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Excerpt from the LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER POPE BENEDICT XVI TO THE BISHOPS, PRIESTS, CONSECRATED PERSONS AND LAY FAITHFUL OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
27 May 2007

A day of prayer for the Church in China

19. Dear Pastors and all the faithful, the date 24 May could in the future become an occasion for the Catholics of the whole world to be united in prayer with the Church which is in China. This day is dedicated to the liturgical memorial of Our Lady, Help of Christians, who is venerated with great devotion at the Marian Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai.

I would like that date to be kept by you as a day of prayer for the Church in China. I encourage you to celebrate it by renewing your communion of faith in Jesus Our Lord and of faithfulness to the Pope, and by praying that the unity among you may become ever deeper and more visible. I remind you, moreover, of the commandment that Jesus gave us, to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us, as well as the invitation of the Apostle Saint Paul: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:1-4).

On that same day, the Catholics of the whole world – in particular those who are of Chinese origin – will demonstrate their fraternal solidarity and solicitude for you, asking the Lord of history for the gift of perseverance in witness, in the certainty that your sufferings past and present for the Holy Name of Jesus and your intrepid loyalty to his Vicar on earth will be rewarded, even if at times everything can seem a failure. ♦♦♦

Our Lady of She-Shan



“O Lord, comfort China and those persecuted for Christ in that great country. Grant them joy in their communion with the Universal Church. Bless them so that the seed they plant during their years of sufferings, patience and love will be richly harvested.” (1991 Consistory) Grant mercy, O Lord, to those brothers and sisters who chose to be separated from you; may they return to the one fold and One Shepherd.

By Ignatius Cardinal Kung, Emeritus Bishop of Shanghai July 1991

**PRAYER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO OUR LADY OF SHESHAN
ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD DAY OF PRAYER
FOR THE CHURCH IN CHINA (24 MAY 2008)**

Virgin Most Holy, Mother of the Incarnate Word and our Mother, venerated in the Shrine of Sheshan under the title "Help of Christians", the entire Church in China looks to you with devout affection. We come before you today to implore your protection. Look upon the People of God and, with a mother's care, guide them along the paths of truth and love, so that they may always be a leaven of harmonious coexistence among all citizens.

When you obediently said "yes" in the house of Nazareth, you allowed God's eternal Son to take flesh in your virginal womb and thus to begin in history the work of our redemption. You willingly and generously cooperated in that work, allowing the sword of pain to pierce your soul, until the supreme hour of the Cross, when you kept watch on Calvary, standing beside your Son, who died that we might live.

From that moment, you became, in a new way, the Mother of all those who receive your Son Jesus in faith and choose to follow in his footsteps by taking up his Cross. Mother of hope, in the darkness of Holy Saturday you journeyed with unfailing trust towards the dawn of Easter. Grant that your children may discern at all times, even those that are darkest, the signs of God's loving presence.

Our Lady of Sheshan, sustain all those in China, who, amid their daily trials, continue to believe, to hope, to love. May they never be afraid to speak of Jesus to the world, and of the world to Jesus.

In the statue overlooking the Shrine you lift your Son on high, offering him to the world with open arms in a gesture of love. Help Catholics always to be credible witnesses to this love, ever clinging to the rock of Peter on which the Church is built. Mother of China and all Asia, pray for us, now and for ever. Amen!

Bishop ordained with 'dual' approval

First ordination since China-Vatican ties turned sour 'not a sign of warmer relations'

ucanews.com reporter, Jiangmen, China

March 30, 2011

Father Paul Liang Jiansen, 46, was ordained Bishop of Jiangmen today, making him the first new bishop in China this year.

He is also the first bishop ordained with both papal approval and government recognition after China-Vatican relations cooled in late 2010 after Beijing ordained an illicit bishop and convened the National Congress of Catholic Representatives.

The episcopal ordination was held at the Cathedral of Immaculate Heart of Mary in Jiangmen city, southern Guangdong province.

The new bishop invited his seminary classmates – Bishops Joseph Gan Junqiu of Guangzhou, Joseph Liao Hongqing of Meixian (Meizhou) and Paul Su Yongda of Zhanjiang, all from Guangdong – to be the consecrator and co-ordiners.

Bishops John Baptist Li Suguang of Nanchang, John Baptist Tan Yanquan of Nanning, Joseph Shen Bin of Haimen and about 40 priests also celebrated the Mass. Priests and laypeople from neighboring Hong Kong and Macau dioceses were also present.

The cathedral accommodated 400 people, while another 1,000 sat in the courtyard. As all seating was by ticket only, hundreds of faithful who did not have tickets watched the liturgy via television screens outside the church compound. Kwun Ping-hung, a Church-in-China expert, said this “dual-approved” ordination has conveyed a positive message, but “in light of current China-Vatican relations, we should not over-interpret it as a sign of warming ties.”

Both sides still hold different views over selecting

and appointing bishops, which may be reflected in the near future or through other incidents, he noted. Jiangmen diocese currently has one bishop, seven priests and 26 nuns serving nearly 20,000 faithful, who are spread over 24 counties and six cities.

The diocese is a special place in the history of the China Church, as two pioneering Jesuit missionaries left an impression here.

Bishop Liang said his coat of arms bears the images of Saint Francis Xavier and Father Matteo Ricci, and expressed his aim to model himself on them.

