

# *The Church in China: A Review*

## *January 2001-December 2001*

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### **Ordination of bishops**

January 18: Bishop Joseph Xu Zhixuan was born on July 6, 1916 and ordained on April 8, 1946. Bishop Duan Yinming appointed him Auxiliary bishop of Wanxian by in 1989. He was consecrated on July 31, 1989, and following the death of Bishop Duan Yinming in January 2001, Bishop Xu became Bishop of Wanxian.

June 4: Fr. Jose Lai Hong-seng was consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of the Macau Diocese on June 2, 2001. He is only the second Chinese bishop in the Macau Diocese's 442-year old history.

### **Death of bishops**

January 10: The humble but much respected Bishop Matthias Duan Yinming of Wanxian died at the age of 92. He was the last Vatican appointed bishop in Mainland China. Bishop Duan was born in 1908 and ordained in 1937. He was appointed bishop of Wanxian by Pius XII in 1949, and consecrated the same year. He died on January 10, 2001.

March 26: Vatican-approved Bishop Peter Luo Beizhen of Chongqing, Sichuan Province, passed away on March 26 at the age of 89. Bishop Luo was born in 1911 and ordained in 1940. He was consecrated Bishop of Chongqing by Bishop Duan Yinming on May 14, 1993.

May 25: Bishop James Lin Bingliang, Guangzhou, Guangdong, Province, died on May 25, 2001. He was born on June 6, 1913, ordained in 1941 and consecrated bishop on May 6, 1990. Bishop Lin's funeral took place in the beautiful Gothic "Stone Church" Sacred Heart Cathedral in Guangzhou on June 5, 2001.

December 10: Franciscan underground Bishop Odoric Liu Hede, 90, of Hankou, Wuhan City, Hubei Province, died on December 10 in hospital. Born in 1910, Bishop Liu joined the Franciscans in

1929. He was ordained a priest in 1936 and appointed administrator of the Hankou Diocese in 1950. He was arrested and imprisoned in 1955 and sent for reform-through-labor during the Cultural Revolution. He was released in the late 1970s and clandestinely ordained a bishop in 1984. The Chinese government recognized him as a priest but not as a bishop.

December 24: On Christmas Eve, the unofficial bishop of Beijing, Bishop Matthew Pei Xiangde died at the age of 83. Bishop Pei had been under house arrest since April 2001. The police ordered a low profile service for his funeral to be attended by villagers only and no outsiders. Born in 1918 to Catholic parents, he entered the Seminary of the Congregation of the Lord's Disciples, a congregation founded by Cardinal Celso Costantini, at the age of 13. He was ordained a priest on May 30, 1948. In 1950, he was forced to work at the Beijing Zhiyaochang Medicine Factory. He was imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution, and released in 1980. In 1989, he was secretly ordained Bishop of Beijing.

## **Arrests**

January 4: A priest, five nuns, six seminarians, and a number of lay people were detained in Fujian Province for worshipping at an authorized place of worship. Most of the group was released. However, two nuns were forced to sign prepared documents denouncing their faith.

April 24: There were a number of arrests in Beijing, Hebei, Henan, Fujian, Jiangxi and Inner Mongolia of bishops, priests and lay people in the unofficial Catholic Church. Among them were three bishops: Bishop Shi Enxiang (79) arrested in April in Beijing; Bishop Matthias Pei Xiangde (82) in Beijing (along with a large number of priests); and Bishop Li Hongye (83) of Luoyang, Henan Province.

July 16: Fifteen priests from the underground segment of the Catholic Church in China were arrested in Yujiang City in Jiangxi Province on July 10, 2001.

November: Bishop Luke Li Jingfeng, Bishop of Fengxiang Diocese, Shaanxi Province, and his assistant, Coadjutor Bishop Peter Zhang Wannian disappeared. Twelve priests were also confined

for indoctrination courses. The monastery and two convents were closed. The seminarians, monks and nuns were sent home. All are part of the underground Catholic community. Fengxiang is the only Catholic Diocese in China, which has only an underground community and no official church.

December 11: The government has seriously restricted the activities of Bishop Bartholomew Yu Chengdi, 72, of Hanzhong Diocese, Shaanxi Province and three of his priests who now have been sent to remote parishes for refusing to join the Catholic Patriotic Association. The priests have been forbidden from contacting their bishop.

