

FROM THE EDITOR . . .

(1) PRAY FOR THE CHURCH IN CHINA

To express our fraternal concern for the Church in China, the staff of the Holy Spirit Study Centre has composed the following prayer:

Our heavenly Father, we praise you because in various ways you have sowed the seeds of the Gospel in our motherland; we thank you because you have made many of our brothers and sisters witnesses of the faith in Chinese society. Father, lead us to walk on the way of reconciliation, help us to respect, accept, and support one another. Enlighten us so that we can be in union with the Universal Church in truth. In a spirit of sharing, we learn more deeply from each other of your love for us. Grant us your life and inflame our hearts so that we can devote our efforts to building a society richer in spiritual values. Amen.

(2) THE STREAMLINING OF CHINA'S GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

The main news in the February 14th issue of the China Daily concerned vice-premier Bo Yi-bo's speech on the plan of restructuring the State Council. When interviewed, Bo Yi-bo recognized that "Chinese Government bodies were troubled by bureaucracy, overlapping of structure, overstaffing and low efficiency." He realised something had to be done. "However," he said, "it was impossible to do anything at that time, as most of the veteran cadres were just rehabilitated after being humiliated by the 'gang of four' for years and the Party needed them to put the house in order." He explained that "a considerable number of old cadres will be retired from active duty, some will move back to what we called 'the second line,' i.e., to serve as advisors. Others, those who are too old and physically too frail to do work, will be moved to 'the third line,' that is full retirement." "But since they have rendered great service to the country, they will be always honoured and respected by the nation and their well-being will be looked after by the government." The vice-premier added: "In streamlining structure, naturally younger people of lower rank will also be affected. Those who will be spared from active duty will be sent by the state to schools and classes so that they can

raise their educational level or receive professional training."

Again, the main news in the People's Daily of March 9th reported: The fifth National People's Congress standing committee in its 22nd meeting approved in principle the plan for restructuring the State Council put forward by Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang on March 8, and decided to appoint four new ministers on the recommendation of the Premier. Premier Zhao pointed out that "after streamlining, the State Council, ministries and commissions will have a staff of 32,000 as against the present 49,000, a cut by one third."

The news mentioned above reflects a fact that today the Chinese Government is aware of the problems of the state administration and is able to face them. In the plan of streamlining structure, the Chinese Government, in a humanistic spirit, not only wants to take care of the aged cadres and the redundant cadres, but it is also concerned with the professional training of personnel. During the process of actualizing the plan, the Chinese Government will meet obstacles and objections. The reasons for this resistance are quite simple. Bureaucratism has been existing in the Chinese political system throughout its 2000 year history. The senior cadres who wish to maintain their present status and protect their personal interests will naturally object to the planned cutbacks and reductions in personnel. However, the government has boldly decided to proceed with the streamlining.

The present streamlining drive of the Chinese Government should be praised for its concern with the common welfare of the whole nation. Common good is a spiritual value which is not foreign to the teaching of the second Vatican Council, especially the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

Two decades ago, when the second Vatican Council was convened, Pope John XXIII was deeply aware of the problem that some elements in the ecclesial structure had already been outdated, they could neither meet the needs of the modern society, nor could they respond to the aspirations of people. Therefore, a reform of the ecclesial life was initiated by the Council. In No. 8 of the Constitution on the Church, the Council recognised that "the Church, embracing sinners in her bosom, is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal."

In restructuring the life of the Church, the Council emphasized that the spiritual values of the Gospel are more important than the external organisations; the authority granted to the Church is for the service

of people rather than for domination. The Council also requested the clergy to promote a closer relationship with the laity. When conveying the faith to people, the clergy should pay more attention to their own attitudes. They must not let their theological outlook be contaminated or distorted by obsolete interpretations in history. Their theological insights should be based upon the original message of the Gospel.

Although the 'ultimate concern' of the Church administration is different from that of the state administration, the two of them are concerned with 'social service' and the 'common welfare' of people. It is hoped that the Chinese Government in its drive for streamlining structure will put more emphasis on spiritual values. Spiritual values such as respecting human dignity and serving people are not foreign to the teaching of the second Vatican Council.

(3) Brief introduction to the articles in this issue

The first article "Social Development in Catholic Teaching" was written by Rev. Edward Malatesta, S.J., visiting Professor at University of San Francisco. The author gives in detail reflections from Five Continents and the teachings for the universal Church on social development.

Sr. Goretti Lau is the author of the second article. She wishes to explain "The Meaning of Suffering" from the viewpoint of soteriology. The conclusion of the article is in accord with the theme of next year's Synod, "Reconciliation with God and man."

"How Does China View the Pacifist Movement?", the third article was written by Rev. Victor Hummert. Reflecting on the anti-nuclear demonstrations in so many countries, he discusses the attitude of China toward the anti-nuclear movement.

Rev. Elmer Wurth has written the fourth article, "Building Friendships and Mutual Understanding". This is a moving account of his visit with the first Chinese Christian sent to America for training.

The fifth article, "Reflections on the Jesus of History," was written by Rev. Pierre Jeanne and is a commentary on an article written by a well known historian of the New China, Professor Hu Yutang. Fr. Jeanne not only views positively the challenges to Christians posed by the historian but also points out the negative aspects of Professor Hu's work. This is a worthy attempt at dialogue.

Rev. Peter Barry in the sixth article continues to introduce to our readers the contents of the periodical "Resources on World Religions" that refer to Christianity.

In "Visit to the City of the Five Rams," the last article, Miss Lucia Lee through photos and a literary composition, presents to our readers some material about visiting Canton.