

China Church and News Update 2012

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Death of Bishops

- *May 24, 2012*: Death of Bishop Hermengild Francis Li Yi, OFM (1923-2012), unofficial bishop of Changzhi (Lu'an), Shanxi. Bishop Li joined the Order of Franciscans Minor in 1943 and was ordained a priest in 1949. In 1998, he was secretly ordained bishop by Bishop Anthony Li Weidao, his predecessor, and succeeded him after he died the same year. Despite negotiations with government officials, the Church community was not allowed to recognize his episcopal status at his funeral. The requiem Mass was held on May 30 at Machang village church, followed by a funeral procession and burial in the convent cemetery of the St. Elisabeth Sisters.
- *Nov. 6, 2012*: Death of Franciscan Bishop Samuel Guo Chuanzhen (1918-2012), retired auxiliary bishop of Jinan, Shandong. He was 94 when he died of a heart attack at Jinan.

Ordination of Bishops

- *April 19, 2012*: Father Joseph Chen Gong'ao (1965-) was ordained as bishop of Nanchong diocese, Sichuan, with the approval of both the Holy See and Chinese authorities.
- *April 25, 2012*: Father Methodius Qu Ailin (1957-) was ordained as bishop of Changsha, Hunan, with the approval of both the Vatican and the Chinese government.
- *July 6*: Father Joseph Yue Fusheng (1964-) was illegitimately ordained as bishop of Heilongjiang, without the approval of the Holy See.
- *July 7*: Father Thaddeus Ma Daqin (1968-), was ordained as auxiliary bishop of Shanghai, with the approval of both the Vatican and the Chinese government.

MAIN EVENTS

January 2012

- *Jan. 5*: Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian of Shanghai issued a pastoral letter *Xu Guangqi: A Man for All Seasons*, urging his flock to learn from Paul

Xu Guangqi (1562-1633), the first local Catholic convert whose canonization the diocese is promoting.

- *Jan. 6:* The Holy See announced that a consistory will be held in Rome on Feb. 18 to create 22 new cardinals, including Bishop John Tong Hon of Hong Kong. It is to be the fourth consistory in the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI.
- *Jan. 8-9:* A National Conference on Religious Work was held in Harbin, Heilongjiang, to evaluate and improve work in the religious sector.
- *Jan. 11:* Bishop John Wang Ruowang of Tianshui and some of his priests were reported to have been forced to attend “study sessions” since Dec. 30, 2011. The “underground” prelate, 50, was secretly ordained with a papal mandate on Aug. 19, 2011, as bishop of Tianshui in Yiwu, Zhejiang. He remained in custody until Sept. 10, 2012. He then was allowed to return to his church in Qin Zhou, Gansu, but he could not move freely and was forbidden to exercise his episcopal ministry.
- *Jan. 16-17:* *Asia News* launched an appeal and campaign for the release of imprisoned Chinese bishops and clergy and on behalf of those who have disappeared in China. To support this initiative, Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai, secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, was interviewed.
- *Jan. 20:* Tianjin diocese started a year of activities to celebrate the 100th anniversary of its founding as the Apostolic Vicariate of Maritime Zhili. It was named Tianjin vicariate in 1924 and became a diocese in 1946.
- *Jan. 30:* Unofficial priests from Suiyuan diocese in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region were “taken away” by police in Erenhot, a city near the border with Mongolia. One of them is the underground seminary rector, Father Joseph Ban Zhanxiong. The others are Fathers Ding Zhanming, Wang Hu, Chu Jianli and Zhao Runxi. The day before, Father Gao Jiangping, the underground administrator who leads about 30 priests, was arrested together with Father Zhao Fu in Hohhot.

February 2012

- *Feb. 4:* On an official visit to China, Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel met Bishop Joseph Gan Junqiu of Guangzhou for 30 minutes at Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral in Guangdong’s provincial capital.
- *Feb. 5:* Father Lawrence Zhang Wenchang (1920-2012), the unofficial apostolic administrator of Kunming, Zhaotong and Dali dioceses since 2000, died at the age of 92.