### **Other news**

January 20: The leaders of the six main religions in Hong Kong have pledged to work in unison to promote cultural values and 'the virtues of benevolence and love' in five directions through education of youth, schools, commitment to the young and old, to build a peaceful community. They also asked the government to put the needs of all Hong Kong people above political ambitions.

February 1: The controversial Episcopal ordination held a year ago in Beijing has caused concern as to whether or not 'boycotting' seminarians were dismissed unjustly for not attending the ceremony.

February 9: Several Hong Kong Christian groups urged the Chinese and Hong Kong governments to be tolerant of the Falun Gong. They asked that 'all citizens should be treated equally regardless of their faith.'

February 20: Chinese Communists officials visited five of Hong Kong's main religious entities. It is not known why the Catholic Church was left out. The purpose of the visit was to arrange for mainland Buddhists monks to study in Hong Kong.

March 2: Scholars are concerned that the Chinese ratification of a United Nations economic and human rights covenant will not bring significant changes to Mainland China's human rights situation.

March 13: Jesuit Father Gutheinz has brought together Catholics, Protestants and experienced people in Taipei to help tens of thousand of Hansenites in Mainland China. With the efforts of these people,

the hope is to improve the treatment, living conditions and education of the 320,000 people suffering from leprosy.

- March 27: A Catholic relief team of nuns in habits visited and assisted the snowstorm stricken area of Mongolia, impressing everyone wherever they went. They supplied food and animal feed to the nomadic families. They also brought more of the love of God than anyone realized.
- March 30: Centenarian Father Francis Burkhardt received the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice Medal from Monsignor Adolfo Tito Yilana, on behalf of Pope John Paul II for his continuing devotion to relieve the suffering of the Taiwanese people.
- April 3: A convent in Harbin, northeast China, has been dissolved, and the Sisters have left. It is alleged that the situation is the result of conflicts over living conditions, treatment of the nuns and suspicion over the election of a convent superior.
- April 5: Bishop Joseph Meng Ziwen, from Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region celebrated his 99<sup>th</sup> birthday with Catholics and family. Though only recognized in the State Church as a priest, Bishop Meng continues to work with all local Catholics. Despite his age, he is in fine health and travels to three dioceses to celebrate mass.
- April 10: The tradition of baptizing newborn babies in northeast China continues despite difficulties due to weather, ethnic traditions, and the Cultural Revolution.
- April 16: The US-based Cardinal Kung Foundation (CKF), a private institution that advocates the interest of the 'underground' church, has begun gathering personal letters from people who knew the Cardinal who died in 2000 at the age of 98 in view of his possible canonization.
- April 23: Father Yue Fusheng of northeastern China had his ear 'chopped' off by two assailants. Though the motives are unknown, people pray and hope that the people responsible will be caught.
- May 4: Many people in Taiwan are committing suicide due to life's pressures, Taiwan's bishops have issued a pastoral letter outlining practical preventive steps and ways of building a culture of life.



- May 25: Bishop Jin Peixian of Liaoning in northeast China celebrated fifty years as a priest with the local Chinese of the area.
- May 25: In seminars and demonstrations Catholic missionaries in Mongolia are helping to change local attitudes towards people with learning difficulties.
- May 30: A priest from northeast China was arrested for cutting off the ear of a fellow priest. Two assailants were arrested later.
- June 20: One thousand local Catholics and a few overseas visitors attended the inauguration ceremony of a Catholic Church as the first religious venue in the resettlement area of the Three Gorges Dam project in China.
- July 14: The Catholic Church joined in celebrations as China won its bid for the 2008 Olympics. There is some optimism that the world will become aware of China's culture and hope for more international openness.
- July 24: *The Jesus Sutras* by Martin Palmer claims that Christianity has been in China for over 1,000 years.
- July 25: An appeal to help improve Sino-Vatican relations made by the Vatican Secretary of State to the US president is not likely to bring any improvement in bilateral relations.
- July 30: Concern about the Church's slow growth and disagreements among priests in three dioceses in Anhui Province in central China, has forced the three to merge into one diocese. Catholics have been banned from entering 'underground' churches. The move is calculated to 'stabilize' the 'open' Catholic Church in the area.
- July 31: 'Faith' a widely distributed Catholic publication in China celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary by taking a closer look at its publication for ways of improvement.
- August 6: Bishop Joseph Zhang Weizhu, 35, of Cangzhou, Xianxian Diocese, Hebei Province, arrested in January 2000, and not affiliated with the 'open' church has been released from house arrest because of poor health.

