

China Church and News Update

Canonization of 120 China martyrs

The Holy Father, John Paul II, will canonize 120 China martyrs, aged between 7 and 79, on October 1, 2000. These were beatified between 1900 and 1946, and comprise 62 lay people, 23 priests, 15 nuns, 8 seminarians, 6 bishops, 4 catechists and 2 catechumens. Many Chinese Catholics hope to attend the ceremony at the Vatican in the fall (UCAN, March 15, 2000).

Death of Cardinal Kung Pinmei at 98

(See p. 55 of this issue of *Tripod* for write-up.)

Death of Bishop Anthony Zhong Quanzhaung

(See p. 60 of this issue of *Tripod* for write-up.)

Bishop ordained

Joseph Li Lian'gui was ordained bishop of Xianxian (Cangzhou) on March 20, 2000. He replaces Bishop Liu Dinghan who resigned his post. The new bishop was born in 1962 and ordained to the priesthood in 1991. The consecrators were John Liu Dinghan of Cangzhou, Bishop Fan Wenxin of Hengshui, and Chen Xilu, coadjutor bishop of Hengshui.

Arrest of underground Bishop John Yang Shudao of Fuzhou, Fujian Province

Bishop Yang, 80, has already spent 30 years in prison. According to press reports, on February 10, at around midnight, 150 public security officials who had come to arrest him confronted the elderly bishop!

Bishop Yang was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1955 for his refusal to denounce the Pope as head of the Roman Catholic Church, and also for refusing to cooperate with the government to form the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. He was released in 1981, and again arrested in 1988, and on numerous other occasions.

Bishops in detention

Besides Bishops Yang, there are several other bishops under arrest at the present time: James Lin Xili of Wenzhou, James Su Zhemin of Baoding, Xie Shiguang of Mindong, and Zhang Weizhu of Xianxian, and Auxiliary Bishop Francis An Shuxin of Baoding. According to reliable sources, Bishop Juliua Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding, who had been in detention, was released in January.

Women religious in Macau look to migrants for vocations

The lack of religious vocations has prompted women's religious congregations to look for vocations among young women outside Macau, especially among Chinese migrants and Filipinas. It is estimated that of Macao's population of 435,000, 35 percent are Chinese who arrived in the territory during the last two decades. Filipinas are attractive prospects since they also have a Catholic background and are usually very active in church groups (UCAN Daily Service, February 17, 2000).

Diocese of Yan'an revives after nearly 70 years

The Diocese of Yan'an in northwest China ordained its first priests in 1988 and 1989 after decades without clergy. Presently, Yan'an has 17 priests and 10 diocesan seminarians studying for the priesthood with the financial support of other dioceses or churches overseas.

The diocese with some 30,000 Catholics has obtained funds from Caritas Hong Kong and churches overseas to help dig four wells and build a water tower to improve the quality of drinking water in this impoverished area.

The Catholic Church first came to this area in 1719, when Spanish Franciscan priests baptized 200 villagers. The Diocese of Yan'an was set up when the Chinese Catholic hierarchy was established in 1946.

Yan'an is particularly famous since it was the Communist Party's headquarters from 1936-1947. It was from here that the Party launched its successful revolution. At that time the Red Army occupied the nearly finished Catholic cathedral (UCAN Daily Service, February 14, 2000).

Young priests reflect on ten years of service

From January 12-18, young priests from the northwest, northeast and central China gathered at the Hebei Catholic Seminary in Shijiazhuang for a seminar entitled, "Reflection and exchanges after ten years of priestly service." All found their sharing "very helpful, because priests' formation after ordination is far from enough," said Father Yue Fusheng of Heilongjiang.

The seminar dealt with the priests' relations to spirituality, women, society, personnel, reconciliation and evangelization. Topics included the handling of Mass stipends, priests' salary and spending, priests' interaction with nuns and women in general, division in the Church, relations among church members, and the Church's adaptation to society.

In their discussion on the very sensitive issue of the Church's relations with the Chinese government, they could only reach a consensus that maintaining good relations with the government is in the best interests of the Church. Other areas of consensus will be published in *Faith*, the Catholic newspaper published by Faith Press, Hebei Province (UCAN, Daily Service, January 26, 2000).

Fifteen dioceses ordered to elect bishops

The Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China, (BCCCC), and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association issued an order to 15 dioceses to elect qualified priests to be bishops. They pointed out that Chinese bishops are aging and many dioceses have no bishops. Dioceses in Hebei, Inner Mongolia, Shaanxi, Shandong, and Zhejiang have so far responded. No specific dates seem to have been set for the ordinations.

Other dioceses are likely to hold elections later this year, but dioceses in Guangdong, Guizhou, Sichuan and Yunnan have indicated that they would not hold any elections. Only 60 of the 110 open church dioceses in China have bishops (*Sunday Examiner*, UCAN, February 27, 2000).

Beijing-Vatican communication channel

In spite of the ups and downs in recent Sino-Vatican relations, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Vatican's Secretary of State, confirmed on February 11, that the two governments had again established an unofficial communication channel.

Former State Religious Affairs official sentenced to death for corruption

Hu Changqing, deputy governor of Jiangxi Province, is the first senior official to receive a death sentence for corruption in the 1990s. Hu failed to identify the source of the 1.61 million *yuan* of property under his name and gave 80,000 *yuan* in bribes to further his career.

Hu was appointed deputy director of religious affairs in 1995, but nothing about his term of service seems available (UCAN Daily Service, February 17, 2000).

Hong Kong's diocesan team ready for the synod

A team of 206 Hong Kong Catholics have been chosen to form the groups of participants at the Diocesan Synod which opened on March 4, with a thanksgiving Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

The group will be expected to chart new directions for the development of the diocese. The synod aims to find concrete suggestions that can be implemented in the diocese, as well as unite Catholics by sorting out important Church issues through discussion. After the synod members draw up the first draft of topics for discussion, Catholics at large will be asked to present their views. Catholics in the diocese are asked to pray for the success of the synod (UCAN Daily Service, January 28, 2000).

China's white paper lauds its human rights record

In spite of the fact that the United States has criticized China for its human rights record during the past year, China's latest white paper stresses that the human rights situation in the country, including the area of religion, has improved greatly in the past 50 years (UCAN Daily Service, February 18, 2000). (See Editorial p. 3, for added information.)