Saint Francis Xavier arrived on Shangchuan Island in 1552, but died months later while waiting to enter the mainland. His tomb there is a famous pilgrimage site in Jiangmen.

Father Ricci first spent six years (1583-1589) in Zhaoqing in the northern part of today's Jiangmen diocese, where he built a church and prepared for his mission to mainland China.

Bishop Liang said the two great missionaries inspired him to put greater effort in spreading the Gospel, as many local people have not heard about Jesus yet. Due to a shortage of religious vocations, he said, he will make it a priority to train lay leaders to share the burden of priests and nuns in catechesis and evangelical work.

Bishop Liang entered the seminary shortly after he was baptized as a young man in 1985. He became a priest in 1991 and has served in Jiangmen parish since 1995. He was appointed as vicar general in 2004 by his predecessor Bishop Peter Paul Li Pan-shi, who died in 2007. ♦♦♦



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Our Lady of Sheshan, Help of Christians, Pray for us

by **Aloysius Jin Luxian**
Bishop of Shanghai

<http://www.30giorni.it> - June/July 2007



The pastoral Letter of the Pope addressed to the Church in China, object of the concern of the faithful throughout the world, awaited by the faithful of all China, was finally published on 30 June. We give thanks for the grace of the Lord!

After publication, friends sent me the Chinese text. I have read it twice with great attention and was left very moved. After receiving it I went to my small chapel and meditated on it in my heart. Amen, alleluia! Then together with the priests I studied the document. Now I would like to share my first understanding with everyone.

As universal pastor, with the concern of a spiritual and merciful father, with serenity and calm, basing himself on Scripture, on the documents of Vatican Council II, on the Code of Canon Law and on the teaching of the dead pope John Paul II on China, the Pope sets out for us in clear and simple fashion the nature, the mission, the task, the organization of the Church of Christ. It gives me the feeling of attending a great lesson in ecclesiology, it makes me love our Church even more, and gives me the determination to take another step in my post of local bishop towards soon achieving the hope and the commitment of Jesus for “one pastor and one fold”

The pastoral letter of the Pope is addressed to the Catholic Church in the People’s Republic of China. This Catholic Church that lives in the People’s Republic of China is only one, there are not two, there is no underground part and no official part. All the Church of China believes single-mindedly in the Church one, holy, Catholic and apostolic. We have one sole pastor together, we live together in only one fold. This the Pope expresses clearly and without ambiguity. At this point I would like to turn to the friends abroad who are concerned for our Church: I beg you to be united with the Pope, no longer to talk of our Church as of two Churches, favoring the one and denying the other, hanging round our necks labels like “faithful” and “unfaithful”, “official” and “unofficial”.

The Holy See perfectly understands the circumstances of the past and of the present of our Church, it has at heart what awaits us in the future and the situations of today. As universal pastor his eyes are naturally focussed on what lies ahead and does not stay in the past. For us, the issues of yesterday belong to the past, for the eternal Father that is not so, all our words and all our actions exist for ever before Him. They cannot be erased. The prize of God goes infinitely beyond our deserts and our hopes.

The Church in China is only one. Brothers and sisters, we cross the river together, we live together in harmony and in joy. This is the Pope’s dearest hope.

But in his pastoral letter the Pope also writes with clear-headedness: *«These indications, that concern the nature itself of the universal Church, have a particular meaning for the Church in China. The problems that it is facing to get over – internally and in its relations with the Chinese civil society – tensions, divisions and recriminations do not escape you»* (Section 6, 22). Thus the Pope stressed the need for forgiveness and reconciliation, and says: *«This journey cannot be accomplished from one day to the next»*.

Our diocese of Shanghai will struggle with all its heart, with all its energy and tirelessly to fulfill the hope of the Pope Benedict as soon as may be.

The Church outside China, in every country and in some lands, has the bodies of the Episcopal Conference or of the assemblies of the bishops.

The situation of China is different from the norm. Twenty years ago the Church in Taiwan organized an Episcopal Conference denominating it Episcopal Conference of the Church in China. The previous Pope pointed out to them that the name was not correct, because its members were only the few ordinary bishops of the island of Taiwan. The name needed to be corrected. The Pope pointed out to them that they could not call themselves Episcopal Conference of the Chinese Church, but rather Episcopal Conference of Taiwan. The bishops of Taiwan accepted with joy the Pope's indication and changed the name.

Once some underground bishops in China constituted a Chinese Episcopal Conference, sending a report to Rome to get approval. Rome didn't approve. The reason was very simple: this body did not include the "public" bishops.

The "public" Episcopal Conference was founded more than ten years ago. Naturally, it did not make a report to Rome. And without report, how could it be approved? A National Episcopal Conference must include all the bishops of the country as members, and only after its name has become correspondent with the reality, does it become a National Episcopal Conference. I hope this comes about soon.

