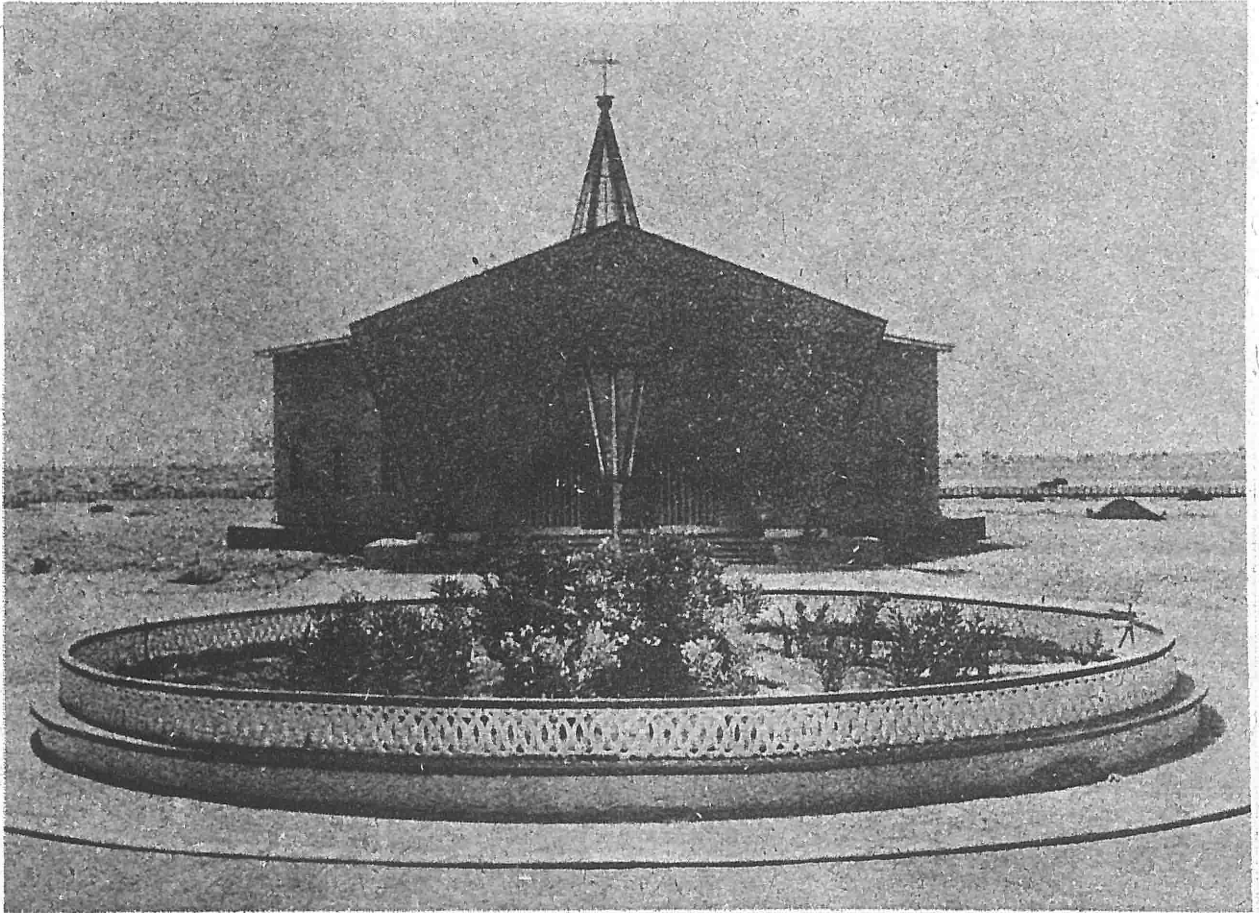


ST. MARY'S CHURCH

D U B A I



OPENED ON FRIDAY 7th APRIL 1967

TO COMMEMORATE THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
ST. MARY'S CHURCH
BY
H.E. Mgr. LOUIS MAGLIACANI
VICAR APOSTOLIC OF ARABIA
IN THE PRESENCE OF
H.H. SHEIKH RASHID BIN SAEED AL MAKTUM
RULER OF DUBAI
ON FRIDAY 7th APRIL 1967



FATHER EUSEBIUS DAVERI, O.F.M., CAPP.
PARISH PRIEST

My dear Friends and Parishioners,

It is with great joy in my heart that I welcome you here today to share with us our great happiness on the occasion of the official opening of St. Marys Church.

Only twenty months ago this site was a patch of barren desert and now we have a house, a parochial hall and a beautiful church. We have achieved all this in twenty months but we have not achieved it by our merit alone. We have achieved it by the Grace of God and the Blessings of Our Lady. We are proud to dedicate this church to St. Mary, to our dearest Mother Mary, most popular amongst us Christians and Muslims too. It is an easy name to remember and to pronounce and after dedicating our church to our Lady I believe we have no reason to be afraid because Our Lady will shield us under her loving mantle and benediction.

