

## EDITORIAL

In this issue of *Tripod* we commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Cardinal Celso Costantini, who, in 1922, became the first representative of the Holy See to China. At that time, the Catholic Church of China was under French protection, and all of the 50 or so bishops were foreign missionaries. Pope Benedict XV, in 1919, had issued an encyclical letter entitled *Maximum Illud*, which advocated the ordination of Chinese bishops.

Thus Costantini's mission was two-fold: to set up a Holy See representation in China in its own right, without recourse to French protection, and to appoint some Chinese priests as bishops and prefects over the mission territories.

In his 11 years in China (1932-33), Costantini succeeded on both counts. He established his authority as representative of the Holy Father over the missionary bishops by convoking the Council of Shanghai in 1924, and he accompanied 6 Chinese priests to Rome to be ordained bishops by Pope Pius XI in 1926.

Three authors, in their articles in this issue, present the contributions of Cardinal Costantini to the localization of the Church in China. Two of the authors are members of our staff, while the third writer is a priest from Taiwan, Francis Chong, CDD, a member of the Congregatio Discipulorum Domini (Disciples of the Lord), a religious Order founded by Cardinal Costantini.

We also present Taiwan Cardinal Paul Shan's views of the mid-2007 letter of Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholics of China. If Cardinal Costantini made a contribution to the establishment of a Chinese episcopacy, Pope Benedict reminds the Chinese clergy and Catholics that as localized as the Chinese Church is, it must still remain in communion with the Holy Father. (PJB)