



United States Catholic China Bureau

# China Church Quarterly

Issue No.74

Spring 2008

## Editor's Note:

The month of May is universally celebrated in the Catholic Church with devotions in honor of the Mother of Jesus. This is especially true in China – where veneration of the Blessed Virgin is a profoundly treasured and widely observed tradition. May 2008 proved very difficult for all Chinese peoples - whose evident pride as hosts of the Beijing Olympics – was sadly overshadowed by the massive earthquake in Sichuan Province on May 12th.

This *natural* disaster came on the heels of *human* disaster in Tibet, where earlier violent uprisings were *officially* judged an *exploitation of religious believers by extremists*, over against political and civil control. In this climate of high anxiety, stringent limitations were imposed on Marian observances - especially pilgrimages to many shrines, including that dedicated to *Our Lady Help of Christians* in Shanghai. Whereas, annually upwards of 50,000 pilgrims go there to pray for the intercession of the Blessed Mother, a strictly imposed cap of 5,000, along with many other restrictions, made it well nigh impossible for many to reach the Basilica at the summit. Local dioceses were instructed to hold observances on their own, where severe limits were also imposed – all aimed at avoiding a repeat of otherwise legitimate religious events being *exploited by outside forces*. .

For USCCB, a long planned visit to the Church in China - and opportunity to re-introduce the current Executive Director after a decade of absence – became an experience of very mixed emotions. We shared the sorrows of the earthquake, mingled with deep JOY in renewing friendships; real admiration and confidence in the leadership of a new generation of clergy and Sisters; and exciting encounters with a dynamic, pastorally focused Church, growing in its capacity to respond to the *New China's* millions of people, in earnest quest of spiritual resources to give meaning to their lives of dizzying materiality.

**The following prayer expresses many sentiments to console and strengthen hearts, not only of Chinese Catholics, but all who may find it meaningful. . .**

## ***PRAYER TO OUR LADY OF SHESHAN***

***In his Pastoral Letter, POPE Benedict XVI invited Catholics worldwide to join in a Day of Prayer for the Church in China on May 24, the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians.***

"Virgin Most Holy, Mother of the Incarnate Word and our Mother, venerated in the Shrine of Sheshan under the title '*Help of Christians*', the entire Church in China looks to you with devout affection. We come before you today to implore your protection. Look upon the People of God and, with a mother's care, guide them along the paths of truth and love, so that they may always be a leaven of harmonious coexistence among all citizens.

When you obediently said 'yes' in the house of Nazareth, you allowed God's eternal Son to take flesh in your virginal womb and thus to begin in history the work of our redemption. You willingly and generously co-operated in that work, allowing the sword of pain to pierce your soul, until the supreme hour of the Cross, when you kept watch on Calvary, standing beside your Son, Who died that we might live.

From that moment, you became, in a new way, the Mother of all those who receive your Son Jesus in faith and choose to follow in His footsteps by taking up His Cross. Mother of hope, in the darkness of Holy Saturday you journeyed with unflinching trust towards the dawn of Easter. Grant that your children may discern at all times, even those that are darkest, the signs of God's loving presence.

**Our Lady of Sheshan, sustain all those in China, who, amid their daily trials, continue to believe, to hope, to love.** May they never be afraid to speak of Jesus to the world, and of the world to Jesus. In the statue overlooking the Shrine you lift your Son on high, offering him to the world with open arms in a gesture of love. **Help Catholics always to be credible witnesses to this love,** ever clinging to the rock of Peter on which the Church is built. **Mother of China and all Asia, pray for us, now and for ever. Amen!"**



# Religious Issues

## Papal Concern for Asian Churches

Recently, a Vatican observer, Gerald O'Connor, reviewed Pope Benedict XVI's three-year reign from a specifically Asian perspective. He discovered how many times the Pope has drawn the world's attention to the Church situation or sociopolitical reality in one or another Asian country. In general, Benedict has been **quite forceful in appealing to Asian governments to find peaceful solutions to acute political, social or humanitarian problems, and to encourage them to promote dialogue, democracy and reconciliation in their territories.** However, one thing stands out: *China and the Church in China continue to be among his top priorities.* This focus has evident from the morning after his election, when addressing the Cardinals in the Sistine Chapel, Benedict expressed his wish that countries which did not yet have diplomatic relations with the Holy See would soon agree to establish these. Though he did not name any country, Vatican sources confirmed that China was at the top of his list, with Vietnam not far behind. In March 2006, Benedict named Bishop Joseph Zen Ze-kium, the bishop of Hong Kong diocese, as a Cardinal. Concern for the Church in China surely informed this decision.

In January 2007, Pope Benedict convened a meeting of Holy See officials and bishops from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau to review the Holy See's strategy to help the Church and Catholics in the PRC. The meeting also considered ways to promote understanding with the authorities in Beijing that could resolve existing obstacles and foster progress towards establishing diplomatic relations. Based on recommendations from this meeting, the Pope wrote a Pastoral Letter to Catholics in China at Pentecost 2007. He later set up a permanent *Commission for the Church in China*,

which brings together Vatican officials, the Chinese bishops, and China specialists from religious orders with a history of missionary presence in China. The Commission met for the first time in March 2008 to review responses to the Pope's letter, and to reflect on ways to implement it.



In his Pastoral Letter to the Church in China, the Pope expressed the Holy See's desire and willingness for "constructive dialogue". Delegations from both sides have met on several occasions these past three years, and talks continue. Vatican sources confirm that the Pope maintains a direct, personal interest in the whole China question and is regularly briefed on developments there.

