

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Light a Candle: Encounters and Friendship with China*

*Reviewed by Michael J. Sloboda, MM  
and Peter J. Barry, MM*

*Light a Candle*, Festschrift in Honour of Angelo S. Lazzarotto  
PIME

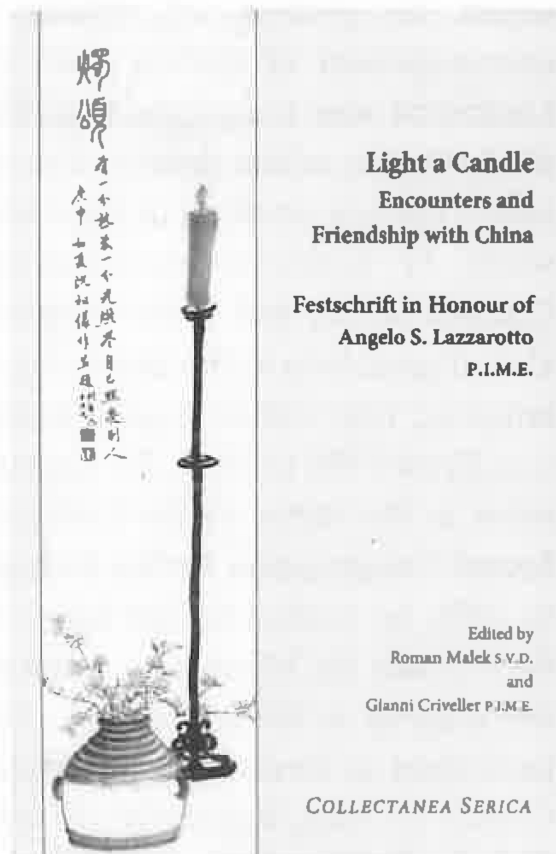
Roman Malek SVD and Gianni Criveller PIME, eds.

Institut Monumenta Serica, Sankt Augustin, Germany, 2010

ISBN 978-3-8050-0563-0

The friends, coworkers and students of Fr. Angelo Lazzarotto, PIME, gathered in Milan on May 14, 2010 to honour him on his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. Part of the celebration was the presentation of this *Festschrift*, to which about 30 of these friends contributed scholarly essays.

Waiting is part of life. It certainly formed a good part of Fr. Lazzarotto's life. When he was ordained for the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) in December 1947,



China was still open to foreign church personnel. After a year studying missiology at the Urbaniana in Rome, Fr. Lazzarotto observed from afar the news of the swift victories of the Communist army over the Nationalists. Many a foreign missionary society could still assign some members of their 1948 ordination class to China. But by the middle of 1949 when the next class of priests was ordained, there was obviously no point for any missionary to buy a ticket on a ship to China.

Waiting does not mean wasting time, however. Fr. Lazzarotto did pastoral work in Italy, and wrote articles for a missionary journal. He finally flew to Hong Kong at the end of 1956. China was tightly closed, so he studied Cantonese and did missionary work in Hong Kong. In 1965, Fr. Lazzarotto was called back to Italy to serve as member of the PIME General Council, a position he served in for 12 years. In 1978, he returned to Hong Kong.

It was an appropriate time to be in Hong Kong, on the doorstep of China, because at a Party Congress in December 1978, the PRC began its process of reform and opening up. With the encouragement of Bishop, later Cardinal, John Baptist Wu, Fr. Lazzarotto was a co-founder in October 1980, of the Holy Spirit Study Centre, which promoted an understanding of Chinese culture and of the new situation of the Catholic Church to other parts of the world. Fr. Lazzarotto immersed himself in the study of Chinese Catholic history and of the work of the early missionaries. He was also of great help to the increasing number of Chinese scholars and religious, who wished to go to Europe for further study.

From 1986 to 1991, Fr. Lazzarotto was called back to Rome to serve as the rector of the Collegio Urbano Seminary, run by the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. From 1991 to 1996, he worked for the Italian Catholic Bishops Conference at their Centre for Missionary Animation in Verona. For many years, and even up to the present time, Fr. Lazzarotto has been an active participant in numerous conferences on the history of the Catholic Church in China, frequently delivering a learned paper at them.

Jesus told his disciples to let their “light shine before others,” (Mt. 5:16) Some Chinese paintings feature burning candles. One such traditional painting with a poem “...You burn yourself to illuminate others,” appears on the cover of this *Festschrift*, giving the book its title. It symbolizes Fr. Lazzarotto, whose “long life and missionary commitment to China has enlightened many people and thus inspired them in various ways.” (p. 8)

Editors Malek and Criveller divided the contents of the book into five sections, “representing the specific fields of Fr. Lazzarotto’s life and work.” (p.3) Sections two and three, dealing with the history of the Catholic Church in China, ancient and modern, especially struck this reviewer (PJB). These sections contain valuable information on such periods of Chinese Church history as the Eastern Syrian (Nestorian) period during the Tang Dynasty, the Jesuit period during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, and the controversial period following the missionaries’ return to China after the Opium Wars.

In Section II, Matteo Nicolini-Zani contributed an enlightening article on the introduction of Christian monastic literature into China. This began in the Tang Dynasty, when ascetical works, such as *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, were translated from Syrian into Sogdian for spiritual nourishment. Later Alphonse Vagnone, SJ, (1566-1640) compiled and published (in 1629) *The Lives of 72 Saints*. Nicolini-Zani brought his bibliography even up to modern times, mentioning Fr. George Barry O’Toole’s booklet introducing Benedictine monasticism to China, published in 1925.

