died around 3 P.M., and was discovered at 6 P.M. I arrived at around 7:10 P.M. Fr. Jack had been writing at his desk, his head fell to the left when he died. I accompanied Fr. Hur to Yeouido St. Mary’s Hospital with the remains of Fr. Jack, obtaining the necessary documents from the doctor there. We proceeded immediately to the Salesian Provincial Building, arriving after midnight.

Father’s death was a big shock to me personally. The next day I awoke with my whole body feeling numb – the death of Fr. Trisolini had affected me more deeply than I had realized at first – thus making some difficulties for the Director. Without some medical assistance, I would have ended up in the hospital myself. Without the care, the numbness could have easily progressed into something more dangerous. The funeral mass was held in Myeong-dong Cathedral at the orders of Bishop YEOM.

The death of Fr. Trisolini left a big void in the labour ministry that became evident with his passing. For Fr. Hur and the staff at the Centre, his death left them all in a daze. For Fr. Lee Sang Bum it was the same... Fr. Jack was a model of good humour even after his cancer surgery and all the suffering that followed – revealing his profound love for the church, and the zeal he

had for training young priests sharing his love for the poor with them. To me personally he was example of a life well led, a sign of a deep personal character. He taught not just with words, but through his sharing his experience with me. He was sometimes like my father, sometimes he was a fellow priest who cherished me and loved me, he showed me his fear of death and the pain he endured in his illnesses; he taught me how to live as a priest. I remember his robust nature and unshakable will - someone who practiced what he believed. He died a poor man, a religious who had nothing material left when he died. He died writing a book in his last minutes. Even though some did not care for him, this did not prevent him from being firm in his commitment; he hated any form of bullying people. He was totally familiar with the basics of his faith. He was convinced of the righteousness of what he was doing – like John the Baptist calling in the wilderness, calling his contemporaries to Jesus. He never caved into pressure, when he was Director he called the priests working with him to a higher standard of service. He would remind those who worked with him who had doctoral degrees that those degrees were not the important thing. Sometimes they become the cause of failure. He was not a Ph.D., but he was a Doctor of the Gospel, spending time every day with the Word of God in study and meditation.

Every day he would spend time studying the teachings of the church so that he could understand reality more deeply, and to become better able to explain these teachings to the people of God. Even having had cancer and beating the odds for a time, when illness again had him its grip, he did not worry about the future. When I was sick he would advise me “You’re going to be fine. Have hope!”

There were some diocesan clergy who did not like Fr. Trisolini, but it was very clear that he did not reciprocate those feelings. He was always a churchman, someone who attempted to adhere to the church’s teaching and

pass them on to people. There were times when confronted with people who were filled with emotion; he could remain cool and collected. He deeply respected the humanity and the dignity of people. There were times when the staff considered him a villain, and would express their anger at him over an issue. He would be angry only when he thought people did not live up to the dignity of being an employee of the church and not being more committed than someone working in society. This would spur him to work harder to show that what was considered impossible in theory was possible in reality. He would not blame others for their weaknesses, but would encourage them to be more than were.

When I was a child, I thought Fr. Jack was like a tiger, not knowing his internal wounds suffered. He was a great educator of young people, who gave his everything in attempting to educate them. Those who did not know his heart thought he was a frightening person. Working with him, after he had become a lot older, he was someone who was always ready to help and to listen – especially his successors Fr. Yong and Fr. Hur – always being helpful and obedient to them. Someone like this is hard to find in Korea! Fr. Trisolini and Archbishop Andrew CHOI Chang-mou are very similar to each other. The deceased Professor Park Yeong Ki and Mr. Kim Mal Ryong used to say this. They were all close friends who worked together for many years.

When he would work on a document on the church's commitment to poor workers, he would reveal his knowledge of the teachings of the church and the Pope's and how faithful he was to their teachings. Always there are copious references to the Gospel and to the church's teachings. He always spoke well of the Bishops when conversation would come up, revealing his deep respect for the church's leaders. He also possessed the gift of diplomacy. When the Bomun-dong Centre was built, he would say to Chairman Lee Jin Gi, of Samyang Construction Company, that "this building is the last thing I will do.

Please help us out!”

After I became a priest, I became aware that Fr. Trisolini kept prodigious amounts of notes. I would suggest to him that because of this, he should write a book about the labour apostolate. From that time on, whenever he had a little time, he began to work on a book, working wholeheartedly on the project. The YCW should help defray the expenses for this book. I helped him a little on this project, and Fr. Hur and Fr. Jack eventually completed the project.

