

EDITORIAL

Over the years, our readers will have noticed that for each issue of *Tripod* we try to have a single theme. We must admit that we are not always successful in doing this, and that some issues turn out to be simply a collection of articles with no apparent connection to one another.

However, since we are now in the season of Pentecost, when we celebrate the Apostles going forth to preach the Gospel under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, the theme of evangelization stands out. These days, we recall how Jesus before He ascended into heaven, told his apostles not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for “the promise of the Father...in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” And further, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1: 5,8) We recall how Peter got up and fearlessly proclaimed the Good News on that first Pentecost morning. We recall how the other great pillar of the Church, St. Paul, wrote: “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent?” (Rom. 10: 13-15)

In his pastoral letter to inaugurate a Year of Evangelization in the Hong Kong Diocese last October, Bishop Joseph Zen pointed out that the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, celebrated Mission Sunday 2003 by canonizing two founders of missionary orders, Daniel Comboni and Arnold Janssen. He also canonized Father Joseph Freinademetz, a Divine Word missionary who worked both in Hong Kong and China, and later beatified Mother Theresa, foundress of the Missionaries of Charity. Through these canonizations the Holy Father wished to emphasize the importance of missionary work.

Evangelization is also an important concern for the Catholic Church in China. In fact, Bishop Li Du'an of Xi'an, in the interview with the Italian mission magazine, *Mondo e Missione*, which we reproduce in this issue, states that there is no better time than now for evangelization in China. We reproduce the many comments given by the participants (priests, sisters and lay people) at the lively one-day seminar on evangelization organized by *Faith Fortnightly* in September 2003. Father Chen Gong'ao, Chancellor of the Nanchong Diocese in Sichuan Province, has graciously consented to let us translate and publish his thesis, written last year during the academic year-long *aggiornamento* course for priests at the National Seminary in Beijing. As the reader will see, many of the Catholic commentators think that the Chinese Catholic Church is too concerned with caring only for the already baptized Catholics, and not enough concerned about going out to preach the Gospel to the unevangelized. They look with admiration on the evangelization work of their Protestant brothers and sisters, and ask the question: why can't we do the same?

In keeping with what could be a minor theme of this issue, namely "interviews with Chinese Catholics," we publish an interview with final year seminarian Ruan Shijun, in which he sums up his five-year experience at the Zhongnan Seminary in Wuchang. Other short articles include Gianni Criveller's commentary on the recent ordinations of several young bishops in China, and Joseph Bierchane's commentary on the treatment of religion in a Chinese language textbook for foreigners. In case any of our readers wonder if Vatican officials ever visit Beijing, we publish the speech of Msgr. Piero Monni, Vatican delegate to the World Tourism Organization, at their 15th assembly held in Beijing in October 2003. We also want to congratulate our staff member, Patrick Taveirne, on the publication of his new book, *Han-Mongol Encounters and Missionary Endeavors: A History of Scheut in Ordos (Hetao), 1874-1911*. A notice of publication appears in this issue.

Finally, returning to the theme of evangelization, we pray that the Holy Spirit come down in abundance upon both the Churches of China and Hong Kong, to animate them to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ to all the non-Christians with whom they come in contact. (PJB)