

## *Documentation*

### *Commemorating 40 Years of the Chinese Catholic Church's Self-Election and Self-Consecration of its Bishops*

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*(Xinhua, Beijing) The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference held a meeting on December 18 in Beijing to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chinese Catholic Church's self-election and self-consecration of its own bishops. The meeting was attended by Mr. Li Depei, vice-director of Party Central's United Front Work Department, and Mr. Ye Xiaowen, director of the State Council's Religious Affairs Bureau.*

In his speech, Ye Xiaowen pointed out that the Chinese Catholic Church's stance of autonomous administration of the church, and the self-election and self-consecration of its bishops, has gone through 40 years of trials and hardships. Practice has proven that the Chinese Catholic Church's choice and maintenance of the principle of the self-election and self-consecration of its bishops conforms both to China's national sentiment and to the religious sentiment of the Chinese Catholic Church itself

The self-election and self-consecration of its bishops is the core, the foundation and the crux of the principle of the autonomous administration of the church. And the autonomous administration of the church is based on Article 36 of our Constitution, which stipulates that China's "religious organizations and religious affairs are not subject to foreign domination." "We will absolutely not waver in this principle, nor is it possible for this principle to be changed. The Party and the government will continue as in the past to uphold the Chinese Catholic Church's maintenance of the principles of autonomously running the church and the self-election and self-consecration of its bishops."

In their speeches, responsible persons from the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Bishops Conference pointed out that only by holding high the banners of loving the country and loving the church, and by following the roads of the autonomous administration of the church and of the self-election and self-consecration of bishops, can the members of the Chinese Catholic Church stand together with their country and their race. "Only by separating ourselves from the control and domination of foreign forces can there be a future for the autonomous administration of the Chinese Catholic Church. Only by self-electing and self-consecrating our bishops can the Catholic Church in China remain in existence. We are unswervingly determined to follow this correct road." (People's Daily, 21/12/98)

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