

China Church and News Update 1995

A Review

Consecration of Bishops

Bishop James Su Zhemin, (underground), publicly consecrated bishop of Baoding, on June 13, 1995.

Joseph Chen Chu, consecrated bishop of Zhanjiang, Guangdong Province, on March 19, 1995.

John Liu Shigong, 67, consecrated bishop of Wumeng, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, October 12, 1995.

Deaths of Bishops

Yang Gaojian, 81, bishop of Changde, Hunan Province, died on January 20, 1995.

Paul Fan Yufei, 63, bishop of Zhouzhi, Shaanxi Province, died on April 5, 1995.

Wang Zicheng, bishop of Lixian, Hunan Province, died on May 26, 1995.

Deng Yiming (Dominic Tang), 87, Archbishop of Guangzhou, in Stamford, Ct., USA on June 17, 1995.

Underground Clerics Released

According to a recent report, three clerics in the underground church were released from detention. They are:

Bishops Han Dingxiang and **Jia Zhiguo** of Hebei Province, both taken August 27 and released at the end of October.

Bishop Zeng Jingmu of Yujiang, Jiangxi Province, arrested October 4 and released October 18.

Father Chi Huitian of Hebei Province. arrested April 26 and released in late October (UCAN No. 846/A November 20-22, 1995).

Significant Happenings, 1995

A topic which surfaced on a number of occasions during 1995 was unity and reconciliation in the Church in China.

1. Pope John Paul II addressed a message of unity to the Chinese People in Manila in January.

2. He repeated the message to the bishops of Taiwan during their ad limina visit in Rome in August.

3. Proposals for achieving unity were published in an open letter made public in 1995.

4. Underground bishops made a plea for unity during the celebration of the 700th anniversary of the arrival of John of Montecorvino in China.

5. Josef Cardinal Tomko in Taiwan for the celebration in honour of John of Montecorvino also spoke of the need for unity.

Pope Addresses the Chinese People

In January at the Tenth World Youth Day in Manila, where China had sent a 24 member delegation to attend the celebration, the Holy Father exhorted the Chinese Catholics "to be the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world," but he could not help mentioning the rift existing within the Catholic community. He exhorted the faithful to love one another with "understanding, respect, forbearance, forgiveness and reconciliation. The Holy Father stressed that, "Unity is not the result of human policies or hidden and mysterious intentions. Instead unity springs from conversion of the heart, and from sincere acceptance of the changing principles in the effective communion of all parts of the Church with her visible foundation: Peter the Rock."

In his talk to the bishops of Taiwan in August, the Pope again spoke of the urgency of unity, "I earnestly invite you to seek paths to communion and reconciliation, paths which draw their light and inspiration from the Truth himself: Jesus Christ." He urged all to discover the steps that can lead to reconciliation but conceded that although the goal is clear, "the path leading to it still seems obscure." He then charged the bishops of Taiwan to promote harmony, patience and understanding as well as fraternal love and reconciliation among all the Catholics of "the great and beloved Chinese family".

The Unofficial Church Speaks of Unity

In an open letter which came to light early in 1995, Professor André Han made a number of "proposals" for solving the problem of church unity in China. He maintained that the problem of unity could not be solved by the Vatican, the Chinese government nor by sympathetic people abroad whose strong voices only deepen the division. The solution can only come from the two groups involved sitting down together to resolve the issue. He stressed that China's religious affairs must be dealt with in China, but under the leadership of a personal representative of the Pope, one who is faithful to the Holy Father, either from the underground or the open church.

Letter from Underground Bishops' Conference

Several bishops of the Unofficial Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference took the opportunity to send a letter to the Priests, Religious and Faithful in China during the commemoration of the 700th anniversary of the arrival of John of Montecorvino in China. They

addressed the problem of division in the Chinese Church and the need for communion with the Universal Church and with the Roman Pontiff. They accused the government-approved Church of refusing to recognize the Pope's supremacy. Their claims reflect the tension between the clandestine and official church and the obstacles to restoring diplomatic relations with the Vatican. They urged conversion of heart and prayer as prerequisites to unity.

Message of Josef Cardinal Tomko

In the second part of his homily given in Taiwan, to honour the great Franciscan missionary, John of Montecorvino, Josef Cardinal Tomko dwelt exclusively on the church in Mainland China. He too stressed the importance of unity and the essential element of communion without which the Church does not exist in the fullest sense. He further emphasized that "no human power can give the Church any other structure."

