

2018: China Church and News Update

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DEATH OF BISHOPS

- June 15: Death of Bp. Li Mingshu (李明述, 1924-2018), bishop of Qingdao, Shandong.

MAIN EVENTS

January 2018

- January 3: Bp. Peter Shao Zhumin (邵祝敏主教), bishop of Wenzhou diocese (Zhejiang), recognized by the Holy See, but not by the government, was released from Xining, Qinghai, where he had been detained for seven months. After his release, he went to Beijing for medical treatment and then returned to his diocese. He had been apprehended on May 18, 2017 by the police and officials from the Religious Affairs Bureau. He was put under pressure to support the independent Church, but he did not join the Patriotic Association.

- January 10: UCANews reported that Fr. Lu Danhua (盧丹華神父, of the unofficial community) of Lishui Diocese (Zhejiang) had been detained by government officials since December 29. Fr. Lu was the only priest working in Lishui, after his ordination in December 2016 by Bp. Shao Zhumin of Wenzhou, who also administers the Lishui diocese.

- January 29-31: Following reports by AsiaNews and UCANews, Card. Joseph Zen confirmed his knowledge that a Holy See delegation had visited mainland China in December and had asked Bp. Zhuang Jianjian (莊建堅主教) of Shantou to retire, so that excommunicated Bp. Huang Bingzhang (黃炳章主教) could take his place, and had asked Bp. Vincent Guo Xijin (郭希錦主教) of Mindong to become the auxiliary of the illegitimate Bp. Zhan Xilu (詹思祿主教). Card. Zen also revealed that on January 9 he had flown to Rome to hand Pope

Francis a letter from Bp. Zhuang. In the conversation, according to the Cardinal, Pope Francis admitted to being surprised by the delegation's action and frowned on it. On January 31, the Vatican press office issued a declaration: "The Pope is in constant contact with his collaborators, in particular the Secretariat of State, on Chinese issues, and is informed by them faithfully and in detail on the situation of the Catholic Church in China and on the steps of the dialogue in progress between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China, which he follows with special attention." This gave rise to a large number of interventions, positive and negative, on the issue.

- January 30: Officials of the State Administration for Religious Affairs met with the Catholic leaders of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and the Bishops Conference of the Catholic China Church (BCCC), *yihui yituan*, for work reports of 2017. The officials requested the *yihui yituan* to guide the faithful in 2018 to study the speech of Xi Jinping and the spirit of the 19th Party Congress, to implement the Sinicisation of the Church along with the new Regulations, to uphold the banner of autonomy, independence and democratic administration of the Church, and to strengthen the personal formation and the patriotic love of the believers.

February 2018

- February 1: The revised Regulations for Religious Affairs came into effect.

- February 8: At a meeting of CCPA and BCCC leaders, Bp. Ma Yinglin (馬英林主教) gave a report of their work in 2017, and listed priorities for 2018: celebration of the 60th anniversary of the democratic choice and ordination of bishops, efforts towards the Sinicization of the Church, and centralizing the democratic systems of diocesan management, according to the revised Regulations.

- February 12: UCANews published an interview with Bp. Guo Xijin of Mindong, who said, although he could not agree with the arrangement to make way for government-sanctioned Bishop Zhan Silu, he would in pain obey the Holy See's decision.

- February 14: A petition signed by Hong Kong and overseas Catholics was issued online, inviting all Bishops' Conferences in the world to

halt the proposed deal between the Vatican and China on the appointment of bishops.

- February 16: Celebration of the Spring Festival or Lunar New Year: churches in Henan were warned not to hang scrolls at their doors, while the campaign of cross demolitions continued.

March 2018

- March 2: AsiaNews reported that crosses, as well as external decorations and the Way of the Cross were removed from Yining Church (Xinjiang). The same happened at the churches of Manas and Hutubi. The explanation was that the Cross represents “foreign religious infiltration.” Prayer services were forbidden even in private houses under the threat of arrests and re-education. Children and young people were forbidden to enter churches.

- March 9: Some people took down the cross of the South Church in Shangqiu, Henan, without prior notification.

- March 3-15: Annual session of the 13th national meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference was held in Beijing. It adopted an amendment to its charter, elected the new leadership, with Wang Yang (汪洋) as chairman. On religion, the outgoing CCPCC Chairman, Yu Zhengsheng (俞正聲), reported special attention to religious affairs in Xinjiang and Tibet in order to fight against terrorism, extremism, and separatist activities.

