

China Church Update

(The news items below are gathered and summarized from a variety of sources by the Holy Spirit Study staff. The main sources are listed at the end of the article.)

National Catholic Organizations of Open Church Set Goals

On February 20-21, the two government-sanctioned national Catholic organizations in China: the Bishops' Conference and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, met to formulate goals to better develop the open Church.

The goals of the Bishops' Conference were:

- to speed up liturgical reform, especially the implementation of the Chinese Mass;
- issue a general set of teaching materials and course outlines for seminaries;
- assist dioceses ready to elect new bishops to fill vacant sees.

The goals of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association were:

- help implement the 5th Congress' resolution in provinces and major cities;
- set up formation courses for young priests;
- train officials of the Catholic Patriotic Association;
- operate economic projects to promote financial self-reliance

Fuzhou Celebrates Centenary of Martyrs Beatification

On May 19, 1993, Fuzhou's Ximen Church celebrated the centenary of the beatification of five Spanish Dominicans who were martyred in the 18th century. The Eucharistic liturgy was concelebrated by 10 priests and attended by more than 800 Catholics from various parishes in the diocese.

Bishop Joseph Zheng Changcheng asked the Fuzhou Catholics to pray for guidance and petition Bishop Sanz, one of the martyrs, to help find a way for the communion and unity of the Church in China.

Chinese Divine Word Priest Ordained Bishop of Yanzhou

Divine Word Father Thomas Zhao Fengwu of Jinan, Shandong Province, was ordained Bishop of Yanzhou on May 18, 1993. The episcopal see of Yanzhou had been vacant since China-appointed Bishop Shi Lingde died during the Cultural Revolution.

When Yanzhou became an apostolic vicarate in 1924, it was entrusted to the Society of the Divine Word. In 1946, Yanzhou became a diocese headed by Divine Word Bishop Theodore Schu.

Bishop Zhao, the former rector of Yanzhou Cathedral, was born in 1920 in Jining, Shandong. He was ordained a priest of the Society of Divine Word in 1945. During the Cultural Revolution he was sent to a re-education through labor camp.

Benedictines to Open Hospital in Jilin

Benedictine Sisters from Korea, Germany and the United States are preparing to open a 600 bed hospital in Meihekou, Jilin Province, 860 kilometers northeast of Beijing in 1995. The population in the area, mostly ethnic Korean, is in urgent need of medical and health facilities as well as trained medical personnel. According to Bishop John Li Xuesong of Jilin, the hospital is a joint effort of the Benedictines who served in the area from 1937 until 1954, the Jilin Provincial government and the Religious Affairs Bureau. The project is being sponsored by Misereor, a German Catholic development agency. The hospital will be administered by the Benedictines and a Benedictine Brother, experienced in hospital construction, is presently at the site monitoring the work.

China Publishes First One Volume Complete Bible

The first 50,000 copies of the complete Chinese Bible has rolled off the press. The project plan, which is the work of the government recognized Catholic Church, is to publish 200,000 copies. The "new" Bible is actually a reprint of a translation of the Franciscan-run Studium Biblicum edition produced over a 22 year period. The work, begun in Beijing in 1946 was completed in Hong Kong after the Biblicum moved there in 1948. The new translation uses simplified characters.

Bishop Ordained for New Ningxia Diocese

John Baptist Liu Jingshan, 80, was named first bishop of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in northwest China on August 1, 1993. Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region was recently established as a diocese of the open Church. The bishop's ordination Mass was attended by 1,000 people including 5 bishops and several priests from neighboring provinces.

Bishop Liu was born in 1912 in Dengkou, Nei Mongol. He was ordained in 1942 and assigned to teach in the minor seminary. Fr. Liu was jailed in 1951 in an incident involving his work with the Legion of Mary. In 1966 he was transferred from prison to a reform through labour farm. Released in 1970, he returned to his home village where he earned his living as a peasant. With the opening of

churches in the early '80s, Fr. Liu went back to Dengkou to serve in the church there. In 1983 he went to minister in Yinchuan. Today, at 80, Bishop Liu feels he is too old to head the new diocese but he nonetheless wishes to thank God for giving him the responsibility to erect it.