- *Feb. 16:* The State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), the United Front Department of the Communist Party of China and various state ministries issued Document 2012 No. 6, "Views on Encouraging and Regulating Charitable works by Religious Organizations" (published in *China Religions*, February 2012, pp. 13-17).
- *Feb. 28:* *People's Daily* published an article to launch a new campaign of "Learning from Lei Feng" and the opening of a two-day symposium on the topic of "altruism." These actions were undertaken in preparation for the annual celebration of Lei Feng Day on March 5.

March 2012

- *March 17:* Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian ordained seven new priests in Shanghai. Bishop Jin, now 96, replaced Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Xing Wenzhi, who submitted his resignation on December 20, 2011.
- *March 19:* Police destroyed the tombstone of Father Li Shiming, an underground priest of Baoding diocese, Hebei, who was killed with six seminarians in a car crash on Dec. 11, 2011. This was part of official attempts to ban a requiem service to mark the 100th day after Father Li's death under the pretext that he was not officially recognized as a priest.
- *March 19:* Coadjutor Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin of Wenzhou, Zhejiang, and Father Paul Jiang Sunian, his chancellor, were taken away to attend "updating classes." In the process, government officials escorted Bishop Shao to Leshan diocese in Sichuan, where he met with Paul Lei Shiyin, who was automatically excommunicated when he was ordained a bishop without papal mandate on June 29, 2011. Bishop Shao and Father Jiang were both set free on Easter Sunday, April 8.
- *March 25:* In the run-up to the election of Hong Kong's new chief executive on March 25, Christian churches raised their voices in support of the introduction of universal suffrage for the election of the chief executive and of the entire Legislative Council. The Catholic Church published some proposals for the consideration of the new authorities.
- *March 26:* Joseph Ma Yinglin, illegitimate bishop of Kunming, presided over the ordination of six priests at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Dali, despite warnings and criticism from within and outside China. The new priests belong to Yunnan province's three ecclesiastical territories — Dali diocese, Kunming diocese and Zhaotong apostolic prefecture. Three expatriate priests were among the 16 concelebrants.
- *March 28:* Cardinal John Tong Hon of Hong Kong accompanied Bishop Franz-Joseph Overbeck of Essen, Germany, and a delegation on a one-

- day visit to Guangzhou, where they were met by foreign affairs officials. The two leaders of the sister dioceses visited the cathedral and met some priests and faithful, but not Bishop Joseph Gan Junqiu of Guangzhou.

April 2012

- *April 4*: Bishop Jin Lugang of Nanyang, Henan, was taken away on Holy Thursday because authorities wanted to keep him from presiding at the Chrism Mass as well as other liturgical celebrations in the days that followed. He was taken to a guest house and escorted by four officials to various tourist spots before he was released on April 8.
- *April 6*: SARA summoned a meeting to evaluate the campaign for “Four Investigations: of the masses of believers, of religious professionals, of sites for religious activities and of religious bodies” (四深入). The evaluation is expected to end in the second half of November 2012.
- *April 19*: According to a report issued by *Faith Institute for Cultural Studies* in Shijiazhuang, 22,104 baptisms were performed in 101 different dioceses this past Easter.
- *April 23-25*: The Commission for the Church in China met in Rome. The next day, the Holy See issued a communiqué, “May the Face of the Church Shine Forth with Clarity in the Midst of the Noble Chinese People.”
- *April 24*: *Shanghai Daily* published a report on the 450th anniversary of Xu Guangqi’s birthday, describing him as “one of China’s great men of applied science.” Mainstream media in China highly praised Paul Xu Guangqi when reporting on Shanghai’s series of commemorative events to mark his 450th birth anniversary.
- *April 25*: Zhang Lebin, vice-president of SARA, paid an official visit to the National Catholic Major Seminary in Beijing and presided over a symposium of all Catholic directors of national formation institutions, seminary rectors, and representatives of teachers and seminarians.

