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Growing Chinese Female Religious Congregations Now and Future Sr. Teresa Yu

1. Fruits of growth

From sleeping to reviving, from sprouting to forming

In early 1980s, the Church in China had suffered a lot from religion persecution for about 30 years. Chinese Church began on top of a mount of miserable ruins and the difficult and hard work of reconstruction. As large number of evangelizers were urgent needed, a great number of female religious Congregations could be observed rising and rapidly growing. According to preliminary statistics, China has around 60 upground women religious Congregations with about 3000 sisters, and 30 underground Congregations with 2000 sisters. Almost half of Congregations were found before liberation of China (1949), reviving between 1980s and 1990s. And rest of the Congregations was also established in this period. Almost every diocese in China has woman religious Congregations now. The largest number of Congregation members is about 300 sisters, and least one is less than 10 sisters.

Gradually starting a way of wholeness formation

The formation of a congregation will safeguard a congregation's growth to maturity. In recent ten years, the way of formation has a great change from ignorance of human nature and excessive devotion to spirituality, to understanding human nature and focusing on physical, psychological and spiritual integration. Sisters learned a lot from their valuable experience which is gained from being hurt and healed, and perceived the true meaning of growth. They started to touch human nature, understood the importance of mature personality, and came to know that formation should be based on real human nature, under being supported and protected, step by step, grow integratedly, so as to achieve the goal of internalization gospel value. Nowadays almost every religious congregation is rising a physical-psychological- spiritual integration movement, participating in spiritual direction, integrating courses, Tai Chi spiritual workshop, retreat, and formator training etc. . Religious sisters are aware of the importance of formation, and have already set about revising formation program and improving constitutions of congregations.

Diversity in evangelization

As is known to all, China of today is not any more the same as before. Its economy is dramatically developed with over-expanded material life, yet followed by many side-effects—deficient spirit, empty and lonely heart, distorted values. To meet the needs of the present, discern the signs of the era, Sisters adopt the diversity in evangelization, traditional Church's cultivation approaches can be applied:

Catechumenate, Sunday school, church music, Bible sharing, and catechism teaching, etc. Some sisters care for social services, going out of the Church to the society and letting society understand the Church. Sisters are at the front of social charity service, setting up orphanages, nursing homes, hospice for mentally handicapped children, leprosy service station and AIDS office, etc. In addition, special services are designed for the needs of the society nowadays, such as marriage counseling, spiritual company, hospital pastoral work, family visits, etc., listening and accompanying with people suffered physically and spiritually are especially popular and welcomed. When smile appears and the power of life is regained during each company, sisters feel themselves as the benevolent Samaritan, who are healing people suffered in pain and pressure. Now more than half of sisters in China have received spiritual company course. In recent years, Tai Chi spirituality is widely popularized by sisters. It is a method of prayer which combines psychology, spirituality of Catholic Church and Chinese culture Tai Chi and Yin Yang. Thousands of sisters and priests have attended the training, and they all have benefit a lot from it. Retreat center, spiritual center, pastoral center, youth training center are especially praised by priests, sisters and laypeople. Many centers are searching for and training a large number of competent and qualified assistants. They strongly expect all of us contribute our personal and material support, give generously and help to Chinese Church in need.

Greater Awareness of Communion

In recent years, people's minds are gradually open, experiencing the importance of communion and development. Upground and underground communities in Chinese Church are relatively harmonious. While the contact of Church home and abroad has become more frequent, especially sisters from both communities have often participated in various training and activities, their friendship increases gradually. Moreover, both communities have own Conferences of Major Superiors which arrange every year's activity, provide platform for communication and resource sharing, and learn from each other. The harmonious development among them is obvious for all of us. Besides, as priests and sisters finish their oversea study and return home, their contacts have also promoted the understanding and communication between Chinese domestic priests and sisters. Also as the network media nowadays has developed rapidly with information spreading more conveniently, interactive communication among people is no longer a difficult task. Therefore, as communications have increased, people have come to know each other better, misunderstandings have been gradually eliminated, trust has been gained, bright future is just ahead. Besides the principle focal issues, human communication, mutual respect, communion and love are improving day by day.

Increasing numbers in teachers and training institutions

Thanks to the support from overseas Church, priests the sisters who have studied abroad returning home, Chinese Church has become more vital. Returned priests and sisters mostly serve in some important fields, like management, formation, with some teaching philosophy and theology in seminaries, and some setting up training centers. Fortunately, Sisters have broken the stereotype—only serve the priests and bishops, instead they begin to teach, set up training centers, and even go deep into society to win the wide acceptance of the society.