- March 5-20: The first session of the 13th National People's Congress was held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing: it modified the Constitution adding “Xi Jinping Thought” and removed the two-term limit of China’s presidency,

Premier Li Keqiang (李克強) mentioned religious work in his report: "Over the past five years, we have made new improvements in work related to ethnic groups, religion, and overseas Chinese nationals... We have actively guided religions in adapting to the socialist society. We will fully implement the Party's basic policy on religious affairs, uphold the principle that religions in China must be Chinese in orientation, promote harmony between religions, and

encourage religious leaders and believers to actively involve themselves in promoting economic and social development."

- March 12: According to the Chinese Catholic bishops taking part in the Two Assemblies, the Sino-Vatican negotiations are moving in a good direction. Bp. Fang Jianping (方建平主教) of Tangshan, a member of the People's National Congress, was confident that the two parties could soon reach an agreement on the appointment of bishops, which could help promote the development of the Church.

- March 12-13: Chinese scholars have joined an anti-organ trafficking conference at the Vatican, to share the country's experience and boost exchanges between Beijing and the Vatican. This was the second time China has been invited by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences to attend a meeting at the Holy See, as China's reforms on organ transplant have increasingly received papal and global recognition.

- March 13: A public notice dated 13 March started to appear at the entrance of various religious sites in Henan province, stating the following nine prohibitions: people under 18 years of age are not permitted to enter the church; Communist party members are not permitted to enter the church, except for work; foreigners are not permitted to preach homilies without the permit of the two Associations; religious activities cannot be held outside registered places of religious activities; without a permit it is illegal to sell religious books, magazines and publications, or hold large scale religious activities, to spread on the internet any propaganda, literature and images with religious content, to exhibit posters with religious content on the streets and on sidewalks; and religious formation courses cannot be held without a permit.

- March 15: The Vatican bestowed a papal knighthood on Hon. Matthew Lee, Taiwan's ambassador to the Holy See, in recognition of his diplomatic work.

- March 19: According to AsiaNews, Fr. Ding Zhanmin (丁占民神父), parish priest in Beishaliang (Baotoukun district, Hohhot archdiocese, Inner Mongolia), was forced to abandon his parish and return to the countryside to work as a farmer in Xilin Gol (also in Inner Mongolia). The priest's expulsion, due to his refusal to register through the CCPA,

took place under the escort of officials from the Baotou Religious Affairs Bureau.

- March 22-23: A Symposium on “Christianity in the Chinese Society: Impact, Interaction and Inculturation” was hosted by the Gregorian University in Rome, organized by the University Faculty of Missiology together with the Beijing People’s University and Hong Kong’s Yuandao Study Society.

- March 26: Bp. Vincent Guo Xijin of Mindong, Fujian, was detained overnight by the police. Fortunately, he could return the next day. According to some of the faithful, the bishop was detained after refusing to concelebrate during the Easter holidays with illegitimate bishop Zhan Silu.

- March 28: According to UCANews, a kindergarten run by Catholics in China's populous Henan province was seized by authorities. Tian'ai Kindergarten, in Weihui parish of Anyang Diocese, was sealed after police stamps were posted on the school's gate on February 14 and March 14. The kindergarten had 60 to 70 children who now attend other schools nearby.

- March 27-28: The government-sanctioned China Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement during their general assembly approved “The Principle for Promoting a Sinicized [Protestant] Christianity in China for the Next Five Years (2018-2022).” The document states that the main tasks will be to build a Sinicized Christianity and Chinese theology in order to “consciously develop Bible study to lay a solid foundation for reinterpreting and retranslating the Bible or writing the reference books.” The Protestant leaders agreed to cooperate with the principle of Sinicization, to adopt the core values of socialism, and to espouse the leadership of the Communist Party.

April 2018

- April 3: The State Council Information Office released a White Paper on Religions, entitled “China's Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief.” The 8,000-character text was issued in Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish and Arabic. It highlights the progress made in protecting religious freedom and in keeping law

and order in religious activities. The White Paper states that China maintains the principle that "religions must be Chinese in orientation (Sinicization)" and that the Communist Party provides "active guidance" for religions, so that they "can adapt to socialist society." Foreigners have freedom to go to temples, churches, mosques, but within "Chinese laws and regulations." Foreigners shall not establish religious organizations, set up religious offices and sites for religious activities, run religious institutions, or recruit foreign students without authorization; nor shall they recruit followers, appoint clerical personnel from among Chinese citizens or engage in other missionary activities.

