

China Church and News Update 2017

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Death of Bishops

- January 4: Death of Bishop Anthony Tu Shihua (涂世華, 1919-2017), Bishop of Puqi, Hunan.
- February 14: Death of Bishop Casimirus Wang Milu (王覓祿, 1941-2017), former bishop of Tianshui, Gansu.
- April 20: Death of Bishop Anicetus Wang Chongyi (王充一, 1919-2017), retired Bishop of Guizhou.
- June 9: Death of Bishop John Liu Shigong (劉世功, 1928-2017) retired bishop of Jining, Inner Mongolia.
- August 13: Death of Bishop Sylvester Li Jiantang (李建唐, 1925-2017), retired bishop of Taiyuan, Shanxi.
- August 14: Death of Bishop Paul Xie Tingzhe (謝廷哲, 1931- 2017), bishop of Urumqi, Xinjiang
- September 25: Death of Bishop Mathew Hu Xiande (胡賢德, 1934-2017) of Ningbo, Zhejiang.
- November 17: Death of Bishop Lukas Li Jingfeng (李鏡峰, 1922-2017) of Fengxiang, Shaanxi.
- December 7: Death of Bishop YU Chengxin Matthias (余成信, 1927-2017), auxiliary bishop, but ministered as a priest in Hanzhong.

MAIN EVENTS

January 2017

- January 1: The Foreign NGO Management Law (approved in April 2016) and the Ministry of Public Security's guidelines for their registration (issued on November 28, 2016) take effect.
- January 2: Catholics at St. Michael's Cathedral in Qingdao Diocese in Shandong held a day of fasting as reparation for the desecration of the Eucharist by a member of the congregation during Mass on Christmas Eve.
- January 4: Bishop Anthony Tu Shihua (涂世華, 1919-2017), one of the eight illegitimate bishops in China, died in Beijing at the age of 98. Bp. Tu, a native of Hubei province, was one of the first self-elected and self-ordained bishops in China. He was ordained without papal mandate on August 15, 1959 as the bishop of Hanyang (Hubei), and later as the ordinary of Puqi (Hubei) in 2001. Bishop Tu had lived in Beijing and

served as a leader of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and the Bishops' Conference for many years, and was a former rector of the National Seminary in Beijing in 1983-1992. Born on November 22, 1919 to a Catholic family in Mianyang (Hubei), he studied at the Hankou seminary 1931-1943, and later in Beijing. He was ordained a priest in April 1944. He had been standing committee member of the CCPA in 1962. He was vice chairman of the national committee of the same Association in 1980, 1986, 1992, and 1998. In 1986, he became vice president of the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference (CCBC). In 2004, he became an advisor to both institutions. He was fluent in several languages, and had translated books.

- January 9-10: The national meeting for religious affairs directors across China was held in Beijing, during which the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) director Wang Zuo'an (王作安) set out the work plan for the year ahead: the work would be to implement the spirit of the National Conference on Religious Work, to strengthen the rule of law along with the new regulations and to insist on Sinicization. Religious work "must deal with politics, must keep a clear alertness to politics, must be strict in discipline and must be responsible."

- January 20: Auxiliary Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin (馬達欽), of Shanghai was reinstated as a member of the standing committee in the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) of Shanghai, but simply as a priest.

- January 22: Pope Francis spoke in an interview with *El País* about dialogue with China: "Actually there is a commission which has been working with China for years and which meets every three months, once here and once in Beijing. And there is much dialogue with China..." On January 23, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson at a daily briefing said: "China's position on its relationship with the Vatican is consistent and clear. The Chinese side is sincere about improving relations with the Vatican and has made many of efforts to that end. We would like to work with the Vatican to strive for new progress in constructive dialogue and improvement in relations between the two sides."

In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* on January 19, the Vatican's Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin had expressed his optimism that more progress could be made in China-Vatican ties. On January 26, *People's Daily* Online published the article "High expectations for China-Vatican relations in 2017." On January 28, from St. Peter Square, Pope Francis extended congratulations to China on the celebration of the Spring Festival.

