# 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Macau Holy House of Mercy

The 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on the foundation of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia (Macau Holy House of Mercy), a noble and meaningful date is to be celebrated in this current year of 2019. The earliest Portuguese-inspired institution set up in this city remains alive and dynamic in the MSAR, guided by the main objective behind its foundation: to give help to the needy.

It was founded in 1569 by D. Belchior Carneiro, regarded as Macao's first bishop, one year after he first set foot on this territory and even before this town's first local government body, the Senado, was established.

Moreover, along with the House of Mercy, which adopted its first statutes or "Compromisso" adapted from counterparts in Lisbon and Goa in year 1627, D. Belchior set up a "Hospital for the Poor" and Lazaretus, in the wake of the solidarity movement spearheaded by Queen D. Leonor in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. The movement soon propagated throughout Portugal and elsewhere, namely Asia, as hundreds of these Fraternities were then founded.

For more than four centuries, the Macau Holy House of Mercy experienced moments of glory and difficulty, starting from a secular though religious-inspired Brotherhood with members from various professions and trades. It set up and managed homes for the elderly, orphanages, lazaretus, hospitals, canteens for the needy. The poor, orphans, widows, the ailing, captives and refugees were assisted. The departed were given tombs. It also served as a financial credit provider, managed and received inheritances and even ran a lottery to gather funding.

Knowing how to adapt to new paradigms the Fraternity managed to survive to this day unlike hundreds of its counterparts, while fulfilling the mission to keep helping the poor and the needy as per its founding principles.

The present facilities include: Nossa Senhora da Misericórdia Home for the Elderly; a Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind, the only one in Macao; one bilingual Creche caring for children aged six-months to 3-year-olds, and a Convivial Centre.

The Museum Nucleus is open to visitors at the Fraternity's classified main-building in the Historical Centre. It exhibits a rich collection of Arte Sacra, including items bearing witness to the presence of the Jesuits in China and in the East, as well as other marking the Fraternity's centuries-old history.

The old Asylum of Santa Casa, in São Lazarus neighbourhood, is now a popular stage for cultural, artistic activities and creative industries.

The Welfare Shop launched and operating since 2013, with the help of sponsors has handed out monthly thousands of food bags to many hundred disadvantaged families to aid those more affected by rising livelihoods.

Macau Holy House of Mercy