

# *China Church and News Update 2014*

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## **Death of Bishops**

- March 16: Death of Bp. Joseph Fan Zhongliang (范忠良, 1918-2014), unofficial bishop of Shanghai since 2000.
- August 25: Death of Bp. John Wu Shizhen (吳仕珍, 1921-2014), retired bishop of Nanchang, Jiangxi (南昌, 江西).
- September 21: Death of Bp. John Chrysostom Lan Shi (蘭石, 1925-2014), retired unofficial coadjutor bishop of Sanyuan, Shaanxi (三原, 陝西).
- September 23: Death of Bishop John Baptist Wang Jin (王薰, 1924-2014) of Yuci/Jinzhong, Shanxi (榆次/晉中, 山西).

## **MAIN EVENTS**

### **January 2014**

- January 2: The work priorities for 2014 of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA): 1. Make the greatest effort to set the religious work on a legal track, by completing the registration of religious operators and venues, by improving the qualifications of teachers in formation institutes and the granting of degrees. 2. Evaluate and deal with difficult issues by finding the best solutions, gather the opinions of the religious communities and encourage their activities, study popular religions, prevent the infiltration of foreign forces, continue the building up of a religious data bank. 3. Strive to encourage the main programs of each Religion: for the Catholic Church, support the Catholic Church's One Conference and One Association in properly carrying on the selection and ordination their own bishops, strengthening the regularization of their activities and setting up a good management system. 4. Strengthen guidance in services: encourage the religious personnel to participate in the social insurance policy, guide the administration of social and charitable service programs, promote their contribution to the "Common Dream of China", improve updating courses for them. 5. Increase the exchange of contacts among religious friends, set up proper rules for contacts and visits abroad, and increase cultural exchanges. 6. Improve work efficiency, by implementing new work styles.

- January 2-8: Bishop Han Yingjin (韓英進) of the diocese of San Yuan (三原) in Shaanxi Province organized a “Formation course for Disciples,” at the Formation center of the province, with the participation of 96 lay leaders from 37 parishes.
- January 7: Vatican Radio reported that on December 24, 2013 fifty of the main publications in China listed Pope Francis third among the ten most important foreign persons of the year 2013.
- January 17: The verification was announced that the niche in a stone wall with a cross carved above it in the Longmen Grottoes (龍門石窟), Luoyang, discovered in 2009, was a repository for the ashes and bones of Christians. The discovery sheds new light on historical research into the Nestorian Church. Precise dating has yet to be carried out, to find out whether or not it is older than the well known Nestorian Stele, in Xi’an, which dates back to 781 AD. Jiao Jianhui (焦建輝), a researcher at the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute (龍門石窟研究院), made the discovery.
- January 21: The State Administration for religious Affairs (SARA) has gathered 29 scholars and experts and has organized them into a think tank of consultants and advisors on religious affairs. Fr. Yang Yu (楊宇) is the Catholic consultant.
- January 26: At the Angelus, Pope Francis sent his best wishes to the Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean peoples for the Lunar New Year.
- January 27: *Asianews* published an informal conversation with Joseph Cardinal Zen (陳日君), bishop emeritus of Hong Kong. He expressed his concern at the situation of the bishops and faithful in China, whom the Patriotic Association and SARA keep under strict control.
- January 31: Spring Festival: during the vacation, many dioceses and parishes organized formation courses for Catholics on the Bible or on Church documents. The latter included the documents of Vatican II and *The Door of Faith*.

## **February 2014**

- February 8: In an interview given to the Italian daily *Avvenire*, Archbishop Pietro Parolin, was asked many questions related to his new post as secretary of state. To the question concerning the relationship between the Holy See and China, he answered: “The Holy See looks with strong sympathy on the great country of China and on its people. Recently also from China have come signs of renewed attention to the Holy See,

occasioned by the election of Pope Francis, who, among other things, is a confrere of Fr. Matteo Ricci. Let us strongly hope that trust and understanding between the two parties will increase and that a constructive dialogue with the Chinese Authorities can be restarted. The Holy See has always desired such a dialogue, and this has been reconfirmed in Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 Letter to the Chinese Catholics."

- February 27: *Global Times*, a pro-Beijing newspaper, published an article "Religion in the Party." It reminded readers that a 1982 document specified that common Chinese citizens enjoy religious freedom, but not Party members, who should be atheists. However, despite the authorities' insistence that CPC members should not believe in any religion, many have a religious faith and participate in religious activities.

### **March 2014**

- March 1 : A group of gangsters entered Kunming railway station carrying knives and swords and killed 33 persons and wounded 143 others, at random. The following day, Sunday, the local Catholic community, offered Masses for the eternal rest of the dead and the recovery of the wounded, although no Catholic was among the victims. On March 3, Ma Yinglin (馬英林), the official bishop of Kunming, who was attending the 2nd session of the 12th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference celebrated the Eucharist with other bishops, praying for the victims, as well as for order and harmony in the country.

- March 1: Twenty one bishops and some priests gathered in Changzhi (長治) Diocese, Shanxi (山西), to celebrate Mass and bless the family, the workers and the factory of a Catholic entrepreneur, surnamed Pan (潘). It was the first such large-scale gathering of Catholic bishops not organized by official Catholic leaders.

- March 3-12: The holding of the 2nd session of the 12th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), with the participation of 6 Catholic bishops and a layman. A Hong Kong member of the Conference, Samuel W.K. Yong (Rong Yongqi 容永祺), proposed to strengthen the role of the Protestant Churches and of their leaders, both in China and in Hong Kong, through the mutual exchange of visits and services.

- March 5-13: Convocation of the 2nd session of the 12th National People's Congress (NPC), with the participation of three Catholic bishops.

