

# Peking Mass Raises Eyebrows, Questions Too

Hong Kong — (RNS) — The first Mass in five years celebrated before foreigners in Communist China was quite traditionalist.

Mass was offered in Latin; there was no indication of a "vernacular," a la Vatican II. The missal used was printed in 1950. Vestments worn were entirely traditional. The liturgy followed was from the era of Pope Pius XII.

Detailed reports from tourists are becoming available here

following the attendance of a group of Italians at a Mass offered in China's capital by Father Wang Ki-ting, vicar general of Peking, in the Church of the Virgin Mary.

Fifteen adult Chinese also attended the Mass in the 300-year-old church. Several received Communion, as did Vittorio Colombo, former Italian foreign minister and head of the Sino-Italian Cultural Exchanges Association which was visiting China.

China watchers here believe there may be some connection between this religious manifestation and current reports from Rome that Pope Paul hopes to renew links with Peking.

Reports here claim that according to an unidentified woman who had an audience with the pontiff, the Pope has made known to Chinese leaders that he would welcome to the Church bishops elected by Chinese peoples after the Communist government's break with

Rome, and that he is now waiting for Peking to declare its intentions with regard to a renewed relationship.

The vicar general, wearing a Mao suit with a clerical collar, said that the church was open every day and that there were 2 million Catholics in China belonging to the "Association of Patriotic Catholics" which has no relations with the Vatican and does not recognize the authority of the Pope over the world's bishops. Father Wang deplored the fact that the Vatican maintained relations with Chiang Kai-shek and praised the "great leader," Chairman Mao Tse-Tung.

He omitted, however, any specific information on the extent of religious practice throughout China, on the relationship between church and state, and on whether regular attendance at services in China was possible.

According to Father Wang there is one bishop for each region and several thousand priests in China. Bishops, Father Wang said, were elected democratically by Church members.

No priest has been ordained since 1963. "As for the moment," she said, "no need is felt for it."

Since the start of the "cultural revolution" there have been no reports of any Christian religion except for the closing or sacking of church buildings even though visitors to China have regularly been questioned here on this subject.

The Rev. Raymond Whitehead, consultant to the Hong Kong based East Asia Department of the U.S. National Council

of Churches, who spent a month in China last July with a group of 13 American students and graduates belonging to the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, said on his return that he was able to talk a bit with guides and interpreters about Christianity. He found that they and others had "some knowledge of Christianity but were puzzled by differences between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism."

The NCC aide said then that he had had no opportunity to discover whether an "underground" church really existed as some missionaries in Hong Kong maintain. His group was shown a Moslem mosque in Peking and was told that this was the only religious institution still open in China.

As late as Oct. 21, the Rev. Hosea Williams, a Southern Christian Leadership Conference official in the U.S., returned to Hong Kong after visiting nine Chinese cities as a declared clergyman. He said he had been told that 3 per cent of Chinese still maintain some religious belief — which seems to match Father Wang's figure for "Patriotic Catholics" — but that "the real religion of China is Mao Tse-tung's thought."

Therefore, say the China watchers here, it is curious that it should now be revealed that a Catholic Church is in regular use in Peking, and it is difficult not to ask why recent visitors who profess religion were not taken to see it.

It is also reported that the cross on the Church of the Virgin Mary where the Italians attended Mass is obviously a new addition. It also seems apparent that the Chinese are not deaf to any Vatican approach for renewing links with the Church.

## U.S. Bishops' Viet Statement Draws Mixed Reaction

Washington, D. C. — (RNS) — The "Resolution on Southeast Asia," passed by a voice vote by U.S. Catholic bishops here, brought a mixed reaction from conservative and liberal Catholic observers attending the final press briefing at the semiannual meeting.

"I think it's a step forward at a glacial pace," said John Murdoch, president of the Pittsburgh Conference of Laity, who said he also spoke for the National Association of Laity. Both are independent agencies, not to be confused with the official National Conference of the Catholic Laity.

"At the rate they (the bishops) are going," he added, "it would be reasonable to expect that the war could end and immediately the bishops could declare that it is immoral and we have declared it so all along."

"A less ambiguous statement should have been issued at this time by men whom millions of people in the United States look to for moral leadership on what has been the main moral problem of this country in the past decade. I think it's too little too late."

Expressing a quite different view was the Rev. Kenneth

Baker, SJ, editor of the Homiletical and Pastoral Review.

"I am disturbed," he said, "that American bishops have apparently not consulted the Episcopal Conference in South Vietnam on what they think about the 'proportional good' theory," on which the resolution is based. (Simply stated, under this concept, the hope for a good result must be greater than the evil to be caused by an action.)

Father Baker noted that South Vietnamese bishops, as far as he knows, are "very cautious" about expressing an opinion on American military presence in their country, but "it's my impression that they do not agree with the proportional good theory."

The American bishops in their resolution, he said, have not "adequately answered the question that the good which would result from our withdrawing from the war exceeds the good that's being accomplished by staying there—that is, the freedom and future of 15 million South Vietnamese."

Robert Morris, editor and publisher of Twin Circle, the national Catholic weekly, said he was "appalled that the

American bishops have issued a statement with an underlying military conclusion without even consulting military authorities."

"The bishops conceded," he said, "that if ending the war without further delay would bring mass executions all over Southeast Asia, such as the Communists wrought at Hue, they would reconsider their conclusions. And yet, they admitted that they had not looked into the military situation."

A. J. Matt Jr., associate editor of The Wanderer, a conservative Catholic journal, said:

"It seems to me most bishops feel they have acquitted themselves of their responsibility to make a statement of moral concern on an issue which has divided the country."

"However," he added, "it's my feeling those bishops who are identified with the peace movement will use this statement to assert that the bishops have indeed called for a unilateral quitting of the war on the part of the U.S."

"Instead of viewing it as a moral document, it will be interpreted by the forces on the left as a political statement," Matt said.

## Charities Aide Urges Help For Elderly

Washington, D.C. — (RNS) — Msgr. Lawrence J. Corcoran, secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, called for immediate passage of a U.S. Senate bill providing a broad nutritional program for the nation's elderly.

In a letter to Sen. Harrison A. Williams (D-N.J.), chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, Msgr. Corcoran said the nutritional needs of older persons have been "adequately documented," as has the fact that many of the aging are "undernourished and even suffering from hunger."


The Williams committee is now studying Senate bill S1163 which provides for federal grants to states for the establishment and maintenance of low-cost meals program for the aging.

The Nixon administration reportedly opposes the bill because it wants to handle the nutritional needs of the elderly in the administration-backed bill, HR-1, a broad welfare reform package.

Responding to this situation, Msgr. Corcoran said that the administration's broad program is not "incompatible" with the Senate bill. "We all favor a broad and many-pronged attack on many problems of the aged," he said, but he stressed that the nutrition program has a special urgency.

Courier-Journal

## CHRISTMAS SHOPPING?



Please put the mission-poor on your Christmas list too. What a great way to celebrate God's giving Himself to us, in Christ, because He loves us. Give to them today because you love them too!

ENCLOSED is my special gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the missionaries bringing the world's poor the GOOD NEWS of how God loves them.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

12/1/71

Salvation and Service are the work of

## The Society for the Propagation of the Faith

Send your gift to:

Rev. Msgr. Edward T. O'Meara  
National Director  
Dept. C, 366 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York 10001

OR

Rev. Joseph F. Reinhart  
Diocesan Director  
50 Chestnut Street  
Rochester, New York 14604

Wednesday, December 1, 1971

Page 7-A