It’s easy to pay for a book. His priest friends in the U.S. and Europe would often send him articles or tapes of famous authors or speakers that he would faithfully read or listen to. He would prepare a transcript of the talk, listening again, typing, listening and typing again. In order to remember what people said, he would listen with great attention. Likewise, he would ask people to read a transcript in advance of publication, and would enjoy having a discussion about the book, always receptive to the opinions of others.

Fr. Trisolini, embracing even those who disparaged and thought little of him, he embraced: he was a priest who gave his all.

From the diary of the late Fr. Paul Yong Dong Jin

# To the Friends and Family of Father John Trisolini, S.D.B.,

Hello and Happy New Year to all. On behalf of my brother, known to his family and many friends in the States as “Jack”, I would like to say thank you for everything that was done for him over the years. Jack loved Korea and its people. He would always share with us how he was highly regarded, respected, and received by all.

Much of his life was lived in Korea, which he certainly called “Home”. Jack fought much illness and health obstacles throughout his life, and he did it with grace. The last few years were especially difficult and a challenge which he fought with dignity. Between the many Doctor visits, dialysis, and side effects of his illnesses, he never complained or felt pity on himself. Without the love, support, and sympathetic help he received, especially from those he lived with the last 10 years, he would not have been able to enjoy what life has offered him as a functioning participant.

I am sure Jack is looking down on each and every one of you and praying for you with the closure of “I Love You”. My thanks to all who touched his heart, as well as my family, by adopting him in to your lives and being his Korean family.

Best Regards and Gratitude,

January 6, 2010

Kathleen Trisolini-Di Laura  
Sister of Father Johns [Jack] Trisolini

# Teacher of Catholic Spirituality and Pioneer in the Labour Ministry in Korea: +Fr. John Trisolini

Labour Pastoral Commission – Professional Committee

## Introduction

Fr. John Trisolini, a foreign-born worker priest, offered up his life for over fifty years for poor labourers in Korea. His objective was to develop Christian spirituality through a pastoral ministry centred on the formation of faith and spirituality for labourers and the faithful. He desired for all to experience Christian spirituality, and to lead people to a life based on this spirituality. I believe that if he were still alive today, he would have continued this ministry through his preaching and writings.

Fr. Trisolini gave priority to a Christian life that was consistent in its spirituality for workers and for those laity dedicated to this ideal. Up to the time of his death he had written on this theme, using Christian doctrine that was the foundation of this spirituality lived in society, in a manner that was

clear and understandable. Furthermore, he worked as a priest using the method of “Observe – Judge – Act” in his daily life that proved to be a fruitful tool in actualizing this spirituality for workers and the laity. The books that he wrote during his lifetime offer an exposition of this spirituality.

*Written during his life time “The Source of Life is Really With You”; “The Father’s Will: As it is in Heaven”; “God Who is Always With Us”; “The Poor You Will Always Have With You” are four books that were published. Shortly after his death, on December 1, 2010 one other book was published - “Church Liturgy: Praying and Meditating Together” thus bringing to five volumes his works on spirituality. Previous to these books, a work done together with Mark Lee Geon “The Church, Ideology and Labour” had been published earlier.<sup>1</sup>*

Fr. Trisolini frequently used this verse as an expression of his dependence on God: “Please, Lord, rescue me; hurry Lord, help me.” (Psalm 40: 13). He confessed that this prayer best expressed his own attitude toward life.<sup>2</sup> In 1993 Fr. Jack had cancer of the kidney and had two surgical interventions. When it was particularly difficult to endure the ensuing treatment, he began to write about his own spiritual journey.<sup>3</sup>

Fr. Trisolini had taught the Theology of Spirituality for a number of years in the Catechetical Institute of Korea. In the simple interest of helping people to develop their own spiritual lives, and in turn help them through the difficult

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1 The Roman Catholic Diocese of Seoul, Labour Pastoral Commission: A Voice Crying in the Wilderness – the Life of Fr. John Trisolini, Catholic Publishing House, 2013.

2 John Trisolini, Spirituality for priest, religious and dedicated laity – “Please, Lord, rescue me; hurry Lord, help me.” Catholic Publishing House, 2000.

