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Asia News.it
12/02/2010 5:32
CHINA

Hebei: seminarians against government official
appointed as their seminary vice-rector
by Zhen Yuan

Shijiazhuang (AsiaNews) – All one hundred seminarians at the Hebei Catholic seminary today took part in a demonstration outside the government's Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission (ERAC) in Hebei Province. For the past 18 days, they have protested against the appointment of a government official as vice-rector of their seminary, fearing that their spiritual values would be compromised by politics.

Most of the seminarians, in their white surplice, held banners and cards, reiterating "the demand of a written statement on revocation of vice-director Tang Zhaojun as vice-rector of their seminary". Other banners read "Honour your promise" and "Hebei Catholic Seminary".

"We protest outside the government office, because we cannot tolerate the situation anymore," a seminarian told *AsiaNews*. "This demonstration is on the initiative of the seminarians. No priests or bishops are involved in today's action," he said.

During the day's "silent demonstration," ERAC officials discussed twice with seminarian representatives in their office, but they failed to agree to the seminarians' sole demand of a written statement of revocation. According to a source, ERAC Deputy Director-General Kang Zhifeng told the students that the appointment was a "Communist personnel arrangement" and refused to give a written statement.

Braving a wintry cold, students began their protest at 8.40 am outside the ERAC offices at 53 Huaxi Road in Shijiazhuang city. Several police vehicles were stationed at the site but security officials did not interfere with the students' action. By 7 pm, the seminarians were still outside the offices.

Tang Zhaojun's appointment as vice-rector of Hebei seminary was announced on 11 November. It met immediate opposition from seminarians and teachers. Since the government refused to cancel the appointment, seminary students and teachers went on a strike.

Continued next page...

On 17 November, Deputy Director-General Kang went to the seminary where he verbally agreed to rescind the appointment and call for a board of directors' meeting to solve the issue.

However, several Hebei bishops who had been taken to the Chengde ordination on 20 November could not be reached. Thus, the seminary's board of directors could not convene to deal with the matter.

After the ordination, the bishops were still unable to meet to settle the issue. "Until today, there is no news of revocation of the appointment," a seminarian said. ♦♦♦

Asia News.it

01/15/2011 11:16

CHINA

Hebei seminarians welcome new rector
by Zhen Yuan

Shijiazhuang (AsiaNews) - Hebei seminarians have welcomed the appointment of their new rector, a bishop, and the exclusion of politicians from the board of directors. In November-December last year, 100 seminarians went on strike and held demonstrations to demand the removal of Tang Zhaojun, a local politician, as vice-rector of the seminary (see: 02/12/2010 [Hebei: seminarians against government official appointed as their seminary vice-rector](#)).

The announcement of the launch of a new board of directors was made on January 13. The new rector is Msgr. Feng Xinmao, bishop of Hengshui. He is replacing the illegitimate bishop Ma Yinglin of Kunming, elected in early December at the head of the council of Chinese bishops, a body which the Holy See does not recognize because irreconcilable with the Catholic faith. Bishop Fang Jianping of Tangshan has been named as director and Father Sun Jigen of Handan as secretary general

The board of directors consists of bishops and delegates from every diocese in Hebei province. Bishop Fang Jianping replaces Mgr. Liu Jing Tangshan. Thanking him for his work in the past, Mgr. Fang said that the new leadership of the seminary will carry on the mission of training Church successors.

A seminarian told *AsiaNews* that the board of directors said it wanted to know every class and listen to their opinions. "We hope - he added - that this will lead to a better development and better educa-

tion."

According to the Catholic newspaper of Shijiazhuang, *Faith Press*, Mgr. Feng told the seminarians that he is eager to serve as a bridge between the seminary and the board of directors and will visit the institution on a regular basis to hear the voice of the students.

Founded in 1984, Hebei seminary has to date educated 472 seminarians of whom 427 went on to become priests. At present there are 116 students in six classes and over 30 teachers between residents and temporary. ♦♦♦

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

Cardinal welcomes Vatican appointment

Published Date: January 19, 2011

By ucanews.com reporter, Rome

Salesian Cardinal Angelo Amato, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, has welcomed the recent appointment of the first Chinese archbishop to a Vatican department.

Archbishop-elect Savio Hon Tai-fai is the "Uomo giusto al posto giusto (the right man in the right place) not because he is a Salesian," Cardinal Amato said of the appointment of his confrere as Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

Cardinal Amato was addressing staff and students at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome on Jan. 18 to start Christian Unity Week.