According to the White Paper, the five officially recognized religions in China, namely Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism, gather a total of 200 million faithful, and are served by 380 thousand priests, imams, pastors, etc. Catholics and Protestants number 6 and 38 million, respectively, Muslims 20 million. It does not specify the number of Buddhist and Daoists since these religions do not have strict criteria for membership or participation.

There are 144,000 venues of worship, which comprise 60,000 Protestant churches, 35,000 mosques, 33,500 Buddhist temples, 6,000 Catholic churches, and 9,000 Daoist temples. One hundred sixty million Bibles were printed in 100 languages, of which 80 million were in Chinese, while Buddhist scriptures were 63,000. The Quran has been translated and published in Chinese, Uighur, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz. There are 91 formation institutes for religious personnel, of which 41 are Buddhist, 21 Protestant, 10 Daoist, 9 Catholic and 10 Islamic, with a total enrolment of 10,000 students.

- April 5: According to AsiaNews, since 30 March, many Chinese e-commerce sites have stopped selling Bibles. This raised complaints against online retailers like JD.com, Taobao, Amazon.cn and Dang Dang. Chinese Government tries to restrict the distribution of the Bible since it is categorized as a publication "for internal distribution," i.e., to be sold only by government-sanctioned bodies to Catholics and Protestants.

- April 30: In a wide-ranging interview, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said that it is important to continue the dialogue between the Holy See and China, albeit "with a lot of

patience, successes and failures.” “The Holy See, as the Pope has said many times, is not interested in diplomatic successes. We are interested in spaces of freedom for the Church, to guarantee that it can live a normal life that is also in communion with the Pope. We expect that we can reach an agreement regarding above all the process on the nomination of bishops.”

May 2018

- May 7: The State Administration for Religious Affairs launched consultations for the revision of the 1991 rules concerning foreigners practising their religion in China. The revised regulations prohibit Chinese citizens from participating in foreign religious groupings, and prohibit foreign organizations that have not been previously authorized from holding religious meetings. In addition, foreign residents cannot instruct Chinese religious staff or preach and teach, unless invited by state-approved institutions. The current rules state that “[foreigners] must not produce or sell religious books, religious audio-visual products, religious electronic publications, and other religious materials; they must not distribute propaganda documents or conduct other forms of missionary activity.”
- May 17-22: The joint assembly of the leaders of the *Yihui Yituan* approved the “Five-Year Plan of Development for the Sinicization of the Catholic Church in China (2018-2022).” The text was not made public at first, but was sent to all Chinese dioceses in June, calling for them to present their own five-year plans for Sinicization by the end of August.

The approximately 6,500-character text comprises 9 chapters. Chapter 3 entitled “Deepening the political, legal and social identity of the Catholic Church in China” contains the item “Insist on the principle of independence, autonomy and self-government of the Church.” Chapter 4 “Promote the integration of Catholicism with distinguished Chinese culture” demands a new historiography of the Chinese Catholic Church. Chapter 5 deals with the construction of “theological thinking with characteristics of the Chinese Church.” Chapter 6 is on the creation of a “Church organization and management model with Chinese characteristics.” That means, among

other things, an “organic union” of hierarchy and democratic management. Other chapters deal with the Sinicization of liturgy, ecclesiastical architecture, art and music.

The document is very political in style. The “Sinicization” of religions and of the Chinese Catholic Church has been a constant theme since 2015. Practically it involves: a) increasing assimilation of Chinese culture into religious expressions; b) “independence from foreign influence”; c) submission to the Party because it must “guide” religions and must “hold firmly the role of leadership in all religious activities.” The name “Xi Jinping” appears five times in the text just as often as the word “Gospel.”

- May 18: In an interview with the *South China Morning Post*, the Archbishop of Taipei, John Hung Shan-Chuan, said that the Pope had told him that he would not compromise Catholic principles in negotiations with China, and that the power to appoint bishops must remain in the hands of the Pontiff. During the visit *ad limina*, the Taiwan bishops invited Pope Francis to pay a visit to Taiwan next March on the occasion of the Eucharistic Congress of Taiwan.