- August 10: In hope of continuing to build young Catholic families in Shandong Province in eastern China, the parishes have begun a matchmaking service. The service is meant to enable young Catholics to meet each other, learn about marriage and continue to grow in the faith.
- August 13: Public security officials have leveled the grave of Vatican-appointed Bishop Joseph Fan Xueyan of Baoding, Diocese, Hebei Province, prominent leader of the 'underground' church, to discourage Catholics from paying their respect.
- August 18: With the help of overseas funding, Catholics from Guilin, southwest China, are looking forward to worshipping in a new and bigger church. The previous church collapsed in 1996.
- August 27: The Caritas Francis Hsu College in Hong Kong has been formally recognized as a post-secondary college. The college offers a wide selection of courses to capable young people who are unable to enter university.
- August 28: China hopes to meet the AIDS crisis through education. More than 70% of China's AIDS cases come from the use of intravenous drugs, prostitution and blood transfusions..
- August 31: Priests returning from overseas studies have been advised to interact more with the locally trained priests in order to help them overcome culture shock and feel part of the community.
- September 4: In April 2001, the Church in Guizhou regained the property of the site of the former Church-run Sacred Heart School in Anlong county, Guizhou Province. With governmental permission the Guizhou Diocese with Father Li Limin as principal is managing the public school on the property. The teaching of religion, however, is not permitted.
- September 7: Catholics of Shenzhen and Hong Kong are experiencing fellowship and mutual understanding by sharing the Bible, singing and worshipping together in one of the first chapels in a shopping center in Shenzhen near Hong Kong.
- September 12: Participants of a symposium held in Taiwan on 'History of the Catholic Chinese Church and of Catechesis in China' suggested that objective studies on early missionaries in China could

give a more balanced assessment of their cultural and religious contributions. Scholars were asked to conduct scientific research that is open to both the laudable as well as the less honorable aspects of missionary life in China throughout the five centuries.

September 15: According to Hong Kong parish advisor Mak Hon-kai, senior religious affairs officials have declared that the controversy between China and the Vatican over the canonization of 120 Chinese Martyrs is all in the past and China is ready to open talks with the Vatican..

September 17: A book called 'Shengdian Xinmao' meaning new faces of churches to be published at the end of the year will enable Catholics across China to appreciate church architecture. This is the first photo collection of Catholic churches in China.

September 29: In response to Pope John Paul's call to honor 'new martyrs' church people in Taiwan, Mainland China and other religious groups have compiled 2,000 Catholic names and sent them to the Vatican.

October 7: The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Hong Kong, was crowded for the solemn concelebration of a Mass to commemorate the first anniversary of the canonization of the 120 China martyrs. The saints were martyred between 1648 and 1930.

October 11: Although the bishops of Mainland China received the working document for the Synod of Bishops in Rome, bishops from the Mainland were not permitted to attend the Synod, as was also the case with the Synod of Asia in 1998.

October 12: October 12 marked the official inauguration of the Macau Ricci Institute for studies on the impact of intercultural dialogue between China and the West.

October 14-17: An international conference titled "Encounters and Dialogues, An International Symposium on Cross-Cultural Exchanges between China and the West in the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties" was held at the Beijing Institute of Technology to mark the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jesuit Father Matteo Ricci's arrival in Beijing. The conference, attended by many Chinese scholars, stressed the importance of situating the China Mission and its varied complex aspects within the historical rather than the ideo-

logical context. The conference was jointly arranged by the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing and the Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History of The University of San Francisco Center for the Pacific Rim.

- October 16-19: China detained more than 23,000 suspects in a 20-day anti-crime campaign in the run-up to the APEC meeting in Shanghai on October 15-21. Bishop Joseph Fan Zhongliang of Shanghai, and other Catholic clergy of the “underground” Church in Shanghai were warned not to “wander around” during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum there.
- October 18: “Photographs of Early Twentieth Century China” by Father Leone Nani, P.I.M.E. went on exhibition at the Macau Museum of Art on October 18. The exhibit of 150 photographs will last until February 17, 2002.
- October 19: The South China Morning Post reported that although China enacted a law ten years ago outlawing the sale of babies, the practice is still widespread in some rural areas. Girls are sold for as little as USD 250 and boys for about USD 1000. Birth certificates are openly supplied by local clinics. The price is often conditioned by the child’s physical state.
- October 24: At an international conference at the Gregorian University, Rome, commemorating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Matteo Ricci’s arrival in Beijing, Pope John Paul II apologized for all “past and present” wrongs committed in China by members of the Catholic Church. “I regret that in many people these failings may have given the impression of a lack of respect and esteem for the Chinese people...For all this I ask the forgiveness and understanding of those who may have felt hurt by such actions on the part of Christians.”
- October 25: A local government demolished a newly rebuilt Catholic church in eastern China for the third time in 18 months because Catholics there refuse to join a government recognized association. Catholics in Linjiayuan Village of Lupu Town, Zhejiang Province rebuilt their church during the National Day holidays on October. 1-7. However, the government again demolished it on October 25.