Archbishop-elect Hon, a former provincial of the Chinese Salesian province, obtained his bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees in theology from the Salesian university in Rome.

He was also the first Chinese member of the International Theological Commission.

The archbishop-elect was appointed to his new position by Pope Benedict XVI on Dec. 23. He will be ordained by the Pope on Feb. 5, the third day of the Chinese Lunar New Year.

Currently there are six Salesians in Vatican departments including three cardinals, one archbishop and two bishops. ♦♦♦

Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org
ASIA/CHINA

A village of vocations on the Silk Road

Zhou Zhi (Agenzia Fides) – A small village on the Silk Road, inhabited by 660 people, of whom 400 are Catholic (about 130 families), has given 14 vocations to the Church in recent years: 7 priests, 1 deacon, 3 religious sisters, 2 major seminarians and 1 minor seminarian. The village is Zan Jia Cun, Fu Feng district in the Diocese of Zhou Zhi, Shaan Xi province. According to information received by Fides, the whole diocese is famous for its abundance in vocations, so much so that it is known as “the diocese of vocations”. The pastor of the village comments: “many people ask us what is our secret. To tell the truth, we do not know whether it amounts to a secret or not. We intensely live out our faith. The families of the village pray together daily. Mass and prayer meetings on Saturday and Sunday are fixed appointments for all. Even the faithful from villages around us come. I think these small daily testimonies have built the base for an eloquent evangelisation and they are useful at the

same time for the formation of vocations. The children are educated according to religious principles and in a simple way, from kindergarten to middle school. The sisters keep up their formation with the Catechism and teaching of religion. Here there is never the need to prepare a list for the evenings of Eucharistic Adoration in Holy Week, or in other circumstances, because the church is always full, 24 hours a day.”

Other Catholic communities often visit this village, to exchange experiences on evangelization and vocations. However non-Catholics also come, as this small village on the Silk Road is also a model of economic development. “Some non-Catholics ask us why we are so happy, and we respond because we have faith,” concludes the pastor. “When the faithful have had economic opportunities, the first thing they thought of was to build, renovate and improve the house of God. Our church is the most beautiful in the whole area. The priests and nuns who live in rooms adjacent to the church wake up at 4 am with the recitation of the Rosary by the faithful”. (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 31/01/2011).

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Cardina Kung Foundation
Press Release – January 11, 2011

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A Twenty Year-Old Underground Catholic Handicapped Orphanage in Hebei, China, Is Under Imminent Threat To Be Forcibly Taken Over By the Chinese Government

Stamford, Connecticut, U.S.A. — What is described in the captioned title has not yet happened. But, the writing is on the wall. It may come at any time, as told by the Chinese officials to Bishop Jia Zhiguo, the founder and administrator of the disabled orphanage. The government has made clear to the bishop that it would not rule out the use of force if the government failed to get the bishop's agreement to let the government take over his orphanage. Bishop Jia has so far refused to sign such agreement.

We beg the world media and leaders to have the moral courage to stand up for these approximately one hundred helpless disabled orphans, voice their concern and appeal to the Chinese higher authorities not to carry out such a threat.

Approximately twenty years ago, a handicapped infant was left at the doorstep of Bishop Jia Zhiguo's residence. Obviously, the baby was abandoned by his parents. The good bishop took the abandoned baby into his home. He is now some twenty years old.

Soon after the first baby was rescued by the bishop, the word spread. Over the years, more disabled babies were left at Bishop Jia's doorstep. In the course of the last twenty years, hundreds of babies, disabled and some very sick, were found abandoned. The good bishop took every one in. Some babies unfortunately did not survive, but at least they were all baptized before they went home to God's house. The Bishop founded a community of thirty Catholic nuns, specially devoted to the care of these disabled orphans. The orphanage has now grown to over one hundred, ranging from a few months to 20 year old. It is located in WuQiu, Jinzhou, Hebei.

Bishop Jia has never joined the Catholic Patriotic Association. He is an underground bishop. For twenty years, he has administered the orphanage without the financial assistance of the Chinese government, but with the full knowledge of the government.

