

St Mary's, Inverness
The RC Diocese of Aberdeen: SC005122]
The Year of St Ignatius
20 MAY 2021 >31 JULY 2022

FIFTY-SEVENTH IGNATIAN REFLECTION

THE IMPACT OF IGNATIUS : XAVIER, MATTEO RICCI & CHINA



In Paris the three University friends, Ignatius, Peter Favre, and Francis Xavier with four others made their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience at Montmartre in Paris on the Feast of the Assumption, 15 Aug 1534. The only priest among them was Peter Favre, a dear friend to the others a man of learning, simplicity of life and open-hearted kindness. From then a growing number of men undertook the *Spiritual Exercises* with Ignatius and Peter Favre. Many sought to follow the growing band of Companions of Jesus offering their lives together in His service. These companions were recognised as the Society of Jesus in September 1540 and from these small beginnings there was a steady increase in numbers, particularly among the better educated and the sons of the nobility. On 14 March 1544 the Society of Jesus was again confirmed and the restriction on its size [originally up to sixty members]. Portugal and Spain became separate Provinces, and missions were established in the East initially under Francis Xavier in Japan, India and looking towards China.



Ignatius walking with Francis Xavier in Paris, deep in conversation. In some ways Ignatius regarded Francis Xavier as a 'hard nut to crack', the young Spanish aristocrat was from a family steeped in Royal service. Like Ignatius he had done military service and was confident in himself. The experience of The Spiritual Exercises, undertaken with Ignatius changed the direction of his life. He and Ignatius had a profound friendship which survived long separations and was sustained by correspondence.

In March 1540, even before the Companions became officially The Society of Jesus [27 Sep 1540], Francis Xavier left his companions for Portugal on his way to India and the East. Despite his work in Japan, the East Indies and India, Xavier died looking towards China. It was for others to take forward his vision.



Matteo Ricci, SJ (1552-1610)

Matteo Ricci entered the Society of Jesus in 1571. Ten years later in 1581 Fr Alessandro Valignani, the Jesuit superior of the Jesuits in the East Indies advised to prepare for a mission to China. His academic training in Rome had equipped him with knowledge of scientific subjects when he had completed his

studies in philosophy and theology. He was a distinguished

mathematician, with interests and expertise in astronomy. These would serve him well on his mission to China.

While at the Portuguese colony of Macao Ricci began an intensive language course and in due course mastered the language to perfection. Matteo Ricci with Michael Ruggeri, a Jesuit companion, entered China in 1583. They dressed at first in the robes of Buddhist monks. Later they dressed as Confucian Mandarins. They were trying to adapt themselves to the culture of their hosts so that they might be more accessible. In their considerable luggage the Jesuits took clocks, musical instruments, mathematical and astronomical instruments, as well as cosmological, geographical, and architectural books with maps and diagrams. They attracted an important audience among the Chinese elite, who were impressed by Matteo Ricci's intellect and his memory he practised training in memory using word games (Mnemonics).

By 1601 Ricci was so well established and regarded that he was summoned to the Imperial Court in Peking where he met Emperor K'ang-Hsi. He was the first western missionary to be invited, a considerable privilege, and an opening. For nine years Ricci and other Jesuits held scientific and philosophical conversations with leading Chinese intellectuals. Through these conversations Ricci was creating a Chinese Christian community.

Ricci died in 1610, leaving over 2,500 Chinese Catholics many of whom were among the educated elites. His writings were influential and remained : Treatise on Friendship, a Treatise on Mnemonic Arts, a Chinese translation of Euclid's *Elements of Geometry*, a book of Chinese



apologetics—*The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven,* and *Ten Discourses by a Paradoxical Man.*

The Flemish Jesuit Nicolas Trigault was one of a long line of procurators appointed to represent the Jesuits' work in China. He arrived in China in the year of Matteo Ricci's death in 1610. However after two years he was sent back to Europe to raise material support for the Jesuits, to recruit more missionaries for the various houses now established throughout the Chinese Empire, and to procure more books that could assist the Jesuits in their intellectual apostolate.

