



Gaylan Yeung

Introduction

A Window into Catholicism in Today's China

By Brent Fulton, Editor

In this issue of *ChinaSource Quarterly*, we explore the spiritual journey of believers who are finding Christ and growing in Him through the ministry of the Catholic Church in China.

For many Protestants serving in China or among Chinese elsewhere in the world, the Catholic Church is seen as rather distinct from their own Christian communities. Historically the Protestant and Catholic churches have taken different paths in their development within China. Politically they are treated as two separate entities, each with its own United Front organization (in the case of Catholic believers, the Catholic Patriotic Association) serving as an interface between church and Party. Although both have suffered the stigma of being viewed as “Western” religions, the Chinese Communist Party has treated China’s Catholics, both within the “official” and “unofficial” churches, with particular suspicion due to their allegiance to the Vatican.

Theologically speaking, the Catholic and Protestant traditions diverge on many issues, and these remain defining factors in the ongoing differences between the two. However, as outgoing World Evangelical Alliance Secretary General Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe remarked recently following a meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican, we are seeing a new era in the relationship between Evangelicals and Catholics. According to Tunnicliffe, “While there are some ongoing tensions, this new era is an acknowledgment that there are many localized partnerships between Catholics and Evangelicals....” In China, particularly at the grassroots level, the traditional distinctions are becoming less defining as followers of Christ seek to grow in their relationship with God through involvement in Catholic communities.

Our exploration into Catholic life in China is ecumenical in the true sense of acknowledging the differences between the Protestant and Catholic Christian traditions while at the same time being open to learning about and engaging with the uniting work of the Holy Spirit as experienced in the Catholic tradition. Our guest editor for this issue, Tricia Bølle, occupies a unique role in this process as she serves both Catholic and Protestant believers in Asia and has experience interacting with many Christian faith communities. Her vantage point affords a view into the journey of China’s Catholics that Protestants working in China normally have limited opportunity to observe, but which is important in understanding the many ways in which God is working in China today. Our hope is that this perspective will serve as a catalyst for further dialog and, where possible, sharing of resources and insights.

Brent Fulton is the president of ChinaSource and the editor of the ChinaSource Quarterly.

In this edition...

Introduction

[A Window into Catholicism in Today's China](#)

[Page 1](#)

Brent Fulton

Editorial

[The Legacy of Catholicism](#)

[Page 3](#)

Tricia Bølle, Guest Editor

Feature Articles

[Finding Faith and Purpose: The Search for Meaning for Young Adult Catholics in China](#)

[Page 4](#)

Tricia Bølle

China's young adults are searching for meaning in their lives. The Catholic Church is working to help them realize their God-given potential and allow them to discover their special calling in Christ. One obstacle to this is their lack of belief in a personal God who loves them and created them for a special purpose. The author examines how the Catholic Church is dealing with these issues.

[Experiencing World Youth Day as a Chinese Catholic](#)

[Page 6](#)

Jennifer

A young, Chinese woman shares her thoughts and experiences from World Youth Day which she attended in Madrid, in 2011. Included in her account are her reflections on several places her group visited as pilgrims as they journeyed to Madrid. She also shares the life-changing impact this event had for her as she dealt with issues of sin and forgiveness.

[A Place to Grow in Faith: The Challenge of Developing Sustainable Faith Formation Programs in China](#)

[Page 8](#)

Alexa Rose

Often missing in China is a regular opportunity for Chinese Catholics to grow in the knowledge of their faith in a structured setting. In recent years, however, there has been a gradual rise of home-grown initiatives and program models adopted from overseas that are starting to change this situation. Nevertheless, challenges remain and the author looks at a number of reasons (beyond the more obvious political challenges) why the deepening of faith has been difficult.

View from the Wall

[The Catholic Church in China and Evangelization through Social Media](#)

[Page 10](#)

Gabriel Aquinas

The author begins by sharing his encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ then continues by explaining his deep interest in the Catholic Church's articulation of truth about Christ and the church as well as their relation to society. He looks at the current situation of the Catholic Church in China and concludes with the suggestion that the Internet can be used positively to bring church unity.

Peoples of China

[My Experience with Chinese Sisters](#)

[Page 11](#)

Shih-Hua Yang

Ms. Yang spent two weeks in China on a retreat with religious sisters from the Catholic Church. Many of these Chinese sisters were facing struggles with a variety of issues including the lack of proper formation, community, opportunity for growth, and resources to provide for their educational, personal, and spiritual needs. While not representative of the Catholic Church in its entirety, her experience still provides helpful insights and fuels suggestions for nurturing these sisters.

Book Reviews

[Church Militant: Bishop Kung and Catholic Resistance in Communist Shanghai by Paul P. Mariani](#)

[Page 13](#)

Reviewed by John A. Lindblom

Paul Mariani makes an essential contribution to the history of the Catholic Church in China during the twentieth-century when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) targeted religious organizations. Through research which includes previously unreleased classified documents and his multifaceted treatment of this turbulent period, he provides a gripping narrative of the gradual, but increasingly tension-filled, showdown between the CCP and the Catholic Church in Shanghai.

Intercessory Notes

Items that require your intercession.

[Page 3](#)

Resource Corner

[Sacred Space](#)

[Page 15](#)

Inspired by the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Sacred Spaces* offers scriptural meditations and personal reflections aimed at helping us relate to God and experience his presence.

Editorial

The Legacy of Catholicism

By Tricia Bølle, Guest Editor

Catholicism has a strong legacy in China that is integral to seeking a comprehensive understanding of the Christian faith in China both past and present. The strength and growth of Catholicism in the context of Chinese society and what it has to offer is likewise of great benefit to the whole of the Christian church.

Catholicism in China can trace its roots back as early as the late 13th century when the Italian Franciscan Friar John of Montecorvino arrived in Beijing to spread the gospel. In later years, through the efforts of famed missionary Matteo Ricci and his fellow Jesuits in the 16th century, and the later establishment of universities, hospitals, and orphanages during the Republican era, the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church in Chinese society left an imprint on Chinese history and culture that can be seen and felt through the present day. The events of the last century have also seen Chinese Catholics share a common experience and test of faith with their Protestant brothers and sisters in Christ, having undergone much of the same suffering and trials through China's tumultuous modern era.

While serving in China, I am constantly reminded of the strength of the faith of China's Catholics. I have seen their faith carry them through much adversity, motivate them to witness their faith to family and friends, and come together as a faith community of encouragement and support. While the challenges of boldly living out the Christian faith within Chinese society are often relentless and overwhelming—much as in Western society—their faith is demonstrated best through their steadfast loyalty and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ. In spite of not having such strong, foreign missionary support as their Protestant brethren, Catholics in China are finding ways to grow in their faith and increase their number. Much of this is owed to a robust faith foundation among the indigenous church with many faith communities able to trace their Christian roots back several generations to the early Catholic missionaries and local clergy from the Ricci era. Primarily, though, it is the hope that is found in Christ and his merciful love and understanding that attracts so many Chinese to the Catholic faith.

My hope is that these articles will provide a small window into very diverse aspects of the Catholic faith in China that will help spark greater understanding among all Christians who care about China. In recent years, I have witnessed a gradual increase in ecumenical outreach among Catholics and Protestants in China that is very heartening. As the often more charismatic flame of the Spirit within many Protestant traditions blends with the rich spiritual tradition and devotions of the Catholic Church, an ever greater number of Chinese are being drawn into the Christian faith. Indeed, the ecumenical dialogue that unites the Body of Christ has done well to serve both Catholics and Protestants to grow in their understanding of their faith and deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ throughout the world—and China is no different.

