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UCA News - www.ucanews.com

VATICAN - Pope sends message for year of the Tiger

Published Date: February 15, 2010

VATICAN CITY (UCAN) — Pope Benedict XVI has extended his good wishes to the Chinese, the Vietnamese, and all other people in Asia and around the world who are celebrating the Lunar New Year.

He conveyed his greetings from his study window in the Vatican at midday on Sunday, Feb. 14, when he spoke to thousands of pilgrims from many lands gathered in St. Peter's Square.

"Today the Lunar New Year is celebrated in various countries of Asia — I am thinking in particular of China and Vietnam, and in many communities scattered throughout the world," the pope told them.

"These are festive days, which these people live as privileged occasions to strengthen family and generational bonds," he added.

He concluded by expressing the wish that "all of them may maintain and increase the rich inheritance of spiritual and moral values, that are firmly rooted in the culture of these peoples."

His words brought warm applause from the thousands in the square, and especially from several small groups of Chinese and Vietnamese present among them who waved to him.

In sending this greeting, Pope Benedict was following in a tradition started by John Paul II as he reached out to improve relations, particularly with China and Vietnam.

The Pope's complete message is available here. ♦

YEAR OF THE TIGER.



Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org

ASIA/CHINA -Wednesday, 17 February 2010

Chinese Catholics moved by Pope's greetings for New Year's; commemoration of deceased missionaries among initiatives

Beijing (Agenzia Fides) – Masses of Thanksgiving, prayers for the world and the country, the commemoration of deceased priests and missionaries, the pastoral visit of the bishops and priests to the Ecclesial Base Communities, and works of charity have marked the celebration of Chinese New Year by Catholics on the mainland. Also, the Pope's greetings at his Angelus address given on Sunday, February 14, has brought happiness and excitement among the faithful. As a priest in Beijing told Fides, "for someone else, it might seem like the usual greeting of good wishes, but for us Chinese Catholics, especially those of us who live on the mainland, every time it arouses great emotion. Every time, gratitude arises from the depths of our hearts! Thank you Holy Father! You have made us feel so close to you, so close to the

Universal Church. We are always with you." According to information received by our agency, the Solemn Mass celebrated on the morning of February 14, the first day of Chinese New Year, in all the Catholic communities there was a very large participation of the faithful. Entire families came and prayed together, thanking God for the past year and calling on the maternal protection of Mary, for peace and prosperity in the world and the country. Among the events of this day of celebration, we mention that at the parish of Fan Ga Da, in the He Bei Province, priests and the faithful went to the Catholic cemetery to pay homage to priests and missionaries who have dedicated their entire life to the

Church. They also visited the parents of several priests and religious, to thank them for their support of their children's vocations.

The Catholic community of Zhong Shan has launched on its website a message for the Chinese New Year, addressed to all peoples, commemorating the missionaries that have come from abroad and, on behalf of Catholics, thanking all who have helped and supported growth of the Catholic community, hoping for a further increase in social harmony so that Catholics may help people to know Jesus Christ and the Church. Finally, it invokes God's blessing on the Chinese people. (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 16/02/2010) ♦



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Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org

ASIA/CHINA - Monday, 15 February 2010

Young Catholics doing volunteer work during school vacations for New Year's

Zhang Jia Kou (Agenzia Fides) - During the winter school holidays, young Catholics in the parish of Zhang Jia Kou are set to perform works of charity, becoming volunteers to witness to the love of Christ to all people, but especially to the youngest, the weakest, and those who are alone. On February 8, the young people, who are divided into several groups led by priests and nuns, visited the nursing home for the elderly, orphanages,

and families of the elderly, who live alone and are sick.

In addition to bringing goods to these people, so they can enjoy the feast of Chinese New Year, they also cleaned their houses, their clothes, and helped the children with their homework. On February 10, there was a big celebration for all the young people of the area to celebrate the New Year, with the spirit of evangelization.

