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China Exchange

Columban Mission Institute
Centre for Promoting Communion with
the Church in China

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EDITORIAL

Since the last China Exchange in March, much has happened in China and other places around the world. There have been protests, sometimes violent, against the staging of the August 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. There has been violence and continuing suppression in Tibet. A horrendous earthquake has devastated much of Sichuan Province with unimaginable loss of life – particularly among young school children. (Little was known in 1975 of a similar catastrophe in Tangshan, north-eastern China). Brave young lawyers, like Hu Jia and other workers have spoken out and been active towards promoting human rights. “We would rather have human rights than the Olympic Games.” Many have been tried and imprisoned.

Remarkably – earlier in May, the China Philharmonic Orchestra performed a programme of Western religious music for Pope Benedict XVI in the Vatican. 150 Chinese musicians played and sang Mozart’s Requiem, some Latin motets and a Kyrie. Mozart is known to be one of the Pope’s favourite composers.

In response Pope Benedict noted:

- ❖ “The interest shown by your orchestra and choir in European religious music.”
- ❖ “A special thought for those of your fellow citizens who share faith in Jesus and are united through a particular spiritual bond with the successor of Peter.”
- ❖ “I send my greetings, through you, to all the people of China as they prepare for the Olympic Games, an event of great importance for the entire human family.”

Ninety years ago, on 29th June, 1918, St. Columban’s Mission Society was officially approved and not long afterwards the first group of Columbans went to work in Hubei Province, China. Later Jiangxi and Hangzhou were added. This all came to an end in the early 1950s with the coming of the communist regime. Long years of suffering followed for the communities the Columbans had served in China.

AITECE – (Association for International Teaching, Educational and Curriculum Exchange) now continues the Columban commitment to China. Organised by the late Columban Fr. Edward Kelly, AITECE with China Government approval places volunteer teachers from English speaking countries in various parts of China, promoting understanding and cooperation between peoples by teaching and sharing of professional skills. In Australia, AITECE is coordinated by the Christian Brothers, partners in mission with the Columbans in Hanyang, more than seventy years ago. ♦

Rev Paul McGee ssc

UCAN: Belgian Church Leaders Make Pastoral Visit To Foster Church Unity

UCA News - www.ucanews.com, 11 April 2008
CH04789.1492 April 10, 2008 67 EM-lines (700 words)

CHINA Belgian Church Leaders Make Pastoral Visit To Foster Church Unity

HONG KONG (UCAN) -- Belgian Cardinal Godfried Danneels of Mechelen-Brussels is leading an 11-member delegation on an "exclusively pastoral" visit to Beijing and the provinces of Liaoning, Hebei and Shaanxi.

The delegation arrived in the capital on March 31. It comprises the cardinal, four bishops and board members of the Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation of Catholic Leuven University in Belgium. Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM) Father Jeroom Heyndrickx, former foundation director, is one of the delegates.

Among the places the group has visited is the Catholic-majority village of Laohugou (tiger valley) on April 8. Catholics have been living in the village of about 500 people since the 18th century. They belong to Chengde diocese, based in the Hebei city of the same name, 250 kilometers north of Beijing.

Father Joseph Guo Jincal, deputy secretary-general of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, is accompanying the group. The Chengde priest told UCA News the delegation joined a Mass at the village chapel and visited the nearby graves of some CICM missionaries.

Father Guo said the CICM, founded by Belgian Father Theophile Verbiest in 1862, funded the construction of the chapel and a statue of their founder in Laohugou. Father Verbiest died in this village.

Father Guo said the Belgian delegation, which had been invited by the governing board of the National Seminary in Beijing, received a warm welcome from Catholics in Laohugou, who expressed gratitude for CICM missionaries' contribution. Father Guo himself studied at special programs of the Verbiest Foundation.

According to a March 29 press release from the foundation, the trip is "part of an exchange program between the Churches in Belgium and China."

Father Heyndrickx, a Church-in-China researcher, told UCA News via e-mail on April 8 that Catholics at the Laohugou chapel clapped their hands and sang the hymn Love Brings Us Together to welcome their visitors.

