

China Church and News Update

News from the churches

Jilin Seminary celebrates 10th anniversary

The Jilin Theology and Philosophy seminary in Jilin City, Jilin province, celebrated its 10th anniversary on 10 September. The seminary has produced 24 priests in ten years but has a chronic shortage of teaching staff and funds. Five young priests and a seminarian graduate make up the full-time staff. Currently the seminary has 53 seminarians and two priests are studying in Italy. Priests and nuns from South Korea and some government officials as well as local Catholics attended the ceremonies. (*UCAN*, 942/A, 22 September, 1997, pp. 6-7)

Jilin opens home for elderly

The first Catholic-managed home for the elderly in Jilin diocese, located in a new extension complex of the Jilin Church, has about 100 beds, 20 of which are reserved for persons who cannot pay. The home, presently operating as pure social service, expects to have great difficulty in meeting its expenses. Thirty elderly have already moved into the building although the home does not begin to operate officially until early 1998. (*UCAN* 942/A 24 September, 1997, p. 11)

Chinese Bishops' Conference reviews church situation

Three committees of the Chinese Bishops Conference met in Tianjin during May. The Economic Development and Social Service Committee, chaired by Bp. Liu Jinghe of Tangshan in Hebei, reported that donations from the laity plus limited rental income from church property do not provide enough money for the total support of the church. A number of churches run hostels, but not very efficiently due to lack of skilled personnel. Despite these difficulties, the church is making helping in disaster relief, clinics, adult and special education.

The Church Administrative Committee, chaired by Bp. Michael Fu Tieshan of Beijing, reviewed organizational changes and looked for better ideas in recording the administration of the sacraments.

The Liturgical Committee, chaired by Bp. John Cai Tiyan of Shantou in Guangdong, reported progress in implementing their 1993 "Plan for Actively Promoting the Mass in Chinese," and in drafting a Chinese Ritual,

although no date has yet been set for the printing. (*Catholic Church in China*, 1997, #4, p. 28)

Guangzhou to issue guidelines

According to reports, Guangzhou is about to pass regulations that could significantly limit the freedom of religious practitioners and even impose heavy fines on clergy who refuse to register with the authorities.

The regulation will outlaw Taoists who practice fortune telling and divinations, and forbid Christians from engaging in exorcisms or healing sessions.

The regulation also forbids religious debate in churches and temples.

Foreigners may not convert Chinese or set up churches and local practitioners must follow procedures set down by authorities in accepting foreign donations. Religious practitioners cannot accept appointment or ordination from foreign religious groups. This is an apparent reference to the Roman Catholic Church. Foreign missionaries are forbidden to open schools or engage in publishing.

Unauthorized personnel such as pastors or underground Christian churches will be subjected to fines of up to 50,000 yuan (approx. US\$6,000). (*SCMP*, 13 October, 1997)

Verbiest Foundation sponsors visit to Europe

Three Chinese bishops and a priest met with church officials in Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands during their July 29-August 17 visit to Europe. The visit was sponsored by the Verbiest Foundation. A pilgrimage to Lourdes and a tour of social services provided by the church made a big impression on the visiting prelates.

Six priests from mainland China are now enrolled in the Louvain Chinese Institute. There are also eight seminarians and laypeople studying at the University of Louvain. Some of these students attended World Youth Day in Paris, August 19-24. (*UCAN*, 939/B, Sept. 5, 1997).

Chinese students gather in Rome for special program

From 25 July to 16 August, 41 Chinese students of theology gathered in Rome for an annual retreat and a study session conducted in Mandarin. These students consisted of seven priests and three seminarians studying in Belgium; two priests and five seminarians studying in France one priest, one deacon, eight seminarians and two religious studying in Germany; one priest, nine seminarians and one religious presently in Italy.

Seven European priests coordinated the program providing both moral and material support. During their stay in Rome the students were lodged at the residence of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on Via Aurelia.