[Vatican Vista, 4/8/08]

## Beijing Philharmonic At Vatican

Pope Benedict XVI was honored on May 7<sup>th</sup> by a concert performance of the *Beijing Philharmonic* in the Paul VI Hall in Vatican City. The orchestra, founded in 2000, was touring in Europe under the direction of Conductor YU Long. Together with the *Shanghai Opera Choir*, the orchestra presented Mozart's



Requiem, some Latin Motets and a Kyrie. Maestro YU chose the program in respect of Pope Benedict who is known to be an expert on Mozart's work. **YU also said they wished to: "unveil a totally new China, coming into contact with the world with open hearts."**

The audience, including some 30 people affiliated with the PRC Embassy in Rome, and DENG Rong, the daughter of former Premier DENG Xiao Ping, was warmly greeted by the Holy Father after the performance. The quasi official Vatican newspaper daily, *L'Osservatore Romano*, observed: "With this Vatican performance of a great classic work of European music of religious inspiration, **music proves to be a language and precious medium of dialogue between peoples and cultures.**"

[Fides: 6-19-08]

### Earthquake Relief

As a registered 501c(3) organization, the USCCB is receiving donations designated for direct relief and assistance to earthquake victims in Sichuan Province – through *Jinde Charities* – a registered Catholic NGO in China.

[CF Reports on P6]

# Church News

## Belgian Bishops Visit China

**Cardinal Godfried Danneels**, together with four Belgian bishops and board members of the *Verbiest Foundation* (Louvain), made a pastoral visit to China in March as part of an exchange and cooperation program between the Belgian and Chinese Churches that has gone on for twenty years. It followed upon a visit of Chinese bishops to Belgium in November 2007. They met to exchange views on how to evangelize today in secularized societies in both Europe and China; and to **explore concrete ways of cooperation and exchange between the two local churches in the fields of priestly and lay formation and of pastoral catechesis**. They also visited some cultural sites and two former CICM missions in Liaoning Province, where the founder of CICM, *Theofiel Verbist* died in 1868. **Cardinal Danneels was also invited by the Institute for Study on World Religions in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to lecture on: "Challenges to the Culture of Life: Ethics and Science in Dialogue"**.

When speaking about the Church in China one must distinguish clearly two different arenas: the *'official' or juridical aspect* of the relations between Church and State, (freedom of religion, normalizing diplomatic relations, etc.) on which the media generally focuses. And *the pastoral realities* of the local Church in China, which generally seem not to interest the media and people outside of China as much. The Belgian delegation precisely focused on this pastoral reality where the People of God in China live their faith intensively.

Of course there are serious problems and challenges on the pastoral level. One major issue is the internal division between the so called 'underground' and 'official' Catholic communities. That is precisely one situation that motivated the Belgian bishops to go to China, to learn from the Christians there how they see this situation and how they hope to grow beyond this internal division. It is there the Spirit is at work giving strength to the Churches toward reconciliation.

**The question is what can we do together? How can Sister Churches in this period of time mutually confirm each other in the Faith?**

[Verbiest Foundation]

## Religious Marriage Center

Ever-growing numbers of non-Christian youth in China are interested in a marriage ceremony, celebrated in the Catholic Church. According to some, *"no extravagant ceremony can compare to the sacred character, the solemnity, and the fidelity that is promised before the priest."* In response, the parish of Hong Jia Lou, in the **Diocese of Ji Nan**, whose gothic structure makes it a common site for pilgrimages and tourists, has begun a *Religious Marriage Center*. The Center also offers a formation course on Christian Marriage, as well as the opportunity for taking photos in the Garden of the Good Shepherd and in the Grotto of the Virgin. A similar interest is reported from **Liaoning Diocese in NE China**, where many requests are received each year. Offerings of RMB 2000 (US\$280) and more are not uncommon. These offerings, made by the couples for the regular ceremony, are used for pastoral work and evangelization in the dioceses. [UCANews]

## Women Religious in China

Reading, interpretation, and reflection on Scripture formed the central themes of a spiritual formation course offered to the Sisters in **Ning Xia Diocese**, by *Auxiliary Bishop Li Jing*. Under the Bishop's guidance, participants **reflected on fundamental biblical passages that are useful in strengthening their own vocation and their election of a life expressed in vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience**. The biblical texts also served in locating the foundations of the service that they offer the Lord and Society in complete union with the Church. Guided by the simple and yet profound talks of the Bishop, the Sisters contemplated four main aspects of religious life, in the light of Sacred Scripture: consecrated life, evangelization, community life, and personal spiritual life.

[USCCB news 4/08]

ISBN: 1084-8401

Editor: Sr. Janet Carroll, MM  
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Subscriptions: US/Canada: US\$10.00  
Overseas: US\$15.00 - airmail

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## Concelebrating Papal Mass

*Barbara Frazee - CNS International Editor - was in China in March 2007 with USCCB's 11th Religious Study Tour. She has written extensively about the Church in China since her visit.*

**Father John CHEN Guang Qian of the Diocese of Xi'an**, who is pursuing a licentiate in sacred theology at Catholic University of America in Washington called **concelebrating Mass with Pope Benedict XVI** and more than 1,300 other priests and bishops **"the event of a lifetime."** "During the celebration, I really understood what it means to be one, catholic and apostolic church," he said in a short reflection written for **CNS**.

At the Mass at Nationals Park more than 46,000 people waved flags and shed tears when the pope mobile arrived in the stadium. *"It was a wonderful experience for me to see: conservative and liberal, black, white, Latino and Asian, they were all one,"* