

Between The “Mysticism of Politics” and the “Politics of Mysticism”

by immersion in both prayer and social action – something he finds exemplified in Thomas Merton, summed up with intensity in Merton’s experience, standing on the intersection of Fourth and Walnut streets in Louisville, Kentucky, of his love for the ordinary people he saw around him, whom he saw ‘walking around shining like the sun’ (228).

I congratulate David Ranson on the important contribution that his book will make to our understanding of the meaning of the universal call to holiness and of Christian engagement in the secular world – I wish his book the success that it richly deserves, complementing the many contributions that Fr Ranson has already made to reflection on the Christian life today. I would also like to thank and congratulate Hilary Regan and ATF Press for his work in publishing this book and so giving it a wider readership.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Australian Chinese Catholic Community: 60 years of service and ministry

Reviews by Carmen Kong

In 2014, the Australian Chinese Catholic Community (ACCC) of Sydney celebrated its diamond jubilee. A special commemorative book was produced to mark the 60 years of service and ministry. A copy of this ACCC Diamond Jubilee Souvenir book was forwarded to the Australian Catholic Historical Society, along with the following three books which have previously been produced:

- *In a Journey Together for Half a Century*, produced in 1998 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Priestly Ordination of Fr Paschal Chang OFM
- *Asiana Centre Sydney Australia Golden Jubilee 1963-2013*
- *4th Worldwide Overseas Chinese Pastoral and Evangelization Convention*, October 2009, Sydney Australia.

It was with great pleasure that I reviewed these four books. Although I arrived in Sydney as a small child and integrated quickly into the mainstream English-language Catholic community, I have fond memories of my encounters with the ACCC. My grandmother regularly attended Mass in Cantonese, and the late Fr

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Paschal Chang OFM, founder of the ACCC, celebrated her funeral Mass. I have some vague memories of attending the Chinese language school run by the ACCC, during the period of my parents' futile attempts to help us retain some knowledge of our native tongue.

When asked to look over these materials, I found myself wondering:

- With the White Australia Policy in place for the first half of the 20th Century, and the abolition of the policy taking place in stages over 25 years, how many Chinese Catholics would there have been in Sydney in 1953 for Fr Paschal to minister to? Who were these Chinese Catholics?
- What is the range of activities undertaken by the ACCC to serve and minister to Chinese Catholics? Have these changed over the last 60 years, particularly in response to any changes to the Australian Chinese Catholic population over this period?
- What have been the contributions of the ACCC to the wider Church and society in Australia?

The four books illuminated me on these topics as I read them, and I was fascinated to learn the stories of the many Chinese Catholics who have come before me in Sydney. They have played a part not only within the ACCC, but contributed more widely to the Catholic Church in Australia, as well as the wider Australian society too.

Overview of the material

The four books consist of three jubilee commemorative or souvenir books, plus the convention proceedings from the 4th Worldwide Overseas Chinese Pastoral and Evangelization Convention hosted by the ACCC in Sydney during October 2009.

The three jubilee commemorative books are quite similar in presentation. They begin with letters of congratulations from important personages, for example, the Apostolic Nuncio, the Archbishop of Sydney, the Franciscan Provincial Minister, and leaders of other religious congregations. Hidden amongst the expected well-wishes conveyed in these congratulatory letters are nuggets of information about the various works, struggles and achievements of the ACCC. These letters are presented in their original language: no Chinese translation is provided for English letters, and no English translation for Chinese letters.

The letters are then followed by articles. Some are in Chinese, some in English, and in a few cases, both Chinese and English versions are provided. Many of the articles are recollections and reflections of people who have been involved with the ACCC in some capacity or another – whether as collaborators of Fr Chang in various ministries, or as recipients of the ministerial service of the ACCC. These

articles reveal the breadth of the work of the ACCC, which was not limited only to the spiritual care of its members, but provided for their material and other needs e.g. providing housing and accommodation, organising social activities etc.

Each of the commemorative books also includes a timeline of key events. These are provided in both Chinese and English.

The books include photographs – perhaps as printing costs decreased, and with the advent of digital cameras photography itself became more common, the later books contain more and far better quality photos than the first commemorative book.

The fourth book contains the convention proceedings from the 4th Worldwide Overseas Chinese Pastoral and Evangelization Convention hosted by the ACCC in Sydney during October 2009. It starts with the blessing from the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, followed by a letter from the Archbishop of Sydney and the homily given by the Archbishop of Sydney at the Opening Mass. There are then talks by the keynote speakers Bishop Ignatius Wang and Fr Savio Hon SBD, and by two other speakers Dr David Ho and Msgr Robert McGucken, are included. I am unsure as to why talks by any other speakers were not included. Where the original text is in English, a Chinese translation is provided. Where the original is in Chinese, no English translation is given.

The convention proceedings tell less about the story of the ACCC in particular, but give a glimpse of the global context in which the ACCC is a part. For example, the very brief minutes (in Chinese) of a meeting of leaders of the various overseas Chinese Catholic communities lists representatives from overseas Chinese Catholic communities in eleven different countries.

All four books are interesting as collections of the experiences of Chinese Catholics in Australia. They would be more accessible to a general audience if translations were consistently provided (i.e. English articles into Chinese, and Chinese articles into English). This way, the reader need not be conversant in both languages to appreciate fully the wealth of materials in these books. The translations which are provided are adequate, although in a few cases, nuances and some humour were missed. This is always a challenge in translation and the problem is not uncommon.

Who are the Chinese Catholics in Sydney?