The CICM priest said Cardinal Danneels spoke to the Chinese Catholics on this theme, telling them the delegation had come precisely to express the unity of all Catholics in the universal Church under the pope. Father Li Shoushan, Chengde diocesan administrator, thanked the Belgian Church for having sent CICM missionaries to preach in the former Jehol diocese, now part of Chengde and Liaoning dioceses, Father Heyndrickx recounted.

The Catholics then lined up in front of the bishops, shook hands with them and kissed their rings. The prelates blessed them.

In earlier e-mails to UCA News, Father Heyndrickx said the delegation had "a good discussion" on April 1 with Bishop Joseph Li Shan of Beijing on pastoral work.

Father Matthew Zhen Xuebin, chancellor of Beijing diocese, told UCA News they also spoke about the Beijing Olympics in August and the local Church's preparations for it.

On April 2, Cardinal Danneels, chairman of the Verbiest foundation, gave a lecture, Challenges to the Culture of Life: Ethics and Science in Dialogue, at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.

The cardinal had visited China in 2005, but that visit was cut short when Pope John Paul II became critically ill.

During the current visit, on April 4, more than 100 seminarians and priests attended the cardinal's lecture on The Beatitudes at the National Seminary, on the capital's southern outskirts.

Mainland bishops and priests the delegation met included Bishop Joseph Ma Yinglin of Kunming and Father Yao Shun of Jining, who participated in a study program in Belgium Nov. 24-Dec. 9, 2007, on Church management and pastoral work.

"Our dialogue is a continuation of the dialogue that took place in Belgium," Father Heyndrickx said, adding that ongoing formation of bishops, priests, Religious and laypeople is a priority for the China Church.

During April 5-6, Cardinal Danneels met with Bishop Pius Jin Peixian of Liaoning, Coadjutor Bishop Paul Pei Junmin and seminary staff in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning province.

Cardinal Danneels spoke on The Spirituality of Joy of St. Francis of Assisi to seminarians and nuns who study theology there.

The delegation then visited Songshu Zuizi (pine tree mission), bordering Hebei, the former CICM headquarters for Jehol diocese.

The group is visiting Xi'an diocese in Shaanxi province April 8-10.

Cardinal Danneels and some other delegates are scheduled to leave China on April 11, while the rest will visit Shanghai. ♦

Fides: 'Nan Fang Weekly' publishes
an article recalling John Paul II

Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org, 15 April 2008
ASIA/CHINA

The prominent Chinese periodical "Nan Fang Weekly" publishes an article by a learned Chinese man recalling John Paul II on the third anniversary of his death

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - The April 4th issue of the Nan Fang Weekly, a prominent Chinese newspaper contained an article remembering John Paul II on the third anniversary of his death, written by "a learned Chinese man living in the United States of America." The author remembers the Pontiff as a "very beloved" Pope, who "changed the face of the Catholic religion and of the world."

Here are some excerpts taken from the article: "Many of our 'contemporaries' maintain the position that Christianity is a Western religion. However, the reality is that Christianity is above all a religion of the third world. The face of Catholicism at the Vatican [making reference to the internationalization of the Roman Curia] has changed thanks to the efforts of the great deceased Pontiff who passed away on April 2, three years ago, John Paul II." "Nowadays it is difficult to define Catholicism as a Western religion. Likewise, it is hard to define Buddhism as an Eastern religion." "According to statistics, of the over 1 billion Catholics in the world, 490 million are in South America, 120 million in Africa, and 110 million in Asia.

That means that 70% of Catholics live in third world countries."

"Over 75% of those baptized in 1998 were from developing countries."

"After so many years, we can finally say that Christianity is our religion." "In many Western countries, a great number of the Catholics are immigrants from Asia, South America, and Africa."

