

## *So Long to a Much Loved Sister*

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*Gianni Criveller, PIME*

**T**he Quarterdeck Restaurant at Fenwick Pier was the venue for the farewell party for Sister Betty Ann Maheu, MM on October 24, 2006. The staff of the Holy Spirit Study Centre and other good



friends joined Cardinal Joseph Zen and Msgr. Eugene Nugent in thanking Betty Ann for her 16 years of untiring service at the Centre.

Our Co-founder and Director, Bishop John Tong, expressed his appreciation with the following words:

Both in her Catholic faith and in her untiring work, Sister Betty Ann Maheu has been one of our leaders. She is a good team member who works skillfully, intelligently, yet humbly. She keeps busy with the work, yet she always has time for people. She is our big sister and we thank God for her.

On November 15, 2006 Sister Betty Ann left Hong Kong for New York. She had in her pocket the gift of a roundtrip air ticket from New York to Hong Kong, to be used at any time at her convenience, donated by Bishop John Tong, with the following words:

On behalf of the diocese of Hong Kong and of the Church in China, I together with the staff of the Centre, would like to present you with this small gift for the many years of dedicated service to the Holy Spirit Study Centre and we want to wish you God's blessing and much peace and joy as you begin your new life and work at Maryknoll, New York.

Her numerous and devoted friends in Hong Kong still hold the hope to see her here once again. But Sister is not going to have much free time. Although she has reached the age for retirement, Sister will not just rest. She has said to us:

I have been asked to complete the history of the Maryknoll Sisters in the China Region. The history is done up to 1969 but I will update it to the present, to include the work not only in Hong Kong but also in China and in Macau.

Sister Betty Ann came to the Holy Spirit Study Centre in September 1990. During these years Sister has served as an exemplary English Editor of *Tripod* and the writer of China Bridge for the *Sunday Examiner*. We, her co-workers, have been the witnesses of the tremendous amount of work this dedicated and generous woman has accomplished during these years. Many persons in this diocese, including Cardinal Joseph Zen and Bishop John Tong, have asked for and always obtained her help. She has written and edited numerous articles, translated hundreds of pages, edited a significant number of books and proofread thousands of pages. Much of what the Centre has accomplished during these years is due to her untiring efforts. Furthermore, her cheerfulness and optimism have made her a favorite co-worker.

Betty Ann served China's cause also outside the Holy Spirit Study Centre. She took an active part in the Hong Kong-based program of orientation of teachers going to teach in China for AITECE and Maryknoll. She has been a speaker at various international events, such as the first Symposium of the International Association of Catholic Missiologists in Rome (1999) and the US Catholic China Conference (2005). Besides in *Tripod*

and *Sunday Examiner* (Hong Kong), her articles have been translated and published in various magazines around the world, including *America, Mondo e Missione, Vita Consacrata, Vida Nueva, EDA Eglises d'Asie, Sedos, East Asian Pastoral Review, etc.*

In her 16 years in Hong Kong Sister Betty Ann Maheu offered her experience, expertise and wisdom through various other services. She served as a Member of the Board of Governors for Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital and was a Member of Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital Governing Committee for the Hospital Authority. She was also a member of the Hong Kong Hospital Authority's Complaints Committee for four years, and a Council member of the Maryknoll Convent School Foundation.

Sister told us about her missionary life before coming to Hong Kong. Her first assignment was in Hawaii, where she served for 18 years, first on the Island of Maui and then on Oahu in Honolulu as assistant to the Superintendent of Catholic schools.

From 1970-1979 Betty Ann served as a member of the Maryknoll Sisters' Central Governing Board. Following that period, she was sent to Rome to the International Union of Superiors General, where she served as the coordinator of publications for six years, and English editor of the Union's major publication, *Bulletin*:

My time in Rome was a tremendous blessing. It was an enriching experience not only for me personally, but it has served me well for my work here at the Holy Spirit Study Centre. After six years, I was recalled to our Centre in New York to serve as the Centre's Administrator. In 1990 I was assigned to Hong Kong. During the summer of 1990 I taught English at the Teachers' College in Xiamen, in Fujian Province, on Mainland China.

*Sister, what was your first impression regarding your work for the Church in China and the Holy Spirit Study Centre?*

Besides our own Maryknoll history in China, I must admit that I knew very little about the situation of the Church in China when I arrived at the Centre. I quickly realized that there was much to learn, and the first thing I did was to read the first 57 published issues of *Tripod*. I also quickly realized that working to help the

China Church and to make it known throughout the world was a most worthwhile endeavor. I have continually felt privileged indeed to be part of this ministry.

