

Chair's Remarks 2005

Before we move much further into the Year of the Dog, it may be appropriate to take a look back to the Year of the Rooster.

First though I would like to pay tribute to our former Chair Person, Sister Patricia Collins SHJM who died after a short but serious illness on 12th September 2005. A founder member of CEC, her experience, diligence and enthusiasm for the language and culture of China inspired and enthused so many of us. She is sorely missed. R.I.P.

Since the last AGM we have continued with our mission: to establish and maintain close cultural links with China. This is carried out first by creating a greater awareness among the public of the needs of modern China, by disseminating information on various aspects of life in China which until comparatively recently, was something of a closed book. However, our main purpose is to build bridges between the Catholic Church in China and the Catholic Church in England by a growth in mutual understanding and co-operation. This has to be at all levels: diocese, parish, seminaries, religious orders, and individual initiatives.

We have attempted to forge more personal links through education. We recruit teachers, mainly for English Language and Teacher Training, who then go to the poorer parts of mainland China for periods from three months to two years or even longer. Their purpose, in addition to teaching their subjects to a high professional standard is to live the gospel in their daily life, to 'Be' rather than to 'Do' in that they attempt to give their students and colleagues a better understanding of Christian thought and practice by leading their lives as Christians. During 2005 we had x number of teachers on this programme. We continue working to establish teacher and student exchanges to our mutual benefit.

In addition, CEC provides opportunities for Chinese students, usually young priests, seminarians or members of women's religious orders to come to UK for further studies. At present, we have twelve students here in England ranging from some well advanced in their M.A.s to one doing a 15-week English improvement course. We also hosted several visitors on familiarisation trips. Unfortunately, there were no 'exposure visits' to China this year. Meanwhile, our Director Fr. Eamonn O'Brien continues to network, as his remarks will show.

In conclusion, we look forward to continuing our work, hoping to be even more effective as an executive following the 'Workshop on Governance' held on June 3rd ably facilitated by Sr. Cathy Corcoran. The 2005 Summer School for Catholic Chinese students in Europe was hosted by Spain last year and we were represented by our Director. The 2006 Summer School hosted this year by England, which our Director is already planning, welcoming over 100 students from all over Europe, could well be the highlight of this coming year. In May, Sister Margaret Walsh an executive member will give a workshop on China and the needs of Chinese students here at the annual meeting of the England and Wales University Chaplains.

We take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support of CEC.