

China Church and News Update

Bishop Shan Named Cardinal

On Jan. 18, Pope John Paul II created 22 new cardinals, one of whom is Bishop Shan Guoxi, Paul, of Gaoxiong [Kaohsiung] in Taiwan. After the news was announced, clergy everywhere expressed their sincere congratulations.

When visited by reporters, Bishop Shan modestly said that the favor was not bestowed on him by the Pope for any talent or ability of his own, but as an honor to the entire Catholic Church in China.



Now 74 years old, Bishop Shan Guoxi was born on December 2, 1923, in Puxian, Hebei. He entered the Jesuits in 1946, and was ordained in Baguio, Philippines, on March 18, 1955. He pursued further studies in spiritual formation in Rome. In 1980 he was appointed bishop of Hualian in Taiwan, and was transferred to Gaoxiong in 1981. Since the 1980s, Bishop Shan has been repeatedly chosen as the Chairman of the Taiwan Bishops Conference. During the past decade he has actively participated in the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences, chairing a number of committees. He is currently on the preparatory committees for the Synod of Asian Bishops and the Holy Year 2000.

Bishop Shan is the fifth Chinese to be named a cardinal. Previous appointees were Bishop Tian Gengxin of Qingdao (1945), Archbishop Yu Bin of Nanjing (1969), Bishop Gong Pinmei, Ignatius, of Shanghai (1979), and Bishop John Baptist Wu of Hong Kong (1988).

After the appointment was made public, Cardinal Wu of Hong Kong with his Coadjutor Bishop, Joseph Zen, and Auxiliary Bishop, John Tong, promptly sent their most sincere congratulations.

Sixth Chinese Catholic Representatives Congress

The Sixth Chinese Catholic Congress scheduled to be held in December 1997 actually took place from January 17-21, 1998. According to Liu Bainian the postponement was due to the need for the organizers to arrange suitable accommodations in Beijing for the 250 delegates. Furthermore, he said that discussions were still underway over the successor or successors to Zong Huaide, who died in June. Liu hoped more nuns and priests would join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

Reliable sources maintained that the postponement was due to the fact that no agreement had been reached on a successor or successors to Bishop Zong. The source said that the Government seemed to favour Bishop Fu Tieshan of Beijing and Bishop Liu Yuanren of Nanjing. Both of these were actually elected at the Congress on January 21, 1998.

Bishop Michael Fu Tieshan was elected the chairman of the Chinese Patriotic Association and Liu Yuanren, the president of the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference.

Bishop Fu, 66, is the bishop of Beijing. He was born in 1932 and ordained in 1956. In 1979 he was elected bishop by the CCPA and consecrated on December 21, 1979. He habitually resides at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Beijing City. Bishop Fu was formerly the chairman of the Beijing Catholic Patriotic Association, a vice-chairman of the China Catholic Bishops' Conference, and vice chairman and secretary general of the Fifth Catholic China Representatives Congress.



Bishop Liu Yuanren, Joseph, 74, is the bishop of Nanjing, Jiangsu Province. He was born in 1924 and ordained in 1953. He was elected bishop of Nanjing by the CCPA in 1993 and consecrated on December 7, of the same year. He resides at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Nanjing. Bishop Liu was also chosen as chairman of the Seminary Formation Commission.

According to reliable sources, the five-day Assembly adopted independence and self-reliance as

its guiding principles, under the patriotic banner, and in accord with socialism.

Li Ruihuan, a Standing Committee member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), said that most of the Catholic priests and bishops follow the religious policies of the Party and adhere to the principles of independence. He also said that they have played an important and positive role in China's modernization and in cultural and ethical progress.

Li added that he hoped that the new Catholic leadership would continue to work for China's rejuvenation while loving their religion and their country. He also hoped that the Catholic leadership would work with people of other religious circles.

Roster of Bishops Conference:

Honorary President: Jin Luxian, Dong Guangqing, Yu Chengcai

President: Liu Yuanren

Vice-presidents: Fu Tieshan, Liu Jinghe, Li Du'an

Standing Committee: Liu Yuanren, Fu Tieshan, Liu Jinghe, Li Du'an, Jin Peixian, Jiang Taoran, Fang Xingyao.

Secretary General : Ma Yinglin (33, Bishops' representative, Xingtai Diocese, Hebei Province)

Roster of the Patriotic Association:

Honorary chairmen: Jin Luxian, Dong Guangqing, Yu Chengcai.

Chairman: Fu Tieshan

Vice-chairpersons: Liu Yuanren, Tu Shihua, Liu Bainian, Yu Jiadi, Huo Cheng, Lu Guocun (Guangdong) Gong Qiusheng (Shanghai)

Standing Committee: (dozens of people)

Resigned their positions: Jin Luxian, Dong Guangqing, Yu Chengcai, Guo Yingong.