So as we journey forth in our own respective calling in service of the One True God, let us recall the divinely inspired words of St. Paul the Apostle: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." Amen.

Tricia Bølle has been working with young adults in universities and local faith communities for seven years. A graduate of Stanford University, she founded an educational nonprofit, DEI, in Asia to develop programs and training to promote personal growth, civic engagement, women's issues, crisis intervention and psychological well-being among Chinese university students and young adults.

Intercessory Notes

Please pray

1. That China's young adults will find meaningful, personal relationships with Jesus Christ that will be the wellsprings of their lives of faith.
2. That within the Catholic church good leaders will be found who will be able to develop effective youth groups, Bible studies and prayer groups.
3. That the Internet would be used to enhance church unity.
4. For Catholic religious sisters who, deeply loving Jesus Christ, dedicate their lives to his service yet often struggle with difficult issues stemming from their backgrounds and the situations they live in each day.
5. For Catholic and Protestant believers who are working together to develop spiritual formation resources for Christians in China



[Joel Montes via Compfight cc](#)



Finding Faith and Purpose: The Search for Meaning for Young Adult Catholics in China

By Tricia Bølle

In the main cities of today's China, young adults on the streets and at local universities can readily be seen focused on their iPhones or knock-off Xiaomi¹ as they connect with friends on WeChat and view the latest video torrents. Many return after a hard day's work or study to crowded dorms or nondescript shared housing while a growing number of others, hailing from wealthier families, go home to posh pads decked out with the latest technology and fashionable décor. Yet, despite the apparent socioeconomic disparity among these young adults, one major commonality that crosses the wealth divide is the lack of a sense of purpose and meaning for their lives.

This search for purpose in one's life draws many Chinese young adults into the Christian faith. A visit to an afternoon or evening Mass at an urban Catholic Church will find the pews filled with young adults devoted to their faith or, at least, to their search for greater meaning through the Christian God. Come too late and you may be left standing out in the evening cold, listening to the priest's homily and the young adult choir from an outdoor speaker for those who did not manage to arrive the necessary half hour before Mass to grab a seat. While a large percentage of these young adult Catholics are 老教友 ("old church members"), coming from traditional Chinese Catholic families, many are recently baptized or are currently enrolled in RCIA[ii] adult catechism classes. They gather before the altar with the restless heart of Saint Augustine, seeking solace in the Eucharist and filled with the hope of Jesus Christ. Their warmth and devotion at church and other Christian fellowship activities is both welcoming and inspiring. Indeed, many Chinese Catholic young adults possess a hunger for a deeper understanding of the faith, especially as it applies to their lives, which rivals that of many young adult Catholics in Western society.

Yet, not unlike most Chinese young adults, these Chinese Catholics also struggle with finding satisfactory work, having healthy relationships, and feeling the pressure of meeting familial expectations—particularly those who are still unmarried. More importantly, they wrestle with understanding God's special purpose for their lives. In counseling and faith-sharing groups, these concerns about finding one's personal direction and understanding God's will for their life are often heightened by the difficulty many have feeling God's presence in their life and having faith in his providence. Many also find it difficult to live out their faith on a regular basis. There is often a disconnect between one's faith life while at church, fellowship, or private prayer and the rest of one's busy, emotionally complex, young adult life. The lack of life experience of most educated young adults only amplifies the sense of feeling lost at sea.

A principal aim then, among the growing numbers of Catholic young adult fellowships in China,[iii] is to help young Catholics realize their God-given potential and allow that to help them discover their special calling in Christ. One of the obstacles to their achieving this, is truly believing in a personal God who loves and cares for them and who created them for a special purpose: "For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, to be our way of life."[iv] Many Chinese Catholics, both new and old, fall into a mindset that looks upon God as only distant and powerful rather than also as close and compassionate. This kind of thinking does not allow much room for the grace and intimacy of a loving God who is also a friend, brother, teacher, and source of comfort and strength. They live in a "tiger-mom" society where emotional and psychological abuse is often the norm. "If you don't get into "xxx" university eight years from now, I won't love you," or "Why am I cursed with such a stupid son?" is often communicated. The concept of a heavenly father who loves us and invites us to "come as you are" and join him at his wedding banquet is often a major paradigm shift that is difficult for many Chinese to make. So, one of the most critical messages to get across is that regardless of any past sins or failures, these young adults are indeed beloved and precious in God's eyes.

Helping fellow Christians believe in themselves and enabling them to see themselves as an integral part of God's beautiful creation and as part of the mission of Christ's Church here on earth, can be very empowering. Yet, in many Christian faith communities, the roles and responsibilities of the lay faithful are often expressed in a rather limited way that does not give much acknowledgement to the beauty and awe in which the Holy Spirit is capable of working through God's creation. This gives rise to the tendency among many Chinese Christians to feel limited by their own capacity in what they can do, rather than opening themselves up to the possibility of an omnipotent God—whose power and grace is not restricted by human limitations—being able to accomplish great works through them. The task, therefore, is in taking a cerebral concept of an all-powerful God and making it real in a way that changes how one experiences God and oneself, and then lives. When Christians are able to see not just themselves, but Christ, alive within them, working to create goodness – 美善, ("a beautiful good") – within society, they can more fully live a Christian life without fear and with greater trust in God and his purposes. While getting this message of faith across to Chinese Catholics continues to be a struggle due to deep-seated cultural anxiety and internal struggles with self-worth, increasing numbers of Chinese Catholics have embraced the fire of the Spirit to live boldly for Christ and strive toward sainthood as God intended.

Underlying all of this is a foundational need for a meaningful personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Our relationship with Christ is



Tricia Bølle

the wellspring of our life of faith. Unfortunately, this intimate relationship with our Lord, so fundamental to our faith, is not always readily found among the Christian faithful, resulting in a faith that may seem devoid of its spirit. This tends to be the biggest obstacle for so many Chinese Catholics who are simultaneously lost and found. Their faith is strong; yet, they continue to struggle with meaning and the ability to transcend the message and strictures of society in order to live more fully for Christ. Some Chinese Catholics are able to speak of hope and believe in the promise of Christ; however, this is often only in the abstract without truly understanding what it means for their lives, and how they ought to live as true sons and daughters of God. There is certainly a change among those who have found Christ, especially after they have been baptized, for the sacraments can be life-changing. Indeed, many Chinese Catholics will readily testify that their faith in Christ has given them life, hope and understanding. However, those who have not yet begun to live in relationship with Jesus Christ in a real sense, often find themselves caught up in a frustrated attempt to discern God's will without the accompanying joy, wisdom, peace and strength. They are unable to reach their full potential in Christ. Thus, their path in life, though made clearer by the loving light of Christ, remains filled with uncertainty. The hope and peace that comes with a healthy, personal relationship with Jesus leaves many Chinese brothers and sisters who lack this relationship feeling discouraged.

