

## **Documentation**

# *Regulations of the Chinese Bishops Conference Regarding the Election and Consecration of Bishops*

*Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference  
translated by Peter Barry, M.M.*

The Standing Committee of the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference held its second meeting on May 17, 1993, in Jinan, Shangdong Province. Based on the opinions of the bishops of each diocese, and in order to increase glory to God and for the benefit of the Chinese Church's pastoral work, the Standing Committee of the Conference drafted "Regulations of the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference Regarding the Election and Consecration of Bishops." The Church Administrative Committee of each province, city and autonomous region, and each diocese, is urged to carry out the regulations conscientiously.

Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference

May 18, 1993

Bishops are the successors of the apostles; they are established as pastors in the church by the Holy Spirit; they take God's place in overseeing the flock; they are teachers of the doctrine, celebrants of the sacred liturgy, responsible for governing the church and the servants of Christ. Once consecrated, the bishop receives the authority to carry out the liturgy, to teach and to govern. In his own diocese the bishop has the jurisdiction to perform all the tasks his pastoral office requires.

If the pastoral needs of the diocese require it, an auxiliary bishop may be chosen. When the see becomes vacant, the auxiliary bishop can become the ordinary of the diocese.

In accordance with "The Constitutions of the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference," we issue the following special

regulations:

1. When a see is vacant, and the pastoral work and the administration of church affairs require the election and ordination of an ordinary or an auxiliary bishop, the diocese must first apply for permission from the provincial (municipal, autonomous region) church administrative committee, and obtain the agreement of the local government.

2. The candidate for bishop must be a priest of strong faith, strictly observant of the regulations of the clerical state, of good moral conduct, capable and virtuous, a devout worshiper of God, fervently giving himself to the glory of God and to the saving of souls, loving of the motherland and law abiding, supportive of the principle of the independent administration of the church, concerned about the spiritual and material needs of the clergy, having good relations with the faithful and being deeply respected by them, having some advanced knowledge of theology, being at least 35 years of age and a priest for over 5 years, of dignified bearing and in good health.

3. After fervent prayers for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and after discussion and agreement, in which they conscientiously and responsibly consider the qualifications for candidates, all the clergy, seminarians, Sisters and representatives of the Catholics are to nominate one or two candidates, and then carry out a secret ballot.

4. For the episcopal election it is necessary that the bishops responsible for the church administrative committee on the provincial (municipal, autonomous region) level, or the bishop of a neighboring diocese, or a highly respected senior priest, supervise the election. A record must be kept of the election process and those in charge of the election should sign their names.

5. When the election is completed, the name of the person who has received over half the number of votes, his background and the circumstances of his election are to be reported to the church administrative committee on the provincial (municipal, autonomous region) level. After examination by the provincial (municipal, autonomous region) church administrative committee, the name should be presented to the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference for its approval, and the result reported to the concerned bu-

reaus of the local government. After receiving the approval of the Bishops' Conference, the consecration of the new bishop should take place within three months.

After examination, if the nominee does not conform to the requirements for candidates or if his election was not in accordance with the regulations, a new election should be carried out in accordance with these regulations. After this, the result should again be presented to the Bishops' Conference for its approval.

6. Before the new bishop assumes office, he should swear to uphold the deposit of faith preached by Christ, to be faithful to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, to be loyal to the motherland, to observe the Constitution and to serve the people.

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### *Cardinal Roger Etchegaray Thanks Chinese Hosts*

(The following is part of Cardinal Etchegaray's statement before leaving Beijing for Rome on 7 September).

...All these people with whom I spoke would like to turn the pages of history, the oldest of which Beijing and Rome have had difficulty in writing together, the most recent of which were written separately.

Throughout my stay, I never ceased to think of Chinese Catholics and to pray for them. Theirs is a growing Church, made fruitful here as elsewhere by the example and suffering of witnesses to the faith. She has a right to universal prayer and solidarity, so that as soon as possible she may rediscover a unity which has been torn apart until now but which is gradually being healed in reconciliation and in recognition of the bond with the Pope.

How many times have I heard the word "friendship" spoken in China, and how many times have I found myself saying it! It is more than a slogan or a way to induce compliance; it responds to an urgent need, the deepest need which God has brought forth in the heart of every person (*Osservatore Romano*, Weekly edition, 15 September, 1993).

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