



REVIEW  
of  
*The First Issue*  
of  
*The "Catholic Church In China"*

*by John Tong*

Title of Periodical

The "Catholic Church in China." Special issue on the Third Synod of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Representatives' Conference.

Publisher

The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Church Affairs Committee.

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Periodical's Predecessor

The bi-weekly "Xin Ge" (信鸽), first published by the Patriotic Association of Shanghai Municipality.

Measurements of Periodical

26cm X 18½cm

## Outline of Contents

There are two parts. The first consists of ten pages of photos. This includes one picture taken of the whole group together with representatives of the conference, and 32 large and small pictures of the conference meeting itself. The second part, altogether sixty pages, consists of 26 articles, including the opening address, the speeches and resolutions, the constitution, the closing address, and a name-list of the committee members of the Third Synod of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. This was held in Beijing from May 22 to 30, 1980.

The second part also has nine articles, including the opening address, the reports and resolutions, the closing address, and a name-list of the committee members of the Chinese Catholic Representatives Conference, held in Beijing from May 31 - June 2, 1980. An appendix includes the common statements of both conferences given on June 2: a Letter to All the Clergy and Catholics of the Country, and a Letter to All the Clergy and Catholics of Taiwan. There are also two short news articles about religious activities in Beijing and Shanghai.

First, we wish to express our sincere congratulations on the birth of this magazine. All those familiar with the Catholic Church in China will welcome this new publication as another sign of the greater freedom now given to religious believers in China. Let us all pray that through the magazine, a new chapter of dialogue and understanding can be opened.

It is very clear that this periodical introduces the organization and development of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Church Affairs Committee. It also helps us understand the orientation of our brothers' and sisters' thinking, feelings and wishes. But, in addition to expressing glad support, the present writer in a spirit of brotherly love, wishes to put forth the following three humble

opinions, based on the contents, and to discuss these with our colleagues.

1. Several speeches printed in this periodical show the strong feelings of the Church in China today towards her past history. Xiao Xianfa, Director of the Bureau of Religious Affairs, and Bishop Zhang Jiashu, head of the Chinese Catholic Church Affairs committee and also President of the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference, both in turn reflect this problem. Director Xiao, says: "The Catholic Church in China was controlled in the past by foreign countries. Various aspects were arranged by foreign powers. To my knowledge, before liberation, the whole country had 143 dioceses and apostolic prefectures, but only something like twenty Bishops were Chinese. And these Chinese Bishops had no status. They were managed by others." Bishop Zhang also says: "Catholicism was spread in my country from 1582 onwards. It was not until 1686 that a Chinese was made a bishop. Again from then onwards, more than 200 years passed before there were six Chinese bishops consecrated. These six Chinese bishops were then placed in poor villages and desolate places, looked upon with disdain by foreign missionaries. Before the foundation of the New China, my country had more than 140 dioceses, but there were only 20 some local bishops. The whole Church in China was divided into spheres of influence of various countries, and controlled by foreign missionaries, while the Chinese clergy and laity was totally without power and status. How painful this was to man's heart!"

Of course, we cannot deny the facts of this disgraceful family affair. Those still living today who helped bring about these accusations should admit their guilt and ask forgiveness. But we must not forget that most of mankind cannot separate itself from the limitations of its own age. A fortiori, the indigenization movement only recently was really put into practice in the Church. Life in this age goes on, and one cannot turn back the clock. For this reason the present writer thinks that we should pay more attention to facing

the future, rather than minutely discussing the past. We should draw lessons from past history, do more self-reflection and diligently enrich our spirituality and knowledge. In such a loving and competent way we can help establish the local church, serve the country and society, and create blessings for mankind. Besides, we cannot sweep away many other historical facts. We need to remember that during the last few hundred years of the modernization process in China, not a few foreign missionaries, in fact, made substantial contributions. For example, in the fields of science, technology and organization, they helped China move towards modernization, even to the point of sincerely devoting their whole lives to China.

2. Several important speeches recorded in this periodical, besides strongly presenting examples of the former foreign missionaries' control in China, also point out that the Church in China today has already set its foot on the road of independence and self-rule. This kind of awakening and progress from dependence towards independence are pleasing phenomena. It is also a correct line, because self-rule, self-support, and self-propagation are actually basic Biblical principles for establishing a local Church. The "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," Chapter 3, #26-27, and the "Decree on Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church," Chapter 2, #11 of Vat. II, point out very clearly, that every local church should be a perfect salvific community of God. It is the universal Church in miniature, and not merely a part of the universal Church. Its center is Jesus Christ. But the same Constitutions remind us not to forget that the local church has a universal aspect. When bishop of a local church is consecrated, he not only takes charge of the pastoral administration of his local church, but at the same time he becomes part of the episcopal college and together with the other bishops, takes up a responsibility towards the universal Church.

The late Pope Paul VI in his apostolic exhortation, "Evangelization in the Modern World," #63-64, also points out: "Legitimate attention to individual churches cannot fail to

enrich the Church. Such attention is indispensable and urgent. It responds to the very deep aspirations of peoples and human communities to find their own identity ever more clearly..... But this enrichment requires that the individual churches should keep their profound openness towards the universal church." A fortiori, because of the development of communications and increasing daily contacts, relationships among each other become closer from day to day, showing more clearly that mankind is one body. If the Church is the world's servant, how can she not clasp hands to work together? Also, in order to expand this common mission of serving the world better, how can she lack a center and organization of unity?

3. The contents of this periodical promote a strengthening of friendly contacts among the Catholics of Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and foreign countries. They also point out the achievements made in this area during the last two years. This is also a happy phenomenon. Contacts through the written word have limitations however and it is difficult to reveal completely the complexity of the other's knowledge, feelings and wishes. So "dialogue" is the necessary path to mutual understanding. In dialogue, besides paying attention to the attitude of dialogue, mutual respect and trust, we must in a friendly and honest way state concretely our points of difference. We must discuss sincerely and avoid hypocrisy or easy compromises. Moreover, we should not sacrifice our own principles or distort the truth.

In addition, in this age of promoting the ecumenical movement and friendly association among World Religions, we should not be satisfied with having friendly contacts among Catholics only. We should break through these narrow doors, and in a broader way, diligently develop friendly contacts among all Christians and non-Christians. Only in this way can we hope for the early realization of our Lord Jesus' prayer for unity, addressed to the Father at the Last Supper (John: 17:20-21).