

20th National Catholic China Conference - Celebration of Hope and Opportunity

Out of a lively group of over 120 participants from the U.S., Europe, Canada and Asia at the 20th National Catholic China Conference emerged a sense of HOPE and OPPORTUNITY for the Church in China. Almost half the participants were from China, including three scholars from major Chinese universities and nearly thirty priests, sisters and lay people studying in U.S. Catholic colleges and universities. Signs of hope came in many different areas:

Recognition that China Has Changed and Continues to Change

Rapidly changing Chinese society is open to religious influences as young people search for absolute values in their lives; and the government looks for ways to cope with burgeoning social problems arising from the reform and opening of the political and economic system in this post-Marxist era.



The Church Can Help Meet Social Needs

The government recognizes the potential benefit of religious believers who, through their religious based social organizations, can help address the growing number of social problems. In the wake of less state control of the economy and provision of social services, there is encouragement for involvement by foreign non-profit organizations, creating the potential for significant Church interaction with religious, and secular, social service organizations. The rapid rise of effective social service organizations based on traditional Chinese religions in Taiwan offer possible models for similar activities in China. Interaction with Christian organizations is possible.

Scholars and Students are Open to the Church Message.

Scholars and students at prestigious universities are actively studying Christianity in a quest for meaning. Many universities have established Religious Study Centers, with a strong interest in Christianity studies. The authorities have a pragmatic interest in this development, in part to better understand religion; as well as to devise means to effectively control religious activities. Catholic intellectuals and educators should

take advantage of opportunities to interaction with scholars interested in Christianity and the impact of religion on society. This exchange should include traditional religions as well. As Chinese intellectuals have begun to discover the potential importance of Christianity, they also are beginning to revive interest in the intellectual, social and spiritual value of China's traditional religions.

Religious Formation is Key

Ministering to traditional rural communities in a changing society under tight government control presents significant challenges to local pastors and religious leaders. Chinese Catholic leaders look for formation and educational opportunities in order to serve the pastoral needs of Catholics in the rapidly changing society. There is a special need to integrate traditional Chinese moral values with universal Church teachings.

Opportunities for Expanded Contact.

These include expanded academic exchanges, work with faith-based organizations in China, enhanced religious formation both inside and outside of China, and more effective outreach to American Catholic communities to promote better understanding of the Church in China.

Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington, D.C., a co-founder and Episcopal Patron of the USCCB, in a letter on the occasion of this 20th anniversary Conference, commended the Bureau and its collaborators for their efforts to "foster vital exchanges among clergy, women religious, scholars and lay women and men in the U.S. who are joined in affection for the people of China, seeking to worship God and exercise their religious beliefs without undue influence."

Further information about the US Catholic China Bureau and the Proceedings of the 20th National Conference may be found on its website [www.usccb.net].

Two Conference speakers, *Dr. Xiaoxin Wu* and *Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest*, reiterated many of the conference themes in an interview on Australian radio. To hear the interview, go to www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/enc/.

Church Must Engage Society



Rev. John Baptist Yang Xiaoting, who received his doctorate in dogmatic theology from the *Pontifical Urban University* in Rome in 1999, said in a recent interview that "*our Church should dialogue with society.*" The Church in China should emphasize faith formation to allow more lay participation in Church management and development.

Father Yang of the Zhouzhi diocese in Shaanxi Province, is the first priest to receive a doctorate, at least among priests ordained since the China Church began to revive in the early 1980's. The 39-year old priest, ordained in 1991, began studies in Italy in 1992. He also earned a master's degree in socio-religious studies in the United States. Since returning to China in June 2002, he has been teaching at Xian Seminary where he focuses on the formation of priests and studies in the sociology of religion.

What stands out from your experience of studying in Italy?

I felt a pressure when I was in Europe. Often, overseas scholars who claim to be experts on the Church in China apply their western perspective to express their views about the history, phenomena and culture of the Church in China. I wondered why they seldom invite Church people from China to take part in overseas seminars on the Chinese Church. I think part of the reason is that they were academic seminars, and there was hardly anyone from the Chinese Church studying the Church from the sociological perspective, by collecting data on actual problems, not merely theories. Our church in China is too inward-looking and self-centered. We should know how others look at us. The Church should dialogue with society.

