

## EDITORIAL

In this issue of *Tripod* we commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment in 1946 of the Chinese Catholic Hierarchy. Because the establishment of the hierarchy signified that the Chinese Catholic Church had arrived at a point in its development to be considered equal to other local Catholic Churches around the world, we felt that the event should be especially commemorated. The event showed that the local Chinese Catholic Church had been set up, and that she could stand on her own two feet.

Anthony Lam's article, "The Chinese Catholic Hierarchy," gives the canonical basis and meaning of the establishment of the hierarchy, and points to its significance for the future. Gianni Criveller gives a short biography of a model archbishop, Li Du'an of Xi'an, who passed away in May 2005, as an exemplary member of present day China's Catholic hierarchy. Peter Barry studies the historical background of the establishment of the hierarchy, giving the names and dates of the important personages involved. His article records the problems faced in the development of a Chinese clergy in the Church. He cites the ordination of six Chinese priests as bishops in 1926 (the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of which we also celebrate this year) as a significant step in the establishment of the hierarchy.

During this year of 2006, three illicit ordinations of bishops, that is, those not having the approval of the Holy Father, the most recent having taken place on November 30 in Xuzhou, have dealt grievous wounds to the Chinese hierarchy, and torn the fabric of its union with the universal Church. Thus we include the Vatican Press Office's statement of December 2, 2006 concerning this incident. Interestingly enough, the statement points out how this ordination "subverts the fundamental principles of the Catholic Church's hierarchical structure." This includes the Chinese Catholic hierarchical structure, which we are commemorating in this issue.

Citing the decree *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican Council II, the statement declares that a bishop becomes a member of the episcopacy “in virtue of sacramental consecration and hierarchical communion with the head and members of that body.”

The December 2 Vatican statement goes on to say that the Holy See is aware of the suffering that consecrating bishops and ordinands go through by being forced to take part in illicit episcopal ordinations, and the pain felt by priests, religious and laity, who are obliged to accept “a pastor whom they know is not in full hierarchical communion, neither with the head of the College of Bishops nor with other Bishops scattered around the world.” Finally, the statement says that the Holy See deplores the way the ordination was carried out, and hopes that such incidents of this kind will not be repeated in the future.

In light of the illegal ordinations of bishops that have taken place this year, the article of Father Jeroom Heyndrickx is particularly timely. Father Heyndrickx points out the need for real dialogue among all parties, so that problems in the Church, like the ordination of bishops, can be resolved in a reasonable manner.

In this issue we also bid a fond farewell to Sister Betty Ann Maheu, who had worked at Holy Spirit Study Centre for 16 years, from 1990 to 2006, and for 14 years of which she served as editor of *Tripod*. Gianni Criveller has an interview with Sister, citing her many accomplishments during those 16 years.

Father Michael Sloboda has gathered the news of major Church events in China throughout 2006, as well as contributing one book review.

Finally, we wish all our readers a holy and a happy Christmas! Pray that the problem of the appointment of bishops will soon be solved, so that the Chinese Catholic Hierarchy celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year will remain intact. (PJB)