The pastoral letter warns: «*The pretension of some bodies, decided on by the State and extraneous to the structure of the Church, of setting themselves above the bishops themselves and of guiding the life of the ecclesial community, does not correspond with Catholic doctrine*» (Section 7, 32). Obviously what the Pope is alluding to is the Patriotic Association. The Patriotic Association was founded fifty years ago. Now the Holy See reveals its position for the first time. In its eyes the Patriotic Association has three features: first, it was founded by the government, second, it is extraneous to the structure of the Church, third, it is set above the bishops to guide the Church. I have been bishop to Shanghai for almost twenty years. The Patriotic Association in Shanghai has never set itself above me; on the contrary, it has accepted my directives. At the beginning of the 20th century, Shanghai had an organization of Catholic Action. Among its members there were such eminent figures as Lu Baihong, Zhu Zhiyao and others. Because of their help in evangelization, the Vatican awarded them decorations. They wrote a glorious page in the history of the diocese of Shanghai. They also served as bridge between the diocese and the government, they solved problems that the foreign missionaries could not solve. I always hope that the Catholics of the diocese of Shanghai continue in the spirit of Catholic Action, developing the spirit that the laity must have. I often say: «The present century will be the time of the laity; I nourish a great hope in the mature friends of Shanghai».

I would like to refer to the second part of the Pope's letter, that lays out the norms of the pastoral life.

Though for twenty years the diocese of Shanghai has developed its own Church according to the spirit of the Gospel, of the Code of Canon Law and of the documents of Vatican Council II, at the present moment we must sit down to reflect and find the shortcomings and to take measures for the purpose of looking after the diocese and the parishes even better in future.

The pastoral letter stresses the task of seminary training. This is indeed very important. I can find comfort in the fact that we created in the Shanghai diocese a seminary at Sheshan. This was the first seminary to be reopened after the reform and the opening of China. The diocese of Shanghai has overcome every kind of difficulty, such as the want of books, the want of professors, the shortage of resources. In the course of the years more than four hundred young priests were trained. I would like to use the occasion to express my deep gratitude to the brothers of the Church in Germany, in Austria and elsewhere, who have generously supported the seminary of Sheshan, and in special fashion the Society of Maryknoll, the Society of the Divine Word, the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Dominican Order, the Society of the Salesians, the Society of Saint Columban, the Society of Jesus. I ask you to pray for them and to ask God to give them a hundredfold reward.

The last paragraph of the pastoral letter makes me feel great joy and comfort. The Pope decides that the annual feast of Our Lady of Sheshan, Help of Christians, 24 May, will be a day of prayer by the Church throughout the world for the Church in China. I think that the believers of Shanghai will be very



The Chinese and English versions of the Letter of the Holy Father Benedict XVI to the Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Persons and Lay Faithful of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China published on 30 June 2007.

happy when they hear this good news. Thank you, Holy Father.

This is a very great honor for the diocese of Shanghai, and at the same time a very important obligation. First of all we must honor Our Lady with extraordinary fervor, we must model ourselves on Our Lady, pledging ourselves to be her sons and daughters, and setting an example to other Catholics. In second place, because certainly there will be many faithful who will come on pilgrimage to Sheshan, we Catholics of Shanghai must prepare adequately, be welcoming hosts, so that the Chinese and foreign faithful can see in us the glory of divine love, arriving with cheerful hearts and leaving in contentment.

Finally, the Pope's pastoral letter stresses the function of the bishop, speaking as essential point of the obligations of the bishop. I feel agitation and fear. I am already 92. The Pope reminds us of the words of Saint Paul the apostle: life is Christ and death a blessing. I ask you all to pray to God for me, that I can indeed live Christ and finally obtain the bliss of a death in peace. Amen.

Aloysius Jin Luxian

The Jesuit Aloysius Jin Luxian was born 92 years ago in a Christian village in the suburbs of Shanghai. Arrested the 8 September 1955, he spent more than twenty years in jail and then in a regime of guarded freedom. In 1985 he accepted to become Bishop of Shanghai with the approval of the government, but without the recognition on the part of the Pope. In 2005 it was Jin who was the "director" of the ordination of his own successor *in pectore* Joseph Xing Wenzhi, nominated by the Pope, "elected" by the diocese, approved by the government. An operation in whose configurations there arrived also for his episcopate the canonical legitimation of the Pope, who then also invited Jin to Rome – without success – for the Synod on the Eucharist. ◆◆◆

AsiaNews - www.asianews.it

03/25/2011 12:22

CHINA-VATICAN

Beijing and the Holy See: the unity of the Church before diplomatic relations

by Bernardo Cervellera

Rome (AsiaNews) - The Church in China and the Vatican are slowly recovering from the shock suffered at the end of last year and at this stage, both in the Holy See and in China, there are those who no longer attach too much importance to diplomatic relations.

The first shock came on November 20, 2010, when Fr Joseph Guo Jincai was ordained Bishop of Chengde (Hebei) without papal mandate. The ordination took place in the church of Pingquan (Chengde) in the presence of eight official bishops, all legitimate, that is in communion with the Holy See. According to information of faithful from other dioceses, these bishops were forced to attend the ceremony, which offends communion with the pope.

An even greater setback for the Vatican and the Church arrived when at least 40 bishops were compelled by force to take part in the Assembly of Representatives of Chinese Catholics, a body Benedict XVI considers contrary to the Catholic faith. According to the Catholic Church, Bishops should always be the leaders of such assemblies, however in this case they are placed on a par with other members, and often are in a minority.

The Assembly was held in Beijing December 7 to 9, 2010, and saw the election of the new leadership of the Council of Chinese bishops (not recognized by the Pope because it does not include underground bishops) and the Patriotic Association, whose aims are irreconcilable with Catholic doctrine.

