

jesuits

in East Asia and Oceania

June 2009



Seven Fountains of wisdom



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of Islam
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Snapshots



Cambodia mission honoured

Sr Denise Coghlan RSM is the senior member of the Jesuit Mission in Cambodia. She came there from the Border camps in 1990. She has recently been much honoured for her work. She was awarded the Order of Australia by the Australian Ambassador for service to international humanitarian aid. The Australian Catholic University also presented her with an honorary doctorate.



Common Tertianship, uncommon experiences

Roger Champoux will again direct the Common Tertianship in September. The previous Tertianship concluded in March, after the Tertians had scattered through the Philippines, exploring Jesuit ministry in schools, interfaith dialogue, parishes, hospitals, formation and prisons.

New website

The Assitancy website has been renovated, allowing easy access to news of the regions. You can access it on <http://www.jceao.net>



Japanese Jesuit martyrs

Four Japanese Jesuits were among the 188 Japanese martyrs beatified in Japan late last year. The four Jesuits were Kibe Kasui, Nicolas Keian Fukunaga, Julian Nakaura and Didacus Yuki Ryosetsu. The vast majority were laypeople, some were samurais, but most were simple villagers, including more than 60 women and children.



Great Jesuit remembered in Macau

The Macau Ricci Institute hosted a symposium on Tomas Pereira (1645 – 1708). He was a friend and teacher of Chinese Emperor Kangxi who issued the Edict of Toleration allowing missionaries to preach in China and for Chinese to become Christians. He was a musician, diplomat, and also tried to make peace early in the disputes over Chinese rites.



From war to peace

Xavier High School on Chuuk began its life as the radio and communication centre of the Japanese Navy. It was made bomb proof by the Mabuchi Corporation. On the Corporation's centenary, Mr Mabuchi renovated the building, and it was rededicated for the peaceful work of education.



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Editor Andrew Hamilton SJ

Graphic design Maggie Power

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Tel: +613 9421 9613
Fax: +613 9421 9600
Email: jeao@jespub.jesuit.org.au

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Send the people you really need

Francis Xavier and Ignatius were friends. They were very direct with each other.

'Don't send anyone who will not be missed at home. Send people whom you really need', wrote Francis to Ignatius, seeking new recruits for the Jesuit mission in Asia.

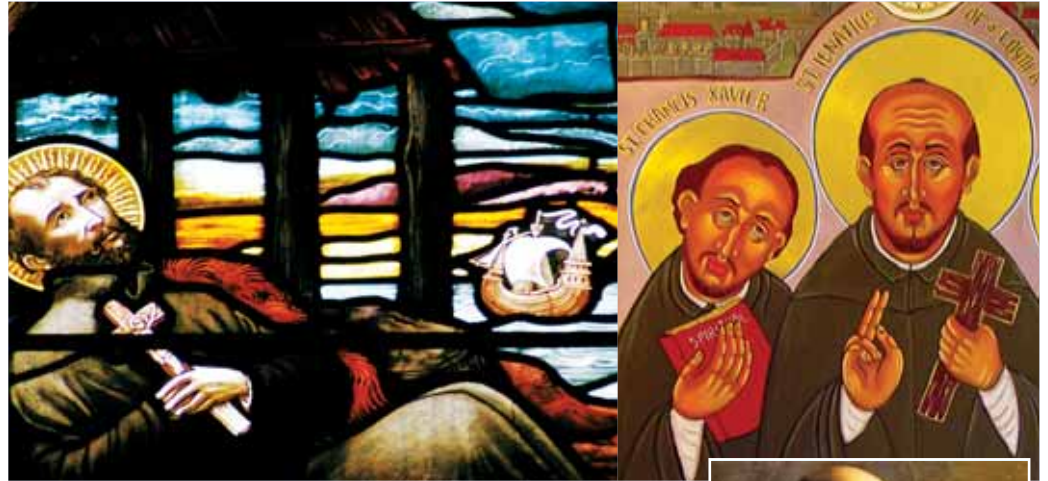
He was only asking Ignatius to practise what he had already preached. Even though Francis himself was urgently needed in Europe, Ignatius had sent him to Asia. And that was in 1540, the very same year the Society was founded.

Francis Xavier arrived in India in May 1542. His passion and energy were contagious. In many places where he landed, he attracted people to work with him, made firm friends and built enduring local church communities.

