

# OPEN Jesuit Forum SPACE

*...Engaging the signs of the times...*

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IS SOFT POWER - FRIENDSHIP -  
THE OPEN DOOR TO CHINA TODAY?

2010 MARKS THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH  
OF THE ITALIAN JESUIT MATTEO RICCI  
WHO DIED IN BEIJING IN 1610.

Who today remembers Matteo Ricci, and how might his memory be helpful for the world in general and for Christians in particular?

Ricci is probably remembered best by the small Christian communities founded by him in China, some of which have endured, in spite of much persecution, to this day. He is also remembered by many in the West. (If you doubt this, try “googling” Matteo Ricci; you will find almost a million listings.)

In China he is remembered formally through his publicly restored grave in Beijing. And a very special grave it is: at Ricci’s death, the Emperor of China gave him the unprecedented honour of being buried in imperial ground. Ricci is also remembered by the millions who visit China’s official exhibitions which are now included among the great museums of the world - and in which Ricci and his fellow Jesuits are given a significant space.

“In 1595, when an upstart player named William Shakespeare was writing a fantastical comedy in English verse called *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* for the London stage, on the opposite side of the globe, in the southern Chinese city of Nanchang, an equally remarkable man named Matteo Ricci was composing an essay on friendship in the formal diction of classical Chinese.”

From the introduction to the 2009 version of *On Friendship* translated by Timothy Billings  
Columbia University Press 2009



Tomb of Matteo Ricci in the courtyard of the Communist Party School in Beijing

Why is Ricci remembered? In brief, because he is credited with opening the door to China for both Christianity and Europe by becoming Europe’s first unofficial ambassador to China. By the same token, Ricci was one of the first Europeans to interpret China to Europe. His commitment to China began in the late 16th and early 17th century, when ocean travel was beginning to allow the

## ON FRIENDSHIP

(excerpts)

In times of trouble, the only thing  
that makes me happy  
is to see the face of a friend.  
Since this is so, either  
when troubled or when rejoicing,  
is there any time when  
a friend is not a benefit?  
When I am distressed,  
a friend decreases my distress.  
When I am joyous,  
a friend increases my joy.

□

Once a friendship is made,  
do not let your mutual feelings of  
friendliness break even once -  
for that feeling, once broken, can  
be pieced together temporarily  
but only with great difficulty  
made whole again.  
When jade wares have been glued  
back together they are unsightly,  
shattered easily, and of little use.

□

When Mo-wo-pi  
(a renowned ancient scholar)  
cut open a large pomegranate,  
someone asked him:  
"Master, what things would you like  
to have as numerous as these  
seeds?" To which he responded:  
"Faithful friends."

**Matteo Ricci**, 1595  
*On Friendship*  
translated by Timothy Billings  
Columbia University Press 2009



***If you think in terms of a year, plant a seed;  
If in ten years, plant trees;  
if in terms of one hundred years,  
teach the people.***

*Confucius 551-479 BC*

whole world to be visited and mapped. Indeed, Ricci, as a scientist, astronomer and cartologist, provided China with its first map of the world and its first modern calendar, among a host of other things including some ingenious clocks.

Perhaps the most important thing to remember about Matteo Ricci is his *modus operandi* - his style, his approach to a chosen work - because without it he could never have succeeded in being welcomed into China by the Ming dynasty at the beginning of the 17th century.

Ricci endured several years of frustrating setbacks to his goal of visiting with Emperor Wan-li and sharing with him his treasure trove of scientific and cultural gifts from Europe. But he did not waste those years. Ricci immersed himself in Chinese language and culture and became a recognized and admired Confucian scholar, openly respected among Chinese intellectuals and lesser political leaders.

His first book published in Chinese was a treatise "On Friendship." It drew on western maxims arranged in such a way as to resonate with Confucian social thought that listed 'friendship' among its cardinal relationships. The book was an immediate success and its appearance hastened the date of his long-sought invitation to meet with the Emperor and be granted permanent residence in Beijing, which finally happened in 1601.

Ricci's approach to his mission was to search out similarities between Confucian and Christian thought and teachings. He was confident that many ethical principles are available to all through natural revelation, and that these thoughts and teachings are in harmony with those we receive by divine revelation. For example, he identified the Confucian 'Lord of the heavens' with the Christian God. He saw the deep devotion that the Chinese had for their ancestors as reverent and filial, rather than idolatrous.

Many of Ricci's accommodations with Confucian wisdom were later rejected by Rome. But he had succeeded in opening the door of China to Europe and vice versa - even if narrower 'dogma' and 'hard power' would later close it again and again.