The participants enjoyed touring Rome, the center of Christianity, visiting various places of pilgrimage, historical monuments and the offices of the Universal Church. They also enjoyed a papal audience at the Pope's summer home at Castel Gandolfo, a day with Archbishop Celli of the State Secretariat, a morning with Msgr. Ghidoni of the Congregation for the Evangelization of peoples. They participated in concelebrated Masses, one in the Melkite Greek Rite at Santa Maria in Cosmedine, another in the catacombs of Saint Callisto as well as another with Bishop Andreozzi of the Italian Episcopal Conference. They visited the Trappists at Trefontaine and the Little Sisters of Jesus and spent a day at Assisi with the Franciscans. (From *Zhonglian*, August 1997, No. 74)

Cardinal Kim of Korea visits China

Cardinal Stephen Kim, Archbishop of Seoul, at the invitation of the Chinese Religious Affairs Bureau, made an official visit to China from 12 to 21 August. He visited the autonomous Korean prefecture of Yanbian in Jilin Province and the national seminary in Beijing. He discussed plans for a monument to Fr. Zhou Wenmo, the first Chinese missionary priest to Korea who was martyred in 1801. (*International Fides Service*, 11 August, 1997, No. 4061)

Qian Qichen speaks to China's Catholics

In a ceremony commemorating the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, Vice-Premier Qian Qichen called on Catholics to conduct religious activities within the scope of the country's laws and regulations. He commented that the CCPA was established out of patriotism and a sense of justice. The Association has made great effort to safeguard national sovereignty and dignity, he said, and to protect the legal rights and interests of Catholics. He added that the association had made a great contribution to socialist material development and cultural and ethical progress.

Fu Tieshan, vice-chairman of the CCPA, said Catholics continue to hold high the banner of patriotism and seek self-development. The ceremony was sponsored by the CCPA and the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference. Some 200 representatives were present. (*China Daily*, 27 August, 1997, p. 1)

Vice-Premier Qian Qichen also called on Catholics to abide by China's religious laws and to ignore overtures made by overseas religious activists.

They should “resolutely resist hostile forces attempting to interfere in the internal religious affairs of the country and split the country under the pretext of religion.” (*SCMP*. 28 August, 1997, p. 14)

House Church leaders arrested

According to reliable reports, two house church leaders from Fangcheng City in Henan have been arrested. In addition a Bible school for children in Wenzhou city, Zhejiang Province, was closed and several of its organizers arrested. (*CNCR* 2594)

Protestants enjoy revival in northeast China

The revival of Protestantism in northeast China was evident when the Shenyang’s Theological College celebrated its 100th anniversary and opening of a new eight-storey college with a chapel on the top floor. The church was originally built in 1876 by a Scottish Presbyterian missionary, John Ross. It was burnt down during the Boxer Rebellion, and rebuilt in 1907. It sustained a great deal of damage during the Cultural Revolution. In 1949, there were nationally 700,000 Protestant believers. The present number is estimated at 10,000,000, 850,000 of whom are in the northeastern provinces. (*SCMP* 23 August. 1997, p. 23)

Other China News update

Chinese delegation meets to discuss human rights issues

The China Society for Human Rights Studies (CSHRS) sent a delegation headed by its director, Zhu Muzhi, to Europe from June 8-27, 1997, where they visited Norway, Sweden, Italy and Spain. They met with government officials and with NGO’s, including Amnesty International. “This was the first time that a Chinese non-governmental human rights delegation had wide-ranging dialogues with foreign officials and people on specific human rights issues.” Economic livelihood, court trials, Tibet, and the different paths taken by different nations regarding human rights were all discussed. (*Beijing Review*, vol. 40, #34, August 25-31, 1997, pp. 18-20.

One-child policy remains source of contention

Guangdong is increasing its grassroots education on the one-child policy. Villagers in Caojiang and Changbo staged public protests against imposition of heavy fines for violation of the policy. An official said that in some circumstances a rural family is allowed two children but they must follow the regulations. Families that ignored the regulations and went on to have a third child were liable to a fine of 21,000 *yuan* and the woman could

be sterilized. An official said the policy has been tightened and families cannot just pay the fines to have more children. (*SCMP* 8 September, 1997, p. 8)

Internet comes to China

Ten internet cafes are now open in Beijing, patronized by foreign students and locals alike. (*Beijing Review*, vol. 40, #33, August 18-24, 1997, inside cover)

Unemployment rises in China

Unemployment and retraining laid-off workers are receiving more attention. With loss-making state owned, collective and private enterprises letting people go, more than 20 million redundant workers need to find new jobs. In addition, there are 130 million surplus rural laborers. (*Beijing Review*, vol. 40, #33, August 18-24, 1997, pp. 9-13)

Money goes up in smoke

With 22% of the world's population, China has 32% of the world's smokers, or 350 million out of 1.1 billion smokers. Five out of eight (63%) of adult men in mainland China smoke. Tax revenue from tobacco minus medical bills and premature death resulted in a net loss of 24 billion RMB in 1993. (*SCMP*, 25 August, 1997)

Hansen disease in China

There are 320,000 people with Hansen's disease (leprosy) in China. The government provides shelter and some care. Catholics from Hong Kong and Macau provide rice, supplementary food and protective footwear to 200 Catholic Hansenites in Guangdong. (*UCAN News*, 939/A, 1 September 1997)

Education News

Professor Chung Yue-ping, Dean of the Faculty of Education at the Chinese University, said it would be impossible to eradicate China's illiteracy problem by 2000 as believed by Zhang Tianbao, vice-minister of the State Education Commission. The situation is less critical in urban areas but remains critical in remote and rural areas, where children have to travel long distances to school and teachers are reluctant to go to the backward areas.