Trigault managed to recruit over twenty Jesuits to return with him (although only eight actually ended up working there). He gathered many books (some of which are now in the National Library of China in Beijing) and he successfully publicized the distinctive Jesuit missions in China with their intellectual and cultural dimensions. Wearing Chinese scholarly clothing he was quite distinctive. Paul Rubens, the Flemish artist, drew and painted him in the Mandarin's robes when he visited Antwerp. [See above]

It was Trigault who published a selection from the collected writings of Matteo Ricci, [Augsburg in 1615]. The formal title of this work (in English translation) was *Concerning the Christian expedition to China undertaken by the Society of Jesus, from the journals of Fr. Matteo Ricci of the same Society. Five books dedicated to our holy Lord Paul V in which the customs, laws, and principles of the Chinese kingdom and the most difficult first beginnings of the new Church there are described*

accurately and with great fidelity, authored by Fr. Nicolas Trigault, Belgian, of the same Society.

The book recorded the difficulties faced by the missionaries and introduced Europeans to China. It was reprinted many times and translated into other languages notably Italian and French.



De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Jesu

[Concerning the Christian expedition to China undertaken by the Society of Jesus].

Johann Adam Schall von Bell was from a noble family near Cologne. After he had graduated from the Jesuit Gymnasium in Cologne he moved to Rome and studied mathematics and astronomy at the Collegium Germanicum. In 1611 he joined the Society of Jesus and continued his formation within the



Society at the Gregorianum University. The Society sent him to the China Mission in 1618. He travelled with Fr Nicolas Trigault sj and other Jesuit missionaries. Like others before the group arrived at the Portuguese trading port of Macao where Johann Schall von Bell learned the Chinese language.

He started missionary work inside China in 1622. In 1630 Schall von Bell and Giacomo Rho were sent to Peking in 1630 to work with Chinese astronomers and mathematicians in compiling the Chinese calendar.

In 1644, Schall von Bell gained access to the newly installed Shunzhi Emperor and became one of his trusted counsellors. He was made a Mandarin and held an important post in connection with the mathematical school: *Director of the Imperial Observatory and the Tribunal of Mathematics*.

This position and his status and esteem among the elite enabled him to obtain the Emperor's permission to build churches. The Jesuits built them and were able to proclaim the Gospel throughout the country. Schall von Bell is credited with enabling the 500,000 Chinese that are said to have been baptised by Jesuit missionaries within fourteen years. There was jealousy and intrigue at the Imperial court where Schall von Bell and other Jesuits were criticised by some Chinese officials and Muslim astronomers. They were accused of political conspiracy, imprisoned and condemned to death. After an earthquake, the Jesuits were pardoned but five Chinese Christians working in the astronomical office were executed. The Jesuits were exiled to Macao. Schall von Bell who had suffered a stroke while in jail died within a year of his release. A new Emperor a few years later restored the Jesuits and Schall von Bell's honours were restored

Schall von Bell is often depicted wearing Mandarin clothing, and holding scientific instruments. As a recognised public intellectual, a Mandarin, he was able to work as a missionary using his mathematical and

astronomical skills. He was also involved in the making of maps On the site of a church built by Matteo Ricci Fr Johann Schall von Bell built the large South Church.



"The Chinese Convert" by Sir Godfrey Kneller.

The Chinese Jesuit Shen Fu-Tsung visited France and Britain in 1684–1685.

He was presented to the French King, Louis XIV on September 15, 1684 when he demonstrated the use of chopsticks and how to write Chinese letters.

After his visit in France, Shen Fu-Tsung visited the University of Oxford where he met leading orientalists, teaching them some Chinese and conversing with them in Latin.

Shen Fu-Tsung also met King James II. This is the first recorded occasion of a Chinese man visiting Britain. The king was so delighted by this visit that he had his portrait made, and had it hung in his bedroom.

Shen Fu-Tsung catalogued the Chinese books that were present in the Bodleian Library and he described their content, which had not been done before.