February 2017

- February 7-8: The invitation of two Chinese health officials to the Vatican's conference on organ transplant and human trafficking sparked controversy as it was interpreted as an olive branch by the Holy See to improve ties with Beijing. But some human rights activists criticized it as "giving a propaganda boost to China" and an "air of legitimacy" to its organ transplant program.
- February 10: Publication of Cardinal John Tong Hon (湯漢)'s article, "The future of Sino-Vatican dialogue from an ecclesiological perspective," dated January 25, 2017. It was followed by several reactions, both positive and negative by newspapers and individuals. All pointed out the optimistic approach of the Cardinal.
- February 14: Death of Bishop Casimirus Wang Milu (王覓祿, 1941-2017), former Bishop of Tianshui, after being admitted to a Lanzhou hospital in late January because of a hemorrhage and pneumonia. Born in December 1941, Bp. Wang was ordained a priest in 1980. He was secretly ordained bishop of Qin Zhou (now Tianshui) in 1981 by Bp. Peter Joseph Fan Xueyan (范學淹) of Baoding (Hebei). Two years later, he was arrested in Beijing and sentenced to ten years in prison (1983-1993). He was full of evangelizing zeal and was very loyal to the pope. Later, he was suspected of abusing the special powers conferred by the Holy See to the underground bishops to ordain other bishops without previous notification and approval of Rome. The Holy See suspended Bp. Wang in 2003. After that, he worked in Gangu County, Gansu Province.
- February 21-22: The top leaders of the CCPA and the CCBC (一會一團) met at Wuhan, the capital of central Hubei province to discuss their work for 2017 and the coming five years. The meeting, with the participation of government officials, was presided over by Ma Yinglin (馬英林) and was opened by Fang Xingyao (房興耀), but the speeches were given by Liu Yuanlong (劉元龍) and Bp. Guo Jincai (郭金才) for the report of 2016 work, as well as by Chen Zongrong (陳宗榮) of SARA, and Bp. Shen Bin (沈斌) on the priorities for 2017 and for the coming five years. They repeated the usual positions, with emphasis on "Sinicization" and the need of "having a political mind." On February 22, the participants paid their respects at the tomb of Bishop Bernardino Dong Guangqing (董光清), the first Chinese bishop ordained without papal approval in 1958.
- February 26: The China Global Television Network, formerly CCTV International, showed the first Chinese TV broadcast on the China-Vatican issue. In the English language TV program, Francesco Sisci, an Italian

reporter, who interviewed Pope Francis in 2016, emphasized that a consensus on how to appoint bishops in China has been decided.

- February 28: According to a report by Radio Free Asia, Catholic underground churches and Protestant house churches have been warned to end all their activities in the area and worship only in officially approved churches.

March 2017

- March 15: Within the context of the Fifth Session of the 12th National Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (March 3-13) and of the Fifth Session of the 12th National People's Congress (March 5-14), all the Catholic leaders of CCPA and CCBC (一會一團) held a meeting to evaluate and spread the spirit of the two assemblies. Bp. Shen Bin presided (沈斌), and also drew the conclusions. He emphasized the importance of the present year because of the new leadership in the Church and the coming Party Congress.

- March 20-22: The first round of closed-door negotiations in 2017 between China and the Holy See took place in Beijing with the Vatican representatives strongly hinting that there may never be any formal announcement of a deal being reached.

- March 22: The Zhejiang Government ordered Catholic and Protestant churches to install surveillance cameras inside and outside their church compounds by the end of March.

- March 28-29: A symposium on “Matthew Ricci and Nanchang, and the Sinicization and Localization of the Church” was held at Nanchang.

April 2017

- April 1: In Baoding, Hebei, underground Catholics worried that the proposed Xiong'an New District economic development project, just announced, would increase government suppression of their religious activities, since Baoding Diocese falls within the development zone.

- April 6: Bp. Vincent Guo Xijin (郭希錦), unofficial bishop of Mindong/Funing, was detained after he went to the Religious Affairs Office in Fu'an. Although not recognized by the government, Bp. Guo is the ordinary bishop of the diocese following the death of his predecessor, Bp. Huang Shoucheng (黃守誠) on July 30, 2016. He was required to undergo a 20-day political education course with the aim of compelling him to join the CCPA.

