
China Church Quarterly

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The U.S. Catholic China Bureau (USCCB) was established in 1989 as a joint initiative of the Maryknoll Society and the Society of Jesus. The USCCB is endorsed by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and is supported by other organizations concerned to foster a **new missionary outreach** of the US Catholic Church **as a sister church in mission** with the Catholic Church in China.

Back in 2006, the USCCB Board of Directors made the decision to move its office to California. In early February 2007, Mr. Gene Theroux (Chair), Prof. Regina Wolfe (Vice Chair) and Fr. Michel Marcil SJ (Executive Director) met with Fr. Paul Locatelli SJ, Chancellor of Santa Clara University and his Cabinet, to discuss the moving of USCCB office to San Jose, CA. **It was agreed then to move in 2008.** But because of the economic crisis and the untimely death of Fr. Locatelli SJ, the USCCB decided to postpone the moving to California to a later date.

In early 2011 the conditions to move to California became favorable, and the USCCB moved to the **Friendship Center** in Berkeley last December 2011. This Center was founded by the late **Fr. Bernard Chu Meng-Chuan SJ**, as an outreach program to the Chinese visiting scholars from the PRC at UC-Berkeley. *Fr. Bernard Chu* was a founding member of the USCCB back in 1989. By moving to the Friendship Center, USCCB is somehow remaining faithful to its own roots.

OLD WINE, NEW SKIN ...
OLD WINE, NEW SKIN ...



St. Joseph the Worker Church, our neighbor.

The USCCB will continue to publish the China Church Quarterly (CCQ) four times a year. We temporarily interrupted publication in October 2011 to give priority to moving the office and re-organize it in Berkeley. We are in the process of getting the USCCB incorporated in the State of California, and listed under the Diocese of Oakland in order to get our tax exempt status as a non-profit organization.

We had two **Study Tours** and a 10 day **Course on Spirituality** planned in China for 2011. But because of the politically tense situation and the cooling of the relations between China and the Vatican, we prudently cancelled them. We will wait till next year to resume our **activities in China**, after the Communist Party selection of the new national leadership for the next ten years.

A **Regional Catholic China Conference** was held on April 14, 2012 at St. John's University, Collegeville MN. Prof Richard Bohr gave a talk on the history of the Catholic Church in China. A Chinese priest, a Sister and a lay person shared stories of their faith. This Conference is a good template to use in other places.

USCCB Board is preparing the **25th National Catholic China Conference** to be held in Fall of 2013 at Loyola, Chicago. The Conference will cover the theme "**American Catholics and China.**" *What can Americans do to partner with the Chinese Church?*

Church News

Gratitude, Patience, Waiting

Interview with the new Cardinal John Tong Hon, Bishop of Hong Kong.

Cardinal John Tong Hon presents himself as a simple, smiling person. He prefers soft tones and a low profile. Among the new cardinals created by Pope Benedict XVI in the Consistory of 18 February 2012, the current bishop of Hong Kong will be called on to offer with more intensity and authority his contribution of advice and balanced judgments with respect to the crucial issue of relations between the Holy See, the Church of China and the Chinese government.

Q- You are now a bishop and cardinal. But if one looks at your biography, it can be seen that your parents did not come from Christian families. None of your grandparents were baptized.

JOHN TONG HON: That is so. My mother was the first who had the opportunity to enter into contact with the Catholic faith. As a girl she attended a high school run by the Canossian Sisters. She had also begun to study catechism, but decided to be baptized only after the Second World War, when I was born and was already six years old.

Q- They were terrible years, those of your childhood.

A- When the Japanese conquered Hong Kong, we fled to Macao. Then I was entrusted to my paternal grandmother in Guangdong. Then were the years of the **civil war**. Communists and nationalists were fighting internally in the north, while the refugees and wounded soldiers arrived in the southern provinces. **The American missionaries who were in Canton welcomed and helped whoever was in need with all-embracing love, regardless of whatever side they belonged to.** My mother and I also helped them to distribute aid to survivors and refugees. Looking at the witness of my pastor Bernard Meyer and his Maryknoll brother missionaries, I began to think that I too, when I grew up, could become a priest.