Although the Immigration Restriction Act (1901) was still in place, the first steps towards the abolition of the White Australia Policy were taken after World War II, when some non-European refugees were allowed to remain in Australia, and Japanese war brides admitted. The revised Migration Act (1958) abolished the controversial dictation test and avoided references to questions of race. During

the 1950s, overseas students arrived in Australia under the Colombo Plan, and they were joined by students from Asian families which had the means to invest in their offspring through overseas tertiary education.

With the growing Asian population, Cardinal Gilroy, Archbishop of Sydney, recognised the need to provide for their pastoral needs. He requested Fr Paschal Chang OFM and Fr Leonard Hsu OFM to come to Australia and minister to the Chinese students. The priests experienced the same struggles as the students, having to master English, which became the *lingua franca* of the ACCC as students arrived speaking different Chinese dialects.

In fact, when the ACCC established its community centre, they chose to name it the Asiana Centre, to avoid any particular racial or nationalistic overtones, and reflecting the fact that there were people of Chinese descent of nationalities other than China. After the liberalisation of migration laws in 1973, increasing numbers of students and other migrants arrived particularly from Hong Kong, and Mass started to be celebrated regularly in Cantonese. In 1900, the Western Sydney Catholic Chinese Community (WSCCC) was started under the ACCC umbrella, and regular Masses in Mandarin began to be offered, providing for the needs of the growing Mandarin-speaking community.

What are the activities of the ACCC?

As the population of Chinese Catholics in Sydney has grown, and the composition of the population changed, so the activities undertaken by the ACCC have also grown and changed. From amongst many varied activities, I have described a few to demonstrate the breadth of the ministry undertaken by Fr Chang and ACCC.

The Catholic Asian Students Society (CASS) had been established before the arrival of Frs Chang and Hsu. As many of these students were of Chinese descent, chaplaincy was transferred to the Chinese priests upon their arrival. CASS supported Asian students in Australia by organising social activities and encouraging Catholic students to support each other in their faith. The Asiana Centre also provided accommodation and other housing services to assist the young people who had come to Australia to study.

As Australia's migration laws were relaxed, some of the overseas students remained after completing their studies, and from the 1970s onwards, migration from Asia increased. Fr Chang recognised the need to assist migrant families, and established a weekend Chinese language school to support migrant parents teach their children about their own cultural heritage. Fr Chang also supported an English language school to assist new migrants.

Apart from ministering to the youth, Fr Chang and the ACCC recognised the needs of the aged and the dying. The Sisters of Our Lady of China were invited

to Sydney to operate a nursing home for elderly Chinese people. In addition, Fr Chang sought the allocation of burial plots to form the Chinese Catholic lawn in Rookwood Cemetery, where Fr Chang himself is buried now. A memorial roll has also been established, where the names of deceased family members can be enrolled, so that members of the ACCC can fulfil their traditional duties of paying respects and praying for the dead.

In 1973, the ACCC acquired what is now called Francisville in St Albans, just outside of Sydney, as a place for retreat and recreation. It has continued to be developed and is used regularly not only by ACCC members but other community groups.

Contributions of the ACCC to the wider community

Through the ministry of the ACCC, its members have contributed to the wider community, both in the Australian Catholic Church and beyond. Reflections by early ACCC members tell of the community facilitating the hosting of Asian students by Australian families during vacations, giving these students a taste of life in rural Australia, and enabling cross-cultural understanding and friendship. Over the years, the ACCC has also published bilingual newsletters to promote cross-cultural understanding. Clearly the assistance provided to new migrants, helping them settle into life in their new country, has great benefit to Australian society as a whole.

The weekend Chinese language school for children and English school for migrants were pioneering works, which have since ceased with such works being taken up by other community groups in Australia. However, at the time of their establishment by the ACCC, such schools were visionary.

As the ministries of the ACCC grew, Fr Chang invited other religious to Australia to assist in providing for the needs of the growing Chinese Catholic community. These groups then extended their work to meet the needs of the wider community. For example, the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres first came to Australia to minister to overseas students, but now also operate a nursing home in Brisbane.

The ACCC continues to evangelise within the Australian Chinese community, with Chinese-language catechism classes being run. A library service also provides reading material for anyone interested in learning more about the Catholic faith.

The ACCC has also sponsored young priests from China to further their studies in Australia. These priests not only gain valuable experience and contribute by serving the ACCC, some have continued working for various diocese in Australia, and others have returned to serve the Catholic communities in China.

In hosting the 4th Worldwide Overseas Chinese Pastoral and Evangelisation Convention, the ACCC demonstrated the contribution of overseas Chinese Catholic

communities to the whole Church. In his Opening Mass homily, the then-Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Pell, highlighted the importance of handing on the faith to descendants. Bishop Ignatius Wang continued on this theme in his keynote address to the convention, noting the similarities between traditional Chinese philosophical teachings and Christianity. He exhorts the overseas Chinese Catholic communities to persevere in handing onto younger generations both the Chinese cultural heritage and the Catholic faith, even amidst the many challenges faced by the communities.

Concluding comments

The four books provide a fascinating insight into the Australian Chinese Catholic Community, and its role in the history of Chinese Catholics in Sydney. The ACCC continues to provide for the pastoral and other needs of its members, and to evangelise those of Chinese descent in Australia. It also plays a part in supporting the work of priests in China, and belongs to the community of overseas Chinese Catholics.

The continuing work of the ACCC contributes to the building of multicultural Australia, and is an example of the ways cross-cultural understanding and friendship can be developed. Indeed, the witness of the Catholic Church is vital in promoting respect for people from different cultures. Fr Chang reveals that early on in his mission in Sydney, he intended to abandon the ministry, and was told that despite the fact that the Australian Government maintained its White Australia Policy, the Catholic Church had no such policy.

Thus these books tell the story not only of Australian Chinese Catholics within a Church context, but of the experiences of migrants and minority ethnic communities within Australia itself.