Thanks to the intelligent manoeuvrings of the Communist Party, Joseph Ma Yinglin, (illegitimate) Bishop of Kunming was voted the new chairman of the Council of Chinese bishops, Mgr. Johan Fang Xinyao of

Linyi (in communion with the Pope) is instead the new leader of the Patriotic Association.

In this way, a body composed of bishops, is being led by a person not in communion with the Pope, while in the other case, a bishop in communion with the pope is placed in charge of a body contrary to the Catholic faith. The goal of all these decisions was to render reconciliation between the official and underground church difficult after the pope's Letter (of 2007) which called for a greater unity. It must be said that this unity was beginning to bear some fruit.

In both cases, the Vatican issued two statements strongly criticizing the Patriotic Association and the person who appears to be pulling the strings behind the scenes, layman Anthony Liu Bainian, vice president of the Association. While addressing the government with respect and leaving a small opening for possible future dialogue, both documents openly denounce the apparent lack of religious freedom and these "unacceptable and hostile acts."

From December until today, the Church in China has been trying to rebuild unity, with great difficulty, between official and underground Catholics. For the latter, in fact, the official bishops were too weak and submissive, disobeying the instructions of the Vatican (which explicitly asked them not to participate in events and acts contrary to communion with the Holy Father).

Among many official bishops there is embarrassment and pain for having been dragged into such an ambiguous situation. After the Assembly, because of their shame, some bishops hid in their houses for days, not wanting to meet with the faithful. Others appear to be on the slippery slope towards an absolute patriotism, contenting themselves with the space given them by the regime and critical of the Vatican "unable to understand" the specific motivations of China (in short a faith subject to government control).

This is all a source of immense disappointment, because it was thought that China had, to some extent, embarked on a peaceful path towards respect for religious freedom that would have eventually led to diplomatic relations. Even the Vatican - which until now had been ready to accept any compromise with Beijing, turning a blind eye on many issues - is disappointed and frustrated.

However, China's gesture, so hard and violent, has had its consequences, one in particular that is shared by many lay faithful: given that Beijing is not ready to accept that it is the Holy See that ordains bishops, the Vatican is better off slowing down efforts towards establishing diplomatic relations.

Bishops, official and underground, now believe that their most urgent task is to strengthen the unity of the Church, and that "the religious policy of the government has suffered a setback" (Wei Jingyi, bishop of Qiqihar).

It should also be noted that even personalities from the Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing (such as Prof. Ren Yanli) consider this step by China a return to the atmosphere of the worst form of Maoism.

In such a precarious situation, it seems unlikely that low-level dialogue, which to date had characterised relations between Beijing and the Holy See, will or can continue.

However there are those in the Vatican who refuse to give up and still hope in a rethinking on China's part, but it has become increasingly clear that the Holy See must remain firm and uncompromising in the fundamentals of the faith and its politics. At the same time the Vatican is pondering how to rebuild its relationship with the Bishops, the faithful and those who have proved themselves to be weak.

A new creative idea from the Vatican was revealed in Benedict XVI's address to the diplomatic corps. On 10 January, during the annual encounter, this year on the theme of religious freedom, the Pope focused on the case of China, denouncing the States suffocation of the Christian communities.

At the same time, as if to suggest a model of Church/State relationship to Beijing, immediately afterwards, Benedict XVI quoted the example of Cuba, a communist country, which has had diplomatic relations with the Vatican for more than 75 years. Later, the pope also cited positive developments with Vietnam, where authorities "have accepted my appointment of a Representative who will express the solicitude of the Successor of Peter by visiting the beloved Catholic community of that country".

The "Vietnam model" could also be used for China: it does not imply diplomatic relations between States, but the states' permission for the Vietnamese Catholics to have relations with the religious hierarchies related to their faith, thus ensuring their religious freedom. The Vatican representative to Vietnam almost certainly will not reside in Vietnam, but will visit the country, according to the demands of his ministry and the Vietnamese faithful.

The strong relationship between Vietnam (the "little brother") and China (the "big brother") is common knowledge in diplomatic circles. In the past, the two countries have copied each other in their openings to the world economy and to the WTO. They may also copy each other with regard to relations with the Catholic Church and the Vatican.

A similar structure – along the lines of the "Vietnam model" - has been suggested to the Holy See by some Italian bishops to overcome the obstacle of diplomatic relations with Beijing. They propose the appointment of papal representatives to areas around China (for example, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macao, Taipei, ...) who would have the freedom to travel to China and meet the faithful and the Catholic bishops there.

Other personalities – who have a deep knowledge of China and are close to the Vatican - note that the absence of diplomatic relations is not an obstacle to the life of the Church in China, nor does it call into question the faith of Catholics. In other words, it is perfectly possible to support the Church in China without diplomatic relations. Indeed, some point out that at this point diplomatic relations would tend to alienate underground Catholics from the Vatican and humiliate the moral authority of the Holy See, because of the way in which China is treating its people and failing to respect human rights.

But the "Vietnam model" also has its problems: in fact it presupposes China's good will towards the Holy See, so as to allow it still the choice of bishops and the pastoral visits of its representatives. Unfortunately, at the present time, China feels encircled by international pressure (for example the case of the Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo, whom Beijing calls a "criminal") and is terrorized by domestic problems (high cost of living, inflation, unemployment and the gap between rich and poor, pollution , ...) which are fomenting social tensions.

