

Dear friends,

Season's greetings from the Centre for Catholic Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong! During this *Season of Creation* (from September 1 to October 4) Christians around the world join in an ecumenical effort to renew our relationship with the Creator and to care for creation. This year we especially listen to the voice of creation. That includes the “voices of those who suffer the impacts of climate change”; the “voices of people who possess ancestral wisdom about how to live with gratitude within the limits of Earth”; and if we listen closely, the silence of a diminishing diversity of species. In this season we invite human beings of all faiths and none to celebrate with us the gift of creation, to recognize ourselves as co-creatures (and sometimes failed stewards), and to commit ourselves to protecting our common home, as well as all beings who share it, and will inherit it. (<https://seasonofcreation.org>)



**Listen to the
Voice of creation**
SEASON OF CREATION 2022

Reconciliation with Creation

Events of a global and local nature that came to a head these past years—the coronavirus pandemic, extreme weather and social rifts—have been unmistakable signs. They reveal to us, beneath the blanket of business-as-usual normalcy, the piercing “Cry of the Earth” and “Cry of the Poor.” In *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis’ encyclical letter devoted to ecological conversion, he underlines for us: “we are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.” (LS 139)

In accord with our Jesuit mission partner whose universal apostolic preferences include “Care for Our Common Home” (the subtitle of *Laudato si’*), the Centre has been discerning ways to foster reconciliation with creation, to walk with others on the path of ecological conversion. On July 24, we partnered with the Justice & Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese to host the first *Hong Kong Catholic Care for Creation Exchange Forum* at St Ignatius Chapel. The forum was titled “Wounded Healer: to be a Good Samaritan to Creation.” Open to parish groups and Catholics who care about ecological issues, the event drew over 30 participants from 21 parishes and ecumenical groups. Brother William Ng, OFM, set the tone with a reflection linking art and ecological spirituality (from perceiving the beauty of creation to sensing the Creator), from contemplation to conversion, and from fraternal communion to acting together for ecological justice. This was followed by animated discussion in break-out

sessions. Seven years of persistent, solitary efforts (perhaps longer), since Pope Francis issued *Laudato si'* in 2015, clearly there was a thirst to share with, and listen to one another.

Cynthia Yuen of the Justice & Peace Commission shared the results of a baseline survey of ecological awareness and practice among the 52 parishes in Hong Kong. Of the 19 that responded, only 3 parishes have groups devoted to ecological concerns. Often the subject does not make the priority list of the parish community or leaders. There are happy exceptions. During the break, forum participants went on a tour of the small but thriving “Garden of the Soul” at St Ignatius Chapel. Mrs. Tam, a member of the congregation, shared with us the genesis of the garden and its personal impact on members of the community.

The idea of the forum was to build a network of people and groups in the diocese that are concerned about ecology and stewardship. Shortly afterwards, “Care for Creation,” a



Facebook group has been formed. Drawing on the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, we hope to share the ideas and practice of integral ecology. “If everything is related, then the health of a society’s institutions affects the environment and the quality of human life. ‘Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment’” (LS 142). Integral ecology takes more than a green thumb. “Reconciliation with God, with one another, and with creation ... is always a work of justice,” as stated in the Society of Jesus’ GC 36, *Decree 1: Companions in a*

Mission of Reconciliation and Justice. The Centre for Catholic Studies continues to discern and enact reconciliation and justice through our intellectual apostolate. We seek potential collaboration with young people, communities of faith, schools and academia, parishes, even neighborhoods. We hope to deepen intellectual analyses with spirituality, storytelling, and the incarnational presence of Jesus Christ. As Jesus points out in his parable, on the road to Jericho, no one is ever safe. But we can choose to be a Good Samaritan/neighbor who cares enough to heal wounded co-creation. (Luke 10:30-37) This is the Good News that we bring!

“The Doors that Propaganda Fide has Opened since 1622” (International Symposium, online)

On August 24-26, 2022, Centre for Catholic Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, together with Macau Ricci Institute, had the privilege (and the audacity?) to organize a 3-day

International Symposium to mark the 400th anniversary of the founding of Propaganda Fide. Pope Gregory XV founded the Vatican organ for the propagation of the faith in 1622 to take charge of evangelization in the Far East, away from the royal patronage systems of Spain and Portugal that were driven rather by worldly interests. It went on to shape, not just Church history, but also world history through missionary encounters whose legacy persists to this day, affecting the destiny of peoples and nations. In 1967, after the Second Vatican Council, Propaganda Fide was renamed the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. In 2022 Pope Francis introduces the reform of the Roman Curia: pastoral conversion of the Church to being missionary. The symposium was thus a wonderful opportunity to review lessons gained from this seminal organization, and to ask important questions about mission and evangelization today.