2. Future Expectations

Vigorously strengthening formation

Formation is the key in the development of Church. People-oriented education is the essential work and mission of church, aiming to cultivate holistic, spiritual, intellectual, philosophy, theology and

professional talents. Faced with China's complexity and challenges of this era, formation remains a long and arduous task. Besides, our formation exist many limits, like improper use and distribution of talents and loss of talents, which is indeed distressful and regretful. How to effectively use talents with everyone's effort, I think, is the main direction of future formation.

We know that Church in China are undergoing an unusual time, Inefficiency to exercise the power of leaders , impact of globalization and secularization, and contemporary "New Culture" problem in China. To deal with these problems, formation is a crucial step because when the quality of people increases, problems will gradually be relieved and solved. Although we have already realized the importance of initiate formation, the formation of formator is the crux of the matter. As the Chinese idiom says," A journey of a thousand miles begins with single step". In every field, training a team who are equipped with mature personality, solid spirituality, excellent professional knowledge and competent formators should be the priority in the future.

Cooperation home and abroad

We should promote communication between religious congregations, enrich human resources, widen cooperation fields, like formation, evangelization, charities, management, etc. Since the religious vocation is not ideal now, if different congregations join initiate formation together in certain courses, it's a way to assemble resources and save teachers. If charity is jointed, it's not only conducive to evangelizing but to enhance the influence to society. In some places with good conditions (in fact we can strive for some conditions), we can also assign sisters abroad to communicate with similar charism community to experience religious life in sake of friendship and mutual development. The characteristics of congregations in China have many numbers of congregations, less sisters in every congregation, young age and weak foundation, wide distribution and great potential to develop. While oversea religious congregations have long history, rich resources, abundant charism and powerful strength, yet members are relatively older and have less vocation. If congregations home and abroad complement each other, it will not only benefit evangelizing work and small communities, but also be great help for universal Churches.

Needing affirmation of religious congregation

Catholic religious congregation is a gift from Holy Spirit, aiming to serve universal Church. In China, most congregations are diocesan right congregations, and imperceptibly form a vague relationship between diocese and congregation without a clear identity, which affects normal management and financial operation of religious congregation. In addition, more than half of congregations were erected after the liberation of China, some have approved by their bishops in writing, while some have not, of course, and they have not approved by the Holy See. They seem to be a group of unidentified cheap labor. Once the relationship with diocese becomes tense, they could probably have been dismissed. We are eager affirmation of our identity as a sister, sincerely hoping we would like to live out the essence of the consecrated life who are loyal to Christ, and faithfully serve universal Church.

Our expectations need the efforts of Chinese Church, and we long for the encouragement and support from universal Church that always concern Chinese Church. Let us build and realize the "Christ dream" and "China dream" together.

成长中的中国修女会现在和未来

一、成长的果实

从沉睡到复苏，从萌芽到成型

1980年初，中国教会惨遭近三十年的浩劫，在一片凄惨的废墟上开始艰巨的重建工作。由于急需大量的传道人员，全国各地女修会如同雨后春笋般地出现并快速地成长。据初步统计，目前全国地上团体约60多个女修会，约3000多位修女；地下约30多个女修会，约2000修女。约一半修会是解放（1949年）前建立，八、九十年代复兴的，其余一半，在八、九十年代新成立的。分布在全国各地，几乎每个教区都有修女会。人数最多的一个修会约300位修女，最少的不到10位。

逐渐踏上全人培育之路

修会的培育是保证修会成熟发展的重要标记。近十几年来，培育方式有了大幅度的变化，从忽视人性，过度灵修化的传统方式渐渐转变为了解人性，重视身心灵整合成长的全人培育。修女们由自身受伤害又被治愈，跌倒而又重新站起来的经验中寻得宝贵的经验，感悟成长的真谛。开始碰触人性，了解人格成熟的重要，逐渐意识到培育应以客观真实的人性为基点，顺序渐进，在支持呵护下，整合地成长，以达到内化福音价值的目标。各个修会几乎兴起一场身心灵整合的新活动，参加灵修陪伴，整合课程，心灵太极工作坊，辅导式避静，导师培训等，修会意识到培育的重要性，开始重新修订培育计划，完善会规。

福传工作多样化

众所周知，中国今非昔日，经济高度发展，物质生活过度膨胀，其副产品—精神匮乏，心灵空虚孤独，价值观扭曲等现象也接踵而至。为满足当下的需要，识辨时代的征兆，修女们福传方式多样化，有传承教会历史悠久的培训方式：如开设慕道班、主日学、圣乐、圣经分享、教理讲授等。也有走出教堂，关爱社会的服务，教会走向社会，让社会了解教会。修女直接走在社会慈善服务前线，开办孤儿院、老人院、弱智收容所、麻风病服务站以及艾滋病办公室等。此外，为当下特别的需要而设的服务项目：如婚姻辅导、灵修陪伴、医院牧灵、居家探访等，尤其聆听、陪伴身心灵痛苦者的服务深受大家欢迎。每一次的陪伴，当忧愁的脸上露出笑容，失望的心灵重获生命的力量时，修女们仿佛感觉自己就是那位慈善的撒玛利亚人，给正处在被各种压力痛苦击垮者负伤治疗，百感交集。目前全国几乎超出半数修女参加过灵修陪伴课程。最近几年深受修女们推崇的心灵太极正席卷华夏，它是用心理学、教会灵修结合中国文化太极阴阳的一种祈祷法，已有上千修女神父踊跃参加了，受益匪浅。避静院、灵修中心、牧灵中心、青年培育中心，脱颖而出，深受神父修女及广大信友们欢迎。目前这些团体正在挖掘、集训一批称职合格的师资队伍，需要大量的人手，期望大家慷慨奉献，解囊相助，帮助饥渴的中国教会。

