



In all things to love and to serve

Irish Jesuit Mission Office Newsletter

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Vision

Our Vision is a just and humane world based on Gospel values and Ignatian Spirituality.

Mission

The Mission Office supports Jesuit works in the service of poor and marginalised people, particularly in Africa and Asia.

Core Values

- Inspired by the Gospel and sent on mission to the new frontiers of our time, Irish Jesuits and their collaborators are called to:
- Become instruments of reconciliation in a divided world.
- Build a new world of right relationships with God, with other human beings and with all creation.
- See the world from the perspective of the poor and marginalised.
- Make the lives of people better in the poorest parts of the world.

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The Wise man from the West

Ms. Yang Yanci

We had just finished a special Mass to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of Matteo Ricci's death in China. As I stood in the portico of the imposing neo-classical church of St Francis Xavier, looking out to Georgian Dublin, surrounded by the excited chatter in Mandarin, I was suspended in a timeless, spaceless moment in which the Jesuit Apostolate had brought Ricci's Chinese heirs and Catholic Ireland face to face.

The Chinese Catholic community in Dublin had been asked to provide a Chinese dimension to the liturgy. This request was an exciting challenge since almost all of us, about 50 in all, are new converts having received the gift of Faith during our temporary stay here as "foreign students". The striking exception in our midst is Ms. Joanna Xiao, who can boast of the grand old age of 85!

Joanna's ancestors had received the grace of conversion through Matteo Ricci himself. Her family passed on the Faith for the next four centuries, with each generation steadfast in its Catholic beliefs despite the sufferings they faced during the repeated religious persecutions. At the Mass on May 9th, Joanna led the procession of seven new Catholics to offer the special gifts at the Offertory, which included a Chinese Bible and a Ming Dynasty robe.



The link between past and present evangelists was highlighted by our awareness that several of us had learnt our Faith in Joanna's Catechism classes and were baptised in this Jesuit church.

The Chaplain to the Dublin Chinese community had trained us well for this special Mass. All the hymns were sung in Chinese, accompanied by a keyboard and an e-wu, a Chinese string instrument. As our voices filled the big church, and the painting of St Francis Xavier preaching in Japan towered over us above the high altar, the words of the Eucharistic Prayer "From age to age, you gather a people to yourself, so that from East to West, a perfect Offering may be made...." took on a deeper meaning and moved us all.



The Prayers of the Faithful were a celebration of our Church's universal appeal, being read in Chinese, English and Irish. Two of us had

practised our English diligently as we wanted to lead a public prayer in this language as impressively as Matteo Ricci had done in ours.

After Mass, Chinese students gave a beautiful cultural performance which presented the diversity of Chinese culture, with songs and dances drawn from three of our most colourful regions – Manchuria, Xinjiang, Sichuan. The performers wore authentic costumes of both the Han and the minority peoples in the past two hundred years.

How different was May 9th 2010 from that date 400 years ago! China is now a modern and vibrant country. Its young people travel the world and have little difficulty in adopting western ideas and culture.

As our group of young Chinese Catholics were offering the same sacrifice of the Mass in a Jesuit church here as he had done four centuries earlier in the Chinese capital, I could see clearly the beams of the Cross stretching from East to West and from ancient Beijing to modern Dublin.

Yang Yanci is a graduate in English Language and has been active in Catholic Action among young Chinese studying and working in Dublin now numbering 20,000.

A Word from the Editor



Dear Friends,

The year 2010 is a special year for the Society of Jesus. On May 9th this year we celebrated the 4th centenary of the death of one of the best-known European Jesuit missionaries to the East. The name of Matteo Ricci (1552 –1610) and his work has left an indelible imprint on Chinese history and the Catholic Church in China. Pope Benedict described him as a Jesuit who was “gifted with profound faith and extraordinary cultural and academic genius”.

Today Irish Jesuits continue to work in the East in Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Cambodia. They continue the great work of education and evangelization which Ricci and others began. The celebrations for Matteo Ricci in Dublin were a wonderful occasion for the Chinese Catholic community. They prepared the Sunday liturgy in St. Francis Xavier Church in Gardiner St. where Fr. John Lee, the Provincial Delegate for China, preached a moving homily.

I take this opportunity to say a very sincere thank you to our friends and benefactors who supported our appeal for donations for our projects in Africa and Asia. Your contributions put roofs on Churches in China and Zambia, put school desks in Jesuit schools and repaired classrooms in Tanzania and Sudan. Your generosity will help to strengthen communities and ensure a better future for children in the most deprived parts of the world.

Our hope and our plan is that our Jesuit schools in Ireland will twin with Jesuit schools in Africa so that communities of students will create real bonds of connection and friendship across continents.

The requests we receive are always beyond our capacity and it is thanks to your support that the Mission Office can continue to respond to real needs and make a difference to the lives of many people.

At this time of year we welcome our returned missionaries as they enjoy a well deserved holiday with families and friends and hopefully the Irish sun will shine warmly on them and on all of us this summer.