By the time he travelled to Japan in 1549, he was one of very few Europeans to enter many Asian cultures. In 1552 he died on a small island off the coast of China, unable to live his dream of entering the lives of people whose culture he already respected.

Francis lives on in the Jesuit calling. In a recent letter to all Jesuits, Fr Adolfo Nicolás encouraged us all to be available for universal mission, 'even if the cost to the sending Province is great'.

In East Asia and Oceania, where Francis Xavier wandered, 1,800 Jesuits now live and serve. Ours is one of the most culturally diverse regions of the world. This is reflected in Jesuit life. Indonesian, Korean and Vietnamese Jesuits and companions have made Myanmar, Cambodia,



Thailand and East Timor their home. Many Jesuits who work in their own lands have also studied abroad.

When we work today, our goal is the same as in St Ignatius' day. It is to form firm friendships, to strengthen local communities, to build up the local Church, and to forge international links.

The great challenge for us now is to work cooperatively where the need is greatest. Many of the challenges humanity faces – cruel injustices and conflicts, environmental damage, mass poverty and inequity, natural disasters and the forced displacement of people – do not respect borders. Our responses to these challenges – education for the poor, shelter for the homeless, building communities of faith and of dialogue – are also helped when we can work together across borders.

Some Jesuits and some of our companions live for a long time outside our original countries, cultures and climates, at least for some part of our lives. Rich and rewarding as it is,

intercultural living is not for everyone. Accommodation to languages and societies other than our own can take hard and long work.

But for all Jesuits short periods outside our culture are valuable. They help us to be aware of values, assumptions and perceptions instilled early in life that shape the ways we behave and interact with one another. Until it finds itself out of the water, a fish does not think about the water it swims in.

International experience can help us cooperate across boundaries, and to develop two attitudes that might seem contradictory. On the one hand, we wish to engage deeply in the local culture and life experiences of the people among whom we live. On the other hand we want to be open to diverse cultures, civilizations and mentalities.

These two attitudes can make us a bridge between cultures. Bridges are built from solid foundations on the banks, not from the middle in the air. To dialogue with people of other cultures and



faiths, we must be grounded in our own culture and in our faith in Jesus. We do this by studying theology and deepening ourselves through prayer. But it is also normal for us Jesuits to learn a useful language other than our own, have experience in international gatherings, and acquire skills that will benefit people of another society.

Throughout Asia and the Pacific our communities of Jesuits and companions seek to be at once deeply local and to have an eye to the horizon. Our teams are both international and committed to the local people and culture. For missions like these, we seek to be the people whom Francis Xavier wanted, the people 'who will be really missed at home'.

Mark Raper

Grass roots dialogue in Jakarta



Among Indonesian Jesuits are specialists who engage in Muslim-Christian dialogue in universities and seminars. But in Jakarta some Jesuit scholastics meet Muslims at a simpler level. They teach and play with poor Muslim children in the graveyard, in slums and under the toll road. This is the dialogue of daily life that complements the intellectual dialogue which scholars engage in.

This is their story.

Class among the graves

Simon Andriyan Permono is studying philosophy, and also volunteers with Forum Warga Kota Jakarta (Jakarta Residence Forum). This organization works on behalf of the poor in Jakarta, defending them against brutal government policies.

Simon helps slum children of East Jakarta. He tutors them in reading, writing and mathematics. They have no place to study, so Simon meets them in the cemetery. 'We can't expect big results in one, two, or even ten years', he says. 'But they find my presence valuable, and I hope their parents will see how important education is for their children's future'.

Simon's own background encouraged him to work with Muslims and the poor. He was born in a lower middle class family where life was

not easy. During his time in a minor seminary, he spent some time with a scavenger family. This program invited the seminarians to build their solidarity with the poor by living and doing precisely what they did each day. 'I was deeply struck by how difficult it is for the poor to get an education, find food and water and a place to stay', says Simon. 'I saw them collecting rain water in a drum to wash their bodies.'

That reflection has pushed him to work for and with the poor. He says that the last four General Congregations asked the Society to play a role in the struggle of the poor. 'I want to take a position where I can stand. I want to stand with people who are underprivileged and despised by society. There I have found the glorified Christ who is still taking His cross in the world.'