教会共融意识增强

近十几年，人们的思想渐渐开放，体验到共融、发展的重要。教会内部上、下团体相对和谐。国内外教会接触频繁，特别是修女们经常参加各种培训、活动，有时国内没见国外见，见多情也增。再说，上下团体都有会长联合会，每年的活动安排，给修会提供交流互动的平台，资源共享，取长补短，修会间共融和谐发展有目共睹。此外，随着海外神父修女们学子回国，他们的人脉也带动了国内神父修女们彼此的认识和交流。当然，目前网络媒体发达，信息传播便利，人与人交流互动不再是件难事。这样，随着认识交流增多，彼此了解，误会渐渐消除，慢慢学得信任，严冬寒月已成过去，暖春三月将至不远。除原则性的焦点问题外，人情交往，彼此尊重，共融友爱的气象蒸蒸日上。

师资丰富，培训机构增多

由于海外教会的大量支援，出国留学的神父修女们陆续回国，给国内教会注入新的血液，增强了活力。他们大多在一些重要领域，如管理、培育，肩负重职，有的在神哲学院授课，有的开办培训中心，为各种需要提供服务。令人庆幸的是，国内修女们打破了给人惯有的印象—只是为神父主教们服务，走上了讲坛，成立培训中心，甚至深入社会，赢得社会广泛认同。

二、未来的期待

大力加强人才培育

教会的发展关键在于培育。人的培育始终是教会的根本工作和使命，尤其是全人的培育，人格、灵修、智力、专业、技能的培育。面对中国错综复杂的时代问题和挑战，人才培育更是任重道远。况且我们目前的培育存有许多限度，用材不当，分配不均，资源流失，确实非常苦恼和惋惜。怎样有效地利用各种资源，齐心协力，把时间和精力花在刀刃上，人尽其才，物尽其用，其乐融融。我想这是今后培育的重要方向。

我们知道目前中国教会正处于非常时期，领导阶层无法自由行其权力，全球化与世俗化带来的冲击，以及

中国当代“新文化塑造”的问题。面对诸多棘手疑难杂症时，培育人才自然当务之急，人的素质提高了，问题就会迎刃而解。培育是老生常谈的话题，初期培育是我们意识到的关键问题，但培育者的培育更是关键中的关键。千里之行，始于足下，在各个领域里推动、造就一批具有成熟的人格，扎实的灵修，卓越的专业知识，称职的培育者，应该是今后人才培育的重要使命。

发展国内外团体的合作

加强修会之间交流，丰富人力资源，扩大合作空间，如培育、福传、事业、管理等。现在修会圣召普遍少，如果各修会联合初期培育，一些共同的课程集体授课，既能丰富资源又能节省师资。慈善事业若联合加盟，不但利于事业发展，更能扩大对社会的影响力。在有些条件较成熟的地方，（其实有些条件我们是可争取）还可以委派国内修女出境体验生活，特别是神恩接近的修会团体，互授经验，增进友谊，共谋发展之路。国内修会团体多，人数少，年龄轻，根底浅，分布广，有发展空间。海外修会历史悠久，资源富饶，神恩丰厚，实力强，年纪大，圣召少。若双方取长补短，共同发展，不仅造福各自修会，发展福传工作，也能助弱小团体一臂之力，对普世教会大有裨益。

修会需要认定

修会是天主圣神赐予教会的礼物，为普世教会服务。在国内大多修会是隶属于教区，不知不觉中形成与教区的关系模糊不清，身份不明。这影响了修会的正常管理、经济的运作。再者，接近半数的修女会在解放后成立，有些有教区主教书面批准，有些却没有，更没有圣座对这些修会的认定，她们好象一群身份不明的廉价劳动力，一旦关系紧张，就很有被解散的可能。我们期望身份的认定，更期待我们能名副其实地活出奉献者的实质，忠于基督，忠诚地为普世教会服务。

我们的期待需要中国教会的努力，也渴望一直关心中国教会的普世教会鼓励和支持，共同实现“基督梦”“中国梦”。