

## *China Church Update*

### **Pope John Paul II Reveals Name of "Secret Cardinal"**

On May 29, 1991, the Vatican announced that Bishop Gong Pinmei, who spent 30 years in prison in China, had been made a cardinal in 1979. Bishop Gong's name appeared on the list of newly appointed cardinals who are to receive the red hat on June 28, 1991. Bishop Gong was born on August 2, 1901, and ordained a priest in 1930. In 1935 he became the parish priest of Zhangjialou and, in 1949 he was consecrated bishop of Suzhou, Jiangsu province. In 1950 he became bishop of Shanghai, and in 1951 was also named administrator of the Dioceses of Nanjing and Suzhou.



On September 8, 1955, Bishop Gong was arrested along with 27 priests and several hundred Catholics. Bishop Gong's trial was delayed for five years. Charges against the bishop included obstructing land reform, rejecting the Patriotic Association and engaging in counter-revolutionary activities. In March, 1960, the People's High Court of Shanghai found him guilty of all charges and sentenced him to life imprisonment in Shanghai's Municipal Prison. On July 3, 1985, the People's High Court released him on parole. He did not, however, regain complete freedom until 1988. At that time he was permitted to leave China to go to the United States for medical treatment. Presently, he is living in a clergy home in Stamford, Connecticut. He is honored as the fourth cardinal in China's history. (The others: Tian Gengxin made cardinal in 1946, Qingdao, transferred same year to Beijing, deceased; Yu Pin, bishop of Nanjing, made cardinal in 1969, president of Fujen University, Taipei, deceased; Wu Cheng-Chung made cardinal in 1988, Hong Kong.)

On June 17, a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry said that "the recent announcement by the Vatican that

the Pope had appointed Gong Pinmei cardinal was interference in China's internal affairs and was unacceptable." He commented further, "This manner of acting can only place a new obstacle in the improvement of relations between China and the Vatican. We express regret for this."

According to a report of the New China News Agency, dated June 19, a joint statement issued by the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference of Beijing, the Patriotic Association and the Church Administrative Commission, criticized the Roman Curia for interfering in the internal affairs of the Chinese Catholic Church. The statement said "that the recent Roman Curia decision announcing the appointment of Gong Pinmei as Cardinal violates the principle of the independent administration of the Chinese Catholic Church and is interference in the internal affairs of the Chinese Catholic Church." The statement added "For the Roman Curia secretly to appoint Gong Pinmei a Cardinal while still serving his sentence and the decision to announce this 12 years later exposes once more the Vatican's attempt to regain control over the Chinese Catholic Church and to divide the Chinese church." The statement stressed, "that in accordance with the stipulation of the Chinese Constitution, 'Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination,' and in order to protect the nation's independence and sovereignty and the holy church's interest...[the Chinese Catholic Church] has chosen the road of independent and autonomous administration of the church and the self-election and self-consecration of its bishops."

Three Catholic organizations in Shanghai: the Shanghai Diocese, the Shanghai Catholic Patriotic Association and the Shanghai Catholic Church Administrative Commission jointly issued a similar statement expressing opposition to the Vatican appointment. This statement added, however, "It is an act of a purely political nature. We Shanghai clergy and Catholics justly and firmly oppose it."

The above statements by Chinese government and church officials seem relatively restrained in comparison to past statements in reaction to Vatican appointments.

### **Bishop Joseph Fan Zhongliang, S.J., Arrested**

On June 11, Chinese authorities again arrested Bishop Fan

Zhongliang, S.J. 75, the alleged underground bishop of Shanghai. He was on the way to Wenzhou, a coastal city in eastern Zhejiang province. Bishop Fan has already spent 15 years in a labour camp in western Qinghai province. He was released in 1982.

### **New Bishop for Kaohsiung**

On April 20, it was announced that Pope John Paul II had named Bishop Paul Shan Kuo-hsi, S.J., of Hualien, bishop of Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Bishop Shan, 67, succeeds Bishop Joseph Cheng Tien-hsiang, O.P., who died last August. Kaohsiung is 290 kilometers south of Taipei. Bishop Shan will continue to administer the diocese of Hualien until another bishop is named. Also, at its April 16-18 meeting the Taiwan bishops' conference re-elected Bishop Shan as president for another four years.

### **Jesuits Establish a New China Province**

The new China Province of the Society of Jesus will include Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Mainland China. Formerly, the China Province included Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam; the Macau-Hong Kong Province included Malaysia and Singapore. Fr. Aloysius Berchmans Chang Chun-shen was appointed overall provincial superior with the actual implementation of responsibility apportioned to two newly appointed regional superiors: Fr. Aloysius Chang Yu-kung for Taiwan and Fr. William Lo Pak-huen for Macau-Hong Kong. Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore have been made dependent regions of the Indonesian Province and Vietnam has been made an independent region.

### **China Jesuit Service**

Within the Jesuit China Province, Fr. Francesco Belfiori has been appointed delegate for the China Jesuit Service succeeding Fr. Ismael Zuloaga. The China Jesuit Service was originally called the Delegation for the Chinese Apostolate. Its purpose is to promote an interest in China among Jesuits around the world. Fr. Zuloaga continues with China related work.

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