Q- It happened that you studied in Rome precisely during the years of Vatican Council II.

A- The Council helped me greatly to broaden and deepen my vision. I was ordained a priest when the Council had just closed a few weeks previously.

The class of deacons at the Pontifical Urbanian University to which I also belonged was selected to receive priestly ordination from the hands of Pope Paul VI, on the day of the Epiphany 1966.

Q- Nearly half a century later, at the last Consistory, it was you who delivered a speech in front of the Sacred College to explain the situation of the Catholic Church in China. What did you say to your fellow cardinals?

A- To describe the situation in China, I used three words. The first is **wonderful**. In recent decades, the Church in China has grown and continues to grow, even if it is subjected to many pressures and restrictions. This is an objective fact, it can also be verified with numbers. Catholics in China in 1949 were only 3 million, now they are at least 12 million. In 1980, after the reopening ordered by Deng Xiaoping had begun, there were 1,300 priests. There are now about 3,500. And there are also about 5,000 sisters, two thirds of whom belong to the open church community registered with the government. And also 1,400 seminarians, one thousand of which are being trained in seminaries funded by the government. There are ten major seminaries recognized by the government and six similar centers related to the underground community. Since 1980, three thousand new priests have been ordained, and about 4,500 young nuns made their vows. Ninety percent of priests are aged between twenty-five and fifty years old.

Q- So, all is well?

A- The second word with which I described the situation of the Church in China is the word, **difficult**. And the most difficult test that the Church faces is the control imposed on ecclesiastic life by the government through the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (PA). I quoted a letter sent to me by a highly respected bishop of mainland China, who wrote: "**In every socialist country**, the government tries to come up with a method, using some nominal Christians to set up organizations outside of the Church structure, in order to control the Church itself ". The Chinese Patriotic Association is an example of this modus operandi. And in the Pope's letter to Chinese Catholics in June 2007 it is written that these mass organizations



are not compatible with Catholic doctrine. It was seen again in the illegitimate episcopal ordinations imposed on the Church between 2010 and 2011.

Q- But why does the Chinese superpower still feel the need to keep the life of the Church under such strict control?

A- According to analysis conducted by Kwun Ping-hung, the well-known scholar in Hong Kong, there are several reasons. 1) The communist regimes fear the competition of religion in influencing people's minds, and eventually their actions. 2) They realize more and more that **religions are important in people's lives and are not going to disappear from the horizon of human societies**, and 3) the number of followers of religions is increasing and they are frightened by this. And 4) after the event of 11 September, the anxiety has increased, since it was seen again that **religious ideas can also lead people to go to war**. Finally, 5) the new leaders who are preparing to come into office in 2012 must at this time show themselves to be loyal communists.

Q- As the Pope clearly wrote: "the Catholic Church which is in China does not have a mission to change the structure or administration of the State; rather, her mission is to proclaim Christ to men and women". How is it possible that the government of China should be afraid of the political interference of the Vatican?

A- We live in society and our real life has to do necessarily with the political dimension and is related to it. The Church is not a political entity. It's not really our problem or our goal to change the political systems. And moreover, in our case, **it would be quite impossible to do so**.

Q- Let's return to your speech at the Consistory. What was your third word?

A- The third word I used is the word **possible**. To understand the rationale behind this choice, I read other passages in the letter from the bishop that I have already mentioned. That bishop said he was serene, peaceful and confident with regard to the present, also because he looked at the problems of today remembering the experiences he had lived through in the turmoil of the decades of persecution, between 1951 and 1979. He, in those past ordeals he had gone through, had been able **to experience** that everything

is in the hands of God and God arranges things very well so that the difficulties may eventually contribute to the benefit of the Church. Thus we see that in itself it is not the **increase of activities of control by the government** that can quench the faith. Indeed it may happen that the effect is to **increase the unity and awareness in the Church**. Thus, the future may also appear bright. And we can quietly await with confidence the grace of God. Perhaps the solution of certain problems will not come about tomorrow. But neither will it be necessary to wait for a far off time.