- April 6-7: Meeting of all the provincial level heads and secretaries the two Catholic Associations, the CCPA and the Commission for Church Affairs, was held in Nanjing, with participants from 30 provinces and places.
- April 9: On Palm Sunday, a national collection was launched for the first time by Jinde Charities, Shijiazhuang, in all the Catholic communities in China. The money collected was designated mainly for charitable services to victims of natural disasters.
- April 12: In the afternoon, the unofficial bishop of Wenzhou (Zhejiang), Peter Shao Zhumin (邵祝敏) was detained by police and taken to an unknown location. Bp. Shao had become the ordinary bishop of the diocese, after the death of his predecessor, Bp. Vincenzo Zhu Weifang (朱维方) on 7 September. The detention of Bp. Shao came just hours before the start of the Easter celebrations, most likely to prevent him from presiding at them.
- April 16: Vatican-approved Auxiliary Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin (馬達欽) of Shanghai concelebrated Easter Mass with the illicit Bishop Vincent Zhan Silu (詹思祿) at the Mindong Cathedral, Fujian.
- April 18-21: A formation course was held for about 50 Catholic patriotic youth, at the Central College for Socialism in Beijing.
- April 20: A seminar was held in Beijing to commemorate the late Bishop Michael Fu Tieshan (傅鐵山) of Beijing.
- April 20: Local officials in northeastern Heilongjiang province cracked down on an underground Catholic community during the Mass. People from the congregation tried in vain to stop the police from detaining a lay leader and Father Shen Yanjun (沈彥軍), the underground priest who worked at the Qingshan Church in Wudalianchi city. The local government described the action as a success in “stopping an underground Catholic priest from holding illegal religious activities.”
- April 20: Death of retired Bishop Anicetus Wang Chongyi (王充一, 1919-2017) of Guizhou. He was born into a Catholic family in 1919 and entered the minor seminary in Guiyang when he was 13. He was ordained a priest in 1949. After the Chinese Communist Party came to power in China, he was sent to villages to work as a laborer. In 1979, the bishop was allowed to return to church ministry. Bp. Wang was ordained as Bishop of Guiyang in 1988, but later (in 1999) he had to oversee the combined dioceses of Anlong, Guiyang and Shiqian. He retired in 2014 and church affairs were turned over to his successor Bishop Paul Xiao

Zejiang (蕭澤江). Bp. Wang was a serious and devoted man, always preparing his homilies very well.

- April 25-26: The Commission for the Ministry of the Clergy of the CCBC held a symposium, inviting an American psychologist, Msgr. Stephen Rossetti, to give lectures.

May 2017

- May 6: Three underground priests from Mindong Diocese were briefly detained on the same day that Bp. Vincent Guo Xijin (郭希錦) was freed and returned to Luojiang after one month's detention. Fathers Zhu Ruci, Xu Wenmin and Peng Zhenkun (朱如慈, 徐文明, 彭振坤), vicar general, chancellor and procurator of the diocese respectively, were summoned and detained for "a course to study religious regulations."

- May 8: According to Hebei Faith Press, a preliminary report showed that 19,087 people were baptized over Easter. However, some dioceses were still compiling their figures. In Hebei Province itself, 4,464 new Catholics received baptism, the highest number in the country.

- May 10: Pope Francis welcomed a group of about 30 Chinese parish priests and lay Catholics, from 29 different dioceses in China, after the Wednesday general audience. Fr. Francisco Carin, CMF, the new director of the Verbiest Institute, Leuven (Belgium) guided them to Rome, after they had participated in a formation course at Louvain.

- May 13: According to UCANews, sixteen dioceses in China publicly held double celebrations for the feasts of Our Lady of Fatima and Our Lady of China, despite previous problems of the Communist authorities over the meaning of the Fatima apparition. "They regarded her as 'Our Lady of Anti-Communism,'" said an elderly Catholic man. The Handan underground community has requested a statue of Our Lady from Fatima, in order to bring her to each of several other diocesan communities.

- May 13-17: The Xi'an Diocese organized a five-day Bible Study program for more than 100 participants from different parishes.

- May 15-19: An updating course for 48 new leaders in the CCPA and CCBC was held at the Central College for Socialism, in order to reiterate the principles of autonomy, independence and sinicization.

- May 18: The Vatican-approved bishop, Peter Shao Zhumin (邵祝敏) of Wenzhou, Zhejiang, was detained, a month after he was briefly taken away during Holy Week and for the fourth time since he succeeded Bp. Vincent Zhu Weifang (朱維方).

