

Reflection on division-unity: A new relationship between the Church in China and the Universal Church

by John B. Zhang

(The following is the intervention made by John B. Zhang, a young priest of Hebei China, at the Manila Forum on Asian Synod, during the discussion of Major Challenges and Concerns of the Asian Synod--the Church in China.)

After many years of isolation, the Catholic Church in China is still alive and even developing as a true local Catholic Church. This important fact, with its attendant serious problem of division, is worthy of consideration by the universal Church.

The reality of division among Chinese Catholics raises some theological, canonical and ecclesial problems, as well as challenges for the church and for the Synod of Asia. The churches of Asia can learn a lesson from the China experience: how the Chinese Church became a true local church and how Christian faith in Jesus took deep root among the masses during the time of isolation. The present guidance and policies of the Vatican and messages from overseas' visitors are having a powerful influence on the church in China, especially in terms of reconciliation and unity.

The universal Church and the Chinese Church should not be separated from each other. *The universal Church seems to lack an arm without the Church in China; the Church in China seems to lack a body without the universal Church.* A suitable fraternal relationship between the Church in China and the universal Church, and especially among the Asian churches, is greatly needed at the present time and in the new situation.

China is not only a huge potential market; it is also a vast mission field. Today, the new way of doing mission and China's policies of reforming and opening to the world, provide a wide road and immense field for a new evangelization.