Q- Some say that in addressing the problems it is necessary to choose between two alternative ways: either the way of dialogue, or the way of the defense of principles.

A- **I for my part am inclined to be moderate**. It is better to be patient and open to dialogue with everyone, **even the communists**. I am convinced that without dialogue no problem can really be solved. But while we should be open to dialogue with everyone, we should at the same time firmly maintain our principles. This means that, for example, a new bishop can accept **episcopal ordination** only if there is papal approval. And then also the defense of the **value of life**, the inviolable **human rights** of the person, the **indissolubility of marriage**... We can not renounce the truths of faith and morals as they are also outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Q- Some Catholic circles in Hong Kong and even in China make use of the internet sites that attack Catholics about doctrinal and moral issues. What do you think of this?

A- Faith does not come from us. It always comes from Jesus. And we are not the controllers and the judges of the faith of our brothers. **We are simply a sister diocese in relation to the dioceses that are on the mainland**. So, if they want, we are happy to share with them our experience and our pastoral work. And if they are in more difficult situations, while we enjoy a greater freedom, our aim is only that of trying to support them. Praying that all can keep the faith, even in the pressures they are subjected to. I think that fraternal correction which I spoke of is made through **dialogue**, not through internet attacks.



Q- A large area of the Church in China is always described as if it were on the boundaries of fidelity to the Church. At the same time, the great devotion of Chinese Catholics is recognized. How do the two things go together?

A- It never seems appropriate to **speak of China in a generic way**. I am not convinced by the affirmations that "faith is strong in China", nor by the opposite. **Everything depends on the persons**. There are so many good witnesses of the faith, who offer their lives and also their sufferings to Jesus, and then there are also some people who, driven also by the environmental pressure, sacrifice their principles.

Q- It is on the young bishops that the attention is focused. Some say they are fragile opportunists. What is to be done with them? Isolate them?

A- No, no, no isolation. **First of all, let us pray for them**. Also for those who have committed obvious errors. If some people can approach them, and be their friend, they can urge them to recognize what was not correct in their choices, urge them to send a letter to the authorities and explain how things came about, eventually ask for forgiveness. This is simply a form of fraternal correction, of healing, not of punishment.

Q- The difficulties experienced by the Church in China concern the bond of communion with the Bishop of Rome. Over time, will this communion diminish?

A- In China I continue to register a great devotion to the Pope. They love the Holy Father, this is certain. They are under pressure on this point. They are hindered in their desire to have normal contact with the Successor of Peter. It is also for this reason that their desire becomes stronger. I would say that it is almost normal.

Q- Is it true that you were present at the episcopal ordination of Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, in Shanghai?

A- Yes, I was present at that mass. **It was 1985**. I was then a priest of the diocese of Hong Kong and since 1980 was directing the Holy Spirit Study Center. **Jin asked me to be present**. He asked me to show my support. He told me that he had been in prison, that he wanted to keep his own faith and his communion with the universal Church and that he would send letters to Rome to confirm his submission to the Apostolic See and the primacy of the Pope. He had weighed all in conscience. At that historical



moment, it seemed that there was no other way except to accept the episcopal ordination. Given the circumstances, it seemed to him an obligatory choice to sustain the diocese of Shanghai and save the church and the seminary there. **Seven years ago the Holy See accepted his requests** and recognized him as legitimate bishop. But these are things of the past. Now we must look to the future ...

Q- Precisely looking at the present and future, what have you learned from the experiences of those times?

A- I learned that **time can tell** and give an account of things. Sometimes only **in the long term** can you see clearly whether something is right or wrong, whether a choice was dictated by good reasons or not. In the transitory immediacy of the moment you can not clearly judge how things are. But in the long run it emerges whether the intention of the heart was at least good. If you make the choices having the love of Jesus and the Church in your heart, the right intention at the end can be verified by all.