Today we want to show our gratitude towards those Christians and non-Christians who helped us to turn this desert land into a place of worship, joy and peace. I am indebted to their magnanimous generosity. Many times I watched material arrive at the church. Always gifts of cement bags in hundreds, stacks of timber, and lorry loads of stones to fill up the area, were sent by kind friends. Donations that came in from our parishioners, friends, well wishers and firms have helped me tide over the financial strains. It is wonderful to see how large-hearted the Muslims have been - showing interest in our buildings, appreciating and admiring our work and above all proud of having a Christian church in their own country. That is why it is our duty to pray for this country, to pray first of all for His Highness the Ruler who gave us land, all facilities and his affection too. Let us each one of us breathe a

prayer whenever we visit this church, for the success of the State of Dubai and the long life of our dear Ruler. We should not feel that we are strangers or foreigners in this land but true citizens of this state. I know that you come to Dubai either on business, or on a job, but you should not dedicate yourself only to accumulate money to send back home. We must not only share the fortunes of the state but also its troubles and difficulties. We have to surround His Highness the Ruler with our affection, our gratitude and prayers.

It would need a book to list the names of all those who have helped us to build this church and rather than single out a few I have not mentioned any by name in this commemorative booklet. My heartfelt thanks go to all of you, Muslims and Christians, firms and individuals, who have given your time, money and materials to St. Mary's Church. May God bless each and everyone of you.

H. Eusebius Barker O.F.M. Cap.



H.H. SHEIKH RASHID BIN SAEED AL MAKTUM
RULER OF DUBAI

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN DUBAI.

Prior to 1965 the Catholic Community of Dubai was served by a priest from Bahrain who visited the town periodically.

During the early sixties the population of Dubai increased greatly and along with it the Catholic Community, so that in 1965 Monseigneur Louis Magliacani, Vicar Apostolic of Arabia, in whose diocese Dubai is situated, decided that the time had come to establish a church with a resident priest. He appointed Fr. Eusebius Daveri O.F.M., Capp. as parish priest.

The first requirement was to obtain a plot of land on which to build and to this end H.B.M. Political Agent at the time approached His Highness the Ruler who very generously gave a plot of land for the church as a free gift.

The first of many snags arose over the wording of the Ruler's gift but with the help of a few local officials and the sympathetic understanding of the Ruler the problem was resolved and everything was ready for building to commence.

The basic design of the church had been thought out previously by Father Eusebius and the plans had been drawn up by a Lebanese architect Mr. Roger Diab. Tenders were issued for the construction of the priest's house and the contract was awarded to Zompi Construction (Sharjah) Ltd. The Bishop blessed the site which was about 300 yards beyond the cement sheds on the Dubai side of the creek, and work commenced. Work went on for a week. The site was marked out, levelling work started and the foundations were being dug.

Suddenly Father Eusebius received word that the

Ruler had ordered work to be stopped. He was naturally shocked and rushed off to see the Ruler to find out the reason. It transpired that the wrong site had been taken and that there were other plans for that particular plot. The Ruler offered to pay for the work which had been done and asked Father Eusebius to accompany the municipal officials to the new site on the following day. The next morning Father Eusebius was still depressed when he accompanied the Director of the Municipality and the Municipal Engineer to the new location. When asked to choose a plot Father Eusebius said "Choose what ? it is all desert, all the same. All I want to choose is my flight back to Bahrain."

Fr. Eusebius was very unhappy, he had nowhere to live and nowhere to eat and now all his plans seemed to have been frustrated; still he had asked the Bishop to send him to Dubai and he could not complain. He chose a new site and went the next day to thank H.H. the Ruler. The Ruler received him kindly and promised to build an asphalt road to the church when it was finished.

After Mass on 15th August 1965 Fr. Eusebius with a group of catholics went to bless the new site. For the second time work commenced and by the end of August the foundations of the house were complete. Fr. Eusebius rented a small flat in Deira and his parishioners gave him an airconditioner, a refrigerator and a gas cooker. His only worry now was that the day was too short. Most days he was working on the site before sunrise and did not finish until after sundown.

During this period Sunday Mass was being celebrated in a room above the Deira sooq and Fr. Eusebius deeply felt the need for a more suitable place where the parishioners could gather. Without a penny in his pocket, he started work on the

parochial hall in September 1965. By going short of food and luxuries he saw the foundations completed and promised himself that the hall would be ready for Christmas Mass.

Christmas Eve 1965 will be long remembered by the Catholics of Dubai. Although the hall was not quite finished the parishioners worked hard to make it ready for midnight Mass. Matting was laid on the concrete floor and the altar was erected. The building and the surrounding area were decorated with hundreds of coloured lights made possible by the loan of a generator from the contractor. Father Eusebius tells us how, when he crossed the bridge on his way back to the site after dinner and saw the hundreds of lights in the desert, he stopped his car and thanked God for having helped him to do so much in so short time.

Midnight Mass was a great success. The hall which seats two hundred was filled to capacity and many more could not get in. After Mass the figure of the Infant Jesus was placed in the Crib for the first time in Dubai.

In January 1966 Fr. Eusebius moved into his house and immediately began to make preparations for the building of the church. For financial reasons the original plans for the church had to be scaled down - the tower was originally intended to be 30 feet higher. The Bishop approved the plans in February 1966 and the building work was entrusted to M/s Khansaheb Hussain.

The ground was tested and twelve concrete columns were driven to support the six pillars. The foundation walls were started and the area was then filled in with about 80 truck loads of sand so as to raise the floor level to about 3 feet

above the ground.