May 2012

- *May 7*: Meeting of the Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference in Taiwan was held to discuss promotion of the office of permanent deacons in order to help meet the problems of the generally advanced age of the clergy as well as the overall shortage of priests in Taiwan.
- *May 13*: The Museum of Cultural Exchange between China and the West was opened in Guangdong’s Zhaoqing city, the first place Jesuit Fathers Matteo Ricci and Michele Ruggieri took up residence in 1583.

- *May 17*: Priestly ordination of Father Zhang Wenmin in Haikou, Hainan. It was the first ordination in the island province in 60 years. He is the second priest to work on the island.
- *May 20*: Pope Benedict XVI invites prayers for the Church in China on May 24, Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, and asks that Chinese Catholics be courageous and faithful.
- *May 24*: On the day of prayer for the Church in China, Father Thaddeus Ma Daqin, vicar general of Shanghai diocese, led about 5,000 pilgrims to the shrine of Our Lady of Sheshan in the diocese.
- *May 25*: Chinese authorities react strongly against the annual *Report on Human Rights in the World* issued by the U.S. Department of State. The report criticizes China for not respecting human rights.
- *May 28 – June 1*: A seminar organized by *Faith Institute for Cultural Studies* to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Vatican Council II took place in Shijiazhuang, Hebei. Some 10 bishops were among the 90 participants. Lecturers were invited from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

June 2012

- *June 4*: An interview with Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kium on the Vatican's "new course" regarding China was reported by UCA News.
- *June 5*: SARA issued the final text of "Measures for Reporting Bishops of the Chinese Catholic Church for Registration (Trial Implementation)" (中国天主教主教备案办法 [试行]). The text, slightly amended according to received comments, assigns the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the official Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China the leading role in the mandatory filing of applications for reporting Catholic bishops for the record with state authorities.
- *June 6*: The website *Catholic Online* reported that China has altogether 1,390,000 places of worship: Buddhist 330,000, Taoist 9,000, Muslim 350,000, Protestant 560,000 and Catholic 6,000.
- *June 6-7*: A symposium was held in Macau with participants from the Catholic Church of Hong Kong and Macau as well as academic scholars and United Front officials from mainland China.
- *June 11*: The Information Office of the State Council published the National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2012-2015). On freedom of religious belief, it asserts the same as the past: "China upholds the principle of freedom of religious belief stipulated in the Constitution and

- strictly implements the Regulations on Religious Affairs to guarantee citizens' freedom of religious belief.”
- *June 15*: In response to questions from *AsiaNews* about rumors of an episcopal consecration being planned without papal mandate in Harbin, Heilongjiang, Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai, secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, stated that should such an unlawful episcopal ordination occur, it would seriously hurt the whole Church and especially the Church in China.
 - *June 18*: A book scrics expounding moral issues of officials, the first-ever publication on this topic in China, went on sale in Beijing as part of government-backed efforts to promote integrity among civil servants.
 - *June 18-22*: A symposium on evangelization to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Vatican Council II was held by the underground Catholic community in a village near Ma'anshan City, Anhui. The gathering was sponsored by Emanuel Institute of Wenzhou and chaired by Bishop Joseph Gao Hongxiao of Kaifeng, Henan. The 67 participants came from 36 dioceses.
 - *June 20*: While the Orthodox Church is not officially recognized in China, Orthodox Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk and an official nine-member delegation visited Beijing. Bishop Joseph Ma Yinglin, president of the so-called China Bishops' Conference, welcomed him when he paid a visit to the National Catholic Seminary. The Moscow Patriarchate aims to strengthen the Orthodox Church's position in China.
 - *June 27-28*: A seminar was held at the National Catholic Seminary to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Vatican II Council, combined with an exhibition of religious local art. The event attracted around 200 participants, including the highest-level Catholic leaders.
 - *June 29*: Paul Lei Shiyin, excommunicated bishop of Leshan, ordained four new priests on the first anniversary of his own illicit episcopal ordination. According to local Church sources, five deacons were to be ordained in Leshan but one refused to be ordained by him. According to one source, the other four agreed to the ordination after the diocese promised them a car and money worth an estimated 150,000 RMB.
 - *June 30*: New laws and rules were issued concerning foreigners illegally entering, staying in and working in China.