Dr. Anselm Lam, Director of the Centre for Catholic Studies, and Dr. Stephan Rothlin, SJ, Director of the Macau Ricci Institute, opened the Symposium. We were grateful for the presence and support of Bishop Stephen Chow of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong. Over 100 scholars, missionaries and members of the faithful took part from Hong Kong, Macau and overseas. Together we had the great honor of welcoming Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Pro-prefect of the newly restructured Dicastery for Evangelization, as the keynote speaker. Cardinal Tagle shared with us a familiar, but deeply thought-provoking

reflection: 1) When we evangelize, do people hear about the person of Jesus Christ who is present with us today, or do they hear about programs and strategies? 2) For 400 years the Church has been used to thinking territorially; nations and Churches were classified as “mission-sending” or “mission-receiving.” Today we face changing *contexts*, the result of the fluidity of boundaries, the vast flow of people, ideas, social media, even fake news and populist manipulations. A lot is at stake—what qualifies someone as a human person? Are social relations skin-deep? What have we learned from the pandemic? Are we aware that care for creation is part and parcel of Christian discipleship? If the Church, imperfect as we are, is to be the leaven for a new humanity, what needs to change? “Every baptized is an evangelizer in need of constant evangelization,” Cardinal Tagle reiterated. Media is a tool for evangelization, but it is double-edged, creating many of the world’s problems. Is media a world to be evangelized, he asked. At the end, Cardinal Tagle exhorted us to learn from Jesus who was born on Asian soil, who related with people as an Asian, who laughed, cried as an Asian, and who ate a lot as an Asian. Let us learn from him, “for it is not just principles and

strategies, but also the imagination evangelized by the Lord that could help us find the path towards evangelization today and in the future.”



Over three days, six panels of speakers, composed of practising missionaries and expert scholars from Asia, Europe and America, provided diverse contexts to further the discussion. We are grateful to Fathers Michael Kim, KMS, Franciscus Armada, CM, John Shen Mi, Bernardo Cervellera, PIME, Mr. Takayoshi Kisaki, Doctors Calida Chu, Chicheng Ma, and Professors Claudia von Collani, Eugenio Menegon, Anthony Lam, Elmo Gonzaga, Qi Han, Augustin Udias, SJ, Yu Xue, Gianni Criveller, PIME, and Thierry Meynard, SJ, for their thoughtful presentations. They shed important light on the history of missionary work in Korea, Japan, Indonesia and China, which was conducted often with great zeal and self-sacrifice, but sadly also hampered by feuding national interests, theological backgrounds and ecclesiastical politics. We now live in a world where social media, images and films flourish and can be harnessed as evangelizing tools. But the scholars and theologians caution us to attend to truth and representation. Who controls and delivers information, facts, and truth? When they are crowd-sourced and algorithmized, is it for better or for worse? For some mass media is like the Areopagus. We need not be afraid of free exchange and contests; we have to risk translation, as God risks communicating with us from the beginning and through imperfect media. In fact, as evangelizing leaven, Catholic media need not be confessional; some of the best cover human issues and speak up for unity in plurality. We learned too that science and faith had not always been opposed. Ferdinand Verbiest, one of the Jesuit Directors of the Beijing Observatory, once observed: “Holy Religion makes her official entry (in China) as a very beautiful queen, leaning on the arms of Astronomy.”

Accommodation, translation, cultural exchanges and transformation of identity—these are the riddles that have plagued the path of evangelization for a long time. Speaking of the reform of the Curia, Cardinal Tagle affirmed “the teaching of Vatican II, where cultures, the cultures of the world are considered blessed with elements of truth and goodness, and therefore they could be embodiments of the one Gospel of Jesus Christ.... I think this is one path that must



be taken, so that the accusation that Christianity is a Western religion would be confronted; that the Gospel could find its many and valid embodiments in various cultures, so that the Gospel does not make you in this case a Westerner or you have to be a Westerner to be evangelized. No, to be

evangelized, you are renewed in Jesus Christ, and you become more what you are and the better version of who you are culturally because of your faith in Jesus Christ”

We thank friends and colleagues of the Centre who served as moderators of the Symposium. Finally we thank the many participants who attended, and contributed to the lively discussion. We received positive feedback and keen inquiries after the Symposium. We have just uploaded the **video of the Welcome Addresses and the Keynote Speech by Cardinal Tague** on Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iV0hAVXKASM>). We also plan to publish articles presented at the Symposium in *Hong Kong Journal of Catholic Studies*, the Centre’s annual journal, issue #14.



“Praise be to you, my Lord,” such are the words that inspire our care for creation and our mission to share the Gospel. Both are more than rhetoric. In *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis put it rather bluntly: “Indeed, when all is said and done,... [the poor, the little ones] frequently remain at the bottom of the pile.

fact that many professionals, communications media and located in affluent urban areas, are with little direct contact with their



This is due partly to the opinion makers, centres of power, being far removed from the poor, problems. They live and

reason from the comfortable position of a high level of development and a quality of life well beyond the reach of the majority of the world’s population. This lack of physical contact and encounter,

Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash

encouraged at times by the disintegration of our cities, can lead to a numbing of conscience and to tendentious analyses which neglect parts of reality.” [LS 49] May we listen and keep that in mind.

Centre for Catholic Studies editorial team

Dr. Cynthia Pon

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