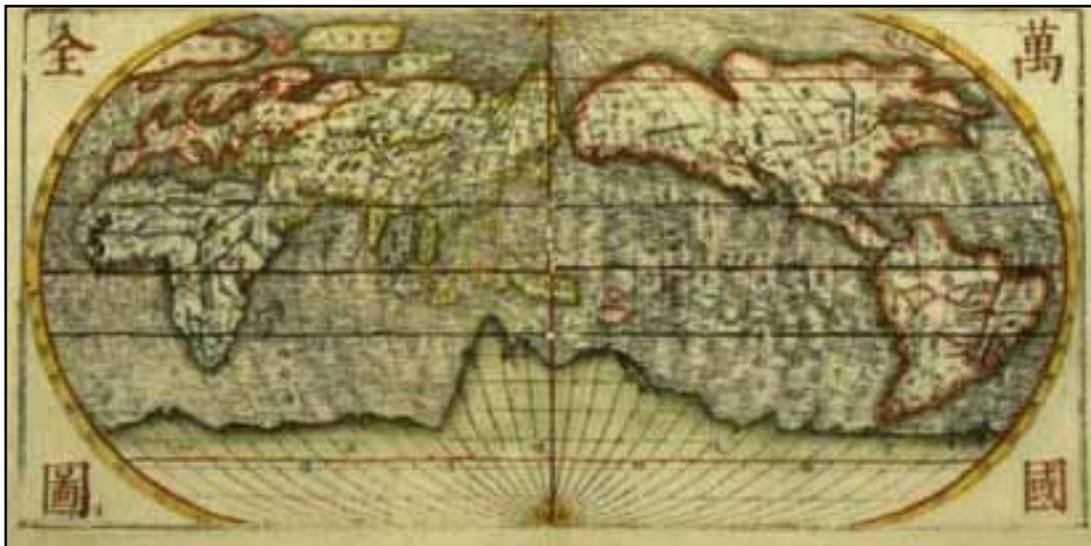
The world is round  
so that friendship  
may encircle it.

*Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*

Fittingly, in our own day, after long years when China expelled Jesuits or held them in prisons indefinitely, the Chinese government has now welcomed them back. Among other initiatives, Jesuits have opened a very visible Center for International Business Ethics in Beijing as well as another centre that hosts foreign students from around the world. Casa Ricci Social Services is a network serving people with leprosy or HIV and AIDS. Through these projects, the Jesuits' quiet and peaceful way of proceeding remains true to Ricci's legacy.

On the global scene, in 2010, nations are becoming more conscious of the interconnectedness of all things and especially of their own inevitable interdependence. Hence the consequent paradox of power, and more particularly, of *The Paradox of American Power* - to use the title of Joseph Nye's book - that shows *Why the World's Superpower Can't go it Alone*. Nye reviews the recent defeats and impasses experienced by the USA in foreign affairs, for example, in Vietnam, Iraq and now Afghanistan.

His analysis resounds with the call to non-violence that can be heard today from so many quarters—including the early warning given by Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson in 1955, when he wrote that humans are moving into "an age when different civilizations will have to learn to live in peaceful interchange, learning from each other studying in each other's history and ideals and art and culture, mutually enriching each others' lives. The alternative, in this overcrowded little world is misunderstanding, tensions, clash and catastrophe." (*Democracy in World Politics*, 1955)



The Great Map of Ten Thousand Countries  
a world map for China by Matteo Ricci

## Liu Xiaobo's Nobel Peace Prize highlights human rights violations in China

The recent announcement of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize recipient has put a spot-light on human rights violations in China.

This year's Nobel laureate remains in jail serving an 11-year sentence for "inciting subversion of state power", due to Dr. Liu's *Charter 08*, a manifesto for democracy. Mr. Liu has been openly critical of China's rulers since he joined hunger strikers in Tiananmen Square twenty-one years ago.

The award reminds us of "numerous other prisoners of conscience languishing in Chinese jails for exercising their right to freedom of expression" according to Amnesty International.

Fifteen Nobel Peace Prize laureates urged the G20 to ask China to free Liu Xiaobo, saying his release would be "an extraordinary recognition of the remarkable transformation China has undergone in recent decades." The letter is signed by the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former President Jimmy Carter, among others.

Amnesty International asks that you write to the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa to call for Dr. Liu's release, as well as that of others jailed for signing on to Charter 08. It was originally signed by nearly 300 Chinese scholars, lawyers and officials.

See [www.amnesty.ca](http://www.amnesty.ca) for more information.

Jeffrey Sachs in his *Common Wealth – Economics for a Crowded Planet* puts it this way: "The defining challenge for the twenty-first century will be to face the reality that humanity shares a common fate on a crowded planet. That common fate will require new forms of cooperation, a fundamental point of blinding simplicity that many world leaders have yet to understand or embrace." (p3)

And Samuel Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* comes to the same insight from a different angle, reminding us that culture is today more important than economics, because people are increasingly defining themselves on the basis of ancestry, language, religion and customs.

For him, critical distinctions between people are not primarily ideological or economic nor even national; they are cultural. As he says, "The security of the world requires the acceptance of global multiculturality." (p318)

It is obvious to all these thinkers that the peaceful division of limited resources which is required for the global common good cannot be based on hard power alone, as was so often attempted in the past.

## SOFT POWER OF FRIENDSHIP?

As China rapidly emerges economically and politically as a second superpower, the whole world is coming to realize that a positive and trusting relationship on China's part with the USA (still a superpower, even if in decline) will be crucial for any viable solutions to our present day global problems. Realizing this, Nye would have us look to alternatives of 'soft power', and to be resourceful in exploring new models of cooperation.