Many young non-Christians received a warm welcome from their Catholic friends, attending the quiz on the Bible and a show on the stories of the saints. They also shared their impressions on how to "live their life of faith." This year, the priests involved in youth ministry have also launched three meetings a week to strengthen the youth's Biblical knowledge, and so they can grow in their faith. (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 13/02/2010). ♦

Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org

ASIA/CHINA - Thursday, 25 February 2010

Public press coverage of Fr. Matteo Ricci exhibition in Beijing

Beijing (Agenzia Fides) - "Matteo Ricci – A Meeting of Civilizations in Ming China," the exhibition commemorating the 400th anniversary of death of the Italian Jesuit missionary, was opened in Beijing with ample coverage from the official press in Chinese and English, including the agency "Xin Hua," which emphasized that the great Italian missionary was the first European who brought the successes of technology and art to China. From February 7 to March 20, 2010 at the Capital Museum in Beijing, the Chinese audience can admire the Jesuit from Macerata who "became Chinese," by far the most respected, known, and loved foreigner over the course of centuries in China. Today, his figure once again shines in the country to which he devoted his life, where he died and was buried exactly 400 years ago.

The exhibition, sponsored by the Marche Region of Italy, the Exchange Center for Chinese Archaeological Findings, and the Capital Museum in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute of the Italian Embassy in Beijing, traces the extraordinary life of Fr. Li Ma Dou, as the Chinese like to call Fr. Matteo Ricci. The exhibition also presents two hundred works - paintings, engravings, maps, clocks ... - to tell the path of Fr. Li Ma Dou in the history of the Ming Dynasty. The exhibition will then be shown in Shanghai (Shanghai Museum: April 3 to May 23) and Nanking (Nanjing Museum: June 5 to July 25). (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 24/02/2010). ♦



UCA News - www.ucanews.com

CHINA - Spiritual malnutrition in China

Published Date: March 2, 2010

BEIJING (UCAN) — A Catholic priest in mainland China says formation is essential to resolve challenges that lie in the China Church.

Father Paulus Gan reflects on Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone's letter to Chinese clergy in November 2009 on the occasion of the Year for Priests.

The priest, who does not want to use his real name, comes from a traditional Catholic family in northern China. He was ordained abroad in 2006, the same year he completed his study in Mission Theology and Church History.

Since returning to China, he has been teaching in a seminary, giving spiritual retreats to lay Catholics and nuns, conducting social service programs as well as doing writing and translating work.

The priest's commentary follows:

One paragraph from Cardinal Bertone's letter to the clergy in China last November stood out for me and has stayed with me ever since. I will quote it in full.

"At this time may no one hesitate to seek reconciliation with concrete gestures, to extend the hand to the brother who 'has something against you' (cf. Matt 5:23-24). In order to obtain it, there is an urgent need to pay attention also to the human formation of all the faithful, priests and sisters included, because the lack of human maturity, self-control and inner harmony is the most frequent source of misunderstandings, lack of cooperation and conflicts within Catholic communities."

This paragraph drives the whole point of the entire Letter home — to call for reconciliation and better formation! Why are there so many conflicts and divisions within the Church communi-

ties, not only in China but throughout the world and down through the centuries? The reason lies in our human weaknesses and shortcomings, not in the Gospel message and Church teachings.

But it also goes directly to the ongoing problem facing the Church of China. This is a result of its unfortunate historical background but it has not been directly addressed. Neither Pope Benedict XVI's landmark letter to mainland Catholics nor last November's letter from Cardinal Bertone to the priests of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China, valuable though both of those documents were, adequately examined and confronted the fundamental challenge to the Church in the country.

Due to the unfortunate Church-state relationship over the past several decades and lack of adequate formation in light of the post-Second Vatican Council theology and spirituality, the bishops, priests, Religious men and women as well as the laity in China are suffering from spiritual, emotional and psychological malnutrition.

In order to carry on the torch of faith, it is these "nutrition-deprived" people who are doing formation work for the young seminarians, male and female Religious and the laity.

How can we expect a different result other than passing many of the ills on to the next generation?

Our bishops have key responsibilities with regard to seminary and young priests' ongoing formation. Yet when most of their time and energy, willingly or unwillingly, is being sapped by frequent meetings, administration

and non-Church affairs, they end up with little time and energy left to take care of their most essential and most important duties.

Worse, these bishops should have a lot to say about the seminary management and formation but, due to the lack of coordination and other obstacles, their influence on the seminary leadership and management is minimized to a great extent.

At present there are 12 major seminaries in China. A good number of the major seminary rectors are not accountable to the board of directors, mainly composed of bishops. Even though some of the rectors are unqualified and doing a very poor job, nobody is able to fire them and find new replacements.

As a consequence, our younger generation becomes the next generation of victims.

It is consequently necessary — and urgent — to call for reconciliation and better formation in the Church of China. It is even more urgent and necessary to find ways for the Church to function as a proper Church.