An illustration from Athanasius Kircher's 1667 *China Illustrated*. It depicts Fr Johann Adam Schall von Bell, an angel, and Matteo Ricci displaying a map of China. Above them the prime movers in the Mission to China, St Francis Xavier and St Ignatius Loyola, are depicted venerating the symbol 'IHS' which represents the name 'Jesus'



- surrounded by angels. Note the embroidered square of the Mandarin on Schall von Bell's robe.

In this first wave of Chinese missionary expansion the Jesuits were successful due to their appreciation of the logic in Chinese mathematics and understanding to appreciate the yearning for scientific truth among the intellectual elites. The Jesuits respected

Chinese culture at the different levels of society. They were consistent in the application of Ignatian principles: respecting the care of the individual, listening carefully in conversations, and seeking the good in the other person's arguments or explanations. The initial Jesuits in the first wave were Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese, Flemings and Germans. Vocations to the priesthood among the Chinese were fruitful : this which has persisted through the centuries to the present times.

Ponder:

- The first conversations when Ignatius and Francis Xavier spoke heart to heart was to give rise to a deep friendship in Christ that enabled each of them to develop as Companions with Jesus, These cords of affection enabled each of them to be free to undertake their respective vocations- from Xavier's work in the east a seed

was sown and later it blossomed and flourished through the work of others. Do our conversations and friendships equip us for sharing the Gospel?

- Recognising the culture of others and respecting differences may lead us to be more inclusive as a society- are we as good at that as we might be?
- The Chinese Church today needs our prayers – especially for Catholics facing persecution.

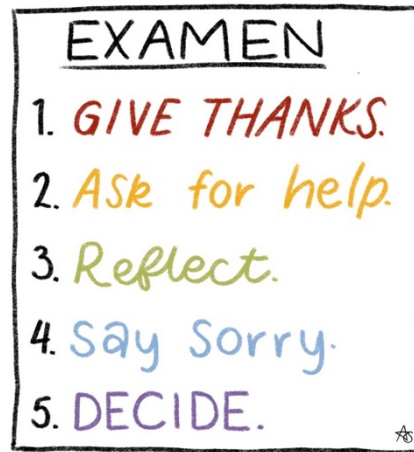


In a surprise move, after a search that lasted more than two years, Pope Francis has named the Jesuit Stephen Chow Sau-yan, 61, the provincial of the Chinese province of the Jesuits, as the ninth Catholic Bishop of Hong Kong.

EXAMINATION OF OUR LIVES [THE EXAMEN]

Daily Examen:

Looking with quiet sincerity and simplicity of heart at the day



GETTING READY FOR THE GIFT OF SCRIPTURE

- We ask the Holy Spirit to settle our minds and open our hearts.
- Our conversation with God begins as we express our gratitude for our blessings and by expressing our sorrow for personal sin.
- We ask that The Holy Spirit may enliven our reading and understanding. *Come, Holy Spirit, our souls inspire and lighten with celestial fire;*
- We place ourselves into the scene of the Scripture : what we see, what we hear, what it feels like, what we smell, what we might taste.
- Reading silently or aloud we form the words as they take shape in our creative imagination.

Passage of Scripture for Reflection : **Acts of the Apostles 17.22-34**

²² Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. ²³ For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to

you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶ From one ancestor he made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷ so that they would search for God and perhaps fumble about for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said,

‘For we, too, are his offspring.’

²⁹ “Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰ While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the



dead.”

³² When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed, but others said, “We will hear you again about this.” ³³ At that point Paul left them. ³⁴ But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Points for Reflection:

- Paul in Athens seeks to find points of contact with the philosophy and religious yearnings of the Athenians : 'the unknown God' – so many of our contemporaries have no knowledge of God. Does our language about God help us to express our faith?
- God is not far from each one of us – as Ignatius reminds us 'we can find God in all things'. Are we sensitive to the presence of God in daily life? The Sacrament of the Present Moment!

Conversational prayer : Opening up to Jesus asking Him for insight into our reflections ===== then we say,

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

After a moment of quiet we offer our day and our week:

Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given all to me. To Thee, O lord, I return it. All is Thine, dispose of it wholly according to Thy will. Give me Thy love and thy grace, for this is sufficient for me.



Jesus Mercy, Mary Pray

Praise God Always