

# *The Response of the Holy See on the Episcopal Ordination in Chengde*

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*Press Office of the Holy See*

## COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE PRESS OFFICE OF THE HOLY SEE

Episcopal ordination at Chengde  
(Province of Hebei, Mainland China)

With regard to the episcopal ordination of the Reverend Joseph Guo Jincui, which took place last Saturday, November 20, information has been gathered about what happened and it is now possible to state clearly the following.

1. The Holy Father received the news with deep regret, because the above-mentioned episcopal ordination was conferred without the apostolic mandate and, therefore, constitutes a painful wound upon ecclesial communion and a grave violation of Catholic discipline (cf. *Letter of Benedict XVI to the Church in China*, 2007, n. 9).
2. It is known that, in recent days, various Bishops were subjected to pressures and restrictions on their freedom of movement, with the aim of forcing them to participate and confer the episcopal ordination. Such constraints, carried out by Chinese government and security Authorities, constitute a grave violation of freedom of religion and conscience. The Holy See intends to carry out a detailed evaluation of what has happened, including consideration of the aspect of validity and the canonical position of the Bishops involved.

3. In any case, this has painful repercussions, in the first case, for the Reverend Joseph Guo Jincal who, because of this episcopal ordination, finds himself in a most serious canonical condition before the Church in China and the universal Church, exposing himself also to the severe sanctions envisaged, in particular, by canon 1382 of the Code of Canon Law.
4. This ordination not only does not contribute to the good of the Catholics of Chengde, but places them in a very delicate and difficult condition, also from the canonical point of view, and humiliates them, because the Chinese civil Authorities wish to impose on them a Pastor who is not in full communion, either with the Holy Father or with the other Bishops throughout the world.
5. Several times, during this current year, the Holy See has communicated clearly to the Chinese Authorities its opposition to the episcopal ordination of the Reverend Joseph Guo Jincal. In spite of this, the said Authorities decided to proceed unilaterally, to the detriment of the atmosphere of respect that had been created with great effort with the Holy See and with the Catholic Church through the recent episcopal ordinations. This claim to place themselves above the Bishops and to guide the life of the ecclesial community does not correspond to Catholic doctrine; it offends the Holy Father, the Church in China and the universal Church, and further complicates the present pastoral difficulties.
6. Pope Benedict XVI, in the above-mentioned Letter of 2007, expressed the Holy See's willingness to engage in a respectful and constructive dialogue with the Authorities of the People's Republic of China, with the aim of overcoming the difficulties and normalizing relations (n. 4). In reaffirming this willingness, the Holy See notes with regret that the Authorities allow the leadership of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, under the influence of Mr. Liu Bainian, to adopt attitudes that gravely damage the Catholic Church and hamper the aforesaid dialogue.

7. The Catholics of the entire world are following with particular attention the troubled journey of the Church in China: the spiritual solidarity with which they accompany the vicissitudes of their Chinese brothers and sisters becomes a fervent prayer to the Lord of history, so that He may be close to them, increase their hope and fortitude, and give them consolation in moments of trial.

24 November 2010.