

Documentation***Concerning the Validity
of the Alleged Holy See Instructions***

Translated by Peter Barry, M.M.

(Editor's Note) What follows is a translation from Chinese of an undated and unsigned document presently circulating in mainland China in at least three slightly different versions. The language of the document or the way of expression is different from that of our regular Church documents. Number 5, for example, is not in accord with Catholic theology nor Canon Law both of which specify clearly that Catholics and other Christian believers can share the same Eucharist, which is the sign of highest unity and communion only when they are in full ecclesial communion. Furthermore, the document is attributed to the Holy See's representative in Hong Kong, but according to our knowledge he has sent no instruction whatsoever to Mainland China. While the message of reconciliation behind the words is valid, reconciliation itself can only be achieved when it is founded on truth and charity.

Eight Instructions from the Holy See's Representative in Hong Kong

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1. Since the beginning of Vatican Council II, the laws of the church have gradually been undergoing change and moving in a new direction. In fact the law has already been transformed. This is especially true of the liturgy. Change has taken place in every country. There is no need to say much more about this.

2. Great change has also occurred in the area of Christian unity and in relations with all the separated churches and denominations. From the time of Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI and

up to the present Pope, the popes have taken the lead in contacting, visiting and praying with them. The church also has a special prayer which everyone in the church can pray together. The prayer beseeches Our Lord to bestow unity among Christians of every denomination. It prays for a new reconciliation among separated brothers and sisters, that they might love one another and move further along the road to unity. It prays that old attitudes, like disdain for others, insulting, criticizing or attacking them, and a lack of harmony will all be wiped out. It prays that a new spirit will arise, a spirit of love, of peace and harmony, of communal prayer, of mutual understanding and of unity, so that all churches might reach the goal of becoming one flock.

3. If it is like this for other Christians and schismatics it is even more so like this for patriotic Chinese Catholics. They are all God's children. Their bishops and priests firmly believe in God and are loyal to the church. They wholeheartedly work for God, desiring to bring salvation to all Catholics. Because of the special circumstances and the difficulties they faced, they had to act in this way so that the Gospel of Christ could continue to be proclaimed. We should sympathize with their sufferings, and absolutely not criticize or attack them. Rather we should try to join them and work with them so that the church will follow a road which is open and above board. In this way we will help them to become united with the Pope.

4. The Pope understands the situation of the Chinese Church. Because of this the Pope has given the Chinese Church all kinds of special authority. It is as if she is not subject to church law. The Pope not only does not criticize the behaviour of Chinese Church members, he does not punish them for it. None of their bishops or priests has been excommunicated. Therefore, we should refrain from slander, from creating rumors and from sowing discord. What benefit is there in this for either the church or the Catholics? It only leads to division and a weakening of the church.

5. Bishops and priests belonging to the Patriotic Association were ordained by real bishops. They are real bishops and priests. The sacraments they administer are real sacraments.

The Masses which they celebrate are real Masses, and the Body of Christ which they consecrate is the real Body of Christ. Why forbid Catholics from participating in their Masses? With the church in such a situation, the Pope does not manifest his attitude. This is because it is difficult for the Pope to say anything; he cannot say yes, nor can he say no. Since the Pope does not make any statement, we can understand that by his silence he gives consent.

6. As for seminaries, if the philosophy, theology and other subjects taught in them are all pure doctrine and not heresy, and if the superiors are all good priests, then we should send candidates to attend them.

7. Regarding the sacrament of Holy Orders, if someone has doubts whether his was proper, then he can be ordained again conditionally. If the original ordination was proper, in order to obtain legal permission (permission of the government), another ceremony can be performed. But it is not necessary to recite all the prayers.

8. The church is lacking in Bibles, holy pictures, spiritual books and medals. If the Patriotic Association publishes the Bible and prints holy pictures, we should thank God for their help. We should think of ways to use these religious articles to spread and to strengthen the faith. Overseas, Catholics and Protestants have published the Bible together, and the church by no means forbids Catholics from reading the Protestant Bible. What about the Bible published by the Patriotic Association? The Patriotic Association Bible is the Catholic Bible. Why should we not be able to read it?