- May 24: On the Prayer Day for the Church in China, Asianews held a symposium at the Pontifical Urbaniana University on “The Catholic Church in mainland China, The Cross is Red.” During the symposium, Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai (韓大輝) expressed the opinion that a “grey pragmatism” is fast spreading within the Church in China.
- May 29- June 2: Bp. Stephen Lee Bun-Sang (李斌生), bishop of Macau, with a 10 member delegation made an official visit to Beijing. He visited three seminaries, namely the National Seminary, the Beijing Diocesan Seminary and the Hebei Regional Seminary.

JUNE 2017

- June 2: *La Civiltà Cattolica* published the article “Catholicism in 21st Century China” by Fr. Joseph You-Guo Jiang, S.J. The main theme of his article was: “As long as the Chinese Communist Party is the only leading party in the government, Marxism will continue to be the ideological guideline for society. Thus, the Chinese Catholic Church will have to redefine its role and relationship with the Party and its ideological theories.”
- June 4: About 900 Catholics joined a prayer vigil in Hong Kong’s Victoria Park commemorating the 28th anniversary of the Tian’anmen Square tragedy, although the Chinese government blocked any mention of June 4 on the Internet. It was followed by a more secular event that tens of thousands of people attended.
- June 7-10: The Hebei provincial civil authorities in charge of religion in the province organized a symposium on “Maintaining the official trend of the Sinicization of Religion” for about 15 Catholic leaders in Shijiazhuang.
- June 9: Death of Bishop John Liu Shigong (劉世功, 1928-2017), retired bishop of Jining/Wumeng, Inner Mongolia. Bishop Liu was born in Sizi Wangqi, in Inner Mongolia on August 18, 1928. He entered the minor seminary at the age of 14. His formation was suspended when the seminary was closed due to political turmoil in the late 1940s. He returned to the seminary again in 1952. He was ordained a priest on 15 August 1956 and served in the parish of Guyingzi, Xiziwangqi, until religious activities were prohibited. He then worked as a farmer. During the Cultural Revolution, he was sent to a reform-through-labor camp. He re-assumed his duties as parish priest of Guyingzi when religious activities revived in the late 1970s. On October 12, 1995, he was ordained Bishop of Jining. He was considered a zealous shepherd of his flock.

- June 11: Bishop Ma Yinglin (馬英林) invited a delegation of 18 participants from nine Hebei Dioceses, among whom Bishops Fang Jianping, Feng Xinmao, An Shuxin and Li Liangui (方建平, 封新卯, 安樹新, 李連貴) to pay a visit to Kunming and to celebrate the solemnity of the Holy Trinity in the Sacred Heart Cathedral. Bp. Li Liangui did not concelebrate the Mass.
- June 12-24: Two Chinese nuns, Sisters Gao Wanjuan (高婉娟) and Jiao Jialin (焦佳琳) of Our Lady of Good Counsel Congregation of Nanchang Diocese, Jiangxi, went on a hunger strike because they were not properly compensated for the disbanding of their religious congregation in October 2014. Bp. John Baptist Li Suguang (李穌光) of Nanchang, before the disbanding, had allowed the 23 nuns to decide their own future: they could join “other religious congregations, live a secular life or negotiate with parish priests to serve in the diocese as laywomen.”
- June 13: The Central Institute of Socialism organized a symposium to study the Sinicization of Christian Theology for the leaders of Catholic and Protestant Churches, coming from 20 educational institutions.
- June 15: According to UCANews, China and the Vatican have both changed at least one of their envoys to the negotiations on episcopal appointments on the mainland in preparation for the discussions to be held at the end of June (24-25). In fact, following the previous talks in March, China replaced Guo Wei (郭偉), former head of the SARA division responsible for Christian affairs, with Ms. Dai Chenjing (戴晨京) another top SARA official. On the Vatican side, Fr. Tadeusz Wojda, the Polish undersecretary for the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, was appointed Archbishop of Bialystok in Poland on April 12.
- June 17: Bp. Peter Shao Zhumin (邵祝敏) of Wenzhou was seen in the Wenzhou airport, but then he was taken away again to an unknown destination. On June 21, the German ambassador, Mr. Michael Clauss, asked Chinese authorities to release him.
- June 20-23: SARA organized a symposium in Beijing for Catholic believers on the spirit of the Xi Jinping’s speech on religious policy and on the new Regulations for Religious Affairs. Participants numbered 150 coming from 27 provinces and cities. The vice-director of SARA, Ms. Dai Chenjing (戴晨京), highlighted five points: develop the sinicization of the Catholic Church, raise high the banner of ‘love the Country, love the Church’, firmly uphold the principle of the independence of the Church, deepen and enlarge the democratic administration of the Church and evaluate with clarity and objectivity Sino-Vatican relations.

