



THE VISIT OF

**..... THE CHINESE CATHOLIC
FRIENDSHIP DELEGATION**



..... TO THE UNITED STATES



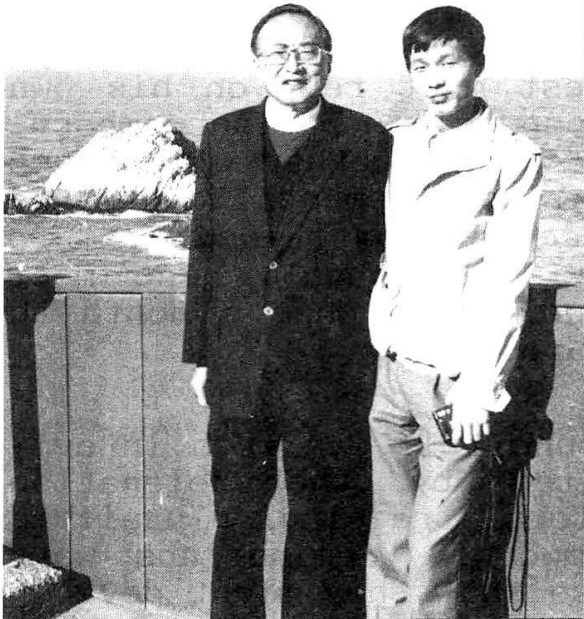
by John Tong
translated by Peter Barry

On September 30 of this year a Chinese Catholic delegation consisting of four bishops, a priest and five laymen arrived in San Francisco. It was the first such delegation of Catholics from China to visit the United States since 1949. They came as guests of the US Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities in the interests of cultural exchange. It was also hoped that this initial visit might help lay the foundation for closer contacts between the Chinese and American churches, with a view to the eventual restoration of full communion between the Church in China and the universal Church. The tour spanned 19 days and included five major cities, focusing primarily on Catholic educational institutions, but also allowing for a number of visits to other Church sponsored social service centres along the route. Peter Barry and I accompanied the group on their tour, and we both felt it to be of great personal benefit.

What strikes me most forcefully about the trip, now that I look back on it, was the spirit of common prayer in which it was conducted. We were met in San Francisco

by Father Laurence Murphy, the trip's coordinator, who brought us to a church where we prayed and dedicated our tour to the Blessed Mother...asking her guidance and protection. Father Ed Malatesta, S.J., who is the Director of the Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History at the University of San Francisco, where we were staying, made personal arrangements for each of the clergy to offer daily Mass privately. He also prepared the Scripture readings and prayers that served as our morning introduction to each day's activities. The delegation was invited to attend Sunday Mass at the University of Notre Dame where they were able to experience to the full the warmth and vitality of the new spirit of participation stemming from the liturgical reforms of Vatican II. While at Notre Dame, Father Theodore Hesburgh, the President, led the delegation personally to the Marian shrine at one corner of the campus, where all joined in the singing of the Salve Regina and lit many candles to symbolize enduring prayer for the Catholics of China. The delegation also toured the major cathedrals of New York, Washington and Newark, where they were accorded the opportunity to say Mass. In Washington, our final port of call, we stayed at a retreat house run by the Franciscan Sisters, who invited us to participate in their spirit of prayer and service, thus ending our tour on a prayerful note. It is my feeling that this prayerful atmosphere did much to strengthen our keen awareness of the working of the Holy Spirit among us, and allowed us to approach the trip with an open and positive attitude that we might better respond to the graces of God and the needs of the Church.

Members of the delegation included Bishop Fu Tieshan of Beijing, Bishop Tu Shihua, Father Wang Zicheng and Mr. Liu Bainian, all from Beijing, Bishop Jin Luxian, Mr. Tang Guozhi, Dr. Hua Zude and seminarian Ni Guoxiang from the church in Shanghai, and, from Wuhan, Bishop Dong Guangqing and Professor Wang Ruiming. Most of the delegation members are involved in seminary training or social services. At each stop they were able to meet and exchange experiences with their American counterparts engaged in similar responsibilities: professors of philosophy and theology and those engaged in pastoral formation. Delegation members not only brought their hosts up to date on seminary training in China, but they also were eager to learn from American experiences. The exchanges were active and lively. To quote one example, at the Graduate Theolo-



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1. Bishop Jin and seminarian Ni at San Francisco Bay

2. L-R Bishop Jin, Father Byron, President of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., Father Barry, Bishop Fu, Bishop Dong, Mr. Liu, Bishop Tu

3. L-R Dr. Hua, Chinese friend and Mr. Tang, chatting at Fordham University, New York

4. Prof. Wang and Father Wang listening to Archbishop Quinn's piano performance

gical Union in Berkeley, California one delegate showed concern for the isolation of diocesan priests who work alone in a parish separated from the support of a religious community. He asked what methods might be used to support such priests. The response was that according to today's trends in pastoral work, the parish priest must rely on his own team of parish leaders and other responsible parish members. The parish priest should plan and work together with these people, sharing with them his joys, achievements, difficulties and heartaches. He would receive from them in return greater encouragement and support. He should also meet with his fellow diocesan priests at least once a month to share experiences and for mutual support.