In addition, many dissidents, in their commitment to human dignity and rights discover their roots in Christianity and convert to the Christian faith. For Beijing, this unity between the dissidents and faith is their greatest fear.

The only possibility that Beijing will agree to a compromise with the Holy See is if the Holy See offers it a guarantee for social peace, which is the greatest need in China today.

So far, Beijing has not expressed its intentions. Meanwhile, many candidates for the episcopate, chosen by the Holy See, need to be ordained. If Beijing gives permission for at least some of these ordinations, it would mean that it is still open to dialogue. But at the moment, it all seems rather difficult: Fear of a "jasmine revolution" dominates Beijing, rather than a desire for peace with society and with the Church. ♦♦♦

Hong Kong Sunday Examiner

<http://sundayex.catholic.org.hk/>

Sunday 27 March 2011

Unwrapping the image to find the core of religious life in China today

by Lucia Cheung

The focus at the National Congress of Catholic Representatives held in Beijing, China, last December, was mostly on the heads of the government-sanctioned bishops' conference and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

However, some were surprised to notice the addition of a Sister Wu Lin, from Hubei province, to the list of the newly-elected leaders. She is the first woman, and therefore the first sister, to be elected as a vice-chairperson of the association.

Whatever about other aspects of the congress, a sister getting a job at that level prompts a revisit to the situation of the religious women in China.

As of 2009, there were around 5,400 sisters and 3,300 priests between the official and unofficial Church communities, according to information cited by Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Sister Victoria Lau in Hong Kong.

In the winter issue of Tripod last year, a journal published by the Holy Spirit Study Centre in Hong Kong, the editor says that religious sisters in China are often neglected in news reports, although they are the real, unsung heroes. They are often the backbone of the parishes. They take care of, instruct and organise the women and children, while they are also the main instructors of catechumens.

However, sisters in China lack a systematic and all-round formation, complicated by the lack of trained formation people. In addition, three decades of political turmoil beginning in the 1950s, was a disaster for the Catholic Church and religious congregations of women. Almost all those that survived virtually restarted from nothing in 1980s.

A number of religious women in different parts of China agree that the gap has forced sisters in China to walk many unnecessary turns on the path of their vocation. They have often had to start again after taking a wrong turn and learn from experience.

Also, because they lack models, they mostly had no concept or little knowledge of what it meant to be a sister, or live a consecrated life, when they entered congregational life in the early years.

Even though she is from a Catholic family of several generations, Sister Sun, in northern China, says she had no concept of the word sister when she heard it the first time in the 1980s. She said that when she was invited to become one, she could only draw a comparison with the Buddhist nuns, who do not get married and live an isolated life of prayer and work.

A few others projected the image of a sister as a holy figure, like an angel. Thus, they had high expectations, looking forward to a transcendent life. However, after more than a decade of community life, they have gradually come to realise that "sisters are human beings after all." There are arguments, lack of tolerance in community life and they see weaknesses in each other.

However, Sister Liu, also from northern China, says that through this process and with the extra formation that is possible nowadays, she has learned to change herself, rather than trying to change others to suit her.

This realisation has certainly led to the departure of some. A former sister, Teresa, suggested that Catholic women who want to join religious life need to have a good awareness of what consecrated life is all about. She noted that a cheerful and understanding personality helps in facing the human weaknesses in a community.

Many sisters of today point to the fact that only with a profound spiritual life can anyone walk through a consecrated life. Indeed, compared with one or two decades ago, there is a growing self-confidence among sisters in China today.

Many of them no longer just smile at strangers and serve only as handmaids of parish priests. Rather, they now volunteer to be on the frontline and serve victims in disasters, as well as the socially marginalised, apart from the regular pastoral work that is often heard about. They are more likely to speak up for their rights, as the sisters in Xi'an and Tianjin did in defending their properties.

A priest in Hebei jokingly described how Chinese priests sympathise with and fear the sisters. This reflects the challenge that better formation, a heightened self-awareness and higher status for the sisters presents to the status quo. (UCAN). ♦♦♦

Hong Kong publishes Compendium

Translating collection of Catholic social teachings into Chinese a complex task
ucanews.com reporter, Hong Kong
Hong Kong
March 22, 2011

Hong Kong diocese has released the Chinese edition of Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, a book for which part-time translators took six years to finish.

Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kium, 79, initiated the translation project after the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace presented the compendium in 2004, five years before he retired as bishop of Hong Kong.

He will send complimentary copies to Macau, Taiwan, Singapore Churches and to other overseas Chinese Catholic communities.

The Chinese compendium is a good opportunity to declare the Church's social values, even though the mainland Catholics can hardly comment on human rights problem and social injustice, said Cardinal Zen.

"This book guides us to build a better society, which is in chorus with the philosophy of the Chinese people for thousands of years. So it will benefit all Chinese, who account for one-fifth of the world's population," said project coordinator Father Stephen Chan Moon-hung, ecclesiastical adviser of Hong Kong's Justice and Peace Commission (JPC).

He agreed that publishing and circulating the com-

pendium or organizing seminars for it would be difficult in the mainland, unless the government relaxes freedom of speech. But "it's our responsibility to sow the seed," he said.

Besides dealing with the complicated sentence structure, the translators also had to add explanations of some Church terms which have different meanings in Chinese, so that even non-Christians can understand, he said.