"John Paul II, thanks to this great attractive character of his soul, was able to maintain the unity of the Catholic Church, as well as improve relations with Protestants, Jews, and Muslims. Religion is a worldwide phenomena; Christianity is also a worldwide phenomena. And this is the 'new color' that this Pope left to the world, so much so that when we refer to

religion we now have a completely renewed vision. Following the principle that one should always draw the line between politics and religion, what can stop us from telling our fellow Chinese Christians, con generosity, that this is our religion and it forms a part of our modern Chinese culture? And in our relationship with foreigners who share this same faith, what is to stop us from saying that this is our religion and that it forms part of our modern culture of global exchange?" (Agenzia Fides 11/4/2008). ♦

ON THE WALL

(Translated from the poem of
an unknown
Korean woman author, writing
in Chinese
characters. The original ap-
pears below)

*The dragon and fish have their
country deep in the marshland wet*

*The birds and the beasts have
their home on the forested hill.*

*But down the light of the moon
my lonely boat's wandering yet -*

*Where is the shore I may
anchor my life and be still?*

GRACE W. MITCHELL

Hong Kong Churches Call for Release of Convicted Rights Advocate

Sunday Examiner, Hong Kong 4 May 2008
VOL LXII NO. 18, Published on 29 April 2008

HONG KONG (UCAN): Nine Hong Kong Christian groups have called for the release of human rights advocate Hu Jia, who has been jailed for writing articles on the Internet criticising mainland authorities.

In their April 17 open letter, the groups are critical of the Chinese government for suppressing rights advocates and demand the immediate release of Hu. The Beijing-born journalist has spoken on behalf of HIV and AIDS sufferers, environmental issues and China's democratic movement.

Hu received a three-and-a-half-year prison sentence on April 3 for inciting subversion of state power. He pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) and Commission of Labour Affairs of the Hong Kong Catholic diocese, as well as the Union of Hong Kong Catholic Organisations in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China joined six Protestant groups, Christians for Hong Kong Society, Christian Industrial Committee, Christian Institute, Christian Patriotic Democratic Movement, Student Christian Movement and Women Christian Council, in signing the letter.

JPC project officer, Or Yan-yan told *UCA News* on April 21 that they signed the open letter to show their support for Hu and his family as well as to speak out against the violation of human dignity on the mainland. She said the Christian groups are planning to conduct follow-up activities, including a prayer meeting to help publicise Hu's case.

They claim that the Chinese government, by imprisoning Hu for his dissident opinions, has violated the right to freedom of speech, which is guaranteed in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights and China's constitution.

Aside from asking for Hu's release, the groups are demanding that the Chinese government stop detaining human rights advocates, or their families, or keeping them under house arrest. The letter reports that Hu's wife, Zeng Jinyan, and their infant daughter have been forbidden contact with the outside world since his arrest.

The letter contends that when human rights advocates and dissidents fight for democracy and justice express themselves through peaceful means, no wrongdoing is involved. "As the Beijing Olympic Games near, authorities in China should honour their promises to improve human rights, which they made in 2001 when applying to host the Olympics, and release immediately all human rights activists and dissidents," the letter states.

Since Hu's arrest on December 27 last year, the JPC has joined other human rights groups in asking for his early release and has called for prayers for Hu and his family. On April 5, two days after his sentencing, the commission issued a statement describing him as a person concerned with people's welfare and the development of the country, as shown through his articles and media interviews.

The statement said Hu exposed social injustices in the country and spoke out for those whose rights were being abused, hoping the country would move toward a more humanising and harmonious development.

The letter says that there is no intent to incite subversion in his acts and the charges made by the Chinese government are completely unwarranted. It calls Hu's sentence "a contradiction of what the Chinese government has said about a harmonious society and the spirit of a humanistic Olympics."

However, some commentators on China believe that the arrests and jailing of dissidents are really intended to keep them from disturbing order during the Olympic Games in August.

'As the Beijing Olympic Games near, authorities in China should honour their promises to improve human rights, which they made in 2001 when applying to host the Olympics, and release immediately all human rights activists and dissidents'

Vatican Information Service

Pope Express His Closeness to Chinese Earthquake Victims
china.infodoc@online.be

VATICAN CITY, 14 MAY 2008 (VIS) - Following his catechesis in this morning's general audience, Benedict XVI launched an appeal for "the people of Sichuan and adjoining provinces in China, so harshly affected by the earthquake which has provoked serious loss of human life, left large numbers missing and caused incalculable damages.