Open Church Bishops Issue First Pastoral Letter

On August 28, 1995, just prior to the United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Bishops' conference of the government approved Catholic Church issued its first pastoral letter, entitled *Women's Dignity and Responsibility*.

The bishops hope that their pastoral letter will help improve the condition of women and have a positive impact on society. The bishops condemned the violation done to women in the abuse of their human rights. The letter also stressed the role of the woman in the family (*UCAN* No. 837/A Sept. 18-29, 1995).

Theologians Meet in Shanghai

Teaching theologians from Mainland China and Hong Kong had their first exchange meeting on seminary education. The meeting took place at Sheshan Regional Seminary in Shanghai, from July 6-20 (*UCAN* No. 832/A August 14-16, 1995).

Conference on Millenium Spirituality

More than 20 bishops, priests, nuns and laypeople from China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, came together from November 8-11, 1995 to dialogue and exchange experiences on spirituality. The conference, *Spirituality of the 21st Century*, was held to celebrate the 16th anniversary of Yi-China Message, a magazine on the Church in China.

The Catholic Institute for Religion and Society Sponsors Seminar

A twenty-three member China delegation composed of bishops, priests, laypeople as well as officials of the Religious Affairs Bureau and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, along with some 60 others invited from Hong Kong, attended a seminar entitled, *Church Response to Rapidly Changing Society*, and sub-titled, *The Experience of the Roman Catholic Church in Mainland China and Hong Kong*. The event was sponsored by The Catholic Institute for Religion and Society, from December 6-10, 1995.

Pope John Paul II Appears in *Catholic Church in China Magazine*

A photo of John Paul II appeared for the first time in the official magazine of the government approved Church, *The Catholic Church in China*, (No. 1, 1995). The photo, on the back cover of the magazine, was taken in Rome during a session of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, on November 3, 1994.

The photo of the Holy Father has now appeared for a second time in the same magazine, (No. 5, 1995). This time the Holy Father is seen in an impromptu conversation with three Chinese priests, reportedly students of canon law, philosophy and theology at Louvain University, Belgium. The young priests were attending the beatification of Father Damien De Veuster, the Apostle to the Lepers and member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The celebration took place on Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 1995. According to the Verbiest Foundation of Louvain, the young men concelebrated Mass with the Pope (*UCAN*, No. 823/A June 12-14, 1995).



West Church to Reopen

Beijing's West Church, also known as Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, closed for forty-five years, is slated to reopen this year after extensive renovations. Until recently it was used for a drug factory.

Cardinal Postpones Trip to China

Cardinal Godfried Danneels, archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels, Belgium, postponed a visit to China scheduled for July 26-August 6, 1995, when a member of his delegation was not issued a visa (*UCAN* No. 829/B July 27-28, 1995).

Cadres Embrace Religion

According to the 31 August, 1995, issue of the Chinese newspaper, *Ming Pao*, the number of Communists cadres joining the churches is steadily increasing. It is estimated that in 1991 only about 150 Party members were Christians. Today the number exceeds 2000. Party regulations forbid members from engaging in religious activities. Party members who join religious organizations are usually expelled from the Party (*CNCR*, 8 September, 1995).

New Publication

In July, 1995, the Religious Affairs Bureau began the publication of a quarterly entitled *Religion in China*. The magazine focuses on propagating religious policy, rules and regulations and giving information on the government's religion-related works.

New Religious Bureau Chief Appointed

A conservative cadre, Ye Xiaowen, former head of Section 2 of the United Front Department, has been appointed the new head of the State Council's Religious Affairs Bureau. He replaces Zhang Shengzuo, 63, now in charge of the RAB's Culture Publishing House, established for the publication of Bibles and other devotional literature.

According to sources, Mr. Ye is an avowed atheist with no formal religious training or overseas experience (*SCMP*, July 8, 1995).

The Church and Social Welfare

In 1992 underground-ordained Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding opened several church-run foundling homes for orphans and handicapped children. The Wuqiu home has recently received official recognition from the government. The approval of church-

run institutions is an indication of the need and demand for these welfare services (UCAN 815/B April 21, 1995).

