

EDITORIAL

This issue of *Tripod* celebrates the 35th anniversary of the founding of Holy Spirit Study Centre. We also have a review of the religious policy in China over the last ten years.

Bishop John Baptist Wu was the main inspiration for the founding of Holy Spirit Study Centre. In late 1979, he appointed Father John Tong to start an outreach program to the Church in China, which had just begun to start up again as part of Deng Xiaoping's open door policy after the 3rd Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in December 1978. Churches, temples and mosques, after a hiatus of about 30 years, began to open again. In assigning Father Tong to China liaison work, Bishop Wu (to become Cardinal in 1988) gave him the instruction: "Build a bridge to our brothers and sisters inside and outside of China, promoting the mission of reconciliation through the Gospel." Fathers Angelo Lazzarotto, PIME, Elmer Wurth, MM, and Peter Barry, MM joined Father Tong to open the centre on the grounds of Holy Spirit Seminary on October 1, 1980. Cardinal Wu also gave the name to the centre, Holy Spirit Study Centre.

At first, help to the Church consisted in just sending medals and rosaries to the Catholics, and books, like Bibles and theology textbooks to priests and Sisters in China. Libraries in seminaries had been depleted during the Cultural Revolution. Later in the early 1980s the centre was instrumental in helping to raise funds for the building of churches, seminaries and convents. Although this work has dropped off due to the world financial crises in the late 1990s, funding agencies these days still seem to be willing to offer their meager resources more in the direction of formation programs for priests, Sisters and the laity. We began a quarterly journal (*Tripod*) to introduce the situation of the Church in China to the outside world, and to introduce theological developments in the outside Catholic world (especially after Vatican Council II) to China. We also see *Tripod* as a vehicle of dialogue with scholars of religion in

China. Over the years, we have also accompanied groups to China to attend church openings, priestly ordinations and Sisters' vow-taking.

Having worked at the centre for 35 of my 50 years as a priest (1965-2015), I must say that overall it has been a wonderful experience. We have met wonderful Chinese bishops, priests, Sisters and lay people both in China and here in Hong Kong. One gets the feeling that there is great hope for the Church in China from meeting the wonderful personnel they have.

However, I perceive that the situation of the Church in China has become more restrictive in recent years. Perhaps this can be dated from the 8th Assembly of Catholic Representatives in December 2010, through to the "house arrest" and removal from office of Bishop Ma Daqin, auxiliary bishop of Shanghai in 2012, and up to the demolition of crosses (and even of whole churches) in Zhejiang Province in 2014-2015.

That brings us to the second theme of this issue: a review of the religious policy during the last few years. In his article, Dr. Anthony Lam, executive editor of the Chinese side of *Tripod*, applies the National Security Law, enacted in July this year, to the field of religion. Professor Ying Fuk Tsang, Director of the Divinity School of Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong, treats the tightening up of the official religious policy in recent years, and Fr. Hua Min, a Chinese priest, deals with the issue of China-Vatican relations, especially the sensitive problem of the appointment of bishops.

Finally, *Tripod* staff has prepared short items of recent news, and pictures of the centre's 35 years of existence. We note, sadly, the death in August 2015 of Father Norman Walling, SJ, who did translation and editorial work for us in the 1990s and 2000s. We are reminded too of the death in October 2014 of Father Denis Hanly, MM, who also did editorial work for us in the 80s and 90s. We remember these two Fathers in our prayers. May they rest in peace.

We thank God for his many graces on the 35th anniversary of the founding of our centre, and we ask God to continue to bless us as we accompany the Church in China on its journey to complete communion with the universal Church. (PJB)