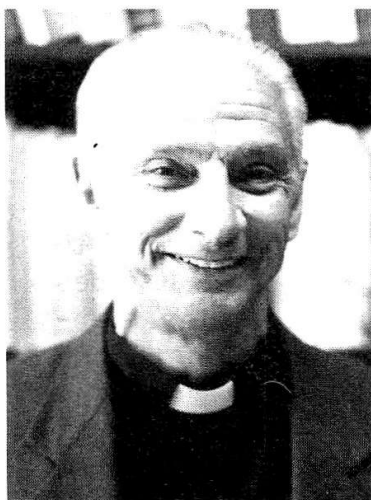


years, young people have been flocking to the Burgundy hillside by the hundreds; perhaps they will now be going in their thousands. This wonderful balance of the horizontal and the vertical through various junctures is the special characteristic of Taizé.

And there we probably have the key to the heart of the matter. At the heart of Taizé, like a hidden spring, there is a fellowship, silent and discreet, sober, entirely turned towards God and open to every guest, using means that are absurdly inadequate and having no pretentious ambitions to push themselves forward in the concert of the Churches. Day after day, they sing the praises of God, they give thanks, they intercede. There is the final secret of Taizé: the exemplary strength of the monastic life, ancient and yet so new.

Looking Toward the Future of the Church in China: An Experience of Teaching in a Mainland Seminary

by Edward J. Malatesta



(Editor's note: Edward Malatesta is the director of the Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History at the University of San Francisco.)

From September 17 to October 29 of last year, at the invitation of Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, I lived and taught in a Catholic seminary in the Diocese of Shanghai. Six weeks is not six years or six months, but I believe it was a long enough period to become fairly well acquainted with at least one training ground for future leaders of the church in China. I would like to share something of my experience as the first Western professor to teach a theology course there.

About 18 miles outside of Shanghai, on the highest of a few small hills that rise above the rich farmland, stands a Romanesque basilica dedicated to Our Lady Help of Christians. Jesuit missionaries built the church toward the end of the 19th century to fulfill a vow made to Mary. The Christian communities of the area had been spared the violence that marked that period. From then until now the church has been the national shrine to Mary. A famous statue of the Virgin holding the child Jesus above her head dominated the highest tower until it was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1965-68). The base of that

statue can still be seen in the garden next to the Cathedral of Shanghai.

The chapel and other buildings of this largest and most important of the 20 civilly authorized Catholic seminaries in China cluster on one section of the wide western slope of the hill. The Regional Seminary of Sheshan (the ancient name of the hill) is presently home to some 145 seminarians, a staff of six priests and a score of lay teachers and laborers. The seminary has existed here since 1982, and the new buildings, paid for partly by the Chinese Government and partly by the Diocese of Shanghai, were completed in 1986.

Initially the seminary was intended for students from East China, but bishops from throughout the country have chosen to send some of their seminarians here because of the quality of the formation. This past summer it was necessary to add a floor to one of the dormitories to accommodate the overflow of students. Presently, the normal program at Sheshan includes three years of post-secondary studies in the humanities, two years of philosophy, four years of theology and one year of pastoral experience before ordination--a 10-year formation period. Modifications are sometimes made in the case of older students, some of whom had their academic preparation for priesthood delayed by 10, 20 or more years of prison or labor camp--a preparation of another kind and surely not less valuable.

A few miles from Sheshan, at Tailaiqiao, in the area of Qingpu, an additional residence has been built in the parish compound where seminarians from the Shanghai diocese will pursue their literary studies. In the future, Sheshan itself will probably concentrate on programs in philosophy and theology for candidates who have already completed their literary studies elsewhere.

It was a privilege to be part of the seminary community and to offer 40 lectures in Mandarin in my specialty of biblical spirituality, as well as an introduction to contemporary exegesis. Since the developments in Catholic thinking and pastoral life immediately before and after the Second Vatican Council are just beginning to reach China, the students were eager to learn about them and found that they had a very timely application for the renewal of the church in China. We studied the "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation" (Dei Verbum) paragraph by paragraph, two essays on biblical spirituality, the rules for the discernment of spirits in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (as one might imagine, these students have much to discern) and parts of a recent introduction to methodology in biblical studies.