However, this situation has been changing where Chinese Catholics are able to deepen their prayer life—faithful, quality time spent with God—and find good, spiritual direction, whether in a group fellowship or private setting. Whether through Lectio Divina,[v] Ignatian prayer,[vi] Eucharistic adoration, theological reflection or just solid fellowship, many are gaining a greater sense of purpose that correlates strongly with the strength of their relationship with Jesus Christ. For those who have had the opportunity to further engage in workshops or spiritual guidance to discern their spiritual gifts and calling, the sense of purpose and understanding of where one fits into God's plan increases dramatically. In the end, however, it is one's relationship with Christ that matters and gives a Chinese Christian the peace of mind to know that he or she is living within God's purpose. In this, each one is able to finally find meaning, a purpose in life, and take up the mantle of the Christian calling to become holy as a beloved member of the mystical body of Christ.

¹ Xiaomi is one of China's biggest electronics companies, privately owned, that designs, develops, and sells smart phones, mobile apps, and consumer electronics.

² RCIA stands for the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. It goes back to the adult catechesis of the early Christian Church for those wanting to be baptized to ensure a healthy foundational understanding of the Christian faith.

³ There are approximately 6,000 parishes serving an estimated 12 million Chinese Catholics spread across 97 dioceses in mainland China (中國天主教 指南, Guide to the Catholic Church in China by Fr. Jean Charbonnier, MEP; China Catholic Communication, Singapore, 新加坡中華公教聯絡社, 2013.). Based on the author's limited experience with only a handful of dioceses, about half the parishes have some kind of regular programming for youth and young adults, a growth up from less than 25% ten years ago.

⁴ Ephesians 2:10

⁵ In Christianity, Lectio Divina (Latin for divine reading) is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and increase the knowledge of God's Word. It does not treat Scripture as texts to be studied, but as the Living Word.

⁶ Ignatian prayer is imaginative, reflective, and personal. It encourages people to develop an intimate relationship with a God who loves them and desires the best for them.

Tricia Bolle has been working with young adults in universities and local faith communities for seven years. A graduate of Stanford University, she founded an educational nonprofit, DEI, in Asia to develop programs and training to promote personal growth, civic engagement, women's issues, crisis intervention and psychological well-being among Chinese university students and young adults.

Experiencing World Youth Day as a Chinese Catholic

By Jennifer

In 2011, I had the amazing opportunity to go to World Youth Day in Madrid¹ for which I am exceedingly grateful to God. He knows me deeply, and at that time I needed him so much. If not for God's grace, I don't know where I would be now.

When I first heard about World Youth Day, I wasn't sure if I'd be able to go for the Chinese government often tries to restrict Christians from participating in international events of a religious nature. Moreover, I wasn't sure if I was worthy to go as during that time I had fallen in love with the wrong person and nearly walked in sin with him. However, God arranged a priest from my hometown to ask me to attend World Youth Day in Spain. At that moment, I truly felt God's love and calling to come back to Him.

There was a good group of us who went—all Chinese Catholics from different parts of China, including a few priests. We went everywhere together, going first on pilgrimage in France and Spain on the way to World Youth Day in Madrid. We visited many beautiful churches, holy places and homes of famous saints. Every day and at every place I was moved with tears. I cannot tell you why I was so moved, but I felt it must surely be the Holy Spirit.

We also visited Lourdes² where a lowly peasant girl experienced visions of the blessed Mother with a message of prayer and repentance. Being present in that holy place and reflecting on the abundant love that Mary gave her Son helped me in my brokenness receive the peace and consolation of Jesus' mercy through the humble witness of His mother. The cool refreshing touch of the water from the spring at Lourdes felt as though it was washing over me, cleansing me, and healing my heart from the burden of sin that I carried with me.

At that time, I felt so great a sinner, and yet I felt that God loves me so much. When I visited many of the churches and cathedrals, I was amazed by their beauty and felt the presence of God in these sacred places that had witnessed the prayers and petitions of so many Christian faithful such as myself.

Each day brought with it its own sense of grace and understanding. Early on in the trip, while one of the very kind and gentle priests was out of the room, one of the other priests stood up and criticized that priest before the whole group in a very unkind fashion. I was extremely upset by his behavior—especially as it was enacted before our group of impressionable pilgrims. In fact, that priest said many unkind things and was condescending even toward us. I could not believe that a priest would behave that way; I was angry and could not forgive him. I wanted to tell him how hurtful his words were and that he shouldn't be setting such a bad example for the rest of us pilgrims. After that day, I went to my room and cried tears of anger, sadness, and disappointment that a priest, who has chosen a life of serving God, could show himself to be so selfish and uncaring.

For many days I remained upset with this priest and did my best to control my anger. I brought my concerns before the Lord, asking him how a priest could act in this way—especially one brought into our midst to accompany us on our pilgrimage for World Youth Day.

Then, soon after we visited the home of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, whose words inspired me with the power and grace of God. As a Discalced Carmelite nun,³ Saint Thérèse spent her young life devoted to prayer, especially for missionaries and priests. "We must pray for priests!" she encouraged through her words and example. "They are human beings who, though devoting their lives to God, possess their own flaws and weaknesses and, thus, greatly need our prayers as well!"

Hearing these words, I knew that God was inviting me to grow deeper in my faith. This pitiable priest needed my prayers rather than my pent-up anger. He was probably suffering hurt in his own life and needed to experience God's mercy and love. I knew then that as a Catholic, I must conduct myself according to the words of Saint Thérèse and pray for this priest with the same mercy and understanding that Jesus showed to all those sinners who implored his mercy and forgiveness. As I began to pray for this priest, I realized that the burden of bitterness and anger I had previously felt toward him was being lifted. Simultaneously, I was being given a new direction for my spiritual life: to humble myself in prayer for all those who serve God's holy church. Through God's mysterious ways I learned to become a better Christian. Such is the grace and infinite wisdom of our Lord!

Indeed, with each passing day, the lives of the saints, the devotion of the faithful, the joy of the Spirit in fellowship with other Chinese Catholics all brought with them their own special graces. God was so present in every moment that often I wasn't aware of his hand on our journey until later when he would reveal his wisdom to us in a way that helped all of us to grow stronger in our faith. I learned a lot from our pilgrimage, especially the strength needed for the journey ahead, both in faith and in life.



[Fot. Hanna Grabowska by Madrid11, on Flickr](#)

Along the way, we often ran into other pilgrims from other countries, all taking the opportunity to visit the plethora of holy sites in Europe in anticipation of World Youth Day. Seeing so many of God's people, so many young adults from every race and culture, reminded me of how glorious God's Church is and what a great God we have.

Of course, all our travels culminated in the weeklong celebration for World Youth Day in Madrid. We were surrounded by a great number of people of faith. Well over a million young adults crowded the streets, squares, and churches of Madrid to rejoice and celebrate our faith in Christ our Savior. Everywhere we went, when people saw that we were from China, they clapped and shouted with praise and were very happy to meet us. Many of us would just break into spontaneous prayer, praying for one another and singing songs of praise. It was a truly festive atmosphere filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Each day was filled with prayer, faith teaching, daily Mass, cultural activities, and many fellowship opportunities to interact with other young adult Catholics from different countries and cultures. Our prayerful excitement overflowed as we gathered together in prayer with the Pope for Eucharistic adoration before our blessed Jesus. Despite the inclement weather, the Lord won out the day as evidenced by over a million young Catholics filling the area. On the final day of the event, Pope Benedict XVI celebrated a holy Mass with a message for all of Christ's young people: "Faith starts with God, who opens his heart to us and invites us to share in his own divine life. Faith does not simply provide information about who Christ is; rather, it entails a personal relationship with Christ, a surrender of our whole person with all our understanding, will, and feelings to God's self-revelation."