On the afternoon 25th March 1966 the feast of the Annunciation, H.H. Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al-Maktoum in the presence of many local dignatories laid the foundation stone before a large crowd of people. The foundation stone is situated in the centre of the church 3 feet below the altar. The area was gaily decorated for the occasion with the Dubai and Papal flags and the Royal Air Force honoured us with a fly past of 32 squadron. The Superintendent of Police read the scrolls in Arabic and these were later enclosed in a copper tube and cemented into the concrete. The ceremony was followed by a tea party in the hall during which H.H. The Ruler cut a cake which was in the shape of the church.

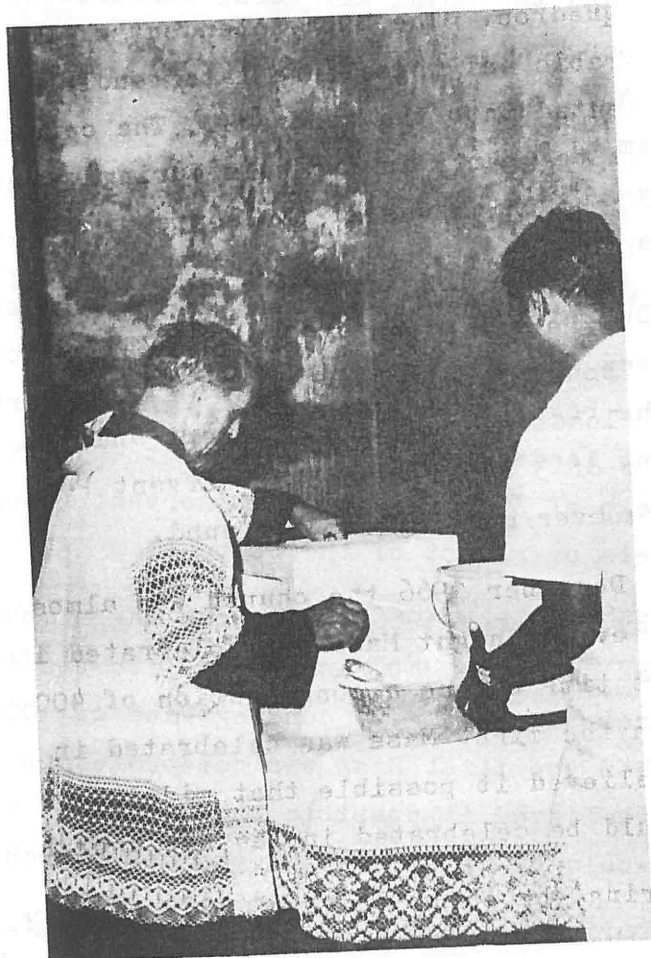
During the long summer months Fr. Eusebius worked like a slave. He was given 1000 oil drums which he used to mark out the boundary of the site. Various firms and individuals sent loads of rubble and cement and little by little, with the help of 3 coolies and his servant Peter Fr. Eusebius laid concrete over most of the compound.

By December 1966 the church was almost completed and on Christmas eve midnight Mass was celebrated in the new church for the first time before a congregation of 400 people. A year earlier, when the first Mass was celebrated in the hall, nobody would have believed it possible that midnight Mass the following Christmas would be celebrated in the new church.

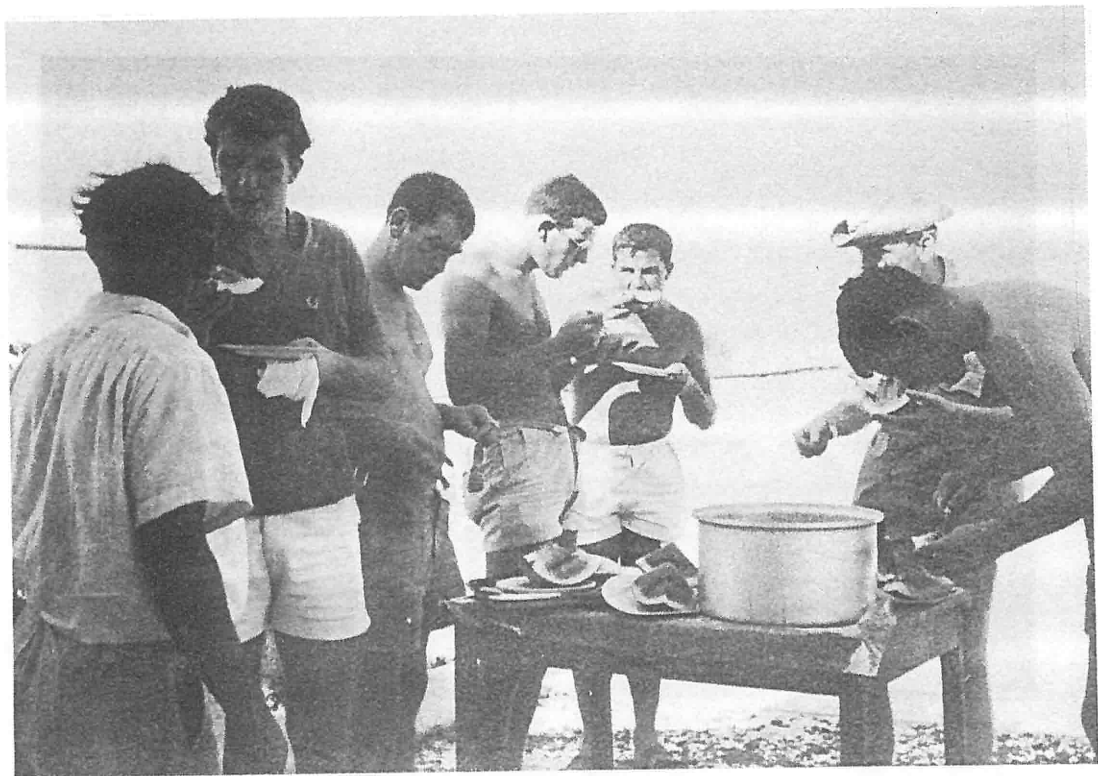
During the early months of 1967 the finishing touches were made to the church. The crucifix which Fr. Eusebius had spent months fashioning in the workshop beside his house was fixed to the rear wall. Most of the marble for facing the altar and altar steps was jettisoned during a storm at sea but by the careful use of what remained supplemented by a

