

## EDITORIAL

**T**he theme of this issue is the 50th anniversary of the Cultural Revolution (CR).

But before we get to that, we want to re-produce the article of our Centre's director, John Cardinal Tong, entitled "The Communion of the Church in China with the Universal Church." The article was first published on August 7, 2016 in *Kung Kao Po* and the *Sunday Examiner*, Hong Kong's Chinese and English Catholic weekly respectively.

Cardinal Tong's article addresses the subject of China-Vatican relations, or specifically, within those relations, the thorny problem of the appointment of bishops in the Chinese Catholic Church. His purpose was to help the negotiations by explaining the matter of the appointment of bishops from a theological point of view. (Cardinal Tong has a doctorate in theology from the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome).

Cardinal Tong begins his explanation by pointing out that for a local Catholic church to maintain communion with the universal Catholic Church, the Pope must be allowed to appoint Catholic bishops in that local church. Cardinal Tong writes: "Communion with the Roman Pontiff is a manner of realizing communion with the universal Church, and is a sign of communion with the universal church. The above principles are applicable to the Catholic Church in China too." He then cites a passage from Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's 2007 letter to the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the Catholic Church in China: "The profound unity which binds together the local Churches in China, and which likewise places them in intimate communion with all the other local Churches throughout the world, has its roots not only in the same faith and in a common Baptism, but above all in the Eucharist and in the episcopate...It is therefore indispensable, for the unity of the Church in individual nations, that every bishop be in communion with the other Bishops and that all should be in visible and concrete communion with the Pope."

Cardinal Tong's article then deals with such specific questions as the manner of selecting bishops, and the makeup of the present Chinese Bishops Conference. The Holy See cannot recognize that conference because it contains bishops who went ahead and had themselves ordained without the papal mandate. It also does not contain the clandestine bishops, whom the Holy See does recognize.

While Cardinal Tong's article deals quite comprehensively with the question of the appointment of bishops, and rightly so, given that this question is the most pressing one in relations between China and the Holy See, other problems remained unaddressed. An example is the role of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) in the Chinese Church. Pope Benedict in his 2007 letter had referred to this when he wrote that entities had been placed above the clergy and Catholics of China, which are incompatible with Catholic doctrine. Just now, the government has undertaken a campaign to register all the Catholic clergy, after which they will receive a clergy identity card. Moreover, the application for registration must go through the CCPA. This is a stumbling block for many clergy, both above ground and below ground, because of the CCPA's avowed stance of "running an independent church." The clergy for the most part are willing to register, but they ask: why not apply directly to the Religious Affairs Bureau, instead of going through the CCPA?

Maybe this question will be taken up in the "current channel of dialogue," which has been set up between China and the Vatican, according to a statement by China's Foreign Ministry (August 29, 2016). But perhaps they just have not gotten around to it yet. Near the end of his article, Cardinal Tong cautions: "The dialogue and negotiation between the Apostolic See and the Chinese government is a long term process...We do not expect that the problems accumulated over several decades between China and the Vatican can be solved in one go. We have to allow time and patience on both sides. A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

Returning to the theme of this issue, we have three articles looking back at the Cultural Revolution. Two deal with the CR's effect on the Catholic Church, while the third one, by Ching Cheong, expresses the fear that conditions may be ripe for another CR to take place. We certainly hope that this does not happen. (PJB)