

From the Editor

The English section of this issue of *Tripod* is basically a Christmas issue. It may not reach you exactly for Christmas Day but, hopefully, it will reach you within the beautiful Christmas season when the Spirit of Christmas is still alive in us.

Christmas is a special time, a time of new life, a time when we stop to gaze on children in a special way, when we stop to think of that special Child born two thousands years ago in Bethlehem, a Child whose birth would eventually change the world. It is a time when we long for that Child to be born again in us and in our world. It is a time of beautiful lights that remind us that in spite of so much darkness in the world, the Light that is Christ will eventually overcome whatever darkness. It is a time for caring and for singing, a time when those we love seem ever dearer to us. It is a time of redemption and reconciliation.

The articles in this issue speak to us of light in darkness, of redemption and of reconciliation.

The lead article, "The Cultural Revolution, Women Tell their Stories", by Gianni Criveller, is a thoughtful analysis of a new literary phenomenon that has attracted a large readership throughout the world. The new genre consists of the memoirs of Chinese women writers who are survivors of the Cultural Revolution. These memoirs are a study in the resilience of the human spirit that is able to bear unimaginable physical and psychological pain, to make sense out of sheer folly, to resist evil and to stand firm in the presence of madness. They are a study of the Cultural Revolution with its inevitable result of collective human suffering. It is a painful record of one of those rare moments in human history when a significant number of persons step out of the boundaries of humanity. The author ventures to ask the unanswerable question: "Who is responsible for such enormous stupidity, unspeakable violence and generalized lies?" Finally, the article also provides synopses of the most important works of this particular new genre of literature and illustrates the possible redemptive nature of pain and suffering.

At the end of the "Year of the Holy Spirit." It seemed fitting to publish a touchingly poetic piece by our China pilgrim entitled,

“Led by the Spirit along the Pathways of China.” In this article the author discusses a new way of bearing witness in China through presence. The article is the story of the experience of a few foreign Christians coming to China “at a moment in history when all things seem to be coming to an end,” when Western believers are asked to leave their foreign baggage at the gate, our Western ways of working, of thinking and of speaking, and yes, many of our talents, too.” This, according to our author, means to “cross the threshold of our new world with empty hands and feet unshod,” but “we are not forbidden to bring our hearts.” This attitude will prove redemptive for the missionary-pilgrim and go far towards sowing the badly needed seed of reconciliation between the Church and China.

Two other short articles speak to us of Christmas or the Christmas spirit. They are “Foreign Teachers Celebrate Christmas in China” and “Models of Faith and Love.” The first is taken from Michael Donnelly’s letters written during his five-year teaching stint in China. These two letters, written during his first and last Christmases in China, are personal accounts of how Christians celebrate Christmas in a country like China where Christmas is not officially “celebrated.” The second is a story written by Betty Ann Maheu, following a recent trip to China. It deals with some of China’s less fortunate children who nonetheless are fortunate enough to have found people who care. These abandoned children have found love through the services of young Catholic women who wish to give their lives to realize Christ’s mandate, “Whatsoever you do to the least of these, my brethren, you do unto me (Matt. 25: 45).

We also publish a short telephone interview with Bishop Matthias Duan Yinming, the bishop the Holy Father had invited to attend the Asian Synod, but whose request was refused.

Also included is a commentary by Father John Wong adding important historical information to the article on the “Hakka Mission” published in the last issue of *Tripod*.

Finally, as in previous years, we have done a summary review of some of the most important events in China, and in particular, in the Church in China during the last year.■