Committees under the Bishops Conference (heads)

Church Administrative Committee:

Fu Tieshan

Seminary Education: Liu Yuanren

Theological Research Centre:

Tu Shihua

Liturgical Commission: Li Du'an

Financial Committee: Liu Jinghe

Foreign Affairs: Fu Tieshan

Present at the meeting were Wang Zhaoguo, the vice-chairman of the CPPCC National Committee and the head of the United Front Work Department of the Party's Central Committee and Ye Xiaowen, director of the State Council's Religious Affairs Bureau.

Death of Bishop John Cai Tiyuan

Thousands attended the Requiem Mass and burial of **Bishop John Cai Tiyuan**, 76, who died on 24 November, 1997. The procession to the grave site, eight kilometers away, attracted many onlookers and caused a stir in the small town.

Bishop Cai was ordained priest in 1949 after studying at the South China Regional Seminary, Hong Kong, and ordained bishop of Shantou in 1981. He held the positions of vice-president of the Fifth Plenary Session of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, director of the Liturgical Commission of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China, and president of the Church Affairs Committee of Guangdong Province. He was a member of the National People's Congress. (*UCAN*, 952B, 4-5 December, 1997)

Death of Bishop Zhu Fengqing

Bishop Zhu Fengqing of Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, died on 12 December, 1997. Bishop Zhu was ordained priest in 1945 after graduating from Ningbo Catholic Major Seminary. He was elected bishop of Hangzhou on 14 August, 1988, and ordained bishop the same year. His body was cremated in Nanjing and the ashes returned to Hangzhou. He was the seventh government recognized bishop to die in 1997. The other six were: Liu Huanbo of Heilongjiang (19 Jan.); Wang Xueming of Hohhot (10 Feb.) Chen Mushun of Zhaotong (9 April), Zong Huaide of Jinan and Zhoucun (27 June), Li Shuren of Yueyang (7 Oct.) and Cai Taiyuan of Shantou (24 Nov.). (*Sunday Examiner* 4 January, 1998, . p. 1.)

United Front and churches in 21st century

Fifteen young Catholic priests and fifteen young Protestant pastors attended a meeting in Beijing, organized by the United Front Department to discuss how their churches were preparing to face the 21st century. The Catholic priests expressed a strong sense of solidarity with their Protestant counterparts. No conclusions were reached since clergy and officials had differing views. (*Sunday Examiner*, 21 December, 1997, p. 1.)

Mainland delegation visits Taiwan

An official delegation of thirteen priests, nuns and lay people from the Mainland visited Taiwan. from December 2 -16, 1997. The original plan to have thirty persons visit in August was delayed due to problems and formalities in Mainland China. In voicing their impressions the visitors noted that the church resources and social services were highly developed in Taiwan while vocations to the religious life are more numerous in the Mainland. Upon visiting Hong Kong they noted that Mainland China is conservative, while Hong Kong is more open but Taiwan has more Chinese culture. (*Sunday Examiner*, Christmas 1997, p.10.)

Call to Unity

Relations between Beijing and the Vatican continue to cause conflict among Catholic priests in China. Human rights groups estimate 50 to 60 Catholics are still in prison, including an "underground" bishop. A 70-year old priest in the official church, says "We say Mass and administer the Sacraments and preach according to the injunctions of the Holy Father." A newly ordained priest who studied in Belgium and Cambridge and served as a deacon in Rome for a short period, says "The Pope said it doesn't matter whether you are with the open or the underground church, you must unite as one church." (*SCMP*, 15 December, 1997, p. 8.)

Priest arrested following nun's funeral

Fr. John Wang Zhongfa, not affiliated with the CCPA, was arrested after conducting a funeral Mass for an elderly nun in Wenzhou. The Mass was held at 11 p.m. Those who asked for his release were told he was a political criminal and there was no hope of release. In 1955 he was convicted of being a counterrevolutionary and given a 22 year jail sentence. He was ordained a priest in 1980, and ordained episcopal vicar to Bishop James David Lin Xili of Wenzhou in 1992. (*Sunday Examiner*, 14 December, 1997, p.1.)

Bishops regret not attending Asian Synod

Several of China's government-recognized bishops have expressed regret that they will not be able to attend the Asian Synod. This situation is due to the political realities between the Vatican and the People's Republic of China. Bishop Pius Jin Peixian of Liaoning Province has expressed the desire to have the China bishops attend as observers. Bishop Shi Hongchen of Tianjin said he hoped that the Bishop's Conference could send a delegation if the Vatican extended an invitation. (*UCAN* No. 958/A Jan.12-14, 1998)

Yi and Bai Catholics help each other

The Catholics of the Yi ethnic minority from Haiyi village, are helping the Catholics of Lefeng village of the Bai ethnic minority to build a new church. The men from Haiyi are experienced builders. In 1949 all of Haiyi was Catholic but they have no resident priest. A parish management committee is responsible for religious activities. In nearby Wenze in the 1850s there were hundreds of Catholic but now on thirty-four remain. Lefeng and Haiyi are visited once a month by Fr. Zhang Wenchang, a native of Haiyi now in Kunming. (*Sunday Examiner*, 14 December 1997, p. 7.)