*Have you seen any changes and progress in the Church in China during these years?*

The Church in China has grown tremendously during these 16 years, and I am happy to say that the Centre has played an important role in this development through its support of the bishops, priests and Sisters. It is always a delight to welcome young priests and Sisters from the Mainland to the Centre. Through our contacts we have been able to establish a network of friendship with our brothers and sisters in the Mainland Church. There is still room for change, of course, and we hope and pray for the day when the Catholic Church in China will be totally reconciled and free.

*You have traveled in China extensively. What has especially touched you while visiting Catholic communities?*

I am always struck by the deep faith of the people, the beautiful simplicity of the bishops, the faithfulness of young priests, many of whom serve in very isolated areas, the joy manifested by the young Sisters even as they so often live in conditions of poverty. And, I must also add that I never cease to be amazed at their obvious devotion to the Holy Father.

*What hopes do you hold for the Church in China?*

The Church in China holds great promise, I believe, for the Universal Church. Many young people in China are seeking meaning in life and looking beyond mere economic success. They are searching for God. Many are finding an answer in the priesthood and in religious life. The Church in China still has many hurdles to overcome, but there are signs of hope. The long years of suffering for the members of the Church can only in the end yield good. I look forward to the day when the bishops of China are seated together with the Holy Father and all the other bishops of Asia and the world.

*Do you have a special greeting for Tripod readers?*

I would like to say a word of deep appreciation to our readers. Throughout the years I have always been inspired by the response

of so many to our work. I have found it humbling to read so many letters of appreciation from our readers. If the work that we have done over the years has helped towards a deeper understanding of the Church in China, I can only say it has been because of the support we have received and continue to receive from our readers. To all of you I wish to say a big thank you, and let us continue to keep abreast of the situation of the Church in China and not forget to pray for its well-being, and its continued growth in unity.

Let's conclude this salute and tribute to our beloved Sister with Bishop John Tong's words:

There is an ancient poem, "There is no unending banquet." Even the best meal must come to an end. The happy years of her friendship and good example will always remain in our hearts. Our loss will be a gain for the headquarters of the Maryknoll Sisters. But from the other side of the world, she will support us with her prayers. We will also pray for her.

### **Statistics: Sister Betty Ann Maheu, MM**

Years of service at the Holy Spirit Study Centre	16
Trips to China	18
Issues of <i>Tripod</i> as Executive Editor	72
Editorials	68
Articles	23
Items written under the title of Tripod Staff (Facts about China, Updates, etc.)	122
Articles translated	31
China Bridge ( <i>Sunday Examiner</i> )	180
Articles edited/proofread	countless

### ***Special issues of Tripod: 8***

- *Ten Year Index* (1991, n. 64)
- *Xujiahui: Then and Now, A Special Pictorial Issue* (1992, n. 70)
- *A Chronology of the Catholic Church in China in the Context of*

- Selected Dates in World and Chinese History* (1993, n. 76)
- *Church and State in China, A Fifteen Year Review* (1995, n. 90)
  - *Building a Spiritual Civilization, Fifteenth Anniversary Issue* (1996, n. 91)
  - *100<sup>th</sup> Issue* (1997, n. 100)
  - *Inculturating Religious Art in China* (1998, n. 106)
  - *Ten Year Index* (2001, Summer Supplement)

**Books edited: 12**

- *Solid Practice II: Case Studies of Therapeutic Intervention*, Caritas Hong Kong (1994)
- *The Catholic Church in China through Darkness and Light*: Anthony Lam (1997)
- *Challenges and Hopes*: John Tong (2001)
- *They Sojourned in Our Land, the Vietnamese in Hong Kong 1975-2000*: Caritas Hong Kong (2003)
- *Decades of Vacillation*: Anthony Lam (2003)
- *Solid Practice III, Case Studies of Therapeutic Intervention*: Caritas Hong Kong (2003)
- *The Martyrdom of Alberico Crescitelli, Its Context and Controversy*: Gianni Criveller (2004)
- *Birds in a Cage, Freedom of Religious Belief in China*: Hong Kong Justice and Peace Commission (2004)
- *The Holy Spirit Study Centre 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, A Pictorial History*: Betty Ann Maheu (2005)
- *Power and Struggle*: Anthony Lam (2006)
- *Papal Documents Related to China 1937-2005*: Elmer Wurth (2006)
- *Who Do They Say I Am, Dialogues on Jesus in China*: Gianni Criveller (forthcoming)

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