

## Editor's word

Ever since the gospel has been proclaimed in different places and Christianity has encountered different cultures, how to express Christian faith in a way that local people would accept is a key issue. Inculturation is often referred as the process by which faith and gospel take root among a people and find expression in indigenous ways of thought, symbols, practices and so on. It not only opens up new ways of expressing the gospel, but more importantly represents an attempt to form authentic local and regional churches.

Localized or inculturated Christian faith is a kind of faith that has been integrated into the local mainstream culture and has become an inseparable part of the mainstream culture. It is a kind of faith that has gone through the reflections and experiences of local Christians, and it affects the daily life and contexts of Christians through concrete ways. Christian faith can be presented in different ways. Apart from theological thought, Christian faith can be expressed in art, literature and so on.

Among them, visual art and architecture are forms of art that are different from the expression of words. They exert influence on the general public and allow imagination because they are contacted through visual perception. Moreover, in response to the cultures of various regions, paintings or visual art and architecture presented under different cultures, time and space can be visually very different. The theme of this issue of

*Tripod* is to explore the inculturation of Christianity through art (including paintings and architecture).

The first thematic article is Fr. Jing Baolu's "Rethinking Inculturation of Christianity and Intercultural Evangelization." Fr. Jing points out that inculturation of faith is not only a human activity, but is also God's salvific action carried out through human persons and their communities. He proposes three approaches to reflect: 1) God's self-revelation and various cultures; 2) God's revelation and the Jewish-Greco-Roman culture; 3) From Christian culture to cultures of the world. He suggests that Christian faith, as a cultural resource, can be expressed in literature, philosophy, music, painting art, and architecture of a place.

Following are two sections focusing on inculturation of Christian faith through visual art or paintings and architecture. The section on "Inculturation through Visual Art" contains two articles. The first one is "Inculturated Art and Theology: A Dialogue," written by Dr. Lin Su-Chi, an artist and a scholar from Taiwan engaged in art education. Dr. Lin first cited the insights of several scholars who integrated theology and art to explore the relationship between art/aesthetics and theology from a theoretical perspective. She also employs a Taiwanese landscape painting of the Japanese colonial period for theological exploration and reflection, guiding viewers to seek the integrity of God in the community and embrace each other's differences in oppression and redemption. In addition, Dr. Lin also pointed out that in the context of the diversity of Asian cultural and

religious background, the definition of Asian Christian art has become complicated. But meanwhile, inculturated art benefits from the perspective of mission studies. She believes that the theological aesthetics embodied in inculturated art opens the door to dialogue across cultural barriers, and affirms that faith has its social responsibilities, and is committed to empowering disadvantaged groups.

Another article is written by religious art scholar Dr. Rebecca Berru Davis. In her article “Traversing Continents: Perspectives on Inculturation from South Asian Artist, Angela Trindade,” she investigated the artworks and experiences of Indian artist Trindade (1909-1980), who worked in both India and the United States. Dr. Davis argues that Trindade encouraged the incorporation of her culture’s unique aesthetic structures and sensibilities to convey the teachings of the Christian faith. Inspired by her contemporary Mahatma Gandhi’s doctrine of self-sacrifice, Trindade saw art as a means of addressing humanity. She also drew from Indian aesthetic shaped by Hindu philosophy and conceived fresh iconographic forms and idioms in transmitting the Christian message. As a Christian woman traversing from India to the U.S., Davis suggests that Trindade affirms the imperative role of artist as a translator and evangelizer of Christianity. These experiences of inculturated art are worthy of our reference.

The second section “Inculturation through Architecture” features three articles. In his article “Culture of Architecture — Investigation on the Localization of Catholic Church Architecture

in Mainland China,” Mr. Liu Ping introduces the history of localization of Catholic architecture in mainland China according to five historical stages. Moreover, based on the author's survey results, accompanied by a number of pictures, Liu classifies the existing church buildings in China according to building layout and the expression of the essential elements of Chinese architectural style. Affirming the premises of the localization of the Catholic Church and maintaining due respect for the Church and sacred liturgy, the author suggests that all ethnic groups and regions can express faith freely within the church in their own way according to their cultural characteristics. The church in China, which has borrowed and inherited the experience of its predecessors, can open up a unique path for Chinese Catholic architectural art.

In “Discussion on the Architectural Culture of the Maryknoll Society in Mainland China,” Brother William Ng, OFM examines the characteristic architectural design strategy that the Maryknoll Society employed in its early stage of mission in mainland China. Employing numerous pictures from the archive, Bro. Ng shows that local cultural features and Chinese architectural elements were integrated in the churches. He argues that Maryknoll's contribution to the localization of religious architecture and art reflects their successful attempt in separating the church from politics and expressing their faith in the local art language. The Chinese-style church architecture expresses the Maryknoll missionaries' passion for mission and cultural exchanges. This is a successful example of localization, allowing Chinese Catholics to express a new identity.

Another piece on architectural art was written by lay Catholic Franky Choi. In his article “The Presence of The Lady Mary in the Catholic Church Architecture in Mainland China and Hong Kong,” Franky Choi introduces Marian architecture and how the relevant design, including localized design and elements, manifest in the churches in mainland China and Hong Kong. The author argues that Marian architecture is the actualization of Mariology in the design and planning of the Catholic Church. Our Lady with the spirit of faith, love, hope, peace and communion in which she represents not only leading the Church in China, but the whole Universal Church and the human family in harmony and communion.

In addition to these six thematic articles, there are two articles relating to the Church in contemporary China and a book review. In conjunction with the theme of this issue, Brother William Ng reviewed a book on Christian visual art, *Space of Mediation: Christian Art and Visual Culture in Taiwan*, written by Dr. Lin Su-Chi. In this book, Dr. Lin explores how art, theology and spirituality interact with each other.

Fr. Ouyang Gangyi contributes an article “Identity Crisis and Family Reconstruction — Analysis of the Dream, Tears and Home in the Biographical Narrative of Joseph.” This year marks the Year of St. Joseph. The patriarch Joseph is often considered a pre-image of Jesus and also a pre-figure of St. Joseph. The author analyzes and sorts out the biographies of the Israeli ancestor Joseph scattered throughout the narrative of the book of Genesis and discusses the image of St. Joseph as stated in Pope Francis’

Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* (with a Father's Heart). Fr. Ouyang also reflects the related issues in the context of modern society, especially the Chinese society. The author hopes to rebuild the sacredness of marriage and the family, helping people finding personal identity, a sense of belonging and approval.

In “An Investigation of the Congregations of Catholic Sisters in Shanxi Province,” Fr. Zhang Kuo examines the vocations and situations of the Catholic sisters in the diocese of Shanxi. The author argues that the lack of vocations of women religious in the Church of Shanxi reflects the general situation of the diocesan women religious in the whole country, showing signs of decline and unsustainability. This is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all the authors for contributing their articles to *Tripod*, the scholars for reviewing the articles, and the editorial team for editing them. I would also like to thank the artists, writers, photographers, and institutes, including Kuo Wen-Hsiung, Liu Ping, Franky Choi, Taipei Art Museum, University of Notre Dame Archives, Maryknoll Archives, Peter Potrowl at Wikimedia Commons, Jastrow at Wikimedia Commons, who allow *Tripod* to publish the pictures.

Mary Yuen  
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