Q- And what, with respect to the controversial events in which Chinese catholicity is involved, does this imply?

A- We can not attempt to review every decision, and expect that every action made by members of the Church in China are always perfect in every moment and every situation. **We are human beings!** We all make mistakes and fall many times along the way. Yet, we can ask for forgiveness. **If each error is isolated and becomes a reason for condemnation without appeal, who can be saved?** This is important: to discover that people persevere in fidelity because they are moved by the love of Jesus. In the end, everyone will see it. And certainly God sees it, who searches the hearts of all of us.

[30Giorni Italy 3/14/12]

The Holy See Communiqué

The papal **Commission for the Church in China** held its fifth plenary meeting in the Vatican, April 23-25, 2012 and afterwards the Holy See issued a communiqué approved by Pope Benedict XVI.

The main theme for discussion was: **"The formation of the lay faithful"**. The Commission agreed that bishops and priests in China "should make every effort **to consolidate the lay faithful** in their knowledge of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and, in particular, of ecclesiology and the social doctrine of the Church". Such formation is vitally important for the 12 million Catholics of the one Church in China with its two communities: one state recognized ("in the open") with 6 million members, the other "clandestine" with 6 million.

The discussion on formation consumed one-third of the meeting, and so its 30 participants (approx) – senior Vatican officials, Chinese bishops from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, and representatives of religious orders – **had time to discuss other important issues** relating to "the particular situation of the Church in China." They focused on **bishops**, in the light of events over the past year. At the end of 2011, there were 117 bishops in mainland China and all except 7 were legitimate, but very many were over the age of 75.

The communiqué repeats that the heart of the problem remains: the **Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA, established 1957) and the Bishops Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC)**, created by the Chinese Government, still place themselves above the Bishops and guide the life of the ecclesial community. Since the CPA and BCCCC "persist" in making this claim, the Holy See reminded mainland Catholics, and indirectly Beijing's Government, that, as Benedict XVI stated clearly in his 2007 Letter to Chinese Catholics (N.7), their claim **"does not correspond to Catholic doctrine."**

The communiqué then focused on those "clerics" in China who have obscured this clear Church teaching. It mentions **two distinct groups**. The first is made of those who have been ordained as bishops "illegitimately", without the pope's approval, and have subsequently "carried out acts of jurisdiction" or "administered the Sacraments". By doing so, "they usurp a power that the Church has not conferred upon them". Moreover, by participating – as some did recently - in Episcopal ordinations that had the

pope's approval, they have "aggravated" their personal status before Church Law, "disturbed the faithful" and "often violated the consciences of the priests and lay faithful who were involved."

The **second group** is made up of the "legitimate bishops" who have participated in "illegitimate Episcopal ordinations", that is, in the ordination of bishops who lack the papal mandate. Without giving numbers, it revealed that "many" of these bishops "have since clarified their position" with the Holy See "and have asked pardon" and Pope Benedict "has benevolently forgiven them". But, it said, other bishops "who also took part" in illegitimate ordinations "have not yet made this clarification", and are "encouraged" "to do so as soon as possible".

The communiqué revealed that the Commission discussed the plight of "the bishops and priests who are detained, or who are suffering unjust limitations on the performance of their mission". There are three bishops and about two dozen priests currently suffering this way. Most belong to the clandestine community, but some are from the "open" community. The Commission expressed **"admiration" for "the strength of their faith" and "their union with the Holy Father" and said "they need the Church's prayer in a special way so as to face their difficulties with serenity and in fidelity to Christ"**.

Unlike previous communiqués since 2007, this year's makes **no explicit reference** to the Chinese authorities or to the Holy See's desire for a constructive dialogue with them with a view to the normalization of relations. Evidently, the Commission sees **no sign of openness from Beijing** for such dialogue today, and concluded that it made little sense to mention it at this delicate historical moment **as China prepares to elect the new leadership** to govern the country.