3 “During my recuperation after surgery, in order to revive my heart and body I listened to a tape by a fellow Salesian, the Irishman Fr. Jack Finnegan of a he retreat he gave on the spirituality of the Intercession for Priests, later publishing a book using this resource.” Editor

challenges of their lives, he wrote on the subject. He had learned through his years of physical suffering, through prayer and meditation, that a life lived in spirituality help solve the internal tensions in his own life. In the most difficult periods of physical suffering he had come to experience the love of God. That is the focus of this article as well. Fr. Trisolini, through his vocation as a priest, came to adhere to a living God, consistent with the principles of Christian theology, through developing a method of spirituality. At the time of a graduation ceremony at the University he heard a commencement talk that led him to choose a life as a missionary priest – where he found true happiness. Thus he spent a lifetime training poor workers and laity, using all of his energy to that end. He gave no better witness than his life lived in the spirit of poverty and humble obedience.

## **II. Christian Spirituality**

### **Definitions and models of spirituality**

Spirituality is about trying to experience God in our lives – and it is the most fundamental value of our lives. That is, in our effort to follow the teachings of the Gospel and the example of Jesus Christ, desiring to become a person of love through loving our neighbours, we develop spirituality through this unfolding experience within ourselves.<sup>4</sup> We realize this through our own experience of good, evil and indifference. This process means ripping off the mask of pretense and hypocrisy and to live a more centred life. Christian

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4 Ibid., Note 1, page 3.

spirituality is living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in a very specific way, like the disciples of Jesus Christ, through a life of faith, hope and love.<sup>5</sup>

In order to understand well the meaning of spirituality, we must ask of ourselves “Who am I?” At the same time we must ask “How can I develop into a human being that is fully mature and walking towards Christ?” – these are the questions that must preoccupy us. We look at goodness, evil and human indifference through the prism of our personal pride and self-interest, and this forms our view of our neighbours. Fr. Trisolini saw three patterns of spirituality in the church in three models of his spirituality, namely interior spirituality, creational spirituality and finally, societal spirituality.

First of all, interior spirituality is formed in solitude through private prayer where we deepen our life of faith and develop an intimate spirituality that is based on the theological conviction of the value of the experience. Dedicated time that is centred on prayer or meditation in silence is the main characteristic of this model. This is reflected by the words “*But when you pray, go to your private room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.*” (Matthew 6:6)

Secondly, creational spirituality “*Think of the flowers in the field, they never have to work or spin.*” (Matthew 6:28) reflects those who meditate in the fullness of joy, who are not content to be in isolation and to do without spiritual gestures and actions, as love reveals itself with their hearts.

Thirdly, societal spirituality leads the heart to consider justice and peace and their theological weight reflecting and acting in solidarity with workers and the poor.

“...and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll

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5 Ibid., later on page 3.

*he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.” (Luke 4:17-19)*

Through these three levels of spirituality, the individual comes to an understanding of their own spirituality in different ways, each of which is connected to real life. Emphasizing one level over another, a person can become blocked at one point or another, failing to understand or appreciate the real problems before them. For others, they are led to attempt radical solutions to social justice issues, and end up dying or trapped in a prison. For still others, they are led to a slower more natural approach to the problems before them and their society. Whatever may unfold, these three approaches and models of spirituality have been recognized by all as valid.<sup>6</sup>

Thus Fr. Trisolini attempted to integrate these three models of spirituality as a form of “body and soul” spirituality. He attempted to integrate these three models in the following manner. The entirety of any one of the models is actually only a part of something larger. For example a given organ in the body is only a part of the body just as our earth is only a small part of the much larger solar system – which leads us to the epistemological concept that this implies. That is the “I” that is the individual exists only in relationship to the larger reality that is society. As a Christian, this experience of being “I” in relationship with the greater “others” leads to a sense of responsibility for the greater reality.<sup>7</sup> In fact each of the models of spirituality outlined above each has its own strengths and weaknesses. For those who centre only on first model fail to connect on a moral level to the wider reality around them, and their life

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6 Ibid., Pages 7 and 8.

7 Ibid., Page 9

of meditation can end up being a life of obsession. Centering on the second model of spirituality exclusively can lead to concentration on the mystical elements alone – looking for miracles and spiritual experiences – which is another form of obsession as well. For those who use only the third model for spirituality, the danger is to become obsessed with liberation theology or its variants, and end up concentrating on strategy and tactics for conflict resolution within the church and in society. Oftentimes this leads to divisiveness and not healing and communion. Thus, in a more holistic approach to spirituality, one is forced to analyze the benefits of each of the models in a given situation.