- May 24: A statue of St. John Wu Wenyin was unveiled at Dongertou Catholic Church in Yongnian parish of Handan Diocese on May 3. But later the authorities ordered the church to remove the statue. Wu Wenyin was executed during the Boxer Rebellion in Hebei in 1900, and was canonized by St. John Paul II in October 2000.

- May 26: China ordered a crackdown on large outdoor religious statues to “prevent commercialization.” The United Front Work Department posted the directive on its website.

- May 28: A plot of land next to the Immaculate Conception Church in Hangzhou Diocese, Zhejiang, and measuring 800 square meters, was sold at auction as commercial land by authorities after a clash between Catholics and security officials. Hundreds of Catholics prayed at the site for a proper solution to the land dispute.

June 2018

- June 5: Local government officials forcibly demolished the Way of the Cross at Our Lady of Mount Carmel pilgrimage site of Tianjiaying village in Anyang Diocese (North Henan) at 8 p.m.
- June 11: In a letter to the Diocese of Shijiazhuang and the Patriotic Association of Shijiazhuang, the Bureau for Ethnic and Religious Affairs of Chang'an in Hebei Province recommended that Fr. Sun Linghui (孫令輝神父), a member of the official Church in Shijiazhuang, be stripped of his clergy status. Fr. Sun was accused of leading a group of pilgrims to Shanxi Province on May 24, thus creating an "extremely bad" social impact.
- June 12-14: Top Catholic leaders held a meeting in Chengdu with representatives of the nine major seminaries to discuss issues related to the life and administration of the seminaries, after the revised regulations for religious affairs came into effect. On June 14, the participants paid a visit to the Yingxiu Museum in Wenchuan that commemorates the 2008 earthquake.
- June 15: According to a Reuters report, the Vatican and China have held a new round of talks on the appointment of bishops, and the Holy See has raised concerns over China's tightening restrictions of religious practice. The talks between the two delegations, the first since a December meeting in Beijing, took place in Rome in the second week of June. The Vatican has not announced the talks and it was still unclear when the deal could be signed.
- June 15: Bp. Giuseppe Li Mingshu (李明述, 1924-2018), bishop of Qingdao (Shandong), died at the age of 94. He was born in December 1924 in the village of Lijia (Shandong). He completed his studies in secondary school and in the minor seminary of Zhoucun. Between 1943 and 1949 he studied in the major seminary of Jinan (Shandong) and then in Wuhan (Hubei). He was ordained a priest on April 11, 1949, in Wuhan Cathedral. Between 1949 and 1953 he worked as a priest in Shaoguan (Guangdong), also teaching in primary and secondary schools. The diocese gives no information about him in the period from 1953 to 1978. From 1978 (the end of the Maoist period) until 1986 he taught educational science at a teacher training college and English in a high school in Boxing, Shandong. From 1986 to 1994 he was vice-principal for studies in the Holy Spirit seminary

(Shandong). He was then appointed diocesan administrator in Qingdao and on 13 August 2000 he was ordained bishop of the diocese, with a mandate from the Holy See. From 2000 to 2005 he was vice-rector of the Beijing National Seminary. At the ordination ceremony, Msgr. Li declared that he wanted to strengthen new means of evangelization for his diocese, form lay leaders, develop adult catechism classes, and maintain communion with the universal Church. His faithful remember him as a "fearful" and obedient bishop to the Patriotic Association, but in 2005 he invited Sister Nirmala Joshi, who succeeded Mother Teresa as superior of the Missionaries of Charity, to visit Qingdao to study the possibility of opening a house in his diocese. He also invited Sister Nirmala to write to the Chinese authorities for permission, but the nun's letter was never answered.

- June 15: Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese launched a petition urging the Chinese government to release underground Coadjutor Bishop Cui Tai (崔泰主教) of Xuanhua in Hebei province. The bishop was taken away by authorities in mid-April and his whereabouts are still unknown. Since 1993, Bishop Cui has been repeatedly placed under detention and house arrest or sent to labor camps by authorities for illegally preaching and holding religious assemblies.

The case is very serious since Bishop Cui has been in poor health in recent years. The Commission sent a statement to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and appealed to the public to sign the petition. 300 people signed the petition which was later sent to foreign consulates in China.