Bishop Jia, seventy-five years old, was consecrated the Bishop of Zhengding, Hebei on December 19, 1980, by the Pope's mandate. He has spent approximately twenty years in prison, having been arrested thirteen times since 2004. At the Bishop's last release from detention on July 7, 2010, the Cardinal Kung Foundation reported that "in the presence of the government officials, Bishop Jia stated that he had not accepted the Patriotic Association and also had not accepted the authority of the Bishops Conference of the official Church. He further stated that he was and would always be firmly adhered to the leadership of the Holy Father." Bishop Jia did not attend the illicit ordination to the episcopacy of Father Guo Jincai on November 20, 2010, an event widely reported in the world press. Bishop Jia also did not attend the eighth National Congress for Catholic Representatives, sponsored by the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, which is not recognized by Pope Benedict XVI.

Probably because of Bishop Jia's repeated rejections of the Patriotic Association and the National Congress for Catholic Representatives, the Chinese authorities are now trying to punish him and break his staunch fidelity to the Holy Father by threatening the welfare of the one hundred orphans under his care and protection.

In December, 2010, Mr. Yin of the United Front Department of Jinzhou, Mr. Guo of Political Secretary, Mr. An of the Bureau on Religious Affairs of Jinzhou, Communist Party Secretary in the Village Wuqiu, and Director Chen of the Public Security Bureau of Shijiazhuang took Bishop Jia away on three different occasions. They tried to force Bishop Jia to sign an agreement to release all his orphans to the government, and to disperse the thirty Catholic nuns who have been serving the orphanage. The communist officials threatened to take Bishop Jia away for a prolonged "study session" without any time limit if he refused to comply. Bishop Jia was also told by the government officials that, in the end, his orphans will be taken away with or without his signature, by force if necessary. However, Bishop Jia still refused to sign such release.

In a desperate move, Bishop Jia called the Central Bureau on Religious Affairs in Beijing, protesting the above-mentioned threats from the local authorities. However, the Central Bureau said that such matters fall under the jurisdiction of the local bureau.

Even without any assistance from the government, the Bishop and the thirty nuns have worked very hard to care for these disabled orphans who have grown to love and depend emotionally and physically on these devoted caretakers in their entire lives. Once they are forcibly separated, they will suffer irreparable harm.

The writing is now on the wall. I believe that the authorities will soon carry out their threats by forcibly closing this orphanage. ♦♦♦

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

HK Catholics 'have China-Vatican role'
Archbishop Hon: faithful can help mend rift between Rome and Beijing

ucanews.com reporter, Hong Kong
February 21, 2011

Salesian Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-fai has called on Hong Kong's Catholics to act as bridge to foster China-Vatican relations.

China and the Vatican have a similar pyramid-like political system, but have different cultural and religious backgrounds, the archbishop said. Faithful or Church groups from outside can serve as "a bridge to foster dialogue, mutual understanding and even agreement between them," he said

The new secretary of the Holy See's Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples is making a week-long visit to the place of his birth and is also due to visit Taiwan on February 23.

He held a discussion with about 100 local Catholics yesterday before attending a welcoming Mass at the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception, hosted by Hong Kong diocese.

Responding to a layman who asked "what can Hong Kong Catholics do for China?" the archbishop cited the words of Pope John Paul II suggesting

dialogue and the sharing of resources with mainland Catholics and encouraging forgiveness among them.

He said the Hong Kong faithful could contact both the official and underground Church communities and help reconciliation.

Since Hong Kong Catholics are outsiders, they are not involved in the conflicts arising from being forced to obey an independent Church or feel a sense of betrayal resulting from political turmoil since the 1950s, he said.

Some concrete steps have been taken recently, he said such as Taiwan's Fujen Catholic University enrolling priests and laypeople from the mainland.

"If in my post I could serve as a bridge, I would be happy to do so," he declared.

One middle-aged mainland laywoman congratulated the archbishop on his appointment and expressed her wish to see the normalization of China-Vatican relations.

Archbishop Hon responded by saying the Vatican should be cautious when negotiating with China.

"If the Vatican makes too many concessions just for normalization or if opportunists hold sway in the talks, the very nature of the China Church could be distorted," he stressed.

At the beginning of the evening Mass, Bishop John Tong Hon of Hong Kong welcomed the archbishop. Nearly 70 priests concelebrated the Mass. More than 1,000 laypeople, including some from mainland China, packed the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception. ♦♦♦

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The China Post, Taiwan

Updated Monday, February 21, 2011 10:52 pm
TWN, By Amber Wang, AFP

Cardinal Paul Shan eyes China-Vatican
dialogue in trip

KAOHSIUNG, Taiwan -- Taiwan's Cardinal Paul Shan, who will embark on a high-profile trip to China this summer, says he hopes that the Vatican and Beijing can be "mature" and reconcile their bitter differences.

