

Our first letter is from old Father Jiang, who is the pastor of the parish church of Chongming. Now nearly 80, he was appointed to be assistant to the rector of Sheshan Seminary when it opened a few years ago. Despite his age, Father Jiang has a busy ministry not only in taking care of the pastoral needs of his flock, but also in traveling about China giving retreats to priests and Sisters. He radiates a spirit of joy and celebration in being alive. I ask myself should this not be the norm for all of us who are Christians?

September 13, 1994

Dear Sister in Christ,

When I returned yesterday from attending the funeral of one
of our Catholics, I was delighted to find the two parcels you
so kindly sent to me. The book *Life, Faith and Doctrine* is
just what I need for teaching my people how those three
things go together. Faith gives life a foundation and doctrine
a direction that leads to an experience of life's wholeness

and sanctity. The book will find a welcome among Catholics

who are seeking a deeper spiritual life, especially among

those who have had the advantage of a higher education. It

is especially valuable in that it speaks of actual experiences

in such broad areas as spirituality, psychology, history,

tradition and personal prayer. I also want to thank you for

the four *Bai Tou Xie Lao* video tapes They are models of the

creative and experimental spirit of your church and another

fine example of its many accomplishments. They provide an

important foundation on which to build strong families, and

they offer young couples sound advice gained from personal

experience, which is especially appropriate during this *Year*

of the Family. The videos have opened my mind to new

ways of thinking, and the songs and melodies so beautifully

rendered join praise of God to practical living in the most

joyous fashion, enabling us to meet each day with a happy

and contented heart. We are in your debt and feel a deep

and abiding gratitude for your support.

Were you able to locate the other two books *The Birth

and Growth of Jesus* and *The Passion of Christ and the

Pain of His Mother*? I would like to give them as a gift to one

of our most fervent couples at Christmas.

In your last letter, you asked me to send some pictures

of our Christian doctrine summer school for children. But I

am writing this letter away from my home, and I have

forgotten to bring any pictures with me. However, the least

I can do is share some memories of the summer with you.

Chongming has four Catholic churches: Sacred Heart, Holy

Cross, St. Paul's and St. John's, all of which band together in

the summertime to prepare our children to receive the

sacraments of Baptism and First Holy Communion. From

July 10 to 24, we had over 350 children in attendance. Many

of their parents came to the morning Masses as well. And, of course, just about all of them came to the First Communion Mass, which was celebrated in each of the four parish churches. The children learned to sing the Mass in Chinese for the first time, and they sang with great enthusiasm. They also did the scripture readings and presented the offertory gifts: bread, wine and beautiful flowers. The Mass in Chinese has added new life to each parish, and the older Catholics are quite impressed with the new liturgy. They are now able to have a deeper experience of the liturgy than they had before, and their sense of what it means to participate individually and as a community has also been heightened.

Among the many children who attended the doctrine classes, two stand out in my memory. One was a little girl who was bitten by a dog one day while on the way to Mass with her grandfather. She was taken to the hospital and

given an injection, and again each day after for a number of

days. Her grandmother spent the whole time on her knees

in church before the Blessed Mother's statue praying that the

child would get well.

The other story concerns a boy of eight who came

down suddenly with a very high fever. They could not bring

his fever down in the hospital and so he was sent home.

Many thought he would die. About a week after the summer

school ended both the little girl and the boy came to church

healed and healthy to make up the classes they had missed.

Shortly afterwards, they received their First Holy Communion

together, much to the joy of family and friends who had

worried so much about them and had prayed to see this day.

Despite the many difficulties we meet in our pastoral

work, we are full of hope and joy... and genuinely happy,

too. This is due to God's grace and your prayerful support.

“Let us rejoice in the Lord always.” Please continue to pray
for us, as we also pray for you who work so hard on our
behalf. May God bless you with good health and grant you
much success in all you do.

Sincerely in Christ,

Father Jiang

* translated by Peter Barry, M.M.