



Beyond Mission



China – China is the world's most populous country, but it is quite resistant to the Church. In fact, while Oblates have been working as priests in Hong Kong since 1966, on the mainland they are not allowed to work as priests but instead need to work as 'social workers'. Despite this, the Oblates have made a huge impact on this relatively new frontier of Christianity. The Hong Kong mission now comprises three primary schools, and a secondary school. On the mainland on the mainland, we have a strong affiliation with an orphanage for abandoned babies and children living with a disability.



REFLECTION

Summer Experience in Hong Kong

My times in Hong Kong and Beijing have been experiences that I will treasure forever. The hospitality of the Oblate priests was exceptional and it certainly felt more like a holiday than missionary work throughout my stay.

The Chinese students were polite, enthusiastic and friendly making the teaching very enjoyable and rewarding. Spending time at the baby home was truly inspiring as I often marvelled at the resilience of the children and the dedication and love given by the carers. These feelings were also shared with the time spent with the foster children in the group homes. These kids were so full of life and really looked out for each other like real brothers and sisters. In a way, even with their disabilities, I saw them as much more fortunate than the majority of one child families of China. The foster parents of these children are remarkable human beings.

I managed to pack in quite a bit of sightseeing into my stay also. The sunrise on the Great Wall, after camping there overnight, was an amazing highlight but there were so many others. Living day to day in the Chinese lifestyle certainly gave me a greater awareness of the beauty and richness of their culture.

Angelo Zamparelli

HISTORICAL NOTE

Chinese Rites Controversy – Ancestor Worship or Veneration?

Fr Matteo Ricci an Italian Jesuit, was one of the first Westerners to gain entry into the closed and xenophobic society of sixteenth-century China. He had not only adopted the dress but also culture, immersing himself in the classic texts of Confucianism. In Confucianism's supreme Creator he saw a Chinese counterpart of the Christian God. He became convinced that the ethical precepts of Confucianism, the religious underpinning of Chinese culture, could be reconciled with Christian morality.

Freed of the taints of foreign imperialism, Fr Ricci won the trust of the Chinese elite and prepared a new field for the seed of the Word. In recognising the important role in Chinese culture played by the veneration of family ancestors, he did not see a necessary conflict with Christian faith and practice (the veneration of the saints). Besides, to disallow Chinese Christians participation in Chinese rites was to invite excommunication of them from Chinese culture. Rome disagreed. By 1704, and again in 1742, papal decrees rejected Fr Ricci's program of reconciling the Gospel with Confucianism and in the process strongly condemned the Christian acceptance of ancestor rites as idolatrous.

In the 1960s, the Catholic Church changed its teaching about other cultures and faiths. Since then Catholics have been encouraged to learn and engage with other cultures, just like Fr Ricci did.

ACTIVITIES

- 1** China is fast becoming more economically rich. Identify areas of injustice or poverty other than economic injustice that the Oblates may be called to address.
- 2** Explain how the Oblates can still spread the love of God in a country that is resistant to faith.
- 3** Complete a SWOT analysis for the Oblate missions in China – *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.*