- March 4: According to the *Faith News Agency*, in view of International Women's Day on March 8, sixty lay women of the parish of the Zi Gong (自貢) in the Diocese of Yibin, Sichuan (宜賓, 四川), held a meeting to discuss how they could be more active in the life of the Church and in

society. The theme was “Women have always played an essential role in the life of the Church, beginning with the Virgin Mary, and with the great Saints throughout the Church's history.”

- March 5: The Italian daily, *Il Corriere della Sera*, published an interview with Pope Francis, in which the following question was asked: “In a few years, China will be the world’s biggest power when will the Vatican have relations with it?” The Holy Father answered: “We are close to China. I sent a letter to President Xi Jinping (習近平) when he was elected, three days after me. And he answered me. There are the beginnings of relations. They are a great people, whom I love.” *Mingpao* (明報) reported the news on March 18 and *Wenhuibao* (文匯報) on March 19. The latter paper also published a comment by Liu Bainian (劉栢年). On the same day, *Global Times* published a statement by Mr. Liu Yuanlong (劉元龍), vice-president of the CPA, which stated that the Vatican should not interfere in the choice and election of bishops in China.

- March 6: The laying of the corner stone of the St. Francis Catholic University in Hong Kong, which will become fully operative within two years.

- March 7: Interview of John Cardinal Tong with Gerald O’Connor of the *Vatican Insider* and with the Italian daily *La Stampa* on Fr. Matteo Ricci. Cardinal Tong said that the Church’s efforts for Ricci’s beatification cause “could open a new chapter in Sino-Vatican relations.”

- March 14: Reopening of the Gothic cathedral in Qingdao, after a five-year overhaul.

- March 16: The death of Bp. Joseph Fan Zhongliang (范忠良, 1918-2014), unofficial bishop of Shanghai, 96 years old. He was born on January 13, 1918, was baptized in 1932, and joined the Society of Jesus in 1938. He was ordained priest in 1951 and taught in the local seminary. On September 8, 1955, together with Bishop Gong Pinmei (龔品梅) and many other priests and lay Catholics, he was arrested, and condemned to 20 years of prison for “anti-revolutionary crimes.” He was sent to Qinghai for prison and forced labor until 1978, when he was freed. On February 26, 1985, he was secretly ordained coadjutor bishop of Shanghai by Bp. Lu Zhensheng (陸振聲) of Tianshui. After the death of Bp. Fan Xueyan (范學淹) of Baoding, he was elected head of the underground Bishops’ Conference. At the death of Card. Gong Pinmei, on March 12, 2000, he became the ordinary bishop of Shanghai. Meanwhile, on the official level, Bp. Jin Luxian (金魯賢) ordained bishop on January 27, 1985, inherited the episcopal post in 1988 after the death of Bp. Zhang Jiashu (張家樹). In the early years of the 21st century, Bp. Jin asked Rome to be legitimized,

and he accepted to be coadjutor bishop to Bp. Fan. From 2005, Bp. Fan's health deteriorated until his death.

- March 31: An article of *Vatican Insider* reported that, since Pope Francis became Bishop of Rome, there has been an ongoing increase of Chinese web-sites which daily publish his messages, speeches and homilies. Some of the sites function as portals and archives, as [www.chinacath.org](http://www.chinacath.org) (on Holy See and its links), [www.chinacatholic.org](http://www.chinacatholic.org) (which collects also many photos of Pope Francis), [www.catholicsh.org](http://www.catholicsh.org) (from December 2013). Other slower web-sites are [www.lnjq.org](http://www.lnjq.org), [www.tzjtsjq.com](http://www.tzjtsjq.com), and [www.ascoltiamopapafrancesco.net](http://www.ascoltiamopapafrancesco.net) (the latter in Italian and Chinese).

#### April 2014

- April 1: The website of SARA reported the "Basic situation of Religions in China". For the Catholic Church, it provided the following data: there are 97 dioceses, 5.7 million Catholics, 3,397 clergy, 6,000 places of worship, 12 major seminaries and more than 20 minor seminaries. The number of Protestants is 23 million.

- April 4: A thousand Christian people gathered at Sanjiang Church, in Yongjia County near Wenzhou in Zhejiang (溫州市永嘉縣甌北鎮三江教堂), to protect the newly built church. The civil authorities had ordered the pulling down of the big cross and the demolition of the church itself. They collected thousands of signatures and submitted a request for the revocation of the order. Later, an agreement was reached, which stated that only the building at the back of the church should be dealt with according to the law, since it was built without a proper permit. On April 10, work started on the demolition of the top two floors of this building. On April 21, hundreds of Christians gathered on the spot amid rumors that the local authorities cancelled the above agreement. On April 29, in fact, the whole church was demolished. The authorities also demolished the Stations of the Cross and other statues in a nearby Catholic-owned hilltop park.

- April 7: In Xinjiang at Yining, Yili (新疆伊寧,伊犁), two Little Sisters of St. Therese, Sr. Li Huarong, 48, and Sr. Zhang Lanxiang, 52 (李化榮,張蘭香) working in an Old People's Home, lost their lives due to a violent storm and strong winds.

- April 10: Bethany Allen of *foreignpolicy.com* reported the data taken from a Weibo survey conducted on April 3: a search for the word "Bible" yielded 17 million recent hits, while the Quotations of Chairman Mao or the Little Red Book, received fewer than 60,000. "Christian Congregation" received over 41.8 million hits, while "Communist Party"

received only 5.3 million hits. However, Christian content is not entirely free from censorship. A search for the term “underground church” produces a blank page with a notice reading “results cannot be displayed due to relevant laws and regulations.”

