

Chinese Catholics told to insist on 'sinicization'

Authorities tell Catholics to 'walk the path of an independent church,' as Vatican confirms meetings



This photo taken May 24 shows worshippers walking past the shadow of a cross outside a Catholic Church in China. (Photo by Greg Baker/AFP)

- [ucanews.com](#) reporter, Hong Kong
- [China](#)
- [October 30, 2015](#)

Authorities overseeing religion in China told a group of Catholic bishops and leaders to insist on "sinicization," in a gathering that took place soon after Beijing concluded closed-door meetings with a Vatican delegation.

It comes as Vatican officials publicly confirmed that China and the Holy See were engaged in dialogue, which included an Oct. 11-16 visit to Beijing [first reported by ucanews.com](#).

Shortly after these meetings, a group of 25 Chinese bishops, priests, nuns and laypeople met with officials from the State Administration for Religious Affairs from Oct. 19-24 in Guizhou province.

"At the moment, loving the church and the country is manifested through ... insisting on sinicization and deepening the extent of managing the church in a democratic way," Chen Zhongrong, vice director of the religious affairs administration, told the Catholic leaders during the trip.

The concept of "sinicization" of religion was [first used by Chinese President Xi Jinping](#) in May. As part of the policy, churches are urged to adapt to Chinese society under communist rule.

"Loving the country and the church are both 'love [coming] from God,'" Chen said, according to

the religious affairs administration website. He added that he hoped the Catholic leaders would "continue to walk the path of an independent church with a firm will."

The 25 Catholic leaders who attended the Oct. 19-24 meeting hold posts with the government-sanctioned Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the bishops' conference, which the Holy See does not recognize.

As part of the six-day trip, bishops with dual approval from the Vatican and the Chinese government also concelebrated Masses with illicit bishops, who are excommunicated by the Holy See.

Such concelebration is considered sacrilege and often rejected by laypeople.

As part of the trip, the Chinese Catholic delegation also visited sites considered important to Chinese communists, in addition to Catholic churches in Guizhou.

Meanwhile in Rome, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's secretary of state, confirmed the separate October meeting between the Holy See and Beijing.

"It is a part of a process aimed at the normalization of relations," Cardinal Parolin [told media](#) Oct. 28. "The sheer fact we are able to talk about it is significant."

The cardinal said the Vatican hoped to "establish normal relations" with China.

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