"I invite you to join me in fervent prayer for those who have lost their lives. I remain spiritually close to the people suffering from such a devastating calamity; and we implore God to grant them relief in their suffering". The Pope concluded his appeal by asking the Lord "to give support to all those involved in meeting the immediate needs" of the victims. ♦

Dozens of churches destroyed or devastated
by Sichuan earthquake

AsiaNews - www.asianews.it

05/21/2008

CHINA, china.infodoc@online.be

Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org

ASIA/CHINA

china.infodoc@online.be

4 June 2008

Fides: Parish of Long Gang offers a Mass
and copies of the Bible

Chengdu (AsiaNews/CCCCN) - The three days of national mourning called for by the Chinese government to honour the victims of the earthquake are also marking the life of the Church in China. The dioceses close to the epicentre are also beginning to take stock of the destruction to churches and other religious buildings.

In these days, all of the parishes of the country are celebrating Masses for the deceased, and gathering funds and donations for rebuilding. Many groups of Catholic volunteers have already left for Sichuan to offer their assistance with medical care and the distribution of food and water.

Today, at noon, the government again updated the numbers: 41,353 dead; 274,683 wounded; 32,666 missing. The health ministry has declared that more than 3,000 of the wounded have died in hospital. Meanwhile, according to Xinhua, the army and volunteers have succeeded in restoring electricity to almost the entire area of the quake, except in Beichuan, which is very close to the epicentre. Of the 20,829 kilometres of road that have been damaged, at least 19,645 have been repaired and reopened for traffic.

The community in the area of the quake is trying to assess the extent of the destruction and material damage caused to Church structures. ♦

Parish of Long Gang offers a Mass and copies of the Bible to students preparing for exams.

Wen Zhou (Agenzia Fides) The young students of the parish church of Long Gang, in the Diocese of Wen Zhou, received a Bible as a gift at the end of the Mass celebrated on May 31, for students preparing for their final exams for the school year. Every year middle school and high school students in China must take final exams in order to go on to the next grade, and have the possibility of going to a better school. In other words, they are exams that are often decisive for the future of a young person and therefore, are greatly taken into account by both them and their families. Every year, the parish organizes a Mass and a special prayer for them. The celebration is held Saturday, May 31. According to the Pastor in his homily, "today's feast of the Visitation of Mary has given another sense to the celebration.

Our Lady brought the best gift to her cousin, that is, Jesus. Today the Church gives you the greatest gift: Jesus and the Sacred Scripture, as the best expression of their hopes for your school exams, as well as for those exams you will face in your lives." ♦



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UCA News - www.ucanews.com
ZY05057.1499 May 26, 2008 72 EM-lines (798 words)
china.infodoc@online.be

VATICAN Historic Rome Gathering Of Chinese Catholics Celebrates
Feast Of 'Our Lady Of Sheshan'

By Gerard O'Connell, Special Correspondent in Rome

ROME (UCAN) -- Chinese Catholics in Italy made history on May 24 when they celebrated the feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians in Rome, coming together as a community from all over Italy for the first time.

Estimates of the expatriate Chinese population in Italy range from more than 100,000 (government) to 300,000 (other sources). Church sources estimate less than 1,000 Chinese Catholics nationwide.

Five hundred of these Catholics -- from both "open" and "underground" communities -- answered their national coordinator's call to celebrate the feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome. Pope Benedict XVI had set the day as a special day of prayer for the China Church in his letter last year to mainland Catholics, in which he noted the Blessed Mother is venerated under this title at the Marian shrine in Sheshan, outside Shanghai.

The Chinese came by bus and train from Florence, Milan, Naples, Prato, Rimini, Treviso and elsewhere. Most were under 40, and many were priests, nuns, seminarians and novices, as well as laypeople with children. Some told UCA News they were not yet baptized.

More than 500 fellow Catholics from Italy and other countries joined them at the basilica.

Cardinal Ivan Dias, Indian-born prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, led Mass assisted by about 80 priests, mostly Chinese but also Vatican officials and European priests with China links.

Cardinal Dias presided and preached in Italian, but most readings and prayers, and all hymns were in Chinese.