The influence of Vatican Council II was much in evidence in all the seminaries visited by the delegation members. The emphasis was on pastoral training, pluralism, and inculcating a spirit of teamwork. Seminarians were given a great amount of freedom, so that they might develop personal initiative in their spiritual lives. In exchanges with missionaries, the group discovered that the concept of "evangelization" has deeper, richer meanings. Missionaries not only "bring" the Gospel, but also "elicit" it from the people to whom they go. Through sincere dialogue people can come to a fuller experience of the mystery of Christ.

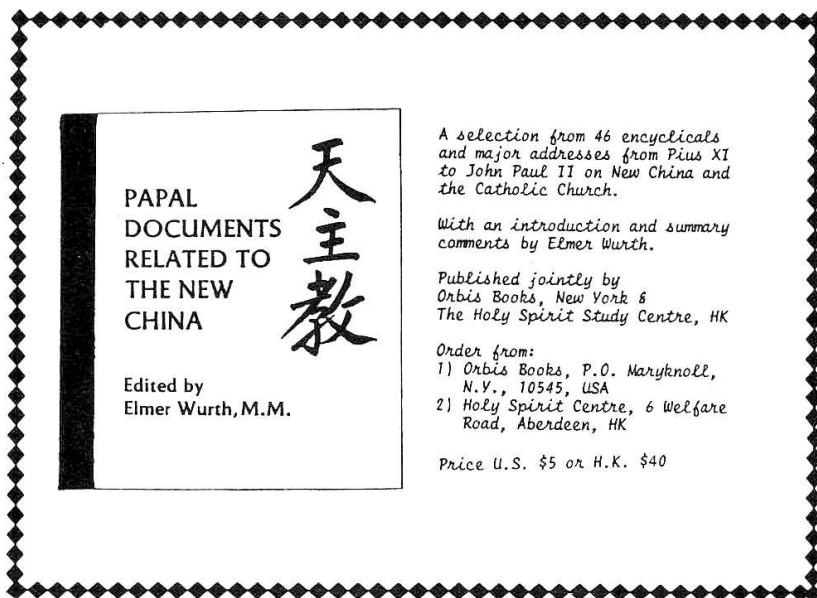
While visiting the social service organizations of each local church, we not only obtained a better understanding of contemporary social conditions in the United States, but also the response of Catholic social work to the problems. The Church is concerned with the poor and weak in society, and, based on a spirit of Christian charity, it works to achieve a respect for humanity that human beings deserve, so that each person may be able to develop fully in all aspects of his or her life: material, social, as well as spiritual.

The members of the delegation had either personally been abroad before or at least had a lot of experience meeting with foreigners. In conversation they showed openness and sophistication in handling the many questions they

were asked. Their expressions of gratitude to their hosts were gracious and sincere, indicating how much they benefited from the experience, nor did they forget to present each of their hosts with a gift from China as a memento of their visit. Thus, in each place, whether meeting old friends or making new ones, the delegation members left a profound impression of warmth and affection.

There were many spontaneous incidents that added colour to the trip. For instance, Archbishop Quinn of San Francisco is quite an accomplished pianist, and when he gladly performed for the group, Bishop Tu Shihua responded by singing arias from Beijing opera, as well as some Italian songs. The toasts offered at dinners were sometimes solemn and sometimes lighthearted, but they were always filled with friendliness. Among the delegation members, besides the multi-lingual Bishop Jin, several could speak English; Bishops Tu and Dong could speak Italian and Father Wang was fluent in Spanish. Not a few times did the occasion arise for the delegation members to display their ability at these languages.

Finally, although there was a natural reticence to discuss in depth the more delicate questions of ecclesiology, a happy and friendly attitude prevailed throughout the trip. Good humour, much laughter and sparks of human warmth gave support to future hopes. During moments of prayer and meditation, communication with God and each other was strengthened. And so, we thank God for the success of this initial step, and look forward to continued progress in the future as we ask God to give us courage to overcome all difficulties.



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