

Editorial

The process of urbanization started with the emergence of modern industry and capitalism. The degree of urbanization in industrialized countries is much higher than that of agricultural countries. Since the 1980s, with China's economic reform and open door policy, the government allowed rural populations to move to cities and towns, and China's urbanization thus developed. According to a report issued by the National Bureau of Statistics of China in August 2012, the urbanization rate in 2011 reached 51.27%. This means that for the first time, China's urban population exceeded the rural population. In 2019 it exceeded 60% for the first time. At the same time, social problems in many large cities in mainland China have gradually become severe. Problems such as traffic congestion, shortage of resources, and the decline in the quality of life of urban residents were made worse by urban progress.

As early as the end of the nineteenth century, due to the industrialization in the West, the Catholic Church started to pay attention to the problems that urbanization had brought to the working class through its social encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. In the 1960s, irregular expansion of cities in Europe led to various social problems and the rise of a new class of poor, causing a large number of people to be marginalized and discriminated against, especially young people, women, and laborers. In view of this, Pope Paul VI issued an apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens* in 1971, emphasizing that everyone is equal and has the right to participate in society. It is important to promote social education and to serve others, in order to achieve the public good, he wrote.

He also pointed out that it is necessary to consolidate the fraternal relationship of humankind in the spirit of the love of Christ, to serve others, and to ensure social harmony and international peace (no. 22-24) .

In carrying out its mission, the Church has “the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in light of the Gospel” (*Gaudium et spes*, 4). This is an on-going and continuous task of the Church. Social and cultural contexts are dynamic, constantly and rapidly changing. Sometimes these changes are sudden and dramatic. Other times the changes are gradual, subtle and more difficult to discern. The Christian community must be ever on the alert to adapt her mission to the changing contexts, always guided by the principles and teachings of the Church. In China, among the new signs of the times are the phenomenon of urbanization and the spiritual and social needs of those moving from the rural to the urban area. Moreover, the mission of the church is to walk with people and to affirm people’s dignity. This is because “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (*Gaudium et spes*, 1).

Due to historical development, the Catholic communities in China have been concentrated in the rural areas in the past. However, with the rural-urban migration, many rural church members have moved to the cities for work or study. In the view of this, the church also needs to change its pastoral strategy in order to meet new challenges. This is a concrete response to the new sign of the times. When preparing this issue, we are still living in the pandemic of the coronavirus. Although the number of

cases in mainland China has become more stable, the city lockdown and social distancing measures urge the Church to develop new pastoral strategies. This is another sign of the times.

In the face of the new phenomenon mentioned above, the theme of this issue of *Tripod* is: **Urbanization and Pastoral Response**. We invited several pastors and scholars with rich pastoral experiences in China to share their personal experiences and theological reflections. In order to enrich the content of their articles, some authors even conducted small-scale surveys and interviews, so that readers can have a broader understanding of the situation. However, due to limited space as well as the tense and sensitive situation in certain areas, the articles were focused on certain areas only. The response of other church communities cannot be covered.

The first thematic article is “Urbanization and Pastoral Responses” written by Rev. Dr. Chan Kim-Kwong. Based on the experiences of the Protestant Church in Mainland China, Rev. Chan provides a general picture of the urbanization process and the relationship with the Christian churches. First, he delineated the main differences between rural and urban church communities in China. Due to the differences in educational level, intellectual background, population density and availability of church buildings, the socioeconomic cost of joining a church community, foreign influences, and business people members, there are distinctions between rural and urban churches in pastoral and organizational practices. Then, the author pointed out the diversity of different urban strata, including the new urban residents who are young, educated, sophisticated, single and optimistic versus the rural migrants who occupy the semi to unskilled labour positions and the so-called “low-end population” who have no

permanent job and are at the bottom of the economic ladder. All these pose challenges in ministering. With the changes, Rev. Chan suggests some ecclesial responses which are emerging in China, including forming virtual ecclesial communities, providing chaplaincy services to particular needs, nurturing ecclesial small groups for fellowship and evangelism.

