

EDITORIAL

For three months now, there has been no news of the whereabouts of Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin of the Wenzhou Diocese. Catholics from within and outside of China have expressed apprehension about what has happened to him. He had been coadjutor bishop to Bishop Vincent Zhu Weifang of Wenzhou, who died on September 7, 2016. As coadjutor, Bishop Shao was due to succeed Bishop Zhu. Although not a member of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), the Catholics of Wenzhou welcomed him because he would be a force for unity among both the official and unofficial Catholic communities of the Wenzhou Diocese. Bishop Shao was first detained in April this year, just before Easter, and so could not spend Easter with the Wenzhou community. He was released for a short time, but had to report to the police in Wenzhou on May 18th. He did this, and has not been heard from since. Observers speculate that he is undergoing political education to convince him to join the CCPA.

On June 20, Michael Clauss, the German ambassador to China, in a statement on the German embassy's website, called for the release of Bishop Shao, followed by a statement on June 26 from the Vatican's press secretary calling for the same thing.

Meanwhile, on July 19th, the CCPA held a one-day commemoration of the 60th anniversary of its foundation. Over one hundred bishops, priests, Sisters and lay people attended. Mr. Yu Zhengsheng, Politburo member and Chairperson of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference addressed the participants.

Perhaps with Bishop Shao's case in mind, Mr. Yu emphasized that "the leadership of the Church should always be in the hands of persons who love the country and love the church." In fact Hong Kong's *Wen Hui Bao* used those words in the July 20 headline when reporting the news of the CCPA conference.

Mr. Yu then suggested several duties for the CCPA to carry out in the future. He urged the CCPA to continue in the direction of

the sinicization of the Church, to be guided by socialism's core values, to make the Church's doctrines and moral principles adapt to the requirements of China's present day progress and development, and to promote the blending of Catholic doctrine with Chinese culture.

One wonders if Mr. Yu's suggestions are his own words, or if someone wrote his speech for him. As chairperson of the CPPCC, he has certainly met many people of different religious faiths, and, one would think, this would have aroused sympathy in him for them. In fact, worldwide, religious believers make up at least two-thirds of humanity. They would certainly be offended by the suggestion that they change their doctrines and moral principles to suit China's modern development. People's religious faith is among their most valuable possessions, and should be respected.

Rather, I humbly suggest that China do a 180 degree turn in its religious policy. Free Bishop Shao, and let him become the bishop of Wenzhou. He "loves his country and loves his Church," (in his own way, and not that of the CCPA), thus fulfilling Chairman Yu's criterion. Grant complete and real religious freedom to all of China's religions, and do not interfere in their administration through such entities as "patriotic associations." Think of all the friends this will make for China among the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, and adherents of other religions living along the route of President Xi's Belt and Road project. Real freedom of religion would win many friends for China all around the world. Instead of curtailing religion, China should let it blossom forth.

The theme of this issue is the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, and the 100th anniversary of the appearance of the Blessed Mother at Fátima. Both took place in 1917. Our contributors, Rev. Archpriest Dionisy Posdnyayev, Ching Cheong and Santiago Milio, describe all the pain, suffering, and destruction that communist systems, introduced by the Russian revolution, have brought into the world, in the past century, and even up to the present day. We also have a "double" book review. Through the intercession of Our Lady of Fátima, let us ask God to bestow a much needed peace on our fragmented world! (PJB, 25 August, 2017)