Claudia von Collani contributed a fascinating 45-page article on a collection of documents concerning the Chinese Rites Controversy, which she found in the Biblioteca Queriniana in Brescia. She reviews well the main steps in that controversy, which, she writes, mainly took place between 1700 and 1720. This included the ill-fated meeting of the Tournon delegation with the Kangxi Emperor. The author has the wonderful ability of being able to go back and forth from describing the contents of a particular document, and then placing it in the context of the whole course of

the Rites Controversy. Her thoroughness goes so far as to listing all the names of the persons to whom a particular document was addressed, and all the names of the persons who signed the document – and the positions these persons held in the Church or in society. So fascinating was this article that this reviewer (PJB) found himself looking to see if any of his European ancestors were addressees or signatories of the documents!

Noel Golvers contributed an interesting study of the letters, called *Litterae Indipetae*, which Jesuit priests and novices from the Flanders-Belgium Province wrote to their superiors seeking permission to be assigned to work in China. It is interesting to read the reasons these Jesuits gave for being assigned to China. Golvers noted that the popularity of China often coincided with the arrival back in Europe of a Jesuit missionary from China, who would regale the students with fascinating tales of missionary work there.

Section III continues the *Festschrift's* path through Chinese Church history. Paul Rule reminds today's Church that it should be aware of the mistakes it has made in the past, especially in the area of missionary accommodation. The most glaring of these, in his opinion, was the Rites Controversy. He also pointed out that 235 years had passed from the death of the first Chinese bishop, Luo Wenzao, in 1691, until the next ones were appointed in 1926. More should have been done to ordain Chinese bishops, he writes.

R.G. Tiedemann took up this question of the lack of the development of the native clergy at greater length in his offering to the Lazzarotto *Festschrift*. Tiedemann posits many reasons for the reluctance of the foreign missionaries to promote Chinese clergy to positions in the hierarchy during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Finally, Rome had to step in, and through the encyclical *Maximum Illud* in 1919 and the appointment of Celso Costantini as Apostolic Delegate to China in 1922, practically force the foreign missionary laden Catholic hierarchy to accept local bishops.

Agostino Giovagnoli, in his article on *Ostpolitik*, covers the period of Cardinal Agostino Casaroli's tenure as Vatican Secretary

of State (the 1960's and 70's), and gives a thorough analysis of "Ostpolitik," Casaroli's policy of church-state relations in connection with the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Through this policy, Casaroli attempted to keep the churches of Eastern Europe united to Rome. He desired to maintain contact with these churches, even though there were no tangible results. Part of his policy was being satisfied with just taking "small steps." "Patience" was also an operative word in implementing "Ostpolitik." This policy can also be applied in present day Vatican relations with China, especially concerning such Church matters as the appointment of bishops.

Speaking of bishops, Fr. Giancarlo Politi, PIME has contributed a very useful list of the 340 China-born bishops, who have been appointed throughout history from Luo Wenzao in 1674, through the 6 Chinese bishops consecrated in 1926, up to the end of December 2007. For each bishop Fr. Politi has included the dates of birth, of both presbyterial and episcopal ordinations, the names of their ordaining prelates (when known), and their dioceses and provinces. No Episcopal ordinations took place in China in 2008 and 2009. This year, up to now (November 18, 2010), 10 young bishops have been consecrated.

If only for the essays in sections II and III, the Lazzarotto *Festschrift* should be a sought after book by every student of Chinese Church history. Of course, there are insightful articles in the other Sections of the book. Most notable among these is Gianni Criveller's compilation of 60 years of Fr. Lazzarotto's writings. Criveller list contains 417 works on a variety of subjects, ranging from missionary work to religious history and policy in China. Fr. Lazzarotto's output can only be described as prodigious. The *Festschrift* is a worthy tribute, not only to Father Lazzarotto, but also to the scholars, who contributed such informative articles.

The proofreaders did an almost perfect job. It is questionable if Francois Noel visited Japan sometime between 1687-1690 (p. 160). Japan vigorously isolated itself from the wider world from 1635 to 1853, except for Dutch ships allowed to visit Nagasaki without any

missionaries on board. The 26-year pontificate of John Paul II was not the longest reign in papal history (p. 389). Pius IX was pope from 1846 to 1878. Nationalists and Communists both used to speak of the Eight Year War of Resistance (八年抗戰) against Japan, 1937-1945, not the 14 years from 1931-1945 (p. 450).

One friend wrote about Fr. Lazzarotto in Chinese. All the other articles are in English, with some quotations in Latin, French and Italian. The scholarly text is amply sprinkled with pinyin and Chinese characters. At the back, there is a list of the 28 contributors and their addresses. It would have been good to have a few sentences about each writer. Unfortunately, there is no index.

The price of the book is 60 Euro per copy, and may be ordered directly from the publisher: Steyler Verlag, Postfach 2460, D-41311 Nettetal, Germany. Checks payable to Steyler Verlag in Euros, drawn on a German bank, and payment by credit card are acceptable.

*Specifications: hardback, 16.5x24cm, 574pp, ISBN 978-3-8050-0563-0.*