Ningxia which became an autonomous Region in 1958, has a population which is 40% Hui, a Muslim minority group.

The diocese consists of 7 parishes, 5000 Catholics, 3 priests and 6 Sisters. There are presently 4 seminarians: one is studying in Beijing and 3 are in Xian.

Bishop Joseph Fan Xueyan Lovingly Remembered

According to the Taipei Archdiocesan newspaper, 7000 faithful, under the watchful eye of police in plain clothes, gathered to attend the first anniversary Mass commemorating the death of Bishop Joseph Fan Xueyan. The Mass, presided by Peter Liu Guandong, bishop of Yixian, was concelebrated by about 30 priests. The ceremony took place on April 14 at Xiaowangting. No incidents were reported.

Death of Bishop Qian Huimin, Nanjing

Government approved Bishop Qian Huimin, 82, of Nanjing died of a heart attack on May 20, 1993. Some 500 Catholics attended the funeral Mass concelebrated on May 22 by 11 priests.

Born in 1912 of a Catholic family in Zhangjiagang, Jiangsu Province, Qian entered the major seminary in Shanghai in 1934 and was ordained in 1940. Following his ordination he exercised his priestly ministry in Chongming, Haimen and Nantong before being named vicar general of the diocese of Haimen in 1949. In 1980 he was named administrator of Nanjing and ordained bishop in the open Church in July 1981. The Nanjing Diocese today has 60,000 Catholics, 11 priests and 27 Sisters. Fr. Liu Yuanren, priest of the Nanjing Diocese and vice-rector of the National Seminary in Beijing, will serve as administrator of the diocese until a new bishop is elected. On his death bed, Bishop Qian urged all the priests to live their commitment to the priesthood faithfully and to serve the Catholics to the best of their ability.

News of a Bishop Who Disappeared 30 Months ago

Bishop Peter Chen Jianzhang, 73, clandestine bishop of Baoding, is apparently still alive in a undisclosed location. A photo taken in October 1992, and recently sent to his family shows the calm, smiling face of an elderly bald man with a long white beard and seemingly in good health. Information on the back of the photo, however, reveals that the bishop suffers from diabetes, that his right side is paralyzed

and that he is confined to a wheelchair.

Born on March 6, 1920 in Xushui, Hebei Province, Peter Chen was ordained a priest in 1947. He was first condemned to prison in 1954. He was released in 1980 only to be re-arrested one year later. So far, Peter Chen has spent more than 30 years in prisons, labour camps or other forms of detention. He was secretly ordained bishop of Yixian in 1983 and chosen in 1988 to head the diocese of Baoding as successor to Bishop Joseph Fan, the last bishop of this diocese to be named by the Holy See. Bishop Fan died in a rest home in April 1992.

Sino-Vatican Relations

On June 19, 1993, Pope John Paul indicated a strong desire to visit China. This wish was expressed while the Holy Father was visiting Macerata, Italy, the birthplace of Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) who served in China for 27 years. According to Liu Bainian, vice-chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, the visit is impossible while the Vatican maintains diplomatic relations with Taipei. Beijing has insisted for years that, before diplomatic relations can be normalized, the Vatican must cut ties with Taiwan and not interfere in China's internal affairs.

Nonetheless both China and the Vatican have confirmed that some negotiations had taken place between them. This does not necessarily mean there will be a normalization of diplomatic relations soon but it would seem to indicate an openness on both sides for dialogue.

CIRS and the Hong Kong Theology Association Sponsor Program for Mainland Seminary Lecturers

From August 13 to September 4, thirteen priests between the ages of 26 and 70, all lecturers in eight of China's open Church seminaries, participated in a training program sponsored by the Catholic Institute for Religion and Society and the Hong Kong Theology Association. According to Fr. Luke Tsui Kam-yiu, executive director of CIRS, the program gave the participants an introduction to the content, scope and methodology of modern dogmatic theology, with a special focus on Christology and ecclesiology. The group was originally accompanied by Anthony Liu Bainian, vice-chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. This was the first time the China mainland had sent such a large group of priests to study theology outside of China.