### **The Incarnation of Spirituality**

Priests, religious and consecrated laity, using all of the models of spirituality at the same time, leads one toward the Christian community in the spirit of Jesus Christ with an open mind. But doing so, we allow ourselves to live in faith and must accept the challenges before us. This was precisely the point that Fr. Trisolini continuously stressed to poor workers and consecrated laity – he considered this the font of spirituality.<sup>8</sup> If in using these forms of spirituality and we are not aware of what they are asking of us, how can we lead the Christian community spiritually towards Christ? What is Christ asking of the Christian community today? Fr. Trisolini would ask us to “look at what is happening in society today and how it is affecting people is something that we must be aware of.”<sup>9</sup> And how can we know the signs of the times? Fr. Trisolini

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8 The following analogy was often used by Fr. Trisolini: “If we meditate on a regular basis and, if through meditation we are rested enough to reflect on our neighbours, we will not be wearied by whatever voluntary action we may do for them. People who do not reflect are at times liable to feel the boredom associated with being still. On the other hand we have the activist who leaves reflection and contemplation aside, and filled with outrage, they become busy, even hectic, and not very fruitful. Leaving one part of the entire spirituality aside can often lead to imbalance and immature action and/or profound laziness.” (Ibid. Page 9)

9 As the Scriptures say “*In the evening you say, 'It will be fine; there's a red sky,' and in the morning,*

would then go on to speak of self-reflection that would lead us to an interior conversion, examining our attitudes and find the appropriate method, asking for the following steps.

First of all, we must be converted to the Word of God. If we are not familiar with the Word of God, how can we meaningfully reflect on the present and plan for the future? We ask for our daily bread every day, what does that mean? “Lord, what do you want us to do now, what is your Will for us at this moment?” If you want to understand what the Lord of all wants at any particular moment, we must be converted to the Word of God – we must wake up to that pressing call now.

Secondly, we must be converted to contemplation and adoration. If we wish to be converted to the Word of God, we need to be more inclusive. If we are able to accept the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have to mold ourselves to God. As Archbishop Fulton Sheen used to say, paraphrasing the words of Jesus to his disciples “*He is asking us to pray with him*”. (Cf. Matthew 26:40).

Third, we must be converted to the sacraments. The conventional method for the Catholic believer to meet Jesus is through the sacraments. Thus, in order for the faithful to enjoy this sacramental intimacy with the Lord, priests must offer the sacraments to the faithful. Of course, the priest must have the zeal to seek out the sick and celebrate the mass and sacramental confession for them as well. If the priest is unable to offer the healing sacraments to the faithful, how will they be able to offer healing to those whom they meet?

Fourth and finally, we must be converted to service (diakonia). For Christians,

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*'Stormy weather today; the sky is read and overcast.' You know how to read the face of the sky, but you cannot read the signs of times.*" (Matthew 16: 2-3). Fr. Trisolini, when he would lecture, would always ask workers or other laity to be able to read the signs of the times, to be a person sensitive to what is going on around them. Editor

in terms of service, the sky is the limit. The only thing limiting the service we offer to others is our own ability to do so. Of course, being converted to a life of service is not easy, growth in maturity is always accompanied by pain. When the Lord calls us to service, he gives us the grace to change and mature. We are always living in fear. How can we overcome the fear in our hearts? Jesus says many times in the Gospels “Do not fear!” and “Do not be afraid!” A life given to love is one that slowly becomes aware that fear diminishes to the extent that we love. If we define love as the absence of fear, and if we still have fear in our hearts it means that our love is not yet mature and healthy.

### **The Experience of God – Spirituality Made Manifest.**<sup>10</sup>

This is not a simple experience that is gained quickly; rather it is an experience of the fruit of a long reflection and contemplation. When we need God the most, which is when we are aware of our own weakness and inability - that is the best time to experience God in our lives. Fr. Trisolini used to say that when we can say “God, be merciful to me, a sinner” (See Luke 18: 9-14) is when we arrive at the moment of joy.

However, the experience of God can be seen in three distinct phases.<sup>11</sup> First of all, people who personally meet God in their beings and interior dimensions. Each is capable of meeting God, and this step is the meaning of the biblical verse “the Kingdom of God is within us.” In other words, our spirituality reveals what is inherent within each of us and is a model of interior spirituality.

Secondly, we meet God in the universe or in nature.<sup>12</sup> God can be discovered

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10 Ibid. Page 18

11 Ibid. Page 19.

12 Looking in the scriptures the Gospel speaks of this as follow “*Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns*” and “*Observe how the lilies of the field grow, they do not toil nor do they spin.*” (Matthew 6: 26 and 28) If one thinks that this, creational spirituality, is the only way to meet God, it would result in a very limited experience. Ibid. Page 19.

or experienced in this beauty of nature around us.