He further encouraged us to respond to Jesus' question of "Who do you say that I am?" with generosity and courage by saying: "Jesus, I know that you are the Son of God who gave your life for me. I want to follow you faithfully and be led by your word. You know me and you love me. I place my trust in you and I put my whole life into your hands. I want you to be the power that strengthens me and the joy which never leaves me."

It is this complete trust in the love and life of Jesus Christ that beckons me forth. He had shown his love for me so many times on that journey; I felt blessed every day.

These blessings continue in my life to the present. During World Youth Day, as I struggled with the weight of my own sin, a sentence came to me: "God walks with people in pain." Now I always remember this sentence and daily receive grace from it.

After I returned home from my World Youth Day pilgrimage, I found the strength to refuse that person who so tempted me earlier to fall into sin with him. As I continued to prayerfully reflect on my experience at World Youth Day and the many graces I had received, I chose to remain single for almost a year. Near the end of that year, I met my present husband—a strong Catholic—who truly is a gift from God. I now have a lovely baby and have just discovered that I am blessed to be pregnant again with a new life inside me.

Thanks be to God always.

Endnotes

¹ A Catholic event held August 16–21, 2011 in Madrid, Spain that focuses on engaging youth with their faith. Begun in 1985, World Youth Day emphasizes Christian unity among pilgrims from differing cultures. Part of this event is the pope's public appearance to lead the faithful in prayer and inspire them to more closely follow Christ.

² Many Catholics believe that the Mother of Jesus appeared to a young girl named Bernadette Soubrius with a message of penance, repentance, and prayer for the salvation of souls. As the Mother of Jesus of Nazareth, Catholics believe that Mary is a messenger of grace and prayer. Lourdes is one of the more famous, modern, pilgrimage sites, where there have been reported hundreds, if not thousands, of miraculous healings. Catholics venerate Mary with honor and respect; as Jesus honored her as Queen of Heaven and Earth, so too does the Catholic Church.

³ The Discalced Carmelites, or Barefoot Carmelites, is a Catholic order established in 1593 by St. Teresa of Ávila and St. John of the Cross, both known for their efforts to reform the Carmelite order and for their intense contemplative spirituality, authoring such great spiritual works as *Interior Castle* and *Dark Night of the Soul*, respectively. Discalced Carmelites are men and women who dedicate themselves to a life of prayer. The Carmelite nuns live in cloistered (enclosed) monasteries and follow a completely contemplative life.

Jennifer is a Chinese Catholic young adult who serves her local faith community in various capacities and works as a teacher.

A Place to Grow in Faith: The Challenge of Developing Sustainable Faith Formation Programs in China

By Alexa Rose

For many Catholics in China, there are few opportunities to grow in faith outside of Mass, prayer and the sacraments. Those Catholics who seek to develop their spiritual life usually only have the available options of daily Mass, Eucharistic adoration, praying the rosary, the divine office and similar prayerful devotions, faith sharing with a group of friends, or private study of the Bible and other works of faith. What is often missing is a regular opportunity for Chinese Catholics to grow in the knowledge of their faith in a structured setting after they have been baptized. This situation has hindered the growth of many Chinese Catholics who thirst for a deeper understanding of their faith but

are unable to find it once they have been baptized into the Catholic Church. In recent years, however, this situation in China has been changing with the gradual rise of home-grown initiatives and program models adopted from overseas. Yet, challenges still remain.

As the Catholic Church sought to rebuild itself in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, the emphasis, rightly so, was on providing regular Mass, prayer and the sacraments for Chinese Catholics. However, left behind were faith formation programs to assist Catholics in growing deeper in the understanding of their faith and how to more fully live out their faith in the challenges of their daily lives. While various versions of The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) programs¹ existed for those Chinese wishing to enter into the Christian faith, little was available for those Catholics who, having already been baptized, sought further knowledge of their faith in Jesus Christ and how it might apply to their lives. Occasionally, Chinese Catholics would gather on their own, to pray the rosary and share their faith with one another, but structured faith formation programs were few and far between.

Since the turn of the century, as the need for greater faith formation has become increasingly apparent, particularly for young adults, more formalized programs have begun to develop. These programs run the gamut from Sunday school programs for children, summer youth retreats, young adult fellowships, Bible studies, marriage encounters, prayer programs, and spiritual formation retreats for mature Catholics seeking to go deeper in their faith. In addition, there are a plethora of social justice programs that have always been a hallmark of the Catholic Church in society. Many of these programs are home-grown, often initiated by strong Chinese lay Catholics who, while supported by their parish priest, have been assertive in trying to address the needs they see existent within their respective faith communities.

However, establishing lasting programs with qualified leaders has proved difficult for many parishes. This is for a number of reasons beyond the more obvious political challenges. Traditionally, many Chinese Catholics do not feel qualified to lead faith formation programs. This, many Catholic laity believe, should be left to someone such as a priest who ideally has received extensive education and formation in the Catholic faith. Few opportunities currently exist within China for lay Catholics to receive the kind of education and faith formation that would give them the confidence to be willing to lead even a Bible study on their own. This sentiment, compounded with a cultural deference towards authority, has led to an over reliance on “qualified” clergy to lead the way. However, many Chinese priests are overworked or do not necessarily recognize the need for greater faith formation programs or what they can do about it. Thus, most early successful faith formation programs were begun by risk-taking, highly-motivated priests with a strong pastoral charism who managed to make the time and effort to initiate and build up programs to help meet the spiritual and formative needs of their parishioners.

More recently, there has been a general relaxing of this cultural thinking as the needs of the laity become more pressing. There is a greater sense of empowerment among the laity to take more ownership of their own faith formation and seek out those among them who are felt to be sufficiently qualified to lead certain faith sharing and social justice activities. Some programs, with the right people at the helm, tend to do fairly well. Others, however, unable to find the right leadership to educate and inspire, wither away.

Finding this leadership is not easy. Even those who may be knowledgeable enough in the faith to lead a Bible study or youth group may not have a good sense of how to structure an effective Bible study with enough content diversity to appeal to a broad spectrum of participants—from multigenerational Catholics to the newly baptized to the simply curious—and keep people interested and excited about their faith. Those Bible studies and youth groups that have done well without the regular active presence of a priest have been successful in finding someone with good leadership and administrative skills, as well as someone who is good at teaching; oftentimes, this is the same person. Once a solid group has been able to establish itself for a good length of time, the most successful groups have been able to train up others with a charism for teaching or leading to make the ministry more self-sustainable over the long run. Regions with strong Catholic populations such as Hebei and Shanxi have been able to develop fairly effective youth groups, Bible studies and prayer groups, in part because they have such a strong Catholic faith tradition, but also because they have a larger pool of dedicated and well-formed Catholics to draw from to find the right people for leading ministry activities.

Yet, there are still challenges for Catholic laity to break free from the old mold of approaching faith and understanding. For many young adults, it is about trying to understand how faith is relevant to, and integrates with, their young adult lives. Whether trying to



Tricia Bølle

understand what the Christian faith says about ethical work practices or how to have a positive marriage, China's young adult Catholics are yearning to know more about their faith and life. Developing an effective young adult ministry takes time and dedication as there is a need for greater cooperation between clergy who can relate to the needs of young adults in a real way, and a young adult leadership willing to take initiative to provide regular programs and activities. Lack of effective models for developing young adult fellowships has hampered this progress as well.