few pieces given to him in Dubai Fr. Eusebius managed to complete the work.

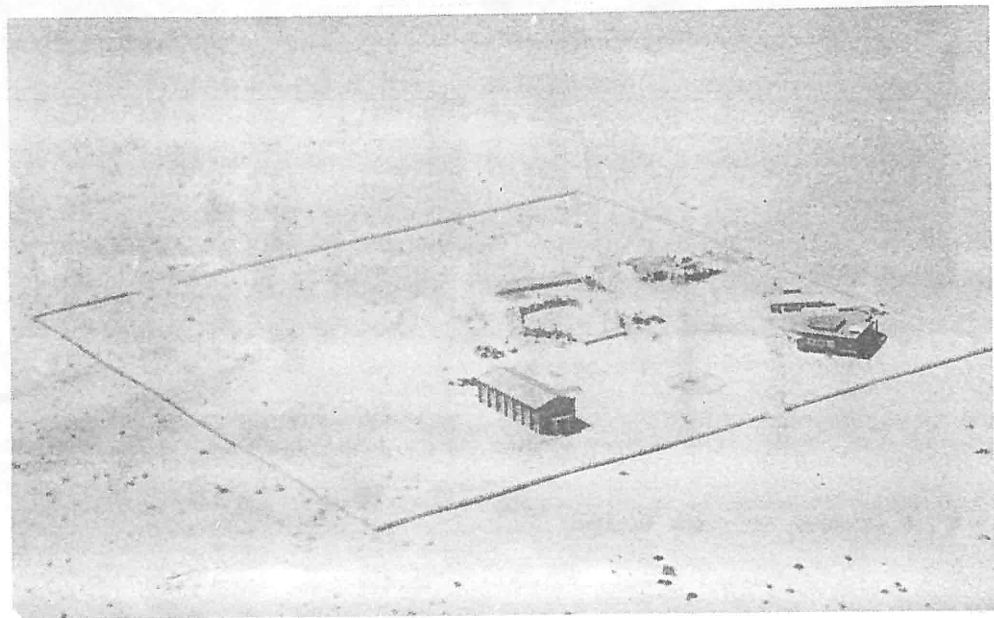
On Sunday 12th March 1967 we started using the new church regularly for Sunday Mass almost four weeks before official opening date.



