EDITORIAL

In order to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's nailing of his ninety-five theses to the door of the Wittenberg church, which marked the start of the Reformation, this issue of *Tripod* takes "Ecumenism" as its main theme. Indeed, as a missionary, preaching the Good News of Jesus in Asia where the majority of the population is non-Christian, I have often felt that we were transmitting a divided message. Putting myself in a non-Christian Asian person's shoes, I think I would be asking myself, which version of Christianity should I accept: Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox? Why can't Christians present a united message? After all, didn't Jesus at the Last Supper with his apostles pray: "I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me." (John 17: 20-21)

The ecumenical movement, or ecumenism, got a great boost from the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Its Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, issued on November 21, 1964, in its first paragraph, states the problem very succinctly: "Certainly, such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature."

What is the present state of ecumenism, over 50 years after the end of Vatican Council II? Our contributors deal with various aspects of the topic. Bishop Andrew Chan of the Anglican Diocese of Western Kowloon and the Very Reverend Samson Fan, Dean of All Saints Cathedral in the same diocese, deal with the build-up to the Reformation, or more specifically with the person of John Wycliffe, who called for reform in the church, a hundred years before Martin Luther performed his famous act. (Too bad, political figures, from Henry VIII, King of England to princes in Germany got involved in the Reformation. This led to state control over the

Church, a violation of the Church's freedom which should never have happened.) Duan Chunsheng, a Chinese priest serving as a professor in the Holy Spirit Seminary College of Theology and Philosophy in Hong Kong, presents an interesting essay on the many catechisms emanating from the Council of Trent (1545-1563) in the Post-Reformation era, and their influence on the Church in China.

A *Tripod* staff member describes the contents of a day-long symposium, entitled, "From Conflict to Communion," which Protestant and Catholic scholars held in Hong Kong in May 2017. The original paper, with the same title, was prepared by Lutheran and Catholic theologians. 24 participants in the symposium then made a pilgrimage to Wittenberg, Trent and, finally, to Rome, where they met Pope Francis on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica on June 7, 2017. A picture of the group appeared on the front page of the June 18, 2017 edition of the *Kung Kao Po*, the Hong Kong Catholic diocesan weekly.

Jackie Foo, a researcher at the Centre of Catholic Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, brings us up to date on the present state of ecumenism in Hong Kong, reporting on the survey he and other researchers conducted in 2016 among Catholic and Protestant believers. We also have a report by Fr. Zhang Guanglai, a priest in China, on the opportunities and challenges facing religious charity workers in China. An index for issues no. 176 to No. 183 likewise appears. Photos from Reformation history are also re-produced.

The final words of Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism ring as true today as they did 50 years ago: "This Council realizes that the holy objective of the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ transcends human powers and gifts. It therefore places its hope entirely in the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Father's meeting with the ecumenical delegation from Hong Kong on the steps of St. Peter's in Rome this June, is a good example for the rest of us Catholic clergy and believers to emulate. (PJB)