

FOREWORD

In the wake of the provisional agreement between China and Vatican signed on February 2018, Ambrose Mong's masterly work comes as a very opportune contribution. It helps dissipate any suspicion of inconsistency from the part of the Roman authority. His very broad and accurate inquiry into the history of the Church diplomacy in relation to the states leads to a better understanding of the latest initiatives taken by Pope Francis.

In the past seventy years from October 1949 to October 2019, both China and the Catholic Church have experienced tremendous changes. China's communist ideology has become 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. Confucian moral principles have been reintegrated in the service of peace and stability. China has at last become a rich and powerful country, able to contribute to peace and human ethics in the whole world.

Pope John XXIII with his encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* has opened the church to new horizons. The Second Vatican Council, held from 1963 to 1965, produced the constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which has completely transformed the Church from a self-defensive attitude to a daring openness to the wide world and to other religions. Catholics in China are more than ever encouraged to love and serve their country. They should no longer form ghettos seeking protection from hostile surroundings. Pope Francis has full trust in their faith. Fully aware of

what they had to suffer for their beliefs, he expects them to reconcile among themselves and to cooperate wholeheartedly in the service of their fellow citizens.

Fr Ambrose's book enhances a renewed vision of the Church as a leaven sown in today's society with the promise of a future harvest of justice and love.

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