

NEWS IN BRIEF

(1) BRIEF NEWS ABOUT THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH:

The theme of the 1983 International Synod of Bishops has been announced as "Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church." A document known as 'Lineamenta' which is to solicit comments on the Synod's theme and to promote discussion, has been distributed to bishops all over the world. This document is divided into three sections: 1) The World and Man in Search of Reconciliation: in this part, the document points out the present phenomena of tensions and divisions in the world. It considers man as the subject of various kinds of divisions. Since divisions are closely related to man's sins, reconciliation cannot be actualized without penance. 2) Announcement of Reconciliation and Penance: this second part of the document is a reflection on Christian faith. Reconciliation is a gift because it is the initiative of God's love to alienated men; and penance is a response of man to the reconciliation of God. 3) The Church, Sacrament of Reconciliation: the function of reconciliation in the sacrament of penance as well as in other sacraments is discussed. In brief, the document as a whole stresses that the Church as Prophet should proclaim the good news of reconciliation to all generations, and should invite people in all places and in all times to conversion and to penance. This is the primary and fundamental task of the Church in the world!

(2) THE QUADRICENTENIAL CELEBRATION OF MATTEO RICCI'S ARRIVAL IN CHINA

It has been four hundred years since Fr. Matteo Ricci, S.J. first settled in China on 10th September 1583. As Ricci was "the vanguard of the cultural exchange between China and the West" (Renmin Ribao, 4/11/1979, p.6), and because "his example should serve as an inspiration to many" (Pope John Paul II's speech, 18/2/1981), there will be various celebrations in different parts of the world on this occasion.

A seminar will be conducted at Loyola University of Chicago, U.S.A., on 7th-9th October, 1982. The theme will be "East Meets West: The Jesuits in China (1582-1773)." Many scholars will be invited to deliver speeches and to present dissertations.

In June of this year, the Bishops' Conference of Taiwan issued

their second joint pastoral letter to call for memorial activities and set "converting thirty thousand people" as the target of memorial activities for next year.

The response from Hong Kong will take place on a pastoral level with academic research as subsidiary works. In June 1982, a preparatory committee consisting of five members was set up by Bishop John B. Wu to plan and to carry out all related activities. This committee has proposed that the 1983 celebration of Mission Sunday should be the climax of the celebrations, in order to spread the Spirit of evangelization and, at the same time, to tie in with the "Searching after Christ" movement which has been the pastoral thrust of the diocese for these three years.

(3) HOW TO DEAL WITH CHINESE YOUTH WHO BELIEVE IN RELIGION?

A reader's letter appeared in the column of "Youth Letter Box" in The Chinese Youth of 6th April, 1982. The Letter enquired about how to deal with youth who have been interested in religion. The editor of the column answered: "Religion which is in one's mind can be changed only through one's self-awareness." "Religion is a kind of superstition." he continued: "It is harmful to the correct understanding, change of nature, and social struggle." Therefore, "the Communist Youth League should propagate atheism and equip young people with dialectic materialism and modern science....." On the one hand, the person in charge of the column admonished people "not to despise and to be indifferent to the youth who believe in religion, because all the people could be united for the great task of building up a prosperous Chinese society." On the other hand, he pointed out that there were many concrete reasons for the youth to believe in religion. Such reasons could be difficulties encountered in life, problems arising from higher studies, employment, love and marriage, and misfortune caused by disharmony in the family or by serious illness. When these problems cannot be solved, the youth in crisis might turn to seek assistance from the gods. The editor suggests that if the Party could bring them warmth and assist them to solve their problems, young people might realize that "it is impossible to solve problems by asking assistance from the gods;.....and only through organization can one have a bright future."

(4) NEWS ON PUBLICATIONS IN CHINA:

On 24th April, 1982, Guangming Ribao announced that Religion, Science, and Philosophy will be published by Henan People's Publications. The book will be edited by the Department of Studies of Religious Principles at the Institute of World Religions of the Academy of Social

Sciences. It will contain more than ten essays on the problems of religion and atheism. The book will be considered beneficial not only to scholars, teachers and researchers in the field of social science, but also to natural scientists.

On 30th April, 1982, Renmin Ribao reported that the first volume of The History of Chinese Buddhism, edited by Ren Ziyu, was published. The press considered this book, which consists of eight volumes, to be the first complete history of Chinese Buddhism written from a Marxist viewpoint. The newly published volume focuses on Buddhism in the Eastern Han Dynasty and the Three Kingdoms period; and future volumes will explain the developments of Chinese Buddhism from the period of the Eastern and Western Jin Dynasties to the period before the establishment of the People's Republic of China. It was said that the most distinctive method the author used was "to compile these eight volumes according to the principles of historical materialism, to link up these principles with certain historical and social conditions during the investigation, and to reduce theological problems into secular problems."

The Chinese Youth introduced to readers a Dictionary of Religions on the 30th of March, 1982. This dictionary was edited by Professor Ren Ziyu, and was published by Ci-Shu (詞書) Publication in Shanghai. It is regarded as a reference book which offers "basical scientific answers" to questions concerning religions. The dictionary contains 6719 items and 1,450,000 words. The newspaper commented: "It is necessary for Chinese youth to-day to have some knowledge of religion, and to interpret the phenomena of religion from a scientific viewpoint." When talking about religion, the press considers religion as ideology, describing it as "a thread which links up the present and the past, an invisible net which can have contact with human life anytime." Therefore, religion cannot be separated from politics, economics, culture, and mentality. In short, religion is so penetrating that it is difficult to find any problem not related in some way to religion.