- June 20: A course for Sisters held at the National Seminary from April 23 ended. The course comprised two identical sessions. There were 45 participants in the first, and 48 in the second session. Topics ranged from spirituality, psychology, consecrated life, vows, prayers and Scripture.

- June 21: Pope Francis gave a wide-ranging interview to a senior correspondent in Reuters' Rome bureau. Asked about relations with China, Pope Francis said he was optimistic about the outcome of normalization with the Chinese authorities, saying they were "at a good point."

July 2018

- July 6: According to UCANews, a "Special Office Emergency Notice" was distributed in Luoyang on July 1. It contains five orders: 1) the number and backgrounds of worshippers of all faiths, especially those from poor families, must be documented and reported to the authorities by 6pm on July 4; 2) Religious leaders were to inform local officials of any minors entering religious venues; 3) the names of clergy must be displayed at parishes so that officials can confirm they have the necessary permits to preach from the pulpit; 4) the Chinese flag must be on permanent display at religious venues and the national anthem sung at each service; 5) the clergy must keep abreast of newly revised regulations on religious affairs, and provide statistics to town and village archives. The notice warned that personnel from the special project office would make impromptu visits to churches in the province to ensure they comply with the new rules. The source said religious venues were being heavily scrutinized and those without permits shuttered.

- July 17: Faith Press reported that Tangshan Diocese had opened a museum on the diocese's history. It is in the Catholic village of Huanghuagang (near Tangshan City), an important location in the history of the local Church.

- July 21: Tianshui Municipal Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee [in Gansu] sent a letter requiring the local CCPA to send personnel to replace Fr. Wang Yiqin (王義勤神父) and Fr. Li Shidong (李世東神父) who had been accused of holding a summer camp for a Bosco youth group. The two underground priests were sent back to their hometowns in Shandong. They were serving Maijiqu Ganquan Catholic Church in Tianshui Diocese.

August 2018

- August 8-12, 2018: A Taizé International Meeting of Young Adults was held in Hong Kong for the first time, bearing the theme "Pilgrimage of Trust and Reconciliation." Some 2,700 young people from 40 countries, mostly from Asia (including mainland China), attended the meeting. About one third of the participants are

Protestants. It included ecumenical prayer services in the Catholic and Anglican cathedrals, with workshops, exchanges and visits to various religious institutions. The meeting was hosted by the Catholic diocese and Christian Churches of Hong Kong.

- August 13: In the Diocese of Jinan, Shandong Province, three legally registered church buildings were recently torn down by local authorities for city-planning reasons. Following the demolition of the Shilihe Church earlier this year, the Liangwang Church was razed on July 17, followed by the Qianwang Church on August 13. Both churches were located in Licheng District, on the outskirts of Jinan, the provincial capital. All three churches had been registered with the religious authorities and in use regularly. Church members were promised another plot of land.

- August 17: The Party journal, *Qiushi*, published an article by Wang Zuo'an, chief of SARA, who wrote: "All religions of our country hold to the principle of independence, autonomy and self-government. There is no subordinate relationship between the religions of China and the religions of foreign countries. The religious organizations and religious affairs of our country are not subject to any foreign domination."

- August 20: One thousand two hundred musicians took to their drums at the "Third Heavenly Sound Cup" organized by the Diocese of Taiyuan for Catholic percussion ensembles across China.

- August 22: A Catholic church built in the style of a Mongolian yurt was consecrated in Salaqi, Inner Mongolia. It is dedicated to Mary, Mother of Mongolia.

September 2018

- September 14: The National Major Seminary held an opening ceremony for the new school year, with 86 seminarians. Other major seminaries did the same in September. The number of seminarians are respectively 49 in Beijing Diocesan Seminary, 61 in Jilin Seminary, 11 in Shenyang Seminary, 35 in Xi'an Seminary, 123 in Hebei Seminary at Shijiazhuang, 15 in Sichuan Seminary and 5 in Shanghai Sheshan

Seminary (only local seminarians). The total number is 385. Taiyuan and Wuchang seminaries remain closed.