July 2012

- *July 6*: Father Joseph Yue Fusheng (1964-) was ordained bishop of Harbin without papal mandate following an acrimonious exchange of

notifications between the Vatican and Beijing. Five Vatican-approved bishops took part in the rite at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Harbin, Heilongjiang's capital. Bishop Johan Fang Xingyao of Linyi was the main celebrant. The co-ordinators were: Bishop Paul Meng Qinglu of Hohhot, Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region; Bishop Paul Pei Junmin of Shenyang, Liaoning; Bishop John Wang Renlei of Xuzhou, Jiangsu; and Coadjutor Bishop Joseph Yang Yonggiang of Zhouchun, Shandong. Two Vatican-approved prelates, Bishop Joseph Li Shan of Beijing and Bishop Methodius Qu Ailin of Changsha, Hunan, also had been invited to attend but did not do so, claiming to be ill. They instead sent messages of apology and congratulation.

- *July 7:* Episcopal ordination of Father Thaddeus Ma Daqin as auxiliary bishop of Shanghai. Only Coadjutor Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian of Shanghai, the main celebrant, wore his mitre. He and two co-ordinators, Vatican-approved Bishops Joseph Xu Honggen of Suzhou, Jiangsu, and Joseph Shen Bin of Haimen, Jiangsu, laid their hands on Bishop Ma's head during the rite. As the ceremony was closing, the new auxiliary bishop declared he would give up his post in the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) to focus on his episcopal ministry. That same afternoon, however, he was taken away by Chinese authorities and put under guard in the hostel of Sheshan Seminary and forbidden to do any pastoral ministry. The official statement of top Church leaders declared that his case was under careful scrutiny and evaluation.
- *July 10:* The Holy See issued a declaration excommunicating Joseph Yue Fusheng for his episcopal ordination without papal mandate on July 6 and praising the courage of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin. The statement also said the Vatican regrets the participation of Zhan Silu, illegitimate bishop of Mindong, Fujian, at Bishop Ma's ordination.
- *July 11-16:* The Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong Catholic diocese voiced critical reactions against the detention of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin, with declarations, demonstrations and prayer meetings led by Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kun, as well as public declarations by Cardinal John Tong Hon of Hong Kong and the Central Secretariat of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.
- *July 14:* The Diocese of Xianxian (Cangzhou), Hebei, opened a diocesan charitable foundation.

August 2012

- *Aug. 1-4:* Bishop Joseph Tung Changping of Weinan, Shaanxi, was detained by public security officers and subjected to continuous interrogations without sleep.
- *Aug. 21:* In Shanghai, Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian announced that the opening of both major and minor seminaries for the coming new school year has been postponed by the local authorities until further notice.
- *Aug. 22:* Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-hsi (1923-2012), bishop emeritus of Kaohsiung, Taiwan, died of multiple organ failure. He had been diagnosed with lung cancer in 2006. (*See Tripod No. 166 for the life record of Cardinal Shan.*)
- *Aug. 23:* Bishop Paul Ch'eng Shih-kuang (1915-2012), bishop emeritus of Tainan, Taiwan, died just three weeks short of his 97th birthday.
- *Aug. 31:* Bishop Zhao Fengchang of Linqing, Shandong, was officially appointed to serve as administrator of Heze diocese, Shandong, despite protests by four official priests. The present diocesan administrator, Father Wei Ligen, is kept under surveillance because he refuses to be ordained bishop without a mandate from the Holy See.

