

An interview with the staff of Yi-China Message

According to the dictionary, the word "YI" (驛) stands for the "stations" where messages are passed on in the various provinces. In Hong Kong, there is a periodical that has taken the same name "YI". It is published by a group of lay persons and a priest and is mainly concerned about China and the Church in China. On the 15th of May, Sr. Beatrice of the Holy Spirit Study Centre had an opportunity to meet with Miss Catherine Hung, the editor of YI, and four of the working staff to talk about the raison d'etre of the periodical, its editorial process and work, etc.

Below are the main points of the conversation:

Q. Can you please tell us the meaning of the name of your periodical "YI", when it was first published, the reason behind it and what you are aiming at?

A. The first issue of "YI" came out in November, 1979. Before that, we had participated in a live-in seminar on faith and life, and discussed how, through the written language, to share with and understand China and the Church in China. At the same time we also felt that there was a need for such a periodical in the Church in Hong Kong. So we went about making the necessary plans and preparations. We use the name "YI" to indicate our wish to be of "service" to promote "exchanges" and to "transmit". That is exactly the aim of our publication, to make more Chinese Christians in Hong Kong and overseas have a better understanding of China and the Chinese Church, and as members of the Chinese Church, to shoulder the responsibility that is ours.

Q. Can you give us a short account of the contents, editorial policy, readers aimed at, copies sold and financial situation of your periodical?

A. Each issue of "YI" is usually edited around a specific topic. The contents include recent developments of the Church in China and reports on the recent situation in China. Some examples are the opening of Catholic and Protestant Churches, new developments of other religions, Church conferences, official policy and viewpoints, the modernization of China, searching out the human problems of life, women, children, personal

experiences during visits to China, etc. We also report on the situation in Hong Kong and the Church overseas such as the Latin American Church and theology. There is also an attempt to make some reflections of Christian faith in relationship to the above contents. From the very beginning, our orientation was to assert that Hong Kong is part of China and consequently Hong Kong Christians should also be regarded as part of the Chinese faithful. Our attitude towards the Church in China is positive and we look at the problems of China with an open viewpoint that is full of hope, with a belief that the future is optimistic. We therefore make special note of, give stress to, and support events and developments that are constructive and contributive to the future of China and the Church. Besides Hong Kong, we have readers in Mainland China, southeast Asia, Europe and the Americas. Our subscribers include overseas Chinese, foreign believers and some institutes. Some parishes and bookshops in Hong Kong help sell our periodical. About one thousand five hundred copies of each issue are sold. It is our wish that this periodical be supported by us Chinese and our funds have come mainly from subscriptions and donations made by Hong Kong Chinese readers. Except for subscriptions from foreign readers, we do not accept donations from foreign funding agencies for the Chinese edition of our periodical.

Q. From the above introduction, readers may perhaps arrive at a general understanding of "YI". What is your viewpoint on the present Church in China?

A. The policy of religious freedom in China is in the process of being implemented. It is a long-term policy which is to the advantage of the development of the Church in China. Endeavours must be continued. The present Church in China also has to face many problems such as finding new recruits for the priesthood to succeed the present ones, and the formation of the laity. One point worthy of mention is that we cannot make a comparison between the present Church in China and the Church in Hong Kong or overseas, because the Church in China is going through a process of development and it might be able to create a new model more suitable for the local Church.

Q. What is your viewpoint on the Three-Self Movement within the context of China's policy for religious freedom? To what degree is your acceptance of the Three-Self principle in the Catholic Church in China?

A. We respect the Three-Self principle of the Church in China and believe that in the process of construction, China needs to be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. Local Churches have similar needs.

Q. Can we discuss the problem of the Three-Self and the relation-

ship between the Church in China and the Vatican?

A. As a matter of fact, the Vatican had already in 1979 begun to manifest a desire for reconciliation with the Church in China. But it has not yet re-evaluated the problems of past disputes and perhaps this is the biggest stumbling block to the relationship between China and the Vatican. We think that if there is a desire to genuine understanding and real concern for the Church in China, the total reality of China and the role that the people and the Church can play in China must not be neglected. While stressing spiritual exchanges, it must also be noted that respect and concern for the realities of life cannot be neglected.

Q. You have mentioned about establishing friendship with the faithful in China. Except for exchanges through the periodical, do you often visit and meet with them?

A. We sometimes go on tours to China, and, on the way, have made contacts with them. We have visited Churches, met with priests and the faithful, conversed with them about their life experiences and feelings with regard to religion. They would also ask about the situation of the Church in Hong Kong.

Q. We have talked about a lot already. One final point we would like to know is about your hopes, future plans and developments.

A. We have recently started to publish an English edition of "YI" so that friends, who are not proficient in the Chinese language, may be able to read our material and get to know our viewpoint. Conferences and talks are also part of our plans for the future. We of course also hope that more readers will support our periodical. This would be very encouraging to us who are all volunteers. We hope "YI", in a general way, may be able to transmit the China Message, the Christian message and the messages of other countries and religions to our readers.

by Beatrice Leung

We would like to introduce a new book just off the press of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. Entitled **Households of God on China's Soil** and written by Secretary for Evangelism, Raymond Fung, the book narrates, in the Christians' own words, the stories of fourteen "house churches" in China. The book sells for Swiss francs 5.90 per copy and can be obtained directly from WCC.