

## *From the Editor*

In 1578, Valignano, an Italian Jesuit missionary mindful of the difficulties his brother Jesuits were encountering in implanting Christianity in China, lamented, "Will that hard, hard rock ever crack?" He was referring, of course, to Chinese culture, that time-honoured, all-pervasive, unbending and inflexible reality which, down through the centuries, had proved to be intransigent in the face of any and all change. We can only surmise what Valignano would say about China's latest policy of openness to the outside world and the current rapid pace of its economic reforms. Even the most casual of observers can see clearly some very definite cracks in the old "hard, hard, rock".

In recent years Deng Xiaoping's frequent calls for economic reforms have spurred on China's new class of entrepreneurs to accomplish much in a very short time. Of course China still has a long way to go to catch up to the developed nations, as it lacks adequate technology, energy supplies, transportation and communication facilities. And much still needs to be done to develop the kind of modern infrastructures needed to sustain the present rate of economic growth. However, there is nothing at present to match China for sheer energy and drive as it hurls itself into the competitive arena of the international marketplace. China's new openness to the outside has also created a vitality within that is unheard of in four decades of conformity to Marxist ideology. There is now emerging a new way of doing things that is transforming China's social system and providing new impetus for its industry, agriculture, science and education. China embraces the new technology with the commitment and passion of an Olympic athlete bent not only on competing on the international level but winning as well.

Li Peng calls China's current modernization process "Socialism with Chinese characteristics". That well may be true, but to the outsider, watching its stock markets expand, the upgrading of its armed forces with sophisticated weaponry financed by economic growth, the lifting of restrictions on monetary outflow, all this looks very much like the business of capitalism and the kind of market economy found in countries throughout the

capitalistic world.

While Deng's emphasis may be on economic reforms, he does keep one eye open to the impact they have on China's political system. Are there significant changes taking place in China's political structures? And are they beginning to erode the "hard, hard rock" of Chinese culture? What kind of modifications have Marxism and that heady mixture of personality cult with totalitarian ideology already made in traditional Confucianism? These are some of the questions Fr. Jean Charbonnier addresses in the opening article of this issue of *Tripod*: "China 1993: Openness, Its Cultural Implications". Professor Stephen Sze of Hong Kong's Ling Nam College comments on some of the issues raised by Father Charbonnier and elaborates further on a few of his own in his response. The well-known American theologian, Fr. Robert Schreiter from Chicago Theological Union, who is familiar to most of our readers, explores the challenges and problems facing the Catholic Church in China today and worries that matters might have come to an impasse there. In response, Fr. Joseph Zen S.D.B., who is currently teaching a course at Shanghai's Sheshan Seminary and is a member of the faculty of Hong Kong's Holy Spirit Seminary, takes a more optimistic view. He also offers a methodology based on incarnational theology and the theology of and service to those who would reach out to help the Church on the mainland in its present situation.

We also have on hand for you the final chapter of Peter Fleming S.J.'s controversial doctoral dissertation *Chosen for China*, which is a provocative case study of the California Province of Jesuits in China spanning the years 1928 to 1957. Fr. Mike Sloboda reviews the entire volume in our Book Reviews section.

Also in this issue, look for Fr. Peter Barry's translation of two very important recent documents: the Constitutions of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. And finally, we include some recent news segments from mainland China which we feel might be of more than passing interest to our readers.

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