

# Catholics venerate St. John Bosco relic after arrival in Taiwan

TAIPEI, Taiwan – Hundreds of Taiwanese Catholics, joined by immigrant Filipino workers, flocked to venerate a relic of St. John Bosco and followed the local custom of burning firecrackers to welcome its arrival.

The relic, the right palm of the saint covered by a vestment, was contained in a casket holding a life-size wax replica of the saint's body. The clear casket was carried by 10 laypeople into St. John Bosco Church in Taipei April 7.

They passed through flower baskets sent from Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou and other senior government officials as they entered the church, reported the Asian church news agency UCA News. Ma is the first Catholic elected president of Taiwan.

"Don't need to be afraid of what you see. It is a replica, not the corpse of the saint, and the casket is also not a coffin," Father Simon Lam Chung-wai, head of the Salesians of Don Bosco's China province, told the waiting faithful.

The China province comprises mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

Father Lam said some Catholics in Hong Kong and Macau feel uncomfortable seeing the relic, because a coffin is regarded as unlucky by some Chinese.

"But it is easier for the faithful to associate what the saint has preached on the meaning of death when they see a statue lying there," the priest explained.

The saint often preached on death and life after death, he said, explaining to the dozens of people who gathered at the church why the Salesians decided to use a reclining replica in the world tour to celebrate the 200th anniversary of their founder's birth.

"Our veneration of the saint's relics is no different from Buddhists' veneration of the Buddha's tooth relics and so there is no need to fear," agreed Yao Ling-shen, a member of the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem.

In the solemn welcome Mass, Archbishop John Hung Shan-chuan of Taipei asked Catholics, especially educators, to model themselves on the saint, known as the Teacher of the Young, because the “education system in Taiwan is unfriendly” to students.

Veneration and additional Masses were scheduled April 8 and 9. Taiwan was the last stop for the relic on Chinese soil. Earlier stops included Catholic churches in Hong Kong and Macau.