Oxfam has expressed concern about the high illiteracy rate in rural areas, especially among females. Girls are discriminated against and often

leave school because of hardship. They are often expected to support the family. (*SCMP* 10 September, 1997, p. 9)

The State Education Commission said all teachers should set good moral example for their students by showing that they enjoyed their work, doing their job well and behaving appropriately. The trend to worship money, seek pleasure and pursue personal interests must be stopped. Furthermore, according to the Commission, educational departments and schools will create a system to supervise teachers' moral performance. The Commission also put an end to corporal punishment. (*China Daily* 4 September, 1997, p. 2)

Zhu Kaixuan, minister of the State Education Commission, said in the next century basic education had two tasks, enforcing nine-year compulsory education and improving teaching efficiency. The SEC has piloted quality-based education in Shanghai, Yantai, Dalian and Miluo. Schools in 10 provinces have abandoned the numerical grade and replaced it with the grades A, B, C, D and F of some Western countries. (*China Daily*, 4 September, 1997, p. 2)

Chinese children like children everywhere

Chinese children were still studying hard in 1996, thanks to parents who stress hard work. But compared to 1986, today's primary students are more fidgety, and truancy has begun to appear. What do those age 10-15 in Beijing want out of life? To play, to be successful, to have friends, and to have a happy and warm family. (*Beijing Review*, vol. 40, #32, August 11-17, pp. 22-23)

Psychological Counseling hotline responds to inquiries

A hotline established by the Maple Women's Psychological Counseling Centre, Beijing, has served more than 32,000 people since it was established five years ago. Half of the callers are between 21-30, one-fourth between 31-40 and 26.4% have been male callers. The most frequently asked questions among women are about health care of women and children, sex, marriage and laws concerning married life. Male callers for the most part asked questions related to sex.

NGO Wang Xingjuan, Director of Centre, has been working to make the centre do more than just help those in troubles. She is trying to provide a channel for China's women to voice their views. The Centre has connections with women's groups abroad and has gained financial support from

the Ford Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme. (*China Daily*, 6 September, 1997, p. 2)

Chinese women find their place as leaders

The calibre of the women and the number of women participating in political activities in China has increased. At provincial-level all leading groups now have at least one woman leader. The All China Women's Federation Chairwoman, Chen Muhua, said that increasing the number of women deputies to people's congresses and training and selecting more women cadres at different levels is vital to women's participation in political activities. The ACWF has organized training classes for women leaders. These include courses in Party theory, leadership decision making and psychological training. (*China Daily*, 8 September, 1997, p. 2)

In spite of propaganda on the progress of women in China there are only eight women appointed to the new 193 member Central Committee. The Minister of Foreign Trade Wu Yi was appointed an alternate member of the Politburo, the sixth woman to be appointed to the Politburo since its creation in 1921. She is well known for her competency and for speaking her mind. She is mentioned as a possible successor to Qian Qichen, the Foreign Minister, whose term of office will end in March. (*Sunday Morning Post*, 21 September, 1997, p. 6)

New regulations for television and radio

The State Council has released new regulations governing the establishment of mainland television and radio stations. The establishment of television and radio stations in such forms as wholly foreign-owned enterprises, Sino-foreign joint ventures or Sino-foreign co-operative businesses are prohibited. Stations must be established by the radio and television department of the Government at or above county level. The new order ended all speculations that China might be opening up its media to foreign investors. (*SCMP* 21 August, 1997, p. 7)

Hong Kong population on the increase

Hong Kong population has reached 6,502,100, a growth rate of three percent. Emigration, students returning and expatriates coming to seek employment explain the increase. Returnees came back to take advantage of an economy that is better than that in their new homes; others have returned out of unfounded fears of losing their permanent residency status. The influx is putting stress on the overheated property market and infrastructures. (*SCMP*, 19 September, 1997, p. 4)