

## **Chair's Report 2002**

### 1. General

The year 2002 has been a difficult one for all of us -- for the growing threats throughout the world to peace as terrorist acts grow in numbers and intensity and no place, however remote, feels safe, on the land or in the air or at sea. The threat of outright hostilities towards the Saddam Hussein regime is imminent and the continuing Israeli Palestine conflict threaten a religious based stand-off that augurs badly for the future of our planet.

Religion in general, and our own Catholic Church in particular, is experiencing its own humiliation, as Church leaders are called to account for their gross failure to confront scandals in their adherents and the faithful are shocked by revelations of infidelity of religious in high places. In many places people are turning away from structured religion and turning to more fruitful sources of spirituality.

For us in CEC and I am sure for many of you here present, the story of China in very recent times is one of sober hopes for the future of the Churches and even of all religions there. The mighty dragon is making its presence felt in many ways in to-day's world, perhaps as a reaction to the almost 20 lost years during the Cultural Revolution. Openness is the word, openness in economic and political and cultural growth, and under cultural growth one could include religion, although it would be naive to say that there is now full freedom of religion in the PRC.

### 2. Chinese on Formation in UK

A significant beginning was made in CEC's sponsoring Chinese for formation in Britain with the arrival of two women recommended by Sapientia Press in Beijing. Yan Li and Jie Sheng have completed a year of English language studies with considerable success. They have managed to visit many parts of Britain and attended the European Ecumenical China Conference in Ireland.

They are attending basic Theology courses at Heythrop College, Campion House and Education for Parish Service at the Christian Education Centre in Tooting. Fr Joseph Cai from Shantou diocese is studying English. Formation in Chinese Seminaries is an area where CEC can be of assistance. Four Seminaries were visited in August 2002.

### 3. Catholic Academic Institutes

Discussions have been initiated with the Philosophy Departments of some Universities and some Institutes for the study of Religion with a view to a joint conference between them and third level catholic academic institutes in the UK.

### 4. Theological Magazines

Subscriptions to The Tablet magazine for 12 Institutes has been sponsored by CEC.

## 5. Teachers in China

One facet of the CEC programme which occupies much of our time is facilitating teachers to do long-term teaching in China. We gave extensive publicity to it throughout the UK, yet only three teachers finally accepted the challenge, and are now happily engaged in their assignments. Over the last quarter of 2002 we have received 18 enquiries about teaching English, and we expect to have three to five successful candidates for this year. It is hoped that in future years opportunities will be offered to teach subjects such as Economics, Business Management, Statistics, Communications, etc. The medium of teaching in each case is English.

## 6. Exposure Trip to China

This is an important event that CEC sponsors. You will get a first-hand reflection by one of the participants. It is here that cultural exchange is acted out in practice. It is hard to tell which side of the exchange is most affected; I suspect it is those who make the trip to China for the first time. Last year's group was led for the first time by a Vincentian, with a Vincentian interpreter. The Vincentian Fathers and Brothers have a long history of involvement in China. Opportunities to meet Church personnel are arranged beforehand by the CEC staff. It is almost impossible to meet people from the so-called underground Church.

## 7. Awareness in the UK

A very successful conference was held in conjunction with the first AGM (Jan 26th, 2002) of CEC sponsored conjointly with the Archdiocese of Westminster, attended by over 100 people. Talks on the Catholic Church in China today were presented by Edmond Tang and Margaret Siberry. A second conference was held in Leeds (June 8th) with a good 80 people attending.

Father Joseph Lan Xiaoping, a staff member at Shanghai seminary, who had completed his studies at Chicago Theological Union in the U.S. was guest speaker to various groups in England including the Leeds conference.

## 8. Working with Other Churches

Joint work was done with Friends of the Church in China (FCC) in the Leeds Conference. Caroline Fielder represented (FCC). We attend meetings with China Forum & have links with the Scottish China Churches Group.

## 9. Magazine

Work is underway on collaboration re a magazine. We will have an insert in the spring issue of the FCC, hopefully moving towards a joint magazine.

## 10. Monographs

A decision on the first monograph to create awareness of the reality of China has taken place and plans for an Editorial group are under way.

## 11. Catholic Networking

Twice yearly mailings go to all who have shown interest in China. Members of CEC, Conference participants, Participants of the Exposure Visit to China, People who are interested in the Teach English in China Program, Bishops and Religious.

## 12. CEC Growth

From all that has been said it is obvious that, in the two years that CEC has been up and running it is growing and developing achieving the aims and objectives set out in its 5 year vision statement and for this we are truly thankful to God and to all who support us.

## 13. Final Words

Last December, we were shocked and saddened by the sudden death of Fr Liam Ganley MHM who represented his congregation's involvement with CEC and took an active part in its Finance Committee. May he rest in Peace.

In conclusion, the last year has been an eventful and fruitful one for CEC and we hope that the Lord will continue to bless its work in the year ahead.

Michael Duffy ssc