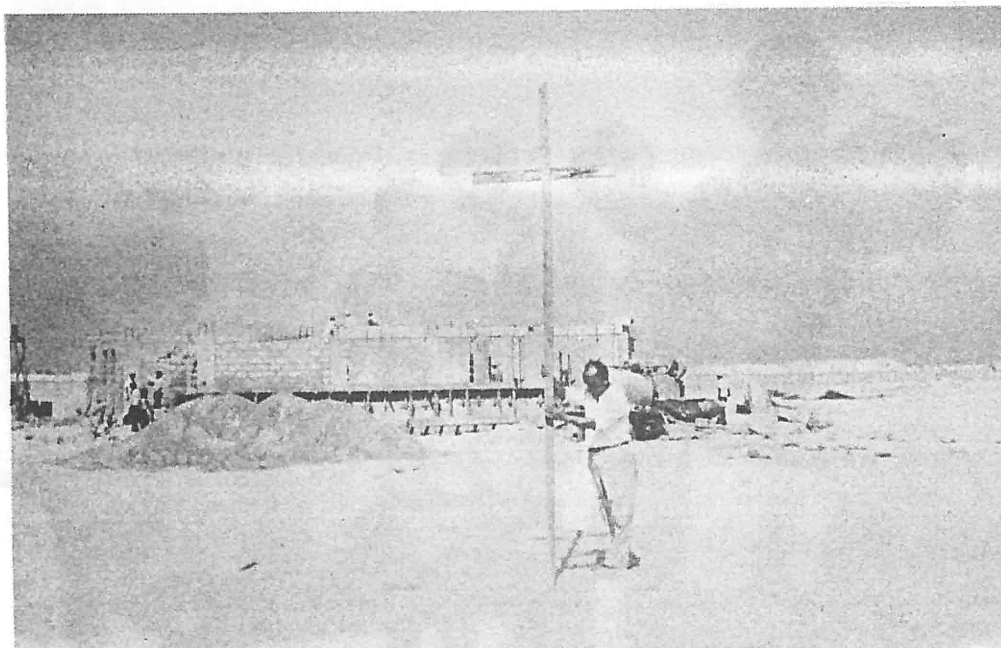
**FATHER EUSEBIUS BLESSING
THE FOUNDATION STONE**



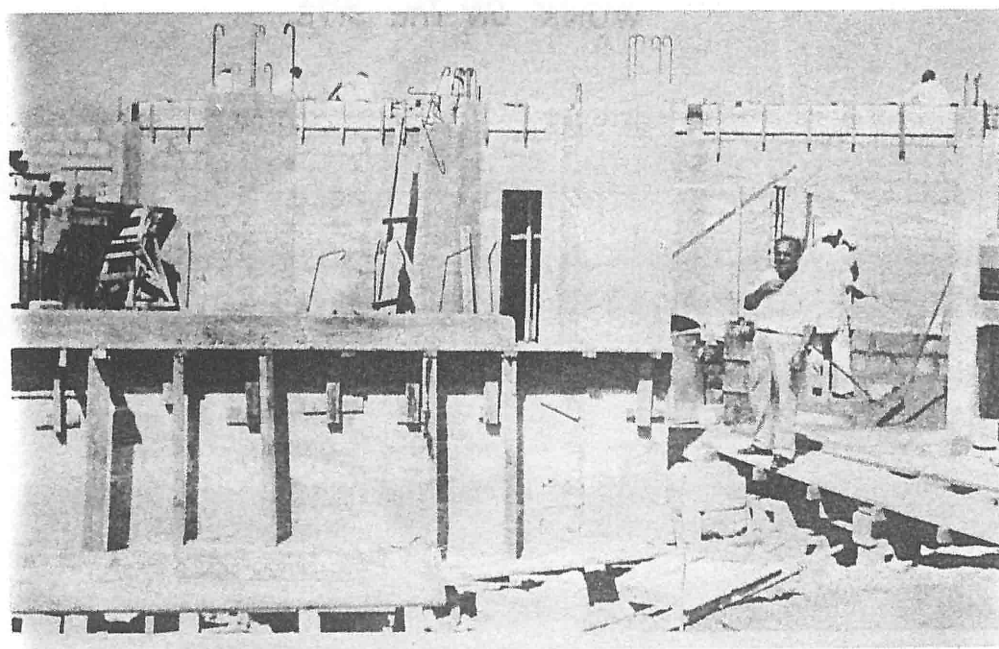
HELPERS FROM R.A.F. SHARJAH ENJOYING A BREAK FROM
WORK ON THE SITE.



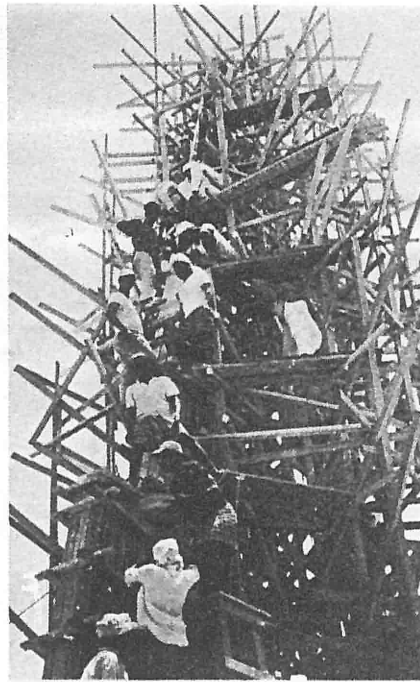
AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE TAKEN BY THE R.A.F.



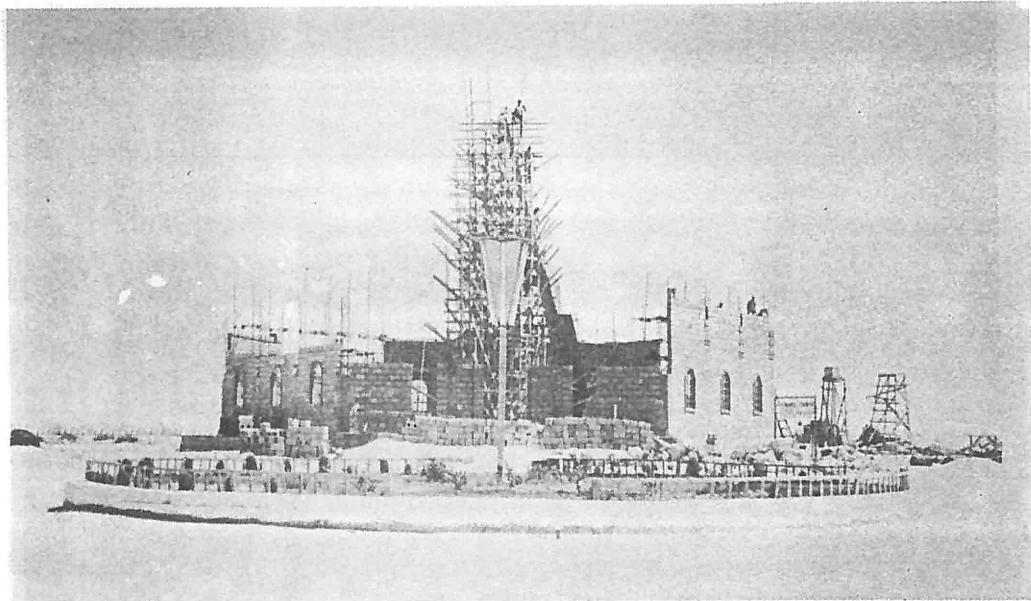
FATHER EUSEBIUS ERECTING A CROSS ON THE SITE



FATHER EUSEBIUS AT WORK ON THE BUILDING



POURING CEMENT FOR THE TOWER



THE CHURCH BEGINS TO TAKE SHAPE



THE BISHOP AND FATHER EUSEBIUS OUTSIDE
THE NEW HOUSE



THE PAROCHIAL HALL PREPARED FOR MIDNIGHT MASS
CHRISTMAS 1965.

