

Editor's word

In the past few years, the sudden and ever-changing COVID-19 pandemic has brought many shocks, challenges, and even loss and pain to people all over the world. But at the same time, this is also an opportunity for us to reflect from different perspectives. Among them, some people looked for the source of the virus; some traced the responsibility and questioned whether the government's handling methods were appropriate, leading to the death of countless patients. Some people also use this crisis to reflect on its meaning, such as whether we take many things for granted and pay too much attention to material life, thus ignoring interpersonal relationships, family life, spiritual needs, the needs of the sick and weak in society, and the balance between the natural environment and human activity. In addition, the excessive uneven distribution of resources in society has made some people feel even more helpless under the pandemic. Some people think it is time to reflect on distributive justice, people's way of life, and even their attitudes towards life.

As a member of society, and an organization where people gather, the church has also been affected by the pandemic. Due to various quarantine policies, many activities, including religious activities, were forced to be cancelled. Even the weekly Sunday Mass was also affected.

For a long time, it could not be held as usual, and the faithful could only participate through livestream or online broadcasting.

The pandemic has indeed changed a lot of our usual activities and living habits, but the time to pause is also a good opportunity for people to reflect. As the current pandemic situation is gradually easing, in this issue of *Tripod*, based on the experiences of the churches in China and Hong Kong, theological and pastoral reflections and inspirations will be examined.

There are six thematic articles, the first three are written by theological trained pastors and pastoral workers from mainland China, sharing their experiences and reflection. In her article, based on the interviews of about 20 pastoral workers and the related analysis, Sr. Guo Xiaoping reviewed the responses of the churches in China to the pandemic, from the initial panic and anxiety to the later attempts of various innovative pastoral methods. In addition to online Masses and sermons, there are a variety of online faith-formation activities and online groups. Sr. Guo points out that these faith activities not only shorten the distance between believers due to the pandemic, but also provide mutual support in faith, spirit and psychology. The author also believes that the pastoral work under the pandemic is more diversified, more flexible, more down-to-earth and more life-oriented. Moreover, these new pastoral ministries provide a platform for evangelization and pastoral ministry by capable

and enthusiastic believers. This can better reflect the spirit of synodality—joint consultation and walking together. In addition, the author points out aspects that the Chinese church needs to strengthen after the epidemic, and made suggestions for the vision of the church in the post-epidemic era, which is to bring hope for healing and reconstruction to society, and to become a constructor of society in an open and dialogical way.

Online activities become our new normal under the pandemic. From the perspective of Catholic liturgy, Fr. Felipe Yang discussed the issues involved in participating in liturgical celebrations through the Internet, such as the digital space of participation, the presence of the body, and the response in the liturgy. The author considers the Internet as a media, an extension of time and space, both in liturgy and in pastoral care. Modern technology does have its limitations, as believers may not be devout and dedicated enough when participating in liturgical celebrations through the media. However, the Internet has great potential in our religious life and needs to be properly utilized as a tool for evangelization.

Based on his rich family and youth pastoral experiences, pastoral worker John Sun discusses the family vocation under the pandemic. The author points out that the three-year pandemic has brought tests and cleansing to the family, turning the family from outside to inside, from external material needs to seeking a harmonious relationship in the family, and realizing that spiritual and emotional satisfaction

will bring real happiness. This is also an opportunity to manifest the communion of the Trinity. The author further points out that the pandemic has brought about the revival of house churches. During the closure of churches, parents assumed greater responsibility for faith formation in family. Many families set up prayer corners or family altars at home to make up for sacramental moments in life of faith. These are pastoral responses of Catholic families.

Dr. Andrew Lam, a Catholic from Hong Kong, shared his personal experience on how he promoted pastoral care during the pandemic. He pointed out that as a lay faithful, under the predicament of the pandemic, he developed pastoral care methods for human growth and faith formation. He used CATCARDS and Letico Divina as two pastoral tools, assisting Chinese believers to participate in Church life, actualizing communion and mission of the church. This is also the spirit of synodality promoted by the current Synod of Bishops. The author discusses how to use catechism as a pastoral tool to run through the formation of a faithful, both before and after joining the church. Under the pandemic situation, the initial preaching of the Gospel relies on digital technology and communication media. The new trend of catechesis formation is to give priority to family formation, which emphasizes the catechesis formation of parents and children in the family as the starting point, and the introduction of family faith formation in parishes.

The article which follows was co-written by three

Hong Kong Catholics. Firstly, Kathy Cheng and Herbert Li, two Catholics from Hong Kong, shared their personal experiences and thoughts during the pandemic. Then Dr. Erica Lee reflected on how Christians encountered God during the pandemic from the theological perspective of theologian Karl Rahner. The article also reflected on interpersonal love and care, and the inseparable relationship between individuals and community.

Senior Counsel Denis Chang examines an approach to health and public healthcare based on care, relation and human rights. Based on local constitution, international human rights standard, and Catholic social teachings, the author argues that a “rights-based” component is necessary to help formulate and drive sound public health strategies, so as to ensure, among other things, that human rights and public health are not set in opposition to each other nor divorced from government and social responsibility and that there be no arbitrary deprivation or disproportionate limitation of fundamental rights. He also offers some recovery strategies during the post-pandemic era.

Apart from the thematic articles, in this issue, Fr. Chen Kaihua wrote an article on the teaching and prospects of philosophy at the Catholic seminaries in China. Through sorting out the development of modern and contemporary Catholic philosophical systems, the author hopes that philosophy teachers in the Catholic seminaries in China will expand in depth the process of philosophy teaching in the

future. Based on academic research and setting up of a multi-dialogue mechanism, it is expected that a new and creative space can be established.

Besides, Dr. Mary Yuen wrote a book review on *Pastoral Creativity amid the Covid-19 Pandemic: Global Experiences*, edited by Anthony Le Duc, SVD and John Mi Shen. She points out that the book not only allows us to understand the pastoral responses of local churches around the world, especially in Asia, to the pandemic, it also provides insightful theological and pastoral reflections, allowing us to draw lessons from these special experiences. This book contains essays recounting real-world experiences of pastoral workers, with focuses on parish ministry, education and formation ministry, and outreach ministries such as those with the poor and marginalized groups, as well as essays of theological reflections based on these experiences. The two editors also offer a number of suggestions for the church in the post-pandemic era.

In the past year, due to the pandemic and other factors inside and outside the church, many things have occurred in the church in China, which deserve readers' attention. This issue provides a review and analysis of the major events of the church in China for readers' reference.

Mary Yuen