- April 16: The Jinan Diocese celebrated the 10th anniversary of the episcopal ordination of Bp. Zhang Xianwang (張憲旺) and the 110th anniversary of the construction of Hongjialou Church (洪家樓教堂), with the ordination of two new priests.
- April 29: The inauguration of the new cathedral in Hefei, Anhui Province.
- April 30 : According to the *Faith News Agency*, the results of an inquiry carried out by the Research Institute of Faith and Culture stated that in 101 dioceses new baptisms administered at Easter numbered 20,004, of whom more than the 70% were adults.
- April 30: The Ministry of Civil Affairs and SARA published a Directive for the acceptance of orphans and abandoned children by religious institutions. It repeated the warning about avoiding the teaching of religion. To date, China has 878 grass-root orphanages, of which 583 are run by religious bodies. The total number of abandoned children is 9,294.

### May 2014

- May 1: The official opening of a contemplative monastery took place, the monastery of St Augustine in Lintou, Yuci Diocese, Shanxi (山西, 榆次教區, 臨頭). The monastery and associated nursing home are known as St. Augustine’s Garden. Bishop Paul Meng (孟甯友), of Taiyuan Diocese (太原教區) presided at the opening Mass and Bishop Wu Junwei (武俊維) of the Diocese of Yuncheng (運城教區) concelebrated. Approximately 50 priests also concelebrated, and over 1,700 faithful from eight dioceses attended. Bishop Wu Junwei blessed the monastery church the previous evening. The foundress of the monastery is Sr. Mary Niu Shufen (牛淑芬), who received her religious formation in an Augustinian community in England. Both the local head of the government’s Religious Affairs Bureau and the secretary of the Communist Party attended, and gave speeches during the reception. Cultural Exchange with China (CEC), a U.K. institution, helped to finance the building of the monastery. The specific aim of this institution is to “build bridges between the Catholic Churches of China and of Britain.” The local bishop, Bishop John Baptist Wang Jin (王薏), 90, was unable to attend the opening, because he was in the hospital. The monastery, in addition to housing a contemplative order

of nuns, will be a catechetical and retreat center for local Christians, as well as containing a nursing home for elderly people.

- May 6: The report, or “blue book”, co-released by the University of International Relations and the Academy of Social Sciences Press in Beijing, states that the “infiltration of religion constitutes a threat to Chinese identification with socialist belief.” The report spelled out four “severe challenges” to national security: the exporting of democracy by western nations, western cultural hegemony, dissemination of information on the internet and religious infiltration.

- May 8: Fr. Joseph Tang Yuange (唐遠閣, ord. 1991) was democratically elected as episcopal candidate for the Chengdu Diocese. 39 votes were cast in favor of his candidacy and 8 against.

- May 16: The *Global Times* published article entitled “Chinese Official Rebuffs Purdue Religious Consensus”, written by Ye Xiaowen (葉小文), former director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs and now the Party secretary of the Central Institute of Socialism in Beijing. It was in response to the “Purdue Consensus on Religious Freedom,” released after a symposium at Purdue University in the United States. Signed by more than 50 scholars and academics, the Consensus criticized China for “misunderstanding, violation, discrimination and persecution” of religious freedom in the legal and social practices of the nation, due to the lack of “a clear definition of and insufficient protection” for religious freedom. Ye Xiaowen responded: “China always upholds the protection of religious freedom. There is a set of clear and specific laws and regulations on religious affairs in China and we have handled all issues strictly in accordance with the law.”

- May 26: The CCP State Council released a white paper of about 21,000 words, entitled “Progress in China’s Human Rights in 2013.” The document covers nine aspects of the issue, including democracy, freedom of speech and personal rights. “China’s progress in human rights’ undertakings is there for everybody to see,” it stated.

## **JUNE 2014**

- June 3: A statement of the China Anti-cult Association condemned the brutal murder of a woman in Zhaoyuan, Shandong (趙元, 山東) Province by members of a religious cult, the Church of Almighty God, and warned that 11 heretic religious sects are currently active in China. A 35-year-old woman, surnamed Wu, was beaten to death by six suspects on May 28 in a McDonald’s restaurant in Zhaoyuan, after Wu refused to join the Church

of Almighty God. Five suspects were arrested. The sect is a violent heretical organization, with doomsday ideas, whose followers were told that they will be killed by lightning if they do not obey the “high authority,” and always “fight resolutely” for their beliefs. Along with the Church of Almighty God, the Association listed 10 other heretical religious sects, like the Society of Disciples, the Unification Church, Falun Gong and The Shouters. Like most of these cults, the Church of Almighty God claims to be Christian, but it has been rejected by the Catholic Church. The death of Ms. Wu has sparked a national debate over the spread of heretical religious sects in China.

- June 5-6: The 4th meeting of the committee for the Diocesan Management of the official Chinese Catholic Church was held in Beijing, with the participation of 26 local Chinese bishops, and foreign guests, Fr. Anthony Gouder and Mr. Henry Cappello from Malta and Fr. Anthony Figueiredo from England.

- June 6: *China Today*, No. 6, published an article “The Xujiahui Legacy”, on Xu Guangqi (徐光啓) and the history of Xujiahui (徐家匯) in Shanghai.

- June 8: The *South China Morning Post* published an article on the possible improvement in Sino-Vatican relations, with the restarting of the negotiations, which were interrupted in 2010. “The Vatican is now waiting for Beijing to confirm the time and location of the talks,” the newspaper reported.

