

EDITORIAL

The main theme of this issue of *Tripod* is the seven Chinese Cardinals, who have been appointed as advisors to the Popes throughout history. Beginning with the first one, Cardinal Thomas Tian, appointed in 1946, and ending with the last one, Cardinal John Tong, appointed in 2012, and including all those in between (Cardinals Paul Yu Bin, Ignatius Kung, John Baptist Wu, Paul Shan and Joseph Zen), we felt that a presentation of their lives would show the importance the Holy See attaches to the Chinese Church. Articles include both biographies of the Cardinals, as well as samples of their own writings. We hope our readers will derive inspiration from their lives.

Sadly, just as we were preparing this issue for the press, we received the news that Cardinal Paul Shan of Kaohsiung passed away on August 22, 2012. *Requiescat in pace.*

At this time we feel that we must call the attention of our readers to the disturbing news that has emerged from Shanghai in the past few weeks, in the aftermath of the ordination on July 7, 2012 of Father Thaddeus Ma Daqin as auxiliary bishop of the Shanghai Diocese. UCAN News reported that Sister Agnes Liu has been removed as superior of the 86-member Presentation Order, and the two seminaries in the diocese, the major one in Sheshan and the minor one in Tailaiqiao, have been ordered not to open as usual in September. According to the UCAN report, Sister Liu was uncooperative when repeatedly asked by government officials why her Sisters boycotted the ordination ceremony. Other sources report that the two Shanghai seminaries will undergo a period of rectification (“zhengdun,” in Chinese), during which religious affairs officials try to rectify the thoughts of the students.

What led to such drastic measures? Perhaps it was the fact that, in accordance with Catholic tradition, only the three consecrating bishops (a main consecrator and two co-consecrators), all of whom had been approved by Holy Father, laid hands on the head of Bishop Ma. However, three other visiting bishops, one of whom

had not been approved by the Holy Father, were in attendance, and concelebrated the Mass. When these three bishops approached the candidate, he stood up and embraced them. Most likely, Bishop Ma did not want the unapproved bishop to lay hands on him because this is against the Church's Canon Law.

Then in his thanksgiving speech at the end of Mass, Bishop Ma said that now that he is a bishop, he must devote all his energies to missionary and pastoral work, therefore, he must resign from all his positions in the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA). The CCPA is not a part of the Church. It is an adjunct group, set up by the government, to supervise the Church, and to promote "the independent administration" of the Chinese Catholic Church. What Bishop Ma was hinting at was that this group's meetings are mostly taken up with political matters. The meetings are many, and the content repetitive. Such meetings do greatly interfere with pastoral work! Of course, the main reason Chinese bishops, priests, Sisters, and lay people have an antipathy towards the CCPA is their continual emphasis on "running the church independently." Independent from whom, the clergy and Catholics want to know, from the Holy Father?

Why is the government so concerned about every detail in a Catholic ordination ceremony? Recently they have been manipulating the ceremony, making sure a papal-approved bishop is present at an unapproved candidate's ordination (as happened on July 6th in Harbin), and vice-versa, making sure an unapproved bishop attends a papal approved candidate's ordination (Shanghai on July 7th).

One wonders where the government's priorities lie. When high cadres go to great lengths to send their families and wealth (ill-gotten?) abroad, even stooping to manslaughter, as the case of a high-ranking official's wife has recently shown, one wonders why the government doesn't go after the real criminals, instead of concentrating so much time, money, and effort on making sure that Catholic bishops, priests, Sisters, seminarians and lay people have the "correct thoughts?" Doesn't the government have more important matters to deal with?

Dear readers, keep the Catholic Church of Shanghai in your prayers. (PJB)