

## *Editorial*

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The inscription over the entrance to City Hall reads: "In the City of the name of God, there is none so loyal." For more than 450 years, this loyalty has been to the Portuguese government and to its flag. On December 20, 1999, the Portuguese flag, that has flown so proudly during Portugal's era of greatness, and so faithfully during its moments of weakness, will be lowered for the last time over the Bay of A-Ma gau.

Macau, the City of the Name of God, will again revert to Chinese sovereignty. The day has been more than four centuries in coming. China knew that Macau, which was rightfully theirs, would eventually return to them peacefully. The moment to address the issue came in 1979 when Portugal established diplomatic relations with China and agreed that Macau was Chinese territory. Both parties also agreed that the matter should be resolved amicably through bilateral negotiations at a time suitable to both parties.

On April 13, 1987, in Beijing, after a series of talks, the prime ministers of China and Portugal signed the "Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on Macau." This Joint Declaration included the statement: "The Government of the People's Republic of China will resume sovereignty over Macau, effective December 20, 1999." Both parties ensured "the total and peaceful handover of sovereignty." A permanent consultative body, the Sino-Portuguese Joint Liaison Group, was created to provide an avenue for information and dialogue to resolve any problems that might arise related to the handover.

Like Hong Kong on July 1, 1997, Macau, on December 20, 1999, will become a Special Administrative Region of China, and operate on Deng Xiaoping's principle of "one country, two systems" as stated in the Basic Law. Like Hong Kong, Macau will have its own relative independence, and its own government and laws. For the next fifty years, China has given its word that Macau will retain its present political, judicial, social, cultural, and economic systems, its present way of life, with all its rights and freedoms.

The Portuguese, who reached the southern coast of China as early as 1513, are usually recognized as the first European presence in the region.

In this issue of *Tripod*, Peter Barry in “Macau: Center of Cultural Interchange,” explores the role played by the Portuguese, and especially by the missionaries, in the interchange of Western and Eastern culture, especially in China.

Gianni Criveller in a short historical piece, “Macau, December 20, 1999” contrasts the situations of Hong Kong and Macau as perceived on the world stage. He also provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Church in Macau at this crucial historical moment. The Church in Macau, and the universal Church in fact, have much to lose if the Macau Church fails to recognize the importance of this event as a positive challenge to be more dynamic, to renew and to be a true Christian witness to the great Chinese continent.

Macau has often been accused of being apolitical, of not being sufficiently conscientized on political matters. Professor Herbert Lee, in “Macau’s Mass Political Culture, Continuity and Change” explores the populations “concerns about public affairs, their concept of democracy, their civic competence, their political participation, and their willingness to challenge the government on any wrong doing. The results of his survey indicate that the people of Macau are very unhappy with their present government. They see the new government’s first task as restoring confidence in government by restoring public order and getting the enclave out of its long economic recession. People wish to participate in decision making. Democracy with more directly elected representatives is the only way to meet their political aspirations.

In “Macau: A Personal View,” Father Liu Yanxin points out that he is optimistic about the future of the Church and sincerely believes that, under the new regime, the Church will even have room to develop further.

The writer of “An Oak Tree or a Willow” also discusses the situation of the Church in Macau. This analysis is done through a series of interviews with members of the Macau clergy. While they realize that they will lose some of the privileges accorded under the padroado, they have no worries about the future of religious freedom.

Finally, there is a short picture story of the Church in Macau.

The “Review of the Major Events of the Year,” usually published in the November-December issue of *Tripod*, will be included in the January-February issue. It will be posted on the Internet on our web site in December.