Shan, 89, a highly revered religious leader on the island, made the remarks after he unveiled plans for the voyage, hailed as a first contact between Catholics on both sides of the Taiwan Strait in more than 60 years.

"It takes time for China and the Vatican to reconcile. The government has its jurisdiction and the Church has its jurisdiction, and they should respect each other," Shan told AFP in an interview.

"The two sides should be in contact and exchange (views) and let the other side know its jurisdiction so they can eventually reconcile," he said, sitting in his residence in the south Taiwanese city of Kaohsiung.

The Vatican and China have not had formal diplomatic ties since 1951, when the Holy See's recognition of Taiwan sparked anger in Beijing, which claims the island as its own.

The state-controlled Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association does not acknowledge the authority of Pope Benedict XVI and is fiercely opposed to the "clandestine" clergy loyal to the pontiff.

However, there are about a dozen Bishops who have been recognized by both the Vatican and the Chinese authorities in recent years, which could become a model for future ties, said Shan, who was born on the mainland.

"Catholicism is different from other religions and there is one Catholic (authority) in the world. The pope appointing Bishops is a fundamental part of the Catholic faith and China should respect core Catholic values," he said.

"Catholics are not willing to accept Bishops who are not recognized by the pope and it's better for the two sides to work out their issues through dialogues."

Demonstrating fragile relations, a war of words erupted between Beijing and the Vatican in December, with China rebuffing criticism by the pope of its curbs on practicing Catholics and of the state-sanctioned Chinese church.

China has about five million Catholics who worship at Communist Party-sanctioned "official" churches, while up to 11 million reportedly worship at "underground" churches.

Shan, appointed by the late Pope John Paul II as a cardinal in 1998, was born in central China and relocated to Taiwan after the nationalist Kuomintang party was defeated by the communists in 1949 at the end of a civil war.

He said the rapprochement between former arch-rivals Taiwan and China in recent years serves as an example that dialogue and contact are the way to go.

"Painful lessons from history show that violence and war cannot solve problems and everyone should mature to conduct negotiations," he said.

Shan first returned to China in 1979 from the Philippines to visit his relatives in a trip that was kept private due to tensions between Taiwan and China at the time. He has not set foot on the mainland since.

He has remained active in public despite his retirement from official duties in 2006, the year he was diagnosed with lung cancer.

He launched a "goodbye tour" across Taiwan the following year to share his fight against cancer and to call for the public to treasure their lives — the same message he intends to take to China.

In June, he is scheduled to travel to Shanghai and Zhengzhou city, near his native town, in a week-long journey.

Shan is expected to hold a joint Mass with Shanghai Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, according to Chou Chin-huar, head of Taipei-based cancer charity the

Chou Ta-Kuan Foundation, which organized his trip.

However, Shan said he is not planning to meet members of China's "underground" Catholic churches because he does not wish to "create troubles for them."

Shan has also been promoting environmental protection and disaster prevention, an area he discussed with the Dalai Lama during the Tibetan spiritual leader's visit to Taiwan in 2009 after a deadly typhoon.

"The Dalai Lama is a down-to-earth person and he came to comfort victims of the typhoon as a religious figure, there was no reason for me to refuse him a meeting," Shan said. Beijing brands the Dalai Lama a dangerous "splittist."

Chou, of the cancer foundation, admitted that meeting had "increased difficulties" in arranging the cardinal's China visit and that Beijing itself will not be a stop due to "political sensitivity." ♦♦♦

Agencia Fides - www.fides.org

ASIA/CHINA

Catholic Community in view of the
Chinese New Year

The lonely elderly, the sick, orphans and young immigrant workers at the attention of the mainland Catholic community in view of the Chinese new year

Beijing (Agenzia Fides) – As every year, in view of the Chinese new year, the mainland Catholic community has intensified its charity work, especially towards the lonely elderly, the sick, orphans, the young and immigrant workers, who always have the greatest pastoral care attention of the Church, just as do all the weakest members of society. According to information received by Fides there are numerous local initiatives.