- June 21-25: Under the sponsorship of CCPA and CCBC, together with the National Major Seminary and the Federation of the Superiors of Sisters Congregations, a workshop on Evangelization Work was held in the National Seminary. Bp. Shen Bin (沈斌) presided over it, assisted by the Vice President of the Sister Superiors Federation, Sr. Wang Haiqin (王海琴), the vice rector of the National Seminary Rev. Li Shuxing (李樹興) and the dean of studies Rev. Zhang Qiulin (張秋林), the spiritual director Rev. You Xijiu (尤錫玖). The editor of 'Mustard Seed' (《芥子》) Rev. Wang Limin (王利民) and Fr. John B. Zhang of Xinde Press (張士江) gave the main speeches. Participants were 51 sisters, 17 priests and 20 lay people.

- June 24-26: A new round of negotiations between the Vatican and China was held in Rome, with Fr. Tadeusz Wojda, though bishop-elect, continuing to lead the Catholic delegation. It was without substantial results, and seems to have met with some obstacles. On June 26, in response to questions from journalists regarding the case of Bp. Shao Zhumin (邵祝敏), the Director of the Holy See's Press Office stated: "The Holy See is observing with grave concern the personal situation of Bp. Peter Shao Zhumin, Bishop of Wenzhou, forcibly removed from his episcopal see some time ago."

- June 27: During a press conference, the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, strongly reacted to the Vatican statement on Bp. Peter Shao Zhumin, saying that China opposes outside interference in its internal affairs. "We oppose any country, any party, using so-called individual cases to interfere in China's internal affairs."

- June 27: News spread that the Wuhan Major Seminary for South-East China had been closed. Since government officials cancelled the ordination ceremony for deacons, as well as a summer program for sisters and the recruitment of new students, the rector Fr. Zhang Li (張力) and the dean of studies Fr. Peng Xin (彭新) resigned. Diocesan bishops called their seminarians back home and made new arrangements for them.

July 2013

- July 8: The 41st Session of the Unesco World Heritage Committee declared the former Sacred Heart cathedral of Xiamen, the Dominicans built in 1917 on Gulangyu island as a "World Heritage Site."

- July 14: The Hong Kong Catholic Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church endorsed a common Chinese translation of the document "From

Conflict to Communion,” an ecumenical document marking the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation.

- July 18: Hong Kong Catholic human rights activists celebrated the Eucharist to remember Liu Xiaobo (劉曉波), the Nobel Peace Prize human rights promoter, who was serving a 11-year prison sentence and who had died in a Shenyang hospital on July 13.

- July 19: The commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association took place at the Great Hall of the People with Yu Zhengsheng (俞正聲), president of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, addressing the participants. He reminded them to maintain the traditional principles of independence and autonomy. He made it clear that the Communist Party intended to keep a tight grip on the Catholic Church. Then, the participants, among whom were 60 bishops, continued the meeting at a hotel. They concluded the meeting with a musical performance in the evening at the Nantang Church, singing religious and patriotic songs.

- July 26-27: An international conference on “Les Missions Etrangères de Paris and China since the Qing Dynasty” was held at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

- July 28: Jinde Charities of Shijiazhuang, Hebei, appealed for further donations on behalf of the recent flood victims in Hunan, Shaanxi and Jilin provinces.

- July 30: In Tianjin, a Catholic woman, Maria Fan Junying (范俊英), died of a cerebral hemorrhage, four days after more than 20 armed men attempted to open the gate of a former hospital founded by the nuns of the Congregation of Charity next to St. Joseph's Cathedral, or the Xikai Church. It was a disputed church property. The Communist authorities confiscated it in 1949. It was meant to be returned to the Church three years ago, but instead was sold to a developer. The attackers started shouting threats and hitting the gate near where Fan was seated with three other women. Amid the confusion, Fan fell to the ground and hurt her head.

