

Church history provides us with many different ways of choosing bishops. Besides the method used recently by Hong Kong's Anglican Church which is worth examining, we can add two other methods which can provide for papal participation. 1) Before the election, provide the Holy Father with the list of candidates for his examination and approval: 2) submit the name of the final candidate to the Holy Father who, in his position as chairman of the college of bishops of the universal church and as the successor of St. Peter, would grant approval. This method takes everything into consideration, and conforms to church tradition. It also implements the "principle of subsidiarity," since it allows the local community to take responsibility for what it can itself be responsible for, being autonomous, making its own decisions, and taking its own initiatives, without interference. Only when it lacks the required capability would the China church receive assistance from outside.

Reactions from the Church in China

(The following remarks on the secular press' reaction to the Papal Message are culled from UCA News Dispatch No. 902/A December 16-18, 1996.)

Bishop Joseph Zong Huaide of Jinan and Zhoucun, president of the government approved Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China, emphasized that

- the government-approved church recognizes the Pope as the spiritual leader and openly prays for him daily.
- He suggested that the underground church visit some of the open churches in order to experience first hand the communion of the open church with the Holy Father.
- In commenting to the Holy Father's wish to visit China, the President of the Conference reiterated the conditions needed:
 - establishing diplomatic relations with China
 - severing relations with Taiwan

Unless these conditions are satisfied, he said, there is little hope that the Holy Father will be able to realize his desire.

Anthony Liu Bainian, vice-chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association said that

- Church communion is a political issue rather than a religious one
- Church communion is not the issue since both the open and underground Church share the same faith and both pray for the Pope.
- They differ in that those in the government approved church support the socialist system and those in the underground do not.
- Bishops have to be patriotic and act according to the country's condition.

A spokesperson from China's foreign ministry, who wishes to remain unnamed, was more direct and blunt. He maintained that

- the Holy See must stop interfering in China's internal affairs, including religion.
- He told the press in Beijing that China respects its citizens' freedom of religious belief.
- China protects all normal religious activities.

