

People, Look East

Pentecost in Asia A New Way of Being Church

By Thomas C. Fox
Orbis Books. 238p. \$25. ISBN 157075442X

It is not often that one finds a book on Asian Catholics written by an American and published in the United States that is not only informative and thought-provoking, but also presents a deep insight into the developments in the Asian Catholic Church that have thus far garnered very little attention in the West. Thomas C. Fox's *Pentecost in Asia: A New Way of Being Church* presents in clear and lucid prose the emergence of a unique, prophetic model of Catholic Church in Asia. Fox insists that "Asian Catholics today have something very important to share with the wider Church"—a "new way of being church" that seeks solidarity with the poor, dispossessed and marginalized and fights for justice on their behalf; that seeks dialogue, harmonious relations and collaboration with ancient Asian religions and cultures; and that seeks consultation and consensus-building in ecclesial leadership.

A veteran journalist, former editor and now publisher of *The National Catholic Reporter*, Tom Fox has a deeply passionate interest in the Asian world, having visited Asia more than a dozen times, lived in Vietnam for five years, and been married to a Vietnamese woman for more than 30 years. The result of this is a fascinating and insightful reflection on the Asian way of being church by an outsider-yet-insider, a "son-in-law of Asia." The plethora of accolades from noted Asian bishops, missionaries, theologians and religious on the book's dust jacket and its first pages bears testimony to the fact that Asian Catholics find this to be a very helpful book describing their faith experiences accurately to their fellow brothers and sisters in the West, as well as to fellow Asians.

For readers who are looking for abstruse theological ruminations on Asian Catholicism, this book might be disap-

pointing because of its simple, straightforward presentation. But for those who are looking for a clear and unencumbered presentation on Asian Catholics and their struggles to mold the shape and direction of their church, this book is a real gem and treat. As Fox admits at the outset, this book seeks to present the Asian Catholic Bishops' vision of being church and doing mission in Asia in a reader-friendly manner from a journalist's perspective, "to bring a very important pastoral-theological story to a wider audience, to popularize it."

In addition to insightful journalistic reporting, much of which first saw print in *The National Catholic Reporter*, the book also includes a wealth of personal testimonies and sharing of anecdotes from Asian Catholics from all walks of life: Archbishop Fumio Hamao, Catalino G. Arévalo, S.J., Cardinal Stephen Kim of Seoul and many others. Sprinkled throughout the pages are delicious journalistic morsels that would delight many a reader. For example, not many in the West would have realized that "in the year 2000, the number of Jesuits in India exceeded for the first time the number of Jesuits in the United States."

Well researched, well organized and elegantly written, the 14 chapters of this book are a joy to read. An appendix at the end provides statistics, demographics and information on Christianity for selected Asian countries. Using the history of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (F.A.B.C.) and several of its key plenary assemblies as the basic framework, Fox takes his readers on a thrilling journey of the Asian Catholic odyssey, clarifying and shedding light on important, monumental events. A notable first in this book is the story of the birth of the F.A.B.C.,

the reviewers

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recounted in detail by Cardinal Stephen Kim of Seoul. Among other things, Cardinal Kim highlights the Vatican's insistence that the proposed organization does not have "binding authority" in "strict moral or doctrinal matters." As a result, what emerged is an organization that is "pastoral in nature" and "deal[ing] in mission, spirituality, dialogue with other religions, and peace and justice issues." Nevertheless, as Fox notes with wry irony: "Curiously, these issues would turn out to be far more 'subversive,' at least from Rome's point of view....The beauty of not having 'binding authority' is that you are freer to speak your mind, your beliefs, and your passions.... It was in this spirit of collaboration and freedom—beneath Vatican radar—that the Asian vision of church took hold."

While this book is primarily written for a general audience, theologians, missiologists, scholars and students interested in Asian Catholicism will certainly find it a very helpful introduction to the Asian Catholic Church. Fox shows balanced judgment about the complex theological issues confronting the Asian bishops and narrates them cogently. Regrettably, this otherwise informative

and engaging book lacks a bibliography, which would have been most helpful to readers interested exploring the topic further.

Nevertheless, *Pentecost in Asia* is easily the best introduction to the Asian church in English and easily accessible to Western readers. It ought to be read, not just by those who are interested in Asian Catholicism, but by everyone who is interested in the future prospects and directions of the global Catholic Church in the new millennium.

Jonathan Y. Tan

Creating a Personal Retreat

Wayfaring

A Gospel Journey Into Life

Margaret Silf

Doubleday. 256p \$21.95. ISBN 0385504616

The day after I finished reading Margaret Silf's *Wayfaring*, I had an encounter with a young woman who helped me experience the value of this magnificent book about journeying. I

was riding my bicycle along the Boston side of the Charles River when I saw a woman whose eyes were filled with tears. I felt moved to do something, so I turned my bike around and approached the woman. I called out to her from a safe distance and asked if she was all right. She gasped in relief to find that she was not alone in her troubles. She burst into tears, ran over to me and embraced me tightly. As we parted, I could only think that somehow my actions were inspired by the reflections so eloquently captured in Silf's book.

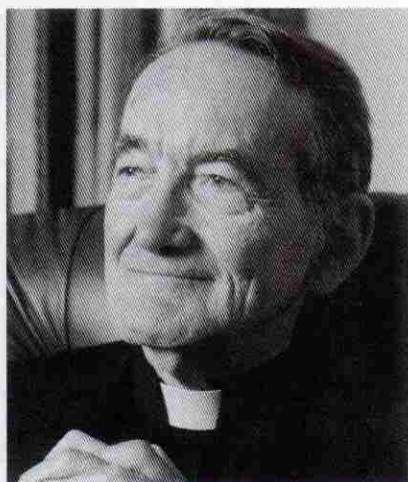
Margaret Silf has become one of England's most popular spiritual writers, and she gained acclaim in the United States with her reflective literature. Her training by the Jesuits is evident in her method and insights as a guide in prayer, especially in her intimate knowledge of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola.

Wayfaring begins by calling for the reader to be an active participant in prayer and in daily life. Silf writes that the common Jesuit phrase "finding God in all things" has become far too passive and does not encourage an active relationship with God. Instead, she states

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