Following the tradition of the Catholic Church to provide medical help to the sick and poor, several priests and Sisters in China, who are also medical professionals, have recently opened a number of clinics and hospitals. These are located in Hebei, Henan, Hubei, and Hunan provinces as well as in other areas of China (UCAN 816/B April 28, 1995).

Groups of Catholics and Protestants Arrested and Fined

--According to various reports, thirty to forty Catholics, not associated with the official church, were arrested immediately before and after Easter in Jiangxi province. Arrests were made on April 13, 14, 18 and 19. Most have now been released. the arrests did not deter more than 20,000 members of the underground church from gathering on Yujia mountain for Easter Sunday Mass.

--It has been alleged that for refusing to join the government-approved Church a Catholic chapel, located about 1,050 kilometers from Beijing, in Jiangsu's Yangcheng fishing village, has been burned down by the police for the second time in ten months (UCAN No. 827 /A July 10-12, 1995).

--During the past eight months, police in Henan's Zhoukou city have launched a massive crackdown on Christians who worship at unofficial or house churches. They were released only after paying fines ranging from 300 yuan to 1,800 yuan. The latest crackdown was apparently sparked by the tremendous increase in the number of Christians in the area.

--According to the report, there are at least 30,000 house church Christians who worship at more than 1,000 meeting points (SCMP, July 3, 1995).

--Deng Zhaoming, editor of *Bridge* magazine, received a report that PSB officials in Huoqiu county, in Anhui, raided underground churches in March and arrested everyone present. Some were tortured, stabbed with scissors or severely beaten. Property was confiscated and houses were demolished.

--According to other informed sources, 67 Protestant house church members and at least three overseas Chinese Christians were arrested in a raid in April in Hubei province. Group members were taken handcuffed, to the Zhongxiang Public Security Bureau detention centre. Some were interrogated for up to 20 hours. After several days, the Christians were told they would be released upon

payment of a 200 yuan fine (*SCMP*, May 4, 1995).

--During 1995 several Christian leaders were sent to labour camps. They were accused of being members of the Holistic Sect which they denied. In one crackdown alone, sixty-eight Christians were taken away by police, sixty-two of whom were freed after paying fines ranging from 300 to 1,800 yuan (*SCMP* August 31, 1995).

No formal or major document related to religion wase published in 1995 in China.

Other China News Items, 1995

The key to Economic Development Lies in Stability

In his speech to the Fifth Plenum in October, Jiang Zemin emphasized the 12 relationships the Party must manage in order to achieve the country's goals:

1. Reform, development and stability
2. Construction, population, resources and environment
3. Industries
4. Market mechanism and macro-control
5. Speed vs. efficiency
6. Eastern vs. Western regions of China
7. The public sector
8. Income distribution
9. Opening-up vs. self-reliance
10. National Defense
11. Central vs. regions
12. Material and cultural progress

The first of these relationships was the one most frequently mentioned in 1995 (*SCMP*, Oct. 9, 1995).

Population Growth Remains Major Concern

The population in China topped the 1.2 billion mark on February 15, 1995. The government is committed to maintaining the population within 1.3 billion by the year 2000. It is estimated that the population will hit the 1.6 billion mark in the year 2030. The National People's Congress emphasized that the agricultural priority must be given to grain production which in the year 2000 must reach a total of 500 million tons. (*SCMP*, March 18, 1995, p. 6; *China News Analysis*, No. 1530, March 1, 1995).

Chinese Students Cause Brain Drain

Of 220,000 Chinese students who have gone overseas, only 75,000 have returned after graduation, creating a brain drain. (*SCMP*, March 15, 1995, p. 8).

Crime on the Increase

Serious crimes increased 61.9% over 1993. The number of murders and those sentenced to death has not been released (*SCMP*, March 12, 1995, p. 6).

Intellectuals Call for Mercy

Forty-five leading intellectuals, scientists and dissidents sent President Jiang Zemin and head of the National People's Congress, Qiao Shi, a petition calling for an end to the persecution of 1989 pro-democracy activists. Previous petitions have been dismissed by the government, but analysts felt the authorities were wary of attacking this petition because of its distinguished signatories including Wang Ganchang, the 88 year-old inventor of China's atomic bomb (*SCMP*, May 19, 1995, also *Agence France* and *United Press International*).

May the blessings
of this Holy Season
follow you
throughout the New Year!

The Holy Spirit Study Centre Staff

