

## EDITORIAL

The theme of this issue of *Tripod* is The Social Teaching of the Church and China. The social teaching of the Church has a history of over 100 years, counting from Pope Leo XIII's encyclical on the rights of workers, *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. The Church's social teaching has continued to develop through the encyclicals of later Popes, like Pope Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*, in 1931, Pope John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra*, and *Pacem in Terris* in 1961 and 1963 respectively, Vatican Council II's *Gaudium et Spes*, in 1965, Pope Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, in 1967, and up to Pope John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens* and *Centesimus Annus* in 1981 and 1991 respectively.

To sum up this long history of Church teaching on social issues, in 2004, the Vatican issued the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. This thick volume, divided into 12 chapters, covers every aspect of the Catholic Church's social teaching, as it developed in the last 120 years, in 583 numbered paragraphs.

The *Compendium* opens with the Biblical sources for the Church's social teaching. From the Old Testament it cites God's words to Moses recorded in Exodus 3: 7-8: "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint.... Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians." The New Testament source cited is Jesus' quotation, in Luke 4: 18-19, of Isaiah the Prophet (Is. 61: 1-2) in his hometown synagogue of Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." (Para. 21 and 28)

The *Compendium* next treats of the place of social teaching in the Church's mission. In its mission the Church enriches and permeates society with the Gospel. It infuses the human heart with the freedom of the Gospel (Para. 62-3). The *Compendium* continues:

“The Church’s social doctrine is an integral part of her evangelizing ministry” (Para. 66). “Because of the corrupting effects of injustice, that is, of sin, the Church cannot remain indifferent to social matters” (Para. 71).

In Chapter 7, which deals with economics, the *Compendium* (Para. 323) again pointed to scriptural sources for the prophets condemning “fraud, usury, exploitation and gross injustice, especially when directed against the poor” (Is. 58: 3-11, Jer. 7: 4-7, Hos. 4: 1-2, Amos 2: 6-7, Micah 2: 1-2). It also cited 1 Tim. 6: 10: “For the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith” (Para. 379). In Chapter 8, regarding politics, it quotes directly from *Centesimus Annus*: “The Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices...guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate” (Para. 406).

In this issue, as examples of Christians speaking out for social justice in China, we include lawyer Xu Zhiyong’s closing statement to the court which sentenced him to 4 years in jail in January 2014 for “gathering a crowd to create a public disturbance,” Riverside Tree’s “The Conversion of a Despondent Lawyer,” and Meng Weina’s “What is Justice? Some Fragments of Reflections and Practice,” and Father Franco Mella’s article on his experience with the Occupy Central Movement.

We also include Father Sergio Ticozzi’s usual Church News Update, this time for the year 2014, and an Index of *Tripod* issues for the two-year period, 2013-2014.

Likewise, in a spirit of social justice, *Tripod* wants to join its voice to that of family and Catholics seeking news of the whereabouts of Bishop Shi Enxiang, of Yixian, who was taken away from his niece’s home in Beijing on Good Friday, 2001, and has not been heard of since, a period of 14 years. If he has passed away, the family would like to have his remains returned to them, so that he can have a proper burial.

May all our readers experience Easter peace! (PJB)