

*John Paul  
II  
Speaks  
to China*

*1981-1996*

*Dialogue  
and  
Reconciliation*

## *John Paul II Speaks to China*

*One of the thorniest problems both for the Universal Church and the Church in China has been the state of Sino-Vatican relations. Articles dealing with this subject have appeared regularly since Tripod's second issue. By reprinting the Holy Father's own words and commentaries, Tripod hopes to shed some light on the problem and help build a bridge of reconciliation between the Universal Church and the Church in China. The words of the Holy Father addressed to China have always had a privileged place in Tripod.*

### *Pope John Paul II, in Manila in 1981, addresses the China Church*

On Feb. 16, 1981, Pope John Paul set out on a pastoral visit to Asia. On Feb. 18, in the Philippines, the Pope met with a group of Chinese Catholics and used the occasion to address the whole Chinese Catholic Church.... "Traveling so close to the borders of your country, I also wanted to speak to you, for across the distances that separate us we are all united 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (Col. 3:12). I have ardently desired to express my affection and esteem to all my brothers and sisters of the Church in China, and to praise the Lord for the great things that he has wrought in the hearts of those who profess his name in the cities and villages of your immense land.

"The Church has no other aim than to be faithful to the mission entrusted to her by her Divine Founder. She has no political or economic goals; she has no worldly mission. She wants to be in China as in any other country, the

herald of the Kingdom of God. She desires no privileges, but only that all those who follow Christ may be able to express their faith freely and publicly and live according to their consciences. (#2, 1981, pp. 40-42)

### *The Pope in Seoul: A Message for China*

Pope John Paul II arrived in Seoul on October 7, 1989 to participate in the 44th International Eucharistic Congress. He took the occasion to address the people of China.

"In this filial conversation with Mary our Mother, I also make mention of our brothers and sisters in Christ in Mainland China. Their geographical proximity, as well as bonds of faith and culture, bring them very near to many of those assembled. Deep within our own heart there is always present an ardent desire to meet these brothers and sisters in order to express my cordial affection and concern for them and to assure them of how highly they are esteemed by the other local Churches. I am deeply

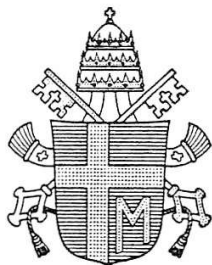
moved when I think of the heroic signs of fidelity to Christ and his Church which many of them have shown in these past years....May the Lord also inspire within them a firm commitment to the delicate task of fostering reconciliation within the ecclesial community, in communion of faith with the successor of Peter, who is the visible principle and foundation of that unity...." (#54, 1989, pp. 71-72)

*The Holy Father invites the bishops of the world to pray for the Church in China.*

"The love of Christ, which unites us in a brotherly way, and the grave responsibility intrusted to me as Supreme Pastor of the Universal Church induce me to open my heart to share with you, dear brothers in the episcopate, my deep concern for the Church in China....."

After sharing various concerns about the situation of the Church in China and acknowledging the difficult trials that Church has suffered, Pope John Paul II once again speaks of his affection for the Chinese people.

"The celebration of the beginning of the Chinese New Year, now near at hand (25 January), offers me a welcome opportunity to manifest once more the affection and the esteem I have, and have always had, for the Chinese people...." (#7, 1982, pp. 27-31)



*John Paul II speaks to Taiwan Bishops' Conference*

"Close to the tomb of the Apostle Peter, whom the Lord chose as guarantor of the Church's faith and unity, I feel bound to make a *strong and earnest appeal for unity*....

"I urge you to be spokesmen of this desire of the Successor of Peter; be untiring and patient builders of reconciliation among the brethren on the Mainland. Tell them that the Pope bears them in his heart and that *his prayer is constantly, daily, raised for them to the Giver of all good things and to the Blessed Virgin Mary.*" (#61, 1991, pp.3-5).

*To the Catholics of China: Message of Pope John Paul II, Manila*

"From Manila, where I have come for the celebration of the Tenth World Youth Day, I wish to send a special and affectionate greeting to all Chinese Catholics who make present and visible on Chinese soil the Church of Christ, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, a community of faith, hope and charity....

"To you, dear Catholics of China, Divine Providence has entrusted the task of living the faith in the midst of a people of ancient cultural traditions. You are called to be "the salt of the earth" and the "light of the world", "that all may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 5:16)....

"Your witness will be all the more eloquent if it is expressed in words and

deeds of love, Jesus said so: 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (Jn 13-35). Love among ourselves, first of all, but love also for all your Chinese brothers and sisters: a love which consists of understanding, respect, forbearance, forgiveness and reconciliation within the Christian community, a love which involves service, self-sacrifice, fidelity, hard work, honesty and justice in society as a whole....." (#85, 1995, pp. 39-40)

### *John Paul II Discourse to Taiwan's Bishops*

Dear Brother Bishops.

"As members of the great Chinese family, the Catholics in Taiwan feel an affectionate closeness to their brothers and sisters in the faith on the Main-

land. Indeed you gladly acknowledge your responsibility to assist them in their difficult spiritual situation....

"I am well aware that the current situation of the Catholic community is a source of painful concern for all Chinese Catholics, Each of them has a special place in my heart as pastor of the universal Church and for all I pray the Lord who has willed that his Church be one, under one Shepherd. Today through you, I repeat the exhortation which I addressed to them in Manila last January, "I earnestly invite you to seek paths to communion and reconciliation, paths which draw their light and inspiration from the Truth himself, Jesus Christ." (Radio Message to Chinese Catholics, 14 January, 1995; ( #85, 1995, pp. 5-9)



*Excerpt from Papal Message, Feast of St. Francis Xavier  
December 3, 1996*

The civil authorities of the People's Republic of China should rest assured: a disciple of Christ can live his faith in any political system, provided that there is respect for his right to act according to the dictates of his own conscience and his own faith. For this reason I repeat to the governing authorities, as I have said so often to others, that they should have no fear of God or of his Church. Indeed, I respectfully ask them, in deference to the authentic freedom which is the innate right of every man and woman, to ensure that those also who believe in Christ may increasingly contribute their energies and talents to the development of their country. The Chinese Nation has an important role to play in the international community. Catholics can make a notable contribution to this, and they will do so with enthusiasm and commitment.

Dear Brothers and Sisters it has been my wish to express to you my affection and solicitude, full of hope in the working of the Holy Spirit in human hearts and confidence in the fidelity which Chinese Catholics profess, and must ever more profess, to Christ the Lord and to his Gospel.

The Church of Rome, which presides in charity over all the particular Catholic Churches throughout the

world under the guidance of their Pastors, is united in prayer with you, the Bishops and faithful of China. She follows your history with affectionate understanding and looks forward to the full and complete visible union of Pastors and faithful alike, around the Pope. Just as the world admires the Chinese people for their culture and enterprising spirit, so the whole Church longs to see fully expressed the witness of Chinese Catholics to their faith and their contribution to the preaching and witness of the Gospel on the eve of the Third Millennium.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb 13:8). As we prepare to celebrate, in the year 2000 of the Christian era, the Great Jubilee of the birth of Jesus, the Pope looks with trust and affection to China and to the Church in China, and he greatly desires to meet personally the Catholics of China in order to express, in the same faith and the same love, thanksgiving to the Father, whenever it may please him to grant this.

I entrust these intentions to the Blessed Virgin Mary, so greatly venerated and invoked by the Catholics of China under the titles of Mother and Queen.