- September 21-27: The second session of the official formation course for 43 Superiors of Sisters Congregations was held in Beijing.
- September 22: The Vatican and the People's Republic of China announced at the same time that they had signed a "Provisional Agreement on the Appointment of Bishops." At a meeting of delegations from both sides in Beijing, the respective "deputy foreign ministers"—the Holy See's Undersecretary for Relations with States, Monsignor Antoine Camilleri, and the Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Wang Chao—signed the document. The very brief message of the Chinese Foreign Ministry explained that both sides would continue working to "promote the improvement of mutual relations." The communiqué of the Holy See says that the agreement "foresees the possibility of periodic reviews of its application," and speaks of "the shared hope" that the Agreement would "contribute positively to the life of the Catholic Church in China, to the common good of the Chinese people and to peace in the world."

On the same day, the Press Office of the Holy See announced that Pope Francis "has decided to readmit to full ecclesial communion" these seven bishops, and one other posthumously. They are Joseph Guo Jincai (郭金才), Joseph Huang Bingzhang (黄炳章), Paul Lei Shiyin (雷世银), Joseph Liu Xinhong (刘新红), Joseph Ma Yinglin (马英林), Joseph Yue Fusheng (岳福生), Vincent Zhan Silu (詹思祿), as well as Bishop Anton Tu Shihua (涂世华 who died in 2017). The statement leaves open the question whether they have been installed as diocesan bishops.

- September 23: A statement on the website of the *Yihui Yituan* declared that both bodies sincerely endorsed the provisional agreement between the "two states, China and the Vatican." In the next paragraph, however, the statement reaffirmed that the Chinese Catholic Church "will abide by the principles of independence, autonomy and self-government"; abide by Sinicization and adaptation to socialist society.
- September 26: Pope Francis issued a message to Catholics of China and to the Universal Church after the signing of the Provisional Agreement and the papal recognition of the illegitimate bishops. He

wanted the Church to see the decision in the light of faith, and to address the perplexity concerning the “value of the sufferings endured out of fidelity to the Successor of Peter.”

October 2018

- October 3-28: Bishop Guo Jincai (郭金才主教) of Chengde and Bishop Yang Xiaoting (楊曉亭主教) of Yan'an attended the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of Catholic Bishops in Rome, i.e., the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment. In his homily at the opening Mass, Pope Francis welcomed the bishops from China as a sign of the communion of the entire Episcopate with the Successor of Peter. They left on October 15, before the end of the Synod.

- October 12: The smuggled diary of Fr. Liu Honggeng (劉紅更神父), 47, an underground Catholic priest from Baoding Diocese in Hebei, who had been missing since May 7, 2015, shows his willingness to die for his faith. His family notified Chinese police but they have refused to investigate his disappearance. Father Liu had been detained once by Chinese authorities in 2006.

- October 8-11: The Hubei Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee held a seminar in Wuhan city for more than 80 priests, Sisters and lay representatives from the province on the recent signing of the Sino-Vatican Agreement. The seminar also covered aspects of church-state relations. It reasserted that the government believes that the Vatican has not abandoned the policy of meddling in China's affairs.

- October 9-16: Three Chinese bishops and a priest, namely Bps. Shen Bin (沈斌主教), Yang Yongqiang (楊永強主教), Dang Mingyan (黨明彥主教), and Fr. Zhang Qiulin (張秋林神父) took part in the World Religions and Peace Meeting in Bologna, Italy, at the invitation of the Community of Sant'Egidio.

- October 18: A symposium was held in Beijing to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Chinese translation of the Bible (known as the *Studium Biblicum* version). Bps. Guo Jincai and Yang Xiaoting cut short their participation in the Synod in Rome to attend the symposium.

- October 19: According to UCANews, Chinese officials have ordered the demolition of crosses and some other church structures in three dioceses in China, in Zhejiang, Henan and Guizhou provinces. In Guizhou, officials issued an order on October 15 to the Anlong Church, a pilgrimage spot, to remove structures and crosses, since they violated planning laws.

November 2018

- November 2: According to UCANews, two underground priests of Xuanhua Diocese, Hebei, Fr. Su Guipeng (蘇貴鵬神父) and Fr. Zhao He (趙賀神父), were detained. Fr. Zhao, who serves in the Dongcheng Catholic Church, was taken away by officials of the United Front Work Department of Yangyuan County on October 24.

- November 9: Bishop Shao Zhumin (邵祝敏主教) of Wenzhou (Zhejiang) was taken away by Chinese authorities. He was detained for 14 days and then released on November 23 together with Fr. Lu Danhua (盧丹華神父) of Lishui Diocese. Father Lu had been detained for 11 months since December 29, 2017.