Blessings to you all,

Fr. John K. Guiney SJ
Director, Irish Jesuit Mission Office

“The spirituality of Ricci is a spirituality of friendship, nurtured by the practice of the Spiritual Exercises, which give more intimate access to Him who said to his apostles “I no longer call you servants but friends”.

B.Vermader, SJ

The Legacy of Matteo Ricci in China

Fr. Alfred Deignan SJ

You may be amazed to learn that this year (2010) at Easter, there were 3,000 adult baptisms in the Catholic Churches of Hong Kong. Here in Ricci Hall Chapel we had 15. These adults had committed themselves to eighteen months of instruction, once a week, before baptism. The number of Catholics is growing in Hong Kong and Mainland China. The Church here is very alive, very young, very active and very generous.



This year, being the 400th anniversary of the death of Matteo Ricci in Beijing, may be a good time to look back and reflect on the growth of the Church in China and what has been achieved. Matteo Ricci's vision of the Church was that it should not be perceived as a foreign import but rather as a development and deepening of the values of Confucianism. He accepted and respected Chinese culture, traditions and customs, as long as they were not contrary to morality and religion. He concentrated on the Emperor and the intellectuals believing that if they were converted to Christianity the ordinary people would follow knowing their respect for the 'teacher'. Over the years Christianity grew as a religion well integrated into the Chinese culture and tradition – a Chinese Church.



Matteo Ricci SJ (1552 - 1610)

Evidence for this is in seeing how the Chinese Catholics faced persecution in different periods of their history and particularly during the Cultural Revolution.

It is very interesting to realize that the Jesuits were drawn by God's plan to do missionary work in China from the very beginning of the Society.

St. Francis Xavier, one of the early companions of St. Ignatius, tried to get into China and died on the island of Sancion facing the mainland which was forbidden to foreigners. Other Jesuits soon followed and Matteo Ricci was the first to reach the court of the Emperor. Over the following years hundreds of Jesuits came from Spain, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Poland and France to work in China. Jesuits came from Ireland much later, in 1926. These Jesuits tried to follow the same policy of Matteo Ricci. They learned the Chinese language and studied the culture, philosophy and customs of the society. In this way they won the respect of the people.

Today the Church in China is truly Chinese with its own bishops, priests, sisters and seminarians. They have a tremendous influence through their dedication and service, especially through their love for the people - the poor, the

sick, orphans and lepers and through their efforts to provide an education for the children.

Recently Bishop Aloysius Jin, the Bishop of Shanghai who is 96 wrote a Christmas (2009) message to the Catholic community of Shanghai. He encouraged them to learn from Matteo Ricci, to have faith in God, to love the Chinese culture and show respect for teachers. Bishop Jin said that Matteo Ricci followed this principle - "In China do not make the Chinese people into foreigners". Meanwhile we pray that the seed of faith planted in Matteo Ricci's time will continue to grow in China and we thank God for the wonder of the marvellous visible growth of the Church in Hong Kong.

Fr. Alfred Deignan SJ comes from Co. Cavan and has been ministering in Hong Kong since 1953. He is currently the Superior of the Matteo Ricci community in Hong Kong.

Jesuit Mission in Cambodia

Fr. Ashley Evans SJ

Cambodia is a green, hot and tropical country blessed with all kinds of fruits and fish. It has an abundant rice harvest each year. The Ancient Khmer civilization built the Angkor Wat Temple complex that remains one of the Seven Wonders of the World. During the sixties its rural tranquillity was shattered by war and in 1975 Pol Pot led his Khmer Rouge communist soldiers into Phnom Penh in victory. All foreigners had to leave. The country closed down to outside influence.

In 1979, when the Vietnamese army invaded Cambodia to overthrow this infamous Khmer Rouge regime, a large number of poor Khmer people fled to the border with Thailand and set up shanty refugee camps there. An old French Jesuit priest, Fr. Pierre Ceyrac, having spent over thirty years as a missionary in India, helped launch a mission of service to these Khmer populations. Around him coalesced an international team of young people, lay and religious, from the Christian, Buddhist and Jewish religions, dedicated to the service of the Khmer displaced people.

Having completed two years teaching I volunteered to work with the Jesuit Refugee Service in the camps in Thailand. I arrived in 1986 only seven years after the Khmer Rouge regime had been overthrown. Soon I was living and working on the mixed team with Fr. Pierre Ceyrac. I learnt much from him about priesthood among the suffering people. My initial task was to train Khmer primary and secondary school teachers in the camps in Mathematics teaching. I learnt the Khmer language on the way. After two years, in 1988, I returned to Ireland but nothing could ever be the same for me again. I had witnessed both the horror of a totalitarian regime over a poor and largely innocent population and the beauty and majesty of the Buddhist religion in the hearts and minds of the same people.

When peace was restored to Cambodia I returned in 1993 to begin my missionary work in Phnom Penh as part of Jesuit Refugee Service. Somehow I ended up teaching Mathematics again but this time at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. In 1997 I moved to the main parish of Phnom Penh to work as curate to the Thai parish priest.