He continues: 'In the Indonesian context, working for and with the poor is necessarily working for and with Muslims.'

Simon has been impressed by the way he can relate with Muslims in the forum. He feels no distance or barrier in their works despite their different religious background. Together they can educate the poor and struggle for equal human rights. Last year in the month of Ramadhan, the staff members – including some Catholics – joined the breaking of the fast with the Muslims.

From rubbish to dialogue

Yohanes Adrianto, who is also studying philosophy says, 'Jesuit life is all about opening ourselves up to the world. In the Indonesian situation that means engaging in dialogue with Muslims. Dialogue, collaboration, and relationship with the Muslims are critical issues to deal with.'



MUSLIMS IN INDONESIA

Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population. More than 85% of the 250 million Indonesians are Muslim. About 10% are Christian, among them, 3% Catholic. Some regions, such as Aceh and West Sumatra, South Sulawesi, the coastal areas of Kalimantan, and West Java, have a strong identification with Islam.

From the twelfth century onwards, Islam began to penetrate Indonesia, beginning with Aceh. The process has been uneven. As a result, in Central and East Java the population is still influenced by Hindu culture. Muslim scholars have often criticised this influence.

In the predominantly Christian provinces – such as North Sulawesi, East Nusa Tenggara, and West Kalimantan – people practice their faith freely. Elsewhere Christians live and work closely with Muslims and people of other religions.

Most Indonesian Muslims are Sunni, although some follow other branches of Islam, including the Shiite. In general, Muslims can be loosely divided into modernists and traditionalists. Modernists adhere closely to scriptural orthodox theology while embracing modern learning. The Javanese traditionalists often follow charismatic religious scholars, and are educated around Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*).

Yohanes volunteers with Sanggar Ciliwung, an institute that is empowering the people living along the banks of the polluted river Ciliwung. He says, 'The people know I am a Catholic, but that's not a hindrance to building good relationships. The Ciliwung people are very open to sharing their life with me although I did not come from this area.'

He helped the Institute build the organic system of rubbish recycling. This simple idea of dealing with the problem of rubbish led to informal dialogue.

For Yohanes it was the option for the poor that led him to the Ciliwung. And that brought him close to Muslims. A simple idea can lead to good contact between people. Here people talked together about how to deal with the problem of garbage.

It convinced Yohanes that the informal dialogue brings understanding and tolerance.

School beneath a freeway

In Jakarta, marginal people have no chance for education. Ernest Justin is a Jesuit scholastic who volunteers in an alternative school established ten years ago by a Catholic layman.

The school is a make-shift room, erected under a toll road. The children are from poor families. The fathers work as factory labourers or as scavengers, their mothers as laundry workers or seamstresses.

Ernest helps the children to study writing, reading and simple mathematics. Sometimes, he instructs them in basic values such as respecting parents, or keeping the environment clean. Through his teaching

he builds a living dialogue. Of course, it is not an Islam-Christian dialogue in the academic sense. He says, 'I try to help them, and I also learn a lot from them. I learn from their lives what simplicity and openness mean. They accept me easily as their friend, and we can be very close. Slowly, we build friendship and trust.'

His relationship with the poor convinced Ernest that education can open people to goodness and religious openness. He says, 'Building a living dialogue with people from a different religious background demands humility. We must have space to embrace and treat them as our brothers and sisters. Dialogue must be able to overcome the religious barriers.'

*Surya Awangga SJ
and Greg Soetomo SJ*

Looking into the many faces of Islam

The heart of dialogue with Islam is to come to know people who are different from us. It leads Sanata Dharma University theological faculty to arrange excursions to Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). They reveal the many different faces of Islam in Indonesia.

Recently teachers and students from Sanata Dharma accompanied students of the Jesuit School of Theology who were invited to stay in two *pesantren* around Magelang in central Java.

In the first *pesantren*, called al-Tauhid al-Islami, they had a hard time. The Kyai (Teacher) and students there, along with hundreds of Muslims from other places, bombarded them with many theological questions. It threatened to develop into a great debate, a nightmare for the American students. But instead of responding polemically, they spoke of how their Christianity related to social problems. They shared what they had experienced some days before with people from various religious and cultural backgrounds around Merapi volcano. They had been impressed by how hard these people tried to help one another. This approach rescued them from what could have been a difficult conversation.

