

## **Year 2019: Statistics of the Catholic Church in China**

### ***Number of Catholics:***

About 10 million (40,000-50,000 new adult baptisms in 2019, without the number of infant baptisms and of deaths)

### ***Number of Bishops:*** 100

Official: 69, of whom 62 active

Unofficial: 31, of whom 16 active

### ***Number of Dioceses:***

According to the Church: 146 (115 dioceses+31 ecclesiastical circumscriptions)

According to the Chinese Government: 96

### ***Number of priests:***

a total of 4,000 (the numbers of unofficial priests who have registered and those refuse to register are not available)

### ***Number of Seminaries and Seminarians:*** 12 and 470 respectively

Official: 6 major seminaries, with 370 seminarians

Unofficial: 6 seminaries with 100 seminarians

### ***Number of Sisters:*** total 4,630

Official: 3,270 in 87 congregations

Unofficial: 1,360 in 40 congregations

## Year 2019:

### Major Events of the Catholic Church in China

#### Bishops

- January 3: Death of Bishop Michael Yeung Ming Cheung (楊鳴章1945-2019) of Hong Kong.
- June 8: Death of the unofficial Bishop of Tianjin, Stephen Li Side (李思德1926-2019)
- November 20: Death of Bishop Andreas Jin Daoyuan (靳道遠1929-2019), official retired bishop of Changzhi, Shanxi.
- August 26: Episcopal ordination of Fr. Yao Shun (姚順1965-) as ordinary Bishop of Jining, Inner Mongolia.
- August 28: Episcopal ordination of Fr. Stephen Xu Hongwei (胥紅偉1975-) as Coadjutor Bishop of Hanzhong, Shaanxi.

#### Main Events

##### JANUARY

- January 1: Tangshan Diocese, Hebei, started the celebration of its 120th anniversary foundation by launching the “Year of the Family”, with several pastoral initiatives.
- January 2: Bp. Tan Yanquan (譚燕全) of Nanning, Guangxi, was reported to have recently signed a contract to sell the church in 2 Kangle St., in Nanning city, to a company for commercial use. He was alleged of being engaged in commercial dealings through his membership in several trade companies.

- January 2: According to *Asia News*, at least seven churches and their communities have been suppressed since September 2018 in the diocese of Qiqihar, Heilongjiang, whose bishop Wei Jingyi (魏景儀) is unofficial.
- January 3: Death of Bishop Michael Yeung Ming Cheung (楊鳴章 1945-2019) of Hong Kong. Born in Shanghai on December 1, 1945 into a Catholic family, arrived in Hong Kong when he was four years old. He was ordained a priest on 10 June 1978. Since 2003 he had been head of Caritas-Hong Kong and vicar general since 2009. As the Auxiliary Bishop of Hong Kong since 2014, he was made the bishop (ordinary) of the same diocese by Pope Francis in August 2017, to succeed Cardinal John Tong.
- January 15-18: A delegation of the Holy See's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and representatives of the doctrinal commission of FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences) held a meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, on witnessing to the Gospel in the continent. Bp. Joseph Guo Jincai of Chengde (郭金才) and Fr. Zhang Qiulin of Anyang (張秋林) were the Mainland Chinese delegates. Bp. Guo was recently legitimized by the Holy See.
- January 22: Official ceremony was held in Jiexi, Shantou Diocese for the requested retirement of the originally (unofficial) Bishop Zhuang Jianjian (莊建堅) becoming "bishop emeritus" at the event. It was followed by a Mass presided by Bp. Huang Bingzhang (黃炳章), recently legitimized by the Holy See. He succeeded Bishop

Zhuang as “bishop ordinary”. Other Guangdong bishops concelebrated, but Bp. Zhuang did not take part in the Mass.

- January 30: Official installation of Bp. Peter Jin Lugang (靳祿崗), as coadjutor bishop of Nanyang, Henan, during a celebration strictly controlled by the police. The Chinese government recognizes 98-year-old Bishop Zhu Baoyu (朱寶玉) as the bishop ordinary, who is a bishop emeritus according to the Holy See.

