



THE POPE IN SEOUL: A MESSAGE TO CHINA

Pope John Paul II arrived in Seoul on October 7th to participate in the 44th International Eucharistic Congress. At the conclusion of the closing Mass on Sunday, October 8, the Holy Father invited all present to join him in the recitation of the Angelus, which he introduced with a message of peace for the world. In this short address, he made special reference to North Korea and Mainland China and their Catho-

lic communities, "two peoples who are very close to my heart."

In speaking to the people he said:

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. We have just celebrated the Eucharist, and brought to a conclusion the Forty-fourth International Eucharistic Congress. In union with the Church throughout the world we have been joined to Jesus Christ in the 'acceptable sacrifice which brings salvation to the whole world'. Together with his Mother, Mary ever Virgin, we have rejoiced in God our Saviour, for he who is mighty has done great things for his people (Lk 1:47-49).

At this midday hour, we turn to Mary, whom Christ gave to us as our Mother (Jn 19:27). Forever 'she stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord' (Lumen Gentium, 55), interceding on behalf of the children of Eve. She is the 'gracious advocate'. In confidence we ask her to pray for us, that we may be made worthy of the promises of her divine Son.

2. Today in Seoul, we offer a fervent prayer that the peace of Christ will descend upon all nations and peoples. Allow me to mention in particular two peoples who are very close to my heart. Confident of Mary's tender concern for all her children, we cannot fail to recommend to her, with deep affection, hope and sorrow, the people of North Korea and especially its Catholic community. We pray for those parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and relatives who are separated, but wait with undiminished hope to be reunited as one family. May Jesus, through the intercession of his Blessed Mother, the Queen of Peace, hasten the day when all Koreans will be reconciled in mutual trust and respect, and reunited in the joy of brotherly love.

3. In this filial conversation with Mary our Mother, I also make mention of our brothers and sisters in Christ in Mainland China. Their geographical proximity, as well as

bonds of faith and culture, bring them very near to many of those assembled here. Deep within our own heart there is always present an ardent desire to meet these brothers and sisters in order to express my cordial affection and concern for them, and to assure them of how highly they are esteemed by the other local Churches. I am deeply moved when I think of the heroic signs of fidelity to Christ and his Church which many of them have shown in these past years. Through the intercession of Mary, Help of Christians, may Christ be their consolation in every trial and in all of life's daily challenges. May the Lord also inspire within them a firm commitment to the delicate task of fostering reconciliation within the ecclesial community, in communion of faith with the Successor of Peter, who is the visible principle and foundation of that unity. May he encourage and sustain Christian believers there, as they seek to dedicate themselves to the pursuit of the common good and the generous service of their fellow citizens, working for the progress of their noble nation.

4. We ask Mary to draw all mankind to the Cross of Christ, our only hope of salvation. Through her prayers, may all hearts be opened to the peace of Christ--that peace which surpasses all human understanding (Phil 4:7). And may we who have received so many of God's gifts through her intercession, imitate her example and offer ourselves in union with her Son for the salvation and peace of the entire world."

The Pope's reference to China comprises the largest part of his brief address. Speaking from Seoul, he is aware of Korea's close proximity to China, of the influence of Confucianism on Korea's traditional culture, and how the Korean church traces its origins back to the Christian community of Beijing. The Pope's admiration and respect for China and its people is unaffected and sincere, and should be a source of pride for all Chinese Christians.

When compared to the Pope's talk to the Chinese community in Manila in February of 1981, we note a subtle change of emphasis. Both are addressed to Chinese Catholics, but in Seoul the Pope underlines his concern for 'all' members of the Church in China. One must conclude from this that he is speaking not only to those who have been unswerving in their loyalty to the Holy See but also to members of the Patriotic Association and their sympathizers.

Undeniably, the Church in China is a wounded church. The Pope makes reconciliation its top priority, indicating that the fostering of reconciliation is a 'delicate' task, and restoration of full-communication with the Holy See demands a firm commitment from all parties concerned. He

reiterates a constant theme that there is no contradiction between being a good Catholic and a good citizen. He urges Chinese Catholics to dedicate themselves whole-heartedly to the common good, working for the continual progress of their 'noble country'. He is deeply moved by the heroic sacrifices Chinese Catholics have made in recent years out of loyalty to Christ in their trials and efforts, assuring them that they are esteemed and admired by local churches throughout the world.

In the present climate of international affairs, where a spirit of confrontation is giving way to a recognition of the need for genuine dialogue to resolve conflicts among peoples, the Pope expresses an ardent desire to visit China. While journalists reported that his plane was refused entry into China's air-space while on its way to Seoul, the Pope made it quite clear that what he wants is substantial contacts with the Catholics of China. His concern is pastoral and reaches out to include all members of the Church there.

by John Tong

FROM THE EDITOR

History is mankind's guide. Along with the changing times, so also has the study of history undergone great change and development. Traditionally, historians presented their material in the form of a chronology of events, or as a reflection on individual historical incidents. But there were also historians such as Toynbee and Spengler who used a subjective analysis of historical phenomena to arrive at a philosophical system that sought to explain the underlying process of history itself and what direction it might take in the future. Today a new critical historiography has arisen which attempts to blend these two approaches. It aims to uncover the authentic relationships among the multiplicity of facts in order to make the events of history more comprehensible and intelligible. This new approach has recently made its presence felt in the writing of several Church histories. It is also reminiscent of the great Chinese historian Sima Qian's comment on history: "It is the study of the relationships between heaven and earth down through the ages that fashions the story of one family."

Tripod's main topic for this issue, then, is the study of Chinese Church history. We are sincerely grateful for the generous assistance provided by the Verbiest Foundation of Louvain University, who commissioned the authors and assembled the material for this issue. We hope that their efforts will advance a better understanding of its past, as the Chinese Church moves towards creating a new future.

Also included in our present issue, you will find the address of Pope John Paul II, which was given at the Eucharistic Congress in Seoul last October. In his role of Shepherd of the Universal Church, he called upon Chinese Catholics everywhere to take up the vital task of reconciliation.