September 2012

- *Sept. 1:* *Xinhua News Agency* announced that Mr. Ling Jihua (1956-) has been appointed head of the United Front Department, replacing Mr. Du Qinglin, who is retiring at age 65.
- *Sept. 10:* To counter the episcopal ordination of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin on July 7, three days of compulsory class were convened at the Shanghai Institute of Socialism in Shanghai for all 80 priests and 80 Sisters of Our Lady of the Presentation Congregation. The participants were divided into three groups and met 12 hours each day.
- *Sept. 14:* The church in Caibang Village, near Xiantao City, Hubei, was deliberately burned down by developers who paid local officials to provide a location to build new apartments.
- *Sept. 17-23:* SARA launched a national Week of Religious Charity with an opening ceremony in Wuhan, Hubei. Among the 200 participants was Bishop Joseph Ma Yinglin, representing China's Catholic Church.
- *Sept. 18:* According to *Faith Institute for Cultural Studies* in Shijiazhuang, the nine major seminaries in China (except Shanghai's Sheshan Seminary, which government authorities closed) have accepted 80 new seminarians this year, bringing the total of major seminarians to

473. There are 213 sisters taking theological courses this academic year, with 102 of them studying at Sisters Formation Centre in Xi'an, Shaanxi.
- *Sept. 29*: Father Gabriele Maria Allegra, an Italian Franciscan who led a Franciscan Studium Biblicum team to translate the whole Bible into Chinese for the first time in 1968, was declared Blessed in the Catholic cathedral of Acireale city in Sicily, Italy.

October 2012

- *Oct. 10*: Through the Chinese Internet Center, the Information Office of the State Council and of the Chinese Communist Party published the white paper "Juridical Reform in China."
- *Oct. 16*: At the start of the Bishops' Synod for the New Evangelization in Rome, Monsignor Nikola Eterovic, the synod's secretary general, read a message from 90-year-old Bishop Lucas Li Jingfeng of Fengxiang, Shaanxi.
- *Oct. 20*: Low key celebration held in Taipei on the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the Republic of China.
- *Oct. 22*: A public statement of the State Administration for Religious Affairs and other nine government departments has banned local authorities, enterprises and individuals from building new religious sites for profit or to list ancient religious sites in the stock market. According to some sources, however, it is questionable whether such a document can stop the trend of marketing religious sites.

November

- *Nov. 8-14*: The 18th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party opened in Beijing with the election of new leadership. The Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong Catholic diocese and four other local and international civil rights groups compiled 18 proposals gathered from an internet poll and submitted the list to the mainland government's liaison office in Hong Kong.
- *Nov. 15*: The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China elected its Standing Committee members (Politburo). There were nine members before but now there are seven: Xi Jinping, Li Kechang, Zhang Dejiang, Yu Zhengsheng, Liu Yunshan, Wang Qishan and Zhang Gaoli.
- *Nov. 29-30*: After their annual retreat, 19 priests of Wuhan diocese held a ceremony to open the Year of Faith, and convened a meeting chaired by the diocesan administrator, Father Joseph Shen Guoan, to announce

new appointments. When local authorities heard of this, they called back their episcopal candidate, Father Cui Qingqi, from Beijing where he had been sent for a special training course. On Dec. 8, they declared the meeting and the decision about new assignments illegal, demoted Father Shen from the post of diocesan administrator, closed the cathedral and forbid priests to take up their new posts.

December 2012

- *Dec. 10:* The government-sanctioned Chinese Bishops' Conference officially revoked the appointment of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin as coadjutor bishop of Shanghai. Since his ordination on July 7, he had been kept "on retreat" in the hostel of Sheshan Regional Seminary. The bishops' conference also decreed: "a pledge of loyalty will be required at all episcopal ordinations in the future." The diocese also suspended Bishop Ma's priesthood ministry for two years, and removed him as dean of Pudong deanery and parish priest of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Tangmuqiao. On Dec. 12, this decision was confirmed by Beijing. Meanwhile, the Holy See's spokesman as well as Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai denounced that action as improper because it is beyond the authority of the Chinese Bishops' Conference.