New holiday in Hong Kong: Buddha's birthday

The birthday of Buddha which falls on the 8th day of the 4th month of the Lunar Year will become a public holiday in Hong Kong in 1999. The Government has assured the business community that the total number of holidays will not be increased. The new holiday will replace one of the six existing non-statutory holidays which include Christian holidays such as Good Friday. The Muslims are now expected to request a holiday marking the end of the Haj. (*Sunday Examiner*, 7 December, 1997, p 1.)

Religious leaders in China visit

American religious leaders are currently in the Mainland for talks with Chinese clergy and government officials on religious freedom.

The three leaders are Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of the Catholic Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, and the Reverend Don Argue, president of the National Association of Evangelicals. They will spend three weeks visiting Shanghai, Nanjing, Hong Kong and Lhasa in Tibet. The leaders hope to meet religious leaders as well as government officials in China.

Other News Items

China targets corrupt cadres

President Jiang Zemin warned that cadres who infringed law enforcement regulations would have action taken against them. Mr. Jiang admitted that there were obvious problems among government officials and especially law-enforcement cadres. He said severe action would take place against those found guilty of dereliction of duty and corruption, and that mechanisms would be introduced to strengthen transparency in government

work. Investigating authorities will target corruption and irregularities in the financial sector. (SCMP 27 December, 1997, p. 5)

Strike Hard Campaign to continue

The president of the Supreme People's Court, Ren Jiaxin, said there would be no change in the *Yanda* (Strike Hard) line which he called "a safeguard of public security that ensures the protection of security and social stability in the first stage of socialism". (CNA, Notebook, #1601)

Caritas helps Chinese abandoned children

An unidentified woman abandoned her one-month old twin daughters at a Church run orphanage in Cuifeng, Zhouzhi Diocese, Shaanxi Province. Zhouzhi Diocese has found homes for 217 orphans left at the Cuifeng church since 1988. Most of these children have been adopted by childless Chinese couples.

Caritas Hong Kong supplies the money to support the orphans, most of whom are girls. Abandoned boys usually have some physical defects. Extra rooms needed to house the children have been built by local Catholics. The church cannot keep the orphans for long as they would not be eligible for education under government regulations. (UCAN, # 956, Dec. 29, 1997-Jan.2, 1998)

Interview on religion

The following points were raised during an interview with a high ranking official, a Christian, who also monitors religious activities:

Regarding persecution:

■ The interviewee made a distinction between persecution and discrimination. He felt religious persecution and discrimination are declining and will continue to do so. Chinese officials equate religion with public worship. They have no concept of Christianity as a way of life. He maintained that it is wrong to say there is no persecution but it is minimal in comparison to the size of the population.

Regarding numbers in prison

■ There is great improvement along these lines and the government has good reason in 9 cases out of 10 to put the people in jail. This was in reference to the "cult" leaders and extremists. He maintained that China is committed to capitalism and continues to open to Western ways; Maoist ideology is wearing out. The bad news is that the 1990s saw regression of this trend. The high ranking leaders are genuinely puzzled that there is so

much turning to religion in China. Buddhism is booming in the provinces. Christianity is growing among educated young people. Folk religion is re-emerging. "Where did religion go if it wasn't destroyed?" asked one leader. "It went where it always is, in the heart."

The attitude towards Christianity is different from that toward Daoism or Buddhism. It is seen as more subversive. Christian churches of Eastern Europe led to the downfall of Communist regimes in 1989. They are threatened by the foreign Christians who are "stop at nothing characters" --- bible smugglers, etc.

Religion and nationalism seem to go together as in Xinjiang and Tibet. This is very threatening to the Party leadership which can't motivate people the way religion does.

Regarding the religious policy

■ There is confusion regarding the religious policy. They do not know how to control it. A single nationwide religious law was introduced into Shanghai on a trial basis in 1996. All religions complain that it was too restrictive and now they do not know what to do, and the unevenness in application of policy is confusing to all. When the leaders feel insecure about their ability to govern they become more defensive. There is great insecurity at this time and this affects all groups such as the house churches that meet unofficially. The puzzlement, confusion and defensiveness of the Party officials are actually an opportunity for the Church.

Importance of making friends

Party officials are open to advice on what to do as never before. Advice has to be given by persons who have taken time to make friends with the officials. Those who befriend the leaders have a golden opportunity at this crucial time.

Western Christians must articulate the cry of the oppressed. All criticism should not stop; but one must be careful not to be negative. Remember there are no communists left, only Party members. The ideological sting should be removed from crusades. If you realize that Mao is not still running the country you can have more influence, but you must become friends first. (CNCR 2607, 10 November, 1997)