Cardinal Bertone's letter also touched on the scale of this task when he wrote: "Among those I wish to emphasize reconciliation within the Catholic community and a respectful and constructive dialogue with the Civil Authorities, without renouncing the principles of the Catholic faith."

I think this is exactly what the Church in China needs and should do.

It should not waste time and energy on internal disputes and hide-and-seek games with the government but come out in the open to carry out our

mission and ministries with a unified vision. This would be for the benefit of Church and society as well as for the proclamation and witness of Gospel values.

In dialoguing either within the Church community or with the government each side will have to face the issue of “principles.” But if we can follow the wisdom of the ancient Chinese philosophy — to set the differences aside while looking for common ground — many things can be achieved. Otherwise, we will only end up with endless divisions and separations in the name of “principles,” which is what has been happening in various local Church communities both “open” and “underground.”

The Catholic Church in China needs

new leadership with vision and courage. But the Holy See also has a lot of work ahead of it when it comes to diplomatic negotiations with the Chinese government. The most important outcome would be to establish a direct chain of command within the Church with some kind of collaboration and consultation with the government agencies concerned. This should be the work of the future.

It will require wisdom and courage, it may stir up some thunder and bring on a storm but in the long run it's far better than letting things go on as they have so far.

Lastly, what comforts me the most are Cardinal Bertone's reassuring words: “I assure you that the Holy See is aware of the complex and diffi-

cult situation in which you find yourselves.”

After so many years of ups and downs, especially after many years of careful study and evaluation, the Holy See has come to a better understanding of the complex and difficult situation that the Church in China is facing.

It is my hope that more studies and evaluations regarding the situation of the Church in China will be done in the future, better with more involvement of the addressees of these letters, not merely with people who had ever visited China, nor with people who had heard, read or written something on China. ♦

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

CHINA - Fujian priest detained over youth camp

Published Date: March 11, 2010

FU'AN, China (UCAN) — Police have detained an “underground” priest of Mindong diocese, eastern China, and fined his fellow priests a month after they organized youth camps for university students.

Father John Baptist Luo Wen, 39, pastor of the Holy Family Church, has been in “administrative detention” at a government-run guesthouse in Fu'an city since March 3.

Fathers Guo Xijin, Miu Yong and Liu Maochun received notices of detention but security officers have not taken any action yet, local Catholics said.

Another three priests were fined 500 yuan (US\$73) each. However, Church sources said, “They would rather be detained and will never pay the fine.”

The seven Mindong priests organized four-day winter camps for about 300 Catholic university students in two

batches in late January and early February.

Church sources told UCA News yesterday that the priests are now “facing revenge” from public security officers.

In mainland China, public security officials can hold a person in custody for a maximum of 15 days as punishment for violating public order provisions or impose a fine, or both.

Father Luo, who is active in online evangelization, and who uses the Internet name, “Father A Sip of Tea,” had anticipated the outcome.

He told UCA News before the detention that he “would be happy to serve as a witness of God and a follower of martyr-saints.”

On Feb. 3, public security officers arrived at Saiqi Church, where the youth camp took place and ordered the priests to close the event down.

“We decided not to and told the students about the situation. We asked those who were afraid to go home and said that we priests would accompany the remaining ones until the end,” Father Luo said.

Fewer than 20 participants left while some gained support from their parents after phoning home for advice, he said.

The priests were questioned by security officers on Feb. 4, but no one was detained until a month later.

Church sources believed the security officers felt they had lost face and punished the priests as revenge.

Mindong diocese has more than 70,000 Catholics. Most of them belong to the underground Church community led by 86-year-old Bishop Vincent Huang Shoucheng and nearly 60 priests. ♦

AsiaNews - www.asianews.it

02/13/2010 10:43

CHINA - VATICAN

New Year in prison for the Chinese bishops. Two priests released

by Zhen Yuan

The family of Msgr. Jia Zhiguo have been requesting his release for months, but they have not been answered. Two other bishops missing for years in police custody: Mgr. James Su Zhimin and Mgr. Cosma Shi Enxiang. The two priests released belong to the diocese of Zhengding.

Beijing (AsiaNews) - Despite repeated requests of Catholics and their families, Msgr. Julius Jia Zhiguo, underground bishop of Zhengding (Hebei), will remain under sequester during the festivities of Chinese New Year, which begins tomorrow. With him, two other underground bishops remain segregated in unknown places in the hands of police.

