

## *Documentation*

People all over the world are concerned about the plight of Bishop James Su Zhimin of Baoding, Hebei Province. Bishop Su has been arrested on several occasions. The last time was on October 8, 1997.

Father Matthias Lu , a special consultant to UNESCO, has published the Government's charges against Bishop Su and the Bishop's response. He has further expressed his concern by petitioning the United Nations to help secure Bishop Su's freedom and those arrested with him.

The reasons for Bishop Su's arrests are given as follows:

1. He refuses to register with the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.
2. He maintains allegiance with the Holy See and the Holy Father in Rome.
3. He holds religious pilgrimages and other religious activities without specific government permission.
4. These pilgrimages and religious activities are political in nature; they disturb the public order and cause social unrest among the working people.
5. He has contacts with people in foreign countries for sinister motives.

Bishop Su has sought to answer these accusations:

1. No citizen can be coerced to join the Chinese Catholic patriotic Association. This is a civil and voluntary association. It has no competence to represent the Church as a legal entity. It denies the authority of the Holy See against the Sacred Scripture and against the faith of the universal Church.
2. My allegiance to the Pope is based not only on Church law but also on Sacred Scripture on which the Church Law is rooted. The authority of God and Jesus Christ is the basis for my allegiance to the Pope. It belongs to the essence of my faith and my religion. Obedience to the authority of the Sacred Scripture

is not contrary to the law of any government. The history of the Apostolic See proves the authenticity of my Church as a true religion. It cannot be characterised as illegal, or called “underground, clandestine, a dark world, etc.”

3. the accusations that pilgrimages and religious group activities are politically motivated or disturbing to society are groundless. These activities were spontaneous orderly, pious, devotional and loved by all who attend.
4. My faith compels me and my people to maintain contacts with the Pope and with the universal Church inside and outside of China. This freedom is inviolable.
5. My contact with people outside China are in my church’s interests and for religious purposes. They are not to be construed as inimical to the Government or to the Party. We Catholics are exemplary citizens even when we are unjustly punished and sent to prisons and labour camps. Catholics can be law abiding citizens in any other country. We do not violate civil law. Our moral objection to the laws is not a violation of the laws. Such objections are legal and constitutional. In case of necessity, we must choose to obey God rather than human beings. This is the meaning of freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