## FEBRUARY

- February 3: L’Osservatore Romano published an article on the steps taken by the Holy See towards the Chinese Church after the *Sino-Vatican Provisional Agreement* signed last September. It says that the dialogue continues to face further “problems still existing, starting with the civil recognition of the unofficial clergy.” It also published an interview with Cardinal Fernando Filoni, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. He emphasized two points: the underground status will fade away, but not the people involved; and that membership in the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) is not mandatory, against the present policy of forcing underground clergy to register through the CCPA under the pretext that “the Pope wants it.”
- February 9: In Baoding, a dozen priests had a meeting with Bp. Francis An Shuxin (安樹新) to discuss the future development of the Diocese, after the Sino-Vatican

Provisional Agreement. They all agreed that the Church needs union around the Bishop, but they asked the Bishop to declare the CCPA illegitimate as a condition for concelebration, and agreed to let the unofficial section continue for pastoral reasons. Bishop Su Zhimin of Baoding is missing.

- February 27: Faith Press announced that the estimated total number of baptisms in the official Church in 2018 was 48,365.

## MARCH

- March 4-14: During the 2nd session of the 13th CPPCC National Assembly, held in Beijing (March 3-13), *Sing Tao Daily* of Hong Kong published an interview with two Chinese bishops, recently legitimized by the Holy See. According to the Hong Kong newspaper, Bp. Zhan Silu (詹思祿) of Mindong, Fujian, has emphasized that “it is wrong” for the faithful of the unofficial Church not to join the official Patriotic Association. Bp. Lei Shiyin (雷世銀) of Leshan, Sichuan, showed great optimism about the implementation of the *Sino-Vatican Provisional Agreement* during the year, and denied that the restriction against the domestic churches will influence the policy of religious freedom.
- March 5-15: During the 2nd session of the 13th National People’s Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, about religion, PRC Premier Li Keqiang (李克強) underlined the need for fully implementing the Party’s

fundamental policy on religious affairs, abiding by the principle of Sinicization of religion, guiding religious affairs in accordance with the law, and to take an active part in promoting economic and social development.

- March 21-24: During the visit to Italy of PRC President Xi Jinping (习近平), there was no meeting with Pope Francis in the Vatican.
- March 29: The (unofficial) coadjutor bishop of Xuanhua, Hebei, Augustine Cui Tai (崔泰), was taken away by police. Bishop Cui has been regularly detained by the provincial government. When he was released in January, he issued a letter “declaring” publicly his episcopal identity. The official reason for his arrest or the length of his detention are unknown. But, according to some sources, it was due to his conflict with Fr. Zhang Li (張利) who had been disciplined by the bishop because he promoted an extremist charismatic movement, and who accused the bishop of not following the Vatican's directives, since he does not register and become official.
- March 26-27: The 5th joint meeting of the 9th Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and government-approved Bishops' Conference of Catholic Church in China (BCCCC) was held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang. It discussed and approved the 2019 work plan.

## APRIL

- April 4-10: In the first half of the month, the Fengxiang Diocese in Shaanxi witnessed some sad events: the Qianyang county government razed to the ground the only

parish in the city, that was serving around two thousand Catholics, all poor peasants. On April 10, about 600 government officials and policemen arrived in front of the Marian shrine of Mujiaping to destroy it, but about 200 faithful, knowing the official intention, had gathered to defend the church. The harsh treatment against Fengxiang Diocese seems due to the fact that local Catholics, clergy and the bishop are reluctant to join the Patriotic Association.

- April 18: Mindong's ordinary and auxiliary bishops, Bps. Zhan Silu (詹思祿) and Guo Xijin (郭希錦), concelebrated at the Chrism Mass. Bp. Guo, unofficial, was able to celebrate with episcopal insignia (miter and pectoral cross) even though he is not yet recognized as a bishop by the local authorities. The event happened due to an intervention of the Vatican itself and of the central government.
- April 28: The local authorities of Weihui, in the diocese of Anyang, Henan, destroyed the huge iron crosses that stood out on the two bell towers of the new church. Since the launch of the new regulations on religious activities, Henan has become a sort of pilot-experiment of repression: several churches have been closed, the catechism is forbidden for children and teenagers, and Christian graves are destroyed.
- April 28-October 7: The Vatican took part to the International Horticultural Expo 2019 held in Beijing, demonstrating the latest example of improving bilateral exchanges.