A red banner with gold writing on one side of the altar read, "The Love of Christ has brought us together."

Pope Benedict sent his greetings and "said he wants to be spiritually present here today," Cardinal Dias began his homily, which was translated into Chinese. He noted the special day was the pope's initiative.

"Now, prayers from all over the world are converging towards Mary, bringing to her all the needs of our brothers and sisters in China," the cardinal said.

While acknowledging "our brothers and sisters" in China "have suffered much over past decades," he echoed Pope Benedict's letter in calling on Chinese Catholics to forgive past offenses.

"Only in this way can we look to the future," which is "full of hope," he stated. "We must thank the Lord for the future of this Church, which is re-born in mainland China."

Cardinal Dias pointed to the May 7 concert that a mainland orchestra and choir gave in the Vatican as a sign of improving relations between China and the Holy See. This "fine gesture offered by the Chinese authorities to the pope," he added, was matched by Pope Benedict's "affectionate words for all the Chinese people" and "good wishes" for the Olympics. He also noted Pope Benedict appealed and prayed for the victims and survivors of the May 12 earthquake in Sichuan.

The cardinal returned to a theme in the pope's letter when he remarked on the divided Church community in mainland China.

"In heaven there will be no official or underground Catholics, because we will all be children of God. The pope wants this unity to be visible also on earth," he said.

The congregation applauded when he finished. The prayers of the faithful followed, including prayers for "all the bishops of China," "all the Chinese people," "those who have died in the earthquake" and "Chinese Catholics" living in Italy and the mainland.

Cardinal Dias concluded the celebration by leading the congregation in reciting the pope's prayer for the Church in China. He also urged them to be united and help evangelize fellow Chinese in Italy and the mainland.

The next day, many of the Chinese Catholics recited the Angelus with the pope in St. Peter's Square.

Speaking from his study window, Pope Benedict greeted "with great affection the Chinese-speaking pilgrims that have gathered in Rome from all over Italy on the occasion of the World Day of Prayer for the Church in China."

His words drew cheers from the Chinese, who responded by waving red and yellow scarves -- red for China and yellow for the Holy See.

The pope reassured them of his prayers for all who died in the earthquake and his "personal closeness to all who are living hours of anguish and tribulation."

He concluded his greeting with part of the special prayer he composed, asking Our Lady of Sheshan to sustain "the commitment of all those in China who, amid their daily trials, continue to believe, to hope, to love, so that they may never be afraid to speak of Jesus to the world, and of the world to Jesus." He prayed they would remain "always credible witnesses" of Jesus' love, "staying united to the rock of Peter on which the Church is built." ♦

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UCA News - www.ucanews.com

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HONG KONG Cardinal Zen Says Quake Revealed People's Magnanimity,
Prays For Victims

HONG KONG (UCAN) -- The openness the Chinese government has shown concerning earthquake relief work bodes well for human rights in China, Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kun of Hong Kong said after a special Mass for Sichuan quake victims.

More than 1,000 Catholics attended the June 2 Mass at Hong Kong diocese's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception to pray for the dead and missing, the survivors and those who are helping in relief and rebuilding efforts.

Earlier, on May 18, the Catholic diocese also held a Mass to pray for those affected by the disaster.

Cardinal Zen said in his homily that amid the suffering caused by the tragedy, God has revealed human magnanimity through love for the affected people. "Do not easily forget the victims of Sichuan, as rendering relief aid for them should be a long-lasting work," he reminded those present.

"A new China has been born out of the quake," he said.

Elaborating on this after Mass, he told the press that he appreciated the Chinese leaders' openness to journalists reporting on the disaster and acceptance of foreign aid, which he said shows they really want to help the people.

However, conflicts still exist between the Vatican and China, he pointed out. Despite the goodwill shown in the concert a mainland orchestra gave in the Vatican on May 7 and Pope Benedict XVI's prayers for the quake victims, many mainland Catholics were kept from praying at the popular Sheshan Marian shrine on May 24 or making cross-province pilgrimages during May, he said.

The Marian month is peak season for pilgrimages in mainland China, and the pope designated May 24 as a day of prayer for the China Church.