Third, it is possible to meet or experience God throughout human history, through the misery and suffering of our brothers and sister (for example, those who died during the Nazi persecution and murder of the Jews, etc.). In looking at history, this is where we must meet God. All expressions of the human person is the place where we see God revealing himself.

In order to meet God, we must be familiar with these three ways of experiencing him. It is possible to have these experiences of God in our daily lives - living and moving in faith. In our interior lives, we must vividly perceive ourselves as creatures of God, aware of the structural evil around, using our faith to overcome it. This is making incarnate our faith. This living faith is what causes us to be concerned about ourselves, about the creation around us, and about our brothers and sisters with a deep sense of responsibility. Our experience of the incarnation of our religious experiences is at the same time an experience of God's presence within ourselves, within creation and within the experience of our brothers and sisters. In other words, God and our neighbour and the history of relationships is a communion with God, with nature and with history. Fellowship with our brothers and sisters is something that should never be avoided – it is the reality that gives us meaning.

### **Spirituality - Devotion to the World**

Spirituality is something associated with concrete reality – a person, a place, a time. If spirituality is to become truly useful for us, it should be looked at with a new perspective.

And that is that it is something that demands positive change. Jesus Christ never tolerated the “status quo”, but rather criticized and rebuked it and made people feel uncomfortable. To ignore the social dimension of spirituality is to ignore the Gospel, thus making spirituality lose its relevance. Over the

last one hundred years or more, that is why the church has emphasized social doctrine. This is seen in the spirituality of Catholic social teaching an emphasis on the common good, fair redistribution of wealth, making a priority the poor and their care. The Catholic Church's social doctrine is a gift, and is the result of many years of experience and deep and long reflection. The church will continue this commitment to social issues for the entire universal church – obliging the faithful to know the problems associated with society today. Each of us individually are led to prayer and reflection about contemporary social issues, and if we are to attempt to correct the social issues that exist today, we must share with other people this prayer and reflection and we must become knowledgeable about what the church has taught regarding social doctrine and choose to live according to these teachings.

We should pay attention to the following topics as follows. First of all, we should develop a deep interest in the common good. We have to think about social side of the common good and its purpose. Using the principle of subsidiarity, we can at the same time come to an understanding of the communitarian aspects of our environment that demand that we make every effort to develop solidarity with one another with enthusiasm. We must never forget the obligation to begin with a preferential option for the poor. Regarding social issues, the French Fr. Michel Quoist described three ways in which a priest responds to them: number one, becoming a type of a worm living in a sacristy. Number two, becoming an activist centering his ministry on liberation theology. Number three, is one who becomes a shepherd and an educator.

The sacristy worm is concerned mostly about ecclesial matters, centered on liturgical functions and protecting the faithful. The fierce activist, aware of the many forms of social evils and injustices, will always lead the protest against them. The priest who is a shepherd should be educators who uplift the consciousness of the faithful spiritually and allow them to take the lead for

change in society as Christian laity who are well developed and trained.<sup>13</sup> Fr. Michele wants priests today to lead Catholic laity by teaching them their role as the ones responsible for the social changes needed for a more just society. Third, Fr. Trisolini, during training and education programs always emphasized that the priest is to be an educator and spiritual leader, concerned with the strengthening of the laity who can much better do the job of working for social justice. Because Fr. Jack understood better than most the actual situation of the poor worker in today's Korea, he could say with Pope Pius XI "the church is in need of workers and workers are in need of the church." He truly believed that Catholic clergy and the labourers work together to work out their salvation by collaborating and working together.

### **The Oppressed and Marginalized: Conversion to their Plight (The Preferential Option for the Poor)**

Spirituality is freedom. The word "freedom" implies conversion and repentance. We as Christians, being full members of society, chose to repent of our failures so that the human family can grow again. We must choose conversion throughout our lives, journeying with our fellow human beings, fully aware of the nature and meaning of the journey we are making together. If on the journey, we come upon those who are oppressed and marginalized, can we stand on the sidelines passively?