THE BEDOUIN OF DUBAI

An edited translation of an article which appeared in the Cappuchin missionary magazine 'Eco delle Missioni' in September 1966 after the visit of the Secretary and the Father Provincial of the Tuscan Province to Dubai.

We arrived at Dubai Airport in a small twin-engined plane in the late afternoon. The sun was just disappearing as if swallowed up by the burning sands of the Arabian desert although it was still very hot and sultry. Here we straightway had a big surprise. Fr. Eusebius had not come to meet us and we had no idea in what part of Dubai the new church was being built. Where were we to start searching? We waited a while and then Divine Providence came to our help. Two young Catholic boys who worked in the airport came up to us and asked if we wanted to meet their 'Padre' Fr. Eusebius.

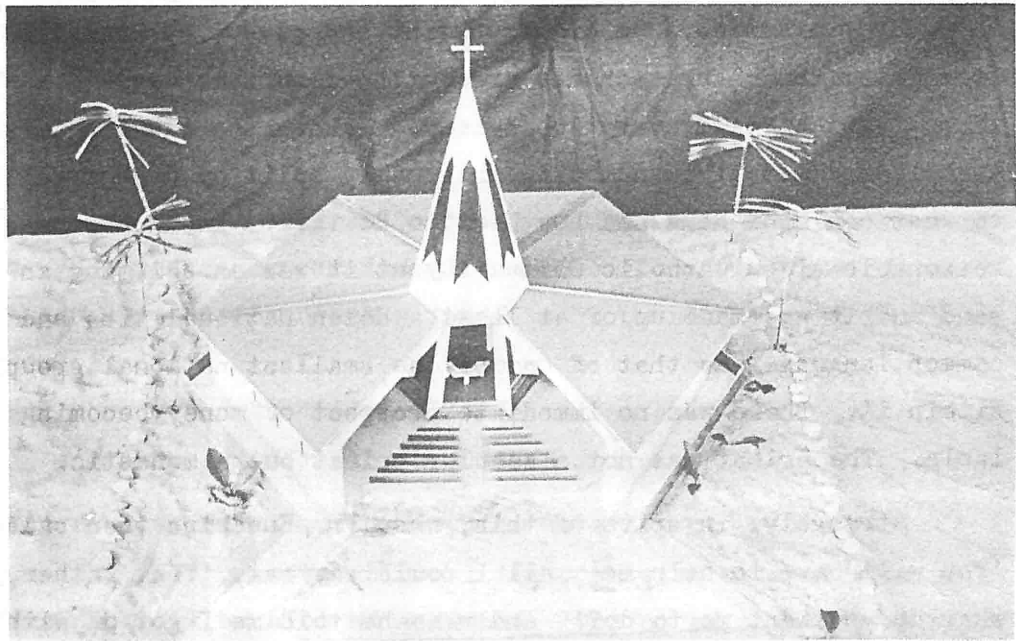
We set out in a jeep and after a while we left the metalled road along a desert track. Amid clouds of dust we approached a great enclosure surrounded by thousands of oil drums, all painted white, which served as a demarcation wall to the property of the mission (One of the many 'finds' of Fr. Eusebius). By the time we got into the enclosure the workmen had finished their day's work. But among heaps of building materials we saw one solitary workman still swinging a pick. Short, bronzed, dripping with sweat, hair turned red with the sun, he wore a pair of poor workman's style of trousers. We had almost run him over with our jeep when he looked up at us with a fixed stare. He could not understand who these intruders were, rubbed his dust reddened eyes and let out a yell 'No, it can't be!' and ran to embrace us. There was a terrific commotion and tears burned in our eyes.

Fr. Eusebius lives alone, here in the desert, on the outskirts of the city of Dubai. In a few months, with an iron will and working like a galley slave he has succeeded in covering a fantastic amount of work. His day begins while it is still dark. When he has celebrated Mass he gets to work with his labourers, under a relentless sun, right until evening and even after his labourers have gone he himself does some hours of overtime. His table is of the poorest and he eats when he thinks of it. In other words Fr. Eusebius lives like a Bedouin of the desert and we marvel that he is able to lead such a hard and exacting life. But he is happy. The Christians have an immense love for him. The Muslims from the Shaikh to the lowliest coolie, think the world of him. Not to speak of the British Airmen from the nearby air base of Sharjah who come on their day off to help in the work of 'that poor Bedouin, Fr. Eusebius'. Now the house is completed. Near the house is a fine Church Hall which presently serves also as a Church. The construction of the new Church, modern and bold in its lines, is well under way. And all this has been achieved in only nine months!

Dubai, which is the capital of the State of the same name, is a beautiful city placed right on the sea-shore and divided by a navigable creek. It has been named the Venice of the Orient. Her streets are wide and well kept. Her palaces are modern and majestic. The Court of the Shaikh is straight from the 'Thousand and one nights'.

