

Dear friends,

The extreme weather does not make any disguise to us. We have a historically high temperature in Hong Kong in July. The cry of the Earth is clearly heard in the floodings in mainland China and the wildfire in Maui Island and Vancouver. The downfall of the global economy and the tightened international relations keep our eyes open to the crisis today. Our broken relationships with people and the Earth make many people, particularly the poor, suffer. As Pope Francis's encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* suggests, one of the remedies for conflict and division today is social friendship, which is the fruit of conversion. One of the exemplary icons of friendship is Fr. Matteo Ricci, who was announced Venerable by the Holy See in December 2022. We organized an online conference on "Matteo Ricci: Inspiration from an Iconic Missionary" in May. Restoring relationships as a process of conversion starts with a conversation. An in-person international conference on Ignatian Spirituality was co-organized with the Xavier House—Ignatian Spiritual Centre in July. The theme is "From Conversation to Conversion: An Ignatian Trajectory."

Apart from the conferences, the publication of books is our concern as well. *Good over Evil: The Efforts on Reconciliation in a Land of Conflict* is the title of the second book of the series on reconciliation. It is a collection of essays of the presented papers in the Forum on the Challenges of Reconciliation in July 2021. Suffering is inevitable during the process of reconciliation and conversion. A Catholic response to suffering and social injustice is essentially different from the secular version of social justice. Redemption of the soul makes the Catholic efforts of justice and reconciliation different from the secular endeavors. Our new book, *Catholic Social Teaching and Personal Spiritual Growth*, illustrates the contemporary challenges of the Catholic Church's social engagement and delineates the Catholic spiritual worldview through the testimonies of three saints.

Furthermore, it is so exciting that we offered the first online course on "Asian Theological Sources on Conflict and Reconciliation" starting on July 18. It is a new path for the services of the Centre in the future.

As a member of the academic community, the Catholic Church, and the planet Earth, we heard the cry of the poor and the Earth. We hope we can work with you to respond to the crisis today. Your support and engagement are essential to us.

Matteo Ricci: An Iconic Missionary of the Time



The term "Inculturation" first appeared in the Vatican Document, *Catechesi tradendae*, 30 years ago, and its meaning was elaborated by Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI since then. Inculturation and Sinicization of the Christian faith have become a hot topics for the Church in China in the past few years. Inculturation of the Christian faith implies an encounter of two cultures, namely, Western Christian culture and the local culture. This encounter has been interpreted as an imposition of Western Christian culture on the encountered country in the Medieval Ages. When the European missionaries first encountered Chinese culture in the 16th century,

they were astonished by its rich and profound culture. This experience invited the missionaries to reflect on their attitude toward other cultures.

Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit priest, one of the iconic missionaries in the 17th century, was renowned for the dialogic approach of evangelization and his friendship with Chinese scholars. Many academic studies emphasized Ricci's achievement of cultural exchange but missed his person and character. The Catholic Church recognized the heroic virtues of Fr. Matteo Ricci and declared him venerable on December 17, 2022. Pope Francis said he "was great not only for what he wrote but because he was a man of encounters, a man of the culture of encounter; a man who went beyond being a foreigner and became a citizen of the world."

To celebrate Matteo Ricci for being venerable, our Centre held an online academic conference on this iconic missionary on May 11-12. The aim and the focus of the conference is the person of Matteo Ricci. Scholars from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau shared their views on how Ricci responded to the challenges out of his personal characteristic and spirituality. Professor Li Tiangang claimed Ricci was a missionary of dialogue. Fr. Robert Ng delineated Ricci's character and spirituality by attentively studying Ricci's letters, which show his care for his family, his patriotism, and his love of the Church and God. Fr. Ng's presentation laid a good foundation for the coming presentations. His friendship with the scholars and the dialogue with Chinese culture is not only a strategy but an outpouring of his personal virtues and faith. Other speakers shared how Ricci interacted with the Chinese Neo-Confucian scholars in Sung dynasty, his careful choice of words for Bible translation and Christian doctrines, and his purchase of land for building churches, which illustrated a holistic portrait of Matteo Ricci to us. Professor Ku Weiying listed different positive and negative comments on Ricci throughout history, which fairly notes that Ricci, like everyone, had his limitations. He was an Italian, a Roman Catholic priest who was well-educated by Western European civilization. He might or might not be aware of his personality and cultural background. However, he extended his hands of friendship to the Chinese people with trust and humility. He opened his mind and critically learned from each other. He believed universal values are shared by different cultures, and the Catholic faith could transform Chinese culture in the encounter, from which Catholics could learn much.