- June 9: A Church source reported that Father John Peng Weizhao (彭衛照), apostolic administrator of Yujiang diocese (余江教區), Jiangxi, has been held in detention at an unknown location since May 30. Father Peng was taken from a priest’s residence in Linchuan (臨川) district. The reasons for his disappearance have not been made public. Father Peng, who is part of the unregistered Catholic community, was appointed Administrator of Yujiang by the Holy See in 2012, following the retirement of the underground Bishop Thomas Zeng Jingmu (曾景牧). In Jiangxi, the official community recognizes the combination of all five dioceses into one Jiangxi diocese, which was announced in 1985, while the unregistered community continued to follow the former ecclesiastical divisions.

- June 22-27: An updating course was organized by the official Church in Beijing for 38 priests and 19 sisters from Shanghai. On June 25, they were taken to visit the offices of the patriotic institutions. They were told not to mention the name of “Thaddeus” (Ma Daqin 馬達欽) during the Mass, since “he has to continue his repentance and reflection”.



- June 29: The National Seminary in Beijing canceled its graduation ceremony after graduates refused to attend the Mass celebrated by bishops involved in illicit ordinations. Seminary students initially protested the possible presence at the ceremony of Joseph Ma Yinglin (馬英林), who was to confer graduation certificates and celebrate a graduation Mass. Even when it was announced that Ma should be replaced by the Vatican-approved Bishop Fang Xingyao (房興耀), a member of the seminary's board of directors, the students still objected as Bishop Fang had previously attended illicit episcopal ordinations. After the event, public security officers closed the seminary and interrogated all staff and seminarians, including Ma.

### July 2014

- July 9: Bp. Ma Daqin (馬達欽) is said to have sent a message to Pope Francis: "Do not worry about me, do not stop preaching the truth." Some Catholics in China prayed for the Chinese Church through the intercession of the Chinese Martyr-Saints, whose feast day is today. They wished to celebrate and to remember their testimonies to the Catholic faith.

- July 11: Pope Francis appointed three Auxiliaries for the Diocese of Hong Kong : Fr. Michael Yeung Ming-cheung (楊鳴章,1946-), Vicar General of the Diocese of Hong Kong, head of the local Caritas office and Member of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, Fr. Stephen Lee Bun Sang (李斌生,1956-), Vicar of Opus Dei for East Asia and Fr. Joseph Ha Chi-shing, O.F.M. (夏志誠,1959-), former O.F.M. Regional Superior in Hong Kong. It was also officially announced that John Cardinal Tong Hon's tenure as bishop of Hong Kong has been extended for a further three years by the Holy Father. The Diocese of Hong Kong has 547,000 Catholics, out of a total population in Hong Kong of 7,071,600 people. The diocese has 311 priests, 18 permanent deacons and 815 religious sisters.

- July 14-18: The third meeting of the official Commission for Vocation Promotion was held in Jilin, together with a meeting of the staff of major seminaries. It dealt with the present situation and future development of the seminaries, as well as the qualifications of their 88 teachers.

- July 15: By the middle of July, news surfaced that government officials had obtained the full list of names of the 115 youth delegates from China to the 6th Asian Youth Day (AYD), and have started to put pressure on them, their families, schools and leaders to cancel their participation. Officials also would not allow 18 accompanying priests to attend the AYD, in order to prevent them from meeting the Holy Father.

- July 22: In Macau three professors, two from the St. Joseph Catholic University and one from the public University of Macau, were dismissed or demoted in early July for their public expression of criticism of the local government and its authorities.
- July 23: The Hong Kong daily *Mingpao* (明報) reported that about 130 crosses and churches have been demolished since the beginning of the campaign against churches and crosses in Zhejiang Province.
- July 23: *Global Times* published an article on an investigation of foreign-funded NGOs, accusing them of infiltration and of being subject to foreign influence. The investigation created difficulties for NGOs, preventing them from receiving funding from overseas. The investigation was initiated by the National Security Commission of the CPC, and was carried out between May and the end of July.
- July 28: Fire destroyed the cathedral in Ningbo's Jiangbei District, (寧波江北), Zhejiang province, originally built in 1872, in the early hours of the day. The church, a landmark in Ningbo, was a key cultural relic under state protection. No casualties took place.
- July 30: According to *New China Agency*, China expressed "firm opposition" to the U.S. annual international religious freedom report about China's religious situation, released by the U.S. State Department on July 29, which continued to include China on a list of countries of particular concern. "We urge the US to abandon its political bias and stop interfering in China's internal affairs under the pretext of religion," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman.
- July 30, 31: Following the beatings and arrest of Zhejiang Christians who desired to protect their churches, Bishop Zhu Weifang (朱維方), 88, Catholic bishop of Wenzhou (溫州) wrote an open letter protesting against the campaign to remove crosses and destroy churches: "I have stayed silent and patient because I believed, as some people said, that this stormy campaign would soon blow over," but instead it turned into a "wrong and unjust campaign." The bishop's letter was received by Catholics in Wenzhou and spread virally on the internet. On the following day, July 31, the Wenzhou clergy published their own protest letter, which acknowledged that some premises were illegally built. However, the clergy insisted that the issue could have been handled differently, not by forcible demolition. By July 31, at least 229 Christian churches were believed to have been demolished, or had had their crosses removed during the campaign. They included 25 Catholic churches belonging to both the open and underground communities.