The Shaikh is a just and intelligent man, loved and respected by all his people. He received us with respect and cordiality, saying that he was very happy to have

given to the Mission, a fine plot of land on which to carry out their building. The Catholics of Dubai already number around five hundred, and one can foresee the finest possible development of this new Missionary station.



A MODEL OF THE NEW CHURCH

FROM A PARISHIONER

'You will have to stop your car here, the sand is too soft over the rest of the area.' That was my first introduction, eighteen months ago, to the site on which you now stand. I had to stop my car behind the spot where you now see the garage.

'That building they are putting up will be the hall. My house will be here and the church will be on that piece of ground over there where it is a little higher. I will have a garden in the middle and a place where children can play.'

By profession I am an accountant and given, by training, to scepticism when large schemes are outlined in this way. I saw a large tract of sand, very loose sand. I knew there was a Catholic Association, small in numbers, internally split by disagreement as to what could be done and how best to do it. I knew there was a reasonable sized Catholic Community but it was as shifting as the sand and it was made up of at least a dozen nationalities and its common language was that of one of the smallest national groups within it. There was no immediate prospect of money becoming available. The priest was not a secular priest but a monastic.

Strangely, in spite of this, when Fr. Eusebius then said, 'You will have to help me', all I could say was, 'Yes, Father, what do you want me to do?' And when he told me I got on with it without questioning whether I was wasting my time.

A few moments of thought made me realise that a great deal had already been done at that stage and I learnt that it had all been done in a very short time. His Highness Shaikh Rashid had already shown his tolerance and kindness, not only in allowing the building of a Christian Church in his domain but in granting the land free of charge. The Bishop of Aden had approved the building of a church and a house for the priest (though I suspect he did not then know he was going to be saddled with a Church Hall as

well). A suitable contractor had been found who would not only make a good job of the building but would keep his costs within reason and even wait for his money on occasions. A bank had been found which was willing to advance the money required. The hall, the house and the church had been designed. The building of the hall had been in progress at least a month. Clearly this little Cappuchin priest wasted no time.

The most obvious need was for money and that does not come in unless there is someone to pay it and someone to collect it. That meant having an organisation for the collection and the most efficient way of setting up such an organisation was to revive the Catholic Association. This meant holding elections for office bearers. Fr. Eusebius decided who he wanted for office bearers and in order to ensure that he got them he formed them into an interim committee to hold office until elections could be held. By the time elections were held the committee was so well known and so clearly successful that they were re-elected. The testimony of their effectiveness is to be seen in the thriving Association, the large collection of money for various adjuncts to the Church as well as to the Church itself, and in the harmony which exists in the Catholic community.

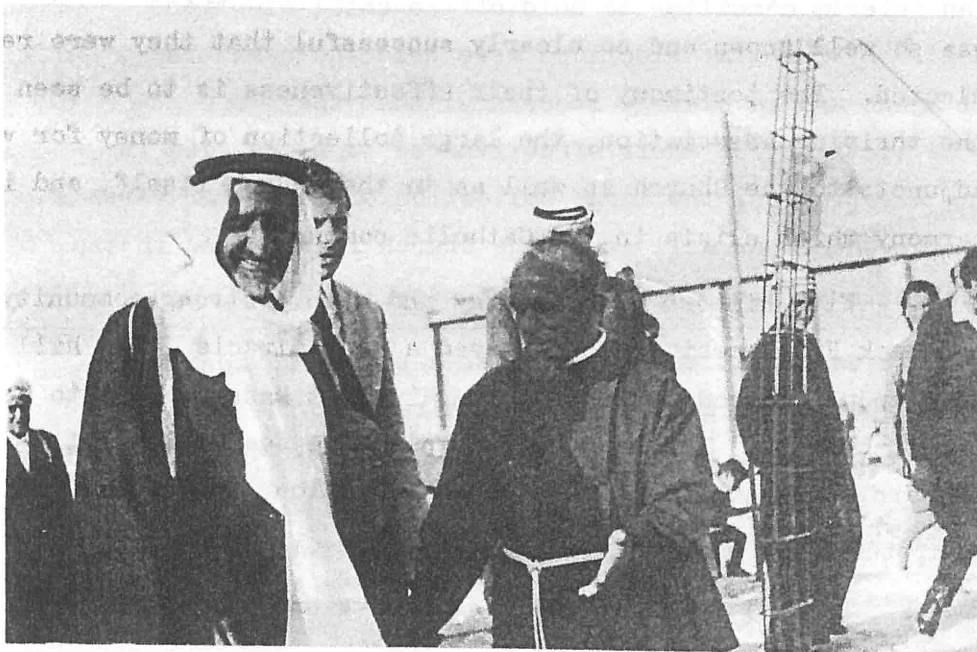
With his own great energy and with a strong community at his back Fr. Eusebius has achieved a near miracle. The hall was near enough to completion for the Midnight Mass of 1965 to be celebrated in it. The house was completed a few months later and on 25th March, the feast of the Annunciation, the foundation stone of the Church was laid.

To list the hearbreaks, setbacks and disappointments of the past year would take too long and be too depressing. Never have I seen more bitter disappointment than when the marble for the altar steps arrived looking more like marble chips and with

the bulk of it having been jetisonned to save the ship carrying it during a storm.

