

EDITORIAL

The theme for this issue of *Tripod* is the Bible in China. We want to show that Chinese Catholics now consider the Bible to be just as important for evangelization, for formation in the faith and for nourishment in the spiritual life, as their brothers and sisters in the Protestant Christian Church.

For this purpose we have translated articles about the Bible in China by three Chinese Catholics: Sister Maria Ko, FMA, a member of the Salesian Sisters in Hong Kong and a Scripture scholar, Father John Baptist Zhang, director of Faith Press in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, and Bishop Matthew Hu Xiande of the Ningbo Diocese, Zhejiang Province.

In her article, Sister Ko points out that the Jesuit missionaries brought the catechism with them, rather than the Bible, when they arrived in China in the closing years of the Ming Dynasty. This was the result of the reaction in the Catholic Church to the reformers' emphasis, in the early 16th century, on *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) as the basis for the Christian faith. The Council of Trent (1545-1563), in turn, emphasized two pillars for the faith, Scripture and tradition. It also consolidated the content of the faith by issuing a catechism, which the missionaries brought to China. Direct contact with the Bible was discouraged for Catholics for fear that private interpretation of the texts would lead them astray. However, Sister Ko rejoices that after Vatican Council II (1962-1965), which encouraged the direct reading of the Bible for all Catholics, more and more Chinese Catholics are deriving spiritual nourishment from direct contact with the Word of God.

Father John Baptist Zhang gives the recent history of the printing of the Bible in both the Catholic and Protestant Christian communities. To show how Catholics have made use of the Bible at the grassroots level, however, Bishop Matthew Hu Xiande of the

Ningbo Diocese describes the establishment and growth of small Bible sharing groups in his diocese. Bishop Hu originally wrote the article in 2003 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the beginning of these groups.

Besides the articles on the Bible, Gianni Criveller has written an article about Alessandro Valignano, after attending two conferences in October and November of last year on this pioneer missionary to China. We also reproduce the Vatican press release of January 20, 2007, after a two-day conference on the situation of the Catholic Church of China. Michael Sloboda contributes a review of the James Kroeger edited book, *Once Upon A Time in Asia*. A page of Catholic Church statistics is included, and author and subject indexes of articles published in the last two years round out this issue.

Just as we were getting this issue ready for the printer, we found out that 20 young priests from different seminaries around China were able to go to the Holy Land from the end of January to the end of February this year for a month's study of the Bible. Sister Maria Ko gave many of the lectures during this study tour. Although it is hard to learn much about the Bible in one short month, it is hoped that the young priests could pick up some basic tools to continue Bible study on their own, and can pass on to the seminarians a love for the Word of God, which would be beneficial to the spiritual lives of priests and seminarians alike.

May the souls of all of us, Chinese and foreigners alike, be as receptive to the Word of God as was the earth described in Isaiah 55:10-11: "For just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it." (PJB)