## August 2014

- August 3: An earthquake took place in Yunnan leaving at least 380 dead and more than 12,000 families homeless. Jinde Charities of Shijiazhuang and other social service centers of other Catholic dioceses contributed help to the victims.
- August 5: The celebration of the 60th anniversary of the National Committee of the Three Self Protestant Movement (TSPM) was held in Shanghai. At the conference, the director of SARA Wang Zuo'an (王作安), underlined the effort for the "construction of a Christian theology" parallel with the socialist construction of the country. Protestant believers range between 23-40 million (1.7 - 2.9% of the total population), of whom 73% joined the Christian faith after 1993. The annual growth in membership is estimated to be about 500,000. At present, China has 139,000 authorized religious venues, of which 56,000 are Christian.
- August 6: In an interview, given to the Italian weekly *Famiglia Cristiana*, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican Secretary of State, stated that he was in favor of a "respectful and constructive dialogue with the Chinese authorities".
- August 7: The Vatican spokesman announced that Pope Francis, during his flight to South Korea, on August 13-14, would send a message to the Chinese leaders. Sent on August 14 the message was not received due to technical problems. It was sent again through the Chinese and Italian embassies. During a press briefing in Beijing on August 14, the spokeswoman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry commented: "We are willing to continue working with the Vatican through constructive dialogue to promote bilateral relations." On August 15, the *China Daily* reported that China is ready for a "constructive dialogue" to improve bilateral relations with the Vatican. However, the Vatican's spokesman, Fr. Lombardi, during a press conference in Korea on August 17, hinted that China was probably not so willing to improve ties with the Vatican, adding: "For a dialogue you need two parties, not just one." On the same day, in a meeting with Asian bishops Pope Francis strayed from a prepared speech to say that the Vatican hoped to establish relations with countries with which there are currently none: "I'm not here speaking only of political dialogue but of dialogue on other human fraternal issues."
- August 8: Fr. Joseph Lu Genjun (鹿根軍), former vicar general of the Baoding Diocese, has been freed without any conditions after eight years of detention; he is now staying in a church near Bishop An Shuxin (安樹)

新). On August 28, Fr. Liu Honggeng (劉紅更) was also unconditionally released after being in detention since 2006.

- August 18: During his return flight from South Korea, Pope Francis stated that he hoped to visit China soon. He again sent a greeting to President Xi Jinping (習近平) as his Korean Air flight passed through Chinese airspace. During a mid-flight press conference, he answered the question: “You ask me if I have a desire to go to China? Certainly, tomorrow. Yes.” On the restrictions on Christianity, Pope Francis alluded to the Vatican’s negotiating position: “We respect the Chinese people. The Church only asks for freedom to do its work – no other condition.” The spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry confirmed that China received the telegram. He said: “China will work with the Vatican on a constructive dialogue and promote the improvement of bilateral relations. In accordance with its history, the Chinese Catholic Church conducts Catholic activities based on the principle of independence, and is developing soundly.” On August 19, *China Daily* interviewed the director of the Institute of the World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Zhuo Xinping (卓新平), who said that the Pope’s action could be the start of an improvement in ties between China and the Vatican. The *Global Times* also expressed a positive reaction. However, Liu Yuanlong (劉元龍), vice-president of the Catholic Patriotic Association, warned that China will always safeguard its national integrity, and will never allow foreign forces to interfere in its internal religious affairs.

- August 19: According to the *Xinhua News Agency*, police have cracked more than 500 cases related to the heretical “Church of Almighty God” sect, and have arrested about 1,000 suspects nationwide in the past two months. Eleven heretical religious sects are currently active in China, according to the China Anti-Cult Association.

- August 25: The death of Bp. John Wu Shizhen (吳仕珍, 1921-2014), retired bishop of Nanchang, Jiangxi (南昌, 江西). He was born on January 19, 1921 in Wuzhou, in Jiangxi Province, and was ordained priest on November 6, 1949. From 1952 to 1985 he worked as a bare-foot doctor. He was ordained bishop of Nanchang on September 6, 1987 and retired in March 2011.

- August 30: The episcopal ordinations of the three auxiliary bishops of Hong Kong took place, presided over by Cardinal John Tong Hon, Cardinal Joseph Zen and Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai (韓大輝). On August 31, Bp. Thaddeus Ma Daqin of Shanghai, from Sheshan Seminary where he is confined, sent prayers and good wishes to the three newly ordained auxiliary bishops of Hong Kong, as well as for the overall benefit

of both Hong Kong and China.

### September 2014

- September 7: The *South China Morning Post* published an article covering China's present campaign promoting Marxist ideology, the new persecution of Christians and the demolition of crosses campaign in Zhejiang, as well as against the infiltration of "foreign forces," which aim at carrying out an ideological evolution in China.

- September 8: In Guiyang cathedral a Mass was celebrated to inaugurate the beginning of the tenure of Bp. Xiao Zejiang (蕭澤江) as ordinary bishop of the Guizhou Diocese (貴州), after the retirement of Bp. Wang Chongyi (王充一), 96 years old. On September 22, Bp. Xiao convened the first diocesan convention with 55 participants in attendance.

- September 10: End of the course "The mission of priests today," which was held in Taipei, Taiwan for 13 priests from various dioceses of Hebei province from August 20 to September 10. The Chinese province of Lazarist missionaries and the Hebei Institute for Cultural Studies of the Faith jointly organized the course, which was held at Fujen University. This was the third such course, following two previous editions in 2012 and 2013 held at De Paul University in the United States. This course focused in particular on the mission of priests in modern society.

- September 12: Hong Kong's *Apple Daily* published a few articles alleging the interference of the Holy See on Hong Kong Catholic Diocese's position on the local campaign for universal suffrage, in order to guarantee the success of an agreement on diplomatic relations between China and the Vatican, expected to be signed within the month. On the same day, the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese published an official declaration to clarify the issue.

- September 15: Due to local conflict over the city development plan and compensation conditions, the Catholic Church in Changdejin, Hunan (常德津, 湖南) and all the religious objects at the church were destroyed in the absence of the parish priest, who had been summoned away and detained by the local authorities. Meanwhile, the campaign of church and crosses demolition continued in Zhejiang, with the pulling down on this day of the church in Jingtou, Cangnan district, Wenzhou (浙江溫州市, 蒼南縣, 鯨頭).

