

*Fr. Chen is a big man, a typical northern Chinese. He is also open, honest and straightforward, which are also traditional northern traits. Fr. Chen spent some time with us in Hong Kong on his way to study abroad and we got to know him quite well.*

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October 10, 1994

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Dear Sister In Christ,

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How are you? May the peace of Christ be with you. I was  
delighted to hear from you. I myself am very busy. I study  
English all day long. I put out a lot of energy but my progress  
is slow. Every morning, Monday through Friday, I go to class  
at the language centre at seven in the morning and finish  
there at ten. In the three months I've been here, I've lost  
twenty pounds... without having to go on a diet... without  
even trying to. As a result, I'm feeling very spry, and I now  
move about much quicker than I used to. I've become

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acclimated to life here, but the language is still difficult for  
me. I can only manage a few sentences after all these  
months, and sometimes I feel anxious and frustrated with  
myself. But my health is good, so why should I complain?

This place isn't bad at all. I live in the suburbs, and go to  
a school run by the Jesuits, which is near the national  
university. It's quite suitable for study, quiet and free of  
pollution. I like it very much. Soon I shall leave here to go  
and live with a religious community. I will then be nearer to  
the university and also living with religious who speak English.  
This will be a great help to me in my language study. I don't  
know what the change of residence will bring, but whatever  
happens, I shall try to make the best of it. Actually, it doesn't  
matter where I live as long as I use well the opportunity God  
has given me to study. Don't you think so?

I wake each day at five, wash and say Mass, and then

have breakfast, which consists of two slices of bread and a  
cup of coffee. At six I leave for school. My afternoons and  
evenings are free to study on my own. I do my homework in  
my room, listen to tapes and memorize sentence patterns. I  
usually go to bed between eleven and midnight. Though I  
have Saturdays and Sundays off, I usually spend them studying  
in my room. Sometimes I go out and practice what I have  
learned on other people. This is the first time I have ever  
studied English and I find it very difficult to learn. I never  
dreamed that the differences between English and Chinese  
would be so great.

You know how things are in my home diocese...please  
pray for it. Although I am far away, my heart is still at home.  
Each day I pray for the priests there that they will be able to  
work together to find new opportunities for spreading the  
Gospel. Recently, I received a letter saying that relations

between the priests and the diocesan authorities were not  

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good. I pray for them, hoping they will make the will of God  

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and the welfare of the diocese their top priority. We all must  

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learn to make sacrifices for the good of the whole.  

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I am sure you are very busy, so forgive me for wasting  

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your precious time. Have you been to mainland China  

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recently? How did you find it there? The next time you write,  

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please let me know. Thank you for your concern for me and  

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remember me to everyone at the Holy Spirit Centre. I have  

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fond memories of each and everyone of you.  

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With prayers and God's blessings,  

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Father Chen  

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\* translated by Michael Sloboda, M.M.  

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