Meanwhile, police in Zhengding have in recent weeks released two priests of the diocese: Fr. Hu Baoguo, vicar general, was released on Jan. 29 at 10 pm, Fr. Ma Hong'en was released on 6 January. Both were often targeted and subjected to periods of imprisonment to force them to join the Patriotic Association, the state body that wants to build a National Catholic Church, separate from Rome.

In recent months, the family of Mgr. Jia, and especially his nephew, along with lay leaders of the diocese have constantly appealed to the leaders of the Religious Affairs Bureau to free the bishop for the New Year celebrations, which are an important appointment for families to come together. But today it was confirmed that the bishop will remain in police custody.

Bishop Jia Zhiguo was arrested on 30 March, as the Vatican Commission on China held a closed-door encounter. At the conclusion of the meeting, a statement by the Vatican asked for

his release (see: 31/03/2009 Police arrest underground Zhengding bishop Jia Zhiguo and 02/04/2009 Vatican's "sadness" over arrest of Bishop Jia Zhiguo. The Church and formation).

Catholics of Zhengding and the village of Wuqiu, home to the cathedral, continue to "pray for his release and his return to pastoral work." According to AsiaNews sources, "Mgr. Jia is in good health and his mind is clear". The prelate's nephew was able to visit his uncle in December.

During his detention, with Msgr. Jia has been allowed to celebrate Mass alone and to have the readings, including the Compendium of the Pope's letter to Chinese Catholics. A group of police officers charged with overseeing the cathedral and the bishop of Wuqiu, are present only on Sundays. When the bishop was there they made round the clock checks on the prelate.

The Bishop was also absent at the memorial Mass to commemorate a year after the death of his uncle, Fr Joseph Fuqin Jia, who died December 26, 2009.

Bishop Jia Zhiguo was arrested on 30 March, during a close encounter of the Vatican Commission on China. At the conclusion of the rally, a statement by the Vatican has asked for his release (see: 31/03/2009 seized by the police Msgr. Jia Zhiguo, underground bishop of Zhengding 02/04/2009 and "pain" of the Vatican to stop Msgr. Jia Zhiguo. The Church and training).

Just like Mgr. Jia, two other bishops remain seized in police custody in unknown locations.

The first is Mgr. James Su Zhimin (diocese of Baoding, Hebei), 75, arrested and disappeared since 1996. In November 2003 he was seen in a hospital in Baoding, controlled by the police, where he underwent treatment for the heart and eyes. But after a few days he disappeared again. The second is Mgr. Cosma Shi Enxiang (diocese of Yixian, Hebei), 86, who was arrested and disappeared April 13, 2001. Bishop Shi, ordained a bishop in '82, had been in prison for 30 years. The last time he was arrested in December '90, and released in '93. Since then he has lived in forced isolation until his latest arrest.

AsiaNews sources say that there are dozens of underground priests in prison or forced labor camps. And dozens of other underground bishops in isolation. ♦



The Washington Post

Friday, February 12, 2010; A17

Chinese court upholds prominent scholar's 11-year punishment

By Cara Anna

BEIJING -- A Chinese court upheld Thursday the unprecedented 11-year sentence given to a prominent scholar who had called for political reform, the latest in a string of harsh punishments for dissenters.

The ruling -- the third legal defeat this week for veteran Chinese activists -- drew a rare public rebuke from the U.S. ambassador, who said Liu Xiaobo should be released immediately.

Liu's hearing at Beijing's high court took fewer than 10 minutes, and the activist was not given a chance to speak. "I'm innocent!" he called out before being taken away.

The United States and the European Union responded swiftly to Liu's failed appeal with statements condemning China's treatment of the scholar, who has been found guilty of inciting to subvert state power. China routinely uses the vaguely worded charge to jail people it considers troublemakers.

"Persecution of individuals for the peaceful expression of political views is inconsistent with internationally recognized norms of human rights," U.S. Ambassador Jon Huntsman said in an e-mailed statement. It was the first statement issued under his name since he took the post in August.

Asked whether China's treatment of dissidents might negatively affect its image overseas, Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu responded, "There are no dissidents in China."

It was bad week here for activists: On Tuesday, a court in Sichuan province sentenced writer and activist Tan Zuoren to five years on the same charge as Liu after he investigated the deaths of thousands of children in a massive earthquake in 2008.

On Monday, the same court upheld a three-year prison sentence for another earthquake activist, Huang Qi, who was convicted on the ill-defined charge of illegally possessing state

secrets.

