

An Interview with Magdalena Liu

Translated by Peter Barry, M.M.

- I. *How do you blend Chinese culture and Christian art into one entity?*

I am a Catholic. From primary school up to my graduation from the Art Department at Fujen University, I received a strict and systematic Catholic education. Everyday was spent under the influence and instruction of priests and Sisters. My love for God is simple and sincere. I am also a professional artist. To use my paint brush to express these sincere feelings comes quite naturally to me. Art basically is a manifestation of the feelings of the artist. Our foundation is Chinese culture. Christian art is likewise beautiful and resplendent. The key linking them together is the love one has for God and the sacrifices made for the sake of that love.

- II. *How do you view your art talent? Where does your talent lie?*

Speaking of talent, each artist naturally has this. However, in order to seek multiple forms of expression and to strive for more perfection in one's art, to be a professional artist one must spend several decades of arduous work. One must also sacrifice oneself with interior devotion and experience the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. National painting is my strong point. I received strict training under eminent teachers, especially when I attended Beijing's Fujen University. I myself feel that the highest point in my artistic achievements came when I was naturally able to blend together national art with Catholic art. This allowed many more Chinese to use the traditional art forms with which they are already familiar to naturally and simply accept the force of Christian culture, art and love.

- III. *What is the reaction of people to your works of art?*

Because the standards of people who view art vary, of course, their reactions also vary. With a fervent heart

and a spirit of sacrifice, together with a reliance on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, I put forth my utmost effort to produce a work of art.

My first work, "The Life of Jesus in His Youth," now hangs in the Vatican Art Museum. The Museum of the Society of the Divine Word in Germany and the Oriental Art Museum in Italy also contain my works. Last year, Fujen University in Taiwan published a book of my art entitled, *A Collection of Sacred Art*, which can be purchased in Hong Kong. This gives me great encouragement and affirmation.

IV. What problems remain in the sinicization of Christian art?

Besides studying the Bible, a religious artist must also have a knowledge of Chinese history and a high level of technique in painting. However, I think that the most important elements are to have a deep spiritual life, and a serious and conscientious creative attitude and creative purpose. A spiritual director once gave me an instruction, which has become the axiom for the creative art works of my whole life. He said: "You are to be a paint brush in the hands of God. What God tells you to paint, you paint for God." The sinicization of Christian art is just in the process of unfolding. It will brilliantly shine forth in the wake of a deepening of knowledge on the part of China's millions.■