August 2017

- August 1: At 12 noon the Holy See press office announced that Bp. Michael Yeung Ming-Cheung (楊鳴章), 72, who was coadjutor bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong since November 13, 2016, had been appointed the ordinary bishop, following the retirement of Card. John Tong. Bp. Yeung was officially installed on August 5th.

- August 4: The *Global Times* reported that the head of the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences, Monsignor Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, speaking in Beijing where he was attending a conference on organ transplants, said: "Pope Francis loves China and loves the people of China, its history and culture."

- August 8-11: The Commission for the promotion of vocations under the CCBC held a meeting in Guiyang, Guizhou, presided over by its chairman Bp. Fang Jianping (方建平) of Tangshan, assisted by the executive secretary Bp. Xiao Zejiang (蕭澤江) of Guizhou with the attendance of provincial and local civil authorities. Bp. Ma Yinglin (馬英林) and Bp. Shen Bin (沈斌) gave speeches, while each of the nine existing major seminaries reported on their situations and problems. On October 8, the participants visited the Church of Zunyi, a historical site for the Communist Party.

- August 13: Death of Bishop Sylvester Li Jiantang (李建唐, 1925-2017), retired bishop of Taiyuan, Shanxi. He was born on December 23, 1925 at Gong'ergou village and in 1939 entered the diocesan minor seminary of Yuci. He was ordained a priest on March 16, 1956, and carried out pastoral ministry in a few parishes. During the period 1966-1980, he was detained at a reform-through-labor camp. In 1980, Li returned to pastoral ministry. In 1991 he was appointed vicar general and parish priest of the Taiyuan cathedral. He was ordained bishop of the diocese on December 18, 1994, and retired on November 24, 2013, after having ordained his successor, Fr. Meng Ningyou (孟寧友), in September 2010. He was on the board of governors of Shanxi Seminary between 1996 and 2008. The Taiyuan Seminary was closed in 2012.

- August 14: Death of Bishop Paul Xie Tingzhe (謝廷哲, 1931- 2017), unofficial bishop of Urumqi, Xinjiang. Bishop Xie grew up in Lanzhou, Gansu province. He entered the minor seminary in Lanzhou in 1945. In the late 1950s, as a seminarian, he was detained for refusing to join the CCPA. He was detained at a reform-through-labor farm in Urumqi, from 1961 to 1980. Upon his release in 1980, he was ordained a priest that same year. He chose to serve the Catholics in Xinjiang, a place where he had spent 20 years of detention. In 1991, he was clandestinely ordained as the bishop of Urumqi, but the Chinese government only recognized him as a priest. In 1994, during a trip abroad, he secretly met with Pope John Paul II. He was an active Internet user and used his blog to spread the Gospel. At times, he sang Latin hymns with other Catholics in a chat group.

- August 17-22: The Verbiest Foundation invited of Bishops Ma Yinglin (馬英林) and Meng Qinglu (孟清祿), with Prof. Tan Lichu (譚立鑄), to visit Louvain University in Belgium.
- August 29: Several priests and lay people defending church property were injured during an assault by security officers and workers in Wangcun village of Laodingshan township, in Changzhi Diocese, Shanxi. The property was confiscated in 1992, but was returned to the church in 2012. In the morning, prior to the assaults, several priests joined hundreds of laypeople in a standoff with the demolition workers. News of the assault went viral on the internet, with some Catholics calling for prayers and support. By the afternoon, about 20 priests and nearly 2,000 laypeople gathered at the site. Unable to carry on with their demolition order, the workers and security officials left the venue.
- August 29: According to UCANews, Communist authorities are continuing to tighten their grip on practicing Christians with at least four regional governments across China issuing notices that restrict children, even if with their parents and teachers, from joining Christian groups and attending religious activities.
- August 31: The formal process for the beatification of Cardinal Celso Costantini (1876-1958), the first Apostolic Delegate to China (from 1922 to 1933), was announced as due to start on October 17 at the cathedral in Concordia, Italy.

