

Wuhan Re-opens Catholic Convent



Bishop Dong officiating at the reception ceremony

After three years of preparation, the Wuhan convent formally opened on July 14, 1985. On that day six postulants were received into the novitiate.

Bishop Dong Guangqing of the Hankou diocese presided over the traditional reception ceremony, which was done in the Latin language. Over twenty sisters (formerly members of different religious congregations) now reside at the Wuhan convent. On the following day, a tea party was held to celebrate the occasion. Now besides the sisters at the convent there are six novices and 14 aspirants. When the renovation of the convent building is complete, the remaining 30 sisters now living in the Wuhan area will join the new community. Novices and aspirants, along with their study of Catholic doctrine and ascetics, also learn a practical skill, which will be put to the service of the church and society. Ten aged sisters who had not yet made their

final vows did so on April 8th of this year.

The religious rule of the Wuhan convent is based on that of the Franciscan Third Order. Some amendments have been made to fit the present circumstances. A simplified religious habit has been designed for the new generation in the convent, while the older sisters still wear their original habits. At work, or when they leave the convent, the sisters wear ordinary clothes. It is only on feast days, while attending ceremonies in the church, that the sisters will put on their religious habits.

The requirements for entering the convent are quite strict. Candidates must be unmarried and between the ages of 18 and 35, should come from a Catholic family and have a firm desire to be a nun. They must also be of good moral character, patriotic, love the work of the Chinese church and be willing to devote their whole lives to it. The aspirancy period varies from one to two years, subject to the requirements of the individual sister. It is followed by a two-year novitiate, at the end of which the novice makes her first vows. The sisters are a diocesan community under the direction of the bishop. The daily affairs of the convent are administered by a council made up of the superior, assistant-superior and novice-mistress.



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