From some conversations before teaching my course, I learned that the seminarians had no textbooks for their theology courses. They studied the notes prepared by their professors, but did little or no other reading. One reason was the scarcity there of theology books in Chinese. Although many such books, and excellent ones, have been published in Taiwan and Hong Kong, they have not made their way to the seminarians. The Studium Biblicum of the Franciscans, originally in Peking but presently in Hong Kong, produced the most frequently used Chinese Catholic translation of the entire Bible decades ago, and over the years it has published many excellent books on the Scriptures. As a gift to the seminarians of Sheshan, the Franciscan community very generously offered to send copies of the Bible in the large format so that every student would have his own. They provided me with one copy of all the titles they have published. I brought these and 150 copies of the ordinary prayers of the Mass in Chinese with me to Shanghai. The six boxes of books naturally attracted the attention of the customs in Shanghai. The officials were very polite, but somehow felt that 150 missalettes were too many. They kept 120, but even these were safely retrieved after some days.

To familiarize the students with these books and journals in Chinese, a book exhibit was organized, and each seminarian was invited to choose a book or an article about which he would make a written report. Two or three could work together, and some would be selected to give their reports in class. What is a familiar procedure in schools in our country was quite a novelty for many of the seminarians. As a result, not a few needed some coaxing to speak before a group for the first time in their lives. Given native Chinese reserve and the fear of making a mistake and losing face, the difficulties to be overcome were not minor. But in the long run, the majority were grateful for the experience. Knowledge was shared, and a volume of reports in fine calligraphy graces the students' reading room. With a bit of financial assistance, the floor above this room could be outfitted with bookshelves, a dehumidifier and a good supply of Chinese books on theology, Scripture, spirituality and relevant subjects that the seminarians would surely use.

During the past four years, with the help of a team of three very dedicated persons--my father, Edward Sr., now a spry 83, Sister Denis of Mary, a very active retired Sister of the Holy Name, and Mrs. Una Michaelson, a professional librarian--it has been possible to process and ship to the seminary of Sheshan some 30,000 carefully selected books in Western languages to serve as a basic library. During the month of July 1988 and again in 1989, Daniel Peterson, S.J., librarian at St. Ignatius High School in San Francisco, and I worked with several seminar-

ians, priests and laypersons at Sheshan to continue this procedure. While these books are useful for the professors, it is urgently necessary to provide the seminarians with an adequate library of books in Chinese.

The daily order at Sheshan reminded us--those of us who can remember--of a style that has disappeared in most other places. As the church in China becomes more familiar with formation programs in the rest of the world, modifications will be made, especially to provide the students with more study time and opportunities to exercise their individuality and creativity. Nonetheless, one cannot help but admire the generosity, fervor and seriousness with which the present system is followed.

Everyone rises at 5:30 A.M. Morning prayers begin in the chapel at 6:00 A.M., followed by Mass. Gymnastics according to taped directives are on the playing courts at 7:00. After breakfast there is a short study period from 8:00 to 8:30. Classes are held for most of the students at 8:30, 9:30 and 10:30. Before lunch there is a brief midday prayer in the chapel. Afternoon classes for most are at 1:00, 2:00 and 3:00. From 4:00 to 5:00 there is the only full hour of free time in the day. Some play basketball or volleyball; some study; some climb the hill to visit Our Lady's shrine; others make the Stations of the Cross outside or pray in the chapel. From 5:00 to 5:30, devotions to Our Lady are held in the chapel. After supper and a brief recreation period, there is study or class from 6:30 until 8:00. Spiritual reading, preparation for the next day's meditation and night prayers, all in common, take place in the chapel from 8:00 until 9:00. After such a day, it does not take long for the lights to go out for a well-deserved rest. This rigorous schedule is slightly modified on Saturday afternoons with a work period and on Sunday afternoons with the possibility of leaving campus for a few hours.

Although many visitors, Christians and other persons as well, come to visit Our Lady's shrine and make a day's outing on the bamboo-covered hill, life in the seminary just below is no picnic. The seminarians live in dormitories (several to a room) where there is no space to study. Each one has his own desk in special study halls. The daily fare is not such as to cause problems of over-weight. After six weeks in mainland China, I had become more used than I realized to the sight of thin bodies and was startled when I saw the very different appearance of the seminarians in Hong Kong. It was not hard to believe that it costs only \$500 in U.S. money to provide for one seminarian for an academic year at Sheshan. It would be hard to think of a better investment.

