

CHINA: Past and Present

By Bob Considine



St. Mary's looks like any other old Roman Catholic church whose neighborhood has grown seedy over the years. There is the old gray exterior, the cross at the crest, and inside are familiar wooden pews, the stations of the cross along the walls, altar rail dividing the parishioners from the main altar, and the altar to the Sacred Heart to the left and to St. Joseph at the right.

The sanctuary light was burning when we entered the other day, passed the confessional and approached the main altar, over which is a fine painting of the Virgin. The tabernacle carried a purple silk curtain, sign of the Lenten season.

But St. Mary's is no longer a Roman Catholic church. It is a Catholic church under the control of the Peking Patriotic Catholic Association.

"We have repelled association with the Vatican since 1952," Tien Chun Len, a member of the association, told us as we stood in the pleasant courtyard.

"We are proud of St. Mary's. It is the oldest Catholic church in Peking — maybe 300 years old. It was built by German missionaries. I myself knew many foreign priests when I was a Roman Catholic — Frenchmen, Americans, Italians. We had a French rector when the association took charge. He was sent away and his assistant, Father Shih Yu Kun, is now our rector.

"There are nine other Cath-

olic priests here at St. Mary's. We have Mass every day and three times on Sunday. Sometimes as many as 500 come to Mass, but generally it is much less than that. And more old people than young. We have no altar boys."

Tien gave us a tour of the rugged old church, pausing perceptively at a bright red collection box, then led us to a reception room to meet Father Shih Yu Kun.

The handsome Chinese priest entered the overstuffed room carrying his gold-edged missal under his arm. He greeted us with a paternal smile, lighted up a cigaret, and patiently and earnestly answered our questions. He began first by smiling and saying "I am over 40," then got down to cases.

"In the People's Republic there is complete freedom of religious belief," he said. "It's in our constitution."

I asked him if he had been aware of Maryknoll Bishop Walsh's years of imprisonment by the People's Republic, and his release last year.

"I read a news item when he was arrested and another when he was released," Fr. Shih said, looking reflectively at his cigaret. "I believe Bishop Walsh used his priest's robes to practice espionage for your CIA. Many Roman Catholic priests were arrested at about the same time, 20 years ago. They were not arrested as Roman clerics; they were arrested because they were counter-revolutionary.

"China was exploited by foreign missionaries for many years. They fled after our liberation. They knew they had used their cloaks to carry out activities detrimental to the people of China. An Italian priest, a man named Martino, actually attempted to shoot the leadership of the People's Republic."

"Your leadership is atheistic," I said. "How do you relate that to your devotion to them?"

"We are doing our best toward constructing socialism," Fr. Shih said, imperturbably stamping out a cigaret that had burned down to his nails. "Yes, the Communists are atheists but this will not inhibit our contribution to the cause. Do I feel less close to God than if I were again a Roman Catholic? No, I don't. I believe in Catholic doctrine. We retain the Latin liturgy. We have Communion, confessions, benediction, vespers. Also, we love our great Chairman Mao. We regard this as proper. The foreign priests were not in conformity with the teachings of the Bible. We are."

There were some laughs, too, on the Nixon trip. At least there were until the communique was issued, a document which sent correspondents scurrying in all directions in search of Rosetta stones.

Walter Cronkite of CBS was among the many correspondents who listened to the White House before embarking on the

trip, and dutifully bought a suit of thermal underwear. We were all assured that Peking would be as cold as the North Pole.

Actually, it wasn't bad at all. So when it came time to start packing to move southward to Hangchow and Shanghai, Cronkite was faced with the alternative of stowing his thermal drawers in his already bulging suitcase or cramming in the presents he had bought for his family. There wasn't room for both, so he tossed the thermals into the wastebasket.

That evening they were returned to him, beautifully laundered. He threw them away again, when the roomboy wasn't looking. But as his bus started for the airport the next night, the roomboy gave chase and flagged it down. He had found and re-laundered the underwear.

It reminded Walter of the boomerang thrower who went mad.

The reporters and the photographers accompanying Nixon were herded to the top of a watch tower when he visited the Great Wall of China. The only view of the President and his party was through narrow slits in the masonry of the high wall which topped the tower. Arrows were shot through them, and gunpowder blew iron balls at would-be invaders centuries ago.

A photographer was not impressed by the antiquity. He growled, "The bum who built

this didn't allow enough camera positions."

The President and Mrs. Nixon visited the ancient Ming tombs, particularly a medieval one called Ting Ling. A reporter suggested to the Nixons that the least they could do to reciprocate would be to invite Mao and Chou to visit Hollywood's Forest Lawn.

Hovering on the perimeter of the presidential trip was a tight little knot of Iron Curtain and "friendly nations" correspondents who are assigned to Peking. I asked a Rumanian newsman what it was like, being accredited to the People's Republic of China.

"They don't give us much freedom to move around," he said. "We seldom get a briefing, and we're invited to cover such visits as that of your President on the rarest of occasions."

"Then, how do you get your news?" I asked.

An Egyptian journalist answered first.

"We make it up," he said.

A Bulgarian writer told us, "You'll like Shanghai. Peking is a big village with no character. Shanghai is cosmopolitan. Like your Chicago."

That was the most unnerving statement of the trip.

A Debate:

(Catholic Press Features)

President Nixon's historic meeting with Red China's Chairman Mao has provided a timely backdrop for the publication of "Sayings of Mao — Sayings of Jesus," a paperback book comparing and contrasting the wisdom of the Chinese Communist leader and that of Christ.

Published by G/L Publications of Glendale, Calif. it is edited by Dick Hillis, who describes himself as "an American by birth and a Chinese by adoption, having married and raised a family in China."