At the invitation of Cardinal Zen, Cardinal Peter Turkson, the pontifical council president, visited Hong Kong for the book-launching organized by the JPC on March 20.

The Ghanaian prelate introduced the contents of the compendium to more than 200 priests, Religious sisters and laypeople.

The compendium is a collection of Catholic social teachings. It is an "ongoing development" and needs updating to include Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), future papal speeches and Holy See documents on social issues, said Cardinal Turkson.

Christians should not let the compendium stay on the bookshelf, but take it as a guideline to transform society, he noted. ♦♦♦

www.chiesa.espressonline.it

5 April 2011

For China, the Vatican Has a New Strategist, Archbishop Hon

The new Chinese secretary of "Propaganda Fide" exposes his views and plans for the first time. More moderate than those of the "hawk" Zen, yet not compliant to a "dialogue at all costs" with the authorities of Beijing

by Sandro Magister



ROME, April 4, 2011 – At the end of last week, almost at the same time, two prominent representatives of the Catholic Church, both Chinese, expressed two different judgments on the difficult moment which the Church is going through in China.

The first is Cardinal Joseph Zen Zekiun, former bishop of Hong Kong, now retired but still highly attentive to what is happening in his country.

On Friday, April 1, Cardinal Zen published on "Asia News," the online agency of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, a vehement accusation against the "triumvirate" that allegedly wants to replicate with China the Ostpolitik practiced in the last century by the Vatican with the communist regimes. A policy of "dialogue at all costs" – Zen writes – disastrous then and even more disastrous now, whose sole result would be to plunge Chinese Catholics "deeper and deeper into the mire of slavish subjection."

The triumvirate accused by Zen is made up of Cardinal Ivan Dias, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, by a "secretary" of the same Vatican congregation, and by Fr. Jerome Heyndrickx, a famous Sinologist and their strategist. The three are alleged to act – according to Zen – both against the stance dictated by Benedict XVI in his letter to the Church in China in 2007, and against the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the commission that the pope instituted to follow the Chinese situation, of which Zen is a member.

The second high Church official who on the same day, Friday, April 1, spoke out on the case of China is Archbishop Savio Hon Taifai (in the photo), in an interview in the newspaper of the Italian episcopal conference, "Avvenire," conducted by the vaticanista Gianni Cardinale.

Archbishop Hon, 61, is the first Chinese to hold high office in the Roman curia. Last December 23, Benedict XVI appointed him secretary of the congregation for the evangelization of peoples, which has jurisdiction over all mission territories, including China.

Originally from Hong Kong, tall and thin, jovial, Archbishop Hon calls himself a "hardly diplomatic theologian."

In fact, in this interview, which is the first he has given so far, Hon expresses very direct views. Without dodging any of the questions. He even describes in simple terms the opposing views of Cardinal Zen and Fr. Heyndrickx. And he does not conceal that he is closer to the former, while not following him in everything.

The interview with Hon is reproduced further below. But in order to put it into context, it is first necessary to summarize briefly what has happened in recent months between the Chinese government and the Catholic Church.

Last March 30 there was the ordination in China, in Jiangmen, of a new bishop: Paul Liang Jiansen, 46. His appointment was "approved" by the Holy See and at the same time "authorized" by the Chinese authorities.

Between April 18 and November 15 of 2010, ten other bishops were ordained in China with the joint approval of Rome and Beijing, in the dioceses of Hohot, Haimen, Xiamen, Sanyuan, Taizhou, Yan'an, Taiyuan, Yuncheng, Nanchang, Zhoucun.

In the midst of this, however, on November 15, there was an illicit ordination in the diocese of Chengde, performed at the behest of the government alone, without the pope's approval. No illicit episcopal ordination had been performed in China since 2006.

And shortly afterward, from December 6 to 8, the Chinese authorities gathered in Beijing a national assembly of Catholic representatives in which 45 bishops participated many of them approved by the Vatican, and the leaders of the episcopal conference and the patriotic association were elected: neither of which is recognized by the Holy See.

Both the illicit ordination in Chengde and the assembly in Beijing were condemned by the Holy See with very strongly worded statements, on November 24 and December 17.

So here is the Gianni Cardinale's interview with Archbishop Hon, taken from the April 1 issue of "Avvenire."

"UNFORTUNATELY, THE NUMBER OF OPPORTUNISTS HAS GROWN"

Interview with Savio Hon Taifai

Q: Your Excellency, what were the reactions to your appointment, in your country?

A: Very positive in Hong Kong. I have received many congratulations also from communities and bishops of mainland China. They considered my appointment a true and proper Christmas present from the pope.

Q: And from the Chinese government and the official organisms of the Church?

A: No reaction. Maybe it's better that way, as is said in English: "no news, good news." They did not want to express any judgment: neither positive, nor negative. This seems to me an attitude of prudent restraint.

Q: You have traveled extensively in mainland China. When was the last time?

A: I was in Shanghai from last December 8 to 13. Precisely in conjunction with the eighth assembly of Chinese Catholic representatives that was held in Beijing from the 7th to the 9th of that month.

Q: What judgments did you take away in this regard?

A: The friends and students with whom I spoke were all very critical. It could be that some of them were favorable, but did not want to say so in front of me. I also spoke with those who had come back from Beijing. They also, with me, were critical. And they said that they had undergone enormous pressure to participate.

