

FROM THE EDITOR

What is sin? Without an accurate answer to this question, it is difficult to arrive at a profound understanding of grace and salvation. From the faith perspective, sin is not only the absence of good but it also involves divisions existing between God and man, among human beings themselves, and between human beings and the world. From a psychological standpoint, sin causes man to be his own enemy, to be divided within himself and to be at odds with himself. With sin good people lose wisdom, integrity, peace and joy. The sinner little by little distorts truth, develops an unbalanced sense of judgement and his life moves without direction.

The Christian comes to a deeper realization of the meaning of grace when confronted with people and a world divided by sin. The primary sign of grace is a beauty that flows from harmony and order. The sinner distorts this by harming himself, and causing harm to others. Sin imprints a wound in the deepest recesses of man's heart. It is a wound urgently in need of healing. The main effect of the incarnation and redemption of Christ is to bring reconciliation where division exists and to restore health to the wounded. The primary object of Christ's redemption is the Church, herself a community of sinners. And unless she continually repents and conscientiously strives for interior harmony, she cannot effectively preach the Good News of peace and joy to the world.

The theme of this issue of Tripod is "Conversion, Reconciliation, and Unity." We are indebted to Father Edward Malatesta, Director of the Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History at the University of San Francisco, for serving as guest editor for this issue. Our Centre wishes to thank him for the generous gift of his time. We also want to express the honour we feel at being able to cooperate with centres in Europe and America to make some small contribution to the good of the Church in China. In his "Introduction" Father Malatesta introduces the content of each article. There is no need to repeat that here. The Holy Spirit Study Centre hopes to continue, and even increase, such international cooperation. It is our desire that through a continuing academic exchange with our brothers and sisters at other international centres concerned with the Church in China, we all may deepen and broaden our understanding and views of China and her church-related stances.

Recently the Chinese government published an official document, entitled "Strengthen Catholic Church Work in the New Situation." The document manifests new directions in the government's policy regarding the Chinese Catholic Church. Father John Tong, our Centre's director, presents a brief introduction of this document.