

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

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## 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.