

Experience from “Birdcage” Education – Journey of Calling and Resilience in Cross Border Higher Education Venture between Hong Kong and China and the recent Vatican – China, Initiative”

Speaker: Professor Edmond Kwok Siu Tong

(A) Hermeneutics (詮釋學)-(解釋學)

- (i) Philosophical hermeneutics
- (ii) Biblical Exegesis (bringing out)
- (iii) Exegesis vs Exposition

At the Vatican Council II, there was a prolonged discussion on Faith, based on biblical exegesis.

(B) Bernard Lonergan S.J.

He is one of the two greatest Catholic teachers or thinkers of the 20th century. His process of analytic discernment is based on the Ignatian Spiritual Exercise:

- (a) Experience)
- (b) Understanding)
- (c) Judgement) EUJD
- (d) Decision)

From past experience, a person understands the problem before him. After careful analysis, he comes to a judgment and makes his choice. This is followed by a decision to take a course of action.

(C) The recent Vatican – China Reapproachment

It is argues that

- (i) Present-day China is agnostic i.e. no religion and also that
- (ii) There is no real freedom of religion under the present regime;
- (iii) Faith has no place in China – fairness is the only influence needed in governance;
- (iv) There should be no compromise between good and evil, like Jesus not succumbing to the Devil in the desert even after forty days of temptation.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the Church must take a long-term view of her salvation work in the world and attempts to bring her message of salvation to as many people as possible, including those inside China: - e.g.

- “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” Luke 5:32”
- “But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mat. 9:13)
- “.....if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains and seeketh that which is gone astray?” (Mat. 18:12)

Thinking along this line, it is only proper that the Catholic Church should take the “risky step to establish contact with China.

(D) Personal History and Familial Background

Professor Kwok came from a family with three sons and studied at Wah Yan College, Kowloon. His eldest brother went to the University of New South Wales, Australia to study Medicine, but died of a ruptured appendicitis with peritonitis. The whole family was in despair – why death at such a young age through no fault of his? Professor Kwok was studying in the science stream at Wah Yan College, Kowloon. After this tragedy in the family, he did not want to study Medicine as first planned but decided to study in the arts stream. There was no arts subject in Wah Yan College, Kowloon at that time, and Fr. Farren had to start a special arts programme to cater to his needs. After this he went abroad to study Western and Chinese History. He made a detailed plan for his life at this time in the following manner:-

(E) Long View Plan

- 1967- 1977 (Academic Preparation - 學術準備)
- 1978-1987 (Social Action - 參與社會活動 – joined Hong Kong Observer)
- 1988-1997 (Academic Research - 學術研究) – at Chinese University
- Most productive period with numerous publications.
- 1998-2007 (Academic Exchange - 學術交流) – with Beijing University, Fudan University, etc.
- 2008-2017 (New Educational Ventures - 教育創新)
 - started new Liberal Arts College in Chu Hoi
 - education for the whole person in line of Jesuit philosophy.
 - (i) During 2005 – 2011 – founded new Liberal Arts College in Chu Hoi with Peiking Teachers’ University and Hong Kong Baptist University
 - (ii) Founded another Liberal Arts College in Shan-Tung
 - (iii) 2012-2013 – Visiting Scholar at 汕頭大學

From his personal Experience, it is possible to go beyond the bird-cage in academic endeavors.

(F) Recent changes in Western-Chinese Relationship as evidenced by the recent TV programme and China Daily write up on Mateo Ricci. Indeed, communism in China today is different from the communism under the gang of Four!

(G) Pope Francis – New Vatican Approach

Pope Francis is a Jesuit priest familiar with the Ignatian Spiritual Exercise and well-versed with Lonergan’s frame of mind. Recently he mentioned the following philosophical concepts:-

- (i) Time is greater than Space
- (ii) Unity prevails over Conflict
- (iii) Realities are more important than Ideas
- (iv) The Whole is greater than the Parts; but it is also greater than the sum of the Parts.

The Vatican under Pope Francis is exploring new initiatives with China out of Charity, hoping to find the new “You”. It also promotes friendship with society as a whole. This may be a Soft Revolution on reconciling realities that are present in our current society today. Pope Francis firmly believes that “charity gives us Courage to conquer Hatred”. This is the driving force behind the recent Vatican-China Initiative.