## MAY

- May 6-7: During the night, the demolition of the huge cross and of the walls the Catholic church of the village of Shen Liu in the Diocese of Handan, Hebei, began. Local authorities said that the motive for their decision was because the cross is “too visible” from the nearby highway and church does not have all the necessary building permits. The Diocese of Handan has already been warned that there are at least 24 churches that “have no building permits” and will therefore be destroyed.
- May 11: The First Catholic Representatives’ Conference of Fengxiang Diocese, Shaanxi, near Xi’an was held in Baoji City, according to a joint report by the national CCPA and the BCCCC. At the meeting, the CCPA established its first branch in the city and passed its official constitution. Vatican-approved Bishop Peter Li Huiyuan (李會元), was elected its chairman, and some diocesan priests were named vice chairmen.
- May 12: *Global Times* reported an interview with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican’s Secretary of State. It is the first time in the history of the newspaper for such a wide-ranging interview with the Vatican Secretary of State. It was considered a sign of positive developments in China-Vatican relations.
- May 14: Bishops Li Shan (李山) of Beijing and Huang Bingzhang (黃炳章) of Shantou, recently legitimized by the Holy See, were in Milan Sacred Heart Catholic University for attending a conference at the Confucius Institute of the university.



- May 28-July 17: Opening of an exhibition of eight sets of Chinese cultural relics stored in the Vatican museum in the Beijing Imperial Palace or Forbidden City. It was the first time that a Vatican collection has been exhibited in China. along with some pieces from the Palace Museum.

## **JUNE**

- June 3: *Ucanews* reported that all the parishes of Fuzhou Diocese, Fujian, have been required to join the CCPA, with some of their priests who refused being excluded from the ministry. Recently the clergy of two dioceses Fuzhou in Fujian and Fengxiang in Shaanxi, were forced to join the Patriotic Association. Several sources consider it the beginning of a national movement that will see all dioceses eventually drawn into the CCPA's orbit.
- June 8: Death of the unofficial Bishop of Tianjin, Stephen Li Side (李思德 1926-2019), at the age of 92 after suffering a stroke in mid-May and being admitted to a hospital. Bishop Li was born on October 3, 1926, in Zunhua city in Hebei province in a traditional Catholic family. He entered the minor seminary at 13 and joined St. Vincent Seminary in Beijing in 1949. He was ordained as a priest in Tianjin Diocese on July 10, 1955. He was ordained as bishop of Tianjin in 1982. Bishop Li was arrested in 1989 after attending the foundation meeting of the Chinese underground Bishops' Conference in November 1989. He was arrested three times in his life and was imprisoned for more than 20 years.

His funeral was held by the official priest Fr. Zhu Lige (朱立戈), on June 10 organized by Tianjin Catholic Patriotic Association under strict government control. Underground Coadjutor Bishop Shi Hongzhen (石鴻禎) was not allowed to attend it. Unofficial priests were allowed to organize a requiem Mass at a funeral home. Bishop Li's headstone named him only as a pastor.

- June 18: In an attempt to protect freedom for himself and for his priests, (unofficial) Bishop Guo Xijin (郭希錦) of Mindong Diocese wrote a letter in which he withdrew his application for government recognition, and sent it to Fu'an Public Security Office, Religious Affairs Bureau and Bp. Zhan Silu (詹思祿), recently legitimized by the Holy See. In the letter, Bp. Guo explains his motivation: "The government has already decided to persecute priests who refuse to sign the request for membership in the CCPA. I am willing to face persecution together with other priests."
- June 28: The Holy See issued the *Pastoral Guidelines Concerning the Civil Registration of the Clergy in China*. It deplores the usage of force to compel the underground clergy to officially register by joining the CCPA.
- June 30: Mindong Diocese, in Fujian, celebrated the dedication of the new cathedral, with an invitation to about 20 bishops, except (unofficial) Bp. Guo Xijin (郭希錦). He refused to attend it, since on June 28 he was not allowed to celebrate the Eucharist with a Congregation of Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

## JULY

- July 10: Officials of the United Front Work Department and the Department of Ethnic and Religious Affairs in the city of Xingtai, in Hebei, urged members of the public to report banned religious activities, by providing two telephone hotlines.

## AUGUST

- August 26: Episcopal ordination of Fr. Anthony Yao Shun (姚順1965-) as Bishop of Jining, Inner Mongolia. Bishop Yao is a former vicar general of the diocese, which has about 70,000 faithful, led by 31 priests and 12 nuns; he was elected by church members on April 9. Although he is the first ordained bishop since the *Sino-Vatican Provisional Agreement* signed in 2018, Bp. Yao was actually secretly approved by the Vatican in 2010. He was ordained as a diocesan priest in 1991 and taught at the National Seminary. He studied liturgy at St. John's University in Minnesota, USA and returned to the diocese in 2010.
- August 26: Chinese authorities under the pretext of illegal construction, announced the plan within five days to demolish the arch portal, the Door to Heaven, of the shrine of the Seven Sorrows Mount, Dongergou, Taiyuan, Shanxi. Local Bishop Meng Ningyou (孟寧友) invited Catholics to increase pilgrimages to the place especially on September 15, feast of the Our Lady of Sorrows. Chinese authorities postponed the demolition until after

the national celebration and the arch portal was only reduced in height during the month of October.

