

# The Canadian Catholic Roundtable on China

by Celia Chua, M.I.C.



From the 1970's the Protestant churches in Canada have had significant contacts with China through their Canada-China program. The Catholic Church was represented in the movement right from the beginning through the Scarborough Foreign Mission Society which cooperated with the Protestant churches in laying the foundation of the program. In 1976, Mr. Ray Whitehead, the Director of the Canada-China program, invited other Catholic organizations to participate in the program. Among the religious congregations that responded positively to the invitation at that time were the Jesuits, the Quebec Foreign Mission Society and the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.

This was the beginning of a concrete commitment on the part of Catholics to an ecumenical effort concerned with China. The 'Montreal Conference' in 1981 allowed Chinese Christian delegates and local Catholic church representatives to meet and enter into dialogue. These encounters gave rise to the French-speaking group called 'Amitie-Chine'. As time went by the Catholics sought greater clarification regarding Catholic Church participation in the Canada-China Program.

During the year 1987-1988, some Catholic groups reflecting on the nature of the Church in China noted that the Church in China is not yet ecumenical. Their reflection, fanned by a desire to serve the Church in China and her people better, led to the conclusion that a separate Catholic body was needed which would parallel the Canada-China Program of the Protestant churches. When the Catholics were required to reconsider their involvement in the Canada-China Program, they pondered together what should be the objectives and responses of such a program for themselves as Catholics. The exchange of thought at this meeting resulted in the establishment of the Canadian Catholic Roundtable on China.

Later, other Catholic religious groups and individuals, like the Religious of the Sacred Heart, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels, and the Ecumenical Office of the Canadian Bishops' Conference, participated in this group. Gratitude goes to the Secretariat of the Missions Office of the Canadian Bishops' Conference for acting as the coordinator and host for the Canadian Catholic Roundtable on China meetings, which take place once every two or three months. The medium of communication in the Roundtable's work is either French or English. Chinese clergy and religious in North America are welcome to join the group.

The Canadian Catholic Roundtable on China has as its purpose:

- To study the contemporary scene in China, including the people, culture, history and languages, but with a particular focus on the Catholics and Catholicism there. Our concern is strongly motivated by the Vatican II document, "Ad Gentes".

- To share knowledge of the current situation in China with other groups through seminars, talks, and media presentations. Opportunities for further exposure to China like teaching or doing research would be welcomed and favorably considered.

- To act as a liaison to other China-concerned groups in Canada.

- To work as an "Ad Hoc" China concerns committee for the Canadian Bishops' Conference.

- To serve as a forum for questions and information regarding China and the Church in China which may arise from Canadian Catholic context.

The Canadian Catholic Roundtable on China is still in its initial stages of development. The group has not yet determined definite modes of structure and membership. Concern for China and the Church in China has brought Canadian Catholics together to search for significant responses to questions that arise. The Canadian Catholic Roundtable on China is a concern group of the local church in Canada in relation to the local church in China. At the present time, its preoccupation with China outweighs the number of its activities. The group sees itself as a continuation of the friendly mission of the Canadian Church towards the Church in China.

## Eucharist and Tradition in the Middle Kingdom

by Eugene LaVerdiere, S.S.S.



Introibo ad altare Dei. It was Passion Sunday, not Palm Sunday but the Sunday before Palm Sunday, the first of two Sundays in Passiontide. The Mass was in Latin from beginning to end, including the reading of both the epistle and the gospel. Throughout the Mass, people prayed aloud, chanting in the vernacular litanies and other prayers long committed to memory.

The priest was garbed in vestments such as those I remember from my earliest years. He wore a maniple; his chasuble was vintage roman; his back was to the people, to whom he occasionally turned to greet with bowed head, a brief but closed gesture, and in a barely audible voice. Only the altar server responded to his Dominus vobiscum with the Et cum spiritu tuo. Few went up to communion, and these would have had to