A former university professor, Liu is among China's most prominent political activists. He spent 20 months in jail for joining the 1989 student-led protests in Tiananmen Square, which ended when the government called in the military -- killing hundreds, perhaps thousands, of demonstrators.

At the end of 2008, he co-authored a document calling for stronger civil rights and an end to Communist Party political dominance. About 10,000 people have signed it, though a news blackout and Internet censorship left most Chinese unaware that it exists.

After the court proceedings Thursday, Liu's wife was given 20 minutes with her husband and allowed to hug him.

"So thin!" Liu Xia said of her husband. "I just wanted to be able to hold him. It might be 11 years before I can hold him again." ♦

China Infodoc Service

China rights record worsening in areas: US

(AFP) – 11 March 2010

WASHINGTON — China's human rights record worsened last year as authorities increased harassment of activists and repression in the Xinjiang region, the US State Department said Thursday.

"The government's human rights record remained poor and worsened in some areas," the annual report by the State Department said.

It said Beijing "increased the severe cultural and religious repression of ethnic minorities" in Xinjiang, the western region that last year saw deadly clashes between China's Han majority and the local Uighur people.

The State Department said China "continued to repress Uighurs expressing peaceful political dissent and independent Muslim religious leaders," by trying to associate the predominantly Muslim people with terrorism.

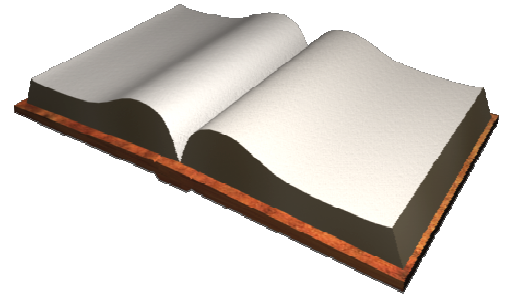
"Uighurs were sentenced to long prison terms, and in some cases executed, on charges of separatism," the report said.

The State Department took note of China's release last year of an action plan on human rights, which addresses issues such as prisoners' rights and the role of religion.

But the State Department said authorities did not implement the action plan and found that critical voices across China faced growing problems.

"The detention and harassment of human rights activists increased, and public interest lawyers and law firms that took on cases deemed sensitive by the government faced harassment, disbarment and closure," the report said.

The report said that China also imposed "tight government controls" on Tibetans, who faced restrictions on practicing their religion and severe repercussions if they tried to escape to Nepal. ♦

Book notice:**title: *A Sword and a Shield: China's Human Rights Lawyers*****editors: *Stacey Mosher and Patrick Poon*****publisher: *China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group******Hong Kong 2009 HK\$ 120******ISBN 978-988-18813-1-1*****By: *Roderick O'Brien***

The motivating factor for the publication of this volume has been to encourage support in Hong Kong and the international community for China's human rights lawyers and their families. The Hong Kong-based China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group feels that they have made a real contribution to the development of rule of law in China, at a great personal cost, and that their contribution deserves better recognition and support. Although this volume is initially published in English, a Chinese-language version is planned. Such a volume will have greater impact among the people of Hong Kong.

The issues are surprisingly complex. Chapter by chapter, the writers introduce us to some of the issues. The presentation is balanced. There have been laudable developments in the legal system in China's mainland, such as the passing of the Administrative Litigation Law, which give human rights lawyers much more "room to move" than they had in earlier times. But there is much which is not praiseworthy. Lawyers are subject to legal harassment using methods such as article 306 of the Criminal Law, which penalises defence lawyers (but not government lawyers) for introducing false evidence. Lawyers are also subject to extra legal harassment including beatings, and unfair treatment during trials. The legal system is skewed against defence lawyers, especially in terms of the production of evidence and the calling of witnesses. The government-sponsored and controlled All China Lawyers' Association has shown that it will serve only its governmental masters, and is unwilling to work for protection of lawyers' professional rights. The book includes a discussion of the role of the All China Lawyers' Association which illegally refused to issue practising certificates for lawyers who have stood up for human rights.

Hong Kong's lawyers are in a privileged position to speak for their mainland counterparts. Cross-border legal activity is sustained and reaches to remote areas. Hong Kong's lawyers themselves can only gain if their mainland counterparts are better treated and respected than they are at present. And Hong Kong has a number of academic or professional writers who have the time and inside knowledge to speak for their neighbours. Fu Hualing and Eva Pils of the University of Hong Kong are among the contributors. Yet the most interesting parts of this book are those which introduce China's defence lawyers, and those which quote their own words. ♦

[end]