

A GLIMPSE AT THE BRIDGE BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND CHINA

"A Bridge with China - The Pope and the Apostolic Delegation in Peking (1919-1939)" is the working translation of a just-published book by Fr. Adel Afif Nasr dedicated to the Holy See's relations with China between the two World Wars, the establishment of an official Apostolic Delegation to the nation and its many fruits. By Vatican News staff writer The Vatican Secretary of State is the author of the preface of the book "Un ponte con la Cina - Il Papa e la Delegazione apostolica a Pechino (1919-1939)" by Lebanese Fr. Adel Afif Nasr and published in Italian by Marcianum Press. Cardinal Pietro Parolin begins quoting the opening words of "Cupimus Imprimis", Pope Pius XII's 1952 Apostolic Letter dedicated to the Catholic Church in China: "First of all we wish to express to you Our ardent affection for the entire people of China". With these words, the Cardinal notes, the Pope expresses affection and closeness to the Chinese people at a truly difficult time in their history, a time when many priests, bishops and laypeople who were engaged in evangelisation were either removed from their work or hindered in the exercise of their activities. A project founded on the Gospel "Our heart turns to you once again and to you, in particular, we wish to address this letter, to console you, to exhort you paternally, knowing well your anguish, your anxiety and your adversity" Pope Pius XII continues, and Parolin points out that this feeling of closeness belongs to every successor of Peter, all of whom have nurtured a special bond of sincere affection and esteem for the people and the Church in China, always pursuing and maintaining fruitful, fraternal and charitable relations. Cardinal Parolin says he believes "this is the context and the sentiment, so authentically founded on the Gospel, that has driven the Holy See to seek ever new ways of relating with China." He lists several documents and initiatives that witness the Holy See's concern for China focussing on Pope Benedict XV's 1919 Apostolic Letter "Maximum illud" and his desire to establish missionary platforms throughout the world and in China. He also analyses Pope Pius XI's commitment to building a "solid bridge" with China that resulted in establishing an official Apostolic Delegation to Peking to create a link for all the missions in the territory and confirm believers in their faith.

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