Reflections on the experience

Firstly, it seems to me that the activities that we engage in are of secondary importance. For Cambodians, the relationship that emerges from working together is of primary importance. Owing to historical and cultural patterns, Cambodians tend to live relationships in terms of patron and client even when those relationships are full of love and affection. It is both painful and liberating to break free of these old patterns to enter a relationship of equality.



Angkor Wat Temple, Cambodia

Secondly, while the beauty and majesty of Buddhism is visible and tangible at all levels of Cambodian society, its inculturation is not as profound as it seems at first contact. Cambodians live in fear of evil spirits. Buddhists, formed before the Khmer Rouge regime, have some capacity to overcome and expel these fears; however many young Cambodians are very susceptible to such fear and terror.

Thirdly, there is a shift from Western to Asian missionaries among the Jesuits and other congregations. This is a good development, as the Asians seem to be less verbose and active and more quiet and contemplative. However there is also an inner Asian respect for hierarchy, which militates against relationships of equality.

Fourthly, the Government can deny visa applications. This power causes some Church leaders to be less than courageous in promoting justice in society.

Fr. Ashley Evans SJ comes from Dublin. He lectures at the Royal University of Phnom Penh and is Director of the Catholic Church Student Centres.

Loyola Jesuit Secondary School Kasungu, Malawi.

Approval has been granted for the construction of a secondary school in Kasungu, Malawi, with the following recommendations:

- That the school be grant-aided
- Co-ed (boys and girls)
- Built in phases and
- Have a community service programme that in some way immediately benefits the local community.

The school will aim to provide high quality education for 700 students. The school will also provide scholarships to the orphans of the Aids-pandemic.

Facts about Malawi:

- Less than 1% of the population gets a post secondary education.
- 65% of rural secondary schools have no electricity and no labs.
- 82% of the secondary school teachers are not qualified.

"Education means exit from poverty"

Recent Events

Over 100 people attended an international conference on 8 May to mark the 400th anniversary of the death of Matteo Ricci. The conference was held in Gonzaga College, Dublin, and the chairperson for the event was RTE presenter Sean O'Rourke. In welcoming the attendants, Irish Jesuit Provincial, John Dardis noted the importance of Ricci's inspiration for later Jesuit missionaries.

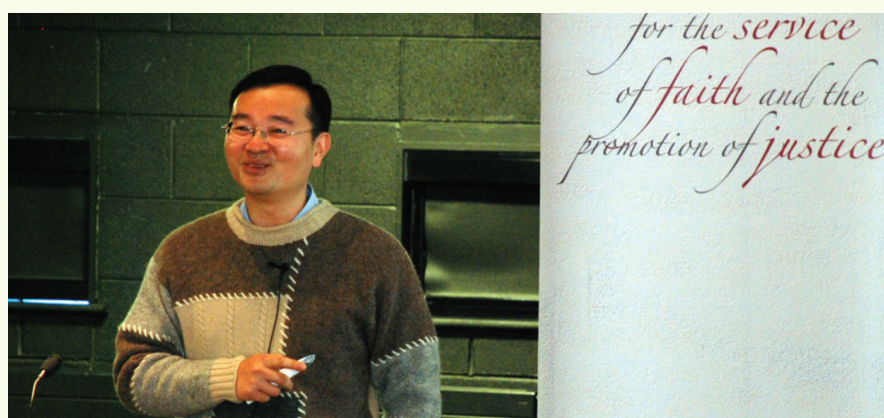
In the first address, Antoni Üçerler SJ expounded masterfully the historical context of Ricci's work. Also addressing the conference were John Lee SJ, on the Jesuits in China today, and Willi Müller SVD, on the present state of the Church in China. After lunch there was a workshop on Chinese character painting and a DVD about Ricci's life.



Proposed Loyola Secondary School

MISSION NEWS

- Fr. Todd Morrissey's book entitled 'Thomas F. Ryan SJ: From Cork to China and Windsor Castle' was launched by Ciaran Kane SJ in Belvedere College, Dublin on June 17th, 2010.
- The Jesuit Mission Office organized an outing on Wednesday 30th June 2010 for returned Missionaries and those on home leave.
- We warmly welcome home the following Missionaries and wish them a pleasant and restful holiday: Jerry O'Connell, Clive Dillon-Malone, Jim McGloin, Tony Geoghegan, Peter Carroll, Sean Coghlan, Ciaran Kane, Tom McIntyre, Ashley Evans, Gerry Clarke.
- Our Projects Officer, Fr. Martin Curry SJ, has just returned from visiting projects in Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan which are funded by the Irish Jesuit Mission Office.
- We welcome Fr. Tom Layden SJ who will take up his role as Jesuit Provincial of the Irish Province on July 31st. Our deepest gratitude to Fr. John Dardis for his support for missions and missionaries over the years.



John Lee SJ addressing the Conference

You can share in our Mission by:

- Sending a donation to the address on front page
- Donating online at www.jesuitmissions.ie
- Regular payments using the enclosed Standing Order form
- A Bequest - we will be very grateful if you remember Jesuit missions in your Will.

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