What have you been doing since returning to China in June 2002?

I did a survey on the spirituality of Catholics in China after I returned. Then in September 2002 I started a center in Xi'an to train priests, sisters and seminarians, and for research purposes. The first step was to organize courses on computer skills and English, and then talks on faith and religion. Some talks were held on religion and science for Catholic university students. I believe such activities can help integrate the Church with society and foster Catholics' love for their diocese and the Church. This past August we ran a pastoral training program for seminarians and nuns from several dioceses in Shaanxi. In the future we will offer training to lay leaders on Church management.

How do you see the development of the Catholic Church in China?

The Church management system will slowly evolve toward perfection. We should emphasize (the Church's) significance as a community. Each diocese should have a focus. Church management should not be solely the responsibility of bishops. In the past few years, awareness that laypeople should share the

mission of evangelization has increased. Now, there are more lay catechists and more training programs for laypeople, and more small faith communities have been set up, so laypeople can better participate in managing their parishes. This is especially important in villages where laymen mostly work away from the village and women take up a lot of the parish work.

What role do middle-class Catholics have in the Church today?

Most people are pursuing economic development. Catholics who become well-off can push forward Church development as well. When money becomes abundant, it requires management and in due course has to incorporate moral development. In southern China, such as in Guangdong and Fujian Provinces, where economic development is fast, Catholics offer great economic support for the Church. But middle-class Catholics are not so visible in the north. We should be careful, however, because parishioners who are too involved in their careers might easily forget the importance of their faith.

How do you assess the growing number of clergy under 40 in China?

I think it is advantageous for Church development. The stamina and vision of the old bishops and priests now are not as good as that of the young people. Also, young priests are usually better at maintaining good relations with the government and people not in the Church or outside China. Many so-called young priests are in fact no longer that young and many are now more than 40. They have already accumulated some experience. I think there will be a structural improvement in three or five years as these priests get older.

Has the role of Catholic nuns in the Church in China changed?

Yes. Nowadays, formation of women religious is emphasized. For example, in Hebei Province, 80-100 sisters from various convents are responsible for training their own sisters in theology and pastoral care. Sisters now have more resources. Their role has greatly changed. Five years ago, many of them were still only responsible for cleaning church premises and doing housework. But now, the sisters in Hebei have set up their own Association of Major Superiors of Religious Women.

What prospects do you see for cooperation with other academics?

Academic advancement is a team effort, but I think we still do not have the foundation for cooperation. I have tried to promote academic and cultural exchanges within the Church and with university academics through the center I set up, and I have cooperated with the Faith Cultural Study Center (of the Church in Hebei). Full cooperation with other Church institutes in the country will certainly strengthen us. But we do not yet have the freedom to really implement it.

Asia Focus 11/03

Church News

Only One Catholic Church in China

Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, former president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace who has frequently served as special envoy for the Pope, recently reiterated that *there is only one Church with two faces in China*. Cardinal Etchegaray is generally acknowledged among Church officials to be most intimately involved in efforts to establish diplomatic relations between the Beijing regime and the Holy See. Speaking at a reception at the Jesuit Gregorian University in October, the Cardinal said, *there is not one 'patriotic' Church and one 'underground' Church, one legal and the other protesting*. Rather the different groups constitute "two faces of the same community, which seeks to be both faithful and at the same time patriotic."