- November 9: According to UCANews, Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kium flew to Rome and handed a seven-page letter to Pope Francis, appealing on behalf of the underground community in China which faces a serious crisis.

- November 14-16: The 2018 Bible in China seminar was held in Shanghai on the theme of “Bible and A Shared Future for Humankind” (《聖經》與人類命運共同體國際學術研討會) with a focus on “Migration and Community.” The seminar has been held for eight consecutive years, supported by the United Bible Societies.

- November 15: A memorial service was held for Fr. Wei Heping (蔚和平神父) of Ningxia Diocese, a Chinese underground priest who died mysteriously in November 2015. Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kium celebrated the Eucharist at St. Bonaventure Church in Tsz Wan Shan, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

- November 23-24: The Orthodox Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev) of Volokolamsk visited Beijing, before travelling to the two Koreas. He celebrated a liturgy in the Church of the Dormition of the Mother of

God, in the Russian embassy in Beijing. In his homily, the Metropolitan mentioned that China is "sacred for us, where the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission used to be, and where 222 Chinese martyrs had suffered [during the Boxer Uprising in 1900]..."

- November 26: According to AsiaNews, a group of eight Catholics from the Diocese of Datong (Shanxi) issued an open and signed letter, denouncing the government's growing oppression of the Christian community, after the revised Regulations on religious affairs took effect.

- November 30: A group of priests of the Chinese underground community unanimously decided after several meetings that "if we are to become official, we will act together; in other words, if the Pope wants us to be open, we will be open together; otherwise, we will together stay underground."

December 2018

- December 4: AsiaNews reported the Christmas pastoral letter of Bishop Gan Junqiu (甘俊邱主教) of Guangzhou, who prayed that "the fragrance of Jesus' love may spread in every Christian family!"

- December 9: About 100 worshippers at an unofficial Christian church in various districts of Chengdu, were snatched from their homes or on the streets in coordinated evening raids. They are members of the Early Rain Covenant Church. It appears to be an effort to close down one of the country's most prominent Protestant house churches.

- December 12: During the last round of negotiations between China and the Vatican held in Beijing, the head of the Vatican delegation, Archbishop Claudio Celli summoned nine bishops, the recently legitimized seven and Bps. Guo Xijin and Zhuang Jianjian, and handed to them the papal document of jurisdiction in their own dioceses. To Bp. Guo he gave the letter downgrading him to auxiliary bishop of Mindong, and to Bp. Zhuang from the Diocese of Shantou the request for resignation due to old age. The Chinese official press considered it a positive step toward the unity and the communion of the Church in China.

- December 17-18: The 60th anniversary of the first episcopal ordination without papal mandate (on 13 April 1958), which was one

of the most painful and tragic moments in the history of the Church in China, was celebrated with a meeting and a seminar in Nanjing. The event brought together 48 bishops, more than 100 priests and over 200 Sisters. According to Wang Zuo'an, deputy chief of the United Front, the principles of independence and self-management will not be eliminated "at any time and under any circumstances." Noting that more than half of China's 98 dioceses have no bishop and a number of prelates are very old, Bp. Ma Yinglin emphasized the urgent need to select candidates "politically reliable, with good ethics and religious knowledge" for the vacant dioceses.

- December 18-19: An underground convent in the city of Qiqihar (Gannan County, Heilongjiang Province) was half destroyed by law enforcement agencies. The demolition began at about 11 pm on December 18, when the police entered the convent and ordered the Sisters to leave in an hour. The bishop of the diocese, Wei Jingyi (魏景義主教), said the next morning that the Sisters had been able to convince the authorities to save a part of the building that was used as a chapel and as a residence. Other parts of the convent were destroyed.

- December 20: The US Congressional-Executive Commission on China, tasked with monitoring China's human rights record, issued a statement blasting Beijing's recent closing of churches and the detention of Christians. On the following day, China's Foreign Ministry refuted the accusation of a "religious crackdown" targeting Christians in China.

- December 21: As Christmas approached, Chinese local authorities in various places issued instructions not to sell Christmas decorations, display Christmas trees, posters, and lights on the streets or in shops, and not to hold liturgical celebrations and gatherings.