

# *China Church and News Update*

## *Church News*

### **Vigilance over religion**

Religious authorities in Beijing warn of new “errors” which have crept into the practice of the various faiths permitted in Communist China. Officials at a national conference identified three tasks to eliminate the problems in religion in 1996:

- to order all places of worship to register;
- to deal with difficult religious problems of public concern;
- to cultivate contingents of young patriotic religious preachers.

State councilor, Ismail Amat, urged closer cooperation between the Party and religion and warned of the need for vigilance and determination in religious work. Of particular concern to religious authorities are the growth of evangelical Christianity, a resurgence of interest in traditional religions and possible links between Christians and democracy activists.

The new warnings are aimed at all five officially recognized religions as well as those involved in so-called superstitious activities. According to an informed source, the government is particularly interested in gathering information about the number of believers among students, intellectuals, Party members and cadres, as well as those who use money to try to overthrow the government.

New laws are slated to come into force shortly after the lunar new year. The regulations will ban divination, prayer for healing and consulting *Yi-jing*, declaring these practices superstitious.

(*China Express*, Jan.18, 1996; *Ming Pao* Jan. 9, 1996; *CNCR* Jan. 26, 1996).

### **China denies reports**

China has emphatically denied reports that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State Council had invited Vatican officials to China. The Ministry, however, declined to say whether Vatican and Beijing officials had actually met.

In early January Agence France Presse reported that a Vatican envoy, en route to North Korea on a humanitarian mission had made a “stopover” in Beijing and met with Beijing officials on January 15. According to news

items, this envoy was Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, a former papal representative for foreign affairs, presently secretary of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See (*Asia Focus*, Vol 12, No. 5, Feb. 2, 1996).

### **Catholic Church not represented on 1997 preparatory committee**

Catholic leaders were not named to the China-appointed Preparatory Committee that will set up the first government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) under Chinese rule July 1, 1997.

The Committee will also oversee setting up the SAR provisional legislature and government. Among 150 members approved by the National People's Congress, Dec. 28, 1995, 94 are from Hong Kong and 56 are mainland officials

Anglican Bishop Peter Kwong Kwong-kit, bishop of Hong Kong and Macau and Buddhist Rev. Kok-Kwong, president of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association are the two religious appointees.

Both were members of the Basic Law Drafting Committee although Bishop Kwong resigned as a Basic law drafter following the Tiananmen Incident in 1989.

Catholic Hong Kong watcher, Stephen Sze Man-hung, lecturer at Hong Kong's Lingnam College, said, "The Catholic Church has been rather low key in politics" and he feels, "the absence of Catholic figures on the preparatory committee may not be bad because then the Church can present itself in a more neutral position in matters concerning Hong Kong" (*Asia Focus* Vol 12, No. 4, Jan 26, 1996).

### **Appointment of Bishop**

Bishop Alfonso Yang Guangyan, 67, of Zhouzhi has succeeded the late clandestinely ordained Bishop Paul Fan Yufei to head that diocese in Shaanxi province, northwestern China. The episcopal ordination took place in Zhouzhi county on December 17, 1995. Bishop Anthony Li Du'an of Xian officiated at the ceremony attended by approximately 50 priests and 40,000 lay people.

The newly ordained Bishop Yang told UCA News of his three hopes:

--That the original boundary of Zhouzhi Diocese be restored; it was divided administratively into three areas in 1992.

--That the 20 priest of Zhouzhi diocese ordained by Bishop Fan who were subsequently demoted to deacons be reinstated.

--That Zhouzhi diocesan Church properties be restored. Some are still occupied by government units that indicate no intention of returning them.

Bishop Yang was born into a Catholic family in Zhouzhi Diocese, September 9, 1928. He graduated from Xi'an major seminary and was ordained a priest in 1955 (*UCAN*, Jan.11-12, 1996).

## *Father Paul Liao's Double Celebration*

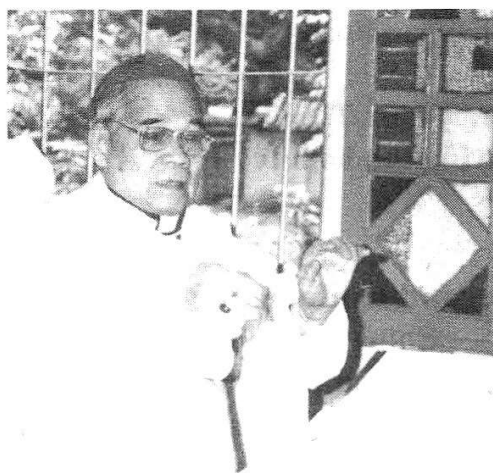
The Beijie Catholic Church in Jiangmen, Guangdong Province, was the scene on November 21, 1995 of Father Paul Liao's 50th anniversary of priestly ordination and 80th birthday. Among the 300 persons in attendance at this double celebration were Chinese and foreign Catholics from several parishes in the Jiangmen diocese and from Hong Kong and Macao. Father Liao's family, including his 79 year old sister and many nieces and nephews, came from his hometown of Chixi to attend the ceremony.