September 2017

- September 1: The new school year witnessed the closure of major seminaries in Taiyuan, Shanghai and Wuhan, leaving only eight official major seminaries in operation. Hebei major seminary in Shijiazhuang welcomed 145 seminarians (approx. 90 in theology, 40 in philosophy and the others in the spirituality year, plus 30 sisters). Jilin major seminary has 18 new comers, which brings the total number of seminarians to 55, coming from a dozen of dioceses. Shenyang major seminary, on the contrary, has only 11 seminarians of which 5 were ordained priests on Nov. 15, 2017. The national major seminary has 106 seminarians, Beijing diocesan major seminary 26, Shaanxi major seminary 38 and Sichuan major seminary 17. Therefore, the total number of official major seminarians is 398.
- September 7: Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (李克強) signed and released the revised Regulations for Religious Affairs, which will come into effect on February 1, 2018. They aim to achieve a greater control over religions

in the complicated situation of the country. Church officials fear that newly revised regulations, under the pretext of protecting national security, will be used to further suppress religious activities in the direction of exercising total control.

- September 21: Together with the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the episcopal ordination of Bp. Li Shan (李山), the Beijing North Cathedral was reopened, after some partial restoration work that started in 2016.

- September 25: Death of Bishop Mathew Hu Xiande (胡賢德 1934-2017) of Ningbo, Zhejiang. Between 1950 and 1958 he studied at the seminaries in Ningbo and Shanghai. With the implementation of the campaign for an independent Church, from 1958 to 1965 he was sent to a reform-through-labor camp. In 1978, after being rehabilitated, he continued to work as a farmer until 1984, when he was able to continue his studies at the Shanghai Seminary in Sheshan. He was ordained a priest in 1985 and worked as a pastor in the diocese of Ningbo. In December 1987, he began pastoral work in Cixi, northwest of Ningbo, where there was a lively Catholic community. Bp. Giuseppe Ma Xuesheng (馬學聖) ordained him coadjutor bishop of Ningbo on May 14, 2000. He led the diocese until his death. Both the government and the Holy See recognized Bp. Hu. The bishop was highly respected and loved by the faithful because he contributed with great energy to rebuilding Catholic community life, which had almost become extinct during the Cultural Revolution.

- September 28: The Press Office of the Holy See announced that Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai (韓大輝), 67, since 2010 secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the only high ranking Chinese member of the Roman Curia, was named papal nuncio to Greece, and stationed in Athens.

October 2017

- October 11: Pope Francis met 30 Chinese priests from the Congregation of the Disciples of the Lord (*Congregatio Discipulorum Domini*), founded by the first Apostolic Delegate to China, Archbp. Celso Costantini (1876-1958), whose procedure for beatification started in the Gorizia Diocese, Italy.

- October 15-29: The course on the “Pastoral Directory for Bishops” originally planned by Verbiest Institute in Louvain for 15 bishops from China was cancelled.

- October 17: UCANews reported details of the arrest and imprisonment of Fr. Fei Jisheng (費濟生), of the Liaoning Diocese. He was accused of stealing money and of performing illegal religious activities (running the 'Apostles Courses'). The trouble was caused by the deputy director of God's Love Senior Nursing Home, whom Fr. Fei sacked for alleged corruption.
- October 18-24: The 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party was held in Beijing, with 2,287 delegates in attendance. Bishops Ma Yinglin (馬英林) and Fang Xingyao (房興燿) represented the Catholic Church as observers.
- October 26: The celebration in Taipei of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the Republic of China, with an Eucharistic celebration at Holy Family Church, attended by the Vice President Chen Chien-jen (陳建仁), a fervent Catholic.
- October 30: According to Asianews, from late last year to the first half of this year, the authorities in the three provinces of northeastern China, – Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang – have expelled hundreds of South Korean religious people and closed down their churches, resulting in the disbandment of most local religious communities. In Changchun, the capital of Jilin Province, all South Korean churches, were shut down at the start of October.

November 2017

- November 6-8: A symposium on "Internet Informatics Work" was organized by the Commission for Propaganda and Publications of the "One Association One Conference" in Beijing. Bp. Lei Shiyin (雷世銀) led the symposium, which had around 60 participants.
- November 10: Official installation of Bp. Han Zhihai (韓志海) of Lanzhou, Gansu. It was followed, on November 16, by the installation of Bp. Sun Jigen (孫繼根), coadjutor bishop of Handan, Hebei. No illegitimate or excommunicated bishop took part in either ceremony.
- November 17: Death of Bishop Lukas Li Jingfeng (李鏡峰 1922-2017) of Fengxiang Diocese, Shaanxi. In 2005 he was invited to Rome for the Synod on the Eucharist, but the government did not allow him to attend. On the occasion of the 2012 Synod on New Evangelization, he wrote to the Synod, describing how the faith of Chinese Catholics would "console the Pope" because of their faithfulness. Bishop Lucas Li was born in 1922 in Gaoling County (Shaanxi) into a fervent Catholic family. He joined the