The Cathedral missionary group in the Diocese of Wen Zhou, Zhe Jiang province, have already brought the witness of God's love to 15 poor families and to the orphanage, to which they have given concrete support. And the mission continues. As every year, this group which carries various types of food and sums of money visited, among

others, a family of deaf-mutes with a mentally handicapped daughter and a son with a malignant tumour; and a widow who thanks to the Catholics was able to keep her baby of two years.... The families who have received visits say, "we are unfortunate and poor, but thanks to God, through these active lay members of the Church, we too feel like Children of God like others."

Two assistant parish priests and two priests who perform pastoral ministry in the Cathedral of the Diocese of TaiYuan, together with 16 extra Communion ministers, made the charitable and pastoral visits to the families in difficulty. Divided into four groups, they brought Communion to 169 families of sick and the elderly because they feel the Love of Mother Church for them. Since 1994 the Cathedral takes the sacraments to the elderly and sick, and Communion to the sick the first Friday of every month. With the upcoming celebrations, the spiritual and material care of the elderly and sick only intensifies.

The diocese of Fen Yang, that of Shi Jia Zhuang and many others, take care of the young, especially of immigrant workers who cannot return home to celebrate this family celebration with their loved ones. Also, at a fraternal meeting, the Catholic community celebrates the Eucharist and Adoration for them, organised by a seminary to share their faith and life experiences, and to know their difficulties, listening to their needs and trying to meet them. (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 20/01/2011). ♦♦♦

2011



UCA News - www.ucanews.com

Chinese Catholics optimistic about challenges ahead in Year of Rabbit

Published Date: February 10, 2011
By ucanews.com reporter, Rome

As is his annual practice, Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kun greeted students from mainland China in Rome at the time of the Chinese Lunar New Year in early February. But this time he was accompanied by Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-fai, the new secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

About 120 priests, seminarians and nuns gathering at the Pontifical Urban College received red envelopes, a monetary gift symbolising good luck, from the 79-year-old cardinal.

They in return presented gifts to the cardinal – to mark the 50th anniversary of his priesthood in February 2011 – and the archbishop who was newly-ordained the day before.

Some of those present voiced their expectations of the new archbishop's role and looked forward to developments in the China Church through this year and beyond.

Father Joseph, who works in Italy, said he was “a bit worried” that Archbishop Hon may not get used to the complex situation in the Roman Curia. “He seems not a man of politics. Now is a critical moment. After the illicit Chengde ordination and Catholic congress in China last year, the missionary congregation has to handle well relations with many parties,” he said.

A bishop who does not have papal approval was elected president of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China during the December congress while a Vatican-approved bishop became head of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

If Rome really wants to do something good for the China Church, it's time to stand on Church principle, said Father Joseph. Archbishop Hon would hopefully have seen the past failures and this could help him to consider how to face the challenges ahead.

Another priest, Father Peter, said he hoped there

would be no more inconsistency in instructions from the Vatican, which he thought was caused by the eagerness of some Vatican officials to build diplomatic ties.

The Chinese government manipulated such a mentality “like giving bait for fish to chase after but the splashes and whirls have caused great harm to the China Church.”

Some missionary societies also support the Holy See to make certain concessions on Church principles for the sake of evangelization, he observed. Father Peter anticipated that whoever the Pope appoints to succeed Cardinal Ivan Dias, the congregation prefect who will reach 75 in April, would definitely consult Archbishop Hon, as a Chinese, on China affairs.

Sister Zhang, a student in Rome, thinks the China-Vatican relations have entered into a transitional stage as the open Church authorities have also elected new personnel.

Father Matthew Gu Guangzhong, a Shanghai native residing in the US, believes the archbishop is in a difficult situation to begin with. “Neither can the orthodox of the Catholic Church work in the mainland, nor can the Holy See accept China's independent Church principle.”

However, the 79-year-old priest, who came for the archbishop's ordination, said he was optimistic that the situation would change as China needs a dialogue with the Vatican to maintain its vested interests in the international arena.

A few other seminarians also see “hope despite great difficulties”, referring to government control of the Church and probably more illicit ordinations in 2011.

“The problems of the China Church also depend on the overall situation of China. So it will not be solved in the short run,” one of them said.

However, given the fact that “the Catholic Church has existed for thousands of years and the China Church has also sustained despite persecution over the past few decades, we should have faith in God's plan,” another one said, adding that it is also important to give encouragement to mainland bishops. ◆◆◆