Cardinal Etchegaray was in China to participate in ceremonies honoring Father Armand Davis, a 19th Century missionary and scientist who was born in the same French-Basque village as Cardinal Etchegaray. He also visited government leaders in Beijing, and was an official guest of the government during the celebration of the October 1 National Day. CWNNews 10/03

Marian Shrine Attracts Old and New

"Rosary Hill Village" in Fujian province in SE China has attracted hundreds of thousands of pilgrims since construction began in 1993. Completed in time for the official opening of *Our Lady of Rosary Church* in May, 2001, the shrine has become a landmark, visible for miles, and now attracts non-Catholic as well as Catholic visitors. Pilgrims come from all walks of life, though the shrine's principal appeal is to simple worshippers. Bishop Joseph Zhang Changcheng of Fuzhou diocese said that workers involved in building the shrine learned about the Church; *"The worker who made the wall pictures of the Mysteries of Light now is also learning about the Catholic faith*. Reflecting deep appreciation for Chinese culture, Rosary Hill Village includes many Chinese characteristics in its design, including Chinese ink painting, Chinese style pavilions, and a collection of Chinese literary classics in the library. Bishop Zhang noted that most of Fuzhou's 150,000 Catholics are in unregistered churches but he welcomes all Catholics to pray and make retreats at Rosary Hill Village because "God loves all." All of the shrine's operational costs come from donations from local Catholics. UCAN 10/03

Guangdong Gets a New Bishop

Newly ordained *Bishop Joseph Liao Hongqing* of Meizhou in Guangdong province has pledged to strengthen lay formation, in view of the scarcity of priests in his mountainous diocese. Bishop Liao, 37, says the biggest difficulty facing his diocese is a scarcity of priests. There are only two old priests and four young ones to serve about 40,000 Catholics scattered in 43 churches and chapels. AF 10/03



Baptisms Celebrate John Paul II

Mission Sunday, October 19, was a great day at Feng Shen He parish in Tai Yuan, Shan Xi province in central China: 16 catechumens were baptized. The Pastor, Father Joseph, said "We wish to offer the fruits of our evangelization to our beloved Holy Father, to share in celebrations for his 25th year of pontificate. We pray that we may be united in heart and mind to imitate the Pope in his dedication, and to follow the example of unconditional love given by Mother Teresa of Calcutta, to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all our neighbors." Taiyuan diocese has 70,000 Catholics, in 25 parishes with more than 9 chapels and churches, served by 45 priests, 8 elderly and 37 young. Fides, UCAN 10/03

Three Gorges Dam Affects Church

The Church of Our Lady in "New Fengdu" was blessed by *Bishop Joseph Xu Zhixuan* of Wanzhou who was joined by more than a dozen priests from Chongqing and Wanzhou dioceses, in the church's opening on October 30. "Old Fengdu" is now uninhabited and will be completely submerged next year. Local priests admitted that resettling people away from where the parish had been based has *negatively affected the Catholic population of Fengdu*. Local Catholics who live far from the new church can now only attend Mass on Sundays and important Church feasts. Since most parishioners are poor peasants, the pastor is organizing the donation of clothes to help survive the winter, while also trying to raise funds to repay the loan needed to build the new church. Evangelization in Fengdu, identified in Chinese folklore as the "Ghost City" where souls go after death, is difficult because the city is steeped in ghostly legends strongly influenced by Buddhism and Taoism. The city is a popular tourist spot and has many ghostly displays. HK Examiner 11/03

Formation

Bishop's Bold Step to Help Priests

Concerned about priests' morale and the danger of their falling behind secular contemporaries in fast changing urban China, *Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian* of Shanghai took the bold step this year of temporarily leaving some parishes in his diocese without a priest in order to bring priests together for a lengthy English study program. Bishop Jin's imaginative course aims to help priests develop deeper supportive and personal relationships by living and studying together. 90 per cent of the time is devoted to English. Many priests suffer loneliness and boredom in their parishes under the restrictions placed on their pastoral activity by the government.

The course is run by *Rev. Joseph Lan* of Shanghai diocese who is responsible for all the business and logistical arrangements and Australian Columban priest *Rev. Peter Kelly* who holds a MA in Linguistics from the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong, is in charge of academics. Australian Christian Brother, *Stan Cusack*, joined them for the second course. A third course is anticipated early next year.

HKSE 10/03

Graduate Studies in Theology

In what may be the first steps toward some sort of cooperation between Chinese higher educational institutions and the Church, both Protestant and Catholic, *Shanghai's Fudan University developed a new MA cohort for thirty ministers and preachers of the Protestant China Christian Council* beginning this fall (2003). *Fudan plans to develop a similar program with Catholic Shijiazhuang Diocese.* These developments may help to resolve complicated administrative matters at all levels and offer graduate studies in Theology with degrees eventually recognized by the Chinese Ministry of Education.