Of the six dedicated priests who make up the regular seminary faculty, three are over 70, and one is over 80 years old. These men administer the seminary, teach classes, counsel the students and on weekends visit the sick, hear confessions and celebrate Masses in the Shanghai area. It was a joy to share meals and simple recreations with them, to witness their love of the church, their devotion to the seminarians and their hope for the future reunion of the church. Some of the lay faculty who teach such supplementary disciplines as languages, history and music are former seminarians whose preparation for priesthood had been interrupted. A number of them spent 20 years or more in prison or labor camp.

As churches continue to be restored and reopened for public liturgies, as pastoral ministry is increasingly allowed on church property and in homes, the need for priests is keenly felt. Of the some 1,000 priests still able to do public ministry, most are over 70. Consequently, the church in China considers the training of future priests to be the priority of priorities. The Regional Seminary of Sheshan where I taught is probably the best seminary in China. Two other priests from outside mainland China were also invited and authorized to teach there this fall. The Rev. Thomas Law, head of the Office of Liturgy of the Diocese of Hong Kong, gave lectures on the history of the liturgy and an introduction to liturgical reforms. His expertise, experience and tact enabled him to carry out his task with great success. Joseph Zen, S.D.B, a former Provincial, is presently chairman of the philosophy department of Holy Spirit Seminary in Hong Kong. A gifted teacher, he is lecturing on Revelation and on the Holy Trinity. A native of Shanghai, Father Zen is overjoyed to be teaching in mainland China. While the three of us visiting professors were at the seminary together, the Mass was celebrated in Chinese for the first time after much careful preparation. The seminarians now have two Masses a week in Chinese, while five are still in Latin. It is planned that within a year, the Mass in Chinese will be introduced into the parishes of the Shanghai Diocese. Traditionally, Chinese Catholics have a great reverence toward the Eucharist and toward all forms of liturgy. We can hope that this admirable quality will pervade their celebration of the renewed liturgy and benefit the universal church.

From what we visitors were told, the experiment of having professors from outside China teach at Sheshan was successful. Others, both Chinese and non-Chinese, have been invited to follow us. We hope that they too may be able to experience the faith, hope and love of a truly impressive community and make a contribution to the future of the church in the most populous nation on earth. We also hope that other

seminaries will have their needs met. I have visited some of them and, in most cases, was equally impressed by the genuine sincerity of staff and students and by the spirit of joy that radiated even in circumstances of great material poverty.

I must raise the question about the appropriateness of rendering service to these publicly authorized seminaries in the context of the divided church in China. There are candidates for priesthood who do not wish to attend these institutions because they are approved and monitored by the Government, which does not allow any official contact between the church in China and the Holy Father, the universal shepherd and sign of unity of the Roman Catholic Church. Men who have chosen an "underground" formation and ordination bitterly resent, at least in some cases, their brother priests who have been formed in the governmentally approved seminaries and have been ordained by bishops whom the Government recognizes. Some of the "underground" faithful refuse the ministry of these latter priests.

It seems to me and to others that assistance to the public seminaries is justified in light of the following considerations. First, these institutions are in fact training over 600 candidates for the priesthood. This training will be carried on, the seminarians who persevere will be validly ordained and countless faithful will seek and benefit from their priestly ministry. Christian intellectual honesty requires that they receive the best training possible. If outside help can be useful in providing good formation and is in fact requested, it is reasonable to reply affirmatively. I am personally convinced of the sincerity of the majority of both seminarians and staff in the officially sanctioned institutions, as far as one can make such judgments.

I am also convinced that the majority desire full communion with the Holy Father and the universal church, but that achieving full public expression of this is beyond their possibilities at the present time. For Catholics from other parts of the world to work together with them in a unity of faith and charity is to realize, to some degree, the full unity we all desire and strive for. If elsewhere Catholics can study, teach, share facilities, pray and work with other Christians (e.g., with Orthodox, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, etc.), it seems reasonable that we cooperate with those Chinese Catholics of good will who at the present time cannot give full public expression to church order as they and we understand and desire it. Moreover, it is known that some of the Chinese bishops approved by the Government have found ways to express their communion with the Holy Father. Public prayers for the Pope are now offered in many places and conversations are going on

between the Holy See and representatives of China that we hope will lead to a happy resolution of the present problem.