Cardinal Zen added that some priests from the "underground" Church community had been warned against traveling or were watched during the month.

Such "pessimistic response to the pope's call for prayers for the China Church" could be the work of some officials who are not willing to see China-Vatican relations improve, he suggested. However, he said he believes the top Chinese leaders are sincere in their desire to dialogue.

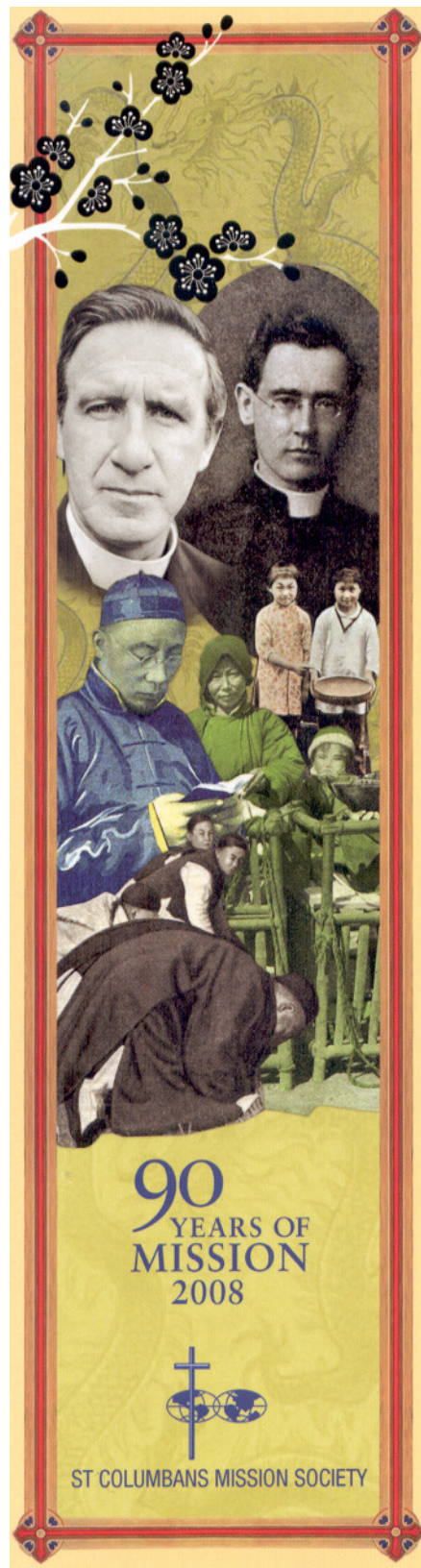
To provide assistance to the devastated areas in Sichuan, he said, Caritas-Hong Kong has raised HK\$11 million (US\$1.58 million) from Catholics and Catholic schools since mid-May. He said the fundraising campaign will last until May 2009, adding that local Catholics are also mindful of the cyclone victims in Myanmar.

The Vatican, through Caritas Internationalis, the worldwide confederation of charity and relief organizations set up by local Churches, has also offered funds to help the quake victims, expressing its sincerity toward China, the cardinal said. ♦

“The memories of the past
 thronged my mind;
 the great priests,
 the Brothers and Sisters
 who under almost
 insuperable difficulties,
 had worked for God
 throughout the diocese
 so zealously and loyally ...

I blessed the compound,
 and the Cathedral,
 the whole diocese.
 I put them under the protection
 of Our Lord and his Blessed
 Mother
 and of St. Columban patron
 of the diocese and Cathedral.
 It was all that I could do.”

Bishop Edward Galvin
 17th September, 1952



“I am also following
 with particular interest
 the events of the entire
 Chinese People,
 whom I regard
 with sincere admiration
 and sentiments of friendship,
 to the point where I express
 the hope ‘that concrete forms
 of communication
 and cooperation between
 the Holy See and
 the People’s Republic of China
 may soon be established.
 Friendship is nourished
 by contacts, by a sharing
 in the joy and sadness
 of different situations,
 by solidarity and
 mutual assistance.’ ...”

Pope Benedict XVI –
Letter to the Church in China –
 27th May, 2007.