Here again, the will of the Spirit has managed to overcome many of these obstacles so that in different parts of the country there are thriving young adult faith groups that engage in a variety of faith formation activities and service work. One such group, with the support and leadership of their parish priest, began a social justice program modeled after the spirit of Mother Teresa's ministry. This program attracts over fifty young adult Catholics who go out each Sunday after Mass to perform basic chores and tasks for the sick and elderly in their local community—from cooking to doing laundry to general cleaning, not to mention the warmth of a smile and friendly conversation. Other parishes, in a variety of provinces, host weeklong faith retreats for young adults during the summer and major holidays. Shorter weekend retreats led by priests throughout the year are also becoming increasingly common in most dioceses.

As opportunities for greater international exchange have increased, many Chinese Catholics have participated in workshops and faith formation programs internationally which has enabled them to draw from the riches of the entire Catholic Church that they are largely cut off from on the mainland. Such Catholics, both clergy and laity alike, return home able to develop new faith formation programs and activities modeled after well-established programs that have been effective in strengthening faith communities overseas. Such programs range from marriage programs like Marriage Encounter and Couples for Christ (CFC) intensive weekend retreats based on the short course model, contemplative prayer utilizing Ignatian or Carmelite spirituality, and even fledgling Sunday school programs that are just now starting to take root in various dioceses. Furthermore, through international exposure to the greater spiritual tradition of the Catholic Church, including recent church documents from the ecumenical council at Vatican II and recent popes,² Catholic thought within China is beginning to open up and further mature in its understanding of church doctrine and the role of the laity in the mission of the church. This, in turn, is creating greater opportunities for Catholic laity to become better formed spiritually through new program initiatives and activities for spiritual formation within China. Thus, now more than ever, there is a home for those Chinese Catholics wishing to grow stronger in the understanding of their faith and how it relates to their lives.

Although the Catholic Church in China has struggled in the last few decades to develop effective faith formation programs, through great personal initiative of both clergy and laity, a broadening of the cultural mindset towards authority, gradual empowerment of the laity, and increased exposure to international program models and the teachings of the universal Catholic Church, faith formation programs in many forms have been taking hold in recent years. Furthermore, through new understanding gained from such programs, many laity have begun to realize their own gifts and abilities through the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, empowering them to live out their faith with greater confidence and ensure the continuity and growth of faith formation programs in their communities. Though the road ahead is still long for many faith communities that still lack the personnel and resources to develop strong and sustainable faith formation programs, the tide is changing as more and more parishes are able to develop and establish a diverse array of these programs for the greater glory of God and his church.

¹ The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) is a program of the Catholic Church oriented towards those who are searching and inquiring about the Catholic way of life. Its history goes back to the early Christian church that wanted to ensure that those who were baptized had a proper understanding and sincere belief of the Christian faith into which they were being baptized.

² Aside from the documents that came out of Vatican II, popular Church documents from recent popes that are just starting to influence Catholic thought within China include *Redemptor Hominis* (The Redeemer of Mankind) *Cristifidelis Laici* (Christ's Lay Faithful) and *Theology of the Body* from St. John Paul II, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) and *Lumen Fidei* (The Light of Faith) from Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel) from Pope Francis.

Alexa Rose has considerable research background in Asian history, culture and society. She has lived in Asia for many years and spends much of her time engaging with Chinese Christian young adults, particularly within the Catholic faith community.

View from the Wall

The Catholic Church in China and Evangelization through Social Media

By Gabriel Aquinas

The aim of my article is to discuss, as a Catholic living in China, my perspective and suggestions on the situation of China's Catholic Church. I was born into a community attached to a military equipment research facility in China and grew up in an environment permeated with atheism and communism. However, I firmly believed that there existed a being transcending the human mind. In my childhood, I did not do well in school. Both at school and beyond, I was treated as an outcast or as somebody like Don Quixote. I was also confused because it seemed as if I was born to search for truth and beauty but was destined not to find them. In 2007, I encountered the Lord Jesus Christ which brought an end to my wandering. I was baptized into the Catholic Church of the Lord Jesus Christ and began a whole new journey of life.



Tricia Bølle

Before I became a Catholic, I never studied theology or philosophy. After I entered the Catholic Church, I came across the encyclicals and pastoral letters of popes, from Leo XIII all the way to Benedict XVI. Their articulation of truth about the Lord Jesus Christ and the church, as well as their relation to society, deeply interested me. In other words, the pontiffs' rational, careful, and direct ways of explication truly satisfied the need for truth in my heart. This is because in China, most people, confronted with different thoughts and phenomena, try to find a seemingly true "point of balance," or an ambiguous "gray area." They also try their best to avoid a thorough investigation which makes it difficult for them to find the grounds for values and a clear direction.

The papal encyclicals and pastoral letters allowed me see that the universal church is the ark of human salvation. This is not only a transcendent truth, but also since the church is the visible presence of the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is the fountainhead of human freedom and conscience. Therefore, the persecution of the holy, catholic, church necessarily extends to every corner of life in society.

Christianity in China is one evidence of this. In China, the government in seeking to minimize the influence of Christianity has created a social ethic that is in opposition to human nature. There is no lack of suffering among the people living under this ethic, and there are multiple scholars who have a sober understanding of its social conditions as well as of its social psychology. However, they lack being informed by a universal value that transcends the secular world—the grounding and direction of freedom and conscience rooted in Christ. The majority of people devolve into cynics in their mocking and ridiculing of secular society as they gradually reach "maturity," defined by despair and coldness from their disbelief in love and denial of eternity.

This kind of social ethic profoundly impacts many Christians. Their love, that ignores truth, and their indifference in politics—they have "seen through everything"—makes them refuse to participate in improving the world around them and its ethical milieu using the transcendent values of the Christian faith. Sometimes they carry out charitable work by restricting their love to a very limited area—which is not a bad thing in itself. It is not that they do not bring love to people around them, but their actions cannot effectively lead people to understand the necessity of God's truth and grace. As such, it is difficult to find a firm grounding and conviction for their acts of charity.

Admittedly, due to the approach the Chinese government has taken towards religion and the Catholic Church in particular, there is usually an obvious division between the Catholic clergy and the faithful in China. A part of them ignore the magisterium¹ based on the authority of Christ's truth. Although they understand that the Catholic Church is "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic," they do not truly understand the meaning of the Catholic hierarchy. They obstinately disregard this, even after having had it explained to them. They simplistically believe that they have fulfilled their obligation as Catholics by following their own "God in their hearts" and participate in the sacraments and parish events. They might even unknowingly accept the manipulated narrative and denigration of the Catholic Church by the Chinese government by considering the principle of Catholic hierarchy to be some sort of "cultural heritage" that is feudalistic and political. On the other hand, the other camp, although clear about the existence of the Catholic hierarchy, falls into the error of reductionism. They unfairly assign blame for persecution by the Chinese government of China's Catholic Church entirely on the clergy who are "weak in faith" (but nevertheless culpable). They even insist on this by seeking to exclude the open church from the Catholic Church in China while calling this "loyalty." This only exacerbates the division within the church.