The next day they visited Pabelan. This *pesantren* is well-known both by Indonesians and foreigners as a prestigious school that provides innovative education to 700 high school students. The atmosphere was totally different. Staff members and students welcomed them warmly, and they could meet and talk peacefully. 'It's as different as earth and sky', they said of their two experiences.



This story reflects the complexity of the relationship between communities and of interreligious dialogue in Indonesia. In 1999 – 2000, for example, Muslims and Christians murdered one another in Molucca islands, but many people also collected humanitarian aid for both sides. In the East Java town of Mojoketo, too, Riyanto, a 25-year-old Muslim, was killed trying to protect a church from bombing by an Islamic fundamentalist group. In Indonesia you can have unpleasant encounters. But you can also find poignant and courageous meetings between people.

These good meetings can also raise large theological questions. Recently some Indonesian Jesuit scholastics joined classes with the faculty of Ushul al-Din (Theology) in the Islamic State University

of Yogyakarta. For almost three hours, both sides discussed issues, some of them quite delicate, to do with Christology. After such a good meeting I asked myself, 'If St. Paul had ever come to Indonesia, what kind of Christology would he have developed?' I suspected that Christology today would be quite different with what has been developed so far.

The discussions held at 'Impulse' (Institute for Multiculturalism and Pluralism Studies) in Yogyakarta have also been consoling. I have no problem there expressing my views before the mostly Muslim students, who differ from one another on many things. It is natural for students from the same religious background to challenge one another on particular topics. There are many names for

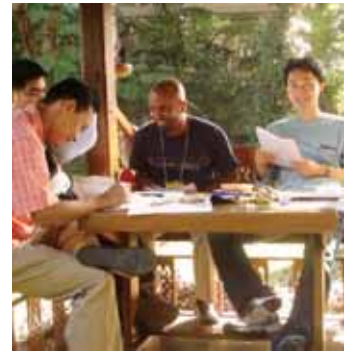
Muslim groups. Some people categorise them as Ulama, revivalists, academicians, and social intellectuals. Others classify them rationalist Islam, cultural Islam, and transformative Islam, or as formalists, substantivists, indigenists, and revivalist-fundamentalists.

These experiences hint at the dilemma of the interreligious movement in Indonesia. On the one hand, it is designed to protect against proselytism from one religion to another. So inter-religious dialogue is promoted for the sake of religion. But in the process we become aware of another goal of interreligious dialogue. It is for social transformation. This is perhaps a more urgent need. *Allahu a'lam! God knows best!*

Heru Prakosa SJ

Wisdom flows from Seven Fountains

Each two years young Jesuits from around the Assistency come together. Their meetings have helped young Jesuits to know one another. They allow them to talk together about aspects central to their Jesuit calling and to lay the foundation for working together later in their Jesuit lives.



Over Christmas and New Year, brothers and scholastics from the Assistency met at Seven Fountains Jesuit retreat centre in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The theme of the meeting was leadership. For those who took part, the three weeks passed busily. Karel San Juan was the main facilitator for the first part of the meeting. Karel, who has studied at Gonzaga University in Washington, introduced leadership as understood in the Ignatian tradition.



Fr John Shea, Director of the East Asian Theological Exchange Program, also described different models of leadership found in the cultures of the Assistency. After the lectures the participants could share their experiences and reflections.

Korean scholastic Jong Ju-hyeon was particularly struck by Fr John's sketch of the difference between Asian and Western cultures. 'Asian cultures are more collective; Western cultures are more individual', he noted. 'In the former, leaders are given a larger role than in Western cultures, and conversations take place in small groups rather than in the large group.'

Ju-hyeon reflected on this difference, remarking, 'the experience of younger people in many Asian countries is now becoming more

individual. This will be true of younger Jesuits too. This will affect the way in which Jesuits will be formed, and also shape their relationships with other young adults.'

The program allowed people to appreciate the variety of cultures in the group. Each morning scholastics from a different region prepared the prayer in a way that reflected their own culture.

