

Historic Building Appraisal

The Hong Kong Catholic Cathedral of The Immaculate Conception

No. 16 Caine Road, Central, H.K.

The Hong Kong Catholic Cathedral of The Immaculate Conception (聖母無原罪主教座堂), also known as the Roman Catholic Cathedral (天主教總堂), was built and inaugurated in 1888. The foundation stone was laid on 8 December 1883. Historically, it is important as the oldest and largest Roman Catholic church in Hong Kong, and is known by Chinese parishioners as *Tai Tong* (大堂) meaning “leading place of worship.” The founder of the Cathedral was the **Rev. Timoleone Raimonde** (高主教, who was the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Hong Kong (in office: 1874-1894).

**Historical
Interest**

Architecturally, the Cathedral is in the **Gothic Revival** style with typical Gothic features such as lancet windows, flying buttresses and pinnacles, built to a cruciform plan. Internally the Gothic style is the predominant style, but unusually the altars are built in the **Baroque** classical style. Stained glass windows and statuary impart a feeling of grandeur and majesty to the Cathedral. However, the architecture is restrained and not over lavish. The Gothic style of church architecture is considered rare in Hong Kong, and the Cathedral therefore has considerable built heritage value.

**Architectural
Merit**

The Cathedral was badly damaged by bombing in December 1941. During the period of **Japanese Occupation** (1941-1945), the Church Bell was also taken for manufacturing arms and ammunitions, and fairly extensive war damage reparation was undertaken after the Second World War. The original timber roof was replaced by a concrete roof in 1970. Regular renovations and repairs are undertaken and the Cathedral is believed to retain much of its original appearance.

**Rarity &
Built Heritage
Value
Authenticity**

The social value of the Cathedral lies in the **Catholic Diocese Centre** next door, a five-storey community centre comprising church offices, conference rooms and activity rooms. The Cathedral is the main religious centre for both local and expatriate parishioners.

**Social Value
& Local
Interest**

The Cathedral underwent renovation in 2002, and the renovation project was recognized by an Honourable Mention in the 2003 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation.

Once an important landmark in the district but now obscured by modern development, the Cathedral together with the **Raimondi College** (高主教書院), the **Catholic Diocese Centre** (天主教教區中心, a five-storey community centre built next to the Cathedral in 1958) and the nearby graded buildings such as

Group Value

Sacred Heart Chapel (聖心教堂) and **Kom Tong Hall** (甘棠第) forms an important group of historical and religious buildings.