Without denying absolutely the need of hard power in some difficult cases, Nye and others argue that the soft power of friendship should be tried by the USA and its Western allies in their general approach to China today. This may well prove a more creative approach than nations simply vying with one another for China's favour.

This is hardly a new insight. Pope Benedict, in his recent social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, suggests that all human relationships, including those in business enterprises and politics, must include the dimension of friendship if they are to be fully human.

Thus the 400th anniversary of the death of Matteo Ricci in China may well carry an important legacy to be remembered not only by Christians but also by the superpowers of our day. At first sight, many may consider such an approach as Utopian. Nevertheless, the soft power of friendship can have and has had a break-through role



in building that degree of trust that is indispensable for arriving at agreements and decisions in troubled, uncharted and confused times and circumstances such as our own.

On a much smaller level, but true to Ricci's example, our Jesuit Forum considers that one of its most important missions is to help to build up trust and friendship among leaders whose duty it is to make difficult decisions in the multiple dimensions of professional and public life today.

The enormous challenges that are encountered in politics, health, education, social welfare and security can tempt the stoutest individual heart to take refuge in learned helplessness or sophisticated resignation. The solidarity that is experienced when colleagues become friends may be, along with the God Who is love, the first and best antidote to the sickness that threatens all leadership: namely, the loss of hope.

Bill Ryan sj

## FRIENDSHIP IS NOT PROMOTED IN CHINESE FACTORIES

Recent worker suicides and well-organized strikes again bring world attention to the struggles of Chinese workers. Seventeen suicide attempts with 13 deaths and serious injuries since the beginning of this year have taken place at Foxconn Electronics, the giant manufacturing company of Apple's iPad and iPhone.

Foxconn employees said in interviews that their dehumanizing work environment was at the heart of the tragedies. Military-style discipline, long work hours and management's strategy of isolating workers socially (eg: by not bunking workers from the same shift or hometown together) had created a toxic environment.

"Foxconn is not a sweatshop" maintains Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple. Certainly there are various sports facilities at the factory with more than 300,000 workers. However, Yan Li, 27, an engineer, died from exhaustion after working 34 hours continuously.

Foxconn has announced plans to set up a new plant in western China, where the minimum wage and living costs are lower. As often happens, the company can thus escape criticism and worker organizing by moving elsewhere. The company plans to "take with them" 100,000 of their workers to the new location.

Governments still refuse to impose significant restrictions on capital, which remains mobile and free to continue its search for unorganized, rights-deprived workers everywhere.

Sources:

Maquila Solidarity Network  
([www.maquilasolidarity.org](http://www.maquilasolidarity.org))

Asia Monitor Resource Centre ([www.amrc.org.hk](http://www.amrc.org.hk))

Hey, we've globalized the market.  
Now can we civilize it?



*"The essence of the Encyclical is that everything, including economic life, is divine gift.*

*"This is quite daring in the context of business dealings..."*

*"The letter's strength is in challenging all ordinary agendas, and in denying that business, politics and morality are separate watertight compartments."*

*Globe and Mail  
July 8 2009*

Making peace with nature:  
a fresh start for all of us.

Development:  
intelligent love of neighbour

The bottom line:  
too flat for a round planet,  
too thin for the human heart

Above are some of the titles of the sessions offered in: **Caritas in Veritate - On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth - A Guide for Discussion and Action**, created by the Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice and published by the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario.

We invite you to bring this significant social encyclical to life. Download the introduction and the first of the seven sessions. Read the notes for group leaders. Bring a small group together. Away you go.

Each session outlined in the Guide offers a reflection on a main theme of *Caritas in Veritate*, a story to illustrate the theme, a short list of related resources and questions for your group.

**The Guide is available in French and English at:  
[www.jesuitforum.ca](http://www.jesuitforum.ca) or [www.acbo.on.ca](http://www.acbo.on.ca)**

**Dalai Lama promotes listening and dialogue:  
“Peace doesn’t fall from the sky!”**

The Dalai Lama highlighted “listening and dialogue” during his October visit to Toronto.

His Holiness said that in order to achieve a peaceful world and a happy world, there is the need to promote a concept of dialogue – at all levels in the education system. He said the opposite of peace is violence, which is man-made. Therefore, he said peace can also be brought about by people. Considering others as part of human society can bring about trust and genuine friendship.

The Dalai Lama has elaborated on this theme before, saying “more human contact in the form of informal extended meetings, without any agenda, would improve their mutual understanding; they would learn

to relate to each other as human beings and could then try to tackle international problems based on this understanding.” No two parties, especially those with a history of antagonism, can negotiate fruitfully in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and hatred.

“I suggest that world leaders meet about once a year in a beautiful place without any business, just to get to know each other. Then, later, they could meet to discuss mutual and global problems.

“I am sure many others share my wish that world leaders meet at the conference table in such an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding of each other’s humanness.”



Detail from Matteo Ricci's adaptation of the Gregorian calendar.

**Listening, dialogue, building friendship and trust...  
this is the work of the Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice.  
We invite you to share in our vision by supporting our work.**

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