In 1959, Fr. Trisolini came to Korea from the richest country in the world – the United States, in order to live and work in what was then the poorest country in the world during his three year training period as a seminarian. After three years, he went to France and was ordained a priest in 1967,

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13 Ibid. Page 21.

returning to Korea shortly thereafter.<sup>14</sup> In 1967 he was assigned to Dorim-dong Parish, where he met and learned from the many poor working youth and labourers, knowing their conflicts and difficulties well. He loved them and felt a deep compassion for them all. His preaching was often centred on the theological approach to the social issues that were in existence at that time. With the growth of new industries and new technologies, the industrial relations changed – with management becoming enormously wealthy while the workers remained poor. He spoke to the moral struggle that was needed to correct this situation – the need for solidarity of the workers reflecting the sentiments of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. He began his actual work with labourers beginning in the 1970’s, but the Catholic Church had been involved in the struggle since the early 1960’s. In those years, the majority of workers lived in injustice and poverty, and the need for solidarity with workers was seen as urgent. In the legislation being approved at that time there was no shadow of the spirit of Christ, and an effort to isolate activists in order to prevent threats to the interest of management was the norm. Greed had victimized those who created the wealth by their labour. The first challenge was to understand the fundamentals of action, that is, to recognize the inherent dignity of the human person and to work that each human person be respected because of that fundamental dignity. When seen in the light of shared human dignity, the obvious social inequity was impossible to ignore any longer. The effort to ameliorate plight of workers was not going to be an easy task, but a beginning had to be made. It would be deceptive to promise easy solutions when it was obvious that solutions would only come into being after even more pain and more injustice to be endured. Thus the most appropriate attitude was

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14 In 1959 the annual income of workers in Korea was only 59 U.S. dollars; Korea was among the poorest nations of the world. Editor

to face the evil of the obvious, de facto, human suffering and begin to find a solution by another means.<sup>15</sup> *Rerum Novarum* gave the future direction to the labour ministry – centred on the sufferings of the workers and the poor. In this context, Fr. Trisolini centred on the theological interpretations that he had to be concerned with will be discussed in the next section.

### III. True Happiness and Poverty of the Christian

#### The definition of true happiness

In the spirituality and preaching of Fr. Trisolini to workers and youth, he centred on the evidence and contents offered by the New Testament, especially of the Synoptic Gospels. There he found the important themes that guided him. In the books he published over the year, his most often cited Gospel verses come from the books of Matthew and Luke in particular.

Fr. Trisolini found two ways of looking at “true happiness” in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.<sup>16</sup> The Gospel of Matthew is targeted towards the Jewish community, especially the rabbis or teachers of that community. Luke, in contrast, was not familiar with the traditions found in Judaism, and targeted rather Gentiles. In particular, Luke has Jesus speaking to all people, including Jews of course, but his concern was a much broader audience. Luke intended that the teachings of Jesus were the same for all.<sup>17</sup> True happiness is a summary

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15 The Korean Catholic Conference of Bishops, *The Social Doctrine of the Church for Church and Society*, 1994, on pages 18-19.

16 John Trisolini, *The Poor You Will Have with You Always*, Catholic Publishing House, 2009, page 72.

17 *Ibid.* Note 13, Page 73.

of the teachings of Jesus, and the key to understanding his program. Luke proclaims that true happiness is found in those who live in poverty and where the Kingdom of God is to be proclaimed, giving happiness and joy to those who accept the Good News. Matthew presents true happiness in a slightly different manner than Luke, and provides a unique perspective among the evangelists. That is that the environment – that is the culture of the people who are hearing the proclamation – colours the message according to the specific situation in which the proclamation is made. To become followers of Christ means to live in a spirit of true happiness. As we lead our daily lives, and for blessed and true happiness to increase, Christians need to live zealously and seriously in order to realize true happiness.

Fr. Jack was impressed for the first time about living seriously in order to obtain true happiness during his time at the Montclair Teachers College in New Jersey State.<sup>18</sup> He vividly remembered a talk that he had heard during his years there – on the subject of a truly happy and meaningful life. He recalled nothing else about that talk, but the reflections on what true happiness really was all about. When he heard that talk, he was concerned about his future life direction – whether he should dedicate his life to education or to becoming a missionary priest. In that talk he heard the precious kernel of the teachings of Jesus presented in such a clear and meaningful way that it made a deep and lasting impression on him. In other words, for Fr. Trisolini living a truly happy life had begun to mean having a sense of mission – and that mission was to proclaim the Gospel as a poor man. That meant for him that he was on the

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18 Op. cit. John Trisolini, *Spirituality for priests, religious and dedicated laity*, (Week 13) page 75. At the Montclair Teachers College graduation ceremonies in 1956 the commencement speaker was U.S. Representative Dean Judd. Representative Judd, noting that they were soon to begin their professional careers soon, challenged them to teach students as people filled with “true happiness” – that is that they instill a certain toughness in their students, and lead by the example of their own true happiness and commitment.