**Fr. Paul Liao with his family at the celebration**

Bishop Li Panshi, 82, of Jiangmen was the principal celebrant at the concelebrated anniversary Mass, with Fathers Ye Yaomin, 81, pastor of the Nanhai Catholic Church, and Liang Jiansen, 31, pastor of the Beijie church assisting at the altar. There were four other Chinese and foreign concelebrants.

Father Tan Tiande, 79, curate at Guangzhou's Stone Church Cathedral, delivered the homily. Father Tan extolled Father Liao's 50 years of service in the vineyard of the Lord, saying that he was a faithful follower of the Lord who had often had to exercise his ministry in difficult circumstances. For instance, Father Liao,



along with Father Linus Wong, who died a few years ago, revived the faith of the Jiangmen Catholics when the church re-opened after the tumultuous years of the Cultural Revolution.

The beautiful singing of the novices of the local Sisters' community



helped to make the Mass a very joyous community celebration. Following the ceremony and the taking of group photos, the assembled congregation moved to a nearby restaurant to enjoy a delicious banquet arranged by the Beijie parish. Local lay leader, Lucy Liang, acted as M. C. for the entertainment.

Speeches praising Father Liao's contribution to the community were given by local dignitaries, but Father

#### **Fr. Liao at the banquet**

Liao himself, displaying his customary humility, declined to give a speech. The occasion provided the opportunity for friends from afar to get together and to encourage one another in the faith. A good time was had by all!

Father Paul Liao resides at the Catholic Church in Jiangmen City itself, located at #15 Old Lane, Changan Road.

#### **Fr. Tan Tiande of Guangzhou giving the homily**



### **Second white paper on human rights reaffirms religious freedom**

China's second White Paper on human rights guarantees religious freedom and normal religious activities as stipulated in the Constitution. It also cautions against using "religious activities to disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the education system of the State" (*UCAN*, No. 852/B, Jan. 4-5, 1996).

### **Catholic Priest Detained**

Fr. Chen Yunpeng of Baoding, Jilin Province, was detained in December. Fr. Chen's fate is still unknown. (*UCAN*, No. 853/A, Jan 8-10, 1996).

### **Church Torn Down**

Seven Catholics were arrested and at least five were injured when police tore down a newly built church in Beideng village, Hebei Province. It was the second church to be demolished in Baoding Diocese in 1995 (*SCMP*, Dec. 3, 1995).

## **Other China News**

### **New Rules for Foreign Employees**

The Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Public Security are drafting new regulations, procedures and penalties related to the employment of aliens in China. The rules will clearly specify what kind of foreign job seekers will be allowed to enter China. China, however, will continue to welcome foreign management and high tech specialists. There are presently about 70,000 foreign workers in China, most of whom are Japanese, German and American. Some 30,000 of these foreigners usually work in China for more than one year (*China Daily*, Dec. 5, 1995).

### **Standardization of Modern Chinese**

China is making efforts to standardize both spoken and written Chinese. According to Vice-Premier Li Lanqing there are three main tasks in the process:

- To enhance the statutory status of standard Chinese;
- To maintain the policy of simplifying Chinese characters and promoting their standardized use;
- To improve standardization of Chinese characters over the past 40 years.

Li maintains that standard Chinese should be the official language in schools, television, radio and in all public institutions. (*China Daily*, Dec. 25, 1995).

### **Curriculum Retains Mao's Thought**

Marxism, Leninist and Mao Zedong Thought are slated to remain a compulsory part of the curriculum for university students into the next cen-

tury. The curriculum will include subjects such as the information highway. Students will also be required to study more literature, and moral education will also be emphasized. Li Wenhai, one of the curriculum planners said they wanted to avoid to deplorable morality found in Western universities (*SCMP* Dec. 22, 1995).

### **Academy of Social Sciences Fires Liberals.**

Four researchers in the Research Institute of Political Science of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, labeled bourgeois-liberal, have been fired. All four had been involved in the 1989 pro-democracy movement. Ms. Chen, one of the dismissed researchers, has worked for institutes of higher learning for over 20 years. She is quoted as saying that the Communist Party secretary of the Academy, Wang Renzhi, said, "Scholars who do not engage in work in Marxism should not be allowed to stay." Informed sources blame the move on the resurgence of leftism (*SCMP*, Dec. 10, 1995).

### **One Price for all**

The city of Shenzhen in Guangdong Province will abolish dual-price structures for foreigners in an effort to attract more foreign investment. Currently foreigners must pay twice the local price for transportation and other services. The changes will take effect in 1996 (*FEER* Nov. 30, 1995).