- September 16: Yu Zhengsheng (俞正聲), chairman of the National Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, urged the China Committee on Religion and Peace (CCRP) to better promote world peace

and international religious exchange. Yu called on the CCRP to better act as a bridge between the Party, the government, and religious circles, on both the local and foreign levels. Founded in 1994, the CCRP is a member of the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace and the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

- September 16: The Argentinian website *Infobae* revealed that Pope Francis had sent a personal letter to China's President Xi Jinping, via two Argentinian emissaries: Ricardo Romano and José Luján. The gesture came after a long meeting in St. Martha's House, attended by the Pope, and two members of the Vatican Secretariat of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin and Bp. Dominique Mamberti. In his letter, Francis formally invited President Xi Jinping to visit the Vatican to discuss world peace.

- September 18: In a meeting with newly appointed bishops from around the world in Rome, Pope Francis brought up the topic of bishops from China. He said "Deep down in my heart, I wish they were here, but that day will not be far off! Let me assure them not only of my and our solidarity with them, but also that of all the bishops in the world, so that, in the shared faith, and in spite of the sometimes impression of being isolated, they can feel the certainty that their suffering will bear fruit for the good of the faithful, their fellow citizens and the whole Church."

- September 19-23: The Pontifical Sistine Chapel Choir, in its first trip to the Far East, on September 19, 2014 gave a concert in the Cathedral of Macao, on September 21 at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre and on September 23 at the National Concert Hall in Taipei. The concerts were made possible through the Hong Kong Institute for the Promotion of Chinese Culture, in collaboration with the Coro Perosi of the Diocese of Macao and the Taipei Philharmonic Foundation. The concerts, entitled "Reverberating Heavenly Tunes in Greater China," included pieces from notable composers. In addition, on September 21 the Sistine Choir sang at the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist in the Hong Kong Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

- September 21: The death of Bp. Bishop John Chrysostom Lan Shi (蘭石 1925-2014), retired unofficial coadjutor bishop of Sanyuan (三原, 陝西). He was born in 1925, entered the seminary at age 14, and was ordained a priest in 1954. He worked in Xiushidu (修石渡) Church, Jingyang (涇陽). During the Cultural Revolution he was jailed and then sent to a camp for reeducation through labor. After liberation, he continued to work in Xiushidu. In 1997. he paid a visit to Germany with his bishop, Zong Huaide (宗懷德). He was appointed coadjutor bishop in 1999 and ordained in 2000 by Bishop Zhang Wenbin (張文彬) of Weinan. He was

not officially recognized. He trained more than 20 sisters and a dozen of priests. He liked music and composed several religious pieces.

- September 21: The Ministry of Public Security's website published a judicial explanation on the application of criminal law in relation to terrorism. The document urged authorities to differentiate normal religious activities from religious extremism and to protect freedom of religion. The term "inciting secession" will include disseminating religious extremism via websites, e-mail, mobile phones or other media, the statement said.
- September 21: About 100 Christians were arrested during a prayer meeting in a "house church" in Foshan, in Guangdong Province.
- September 22: Start of the class strike and demonstration of university and secondary school students in Hong Kong against the decision of Beijing restricting the democratic process for the 2017 election of the HK chief executive, and seeking the resignation of the present chief executive. On the night between September 27 and 28, the Movement to "Occupy Central" joined in, advancing its beginning originally planned for October 1. The use of pepper and tear gas by the police displeased the majority of Hong Kong people, who increased their support for the protest.
- September 23: Death of Bishop John Baptist Wang Jin (王薏, 1924-2014) of Yuci/Jinzhong Diocese, Shanxi (榆次/晉中教區, 山西). He was born in 1924 near Taiyuan and entered the local minor seminary in 1935, and later joining the Montecorvino major seminary in 1943. Due to the war situation, in 1948 he shifted to the major seminary in Hankou, and in April 1949 to the seminary in Macao. He was ordained priest on October 7, 1951, and did pastoral ministry in Geliaogou (圪遛溝). From 1956 to 1958 he taught in the Taiyuan seminary. From 1958 to 1964, he was parish priest in Wujiashuang, Jin District (武家莊, 忻縣). On April 9, 1965, he was arrested and jailed for 20 years. On April 8, 1985, he could return to do ministry in Yuci/Jinzhong Diocese, in charge of churches of Taigu and Yushe (太谷、榆社). On September 14, 1999, Bp. Li Jiantang (李建唐) of Taiyuan ordained him bishop. He died after a long illness.
- September 23: Government officials held a meeting with Bishop An Shuxin (安樹新) and the recently released unofficial Vicar General of Baoding Rev. Lu Genjun (鹿根君) at the bishop's residence in Baoding. Among the officials was the head of a department of the central United Front Mr. Zhao Xueyi (趙學義局長), the vice-head of the provincial United Front Office, Mr. Liu Qing (劉青副部長), and the director of the Baoding United Front office, Mr. Wang (王部長). Other officials were also in attendance. The officials were doing a visitation of the church in

Baoding. and They also held a meeting with clergy and faithful. One lay Catholic, Mr. Su Tianyou (蘇天佑), representing the whole community, asked for the release of the old Bishop Su Zhimin (蘇志民). However, he did not receive a direct answer.

- September 25: Msgr. Paul Russell, the Holy See's Chargé-d'affaires in Taiwan told *Ucanews* in an interview during a conference on migration in Taichung that the Vatican and China still have "a long way to go" before establishing diplomatic ties. Although recently there was some improvement in communication, a lack of freedom of religion and speech remained the main obstacle between the two sides, "There is no reason for Taiwanese to fear that the Vatican will switch to diplomatic relations from Taiwan to China."