Q: On that occasion, the Holy See issued a very tough statement . . .

A: Yes. But I must say that not all of the participants had been forced to go. Some went spontaneously, just as they spontaneously adhere to the policy of the "autonomy" of the Chinese Church from the pope and from the Holy See.

Q: Even among the bishops?

A: Unfortunately even among the bishops, including those recognized by Rome. In Beijing not a few of them threw themselves at the new bishop of Chengde, consecrated illicitly a few weeks earlier, to congratulate him, to have photos taken with him, and this they were not obligated to do. In short: 45 bishops participated in this assembly, of an average age below 50. Some of them were taken there by force, others were not.

Q: And what conclusions do you draw from this observation?

A: That, unfortunately, the number of opportunists has grown.

Q: And what is the cause??

A: A lack of adequate formation in the clergy. But also some shortcomings in the selection of candidates for the episcopate. Sometimes the best have not been promoted, but compromise appointments have been preferred. For a few years now, in fact, Chinese officials have understood that the illegitimate bishops will never be truly accepted by the faithful, and so they prefer to work so that priests obedient to their guidelines may be consecrated bishops with the "placet" of the Holy See.

Q: So you maintain that a better formation of candidates to the priesthood is needed, and a more attentive discernment on the part of the Holy See in the selection of candidates to the episcopate. Does this mean that in recent years this has not always been the case?

A: This is not only an opinion of mine. Often in mainland China I have heard complaints from faithful and priests over compromise episcopal choices. But I must add that the Holy See has always, rightly, been concerned about avoiding illegitimate ordinations.

Q: And it is difficult to find the balance between this requirement and that of avoiding legitimate but compromise ordinations.

A: In effect that is the case. Selecting good candidates is difficult. The government maintains that in presenting lists of candidates that are acceptable from its point of view, it is already making a big concession. And if the Holy See refuses to give the "placet," then it threatens to have them consecrated anyway . . .

Q: As happened last November in Chengde.

A: Yes, for me that was a clear message, the government wanted to say: "*in my house I'm the boss*". A signal that almost brought us back to the 1950's, as if some signs of dialogue that indeed have been registered had never been.

Q: How can this dialogue be resumed?

A: The Chinese government has officials who are very well prepared and capable in negotiating, and so must be the interlocutors on our side. But first of all, it must be understood if the government really wants to reach an agreement with the Holy See or not.

Q: On this, and on other things, there is a difference of opinion between two leading experts on China: Cardinal Joseph Zen and Fr. Jerome Heyndrickx. How do you see this debate?

A: Fr. Heyndrickx makes two premises. The first is that the Chinese government has good intentions, including that of signing an accord with the Holy See. The second is that after the pope's 2007 letter to Chinese Catholics, the so-called clandestine communities no longer have any reason to exist. On the other side, Cardinal Zen, who understands very well the Chinese reality and mentality, does not trust the communist authorities very much. He maintains, rightly, that if the government wants to secure this trust, it must carry out concrete actions that have not been seen so far. For example, giving the Church the freedom to choose its own bishops. Moreover, Cardinal Zen, and I with him, maintains that the clandestine communities still have reason to exist.

Q: One last question. Why has excommunication not been declared for the illicitly ordained bishops and their consecrators?

A: In reality, immediate excommunication is stipulated for those who receive and for those who carry out an illegitimate ordination. But there can be attenuating elements, for example for those who are forced to play a role in these actions. I believe that the Holy See, before declaring excommunication publicly, is investigating the individual cases to identify these attenuating circumstances. But this is understandably a delicate and long process.

Q: What is your judgment on illegitimate bishops?

A: There are cases of candidates who have themselves consecrated bishops illicitly with the idea that in a short span of time, at their pleading, the Holy See will grant pardon and full legitimacy. Care must be taken to oppose this kind of contriving. Having said this, however, it must always be kept in mind that the Church is the Body of Christ and that if there is a little piece of this Body that is breaking off, it must not be let go, but efforts must be made to recover it with justice but also with mercy. ♦♦♦

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

CMC and Mongolia Church agree clinic

Facility is the only hospital run by the Catholics in Mongolia, focuses on poor

ucanews.com staff, Seoul

Korea

The Catholic Medical Center (CMC) in South Korea and the Mongolian Church signed a memorandum of understanding about management of the St. Mary Clinic in Ulaanbaatar yesterday.

The clinic in the compound of the Bayanzurkh Cathedral is the only hospital run by the Catholic Church in Mongolia and focuses on the poorest people.

It has been undergoing reconstruction and will re-open in July.

CMC will support it by providing medical facilities, personnel and education.

Bishop Wenceslao Padilla of Ulaanbaatar prefecture said that with the MoU the clinic and the Mongolian Church will better serve the poorest in Mongolia.

