

EDITORIAL

China is to be congratulated for producing a successful summer Olympics this year. From the opening ceremony to the many exciting events, I think the worldwide audience would unanimously agree that the Olympics this year were both colorful and entertaining. Thanks are due to the organizers, athletes and volunteers for their cooperative effort to make the Games the success that they were.

The Summer Games contained everything, from triumph to disappointment. People around the world, watching on TV, felt excitement at the victories and sadness at the disappointments. China's athletes can be proud of the 51 gold medals (and 101 overall) they won for their country. Athletes from the U.S. can be proud of Michael Phelps, who won 8 gold medals in swimming, and of their men's basketball team, who won the gold medal in that sport after being in the doldrums for many years. Even small countries, like Jamaica, can be proud of their sprinters, who won gold medals, and set world records in the process.

As for disappointments, The worldwide TV audience could feel the despair of the Chinese fans, as their beloved Liu Xiang was too injured to run in the 110 meter hurdles event. The same could be said of U.S. fans, as they watched their men and women's relay teams drop the baton in their races, thus eliminating them from contention. So, there was something for everybody in the world community, but mostly it was a feeling of satisfaction at a job well done on the part of the Chinese hosts. They gave the world an entertaining 2 weeks in the middle of the summer.

So, it came as quite a jolt to Catholics around the world when they heard the news that one of their bishops was arrested in China on the very day of the closing ceremony. Questions arose in their minds, like: what was he arrested for? Does this indicate a crackdown on the Chinese Catholic Church after the Olympics are

over? What happened to the greater freedom and openness many people came to expect would prevail in China after the Olympics?

The high spirits people felt from watching a successful and entertaining Olympics were suddenly dashed with the arrest of Bishop Jia Zhiguo of the unregistered Catholic community of Zhengding in Hebei Province. The arrest took place on the compound of Bishop Jia's cathedral at 11:20 AM on Sunday, August 24, 2008. One of the arresting officers told the parishioners that the bishop "will not be back soon."

Perhaps Bishop Jia's arrest had to do with the celebration of the feast of the Assumption on August 15th. The police had told the Catholics to celebrate the feast in their own parishes, and not to gather at the cathedral, as was their custom on that major feast. The reason for this, most likely, was to prevent the gathering of large crowds during the Olympics. Nevertheless, over 1,000 people showed up at the cathedral that day. Should the bishop be held responsible for the large number of attendees? How could he have prevented their coming? Moreover, Zhengding is over 200 kilometers from Beijing. How could a large crowd there affect the Olympics? If a large crowd was expected, could not the police have assigned more officers there to supervise the crowd?

The special topic for this issue is the 30th anniversary of the famous 3rd Plenum of the 11th Central Committee of December 1978, when Deng Xiaoping returned to power, and started the policy of reform and openness. We present several articles on this topic. Father Jean Charbonnier, in addition to an article on the 30 years of reform, has an article on the 350th anniversary of the foundation of his congregation, the Paris Foreign Mission Society. Father James Kroeger also presents an article on mission as a gift. Part of the reform was the implementation of religious freedom. After 30 years of openness and reform, it seems that China has not yet decided whether it wants to be an open or closed country. For all the rules and regulations promulgated since the 3rd Plenum seem to have whittled away at the freedoms granted by that historic meeting. (PJB)