

<b>Documentation</b>
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***A Letter to All the Bishops of the Country  
from a Diocesan Administrator  
Pentecost Sunday, May 26, 1996***

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Dear Brother Bishops! May the peace of the Lord be with you all!

Due to the windstorm of this last half century, our Chinese Catholic Church has suffered much cruel destruction and calamity, and many faithful have been imprisoned and died. All these are shocking events. But these are not so bad as the division which has taken place within the church. All of us are bitter and filled with emotion. All desire unity to take place soon, so that we may once again be “one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16). Despite my old age, how can I, as a church leader, shirk my responsibility and pass this situation on to my juniors? My conscience will reproach me and fill me with guilt.

We do not want to recall the painful past, nor review the rights and wrongs. The younger members of the church do not understand the nature and the reasons for the divisions in today’s church, nor are they aware of its historical development. We, old-timers, and witnesses, can vividly recall these events. Non-Catholic observers are also aware of the situation.

The Catholic Church in China, which was originally one, has been divided in two since the 1950’s. The division did not come about from persons in the church, but it was imposed upon it by a force from outside the church. This force divided the flock.

We do not want to review events of the past. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “with honest heart and good faith” (*The Great Learning*), let us carefully listen to the prayer at the Last Supper:

“That they may be one as we are one.” (John 17:11)

“Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

“If you keep my word, you will indeed be my disciples.” (John 8:31)

Jesus’ doctrine is not the same as secular doctrine. In Jesus’ doctrine yes is yes and no is no. Secular doctrine is: the smart man understands the times and follows the way of power; the clever man manages to escape difficulties, and those who are worldly-wise know how to play it safe. To follow Jesus is to follow the straight path; it is not a winding road. Wang Jingwei followed a winding road to save the country, and he did not save the country. Pu Yi followed a curved road to save the Qing Dynasty, but he did not succeed in saving the Qing Dynasty. Today some people want to follow a curved road to save the church, but they cannot save the church. “It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.” (Psalm 118:9)

We all acknowledge that the Catholic Church in China should be one flock with one shepherd. Now is the time for taking action; let us no longer procrastinate or involve ourselves in fruitless discussions.

In 1989 I wrote an essay entitled *The Tentative Proposal of One Professor*, calling on the two communities in the Catholic Church in China to unite on the basis of “one flock, one shepherd.” In 1994-1995, by invitation, I participated in three meetings of the Jilin Catholic Church, which were intended to be a dialogue on unity. At the last dialogical meeting I read the paper *A Proposal of a Professor*, the substance of which was unchanged from my previous one. However, there had not the least result. The response of the priests of the Jilin Diocese was: we will listen to Jin Peixian. Therefore in May 1995, I personally went to visit Bishop Jin Peixian of the Shenyang Diocese. We talked for almost a day and a half, but without any resolution. Today, I once again take the liberty to express my humble opinion to my brother bishops throughout the country, and to the administrator of each diocese (whether recognized by the government or not). For your reference my opinions are listed below:

1. Under the light of the truth of the Holy Spirit, we brothers should have a heart to heart talk about important matters in the church.

2. Let bygones be bygones: the past is over; let us not recall the painful experiences of the past. Let us look to the future and not dispute over who is right and who is wrong.

3. Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. Let us announce publicly: we have returned to being one flock under one shepherd. Let us swear to be both loyal Christians and loyal Chinese citizens.

4. Regarding the Patriotic Association, let us not bother them.

5. Let us hold a meeting of all the bishops in the country to discuss the implementation of the decrees of the Second Vatican Council, and let us draw up concrete plans.

Please place our desire for unity into the hands of our Mother Mary, Queen of China, and pray that, through her intercession, the Holy Spirit may descend upon the Chinese Church and guide the Chinese Church to follow the path of Jesus Christ.

Yours sincerely, your humble servant,

(signed) Bishop Augustinus Andreas Han