- August 28: Episcopal ordination of Fr. Stephen Xu Hongwei (胥紅偉,1975-) as Coadjutor Bishop of Hanzhong, Shaanxi, by the laying on of hands of Bp. Ma Yinglin (馬英林) of Kunming with all the bishops of Shaanxi province con-celebrating. Bp. Xu studied in the pre-seminary of Weinan Diocese in 1993, in Xi'an seminary in 1996 and was ordained as a priest in Hanzhong in 2002. He graduated with a master's degree on pastoral theology in Rome in 2008 and then practiced pastoral ministry in the Diocese of Vancouver in Canada until 2010. He was already approved by the Holy See for a few years. Bp. Ma was recently legitimized by the Holy See.
- August 28: The State Administration for Religious Affairs now under the United Front Work Department issued the draft of the Norms for Religious Groups, inviting comments. By Religious Groups are meant “social non-profit organizations, which are freely formed by religious citizens and carry out activities according to their statutes in order to unite their fellow religious believers to love the Nation and the Church, and promote a sound development of religion.”

## SEPTEMBER

- September 10: The issuing of the Circular letter of the country Catholic leaders about raising of the national flag,

singing the national anthem and praying for the blessing of the nation in the churches, especially at the Eucharist on Sunday 22 September. The occasion was the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

- September 14: Within the context of the International Horticultural Expo 2019 (from 28 April to 7 October) in Beijing, a “Vatican State Day” was organized with ecological themes.
- September 24: A symposium on Inculturation of Catholic Theology, was held in Sichuan Major Seminary with the participation of 80 participants coming from all over China but mainly from all the dioceses in Sichuan Province.

## **OCTOBER**

- October 31: Unofficial Bp. Shao Zhumin (邵祝敏) of Wenzhou, Zhejiang, was reported to have been once again detained and submitted to an indoctrination session.

## **NOVEMBER**

- November 6: Chinese authorities urged representatives of the official five Religions in China to modify the translations of the reference texts, in order to bring them into line with the requirements of the official Marxist ideology of the CCP and of the “new era.”
- November 19-26: On the occasion of the visit of Pope Francis to Thailand and to Japan, groups of Chinese Catholics flocked to these countries to see him.

- November 20: Officials of China's United Front Work Department removed a statue of Christ the King from the steeple of the church of Linjiazhuang in Jinan Diocese, Shandong, replacing it with a lightning rod. Recently, Chinese authorities also tore down crosses from churches in Wuda, Inner Mongolia, and in Zhumadian Diocese, Henan.
- November 20: Death of Bishop Andreas Jin Daoyuan (靳道遠 1929-2019), retired official bishop of Changzhi, Shanxi. Bishop Jin was born on 13 June 1929, in a catholic family in Lucheng district of Changzhi City. After his studies in various seminaries, including North China Catholic Theological Seminary in Beijing, he was ordained a priest in July 1956 in Beijing. In August of the same year, he returned to Changzhi Diocese for pastoral work. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), he was arrested. When released from prison after 13 years in 1979, he returned to Beishe. In the following year, he led the pastoral work of Nantiangong church in Lucheng district. He was appointed vicar general of Changzhi Diocese in 1992 and was ordained bishop on 6 January 2000. In 2008 he was legitimized by the Holy See but without jurisdiction.
- November 26: Pope Francis during the in-flight press conference returning to Rome from Tokyo, answering to the question about the situation in Hong Kong, with the society divided between pro-democracy protesters and the pro-Beijing government supporters, noted that in

many other countries there are this type of demonstrations and conflicts, and he concluded with the phrase “I would like to go to Beijing, I love China.” On November 28, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman appreciated Pope Francis’ “friendliness and good will.”

## **DECEMBER**

- December 8: The Holy See announced the appointment of Cardinal Louis Antonio Tagle, archbishop of Manila, the Philippines, as the new Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, taking the place of Cardinal Fernando Filoni.
- December 25: A kind of a war on Christmas was officially waged, since it is considered an element of Western “spiritual pollution” and a “betrayal of Chinese culture.” It caused a ban on Christmas celebrations, prayer meetings and decorations. Students were required to sit for exams on December 24 and 25 to prevent them from attending Christmas Mass.