USF/Ricci Institute

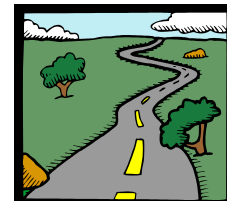
Lay Theology Program

The Beijing diocese Institute for Christianity and Culture Study launched a seven-month long *Fundamental Theology Guidance Program* in October. Institute director, *Rev. Zhao Jianmen*, was encouraged by the response to the program. "We thought ten students would be fine, but because the response was so overwhelming, we have twenty, all college graduates."

Asia Focus 09/03

Winding Roads to Ordination

Three priests and four deacons recently ordained in southwestern China recall the way to their ordination as *winding roads*.



Bishop Joseph Xu Zhixuan presided at the first ordination in Chongqing in seven years on October 28. Over 1000 attended the celebration held in Saint Joseph's Church in Chongqing.

With three new priests Chongqing diocese now has 18 priests, three of them older than 80, to serve the pastoral needs of about 220,000 Catholics.

Rev. Wang Wanhong, 34, was baptized at 19 and was the only Catholic in his family. His family first opposed, since he was the eldest son, but through mediation of religious affairs officials, his family reluctantly accepted his choice. The family later became Catholic.

Rev. Xia Wei, 30, although from a Catholic family, came to his vocation from a business career. He gave up a lucrative position as a factory manager in southern China in the mid-1990's to enter the seminary.

Rev. Wu Chaunlu, also from a Catholic family, entered the seminary right after high school, but was advised to work for a while and save money for the seminary. Priests he met while working helped to keep his vocation alive. *Deacon Zhang Yonglin*, 24, was initially against the idea of celibacy but was encouraged by various Catholics, including the late *Bishop Matthias Duan Yinming* of Wanzhou, to "give it a try." After all those years, he said he learned that **"where there is a choice, there is something to give up."**

Deacon Peng Enbing, 27, was baptized only in 1994. He especially realized the importance of retaining the spirit of learning. To handle the disagreements with the way elderly Catholics think, he had to make adaptations and dialogue with them.

In the retreat before their ordination Bishop Xu, 87, warned and reminded them *in no parable terms* that, like Jesus, **their work is to serve and that a priest's success comes only from the support of Catholics.**

UCAN 11/03

Social Outreach

Slow, Deliberate Work in Mongolia

With no Christian presence since the 13th Century, Mongolia, a country of 2.7 million, is one of the last modern nations to hear the Gospel. Throughout the country, there are 177 Mongolian born Catholics along with 25 Sisters, 13 priests and one religious brother, all foreigners. **Showoo, a village of 5000**, is an example of how the Catholic Church has worked in Mongolia – slowly, deliberately and with little fanfare. *Sister Marife Sebial*, Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary first came to Showoo to teach English. *We began by dealing with social problems, working on development projects and running a language center. Our policy from the beginning was 'Come and see.'* This 'go slow' approach means that after five years in Showoo there is not one baptized and confirmed Catholic among the 35 people who regularly attend the bishop's weekday evening Mass. The local populace still suffers from the breakup of the Soviet Union. Sister Live Stragier, superior of the Sisters in Ulan Bator, noted that under the Russians, each little community had a hospital, school. Now with subsidies ended, those building are left to rot. Sister Marife said, *they have so much land. What they need are the facilities, some farm materials and some education*, adding that she sometimes has trouble finding the \$25,000 a year it takes to fund existing programs. CNS 08/03

Ed. Note: Readers who would like to contribute to aid the work of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Mongolia may contact them at: icm@magicnet.mn.