Since none of the difficulties confronting the Catholic Church in China can be resolved within a short period of time due to the complicated situation, many of the church's ministries, as well as evangelization, develop very slowly. However, I believe there is a "popular" way of outreach that has not received the attention it deserves: this is the use of social networking and apps.

Since none of the difficulties confronting the Catholic Church in China can be resolved within a short period of time due to the complicated situation, many of the church's ministries, as well as evangelization, develop very slowly. However, I believe there is a "popular" way of outreach that has not received the attention it deserves: this is the use of social networking and apps.

In China, a country in which information is often blocked, the Internet has become the indispensable window of knowledge. Its breadth and depth in distribution can influence even the moral knowledge of the young generation in China. As for me, before my baptism, all the preaching of the gospel (mostly Protestant) that I came across and the papal encyclicals that I read came from the Internet. There are only two or three influential Catholic web sites and forums accessible to China's Catholics. Unfortunately, both

Continued on page 12

Peoples of China

My Experience with Chinese Sisters

By Shih-Hua Yang

In 1948, there were nearly 5,000 Catholic sisters in China. Following the persecution of the Maoist era, it would not be until Deng Xiaoping began reopening China that Catholic congregations for women religious were able to openly grow again. Today there are well over 4,000 Chinese Catholic women who live consecrated lives as religious sisters dedicated to serving Christ and his church in China and meeting the social needs of local people. However, many of these Chinese sisters face a host of struggles surrounding issues such as lack of proper formation, community, opportunity for growth, and other resources to provide for their educational, personal, and spiritual needs.



news.xinhuanet.com

This article encompasses my interaction with Chinese sisters during two weeks. It is by no means representative of the Catholic Church in China in her entirety, but we can nevertheless still learn from this experience.

During my two weeks with these Chinese sisters, I led a workshop of psychosomatic integration during one week and an individual counseling retreat during the other. There were roughly forty sisters from various provinces between 28 and 50 years of age. They came from the Patriotic Church (the open church), the underground church, or somewhere in between. It was no less than a miracle that sisters from all these communities could gather in one room. Indeed, the church of God can always find a way to carry on, no matter how difficult its circumstances.

Circumstances of the Church

The sisters from the Patriotic Church were much better off economically than the others. It seemed they had their own savings and dressed like lay people. The other sisters all wore black tops with black pants and looked more like ascetics. These other sisters also strictly observed their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience; therefore, their superiors have unquestionable authority and power. Perhaps due to the influence of Chinese cultural values, sometimes these superiors lose sight of the need for respect and tolerance of the sisters under their guidance. As a result, I met many suffering young sisters who were in many ways still searching for their true vocation. On the other hand, the sisters from the Patriotic Church had more relaxed rules. Their lifestyle resembles less of community life; rather, they live like single people living a consecrated life—not as much like religious.

Ministries of the Sisters and Community Life

Some sisters attending the retreat worked at parishes, others in clinics, orphanages, and nursing homes while others were in homes caring for handicapped children. There were also some who managed retreat centers. Regardless of the field of ministry, the majority of the sisters were exhausted from work. Excessive workload, compounded by the lack of support and communication among sisters, resulted in many that were hurt. All they could do was sit and pray in front of the Eucharist. However, because of their exhaustion, they were unable to get consolation from prayer and consequently lost touch with Christ; thus, they fell into despair. However, precisely because of this, every one of them seized this opportunity of growing in integration and being on retreat in the hope of satiating their thirst, deep within their heart, for union with Christ.

The Formation of the Sisters

China is a vast country with great differences between urban and rural regions. Many missionaries arrived in China to evangelize as early as the Ming and Qing Dynasties giving rise to many Catholic villages. However, after the Cultural Revolution, many Catholics were martyred while others went underground. This made evangelization and pastoral ministry very difficult. The poverty of China's countryside does not allow local people to receive a good education. Overall, these sisters did not receive an adequate general education and their spiritual formation was also quite lacking. Because of the tumultuous, recent history of China, people carry heavy burdens and have wounds that need healing. The course described below, offered by the retreat center, is what many Chinese religious sisters need the most.

Course Description

This formation course is primarily based on the Scriptures, psychosomatic integration, and consecrated life. These will be learned and internalized mainly through themed discussion, prayer, sharing, practice sessions as well as the full-time presence of the instructor. This course is aimed at nourishing and helping the students grow in their faith and spirituality. It will also help them discover a way to approach God and move towards a fulfilled life, unique to themselves, as their personality and psychological state are being shaped. As such, they will live out their identity as consecrated religious and follow Christ wholeheartedly as they attain mature rootedness and stability in faith, personality, psychology, and spirituality.

[Continued on page 12](#)

positive information and defamation of the church by the Chinese government coexist on the same site! What is especially disheartening is that the two major forums are filled with fighting and shouting. I believe, if there could be a positive guide that has the authority of the church on the handful of influential Catholic sites—or even social networks such as Sina Microblogs or QQ² groups—many disputes could be resolved. In addition, many unnecessary misunderstandings between the body of Christ and non-Catholics could be averted, thus paving the way for church unity. Of course, the participation of Catholic “geeks” who are familiar with China’s internet lingo, different directions of various platforms, and popular apps, is essential.

Thus, given the current state of the church and society in China, it is essential that we overcome our differences and utilize newer information technologies such as social media to evangelize China’s citizens with the truth and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then we can better give China a more unified message about the healing of our society and the real hope that it longs for—the merciful love and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹The magisterium (Latin “to teach”) is the teaching authority of the Catholic Church regarding faith and morals.

²The popularly known QQ is an instant messaging software service developed by a Chinese company, Tencent Holdings Limited. QQ offers a variety of services that includes group and voice chat. As of August 2014, there were 829 million active QQ accounts.

Gabriel Aquinas is a young adult Catholic who devotes his time to serving the Catholic Church in China. He leads a strong, online, evangelical ministry specializing in apologetics and also helps lead a local Bible study and young adult fellowship.

Themes

- *Scripture*: Women in salvific history, biblical spirituality
- *Psychosomatic integration*: Integration between psychological strength and the value of vocation; the integration between experience in the family and the strength of vocation
- *Consecrated life*: Vows, community life and mission, sexuality, intimate relationships, and chastity
- *Individual counseling retreat*: Between or after classes

Learning Attitude

As China opens up and has more and more contact with the outside world, many courses on counselling, healing, theology, philosophy, and spirituality have been introduced. Any learning opportunity is very much welcomed. Currently retreat centers are used frequently. However, because of the enormity of the population in China, current resources from outside are still insufficient to meet these needs.

The Struggles of the Sisters

The sisters I met with have difficulties dealing with superiors and cannot easily express their opinions. Even between sisters, they could not easily share their personal struggles. They are also worried about the lives of their own family members. There is a lack of sex education, and there is a high rate of sexual abuse in their backgrounds. Many sisters grew up in abusive families. Opportunities for on-going formation and further studies are inadequate. Finally, some sisters are unable to have any experiential relationship with God.

Conclusion

During my two weeks with these sisters, through a profound interaction with the love of Jesus Christ and due to the sisters’ strong motivation, they quickly opened up, absorbing their experiences during the retreat like sponges and thus growing rapidly. In their sharing, I realized that women are still bearing the burden in rural China. As a result, although they have a high endurance level, they often neglect taking care of the most basic needs of their bodies and emotions. The wounds caused by these factors give rise to a desperate need to take care of the body, mind, and soul. Therefore, I plan to carry out the work of formation and spirituality concurrently.