Franciscan Order and became a priest in 1947, covering various duties in the diocese. In 1959, he was arrested and sentenced to forced labor, from which he was released only in 1980. On 25 April of the same year Bp. Zhou Weidao (周維道) ordained him auxiliary bishop of Fengxiang. In 1983 he became the ordinary bishop of Fengxiang. In November 2001, the Chinese authorities subjected the diocese to harsh repression. They ordered “raids” on convents and parishes in the area. Bp. Li disappeared for a few weeks to be indoctrinated on Chinese religious regulations. In 2004, the government recognized the bishop as an official bishop, but without being forced to join the CCPA. Since the beginning of 2017 his health had deteriorated.

- November 21: In the morning, the North Gate Church in the city of Ji'an in Jiangxi Province was raided by more than 100 officers in uniform. They destroyed holy statues and icons, as well as struck and tied up four old Catholics, who guarded the church.

- November 22: Chinese tourist agencies were reported to be prohibited from advertising and planning trips and visits to the Vatican and to St. Peter's Basilica, with fines up to 300,000 yuan. The fact seems amazing, since just the day before, the Holy See Press Office announced that a joint exhibition between the two states was to be held contemporaneously in the Vatican Museum and at the Imperial Palace in Beijing, in March 2018.

December 2017

- December 7: Death of Bishop Yu Chengxin Matthias (余成信, 1928-2017), auxiliary bishop of the Hanzhong Diocese, but existing as a priest only. Bp. Yu was born into an old Catholic family on 28 February 1928 at Yujiawan Village, Hantai District. His family included his elder brother, Bp. Bartholomew Yu Chengti (余成悌) and a sister. All three consecrated their lives to God. He studied at the Kaifeng Regional Seminary, and was ordained a priest in 1980. From then on, he carried on priestly ministry in the area of Fengjiaying, Wangjiabao and Shangyuanguan. On December 12, 1989, Bp. Li Zhengrong (李振榮) of Hebei ordained him a bishop. But he always considered himself just a priest, and ministered as such. In 2007 a slight stroke impaired his working ability, and he retired to a convalescent home, receiving the support of the Diocese, together with the love and concern of the faithful. On May 13, 2017, just before the feast of St. Matthew, the Diocese solemnly celebrated his 90th birthday with a concelebrated Mass with all the diocesan clergy in attendance. On December 7, due to illness and old age, he returned to the heavenly Father at Xiaozhai Church.

- December 11: The Shenyang Pharmaceutical University, Liaoning, notified its students that they are not allowed to organize any Western religious festivals. The move was intended to help the younger generation to "build cultural confidence" and not to be "blindly excited about western holidays," especially Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.
- December 16: St. Ignatius Cathedral in the Xujiahui district of the Shanghai Diocese was opened again after being closed for more than two years for renovations. Fr. Wu Jianlin (吳建林), celebrated the dedication Mass, joined by about 50 priests. However, despite some expectation, Bp. Ma Daqin (馬達欽) did not attend the ceremony.
- December 20-21: Another round of the Sino-Vatican negotiations was held in Beijing. The Catholic delegation could meet some Chinese bishops.
- December 25: The celebration of Christmas in China was solemnly conducted in the official open churches, but the number of attendees was reduced, and several underground communities were downsized to small assemblies. This was due to the official campaign against the celebration of Christmas. Since 2014, authorities have wanted to "uphold the purity of Chinese culture and resist the corrosion of Western religious culture." In December, several universities and official authorities instructed people to avoid celebrating Christmas. Hong Kong Cable News noted that recently there had been an increasing number of official surveys of students' religious beliefs. Questions in the survey included whether there were any Christian missionaries on campus, and if there were Christian gathering points. Other invasive questioning related to which students and teachers had embraced Christianity.
- December 27: The only Catholic church in Zhifang, a village in the Huyi District, near Xi'an (Shaanxi), was demolished by force and without any reason. It was built in 1999 with all the necessary permits from the Religious Affairs Bureau. Without consulting the community, the authorities issued a simple note on December 20th, and on the afternoon of December 27th proceeded to tear down the building under the pretext of development.