China Church Cares for "Heaven" Kids



Sisters of St. Teresa of Xingtai diocese in Hebei Province care for eighty children in a northern China village who share the surname, *Tian*, which means heaven. All have mental or physical disabilities. Bishop Raymond Wang Chonglin of Xingtai, recalls how the special apostolate began in the 1980's when the Catholic community there was unregistered and subject to harassment. Many handicapped children were abandoned at the church, and the Sisters took them in; eventually the convent next door to the bishop's residence became a children's home. As the number of children grew, the local government tried to stop the Church, but after a brief confrontation, the Church was allowed to continue this work. AF 10/03

New Opportunities for Church NGOs

In a *first for Catholic social service organizations*, the director of **Beifang Jinde Catholic Social Service Center**, said that Church NGO's will benefit from China's increasing presence in the global economy. Rev. *John Baptist Zhang Shijiang* addressed Church NGO opportunities and challenges when he and *Jinde* took part in "*The Business and Civil Society Forum*," a charity forum run by national business and social welfare organizations in China in Beijing in November. Among 32 organizations invited were the China Charity Federation, China Foundation for Poverty and the *US-China Business Council*. **This was the first time a Catholic organization had taken part in a national event bringing together charity bodies and business groups.** Father Zhang said that *Jinde's* participation was a good opportunity to introduce Catholic social service to business people in China. He expects a gradual increase in funding, as well as a more liberal political environment and more consolidated legal structures to benefit charities in China. UCAN 11/03

Church Moral Teaching a Resource

The *Beijing Diocese Institute for Christianity and Culture Study* organized a seminar on "*Contemporary Catholicism and Moral Ethics in Chinese Culture*," in Beijing attended by more than 30 Christian and secular scholars, Church official and students.

Reverend Peter ZHAO Jianmin, Institute Director and program host, spoke of the contrast between the concept of sin in Catholic tradition and Chinese culture to explain what he sees as low awareness of the rule of law in China. Father Zhao, who has a doctorate in canon law from Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, said that in Catholic tradition, sin is understood not only as a violation of relations between human beings but also in its theological dimension as a betrayal of God.

A researcher from the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences cited documents of the Second Vatican Council in agreeing that Catholic moral teaching could be one of the most important ethical resources for China society. The Church and Chinese society, however, have had difficulties in the relationship between the Church and the government. UCAN 12/03

China News

China and the World

China's Premier, Wen Jiabao's visit to the U.S. in early December highlighted China's growing international prominence. President Bush moved closer to China on the Taiwan issue, according to some commentators, by warning Taiwan president Chen Shui-bien not to promote independence. Wen's visit comes shortly after reports of China's increasing economic influence in Asia. The 12/14 edition of the NY Times reported that *China could replace the U.S. as the #1 consumer nation in the foreseeable future.*

Chinese Christian Delegation Visits U.S.

Leaders of the Protestant community in China met this fall with their US ecumenical partners, the National Council of Churches (NCC) and Church World Service, to reaffirm longstanding ties. Reverend Cao Shenghi, president of the China Christian Council (CCC), reported that the Church in China is prospering. She said that there now are more than 16 million Protestants and 50,000 churches and meeting places in China. While open to friendship and mutual visits, she cautioned those from outside China to be sensitive when visiting. The Church has seen significant improvements in the past 20 years, but some people have a memory of the Cultural Revolution, which ended more than 20 years ago, and they take for granted that things are the same, which they are not." The NCC told the visitors that "you can count on us to be a partner in spreading the Gospel, extending Christian compassion, and working for peace and justice."

WFNews 10/03

High Pressure on Chinese Children

Chinese experts blame high pressure lifestyles for high levels of emotional and physical neglect of children. A recent survey found that almost one-third of children living in China's major cities show signs of neglect. Highest rates were among single-parent families, with boys exhibiting the strongest evidence of physical and emotional neglect. Emotional neglect was defined as the failure of parents to communicate or play with the child. Parents instead supervise their child playing the piano or violin and doing homework and demand that the child do well. Parents are subject to almost intolerable pressure to achieve by competition and by the schools. There is little time for fun or rest.

Digital Library Opens in Beijing

The world's largest Chinese digital library, opened November in Beijing. The library database containing over 12 million documents, or 25% of China's public information resources, will allow users to share 80% of China's intellectual resources through the Internet within three years. Included is information from periodicals, newspapers, books, theses and on-line resources and information in the natural sciences, engineering and social sciences. The China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House claims that the site stresses the importance of protecting intellectual rights.