When discussing inculturation today, it does not compromise two cultures in the encounter. Neither is the Christian faith modified or molded by the current Chinese culture nor the Chinese culture distorted by the Christian faith. As Pope Benedict XVI said, the meanings of inculturation include not only the efforts by the Church to make the Gospel enter every socio-cultural context but also its influence on cultures which is linked to "the idea of growth, the mutual enrichment of people and groups, by virtue of the meeting between the Gospel and a given social environment." In sum, the conference participants would agree that the spirit of inculturation is embodied in the person of Matteo Ricci.

Hong Kong Celebrates the 500th Anniversary of the Conversion of St. Ignatius of Loyola with an International Symposium

By Hessler Lee

More than 300 people attended the International Symposium on Ignatian Spirituality to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Conversion of St. Ignatius of Loyola at Wah Yan College Kowloon in Hong Kong from July 1-3.

The theme of the symposium, which was jointly presented by the Xavier House Ignatian Spirituality Centre and our Centre, was “From Conversation to Conversion – An Ignatian Trajectory.” It focused on what conversion means to the contemporary on personal level as a journey to actualizing authentic self, on the social level as a response to the world, and on the communal level as a call to becoming a pilgrim church.

Six keynote speakers shared their insights into the theme of the symposium. Keynote speakers Fr. Jose Garcia de Castro SJ and Fr. Gerard Kevin Whelan SJ spoke on “The Journey of Conversion: Insights from the Conversion of St. Ignatius,” and on “Using Our Imagination to Let God Transform Us: Ignatian Contemplation and the Spiritual Exercises,” respectively on the first day of the symposium.



On the second day of the event, Fr. James Hanvey SJ presented his keynote speech on “‘For the Life of the World’ – God Labouring and Working in All Things,” while Fr. Peter McIsaac SJ talked on “Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly: The Contemplative in the World.”

Giving keynote presentations on the last day of the symposium were Fr. Richard Leonard SJ, whose presentation theme was “Called to Communal Conversion: The Church on Mission to the World;” while Fr. John Dardis spoke on “Narrative as a Path to Conversion: Reflection on the Ignatian Tradition.”



Apart from the six keynote presentations, a total of 27 workshops were organized in the three-day event. In addition to the six keynote speakers, three other Jesuits, Frs. Ari C. Dy, Elton Fernandes and Francis Xu; one religious, Sister Monica Wong; and five lay persons, Ms Elia Chan, Dr. Anselm Lam, Mrs. Mary Robson, Dr. So Ying Lun, and Ms Robyn Wunder, also led at the workshops.

It is noted that the symposium was originally scheduled for taking place in 2022 as part of the Society of Jesus’ world celebration of the 500th anniversary of the conversion of St. Ignatius of Loyola but had to be postponed to this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

New Book - *Catholic Social Teaching and Personal Spirituality*

No believers will deny the importance of virtue practice in fulfilling social mission. But how to practice, and what is the relationship between virtue practice and participation in social affairs? Superficially, the question seems to be clear-cut. For more than a century, papal encyclicals and Church doctrines have provided detailed explanations widely accepted by believers engaged in social action. However, the problem is far from as clear-cut as imagined when it refers particularly to spirituality, which is often prone to serious misunderstandings and causes many Catholics to gradually deviate from Catholic doctrines when following the secular path to fulfill their social mission.



