

# FROM THE EDITOR



This special issue of TRIPOD is dedicated to the memory of Matteo Ricci on the 400th anniversary of his arrival in China. In this way, we wish to add our own modest contribution to the world-wide celebrations being held this year in honour of this pioneer, Jesuit missionary. Ricci's role as a mediator between Chinese and Western cultures is of particular relevance today, and we have assembled a variety of articles that we hope will not only be thought-provoking and stimulating for our readers, but instructive and educational as well.

Pope John Paul II's address during the International Convention of Ricci Studies recently held at the Gregorian Pontifical University in Rome illustrates the contemporary nature of Ricci's role, and we print the full text along with a brief analysis by one of the participants. We also have included an interview with a spokesman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association which was carried by the AFP (Agence France Presse), and which seems to us to echo the Holy Father's appeal for dialogue.

Our remaining articles deal with Ricci, himself; the man, his times, and contemporary significance. The Background in European History of Matteo Ricci's Mission directs our attention to Europe on the eve of the Age of the Enlightenment and China during the last decades of the Ming Dynasty.

Matteo Ricci, Friend of China is a study of the character and personality of the man who was not only respected as a man of learning but also accepted as a true friend by members of the Chinese literati.

In The True Idea of God (which, along with Euclid's Geometry are Ricci's most enduring works, and had a great influence on succeeding generations of Chinese scholars), Ricci's introduction of the eschato-

logical nature of Christian teaching to Neo-Confucian Scholars is analysed and criticised from the viewpoint of modern theology and a developing understanding of Eastern religions.

For an insightful essay on possible approaches to a Christian dialogue with China today, we refer you to China-Christian Relations in the Spirit of Ricci where we are encouraged to learn not only from Ricci's successes but from his mistakes as well.

For an appraisal of Ricci's contribution to China, we include an article by the same name which is a reflection on the insights of two modern Chinese scholars.

An area often overlooked by scholars both past and present, is the subject of Ricci: Precursor of Inter-Cultural Exchange, and that is the impact of Chinese civilization on European political and cultural history.

Ricci's methods for creating a favorable climate for preaching the gospel is discussed in The Influence of Matteo Ricci's Missionary Efforts on Successive Generations. Having become quite used to the concepts of adaptation and inculturation, we sometimes forget the incredible problems posed by the initial meeting of these two great cultures.

No discussion seriously concerned with Matteo Ricci would be complete without reference to one of the most painful protracted, and polemical issues in the history of the Church in China. The Chinese Rites Controversy outlines the basic problems involved, and their continuing effect on the Church today.

In closing this special issue on Matteo Ricci, we have a report from the Matteo Ricci Symposium, which was held in October at Loyola University of Chicago - A Fitting Tribute to a very Remarkable Man.