

A RESPONSE

to "MACAU ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND 1999"



by Fr. Francis Hung S.D.B.

Before giving my response to the paper on the Diocese of Macau in Political Transition, I would like to say that while I was not born in Hong Kong, I did receive my education and worked here for many years before my religious superiors sent me to work in Macau in 1981.

On my arrival in Macau, I immediately noticed that Macau, while geographically near, differs from Hong Kong in many ways. My impression is that the lives of the people of Macau are somewhat calmer and more peaceful, and that they are more traditional and conservative in style and manner. Each one seems to go about his or her daily business, enjoying life but without too much concern for others in society, harbouring no great personal ambitions and taking little social initiative. And I would describe the Church in Macau in more or less the same terms.

Perhaps because it is considered to be the Mother of many Churches in the Far East and has always had a privileged status under Portuguese rule, the local Church gives one the impression of being self-confident and very proud of its past glories. This might be a reason why it does not open itself very easily to the outside. Unfortunately with the passage of time, while many other places advanced, in some cases taking dramatic giant steps forward, Macau still remains rooted in the same place. I agree very much with the remark that the Macau Diocese in many ways did not move with the spirit of Vatican II. Though we cannot deny that there has been some progressive movement: new groups, renewal courses, updating seminars, etc., there has yet to be a coordinated effort on the part of the Diocese as a whole to support and encourage Church renewal.

In recent years, some religious communities have on their own initiative organized several seminars on such subjects as liturgy, bible, and spirituality. While these seminars attracted quite a number of lay people, few of the local clergy attended. If parish priests, who are our pastoral leaders, do not attend, how can we expect the faithful to move ahead on their own?

My own personal observation is that the younger generation of Catholics are quite eager to learn and to do something for the Diocese, but they need leadership that matches their enthusiasm and understands their problems. The future of the local church in Macau depends very much on the awareness of its leaders of the need for greater efforts in evangelization and formation for pastoral responsibility. Therefore, much depends on a renewal movement among the clergy to accomplish the important task of turning out animators and coordinators who will be able to bring our limited resources to bear on formulating clear pastoral plans for the future.

We know well that personnel resources are very limited in the Diocese. But I think if we are open enough to cooperate more fully with neighbouring local churches and increase our contacts with them, there is still time to strengthen our communities to face the challenge of an uncertain future.

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