verge of choosing life as a missionary priest in order to live a faithful life of service to others.<sup>19</sup> The second time he heard the theme of “true happiness” spoken about what in Rome in 1963, on the eve of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Fr. Trisolini was then a seminarian living in Rome. The person speaking about “true happiness” was Blessed Pope John XXIII.<sup>20</sup>

How do we read and meditate about and apply “true happiness” to our daily lives? Cardinal Joseph Cardijn realized that present the Gospel of Christ to young people that applied only to their personal lives was not sufficient. If a young person’s conversion to Christian belief is sincere, it must go beyond the intellectual level and must involve a life of activism. Their conversion should develop into a commitment to changing their own personal lives, but beyond that it should lead to a further commitment to help change society for the good of others. Cardinal Cardijn developed the “Observe-Judge-Act” to help young people to evaluate themselves and the reality that is around them. This methodology proved useful in helping evaluate personal and societal failures as well leading to a reflection on the spirit of poverty in their lives. This methodology also raised the awareness that each individual, each family and that each faith community are separate entities from the secular world – and that secular world does not supply enough to nourish a Gospel-centred life. The spirit of the Gospel must overflow from personal experience to the family and religious communities that we are part of. The path to the future is applying these Gospel experiences beyond us, and to allow our experience to overflow into society as well, thus becoming a leaven in that society, affecting every person in society in a diverse but deep ways.

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19 Ibid., Note 13, Page 76.

20 Ibid., (Note 13) Page 76. Pope John XXIII received the Balzan Prize for his contribution to the promotion of humanity, when he spoke in a very positive vein about the true happiness of the Christian in the 20th Century.

This living spirit of true happiness is right for our era today. In applying the Gospel to our own lives, we must learn how to express the good that in that commitment to others. However, frequently our reflections about what is happening around us, does not flow over into witness. We constantly forget that the Holy Spirit is with us, leading us through history. Therefore we must learn that through our regular reflection on life and what is going on around us, we must come to reap the benefits of the goodness and grace that is abundantly present within and around us.<sup>21</sup> True happiness is paradoxical. It is the opposite of the values of the wisdom of this world, and contrary to the common sense experience of many. Jesus told us that “blessed are the poor in spirit”, and thus clearly outlines the teachings of Jesus are. These teachings lead us to find this true happiness or blessedness and it is to be found in poor workers – a spirituality that can be shared with lay people as well.

### **The Poor and True Happiness**

The relationship between the rich and the poor is a theme that comes often in the Bible. Who are the poor in the Old Testament? In the Old Testament the poor are the needy, the people who are hungry yet humble or the anawim (אֲנָוִים). This includes the hungry or those who lack the necessities of life, and those who must beg to survive. Included in these would be the sick and disabled, the elderly or anyone who depends upon charity. These are ones who can no longer move their own bodies to support themselves, and survive by the charity of others.<sup>22</sup> Included in the anawim, in the Jewish tradition, are those who

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21 In February and March 1990, the Taizé community's Brother Roger Shultz sent a letter through his brothers to the pilgrim miners in the Silesian region in Poland in which he reflects on the effort to practice true happiness. Ibid. (Note 13) Pages 80 thru 81.

22 Ibid., (Note 13) Page 83.

have been denied access to work.<sup>23</sup> Concern for the poor and taking specific measures to alleviate their suffering, became with time an essential element of the faith-life of the Jews. This is seen in these lines from the fourth chapter of the book of Tobit:

*Set aside part of your goods for alms-giving.  
Never turn your face from the poor  
and God will never turn his from you.  
Measure your alms by what you have;  
if you have much, give more;  
if you have little, do not be afraid to give less in alms.  
So doing, you will lay up for yourself a great treasure  
for the day of necessity.  
For almsgiving delivers from death  
and saves people from passing down to darkness.  
Almsgiving is a most effective offering  
for all those who do it in the presence of the Most High. (Tobit 4: 7-11)*

In the Old Testament those in poverty are at first, those denied the blessings of God. But as the tradition matured, the poor were no longer considered evil because of their plight. Finally the prophets taught the Jews about their spiritual poverty, and further diminished the thought that those in physical poverty were cursed.<sup>24</sup> Jesus taught his disciples about “true happiness” and the way of achieving justice, showing them a new path of life. We do not achieve justice

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23 Included in these would be shepherds, doctors, and washer-people, and butchers, people sick with infectious diseases (lepers and others with skin diseases), prostitutes, tax collectors and gentiles. Editor.

