

## EDITORIAL

One of our past contributors, Lei Yu (*Tripod*, #167, p.51), in describing the situation of the church after Bishop Ma Daqin's ordination as auxiliary bishop of Shanghai on July 7, 2012, used the Chinese proverb: "Wan Ma Qi Yin," meaning Ten Thousand Horses Standing Mute." The image is one of horses waiting to carry out orders, such as to march into battle. Over a year later, the horses are still waiting and are still standing mute.

The Shanghai Diocese is in a shambles. Last year, after Bishop Ma's ordination, the diocese had four bishops. Today there are none. Bishop Fan Zhongliang, the unofficial bishop, is seriously incapacitated. Bishop Aloysius Jin, the coadjutor bishop, died on April 27th this year, and his remains were buried at sea. Bishop Joseph Xing, an auxiliary bishop, walked off the job in disgust after attending the 8<sup>th</sup> Catholic Representatives Assembly in December 2010, and Bishop Ma Daqin, another auxiliary, was removed from his post by an executive order of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference (CCBC) and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) after a joint meeting of these two bodies in December 2012.

Also, the major and minor seminaries of the Shanghai Diocese have not re-opened after having been closed after the Ma ordination. The Superior of the Sisters congregation has been replaced. The once mighty diocese, with nearly 200 open churches, and possessing the best seminary (Sheshan) in all of China, has fallen upon hard times.

What is to be done to correct the situation? The first thing to do is to restore Bishop Ma Daqin to his previous position as auxiliary or coadjutor bishop, with right of succession to the See of Shanghai. We may recall that the reason for Bishop Ma's demotion was that in the last line of the thanksgiving address at the end of his ordination Mass, he said that because he would be busy with his pastoral work as bishop, he would have to give up all his duties in the patriotic association. That evening the authorities took Bishop into custody and he has been held incommunicado (for the most part at Sheshan) since. During the ceremony, too, and out of scorn for a Catholic episcopal ordination ceremony, someone added a non-papal

approved bishop to the group of concelebrating prelates. However, Bishop Ma would not allow this bishop to lay hands on him.

Secondly, it seems to me, the pressure needs to be taken off the Catholic bishops. There are at least three political entities above them: the Party, the government and the CCPA. They are often asked to perform actions that are against their conscience, such as ordain non-papal approved bishops, or participate in such ceremonies. The bishops feel a lot of pressure. Although most bishops kept silent after Bishop Ma's statement, I think he was speaking for all of them when he said the equivalent of: "As a Catholic bishop, I want to do pastoral work, rather than being involved in politics." Many Catholics perceive that CCPA activities are more political than religious, and that they can love their country without belonging to the CCPA.

Some people say that Bishop Ma should not have made his statement at that time. They say that he should have waited until after he had settled into his episcopal office for awhile. But there never is a suitable time for a prophet to speak. A prophet speaks when something needs to be said, when wrongs need to be righted. There is no set time for this.

So, dear readers, do not be fooled by the argument that Bishop Ma's statement was imprudent or impetuous, or both. That is a tactic to discredit Bishop Ma. Deng Xiaoping's "open door" policy has been in effect for over 30 years, and not much has changed. The three entities mentioned above still exercise strict control and supervision over the clergy, and religious of the Catholic Church. The new regulations (16 articles), detailing interactions between church and government officials for the election and consecration of bishops, issued in April of this year are an example of this. (cf. *Tripod* #169, Summer, 2013, pp. 50-53).

As for our theme, "Women in the Catholic Church in China," readers will find that the articles speak for themselves. They tell us that for the most part, it is WOMEN who pass on the faith in that great country. They deserve much gratitude and praise for their wonderful work. We also add the essay of Professor Kuan Hsin-chi on the leadership transition, which is a carry-over from our previous issue. May God bless you all. (PJB)