The first part of this book explores from a macro-historical perspective how the Catholic Church gradually steps down from the leading position in Western belief system and politics to a marginalized role in modern society. It then analyses how Catholic social teaching pursues a direction for development with the ultimate goal of redeeming souls in a modern society that is dominated by scientific and technological rationality. Here it shows especially what spiritual qualities a leader who executes Catholic social mission must possess. The second part

focuses on the spiritual journeys of St. Teresa of Avila, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and St. Teresa of Calcutta. The writings of these three Catholic saints provide rare empirical experiences that allow Catholics to gain insight into the importance of personal spiritual growth in living a life of faith and fulfilling the Catholic social mission.

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Where to buy: Centre for Catholic Studies, CUHK; Catholic Centre; T Talentum Bookshop; Logos Book House; The Commercial Press - University Bookstore, CUHK

New Book - *Good Over Evil: Reconciliation Efforts in the Land of Conflict*

This new book is the second book on social reconciliation published by our Centre. The first one, published in 2021, is a collection of essays from the “Forum on Justice, Forgiveness and Reconciliation.” Hong Kong society, without doubt, has become more divided and has not really recovered in the past few years due to the social conflicts and the subsequent Covid pandemic outbreak. As Christians, reconciliation is our calling and ministry. The path to reconciliation today is far from reality. Facing historical challenges, we have to bear in mind that we are not alone. Many Christians worldwide have been working for reconciliation in their countries for many years. Their experiences with tears and laughter would shed light on our endeavor toward the goal.



Thus, every country has its path to reconciliation; every way has flaws, and thus, progress is slow. It takes decades to move a small step. For Christians, reconciliation is the fruit of the salvation of Jesus Christ. It is not the result of human effort. The roadblocks along the path to reconciliation are based on different forms of human biases. With friendship with God and

other people in God’s love, we choose the difficult good to break the cycle of evil; we can move toward the final destiny of redemptive justice.

The essays in this book were originally commissioned as background papers for a forum held online by our Centre on July 17, 2021. Rev. Johnston McMaster from Ireland, Mr. Elias D’eis from Palestine, Dr. Elisee Rutagambwa SJ from Rwanda, Dr. Youn-su Kim SJ from South Korea, and Mr. Ruki Fernando from Sri Lanka shared their experiences and thoughts on reconciliation without reservation in the Forum. To integrate the experience with intellectual reflection, we invited Professor Ligita Ryliškytė to contribute an article on reconciliation according to the theology of Bernard Lonergan. We are grateful to all the authors for taking time out of their busy schedules to contribute to this book. We now publish their inspiring and encouraging papers in English and Chinese to benefit more audiences.

Asian Theological Resources on Conflict and Reconciliation

Our Centre is happy to offer the first online course in July. It is our first attempt to deliver a theology course online. This course intends to explore the resources offered by modern and contemporary Asian theologians when dealing with conflict and peacebuilding issues. It primarily refers to Catholic theologians but extends to all major Christian denominations. It also considers resources provided by Chinese Classics and other cultural references when reading through the prism of biblical hermeneutics. Authors and situations covered come from India, Sri Lanka, Korea, and Greater China principally, with some Japanese and Vietnamese authors also mentioned.



The methodology followed consists in the reading of texts explained by referring to their present-day context as well as to the use they make of the various traditions into which they are inscribed. (Note the tension between “present-day context” and “traditions”) We will try to develop our own interpretation of these resources in light of the changes presently affecting the global community.

Our Centre is honored to have Prof. Benoit Vermander SJ to teach this course. Fr. Vermander is a professor in the department of Religious Studies at Fudan University and academic director of the Xu-Ricci Dialogue Institute at Fudan Faculty of Philosophy. He got his PhD in political science from Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris (1984) and a doctorate in theology from the Jesuit Faculties of Philosophy and Theology of Paris (2009). He can speak fluent Mandarin. His research and publications focus on China’s model of development and its role in the globalization process, on Chinese religions and spiritual traditions, and contemporary expressions of civil religions.

Around 170 audiences registered for this course, and their feedback is very positive. With their encouragement and support, our Centre will offer more online courses on different subjects in the future, including one on Pastoral Communication offered by Rev. Mi Shen. Please stay tuned.

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