- October 26: Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Sun Yuxi, said at a press conference on October 25 that China is willing to improve relations with the Vatican, but two conditions must be observed: the Vatican must terminate “diplomatic relations” with Taiwan and admit that the government of the People’s Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China, and Taiwan is an inseparable part of China’s territory. Moreover, the Vatican must not interfere in China’s internal affairs, including not interfering in China’s internal affairs by conducting religious activities.
- October 29: Taiwan Catholics and church leaders praised Pope John Paul II’s humble gesture of apology to the Chinese people and said they are prepared for changes in Taiwan-Holy See relations.
- November 4: The Hospitalier Order of St. John of God has been invited to open a facility for terminally ill cancer patients in Jilin Province. The invitation followed a meeting two years ago after Chinese health representatives visited the St. John of God center for terminally ill cancer patients in the Korean city of Kwangju. The Brothers will not be able to engage in religious activities publicly, but they will be able to pray with the sick and their relatives if they explicitly request it.
- November 9: The Museum of World Religions, the first of its kind all over the world, opened on November 9, 2001 in Taipei. President Chen Shui-bian and 12 local overseas dignitaries including Cardinal Paul Shan and Archbishop Joseph Ti Kang of Taipei took part in the opening ceremony. Buddhist Venerable Hsin-tao, abbot of the Wu Sheng Monastery on Ling Jiou Mountain in north-eastern Taiwan is the founder of the museum.
- November 27: China’s foreign minister says that the Holy See must apologize for the canonization of the 120 China saints before China will consider re-establishing Sino-Vatican relations. The Holy Father has already apologized to China for errors committed by missionaries, and no other apology seems warranted.
- December 1: The media reported that Bishop Luke Li Jingfeng of Fengxiang and several priests of Shaanxi Province, not affiliated with the open church, were arrested by the government and taken away for re-education classes. The priests were sent back to their home town on November 27, and they are not permitted to return

to their parishes. The government has declared that the seminary in the cathedral compound is illegal and ordered all seminarians to return home by November 20.

December 3: The Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Diocese attempted to present a letter to the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government on World AIDS Day urging the Chinese government to care for its AIDS patients. The government office refused to accept the letter.

December 7: Hundreds of Catholics, government officials and donors attended the ceremony officiated by Bishop Joseph Xu Zhixuan inaugurating the opening of St. Joseph's Church in Wanxian Diocese. This is part of the project to relocate churches being submerged by the Three Gorges Dam Project.

December 21: Msgr. James Patrick Green will succeed Msgr. Adolfo Tito Yllana as Charge d'Affaires of the Taipei-based Apostolic Nunciature in China. Msgr. Yllana has been appointed as Archbishop and Apostolic Nuncio to Papua, New Guinea.

December 22: St. Anthony's, Shenzhen's new and only Catholic Church, opened on December 18 to the joy of some 1,000 Catholics in the city. The Mass was concelebrated by Bishops John Huo Cheng of Fenyang, Shanxi Province, Paul Jiang Taoran of Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province as well as 40 priests from different parts of the country including Hong Kong.

December 25: The Chinese celebrated Christmas by shopping, going out with family and friends, exchanging Christmas cards and presents, and sending E-mail cards. Hotels inflated their prices to cater to the new rich. "Chinese celebrating Christmas doesn't mean that they know all about the Western Christmas spirit. It's only that we are better off now, and need an excuse to gather together with friends and enjoy ourselves," said Zhao Xiaqiu, a professor at Renmin University in Beijing. Many Christians, however, queued up for hours, in below freezing temperature, and waited patiently for hours to get into the midnight Mass to celebrate the birth of Christ.