Some persons object that any kind of cooperation with those in the publicly authorized churches or seminaries in China is a rejection of those who have suffered in the past or continue to suffer now for their loyalty to the Holy See. It is said that these faithful Catholics are ignored and forgotten, that their sacrifices are not appreciated and that they have been betrayed.

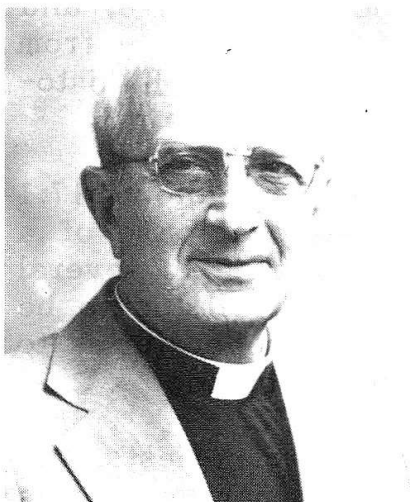
Such statements should be listened to seriously and with respect. The painful experiences and unhealed wounds they point to should be recognized and appreciated, especially by those, both within and outside China, who have not made similar sacrifices. At the same time, it appears presumptuous to say that only one course of action is the correct one in the complex situation of the church in China, which varies from place to place, from community to community, from person to person, from day to day. There seems to be solid evidence that, guided by the same Holy Spirit, some Catholics have rightly chosen a course of noncooperation with government sponsored churches, bishops, priests and institutions, while other Catholics have rightly chosen a course of some form of cooperation.

In any case, bitterness, hatred and total rejection of one group by another, or of either group by third parties are not signs of the Holy Spirit. Rather, all Catholics, both inside and outside of China, should strive for mutual understanding, compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation, reunion and communion. One means to heal the divisions would be for all of us, instead of looking at one another, to look outward to the immense task of announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people of China who have not heard the Gospel. Assistance should be given in every way possible to all our brothers and sisters within the one Catholic Church of China. But not everyone can do everything, especially in a society as rigidly controlled as that of China.

In the last talk that I gave to the seminarians before leaving Sheshan, I shared a dream: The day will come when the Holy Father will visit China and celebrate the Eucharist together with all the bishops of China at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sheshan, a place he has referred to more than once. Some of today's seminarians will share in that day of great rejoicing and longed-for reconciliation. In the future, the universal Church will learn from the experience and thought of the church in China just as it now learns from the experience and thought of the church in Latin America. The day will come when the church in China,

which has known persecution and oppression for many centuries, will enjoy greater freedom. And when the Word of God is proclaimed openly in Chinese by Chinese to Chinese, the body of the church will grow in ways yet unimagined.

Before I left Sheshan, two members of the community quietly told me that my dream was their dream. I suspect it is the dream of many more.



Small Faith Communities

by Osvaldo Pisani

(Editor's note: Osvaldo Pisani is the former chancellor of Hong Kong Diocese.)

Rev. Fr. Luke Tsui is to be congratulated on his very fine article on this subject, published in Tripod #55. The definition he gave of small faith communities is very precise indeed: "Small

faith communities are communities which have the Bible as their guide, the Eucharist as their motivating force and the attainment of a richer life as their object." In the text of his article, describing their method, he emphasizes that "Their method is... to obtain nourishment and strength from the sacraments."

Although in his 8-page article he mentioned only twice the necessity of the Eucharist and the other sacraments, no one can deny their essential importance in the life of such communities. My purpose here is to encourage more dialogue on this subject, which, in a near future, may well become a modus vivendi in our diocese. Cardinal Ratzinger says that "the eucharist links men and women not only with each other but with Christ and in this way it turns people into the Church...the Church lives in eucharistic communities. Its worship is its constitution, since of its nature it is itself the service of God and thus of men and women, the service of transforming the world...". However, quoting Lumen Gentium of Vatican II, Ratzinger also makes a point of clarification "It does not say simply: 'The Church exists completely in every community celebrating the eucharist' but uses the formulation: 'The Church is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful, which, insofar as they are united to their pastors, are called Churches....'" Two elements are important here. Ratzinger continues: 'The