Mu Village Holds First Ordination in 50 Years

Mu village, Hebei province, originally evangelized by Matteo Ricci, S.J., in the 16th century, ordained two young men to the priest-

hood on July 3, 1993. This was Mu village's first ordination in 50 years. Although today Mu village has only about 400 Catholics, more than 2,000 Catholics attended the ordination ceremony concelebrated by Bishop John Liu Dinghan of Cangzhou, Liu Jinghe of Tangshan and 20 other priests. An additional 1,000, all non-Catholics, were attracted to the scene.

The two priests, Frs. Joseph Shao Zhanyuan and John Li Yongzai are graduates of Hebei's Provincial Catholic Seminary in Shijiazhuang. Before ordination Fr. Shao went to Sheshan Regional Seminary for additional studies and Fr. Li taught in the diocesan minor seminary in Jing county. Before being given their parish assignments, the young men will spend some time in pastoral ministry.

Major Religions in Shanghai Form Realty Company

On August 4, 1993, Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants and Taoists in Shanghai formed the Shanghai Zongxin Real Estate Development Company. According to Shen Baozhi, chancellor of the Shanghai diocese, the new company is not part of the diocesan structure, but it will assist the Church secure its land holdings and make money for the development of religion. Furthermore, it will help the church select investors and partners in the development of its real estate. The local Catholic church, says the chancellor, owns about one-third of the 1.3 million square meters of land and property that the new company hopes to develop. The enterprise has already attracted property developers from Hong Kong and signed contracts with at least two firms to rebuild a church and to construct commercial buildings. Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, the chairman of the company's board of directors, says that the profit from the real estate development will enable the diocese to be self-supporting and also provide services to the poor. The secretary of the Shanghai Catholic Patriotic Association, John Tang Guozhi, says that profits will be equally shared between the diocese and the developer. Some people have expressed dismay that the churches would be so willing, as the Chinese saying goes, "to jump into the sea". They wonder whether it is ever good for the church to move beyond religion to business interests.

Cardinal's Visit Signals Improved Vatican Ties

Cardinal Etchegaray, 71, head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, was officially invited by Wu Shaozu, China's sports minister, to attend China's Seventh National Games. The Cardinal was in China from September 3-8. While there, the Cardinal was received by Bu He, a vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Zhang Shengzuo, director of the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council. He also had an informal meeting with Bishops Joseph Zong Huaide, President of the Government-approved Bishops' Conference and Michael Fu Tieshan

of Beijing. Although China maintains that the Cardinal was not in Beijing as a Vatican official, but as a personal guest of the sports minister, many could not help but read the event as a sign of hope that Sino-Vatican relations, virtually in cold storage for 36 years, were slowly but finally on the mend (cf. *From the Editor* p. 4).

Some House Churches Registering with Government

According to CNCR's September 17 issue, many house churches in Beijing are choosing to register with the government. Although previously considered completely illegal, house churches are now being allowed to register and continue meeting. The cost cited for registering is RMB50 per house church. Certain regulations, however, have been imposed: 1) no foreigners are allowed to attend the meetings; 2) no religious materials from overseas can be used; 3) no preaching to those under 18 years of age is permitted, and 4) the Three-Self Patriotic Movement regulations must be followed. Some house churches, however, choose not to register since they want nothing to do with the TSPM.

Managements Fees Being Levied on Religious Believers

Tian Feng, China's official Protestant Church monthly magazine reports that some local officials have begun to levy "management and service fees" on local temples and churches under their jurisdiction. A document dated May 25, 1993, but without specifying the name of any particular county has come to light. The document is entitled: *XX County People's Government Nationalities and Religious Affairs Office Notice Regarding Management Fees for Places of Religious Activity*. According to the document, "Each place of religious activity shall report its income on the form provided and pay the fee to the nationalities and Religious Affairs Office twice a year on June 15 and December 15. The standard fees are "five percent of each religious place's income for that year. Where this is below RMB 250, the fee is RMB250."

Reference Sources

Catholic Church in China, official publication of the government approved Church
China Daily, Beijing, English language newspaper
China Study Journal
CNCR China News and Church Report
EDA Agence d'information des Missions Etrangères de Paris
Hong Kong Standard
Holy Spirit Study Centre Research Information
South China Morning Post
UCANEWS, Union of Catholic Asian News