"In 1971-72 the Chinese Communist Party celebrates its

Two Parishes Host Speaking Course

Evening classes in the Gabriel Richard course will begin next week at St. Augustine's and Holy Name, Greece.

The course, designed to "bring out the best in you," includes public speaking, memory training and leadership techniques, according to the local promotion director, Carl E. Loewenguth of 432 Arnett Blvd. Advance registration may be made by calling him at 436-1919.

Classes will meet at 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays at St. Augustine's; at 7:30 Thursdays at Holy Name. Each is limited to 30 persons.

Got Some News?

The Courier-Journal wants to print news of your organization, club or association. Please remember that the deadline is Thursday noon for the following week's paper.

Courier-Journal

The Teachings of Jesus And Thoughts of Mao

half-century anniversary while the United States is being swept by the Jesus revolution," he comments. "What do Mao and Jesus have to say about the issues confronting us today?"

The book consists of a series of back-to-back comparisons of statements by Mao and by Christ on identical topics. Some of these include:

Mao—"Our country and all the other socialist countries want peace; so do the peoples of all the countries in the world."

Jesus—"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you."

Mao—"We take up swords, too, following his (Chiang Kai-shek's) example . . . As Chiang Kai-shek is now sharpening his swords, we must sharpen ours too."

Jesus—"Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword."

Mao—"War is the highest form of struggle for resolving contradictions when they have developed to a certain stage, between classes, nations, states, or political groups, and it has existed ever since the emergence of private property and of classes."

Jesus—"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Mao—"We are advocates of the omnipotence of revolutionary war; that is good, not bad; it is Marxist."

Jesus—"Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Mao—"According to the Marxist theory of the state, the army is the chief component of state power. Whoever wants to seize and retain state power must have a strong army."

Jesus—"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting."

Mao—"Only with guns can the whole world be transformed."

Jesus—"I have overcome the world."

Mao—"U.S. imperialism has not yet been overthrown and it has the atom bomb. I believe it also will be overthrown. It, too, is a paper tiger."

Jesus—"Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Mao—"If (the Koumintang) attack and we wipe them out, we will have that satisfaction; wipe out some, some satisfaction; wipe out more, more satisfaction; wipe out the whole lot, complete satisfaction."

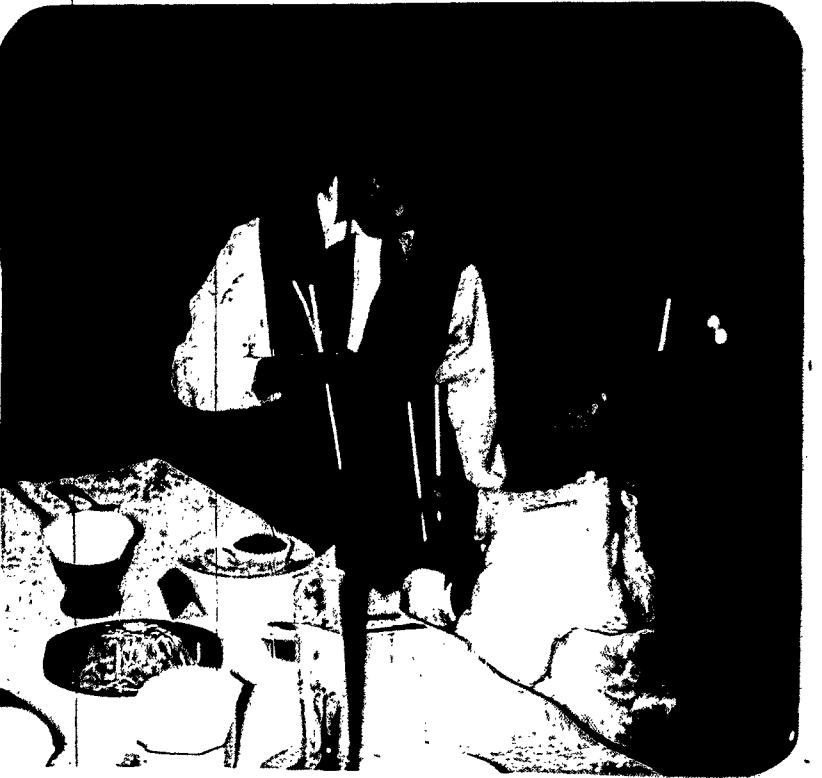
Jesus—"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

Mao—"The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history."

Jesus—"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth."

Mao—"We are not only good at destroying the old world, we are also good at building the new."

Jesus—"Behold, I am making all things new."



Lisa Frank helps Sharon Shaw learn to use chopsticks at Chinese dinner held by Guardian Angels students.

President Nixon Replies To School Well-Wishers

Students in the non-graded primary of Guardian Angels school finished their study of China with a Chinese dinner and a letter to President Nixon, wishing him success on his trip to the mainland and enclosing a pair of chopsticks as a gift.

President Nixon replied to the pupils with a note thanking them for the chopsticks and assuring them that, "Your prayers mean a great deal to me as I embark on my historic journey to the People's Republic of China and I hope, as you do, that this visit will be a step forward in achieving a world truly united by peace."

The President's response was sent care of Sister Marie Castagnaro, teacher of the literature unit which was studying China.

Pupils in Sister Marie's course started by reading two Pearl S. Buck stories, "The Water Buffalo Children" and "Dragon Fish."

The children then made dioramas and used Chinese lanterns and cherry blossom trees to make their classroom look like a Chinese restaurant.

Mothers volunteered to help prepare the menu for a Chinese dinner, which included chicken and rice, dried noodles, tea and fortune cookies. Each child got to try chopsticks.