24 Ibid., (Note 13) Page 87.

because of what we have done, but because we empty ourselves and become poor by choice. The person who lives justly is the one who opens their hearts to the love of God, allowing that love to flow through them. True happiness is not gained by adhering to the law, but is won by faith. For most the way to happiness is precisely the opposite meaning. In reality, most people accept the evil that exists in the world, and normally do not attempt to change the injustices they find in life. Even knowing that there are many people in this world who suffer from hunger and disease, and violation of their basic human rights, they do not move to change reality. Those who follow Jesus, accept the standards he presents for obtaining true happiness and spiritual blessings. He has taught us about happiness, so that we will become happier as we live more just lives.<sup>25</sup>

## IV. Closing Remarks

While presenting his views, Fr. Trisolini was well aware of the numerous political, social and economic solutions he was suggesting were contrary to the political effort behind the industrialization and gradual democratization of Korea. He always presented his insights to the dedicated laity on a professional level, pondering and reflecting from a biblical perspective and sound theology, so that they could stand in opposition, with true wisdom fed by the social doctrine of the church, to the stance of the governing class. In evaluating his efforts, his commitment at enhancing the spirituality of laity and workers were consistent with basic pastoral principles.

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25 Ibid., (Note 13) Page 105.

When the faithful received training in the bible and doctrine, they often studied using the writings of biblical scholars and spiritual directors. However, Fr. Trisolini's lectures on the bible and theology as well as the spiritual foundations of the social doctrine of the church that he presented were clear and much easier to understand. He had an unfailing understanding as a priest and shepherd about what important about lay spirituality and what was useful to those whom he lectured to. His spirituality was always based upon the bible. He believed that in order for the living Word of God on a personal, societal and ecclesial level to become something almost organically a living reality, the sense of communality, solidarity and the ethical basis of mutual aid needed to be clear and concrete when used to consider the various issues being discussed. He spoke passionately and with great devotion about the preferential option for the poor – that is consciously choosing to be of service to the most marginalized in society was a response to the obligation we assume to be part of God's work of salvation to be of loving service to the human family – especially for the working poor and migrant workers and migrant women in multicultural families with the purpose of improving their human rights.

Above all, Fr. Trisolini's vocation as a missionary in the Korean Catholic Church was a sign of God's grace and love. He was a teacher of spirituality to Korean clergy and committed laity and the founding father of the labour ministry in our country. He was a shepherd of God – a voice that cried out in the desert. Spirituality is not something that is important only to those who choose to study it, any normal person with some effort on their part, can benefit from it; as is noted in the last chapter of the regulations "The Working Person" – Fr. Jack Trisolini was the one who most thoroughly understood and practiced most precisely this conviction.

# A list of the Books translated and / or published by Fr. Jack Trisolini into Korean

## 1998

- Economic Globalization: Implications for the Church*
- Cos'è la dottrina sociale della Chiesa?*
- La Rerum Novarum oggi*
- Diversi aspetti del concetto di lavoro*
- Madre Teresa di Calcutta*
- Instrument of God's Peace*
- The shortcomings of the market*
- Moral Imperatives for addressing Structural Adjustment and Economic Reform Measures*
- Mass Unemployment and the Expansion of the Social Safety Net*
- Globalization and neo-liberalism and the church*
- When will it end?*
- Cano Foundation: The Life of Blessed Marcel Gallo, Martyr*
- Senso del lavoro alla luce della fede cristiana*
- Il Principio di Sussidiarietà*

## 1999

- La Solidarietà*
- Punto centrale dell'etica del lavoro: il fine del lavoro è l'uomo*
- International Labour Organization (ILO) report on industrial accidents*
- La Destinazione Universale dei Beni*
- Rapporto tra dovere di lavorare ed esigenza di liberazione dal lavoro nel <riposato>*
- Foreign (Philippines) Workers Survey Report*
- South Korea's labor movement and the Catholic Church's Involvement*
- Pope Karol Wojtyla*
- Il Bene Comune*

## 2000

- Jubilee Memorial temporary workers labor survey*
- Work for Everyone: The Way of Solidarity and Justice*
- Catholic Social Teaching and Trade*
- International Council of Catholic Youth Labor (CIJOC) constitution, the basic principles of the declaration, bylaws, and other documents related to the International Conference.*
- Chiesa e movimento operaio: un percorso storico dalle origini al Concilio Vaticano II*
- Bibbia e lavoro: alienazione e liberazione del lavoro nel messaggio biblico della salvezza*
- Social doctrine and labor: The Church's social teachings for labor, workers and workers' solidarity*
- Dottrina Sociale e lavoro: lavoro, lavoratori e solidarietà dei lavoratori nel Magistero sociale della Chiesa*