Thanks to the blood of the martyrs, the Catholic Church in China sprouts up everywhere and continues to grow and develop despite the current ambiguous situation. Undoubtedly, the Lord and his blessed mother see the plight and faithful devotion of these women religious who desire to serve God’s people so strongly, and Christ will carry them through the difficult struggles they face granting them joy and peace. May the Spirit of the Lord shine brightly through them! They are God’s messengers to inspire us to “run with perseverance the race set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

Shih-Hua Yang, a retired music teacher, lives in Taipei, Taiwan. Since her retirement about fifteen years ago, she has been a full-time mental health counsellor. She has been invited to give retreats and workshops in Taiwan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Mainland

Book Review

Church Militant: Bishop Kung and Catholic Resistance in Communist Shanghai

Reviewed by John A. Lindblom

Church Militant: Bishop Kung and Catholic Resistance in Communist Shanghai by Paul P. Mariani. Cambridge: Harvard University Press (Nov. 23, 2011), ISBN-10: 0674061535; ISBN-13: 978-0674061538; 310 pages, kindle edition, \$23.99; hardback, \$37.42 at Amazon.com.

Many Christians (especially from Protestant backgrounds), interested in church history in twentieth-century China, may be more familiar with leaders of the early house church movement such as Wang Mingdao and Watchman Nee, rather than with their Catholic counterparts such as the "underground church" bishop, Ignatius Kung Pinmei, the first Chinese bishop of Shanghai. These men, along with many others, spent long years in prisons and labor camps for refusing the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) demands that they join the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) for Protestants, or the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) for Catholics, which aim to control the activities of Christians and force them to sever foreign ties.

Paul Mariani, a Jesuit, in this book makes an essential contribution to the story of the Catholic Church in China during this period, through penetrating research which includes previously unreleased classified documents from the Shanghai Municipal Archives and his multifaceted treatment of this turbulent period from the points of view of the many actors involved. He provides a gripping narrative as the gradual but increasingly tension-filled showdown between the CCP and the Catholic Church in Shanghai unfolds, skillfully told by frequently interweaving the words of persons engulfed in the drama, taken from interviews and documents from both sides. Most striking of all, however, are the classified documents, clearly showing that the CCP did have specific, targeted plans to destroy the power, vitality and influence of the Catholic Church in Shanghai, despite its claim to respect freedom of religion.

In the introduction, Mariani sets the stage with an important historical overview of Catholic missions in China, drawing out key questions at stake in the conflict between church and state. He traces the church's origins in Shanghai to the time of the great Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and influential Chinese convert, Paul Xu Guangqi (1562-1633), who later became the Grand Secretary to the emperor. He then reviews the following four centuries, both the church's momentous accomplishments, such as the successes of Ricci and the early Jesuits at winning the favor of emperors, to its calamitous setbacks, such as the Chinese Rites Controversy, the two Opium Wars, the Taiping Rebellion, and the Boxer Rebellion, all of which brought China and the West into conflict, often with devastating violence.

Despite the great damage to Christianity's reputation, the church grew over the long term, mainly due to dedicated missionaries who won the loyalty of Chinese converts, and who, at least for a few decades, enjoyed the support of the Republican government (1912-1949), building many schools, hospitals, and other institutions in the early 20th century.

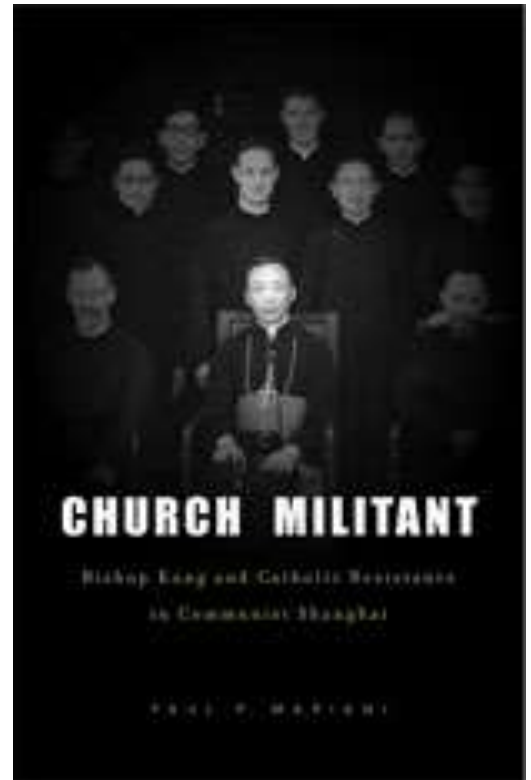
Chapter one focuses on Shanghai from 1949 to 1951. After founding the PRC in 1949, the CCP sought to eliminate any remaining potential opposition and began targeting foreign missionaries, then in the thousands, as "imperialists" and Chinese Christians as their "running dogs."

The CCP proposed its "Three Self" principles—"self-governing, self-propagating, and self-financing"—in order to force religious groups to cut ties with foreign entities. This "independence" meant that Catholics would have to cut ties with the pope. For them, however, the pope's role as head of the church on earth, established by Jesus Christ himself, is a non-negotiable point of Christian doctrine. Meanwhile, in 1950, Shanghai's Catholics were given a gift for which they had longed when Ignatius Kung Pinmei was named bishop. As the author states it, "Shanghai Catholics were jubilant. They referred to him not as the bishop but as our bishop" (p. 43).

Under Kung's leadership, a revival of Catholic faith took place. He worked tirelessly to build up the faith of his flock. His deep love for youth and their ardent love for him and zeal for their faith, led him to organize retreats, catechism classes, and strongly support a youth organization dedicated to study and leadership, called the Legion of Mary, a kind of Catholic "spiritual army."¹

In chapter two, Mariani details the CCP's targeted attacks against the Legion of Mary, the Catholic Central Bureau (CCB), the central coordinating body for bishops, and the papal internuncio (diplomat), Archbishop Anthony Riberi, who had strongly opposed the Catholic "patriotic" movement. A major tactic of the CCP was to attack foreign priests and paint the church as a foreign entity, during a time of great anti-Western fervor.

The Legion of Mary became another target, predictably, because of the group's name, military terminology ("Mary's Army" in Chinese), and its clear identification of communism as an evil force. At one point, Bishop Kung, who had proclaimed himself to be an



ardent lover of both his country and the church, felt torn between the choice to instruct Legion members to compromise with the authorities in order to spare them from prison, or to continue to urge them to resist. After a young Jesuit leader in the Legion was arrested, students were strengthened in their resolve to choose prison over registration, which in turn bolstered Bishop Kung's decision not to compromise. For a time, the youth and the bishop stood together and the government backed down from its most serious threats. As a prudential move, the Legion decided to disband, and its members joined the less provocatively named catechism groups where they continued to be well-trained in the study of scripture and the Catholic faith.

In chapters three and four we read of increasing arrests and expulsions, especially of foreign missionaries and of the increasing resolve of Chinese church leaders and lay believers to resist. Bishop Kung, sensing trouble to come, led three hundred seminarians and directors, including Father Louis Jin Luxian, to a nearby basilica where they all "took an oath to Our Lady of Sheshan not to betray the church" (p. 138).