The Holy See's communique concluded by reminding Catholics worldwide that **May 24**, the feast of the "Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians", has been established by Pope Benedict as the **Day of Prayer for the Church in China**. It therefore invited the Catholic Church worldwide to pray to God "for energy and consolation, mercy and courage, for the Catholic community in China".

[Vatican Insider, 5/1/12]



The Vatican and China Can Reach "Win-Win" Accord

Cardinal John Tong Hon of Hong Kong speaks about the struggle between China and the Holy See over the nomination of bishops and shares his conviction that it is possible for both sides to achieve real "win-win" solutions to the problems between them. He talks too about the love of John Paul II and Benedict XVI for China and the Church in China, and his own wish to visit the mainland.

*Q. For many years the Holy See and China have been trying to reach an accord on the **appointment of bishops**. One reason for the failure to reach this is that Beijing can, whenever it likes, ordain a candidate as bishop even if the Vatican considers the man totally unsuitable and has explained all this to them. In such a situation the Vatican is powerless to prevent such an ordination. **How do you break that impasse?***

A. On our side, I think education and formation are still very important. Ongoing formation for the seminarians and the priests inside China is also very important. On the one hand there is a push from the Government to make such an unacceptable person to be a bishop, but on the other hand if the priests and the Catholics inside China are well trained and receive a good formation, then they should have the strength to resist such a temptation. Even if a man is pushed by the Government to be a bishop candidate, the person himself plays a very important role.

Q. But when the candidate chosen is a weak man who cannot resist the pressure or temptation given by the Chinese Government, what does the Vatican do, excommunicate him?

A. I think the Holy See was pushed into that corner last year, but **the important thing is the preventive formation**, and we have to emphasize this. I was formator in the seminary for a long time, and we always emphasized that when a man is ordained priest, he is not just ordained as an individual to serve the Church, he is also accepted into the **college of priests**. When the Second Vatican Council talked about the bishop, it said he is enrolled into the college of bishops because Jesus did not select one apostle, but established twelve apostles, which means a team. The priesthood was established as assistance to the bishops, the same kind of spirit of a college was still maintained.



New Cardinal John Tong Hon of Hong Kong

Q. So that is one of the bridge roles that the Church in Hong Kong can play; assisting in the formation of Catholics in the mainland.

A. Yes, of priests, religious and also for **lay Catholics**. When I teach theology, I also emphasize what it means to be a Catholic. We baptize more than 6,000 people each year in Hong Kong, and we tell them that not only should they learn the Catechism and take one year and a half to be qualified to receive baptism, but also they should join a community or a small group to develop their spirit of communion. We have to learn from the Early Church communities. If we read carefully the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 2:42-47, we can see there are three elements in the Early Church communities. These three elements can be expressed with three Greek words: first, didache, meaning the **teaching of the Apostles**; second, koinonia, meaning the **community**; and third, diakonia, meaning **service**, to serve others with faith, particularly to serve the poor and the people in need. If we only emphasize the first and the third of these three elements without the second – the community – something would be lacking. This vision is fundamental not only for Catholics but also for priests and bishops.



Q. Therefore you believe good formation can break the impasse and avoid illicit ordinations?

A. Yes. If a candidate is a weak person, and judged by the Holy See as not a suitable person to be a bishop, but the Government chooses him as candidate, then all the others in the local Catholic community should help him, pray for him, encourage him, to step aside or to withdraw from the episcopal ordination. In many cases it is **not only the Government but it is also the individual candidate** who is responsible. Many priests in China are influenced by secular values and the special status in society that being a bishop can give them.

Q. As a cardinal, as advisor to the pope, what would your message be to the Chinese authorities at this point?

A. **First**, I would try to tell the Chinese Government officials that dialogue is very important. **Secondly**, through dialogue we can always achieve "win-win" situations, meaning without sacrificing our principles and their principles, we still can find solutions. **The third thing** is I ask the Government to believe that our Catholic Church always asks each Catholic to be patriotic, to love his or her own country. Therefore I would ask the Government to trust also in Catholic believers so that if they really enjoy full freedom, they can make more contributions to their own country, and **China and its Government will enjoy a better reputation in the whole world**. That would be a real "win-win" situation for the Chinese Government, for the country, and also for the Catholic believers in China.

