

## **From the Editor**

### *The Pope's Message*

On August 19, at Castel Gandolfo, Pope John Paul II met with the bishops of Taiwan who had come on their *ad limina* visit. He spoke of reconciliation and unity and made seven points:

1) He mentions the 700th anniversary of the arrival in Beijing of John of Montecorvino, the first Catholic evangelist to China. He hopes that the bishops of Taiwan will follow in Montecorvino's footsteps and reinvigorate their mission of proclaiming the Gospel and shepherding the flock of God.

2) The Pope is happy that the Chinese Regional Catholic Bishops Conference is preparing to celebrate the third millennium of Christ's birth and is planning a nine-year program of events stressing the need for a renewed evangelization.

3) He encourages the bishops of Taiwan to make every effort to spark an inner renewal and the growth of an authentic missionary spirit among Catholics, securing that the Gospel will be transplanted into their own culture. This will prove that there can be neither opposition nor incompatibility between being truly Catholic and authentically Chinese.

4) He encourages all Catholics to become involved in the work of evangelization, especially diocesan and religious clergy.

5) The Pope appeals to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life, and help young men and women recognize and respond to God's call.

6) He summons Catholics on Taiwan, as members of the great Chinese family, to promote reconciliation and unity among Catholics in Mainland China.

7) In addition to words of encouragement and blessing, the Pope expresses his love and pastoral concern by asking: "If these brothers and sisters of ours already pray for the Pope and

in some way recognize in him the special ministry of Peter, how much longer will it be before he can embrace them and confirm them in faith and unity?"

As to Mainland China and the Church there, his address contains some new ideas, and makes four news-worthy points:

1) To surmount any talk of the Catholic Church being a threat to the power of the Chinese government, the Pope reemphasizes that the Gospel must take root in particular cultures in order to verify that there can be no opposition or incompatibility between being "truly Catholic" and "authentically Chinese".

2) The Pope no longer calls the church in Taiwan or the overseas church "bridge churches;" he now calls them "sister churches." This points to a relationship among equals, and stresses their intimate connections. The churches in Mainland China and on Taiwan previously did not have any contacts, such as have been established today.

3) The Pope "know[s] that the Catholic community throughout China, in union of faith with the rest of the Catholic Church, prays for the Pope, recognizing in this way the specific nature of the Petrine ministry as an essential aspect of Christ's will for his Church." He appreciates this step forward, yet he also hopes that they can progress "with renewed faith and strength for full communion and unity with the universal Church and the Successor of Peter." He hopes to be able finally to embrace all the Catholics in China and strengthen them in faith and unity.

4) The Pope is profoundly aware of the current situation of disharmony between Catholic communities within Mainland China. In response to the questions of many people as to how reconciliation can be achieved, the Pope points out a way to reconciliation. This is not the way of group A approaching group B, nor the way of group B approaching group A, but "[all] need to move; all have to turn towards Jesus Christ".

This address by the Pope certainly contains within it a number of new revelations for Catholics in Hong Kong, Macau and overseas who are concerned about the church in Mainland China. [JT]