



## by the Delegates on Their China Visit

Tripod asked the members of Bishop Wu's party to share some of their impressions with our readers after coming back from the China mainland. They were happy to do so, and here is what they said.

*Father Michael Yeung:* I have three impressions or general comments to share with your readers. First, our visit happened to coincide with the meetings of the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference which were in session when we arrived. Although the national leaders were kept very busy, they still set time aside to meet and talk with us informally. Also because of the meetings, there were many journalist friends in Beijing covering them. This enabled the Bishop's visit to get a lot of coverage in the media throughout the world.

Second, while some people are of the opinion that the Bishop made this trip rather late, or at least later than many other similar delegations from Hong Kong, I do not agree with them. Had the Bishop accompanied the earlier and larger groups, he would not have had so many opportunities for dialogue, and the impact of his visit would not have been as great.

Finally, I sincerely hope that this visit will not be the last. There is too much to be gained by all parties concerned for this positive beginning not to be continued into the future.

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*Dr. John Chan:* My impression were very positive. It was my first contact with members of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, and we established immediately a warm and cordial relationship. It was especially wonderful for me in Shanghai where I was able to renew old friendships with so many former classmates from Aurora University. The opportunity for us to meet with each other under such friendly circumstances, and exchange all the news about our lives over these many years, was indeed priceless.

The trip allowed me to initiate contact with the Patriotic Association, and thereby helped me to understand the Association better. I know now that despite a shortage of personnel, they have made great efforts in pastoral ministry. I also saw how energetically they have devoted themselves to the training of their priestly candidates in the seminaries. This was for me both a joy and a comfort.

As for the current open door policy of the Chinese government in allowing more and more churches and seminaries to reopen and permitting Patriotic Association leaders to have more contact with the world outside, I find this a most welcomed state of affairs.

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*Ms. Joyce Chang:* I was very impressed by the warmth and friendliness of the people we met, and also by their openness in the exchange of views and opinions. I was particularly happy to find that we have common bonds and share a common concern for the Church and the expression of our faith in terms of service to people, to the community, and to the building up of the society. In the social development of China, there is definitely an unexpressed acknowledgement that the Church has an important role to play.

I was touched deeply by the simple faith of ordinary believers, and to see how that faith has been enlivened rather than diminished by the years of hardship. Their devotion and loyalty was a great source of consolation for me and made me realize that God is really present inside China, especially in the hearts of the millions of Christians.

Being the only woman member in the delegation was a great personal privilege. Our group was like a mini-pilgrim church travelling, praying, and sharing with one heart and mind the same emotional climate. The Bishop being our leader had the most difficult task, and the six days with him gave me a rare glimpse into the daily life of a bishop. Believe me, it is not what one might read about in a book or see portrayed in the movies. Unless it was for the Lord, no one could possibly want to bear such a burden even in one's dreams. Having personally witnessed the Bishop's dedication and seen how his whole heart and mind is with and for the Church, I was reminded of the Bishop's role as Christ's representative, a shepherd; and, as a member of his flock, I asked myself how much of the burden are we, too, willing to share, and how close are we keeping to the shepherd of our flock?

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In front of Sheshan Basilica (L to R): Dr. John Chan, Fr. Gu Pinxian, Fr. M. Yeung, Fr. Jiang Weilin (Director of Sheshan Seminary), Bp. Wu, Fr. J. Tong, Ms. Joyce Chang, Fr. Shen Baozhi (General Secretary of the Shanghai Diocese)