

## *From the Editor*

The month of September brought an event which caught our special interest as well as that of the media. This was Cardinal Roger Etchegaray's six-day visit to Beijing, September 3-8 (cf. *Church Update* p. ).

According to the newspapers, the head of the Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission, Cardinal Etchegaray, was invited by Sports Minister Wu Shaozu to attend China's Seventh National Games in Beijing. It was "a friend to friend" invitation. Incidentally, during his visit the Cardinal was also able to meet with Bu He, vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Zhang Shengzuo, director of the Religious Affairs Bureau. At a reception it also happened that Cardinal Etchegaray informally met with Zong Huaide, president of the official Church's Bishops' Conference and Michael Fu Tieshan, bishop of Beijing.

Those who know how the Chinese government functions are well aware that an individual official does not issue an invitation of this kind on his own whim. Any official with contacts outside the country would of necessity reflect the views and desires of the government. This move on the part of Beijing would clearly seem to indicate an increasing interest on the part of China to begin a process of normalizing its relations with the Vatican. Incidentally, China often prefers to use the term *Curia* instead of Holy See or Vatican. Could this perhaps be China's way of pinpointing their difficulty with Rome in terms of its bureaucracy instead of its spiritual leadership?

Possibly, there was another timely reason for China's gesture of good will. To the outsider it would seem that the Cardinal's invitation and visit were closely linked to China's desire to secure the Olympic vote. It has been reported that the Cardinal himself expressed the wish that China would triumph in its bid to host the Olympics 2000.

China's foreign ministry spokesman, however, made a point of stressing that Cardinal Etchegaray came to Beijing as a French cardinal, not as a Vatican official. Evidence of

this is that no arrangements were made for him to visit the Church or contact Church people. His meetings with Bishop Zong Huaide and Bishop Michael Fu took place at an informal gathering, not on church property.

There is evidence that China views its difficulties with Rome as purely political rather than religious or spiritual. As such they are to be solved through political channels. This is certainly not the view or desire of most of the Catholic leadership or Catholics in China and it may take some time before the channels of communication between the Catholic Church in China and the Universal Church are really normalized. Complete communion lies in the future. Only time will reveal whether Chinese and Vatican relations will go forward as a result of the Cardinal's visit. Be that as it may, his visit, the first such by a Roman curia cardinal, eager "to bear witness to the sincere desire of the Holy See to enter into contact with the reality of the great Chinese nation," augurs favourably, that eventually, "all will be well."

Actually, this issue of *Tripod* deals mainly with women. We have assembled several articles which, we hope, will shed light on the influence of religion in the daily lives of Chinese women as well as their influence on China's rapidly changing family structures.

In *A New Form of Communion: Feminism and the Chinese Church*, Dr. Margaret Farley, through a thoughtful discussion of faith and culture questions, as well as theological and ethical ones, explores the critical convergence of feminist, socialist and Christian issues in the Chinese Church today. Dr. Eva Man Kit-wah in *Chinese Women in the Family: A Confucian Perspective* examines the role of women in a Confucian society by focussing on the philosophical and socio-political aspects of the *li* (rites/rituals). Dr. Man maintains that an understanding of the *li* is basic to understanding the traditional values which influence the lives of Chinese women and define their role in the changing family structure. Dr. Josephine Leo Fung-Ming's article, *Chinese Women and the Family: the Buddhist Tradition*, focuses our attention on some of the past traditions that continue to hamper the development of women. Chinese women today, playing many roles, find themselves torn between traditional values and modern necessities. To meet the challenges of the times, Dr.

Leo counsels Buddha's Eight-Fold Path to righteousness. *China: The Status of Women Today* is a compilation, by the members of the Holy Spirit Study Centre staff, of updated information and statistics regarding the situation of women in China today.

Periodically, we feature a person whose life and deeds have influenced the Church in China in some special way. In this issue we include a personality profile of Father Vincent Zhu Hongsheng, S.J. The brief account of his life and the funeral oration delivered by a long standing friend can only command admiration for Fr. Zhu's courage, strength and loyalty.

The documentation section includes a translation of the new regulations governing the election and consecration of bishops and an incisive commentary on its contents by the noted canonist, Fr. Geoffrey King, S.J.

In this issue also, we begin a series of articles on the history of the Church in China's municipalities and provinces. We begin with a brief history of the Church in Beijing.

In our May-June issue we published two papers presented at the National Catholic China Conference in the United States last January. Both these papers referred to Aloysius B. Chang's article, *The Church in China: Ecclesiological Impasse*, (*Tripod*, No. 69). On reading these article, Father Chang felt the need to respond. His response is entitled, *More on the Fundamental Attitude of the Bridge Church*. (BAM)

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