

The Eighth European Catholic China Colloquium: “The Chinese in Europe — Trends and Catholic Perspectives”

European Catholic China Colloquium

CHINESE MIGRANTS IN EUROPE: INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, an increasing number of Chinese has come to Europe for work, education, family reunions or to start a new life. Russia and Eastern Europe are major destinations for the new migrants. Another new destination is Southern Europe where some Chinese communities are tens of thousands strong. Among Germany’s population today, one out of thousand is a Chinese. More than a quarter of all the Chinese in Germany are students in tertiary education — they are by far the strongest national group among those who enter Germany’s universities from abroad.

The situation of the Chinese in the various European countries is very diverse. This motivated the European Catholic China Colloquium, a platform for Church organizations that are concerned with the Churches and people of China, to discuss this topic at the latest conference in Freising, Germany, held on 16-19 September 2010.

China-Zentrum, based in Sankt Augustin (Germany), organizer of the Eighth European Catholic China Colloquium, articulated the theme as “The Chinese in Europe — Trends and Catholic Perspectives.” The following issues were addressed at the conference:

1. What problems do Chinese people encounter in Europe and what do they contribute to European societies?

2. What do Chinese people mean to the local churches in Europe, and how does the Church respond to the Chinese presence?
3. What is the mission of Chinese Catholic parishes in Europe? How can cooperation in the academic and social fields be enhanced?

As at previous conferences — the last one being held in Triuggio near Milan, Italy, in 2006, the colloquium in Germany gathered representatives of Catholic initiatives and organizations in Europe cooperating with Chinese partners, as well as some representatives of the Protestant and Russian Orthodox Churches in Europe. About one third of the 100 participants from 13 different countries were Chinese Catholics, priests, and Sisters living or studying in Europe. The colloquium took place at the Kardinal-Döpfner-Haus in Freising near Munich, where the incumbent Pope Benedict XVI once studied and lectured.

FINAL STATEMENT OF THE 8TH EUROPEAN CATHOLIC CHINA COLLOQUIUM

*“I was a stranger and you made me welcome”
The Chinese in Europe — A Christian Answer*

More and more Chinese are living in Europe, permanently or temporarily. While in some European countries Chinese immigration has a long history, in other countries it is a more recent phenomenon. Russia and Eastern Europe are major destinations for the new migrants. Another new destination is Southern Europe where there can be tens of thousands of people in some Chinese communities. In several European countries, Chinese students are the largest single ethnic group amongst the students from abroad attending local universities.

One hundred representatives of Catholic initiatives and organizations in Europe cooperating with Chinese partners, together

with Chinese lay Catholics, priests, and Sisters living or studying in Europe as well as several representatives of the Protestant and Russian Orthodox Churches met from 16–19 September 2010 at the 8th European Catholic China Colloquium in Freising (Germany) to discuss the topic “The Chinese in Europe — Trends and Catholic Perspectives.” The participants of this meeting see the following needs and make the following appeals:

1. Chinese living in Europe should be perceived in their diversity and heterogeneity. They should be welcomed as individuals with their specific personal and social backgrounds.
2. Genuine concern and care for the basic human needs of Chinese migrants are important. Crucial for the immigrants is the acquisition of communication skills, including knowledge of the local language, culture, customs and regulations, to support their integration into the local environment. Local Christian communities could provide training and help on these and other important issues. Lobbying on behalf of the rights of Chinese migrants, especially the victims of human trafficking and labour abuse, is absolutely necessary.
3. Migration has both spiritual and cultural potential, and provides opportunities for human enrichment for both the migrants and the receiving countries. Real intercultural encounters and sharing on both sides need to be encouraged. We hope that the local churches can play a more integrative role, especially among the young Chinese and the university students from China. Local Christians are encouraged to learn Chinese. We invite individual bishops and bishops’ conferences of Europe to consider this statement, to intensify their support for the Chinese community where this is already in vogue, and to start new initiatives where necessary. At the same time, we encourage religious congregations to recognise their responsibility to serve as a bridge between the Chinese in Europe and the local Church.

4. There is a special mission for the Chinese Catholic communities in Europe to extend their pastoral care towards Chinese Catholics, and to introduce Christianity to non-Christian Chinese. However, the basic approach should be caring love for the people, especially those in need, regardless of whether they are Catholic or not, trying to go from thoroughly human care and concern to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Dialogue and cooperation between the Church in China and the Church in Europe concerning the Chinese migrants in Europe is necessary. This includes the question of Chinese priests caring for Chinese migrants in Europe. Cooperation between the Chinese communities and the local parishes should be encouraged. Stronger efforts in terms of ecumenical cooperation in this apostolate would be appreciated.

A better networking and coordination of efforts among Chinese Catholic communities on a European level is needed. More interaction and exchange of ideas should be fostered. To start with, it would be helpful to establish a databank of all the Chinese Catholic communities and local communities involved with the Chinese in Europe and their activities.

The Participants of the 8th European Catholic China Colloquium

15 December 2010

This appeal was drafted at the Colloquium in Freising and finalised at China-Zentrum in Sankt Augustin (Germany) after consultation with all participants.

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