- September 26-27: A forum on the Development of the Chinese Catholic Lay Association in the 20th Century was held in Macau.

- September 29: Message of John Cardinal Tong encouraging the participants in "Occupy Central" to demonstrate peacefully, and calling the Hong Kong Government to exercise restraint and listen to the people.

#### **October 2014**

- October 4: The ordination of four new priests in the Yan'an/Yulin Diocese, Shaanxi, and the blessing of a formation center.

- October 8-10: Shaanxi Major Seminary held its 12th Autumn Sport Games, by inviting the Minor Seminary to participate in various competitions. Other guests were from Protestant churches and Bible Institutions, with a total of 150 participants in attendance.

- October 9-17: The visit of Prime Minister Li Keqiang (李克強) to Germany, Russia and Italy, three countries which have a combined population of 210 million Christians, made up of Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. However, the issue of the religious persecution (e.g., the removal of crosses and the destruction of churches) was not raised. "The economic crisis in southern Europe and German trade interests in China, will continue to make sure that human rights do not become an issue in European-Chinese meetings," Axel Berkofsky, a research fellow at the Institute for International Political Studies in Milan, said.

- October 10: The 6th Marathon was held in Beijing, with the participation of 36 religious sisters from different parts of China. The sisters were raising funds for services to handicapped people.

- October 20: A diocesan curial decree, signed by Bishop Li Suguang (李蘇光) of the Nanchang Diocese, (Jiangxi Diocese, according to



government determination), dissolved the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Good Counsel, after a two-year special formation program, which did not produce the expected results. The 23 Sisters, however, did not accept the decision and appealed to the provincial authorities.

- October 20-23: The 4th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of CPC was held in Beijing. For the first time it took up the rule of law as its central theme, i.e. “issues concerning comprehensively advancing the rule of law.” The session launched the slogan: “rule the country according to the law” (依法治國).

- October 24: The unconditional release of the 3rd priest of Baoding Diocese, Fr. Ma Wuyong (馬吾勇), after ten years of detention.

- October 25: *Catholic Church in China*, No. 5, published an article by Bishop Fang Xingyao (房興耀) to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the foundation of the People’s Republic of China. In it, he provided the following statistical data: Catholics now number more than 6 million, with more than 100,000 new baptisms each year; there are 6,000 venues for worship, 12 major seminaries, about 70 Sisters congregations, with more than 6,000 Sisters, of whom 3,000 have taken perpetual vows. There are 2,800 young priests, of whom 200 have been sent abroad to study in ten different countries, and have returned to China with academic degrees. The Church contributes greatly to social service, operating 8 hospitals, 136 clinics, 9 orphanages, 7 centers for handicapped people, 52 homes for the elderly, 43 kindergartens and 173 “Hope” schools. From 2000 to 2013, Catholic clergy and faithful have contributed more than 200 million dollars to victims of natural disasters.

- October 27: The Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Religions of the CPPCC held a meeting to discuss the updating of the 30 year-old Document 19 in accordance with the new directives of the recent 4th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of CPC on rule of law. It also raised the issue of the need for the Law on Religion, which has been under consideration for more than 20 years.

- October 28-29: The Faith Institute for Cultural Studies (FICS), together with the Historical and Cultural College of Hebei Normal University and the Religious and International Relations Research Center of Fudan University in Shanghai, jointly organized an international Conference in Shijiazhuang on “The Zhengding Church Massacre and the Humanitarian Efforts of Religions during the War Against Japan.” It dealt with the incident of the murder of Bp. Frans Schraven, C.M. and eight other missionaries by Japanese soldiers on October 9, 1937.

- October 28: The celebration of the 25th anniversary of the ordination to the priesthood of six official bishops, namely Fang Xingyao (房興耀), Li Shan (李山), Fang Jianping (方建平), Meng Qinglu (孟青祿), Ma Yinglin (馬英林) and Zhan Silu (詹思祿). SARA director Wang Zuo'an (王作安) gave a speech at the celebration, which was held in Beijing.

#### **November 2014**

- November 6: John Cardinal Tong of Hong Kong revised and published his Pastoral Letter "Proclaiming and Living the Gospel of the Family," originally written on September 29.

- November 6: The web-site of the Religions of the Chinese Minorities re-published a 2008 article by SARA Director, Wang Zuo'an (王作安), about "New Changes in the Situation of Religions in China". His main points were: 1. The number of religious believers continues to increase; 2. The composition of the religious masses shows visible changes (from rural to urban area members, from lower to higher educational standards, etc.); 3. The official structures of the religions face challenges ; 4. The foreign influence on religions is increasing strongly and quickly; 5. Religious contradictions become ever more complicated (against the official control, and concerning the return of religious properties).

- November 7: The unveiling of statues of Paul Xu Guangqi (徐光啓) and Fr. Matteo Ricci in Shanghai on the 381st anniversary of the death of the former.

- November 13: Zhu Weiqun (朱維群), chairman of the ethnic and religious affairs committee of the CPPCC, published an article after a meeting of the Party's Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, criticizing some local party members for believing in a religion and taking part in religious activities. He emphasized, "Communist Party members cannot follow any religion – this is an important ideological and organizational principle which has been upheld since the founding of the Party." He rebutted the claim that atheism should be blamed for widespread corruption among the cadres or any moral decay in society.

- November 14: Bishop John Peng Weizhao (彭衛照) of Yujiang (余江) in Jiangxi province has been released six months after Chinese authorities detained him following his secret ordination as bishop on April 10, 2014 with the approval of the Holy See. He was freed on the conditions that he should not travel outside Jiangxi province and that he practice his priestly ministry only, but not his episcopal ministry.