The delegates also had several opportunities to come into contact with the local Thai culture and some of the works of the Jesuits in Thailand. The scholastics working in Thailand generously offered to guide their brother Jesuits to various sites around Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

These visits prepared them for what for many was the

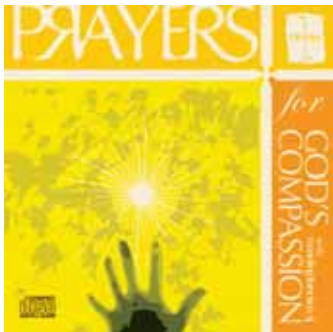
highlight of the meeting, the two days they spent in Karen villages. Village families hosted them, inviting them to dinner and lunch. They took part in a Mass to celebrate fifty years of the church in the village, and prepared catechetical presentations for the primary school children.

Christmas was a special time. Though far from their own homes, the participants enjoyed Christmas and New Year together, building relationships that will surely outlive the meeting.

Ju-hyeon reflected afterwards on the importance of the meeting. 'I learned how to work together in our Assistency', he said. 'Before we knew about each other's cultures mentally, but not emotionally. If we are to work together later, this will have been a good step.'

The rhythms of the Gospel

In the Philippines Jesuit music is not a hobby but an industry. Over the last twenty years, Jesuit Music Ministry has produced over fifty albums. They are marketed by Universal Records.



The Director of the ministry is Jessel Gerard Gonzalez, universally known as Jboy. He says that Jesuits and music have long been associated. Jesuit musicians contributed to the baroque music performed in churches and taught it in the colleges.

In the Philippines Jesuits brought with them music in other languages. First, the Gregorian Chant and polyphony, all in Latin. Later they introduced Spanish hymns and, immediately after the Vatican Council, songs in English by the St Louis Jesuits.

Shortly afterwards the first steps were taken towards Jesuit church music in the Filipino idiom. In 1965, the then Rector of the San Jose Seminary, Fr Eduardo Hontiveros, composed a Filipino Mass. He continued to compose music for many

Biblical and liturgical texts. Many musicians, including Jesuits, followed his example over the next fifteen years. By 1981 there were sufficient Jesuit composers to put together an album, *Himig Heswita*, to celebrate 400 years since the arrival of the first Jesuits in the Philippines.

There was subsequently an explosion of Jesuit church music in the Philippines. Many groups combined in 1994 to make another album, *Himig Heswita 2*. It created a stable singing group and a core group of musicians who work in different groups each with its own style. They include *Himig Heswita*, *Bukas Palad*, *Hangad* and *Musica Chiesa*.

Of course, Jesuit music is more than making records. *Himig Heswita*

has held concerts for the ill, and members have also given workshops on liturgical music. Composers have moved beyond the Filipino idiom into Mandarin for the Chinese-Filipino community. Many recordings of music for prayer and reflection have also been made.

Fr Jboy has thought much about music as a ministry. He says, 'Whatever people do and wherever they are, our music helps them enrich their relationship with God. From the mundane such as driving a car, lounging on an easy chair and reading a book, to sitting on a pew and reflecting on Scripture, music uplifts and brings people to God.'

The music ministry constantly adapts to the changing needs of its audience. It receives



requests from people who want to play religious songs while caught in their cars during peak hour traffic. Schools ask for liturgical music, multi-media performances and prayer guides based on music.

After World Youth Day in Manila, there was much focus on youth ministry. Fr Jboy believes that music is a very important way to form young people. 'Youth responds very well to music', he says. 'It is non-threatening, never

preachy, and at the same time, enjoyable.'

But to reach the young, music needs to use modern technologies. 'To be effective, music has to be accessible and mobile', he says. 'So our music is now easily downloadable from their mobile phones.'

'If people are in cyberspace, our music should be available there. If the way to the hearts of the young is through rhythmic music such as rock, then the

Church should be present in rock concerts. Look at World Youth Day: the young pray and praise God with contemporary music.'

Finally, music is also for ministry. Volunteers with Gawad Kalinga, an organisation that builds houses for the poor, make music central to their work. 'Before, during and after they build', says Jboy 'they pray and sing songs. Just as music brings us to loftier things, it can also inspire us to concretely practise them.'



REACHING YOUNG PEOPLE

Apart from his work with Jesuit Music Ministry, Jboy is also chaplain at the University of the Philippines. This fuels his conviction that music must meet young people where they are at.

Jboy was born in Albay province south of Manila. He was involved in the choir and in youth ministry. He completed his Jesuit studies at Loyola School of Theology. His great love during his studies was science. As a scholastic he joined the campus ministry at Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro.