Father Lemigio Lee Dong-ik, head of the CMC, told the signing ceremony that St. Mary Clinic will grow into the role of CMC's counterpart in Mongolia. ♦♦♦

Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org - 08/04/2011

ASIA/HONG KONG

Catholic Mongols on pilgrimage to Hong Kong in the footsteps of St John Bosco

Hong Kong (Agenzia Fides) – Eight Catholic Mongols, led by Salesian Father Liang Gan Chao, went on pilgrimage to Hong Kong and Macao in the footsteps of St John Bosco. Since the end of March the relics of Don Bosco have been making their pilgrimage around the world, arriving at the Salesian communities in Hong Kong and Macao. According to reports from Kong Ko Bao (the Chinese version of the diocesan bulletin), with the help and financial support of the Salesian Provincial House, Don Liang and the Mongolian group of Catholics have been able to make this journey and experience mo-

ments of sharing with Catholics in Hong Kong.

In addition to making the pilgrimage to Hong Kong, they also visited the parish of the Holy Cross where Don Liang had worked. One of the pilgrims, Tunagalag Patricia said to friends in Hong Kong, “the adoration each evening was the happiest moment of my life because I could have an intimate dialogue with the Lord.” According to Don Liang “it was like take children to their parents' home. We are all united in the house of the Universal Church.” ♦♦♦

China Infodoc Service [china.infodoc@online.be]

Tuesday, 19 April 2011 11:45 PM

UCAN : Church to beatify early China convert in Shanghai

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

Church to beatify early China convert in Shanghai
One of the earliest Christian converts in China, Paolo Xu Guangqi, a disciple of the Jesuit Matteo Ricci is to be beatified in Shanghai, the Vatican has announced.

China
April 19, 2011

One of the earliest Christian converts in China, Paolo Xu Guangqi, a disciple of the Jesuit Matteo Ricci is to be beatified in Shanghai, the Vatican has announced.

“It’s a pleasing light of hope for China today and tomorrow,” Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi told reporters Friday, AFP reports.

The news that scientist Paolo Xu Guangqi was on the path to beatification brought “hope” and “joy” in what was otherwise a period of tension between the Vatican and China’s official state Catholic church, the Holy See said.

Guangqi (1562-1633) converted to Christianity under the Ming Dynasty. His story should give Catholics in China confidence in confirming loyalty to the Vatican, Lombardi said.

“Chinese people, whether they are Catholics or not, will be better able to understand that there is no contradiction or risk in being both Chinese and Catholic,” he added.

“This layman, a highly cultured imperial official of some rank” was known as “a great and faithful servant of his country and his people,” he said. Shanghai’s bishop, Aloysius Jin Luxian, who set the beatification process in motion, plays an important reconciliatory role in the Catholic community. ♦♦♦



XU GUANGQI

China Infodoc Service [china.infodoc@online.be]
 Tuesday, 19 April 2011 14:30 AM
 Zenit : No Contradiction in Being Catholic and Chinese

Father Lombardi Comments on Vatican Message

VATICAN CITY, APRIL 17, 2011 (Zenit.org).- There is no reason that good Chinese citizens cannot be very good Catholics as well, according to a Vatican spokesman reflecting on this week's message to the Church in China.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, director of the Vatican press office, offered this comment in a Vatican Radio statement regarding the fourth plenary assembly of the Vatican's commission on China. The group met last Monday through Wednesday and addressed an 11-point message to Chinese faithful.

The Vatican spokesman said that "there is no doubt that recent months have been particularly difficult for Chinese Catholics."

He noted an episcopal ordination held without papal approval as well as the so-called 8th Assembly of Chinese Catholic Representatives, both of which happened at the end of last year. These events triggered a firm response from the Holy See in defense of religious liberty, and the Church's right to live according to her nature and mission.

All of this has "caused a situation of tension and disorientation in the ecclesial community," Father Lombardi said. And in such a context, the commission's message is "a point of reference in a situation of crisis."

The Jesuit noted that the statement describes fundamental tenets "with clarity and lucidity in light of Catholic doctrine."

Unacceptable

The meeting message also confirms that from the Catholic perspective, the organizations imposed by the state to guide the Church are unacceptable. The statement further admits a fear that more bishops will be ordained without a papal mandate.

At the same time, Father Lombardi pointed out, "the message reflects a sincere closeness," mindful

of the "difficulties and suffering" and offers "genuine encouragement, rooted in the spiritual experience of the ecclesial community, nourished by assiduous prayer."

From this "realistic but not discouraging" perspective, the spokesman continued, "the conviction that to obtain the solution of some problems of the Church in China -- for example, the appointment of bishops or the reorganization of ecclesiastical circumscriptions -- 'sincere and respectful' dialogue with civil authorities would be valuable."

In the Holy See's view, "this would contribute in a decisive way to that 'harmony in society' that everyone desires for the common good, beginning with Catholics," he said. "The Holy See's availability for this dialogue is confirmed once again, with the hope of finding the same availability on the other side."

Saintly example

Father Lombardi also proposed that the commission's message contains two elements that should not go unnoticed.

"First of all," he said, "the Pope stresses very much the value of prayer to support the unity and vitality of the Church in China and to manifest the solidarity of the universal Catholic community."

In addition, the message notes the beginning of a beatification cause in the Diocese of Shanghai for Paul Xu Guangqi, a layman and imperial official of great culture, who was a disciple of Father Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the Italian Jesuit missionary who introduced Christianity in modern China.

"On seeing the exemplary life of Xu Guangqi, the Chinese -- Catholics and non-Catholics -- will be able to understand better that there is no contradiction whatsoever or any risk in the fact of being Chinese and Catholic," Father Lombardi reflected. "What is more, it is possible to be great Chinese and very good Catholics." ♦♦♦