- November 17-18: The 4th Symposium on “Influence and Function of Christianity on Contemporary Chinese society” was jointly organized in Shijiazhuang by the Christian Culture Institute of Beijing People’s University and the Hong Kong Yuandao Institute. Participants coming from China, Hong Kong and Macau academic institutions numbered more than 50.
- November 20: The *Wenhuibao* (文匯報) reported in an article the opinion of an authoritative person on the present situation of Sino-Vatican relations. The article pointed out that a kind of agreement has been reached for the choice and ordination of new bishops. But three issues remain: relations between the Vatican and Taiwan; the Catholic Patriotic Association, which can change its name and role in accordance with the new circumstances; and the role of the National Assembly of Catholic Representatives. The role of this assembly has become a major problem for the signing of an agreement. The *Global Times* also reported this news, with reactions coming from *Faith Press*, *Ucanews* and *Asianews*.
- November 26: According to a 21 December article published in the *Kung Kao Po* at an election on this date for new members of the Patriotic Association at the Catholic church in Changsha, Hunan (長沙, 湖南), Sr. Zhou Hongyan, 60 (周紅艷) was badly beaten by an accountant Miss Yang Liu (楊柳), who, though not yet baptized, enjoyed the favor of the head of the Patriotic Association Mr. Zhang Ju (張炬). He had appointed Yang Liu as a member of the association, and put her in charge of the marriages and funerals. Sr. Zhou was hospitalized for about ten days.

#### **December 2014**

- December 3-9: A Catholic Delegation, including Bp. Pei Junmin, Ma Yinglin, Yue Fusheng and Mr. Liu Yuanlong, returned a visit to the Bible Societies of the United Kingdom and Germany, whose delegation had been welcomed by Catholic leaders in Beijing in mid-October.
- December 8: The Chinese web portal Sina posted a photo essay on the town of Yiwu (Zhejiang), where most of the world’s Christmas decorations come from. It is a huge commodities market dubbed the “Chinese Christmas Village.” Photos show migrant workers toiling in harsh conditions to make decorations for a festival they know nothing about.
- December 12: Jining/Wumeng Diocese, Inner Mongolia, has three new priests, Rev. Cui Ji’en, Gao Huipan and Li Guibing (崔繼恩, 高會盼, 李

貴冰) ordained by local Bishop Liu Shigong (劉世功). They are the first ordinations in the diocese for more than ten years.

- December 14: A spokesman for the Holy See confirmed that Pope Francis would not meet the Dalai Lama – whom the Pontiff “obviously holds in very high regard.” The Dalai Lama was in Rome to attend a meeting of Nobel Peace laureates. This was most likely due to Pope Francis’ sensitivity regarding the situation of the Catholic Church in China. A spokesman of the Chinese Government acknowledged the fact, and expressed the hope that a persistent channel of contact could be maintained between Beijing and Rome.

- December 21: According to *Zenit*, the Vatican Library director, Bishop Jean-Louis Brugès recently signed agreements with both Cuba and China for cooperation between their state libraries. The Chinese authorities have learned that the Vatican Library possesses 1,200 ancient Chinese manuscripts of the late Ming Dynasty and have requested permission to digitalize them. They agreed to bear the whole cost of the work and, afterwards, to organize exhibitions together with the Vatican, not only in Beijing but also in other major Chinese cities in 2017.

- December 18-19: In the latest incident of its kind, the cross of a Protestant Church in Dingqiao (Zhejiang) was torn down, during the ongoing “Three Rectifications and One Demolition” campaign. Some members of the local congregation were injured, while trying to stop the destruction. On 18 December, the cross of a church of Nanle (Henan) was also taken down, and 4 million yuan, saved by parishioners to build more churches, were seized.

- December 20: Jinde Charities (進德公益) held their 10th Christmas party in Shijiazhuang. It was entitled “I and you walk together” for handicapped children and orphans. The party raised more than 650,000 RMB to help orphanages and AIDS patient centers, as well as for medical care and study for poor students.

- December 22: *Vatican Insider* reported that in an interview, which will be published in the January issue of the Franciscan monthly magazine *Rivista San Francesco*, Cardinal P. Parolin, the Vatican Secretary of State, talked about the Holy See’s relations with China. He said, “We are in a positive phase and I would go so far as to say that prospects look promising even though the journey has not yet come to an end.” The Cardinal added: “We are currently in a positive phase. Both sides have shown a willingness to continue talking and to search for solutions to the problems relating to the presence of the Catholic Church in that vast country.”

- December 24-25: While all Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, were celebrating the birth of Christ, joined by many non-Christian people, some educational institutions did not allow their students to hold any celebrations whatsoever. On December 26, *People's Daily* published pictures of students in Changsha, holding banners with slogans saying "Boycott Christmas – the Chinese do not celebrate foreign festivals." *Global Times* reported that schools in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, forbade their staff and students from holding any Christmas-related events.
- December 25: The website of SARA reported that on the afternoon of the Christmas Vigil, Wang Zuo'an, director of SARA, visited the Chaoyang Protestant Church and the Xuanwumen Catholic Church (朝陽堂和天主教宣武門堂) in Beijing, reminding everyone to continue to support the autonomy and independence of the Church, as well as to uphold the core values of socialism and opposition to the infiltration of external forces.
- December 27: The official *Xinhua news agency* reported that China is to publish online details regarding legal religious venues, apparently in an effort to identify unregistered groups and unauthorized venues, as part of an effort to "root out illegal religious activities." The names and addresses of all Buddhist and Taoist venues will be published within two years.
- December 31: For the Year of Consecrated Life, the Xianxian Diocese (獻縣教區) in Hebei has invited all clergy, seminarians and sisters to carry out, by turn, continuous Eucharistic Adoration from January 1, 2015 to February 2, 2016.