

EDITORIAL

The theme of this issue of *Tripod* is the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Catholic Hierarchy. At the same time, it is the 90th anniversary of the ordination of 6 Chinese bishops (1926). They were the first ones ordained since the only other one in Chinese Church history, Luo Wenzao, in 1685.

With the papal decree *Quotidie Nos*, Pope Pius XII, in 1946, set up 137 ecclesiastical jurisdictions in China: 20 provinces (archdioceses), 79 dioceses (from former vicariates apostolic) and 38 prefectures (missions not yet mature enough to become dioceses). Three Chinese bishops became archbishops (Cardinal Tian Gengxin in Beijing, Archbishop Yu Bin in Nanjing and Archbishop Zhou Jishi in Nanchang). 18 Chinese priests were raised to the episcopacy to head 18 dioceses and seven Chinese priests became monsignors as heads of prefectures. Thus 28 Chinese priests became members of the Chinese hierarchy.

The establishment of the Chinese Catholic hierarchy meant that the Church in China, formed by the union of the above local churches, became independent. It could stand on its own two feet, and take charge of its own affairs. It was on an equal footing with local churches throughout the world. Of course it had to maintain its union and communion with the Holy Father in Rome. Its liaison with Rome was still with the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Evangelization of Peoples today), and not under the Congregation of Bishops, as was the case with other national hierarchies. This was because the Chinese Church still needed the help of foreign missionaries.

The establishment of the Chinese hierarchy was the product of the efforts in the early 20th century of two missionaries and two Popes. The two Vincentian Fathers Vincent Lebbe and Anthony Cotta, whose writings on the development of local clergy influenced Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922) to write his famous encyclical on missionary work, *Maximum Illud* (1919), in which he advocated the promotion of local clergy to positions of leadership in the church. Benedict's successor, Pope Pius XI (1922-1939),

continued the impetus for the promotion of local clergy in his own encyclical on mission work, *Rerum Ecclesiae* (Feb. 26, 1926). Moreover, Pope Pius XI, in a move to extract the Catholic missions of China from the French Protectorate had, on June 15, 1926, issued an apostolic letter, *Ab Ipsis Pontificatus Primordiis*, which advocated the abolition of the rights of extraterritoriality. Father Sergio Ticozzi, a contributor to this issue of *Tripod* unearthed this little known letter, and described it in an article published in Cindy Chu Yik-Yi's *Catholicism in China, 1900-Present* (Palgrave, 2014, pp. 87-104). Pope Pius XI had already signaled his intention to eliminate the foreign protection over the missions (保教權) with his appointment of Celso Costantini as Apostolic Delegate to China in 1922.

Costantini also promoted Chinese leadership over the church. He convoked the Shanghai Synod in 1924, and had a hand in selecting the six Chinese bishops, whom Pope Pius XI ordained in Rome in October 1926. Costantini left China in 1933, but under his tutelage, the Chinese Church was well on its way to becoming self-governing.

After the speedy developments in the direction of self-government for the Chinese Church, from the issuance of *Maximum Illud* in 1919 until the ordination of the six Chinese bishops in 1926, the movement in the direction of self-governance seemed to have slowed down. It then took 20 years for the Chinese Catholic hierarchy to be established in 1946. One reason for the delay was the turmoil in China itself caused, first of all by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, followed by the outbreak of all-out war (World War II, in China 1937-1945). Another reason was the intransigence of the foreign missionaries, who were reluctant to give up their leadership roles in the local church.

Our authors: Sergio Ticozzi, Louis Ha, Anthony Lam, and Valentine Iheanacho all treat of various aspects related to the establishment of the hierarchy. On another topic, Chen Fang-Chung presents an essay on Vatican relations with Taiwan in light of the present Sino-Vatican dialogue. At this time it is good to recall the great effort the Holy See put forth in the first half of the 20th century to promote Chinese leadership for the Chinese Church. (PJB)