

Chair's Report 2003

1. General

The year 2003 has been a year of joys and sorrows for us all as we lived through the unfolding consequences of the struggle against global terrorism, which culminated in the war against Iraq, and the capture of Saddam Hussein. The Israeli Palestine conflict continues to bring bloody scenes of pain and suffering to our television screens and we ask when we will it end? And as I write there are rumblings of political unrest, in Haiti.

On a brighter note we celebrated the official beatification of Mother Teresa and unofficial "canonisation" of Jonny Wilkinson as the England Rugby Team won the much-coveted World Cup. Life was eventful too for the People of China. In March last year Hu Jintao was elected president of the People's Republic of China ushering in a new political chapter while nationally both Government and medics struggled to cope with the escalating numbers within its population affected by SARS (Severe acute respiratory syndrome)

We too in CEC were affected by the SARS epidemic and our expo sure trip had to be cancelled. This setback, however, was only a temporary blip and there have had many good things to celebrate as we tried to add our "widow's mite" in bringing about the reign of God in and through the links we make between the Church here in Britain and the Church in China.

As we all know, the Church in China struggles with many tensions and difficulties because of its history. Catholics in both the "Unofficial" Church, which is considered illegal by the Government, and the "Registered" Church, which the Government officially recognises, long for a reconciliation between these "two faces" of the Catholic Church and ask for our prayers in bringing this about. Let us keep their hope for reconciliation and unity always in the front of our minds and hearts. (see page 12)

2. Formation

Yan Li and Jie Sheng, who studied English and Theology in Britain have returned home and begun work with Sapientia Press printing house, Beijing. We expect to have two more students in July 2004 to study Philosophy and Theology at Heythrop.

Assistance was given to a seminary in China to establish a language laboratory and through this gain access to the world of global theology.

A good partnership is developing with the *Institute of Culture and Christianity* in Beijing. Their aim is to prepare Christian literature, historical and current for the Chinese public. In 2003 they have initiated a basic theology course and discussions are ongoing with a view to some of these students spending a semester in the UK.

Theresa Enhui presently studying Theology in Rome spent three months with us during summer studying English, Catholic Church and Ecumenical relations in the UK.

3. Catholic Academic Institutes

Discussions continue at three levels to link institutes in the UK and China.

4. Theological Literature

The Tablet is being sent to 12 institutes / individuals. Some theological books have also been sent. A number of requests are being made that we are unable to finance.

5. Teachers in China

11 Teachers from the UK have participated in this programme since 1992. Five teachers were prepared to go in 2003, but SARS scared people and only two went, adding up to three presently in China.

6. Exposure Trip to China

This visit had to be cancelled due to SARS but will be resumed in 2004. Representatives of church organisations in UK will be the members. As well as meeting people in parishes, we had also hoped to have a number of academic dialogues on Christianity with staff of seminaries and institutes for the study of Christianity.

7. Awareness in the UK

Two awareness conferences were held, one in Birmingham and the other in York, co-sponsored by those dioceses. The Bishops of both diocese spoke at the conferences. Through these conferences we hope to widen the network of people with an interest in China.

8. Working with Other Churches

Caroline Fielder, representing the Churches Commission On Mission (CCOM) / China Desk and member of Friends of the Church in China (FCC), and Ruidi Guan now studying at Nottingham University spoke at our awareness conferences on the Protestant Churches. We are represented at the executive meetings of the FCC, a member of the China Forum and have good links with Scottish, China Churches group.

9. Magazine

We collaborate with FCC on a magazine and two issues were collaboratively published during the year. The relationship will be reviewed in 2004.

10. Monographs

Our first monograph on 'Human Rights, Religion Freedom and the Catholic Church in China' is presently being edited and hopefully will be ready in Spring 2004.

11. Support for Catholic Network in UK interested in China

Twice yearly we send mailings to all who have shown interest in China. Discussions are planned to see what direction these networks should take.

12. Response to Chinese students in the UK

Our friends in China have asked us to try to develop some response to the many Chinese students who are studying in the UK. Discussions have begun with Catholic Chaplaincies and a pilot project is being developed at one University, we are alert and open to hearing of any other opportunities to respond.

13. Final Words

In conclusion, I would like to say a word of thanks to our former Chair, Fr Michael Duffy scc who is now working at the Columbans headquarters in Navan. He did a great job in getting CEC up and running and registered as a Charity.

Thank you also to the members of the executive, who facilitate the work of CEC and to Fr Eamonn and Fausta who keep the office at St Joseph's, Hendon running smoothly. And last but not least, a sincere word of thanks to all of you and to all who support CEC for your prayers, words of encouragement, practical support and financial contributions; without you, the work of CEC could not continue.

Sr Maureen Tinkler DC