

INCULTURATION, EAST ASIANS

At the invitation of the Moderator, John Farrell volunteered to present an account of an International Conference in Taipei, Taiwan. In his account, Farrell made the interesting remark that the Chinese scholars had difficulty to find a proper term to signify the English word "person." A long discussion was needed to explain the meaning of the word "person" for trinity, incarnation, and morality on the dignity of the human person.

Sean Dwan, who also volunteered, told something of his experience with people involved in Shamanism in Seoul, Korea. He pointed out that the idea of happiness is emphasized in Shamanist rituals to celebrate the events of life, including the death and burial of children. Shamanists believe that prayers and rituals can be used to communicate with good and evil spirits through the medium of a Shamanist minister. Rituals are performed to heal the sick and to communicate with the dead.

Filomena Saraswati Devi gave us a presentation on the Venerable Servant of God, Joseph Vaz, who was a 17th century Oratorian priest and a native of Goa. In his practice of Christian virtues, he used the ascetical and mystical methods of *sunnyasa*. He became honored as a holy *sannyasin* by all Catholics and non-Catholics in Ceylon (now renamed Sri Lanka), India and Goa. Filomena presented him as a prototype of Asian Catholic inculturation. She said that his success is an evidence that Hindu liturgy, ascetism and mysticism can be used selectively for enriching the spiritual life of a Christian. It shows that different cultures can co-exist and flourish and enrich each other. This helps us to appreciate the American cultural environment which is multiracial and multicultural. Filomena also told us that being in America, far away from Goa and India, she began to realize the need to recover the roots of her life from the heritage of East Asian religious culture.

Following the chronological order of history, Matthias Lu, the moderator, gave a brief review of the early Jesuit Modern Missions of the 17th century in China. Their approach to Chinese Confucian culture was methodic and systematic. Under the leadership of Matteo Ricci (+ 1610), they undertook four tasks in relation to Confucianism: (1) to agree in truth; (2) to correct errors; (3) to supply knowledge; (4) to transcend nature by grace. They were conscious of the importance of transcendence in multicultural encounter. The exercise of theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity creates an effect of transcendence in cultural relations. It transcends the barriers between guest and host. It unites them in the common task of serving the common good through development of culture, that is, in knowledge and skills. The same four tasks should be extended from Confucianism to all religions and cultures. Different cultures by mutual exchange converge to serve the common good of human community more efficiently.

Richard Yee in his presentation presented two major points. The first was a survey of history of Chinese Catholic Mission Center in San Francisco. He praised the School at the Center for its constant efforts of bi-lingual education. The second point was the experience of his personal life in the context of multi-cultural environment. He said that both the Chinese tradition and the Catholic liturgy are rich in rituals, costumes, and symbolism. He made an observation about an interesting cultural phenomenon. He noted that Chinese families use Chinese rituals to celebrate the events of life at homes, while they use rituals of the Catholic liturgy when they worship in churches. He also pointed out the Chinese rituals as well as the Catholic liturgy are full of deep meaning in the sense of culture and education. He gave a special emphasis to the reflection of the meaning of death. He quoted Hegel's reflection on it. Hegel wished to remind his readers to consider death not as an irrational event of nature, but rather as an active struggle and a positive moment in the total process of the life of the spirit and its consciousness. If our lives are spiritual journeys, the very mystery of where we shall meet (hereafter) is the sign and the goal of our Catholic faith. This mystery is common to all religions and cultures and shines out with more light in the Catholic liturgy. "I am glad that I started the journey in San Francisco Chinatown," Richard said in conclusion.

John Wright drew everyone's attention to the fact that as early as 1938 the church lifted the ban of Confucian rites to the extent that they may be performed or attended licitly as civil rites of social respect, but not as religious rites. In as much as they are civil rites, it should be culturally incongruent to insert Confucian rites in the liturgy of the Catholic Mass. The general feelings of the Chinese Catholics in many areas do not favor such insertions. The rituals of different cultures for their proper festival occasions can be given a proper time and place for celebration freely, without hybrid mixing up with the mystery of the Mass which is a memorial of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and which is highly religious.

Richard Yee and Filomena Devi are not members of the Society. They were invited to serve as respondents and presenters at the workshop. The moderator invited all the participants to welcome them and thank them for their contributions. Their papers in the full length can be obtained from Matthias Lu.

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