We also learn of the sad events of September 8, 1955, when the CCP launched its third "strike hard" campaign against the church and "hundreds, if not thousands" of police raided Catholic churches, seminaries, and households, and arrested Bishop Kung, Father Jin Luxian, over twenty other priests, and more than three hundred leading Chinese Catholics. In the ensuing days and months, Kung and the others were denounced in large public meetings designed to show the Catholic youth that their leaders had been defeated. In one such meeting, Kung is said to have been pressured to speak, and after a time he "raised his head and shouted 'Long live Christ' several times," to which the students shouted "Long live the bishop," twice before the soldiers raised their rifles and ordered them to be quiet (p. 154).

In the fifth chapter, we see the CCP dividing the church by turning as many priests and leaders as possible against Kung and writing in the People's Daily, "What the Kung Pin-mei counter-revolutionary clique did had absolutely nothing at all to do with religious belief." The party succeeded in getting many priests to denounce Bishop Kung and began to set up what Mariani describes as a "puppet church."

In 1956 and 1957, Catholics who remained loyal to the pope and Bishop Kung adapted and became known as the "underground" church. They refused to recognize "puppet" bishop, Zhang Jiashu, and some began to pray in private homes, avoiding the parishes that were increasingly under CCPA control, or to worship only at masses offered by "loyal" priests. The Holy See recognized and approved the underground church, even extending to loyal priests some faculties usually reserved for bishops. In 1957, the CCPA was formed officially, and in 1958 it began to consecrate new bishops without Vatican approval, a practice that continues today remaining a primary point of conflict in Sino-Vatican relations in the post-Mao era of "Reform and Opening."

Bishop Kung and those arrested with him were given a show-trial and received life sentences. In 1979, he was secretly named a cardinal by Pope John Paul II and was finally released from prison in 1985. Held under house arrest until 1988, his nephew, Joseph Kung, obtained permission to bring him to the United States. A year later, Kung flew to Rome and met Pope John Paul, received his Cardinal's red hat and an "unprecedented eight-minute standing ovation" from the crowd at St. Peter's Basilica. He died in Connecticut, in March, 2000, at the age of ninety-eight.

A most intriguing part of the book is the epilogue in which Mariani turns his discussion toward a comparison between Kung and the controversial Jin Luxian, who, after his release from nearly thirty years in prison, in 1984 became the "official" (i.e. government-approved) bishop of Shanghai, without Rome's approval, possibly because "he felt the future of the church was in jeopardy; he was afraid the government might appoint an even more pro-Communist bishop" (Adam Minter, quoted in Mariani, p. 214). Jin emerges as a very complex man, having served with Kung and others during the 1950s, taken the oath with him at Sheshan, endured long years in prison, and yet later cooperated with the regime, in effect, to ensure the survival and growth of the Catholic Church in Shanghai. As is well known, Jin built many churches and Catholic institutions in Shanghai during the last thirty years and enjoyed the respect of government authorities. He had also been attacked by many, especially underground Catholics, and yet, says Mariani (writing before Jin's death in 2013), "ironically, it is he who ensures their protection—for given his contact with the authorities, who else but Jin could act as the protector of the underground church?" By 2005, it was widely acknowledged, although apparently never officially declared, that Jin was among the majority of bishops now reconciled with Rome (p. 220).

The book concludes by recognizing that the fundamental issues dividing the Catholic Church in China, as well as causing the Chinese government and the Holy See to remain at an impasse, are still unresolved. For example, in July 2012, shortly after this book's publication, Thaddeus Ma Daqin was installed as the bishop of Shanghai and, at his ordination mass, made a bold move by announcing his resignation from the CCPA and remains under house arrest today, unable to take up his duties as bishop. At the same time, underground and official Catholic communities today coexist in widely varying degrees of reconciliation or continuing separation, depending on location and circumstances.

The book, as stated above, is an essential contribution to the field. Mariani asks the right questions, his analysis considers various sides, and he presents the complexity of the church's situation up to the present time, even while his primary sympathies—with Bishop Kung and the underground church—are clear. There are a few places in which he raises curious issues without providing enough detail. For example, he writes that after his release from prison Bishop (then Cardinal-elect) Kung

was beginning to make confused and cryptic statements. Was he making these statements of his own volition? Was the party putting words into his mouth? In either case, the fear was that Kung could too easily play into the hands of the CCP. These diehard Catholics wanted to preserve intact the memory of Kung's heroic resistance. They did not want it sullied in any way by the complexity of the new situation or by the powerful forces arrayed against an exhausted old bishop (p. 215).

[Continued on page 15](#)

Resource Corner

Sacred Space 神圣的空间

Your daily prayer online 你的每日圣言在线

The *Sacred Space* website is inspired by the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola whose insights into God's working within the human heart have been of great assistance to countless people over the centuries and are more helpful than ever today. A work of the Irish Province of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), *Sacred Space* is available in a variety of languages including English and Chinese. Begun 15 years ago, it offers daily meditations on Holy Scripture and personal reflections aimed at helping us get in touch with God and experience his presence in our lives. To help us better prepare ourselves for more fully encountering Christ through Scripture, it guides us through sessions of prayer in six stages:

- The Presence of God
- Freedom
- Consciousness
- The Word
- Conversation
- Conclusion

In addition to the prayer offerings at *Sacred Space*, there are also links to *Pray As You Go* and the *3-Minute Retreat*, both excellent resources for engaging more fully in prayerful meditation through Scripture, and in life, in the spirit of Ignatian contemplative prayer. Incorporating Scripture and questions for reflection for daily living, along with quieting or meaningful music and peaceful imagery, these additional daily prayer resources are well suited to those who lead busy lives but still desire to make more time for God in contemplative prayer.

Find these resources at:

Sacred Space: <http://www.sacredspace.ie/>

神圣的空间 (shenshengkongjian): <http://www.shenshengkongjian.org/>

Pray As You Go: <http://www.pray-as-you-go.org/home/>

3-Minute Retreat: <http://www.loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer.htm>

Pray As You Go and *3-Minute Retreat* are also available as mobile phone apps.



IMG_2252.jpg by Kuruman, on Flickr

Church Militant: Bishop Kung and Catholic Resistance in Communist Shanghai

Continued from page 14

Although most readers will fully sympathize with Kung, this intriguing statement still causes one to wonder exactly what kinds of statements Kung was making and about possible explanations. On the whole, however, this outstanding book is recommended for any seeking a penetrating account of events and issues which are still pertinent to the ongoing trials of the Catholic Church in China today.

¹ Whereas some Protestant traditions tend to find Catholics' loyalty to the Virgin Mary and groups dedicated to her to be unacceptable because they seem to rival the loyalty that is due to Christ alone, Catholics see no conflict, viewing Christ, who they worship as Lord and Savior and as one of the persons of God in the Holy Trinity, and his mother, who they honor for her complete obedience and steadfast maternal devotion to raising Jesus as Theotokos (the Mother of God), as being already perfectly united in obeying the will of God the Father. For them, to love and honor Mary is to love and serve Christ himself, for she always instructs believers as she did the servants at Cana to "do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5).is mercy and love to more completely surround us in our prayer.

John A. Lindblom is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in World Religions and World Church at the University of Notre Dame. He holds an MA in China Studies from the UW Jackson School of International Studies and has spent several years working in mainland China where he was also involved with the local Catholic church and serving Catholic charities.