The following articles illustrate examples of pastoral responses of a few urban churches and the challenges they face in China. In the article “Difficulties and Prospects of the Pastoral Pattern of the Catholic Church under Urbanization in China: Taking Guangdong in the Greater Bay Area as an Example,” Bishop Gan Junqiu and Fr. Zhang Kuo of Guangzhou Diocese analyzed on the difficulties of the urban church in China, particularly of the Guangzhou diocese. The challenges include the lack of church buildings, insufficient human resources, a lag in management models, the lack of experience in urban pastoral work, and problems due to the setting of boundaries of dioceses. Borrowing the experiences of the Hong Kong and Macau dioceses, the authors hope to develop and improve the work of laity formation, marriage and family ministry, and social service ministry. Fr. Zhang Tianlu’s article “Pastoral Challenges in the Course of Mainland China’s Urbanization – the Experience of Beijing and Shenzhen Churches” provides a concrete example of the diversified ministries of urban churches in Beijing and Shenzhen, including ministries inside and outside the parish. As the pastor of St. Anthony’s Church in Shenzhen, Fr. Zhang shares his first-hand experience and rationales for developing various ministries relating to liturgy, whole-person development, and social service.

In their articles, based on their own research and interviews

with other clergy or lay people, Fr. Bai Jianqing and Fr. Dominic share their observations and opinions respectively on the challenges and opportunities for evangelization under the process of urbanization. In his article “Urbanization: New Opportunities for the Church,” Fr. Bai discussed the challenges of urbanization from four perspectives – an individual believer, the parish level, the pastor, and the Church in China in general. From a positive point of view, he saw opportunities for the church to readjust itself in the new environment. In an era of rapid development, the Church has to learn not only how to survive, but how to carry out its mission in a universal Church; to review pastoral strategies; to go towards people; to evangelize through various ways; and to make good use of new resources, such as the internet. For Fr. Dominic who is a youth pastor, it is important to set the direction and goal of evangelization in an urban environment. In his article “An Examination of the Relationship between Urbanization and Evangelization among the Youth and Youth Ministry,” Fr. Dominic argues that the Church should put more resources and manpower into the urban churches, walking along with the youth, and help them to form faith communities with love and friendship.

Last but not least, Dr. Chiaretto Yan reflected on how Catholics adapt to changes in China from a missiological perspective. The author points out that because the laity and young people play an active role in evangelization and formation in the urban church, it facilitates the reconciliation of state-sanctioned and underground groups. In addition, through an analysis of the changes in Chinese society, including adapting to the restrictions imposed by the implementation of the new religious regulations, Dr. Yan reflects theologically on the “culture of care” proposed by Pope Francis. The culture of care encourages everyone to have a

new vision of care with an integrated approach to solve the problems of ecology and poverty and to develop a new economy. He points out that the recent epidemic offers an opportunity for the Church in China and Chinese Christians to express concern and care for the poor near and far.

From these articles, we can see the similarities of challenges in facing the trend of urbanization. But the pastoral responses of different parishes or dioceses can be quite different due to human and material resources, attitudes and enthusiasm of pastors, experiences, and pressure from the government. Different urban churches can indeed learn from each other and share experiences among themselves, working together to fulfill the mission of the Church .

Apart from the thematic articles, we have three book reviews on very different subjects. Dr. Lin Suchi who has a background in art and religion, wrote on an artwork collection *Art Book of Song-en Luo*. While reading the review, readers can also appreciate the works of the painter Luo. Historian Fr. Patrick Taveirne provided a review of Fr. Ambrose Mong's *Sino-Vatican Relations: From Denunciation to Dialogue*. He provided some viewpoints of other scholars on the topic. Sociologist Professor Lida Nedilsky gave a review on Professor Lian Xi's *Blood Letters: The Untold Story of Lin Zhao, a Martyr in Mao's China*. Lin Zhao wrote hundreds of thousands of characters with her own blood, complaining against the socialist system. She described herself as "a freedom fighter and young rebel against tyranny." Finally, Sr. Beatrice Leung and Fr. Peter Barry wrote two essays on Professors Leo Goodstadt and Audrey Donnithorne respectively, in memory of two friends of the Holy Spirit Study Centre and also friends of the Church in China.

Finally, I would like to thank all the authors for contributing their articles to *Tripod*, the scholars for reviewing the articles, and the editorial team for editing them. I would also like to thank the artist Song-en Luo for allowing us to publish his paintings in *Tripod*.

Mary Yuen

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