

FROM THE EDITOR

Our special theme for this issue fits in well with Cardinal John B. Wu's recent pastoral letter to the Diocese of Hong Kong in which he calls for the setting up of Small Faith Communities as the top pastoral priority of the 1990's. Jesus has compared the potential growth of the Church to a mustard seed. In this parable of the kingdom, the seed though small in size, has within itself great power to expand and develop. The disciples themselves bore witness to this in their own lifetime as they saw the infant community move out from Jerusalem spreading across the Empire until it reached to the city of Rome itself.

The vehicle for the rapid spread of the early Church was, of course, the small faith community. After their expulsion from the temple, and the synagogues, the disciples met in the homes of Christians, which soon became focal points for their community life and worship. Raymond Collins, Professor of New Testament Studies at Louvain, describes this movement for us in our opening article House Churches in Early Christianity. And Herman Hendrickx, who teaches New Testament Studies at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in the Philippines, covers the same ground from a different angle in The Community Addressed by Luke/Acts. It is his conviction that the word 'communion' best describes the inner nature of these early communities.

Moving along to the present, we have four articles by our local church leaders who, along with Cardinal Wu feel that small Christian communities are the building blocks for the Church of the future here in Hong Kong. Sister Goretti Lau, our resident theologian and TRIPOD editor, offers in her Preliminary Theological Inquiry a possible ecclesial model that might serve as a theological underpinning for their further development. In Establishing Small Faith Communities in Hong Kong, Luke Tsui, who is the Executive Director of the Institute for Religion and Society, gives us a crystallization of his thoughts, gained from years of pastoral experience in this field. And even more practical is the account of the effort to reorganize an entire parish around small Christian communities centered in the tenement blocks of Hong Kong's housing estates. Christian Family Associations in St. Vincent's Parish is a blueprint for pastoral action. A key person in the small faith community renewal is, of course, the parish priest. How he perceives his role is equally important. John Cioppa, who is the Project Director of our Centre, addresses this concern in Is the Parish Priest a Leader or a Manager or Both?

We bring to a close this issue with Anthony Lam's preliminary survey on the Bishops of the Chinese Patriotic Association ordained in 1958. And we wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year in this Year of the Horse.