Through all this I am proud to have been a friend and confidant of Fr. Eusebius. I have done little enough to help the work along, but I feel that it has been of value for me to have provided this most human of men with a person on whom he can lean a little and to whom he can express his happinesses and his disappointments. My work is done and there is nothing more of value that I can give to Fr. Eusebius and the community I have learned to love. I regret that I shall not be present at the Blessing of the Church of St. Mary and its official opening but my prayers will be with you all - from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

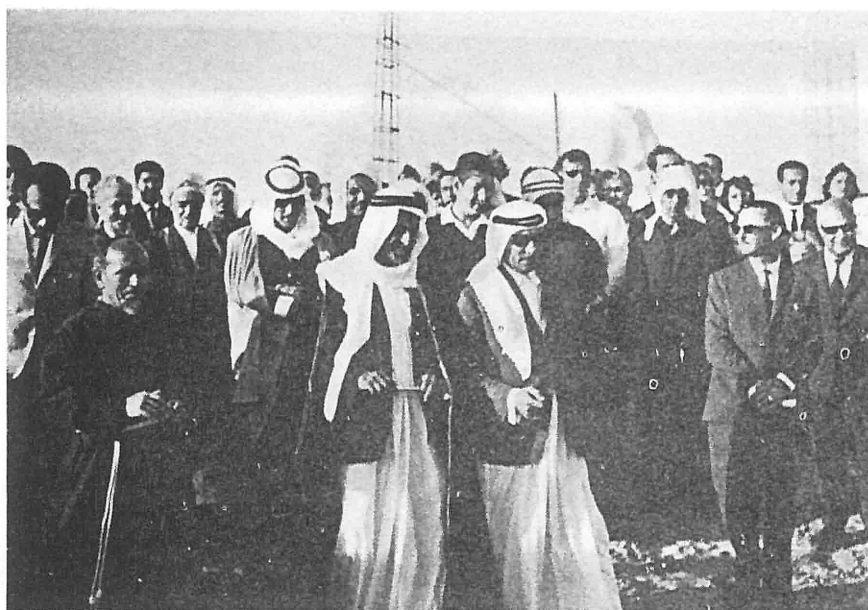
W. KEAST.



SHEIKH RASHID AND FATHER EUSEBIUS AT THE LAYING
OF THE FOUNDATION STONE



MONSEIGNEUR LOUIS MAGLIACANI,
VICAR APOSTOLIC OF ARABIA



H.H. SHEIKH RASHID BIN SAEED AL MAKTUM RECEIVING THE
INSIGNIA OF THE ORDER OF ST. GREGORY THE GREAT
FROM THE BISHOP.



H.H. SHEIKH RASHID BIN SAEED AL MAKTUM

TRUCIAL STATES CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION.

In 1958, late one evening all the Catholics of Dubai met together to form an Association. It was a memorable evening particularly since all the twenty two Catholics comprising the whole of the Catholic Community of the Trucial States, with the exception of the Oil Company and Army personnel, were present. The Association was formed to promote a Christian atmosphere.

The Association came into existence on January 2, 1959, with religious, cultural and social aims as its object.

In the earlier days activities were confined to occasional social gatherings and to making arrangements for the religious services. The Church services in the beginning were held in a private residence according to the facilities available. The service was conducted by the visiting Royal Air Force Chaplain who visited Dubai, after conducting the Service in the R.A.F. Camp, Sharjah. Later permission was obtained from the British Bank of the Middle East Ltd., to hold the services in their junior staff quarters in Deira. Mass and other social gatherings were held in these premises until 1964.

By this time the number of Catholics in Dubai had increased and it was found necessary to rent larger premises to accommodate the congregation.

In 1965, the Catholics of Dubai were happy to learn that His Highness Sheikh Rashid Bin Saeed Al Maktum, Ruler of Dubai, had granted permission and very generously donated a plot of land free of charge for the building of a Catholic Church in

Dubai, which today stands before us all, a magnificent structure of which we are proud.

Adjoining the Church is the Parochial Hall, which was initially used to conduct the Church Services until the Church was ready and now will be used for carrying on the social, recreational and other activities of the Association.

The Membership of the Association is still far from satisfactory in relation to the Catholic population of Dubai and Sharjah. The premises being far away from the town, it is no doubt very inconvenient and expensive for many to visit the Association regularly. In view of this and to enable more members visit the Association, the Managing Committee, despite the limited funds available, have decided to buy a bus, which we hope will solve a major problem.

The Trucial States Catholic Association is primarily a Catholic Association and the management is entirely in the hands of the Catholic Members, but in order to develop an all embracing spirit and live in friendliness with our other brethren, we have, Associate Members of other Christian faiths and non-Christians belonging to other religions.

S.F. Fernandes,
Honorary Secretary,
Trucial States Catholic
Association, Dubai.

"OUR GRATITUDE"

Dear Mother, thou hast been kind
The Christians of Dubai to bind
In this newly-founded Church
Our hearts wherein you can search.

Ave Maria, Ave Maria,
Guard and guide us day by day
Your parish who to you do pray,
Ave Maria! Ave Maria!

Keep us from all stain of sin
Let our hearts be filled within
With love and gratitude to you
Shower your blessings all anew.

St. Mary's Church we call it now
While our heads in prayer do bow,
And ask to bless our Ruler dear
Save him from troubles far and near.

By
Miss Coral Meneaud,
Dubai.

N. P. P. OFFSET - DUBAI.