Q. So you are saying that in relation to the Chinese; we must dialogue, there is no exit, this is the road we have to take.

A. Right, **there is no exit, we must dialogue**. I think that now China, including this Government, is playing a very important role in the international arena, therefore they have to appreciate many international values, and we consider some of their standpoints too. I think in the long run that China will change in very important ways.

In the meantime, of course the Chinese do always care about face, and this always has positive and negative impacts. **Saving face**, from the positive side means that China always wants to keep a good reputation; from the negative point of view it means that sometimes the Chinese Government is too stubborn on certain points where they think they are right, without deeper consideration of the opinions offered by the other sides. So you have always two aspects to interpret this face-saving.

Q. Pope Benedict seems really interested in China and especially the Church in China.

A. Yes, he is personally very interested. It is one of his priorities. He pays great attention to China and the Church there. Of course some people helped him to draft the Letter in 2007, but he also modified everything.

Q. Now he has made you cardinal, what are you going to say to him?

A. I will thank him for his great love for the Church in China, and I will follow his guidelines, given in his Letter. You know that Letter has two parts. **Part I** offers the basic structures of the Church and our bottom lines for the Church to deal with the Government. **Part II** deals with formation: formation of bishops, priests, the sisters and the lay people. This second part regarding formation and on-going formation is very important.

On the one hand, we can say that the **Government does not understand all this**. On the other hand, our people should receive sufficient formation and also on-going formation so that in the important moments **they can stand firm on principles**, and be **more fully empowered to resist** some temptations. That is the reason why we uphold the importance of formation.

Q. If the Chinese authorities were to invite you to Beijing, will you go?

A. Well, **it depends**. I would welcome this. The place doesn't have to be the capital Beijing or Shanghai. It could be Guangzhou where I received my primary education and served Mass as an altar boy.



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Reading Notes

- **Church Militant: Bishop Kung and Catholic Resistance in Communist Shanghai** *Paul P. Mariani* Harvard University Press, October 24, 2011. 310pp.

A gripping narrative of how militant Catholics in Shanghai in the 1950s tried to resist the Communist Party and how the Party crushed them. The book contains interesting material, based on internal party documents, on the tactics used by the Communists to organize multifaceted campaigns against the church, to infiltrate Catholic organizations, and to divide Catholics from one another.



Historian Paul Mariani tells the story of how **Bishop (later Cardinal) Ignatius Kung Pinmei**, the Jesuits, and the Catholic Youth resisted the regime's punishing assault on the Shanghai Catholic community and refused to renounce the pope and the Church in Rome. Acting clandestinely, mirroring tactics used by the previously underground CCP, Shanghai's Catholics persevered until 1955, when the party arrested Kung and 1,200 other leading Catholics. The imprisoned believers were later shocked to learn that the betrayal had come from within their own ranks.

- **Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule** *Fenggang Yang* Oxford University Press, October 28, 2011. 264pp.

Religion in China survived the most radical suppression in human history--a total ban of any religion during and after the Cultural Revolution. All churches, temples, and mosques were closed down, converted for secular uses. Over the last three decades, however, religion has survived and thrived even as China remains under Communist rule. **Christianity ranks among the fastest-growing religions** in the country. All the while, authorities have carried out waves of atheist propaganda, anti-superstition campaigns, severe crackdowns on the underground Christian churches and various "evil cults." How do we explain religion in China today? How did religion survive the eradication measures in the 1960s and 1970s? How do various religious groups manage to revive despite strict regulations? Why have some religions grown fast in the reform era? Why have some forms of spirituality gone through dramatic turns? In *Religion in China*, Fenggang Yang provides a comprehensive overview of the religious change in China under Communism.

- **USCCB News Service**

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Please update your records, thank you.

