

Editor's words

While we are still mourning and remembering Pope Francis' contributions to the Church and the world, a new Pope has been born. Cardinal Robert Prevost from the United States has become the 267th Pope Leo XIV. Soon after his election, many people pointed out that Leo XIV would follow the path of Pope Francis, willing to go among the people, listening to their opinions and continue the journey of synodality, and caring about the marginalized and the disadvantaged. Both of them are humble leaders. Although the new Pope is from the United States, he served as a missionary in Peru for more than ten years. He lived in poor communities and understands the situation and needs of the poor. He is a leader who fights for the poor.

In addition, the two popes have one thing in common, that is, they inherited and continued the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. We still need to observe the new pope's style of doing things and his commitment to reforming the church, but as for Pope Francis, he canonized three former popes as saints, including John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II. These three popes were also active participants in Vatican II, having close ties with Vatican II and, to a large extent, are implementers and promoters of the spirit of Vatican II.

It has been 60 years since the end of Vatican II. The reforms and renewal promoted and the extent to which the spirit of Vatican II was implemented deserve in-depth discussion. In fact, many scholars and faithful have conducted various studies and have organized seminars to explore the implementation of the 16 documents of Vatican II in various local churches. In this issue, we follow this direction and explore the characteristics and concerns of the three papal saints canonized by Pope Francis.

First, Maryknoll missionary Fr. James Kroeger introduced in his article the characteristics of the three papal saints canonized by Pope Francis. He stressed that the three holy popes all played a key role in Vatican II. What they said and did during their term reflected their personal style, vision of faith and pastoral focus. Fr. Kroger called John XXIII the Pope of Joy, Paul VI the Pope of Evangelization, and John Paul II the Pope of Global Mission. In fact, the three also attach great importance to the mission of evangelization. When discussing Paul VI and John Paul II, the author quoted the two popes' encyclicals *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and *Redemptor Hominis* respectively, pointing out their understanding of mission and the vision of evangelization, emphasizing the integral and holistic nature, as well as its theological foundation. When discussing each pope-saint, the author also adds his reflections and their significance to the Church in China at the end.

Political philosophy scholar Professor Moka-Mubelo, discusses how the three popes, especially John XXIII and John Paul II, interpret human rights, thereby affirming the importance of human dignity. He stresses that promoting human dignity through the protection of human rights and the promotion of justice and peace are an integral part of the Church's mission. Therefore, there should be no dichotomy between spirituality and social concern; this dichotomy tends to limit the Church's action to the intangible spiritual level. By analyzing John XXIII's *Mater et Mentor* and John Paul II's *Pacem in Terris*, he points out that the former mainly discussed human rights from the perspective of economic justice, while the latter, by emphasizing the anthropological foundation of the Church's social teaching, namely human dignity, put people back at the center of social and political policies, and the importance of the right to good living conditions for achieving peace. The author also claims that Pope John Paul II's emphasis on the search for the true meaning of life requires the promotion of a culture of human rights, both at the individual and community level. This culture should be protected by a legal framework that emphasizes the importance of respecting civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and creates institutions capable of implementing the essence of the law and its applicability to the entire society. It can be said that human rights culture depends on the commitment of individual countries and the international community as a whole.

Religious studies scholar Xiang Yang's article focuses on Paul VI's vision, methods and attitude of dialogue, and its inspiration for the development of Catholicism in China today. The author points out that Paul VI's mission of dialogue is always closely linked to the Church's evangelization efforts, witness to the Kingdom of Heaven, and vision of serving all humanity. He hopes that countries can unite and help each other through dialogue. This also laid the foundation for successive popes and the entire Catholic world to maintain an active and open attitude of dialogue after Vatican II. The China-Vatican dialogue is on the same path that the Catholic Church has been following since the Second Vatican Council. The author also frankly points out that the advancement of dialogue requires overcoming multiple difficulties, requiring sincerity and wisdom from both sides to seek common ground while respecting differences. This can overcome past misunderstandings and heal the wounds left by history, and then work together for the well-being of the Chinese people and for the peaceful development of the world.

Apart from the thematic articles, there are two articles of other topics. One of them is an exploration of the notion of spiritual fatherhood in the Christian faith by Han Anqi. Based on the fact that sexual abuse scandal within the Catholic Church have been exposed in the past two or three decades but have not been properly handled, the author analyzes the phenomenon and proposes reflections based on the concept of spiritual fatherhood. Another article

follows up on the previous two issues' discussion on the role of the laity. Father Sun Junsheng discusses the mission of evangelization among clergy and laity based on his experience in the Church in China.

Besides, Mary Yuen wrote a book review on the book *A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis* by James H. Kroeger, MM. The author of this book selected twelve documents promulgated by Pope Francis and introduced twelve related themes. He also offers a concluding synthesis of several recurring themes, which he called "Francis themes." This book helps readers briefly grasp the key points of Francis' theological thought and reflect on their own level of practice. Readers can access this book on the website of the Holy Spirit Study Centre in this link: <https://hsstudyc.org.hk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/A-Joyful-Journey-interior-2-9-final.pdf>. Finally, this issue provides a review of major events in the Church in China in 2024 for readers' reference.

Mary Yuen