

FROM THE EDITOR

I recently came across this response of a China mainland Christian to a visiting clergyman while they were discussing the Bible. "You Christians from outside China," he said to his guest, "see the Bible as a book to be read, whereas we here see it as food to be eaten." He went on to explain to him that the Bible is the indispensable spiritual nutriment that gives Christians in China the strength to face up to the demands of their daily lives. I was moved by his sincerity and inspired by his words. And I think of him as I introduce to our readers the first two articles in this issue of Tripod.

"The Bible and Daily Life" comes to us from Richard Wang. Father Wang is a Jesuit living and working in Taiwan. Previously, he was the editor of Collectanea Theologica, but in more recent years he has dedicated his time, attention and enthusiasm to the local charismatic movement there. This marks a personal shift in emphasis from a more academic to a Spirit-centered approach, which becomes obvious when reading his article. His focus is on the interpersonal and dynamic relationship that exists between Bible reading and living in the Spirit.

Our second article is "How to Understand and Read the Bible". It is the work of Ou Jue, a China mainland Catholic, and reprinted here from The Beijing Catholic News. Disarming in its simplicity and freshness, it is replete with spiritual insights.

From the Bible we now turn to the situation of the Church in China with two articles by veteran missionaries, who have had a long history of living and working among the Chinese people. The current state of affairs of the Church in China is so complex and brimming with paradox that it lends itself to a plethora of interpretations.

Without doing violence to the complexity of issues involved, we tend to view outside interpretations on a spectrum extending from the traditional, anti-communist approach on one end to the historical-humanistic approach on the other. Categories overlap and intermesh, and there is a lot of room in the middle ground. With this in mind, we will continue to offer our readers a variety of views by knowledgeable authors with the hope of stimulating further reflection and encouraging a broader understanding of what is for all of us a matter of vital concern - the future of the Church in China.

Jerome Heyndrickx's "Emergence of a Local Catholic Church in China?", in our opinion, tends towards the historical-humanistic approach. Father Heyndrickx is a Belgian CICM missionary, who has thirty years of experience working in Taiwan and is presently the Secretary General of the Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation, which is located at the University of Louvain. Fluent in Chinese, he has been an active promoter of cultural exchanges between Europe and China. The contents of his article have been taken from an address he gave to a group of Catholics in Europe as part of the Foundation's efforts to educate Christians there to a better understanding of Chinese culture and history. His love and appreciation of the Chinese people is clearly in evidence in his address.

"The Catholic Church in China: One Church, Two Testimonies" comes to us from the pen of Pierfilippo M. Guglielminetti. After taking his doctorate in Sacred Theology, Father Guglielminetti, a member of the Society of Jesus, came to Hong Kong, where he has been active in pastoral ministry for many years. His analysis of the Church in China is theological and sociological. He introduces the present religious policy of the government and the structures of the Church that have arisen there. The conclusion of his objective and detailed analysis is a clarion call for China and Christianity to join visions, so that the new evolution of mankind may reach historical accomplishment through the cosmic energy of a glorified Christ.

We wish all of our readers health, success and good fortune in the New Year.