Peoples' Daily 11/03

Traditional Religions go Modern

"We religious people should also keep pace with the times," says *Master Yongqing*, a 25 year-old Buddhist monk from the Guanghua Temple. From a devout Buddhist family in Nanjing, he came to Beijing after graduation from the Qixiashan Buddhist Academy. He uses a cell phone, drives a car, plays table tennis, surfs the Internet, and is taking a postgraduate course on Buddhism at a Beijing-based university. Courses include Buddhist theories, philosophy, ethics, English and Deng Xiaoping Theory.

Xinhua 09/03

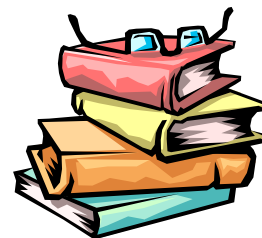
A new Taoist Scripture, the first of such a large scale since the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), was published in Beijing in October. More than 100 Taoist scholars, experts and compilers took seven years to complete the major scripture consisting of 49 volumes with over 60 million Chinese characters. The Party's United Front Department urged Taoists to use their 1800 year old native religion to help build a progressive China. PD 10/03

Chinese TV to Feature Jesuit Missionary

Hunan TV and Broadcast Intermediary Company early next year will broadcast on national television a film on the life and work of Italian Jesuit Giuseppe Castiglione, well known in China as an artist and architect during the 17th and 18th Centuries. One of his most famous paintings, depicting the Sacred Heart, is preserved in the church of Saint Joseph in Wang Fu Jing, Beijing's central business district.

Fides 07/03

Reading Notes



- ***Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power.* David Aikman 2003.** Regnery Publishing, Inc. 256 pp. \$27.95 (19.57, Amazon)

Within the next thirty years, one-third of China's population could be Christian, making China one of the largest Christian nations in the world. These Christians could also be China's leaders, guiding the largest economy in the world. While China's Communist rulers hope to reap the social and economic benefits of Christianity without losing power, the Chinese dragon might just be tamed by the Christian Lamb. So argues David Aikman, former Time Beijing Bureau Chief and scholar of Protestant Christianity in China, as he recounts Christianity's beginning, bloody anti-Christian persecutions, revival of an underground Christian movement, and the flowering of Christianity today--though still under persecution.

- ***The Coming Influence of China.* Carl Lawrence and David Wang 2000.** Shannon Publishers, 204 pp.

Written by Hong Kong based evangelicals, *Influence* provides details of personal evangelization in the countryside, the kind of which is leading to developments David Aikman describes in his *Jesus in Beijing*.

- ***Chairman Mao Meets the Apostle Paul: Christianity, Communism and the Hope of China.* Khiok-Khng Yeo 2002.** Brazos Press, 304 pp. \$29.99

Equal parts Christian apologetic and academic text this book explores the impact of Maoist politics and culture on China's traditions, particularly its theological worldview, and concludes that as Maoism incorporated Chinese and Marxist views, it began to look like the message of Paul. Although probably too specialized for the general reader, it should interest scholars, particularly those engaged with the growing number of "Cultural Christians" in Chinese academic institutions.

- ***"Patriots" or "Traitors": A History of American-Educated Chinese Students.* Stacey Bieler 2003.** M.E. Sharpe, 544 pp. \$71.96

Stacy Bieler's examination of the lives and experiences of Chinese students who came to the U.S. and returned home over a period 150 years offers potentially important insights for understanding the challenges facing Chinese priests and religious who have returned home after their own studies abroad. Many whose lives are recounted in this book considered themselves "patriots" for studying in the West in order to contribute to China, but were often labeled "traitors" for advocating new ideas and ideals.

ISSN: 1084-8401

Editor:
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Layout & Design:
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Subscriptions:
US/Canada: US\$10.00
Overseas: US\$15.00 - airmail

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On January 22nd we welcome the
Lunar Year of the Monkey -
the 4,702nd year of the Chinese
Calendar
Happy New Year !