

EDITORIAL

On October 28-29, 2014, a seminar took place in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, which could have a far-reaching influence on the official view of Christian missionary activity in China during the modern historical period (after the Opium Wars). The seminar commemorated the massacre of the Dutch Vincentian Bishop Franciscus Hubertus Schraven of Zhengding, Hebei, and eight other priests and religious by Japanese soldiers at the Zhengding Cathedral on October 9, 1937.

Bishop Schraven and his companions had been protecting several hundred women and girls who had taken refuge in the Cathedral from the ravages of the invading Japanese military. Apparently, the Japanese soldiers' intention was to use the ladies as "comfort women." Thinking they would be safe in the church, the women had taken sanctuary there. In medieval Europe, marauding hordes would respect such sanctuary.

The soldiers bound Bishop Schraven and his companions with wire, took them outside the church, bayoneted them, and burned their bodies on funeral pyres a few hundred yards from the Cathedral.

Over 70 scholars from 20 Chinese universities and research institutes attended the seminar. All the speakers emphasized that too little is known about the humanitarian sacrifices of some foreign missionaries on behalf of Chinese citizens during the War of Resistance against Japan, and in other periods of strife. Speakers said that reports of such heroic deeds should be spread to a wider audience. Hinted at in the presented papers was a need for a change in the official view that all missionaries were agents of the foreign imperialist powers. The Zhengding Incident demonstrates that here at least were some foreign missionaries who gave their lives for the Chinese people.

The November 13, 2014 issue of Faith Press reported the proceedings of the seminar. It contains the highlights of the papers delivered by some of the university professor speakers, as well as an overall analysis of the conference. It was the first international

conference ever held to commemorate the Japanese invaders' slaughter of Catholic missionaries because the latter were protecting Chinese civilians. Fr. Zhang Shijiang, Director of the Faith Institute for Cultural Studies, one of the organizers of the seminar, expressed the hope that the Zhengding Incident will show the uselessness of war because it leads to the death of many innocent people. May such an incident never happen again, he concluded.

It seems to me that the publication of such incidents of missionaries helping the local people would go a long way towards dispelling the mistaken notion that all missionaries were agents of imperialism.

To bring matters up to the present time, this issue of *Tripod* covers the topic of poverty in China, and the efforts of the Catholic Church of China to alleviate it. Zhang Guanglai, after briefly describing the history of the Church's work in the medical and educational fields, brings us up to date with an enumeration of all the different Catholic social service works taking place in China today. These include hospitals, clinics, orphanages, homes for the elderly, the handicapped, and care for Hansen's Disease patients, and victims of HIV/AIDS. The Xi'an Catholic Social Service Center describes its work of community service in the countryside of Shaanxi Province. He Ping describes his experience of working with the poor in Yunnan Province. Shanren Shenfu talks about his encounter with the 4th World Movement. Finally, Leo Goodstadt, head of the Hong Kong Government's Central Policy Unit from 1989 to 1997, taking a cue from his recent book (2013) *Poverty in the Midst of Affluence, How Hong Kong Mismanaged Its Prosperity*, describes "Hong Kong's Cruel Poverty."

Dear Readers, we have a New Year's surprise for you. *Tripod* will have a new look in 2015. The format will be changed. Thank you for your continued support. May God bless you at Christmas and throughout the New Year! (PJB)