Although he sees face to face contact as essential, Jboy has made great use of technology in communicating with young people. He has his own website, with links to his blog on which he posts his homilies and videos helping young people reflect on them. He also has accounts on Friendster, Facebook and Multiply. He invites his online community to his Mass at the University of the Philippines.

Through these sites he receives many questions from young people. He believes that in an ideal world young people could ask these questions of their parents. But parents are so busy working or absent that they have no time.

In four years, he has had almost 40,000 hits on his blog. It has helped him engage with many young people who would otherwise have no contact with the church, and also brought him into touch in a very direct way with the lives and practices of young people.

Spiritual computing



In 1964 Fr Yves Raguin founded the Taipei Ricci Institute. When I succeeded him in 1996, he told me, 'I have always wanted to integrate Chinese spiritual resources into humankind's spiritual computer'.

Yves Raguin used a typewriter all his life. He never handled a computer or browsed the internet. So his knowledge of computing was small. But he understood what the computer could do. It enabled you to process the data you entered into it, and to make connections you otherwise couldn't.

His image of the computer helped us to develop the Ricci Institute in ways that built on the inspiration of its founders. The predecessor of the Institute was the Office for Chinese Studies which the French Jesuits had founded in Shanghai at the end of the 19th century.

Fr Raguin focused the Institute on lexicography

and on comparative spiritualities in a Chinese context. We have gone from lexicography to networking with Chinese intellectuals about the role of China in world governance. In 2004, we launched a Chinese-language paper monthly, *Renlai* (The flute of humankind), and, in 2006, an English-Chinese internet magazine, www.erenlai.com. The magazine has focused on cultural diversity, sustainable development and spiritual empowerment in Asia.

The image of the spiritual computer stays with me in whatever I am doing. Sometimes when I'm writing a boring article or bad poetry, sometimes starting a painting, at other times

building a project with members of our team or with friends around the world... Whether as individuals or as a group, we are enriching the network of knowledge that computers process.

If we imagine a spiritual computer of humankind, what would the machine look like? Its basic components are surely our personal

experiences and the ways in which we try to express them. At a second level, the computer would be shaped by the in-depth encounters that, by chance or miracle, happen when people can listen and speak to each other in truth, humility and mutual recognition.

At a third level, it would contain the words and deeds of a few people whom we have never met, because of the distance in time and space, but whose quest resonates





with ours, and who move us. These people become our spiritual father or mother. In this way spiritual lineages are built across generations. They create solidarity across ages and cultures.

People who strive to be true to what they feel obscurely called to become, recognise each other when they happen to meet. Sometimes their spiritual friendship is through a single meeting, one which they remember for the rest of their lives. Other spiritual friendships develop over a great number of years and are an invaluable support to each partner. They are vital parts of our spiritual computer.

Spiritual discoveries can differ from scientific discoveries. They are likely to disappear if the person who makes the discovery is

not supported, nurtured and enriched by a living tradition.

Humankind's spiritual quest goes through ups and downs. Discoveries must be remade, the quest always begins again. If they are lucky, pilgrims find masters and elders along the way. But sometimes they must struggle alone, because their culture and society stifle their efforts.

No matter how modest any person's spiritual quest appears to be, it carries enormous importance for the global community. The intertwining of spiritual endeavours creates the tapestry of our collective human adventure. No one can predict its final shape and colours, but its texture continues to be woven through our spiritual computer.

What we are trying to do through *Renlai*, e*Renlai*, the Taipei Ricci Institute and the knowledge networks we are nurturing in Shanghai, Chengdu, Beijing and other cities is really very simple.

We are trying to make new resources available on humankind's spiritual computer, especially the resources that flow from the entry of China into the global community. We want to help people to become informed, reflective and networked, so that we shall all be effective actors in the drama of the international community.

Benoît Vermander SJ

Benoît directs the Taipei Ricci Institute, *Renlai Monthly*, and *eRenlai Magazine* (www.erenlai.com). He is also an artist and poet.





Learning from things

By the book I am taught

Of the tree.

By the tree I am taught

Of the bird.

By the bird I am taught

Of the fish.

By the fish I am taught

Of the pond.

By the pond I am taught

Of the moon.

By the moon I am taught

Of the night.

By the night I am taught

Of silence.

By silence I am taught

In silence

Benoit Vermander SJ