

REGULATIONS CONCERNING CATHOLIC CHURCH AFFAIRS IN CHINA

translated by Peter Barry



Editor's Note: The following regulations concerning church affairs were published in the most recent issue of Catholic Church in China (#1, 1987). We also reprint here previous sets of regulations published in Catholic Church in China in 1980 and 1981.

On June 3, 1980, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference issued "A Decision concerning a reaffirmation of the clergy's faculties to administer the sacraments;" on July 23, 1981, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference and the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission together issued "Regulations concerning the clergy's faculties to administer the sacraments." Facts of the last few years have proven that these two documents were advantageous for the administration of church affairs, for the safeguarding of our church's interests, and for the spiritual benefit of the broad mass of the clergy and Catholics. Based on the present development of our country's church affairs, and to strengthen the administration of church affairs and protect our church's sovereignty, we have again especially formulated the following regulations:

I. Supplementary regulations to "The Decision concerning a reaffirmation of the clergy's faculties to administer the sacraments"

1. Every cleric's faculties to administer the sacraments, must be granted by the bishop having ordinary power or the diocesan head. It

must also be reported for the record to the proper church administrative committee, at the provincial, city or autonomous region level. If a cleric goes to another diocese, he must carry an introductory letter from his own bishop or diocesan head, and he must get permission of the local bishop or diocesan head before administering the sacraments or saying Mass.

2. A cleric who is authorized to administer the sacraments and to say Mass must, for the time being, observe the traditional ceremonies and regulations of our Chinese church. Without permission of the Bishops Conference and the Church Administrative Commission, no one may make unauthorized changes in, or simplifications of, the ceremonies.

3. A cleric who has been punished and stripped of his political rights due to violating the law, immediately and automatically loses his authority to administer the sacraments. For the abovementioned cleric to have his authority to administer the sacraments restored, it must be approved by the local church administrative committee (province, city or autonomous region). Afterwards, the bishop having ordinary power or the diocesan head of the place will again bestow the authority upon him.

4. In accordance with China's Constitution and the Chinese Catholic Church's principle of the independent administration of the church, clerics from foreign countries, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, who come to China to travel or to visit relatives, do not have faculties to administer the sacraments. If such a cleric, for the sake of his own personal religious life, asks to say Mass, the ordinary bishop of the place may grant special permission for private Mass to be said at a place designated by him.

If it is discovered that someone has administered the sacraments or said Mass without permission, then the local diocesan bishop and church administrative committee (province, city or autonomous region) will explain to the person our church's principle of independent administration, and exhort him to desist. If in special circumstances there is a request for a public Mass, then permission must be sought by the local church administrative committee (province, city or autonomous region) from the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission and the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference.

II. Regulations regarding adjustments to diocesan boundaries

For the sake of convenience in governing dioceses and the



requirements of pastoral work, if the cities and districts of a diocese are not in conformity with civil district boundaries, then based on practical needs, the local church administrative committee (province, city or autonomous region) can, after discussion with the concerned dioceses in the same province (city or autonomous region), carry out adjustments. If necessary, adjustments which have been made

in the past can be re-made. After the adjustments, church affairs matters and questions of personnel can be resolved by harmonious discussion between the dioceses. Once resolved, administration is determined in accordance with the new adjustments. Diocesan adjustments should be reported as soon as possible to the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission and to the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference.

III. Regulations regarding the selection of bishops and the ordination of priests

1. Every diocese because of pastoral needs and the administration of church affairs may elect and consecrate a bishop. To do this, it must first apply for and obtain the agreement of the local church administrative committee (province, city or autonomous region). Then representatives of the priests and Catholics, after fervent prayer for the light of the Holy Spirit, discuss and approve candidates for election as bishop. Finally, the election is held, and the candidate with over half the votes is elected.

2. The episcopal candidates must be priests devoted to God's glory and the work of saving souls, must be patriotic and law abiding, supportive of the policy of independently running the church, virtuous and talented, concerned about the spiritual and material needs of the priests, have good rapport with the Catholic faithful, enjoy great prestige, be at least 30 years of age and ordained a priest for over 5 years, of dignified bearing and in good health.

3. Once the new bishop is elected, the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference and the Church Administrative Commission should

immediately be informed, and a day chosen within the following six months for the consecration.

4. If a bishop violates provision #3 of article I above, he immediately loses his episcopal authority. For restoration of his episcopal authority permission of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference and the Catholic Church Administrative Commission must be obtained.

5. For a seminarian to be ordained a priest, after he graduates from the seminary, the seminary will make a report of his spiritual, moral and scholastic achievements to the church administrative committee (province, city or autonomous region) which sent him to the seminary, as well as to the diocese to which the seminarian belongs. Afterwards, the appropriate church administrative committee and the seminarian's ordinary bishop or diocesan head will decide whether to permit the seminarian to be ordained a priest.

These regulations take effect from the date of passage. If anything conflicts with these regulations, these regulations are the standard.

Power of interpretation of these regulations belongs to the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference and to the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission.

Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference
Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission

November, 1986

Appendix I

A Decision Concerning the Reaffirmation of the Clergy's Faculties to Administer the Sacraments

In order to strengthen diocesan administration and to maintain the church's purity, this Bishops' Conference reaffirms the church's regulations concerning the clergy's faculties to administer the sacraments:

1. Every cleric's faculties to administer the sacraments must be approved by the bishop having ordinary power or the local diocesan

leader.

2. The faculties to administer the sacraments or to engage in missionary activity of a cleric who is visiting China from abroad must be granted by the bishop having ordinary power or the local diocesan leader.

Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference

June 3, 1980

Appendix II

Regulations Concerning the Clergy's Authority to Administer the Sacraments

In order to safeguard the interests of the Chinese church and the spiritual good of the great mass of the clergy and Catholics, and to ensure the sacred nature and effectiveness of the sacraments and the Mass, and to prevent bad elements from carrying out unlawful activities, wantonly committing sacrilege and deceiving good Catholics in the church's name, the standing committee of the Catholic Church Administrative Commission and the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference not only requests the church administrative committee of each province (city, district) and each diocese to strictly implement "The Decision concerning the reaffirmation of the clergy's faculties to administer the sacraments," but they also promulgate the following special regulations:

1. Clerics must administer the sacraments and offer Mass in the territory determined by their provincial (city, district) church administrative committee and by their ordinary bishop or diocesan head. "Be shepherds of the flock which God has entrusted to you, and watch over it." (1 Peter 5:2)

2. Any cleric who has violated the laws of the country and been punished, or who has been stripped of his political rights, immediately loses his faculties to administer the sacraments. For this authority to be renewed, permission must be granted by the provincial (city, district) church administrative committee and by the cleric's ordinary bishop or diocesan head.

3. In order to elect and consecrate a bishop, permission must be obtained from the provincial (city, district) and local church administrative committees. And for the record it must be reported to the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission and to the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference.

4. Clergy must observe the traditional church regulations regarding ceremonies, the administration of the seven sacraments and the offering of Mass. No unauthorized changes or simplifications may be made without the approval of the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission and the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference.

5. Clerics who go to places outside the church to offer Mass and to administer the sacraments must first contact the concerned government office and enlist its support.

The provincial (city, district) church administrative committee and the bishop with ordinary power or the diocesan head should terminate the faculties to administer the sacraments of any clergyman who does not observe the above regulations or who is incompetent, and who stubbornly refuses to change even after undergoing education, and report this for the record to the concerned local government office and to the Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission.

It is hoped that each church administrative committee, each diocese and the whole body of the clergy will strictly observe and carry out the above regulations.

Chinese Catholic Church Administrative Commission
Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference

July 23, 1981