

## EDITORIAL

### “A New Pentecost” Needed

What a Coincidence! The largest street demonstration in Hong Kong in 30 years (since the Tiananmen event of 1989) took place on Pentecost Sunday, 9 June, 2019. Just as the Twelve Apostles burst out the doors of the Upper Room, and began preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ on the streets of Jerusalem on that first Pentecost Sunday, so the citizens of Hong Kong took to the streets to protest what they perceived was a gradual erosion of their freedoms. Do the two events, separated by so many years, have anything in common? Both seem to have been spontaneous events. At the first Pentecost, the Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit and the power of his fiery presence, burst through the doors of the Upper Room, and rushed out into the streets to proclaim the Good News to the multitudes from various countries then gathered in Jerusalem. The account in the *Acts of the Apostles* tells us that the multi-national audience all heard in their own tongues the Apostles telling them of “the wonderful works of God.” (*Acts 2:11*)

The demonstrations in Hong Kong also seem to have been spontaneous. No leaders, nor organizations told the Hong Kong citizens “to take to the streets.” Their action was triggered by the Hong Kong government’s ill-conceived effort to introduce an extradition bill into the local legislature. Hong Kong citizens perceived this as the most recent step in the gradual deterioration of their liberties. These were the promises Chairman Deng Xiaoping put in place before the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997: the policies of “one country, two systems,” and “no change for 50 years.” Hong Kong’s citizens see their hopes for freedom to determine their own lives gradually fading away.

A second demonstration on the following Sunday (16 June), contained many more marchers. Except for minor skirmishes between demonstrators and police around the Legislative Council building on Wednesday, 12 June, the two major Sunday

demonstrations went off without a hitch. But the emotional energy expressed was palpable.

Likewise the Church in China, in these months after the signing of the provisional agreement between the Holy See and the Chinese Government (in September 2018), is also experiencing difficulties. Pope Francis had hoped that the two sides of the church could bear witness to Christ before their fellow citizens together. Yet, we in Hong Kong still hear of churches being demolished in some places, youth under the age of 18 not being allowed to enter a church building, and priests being forced to join the Patriotic Association, for which many have a disdain for its stance on “independence.” Why are such things still happening in China in this period of supposed “friendly relations” with the Holy Father?

What is needed today, in both Hong Kong and the Mainland, is a new Pentecost. Society at large and the Church both need the Holy Spirit to come down upon them, so that they can be united among themselves. For the Church this means unity and reconciliation among all Catholics. For society it means that people work out their differences regarding political, economic and social problems in an amicable manner. Such aspirations would also be in line with the traditional Chinese philosophy of *Da Tong* (大同), or the Great Harmony among all humankind. So we must pray that God send His Holy Spirit down upon us to guide us, and help us to find solutions to the problems we face, because we poor human beings cannot do it on our own. “Come, Holy Spirit!”

Our four main writers in this issue, Fr. Lawrence Lee, Chancellor of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, Pastor Chan Kimkwong, Chinese scholar Zhang Zhipeng, and our Chinese editor Anthony Lam, all treat of the special topic of this issue: church properties and economic development. Fr. Mike Sloboda, presents a timely book review, and we offer a commemoration to Sister Janet Carroll, MM for her many years of service to the Catholic Church of China. Sister passed away on 28 May, 2019. We also ask for prayers for Bishop Li Side of Tianjin, who died on 8 June, 2019. May they rest in peace. (PJB)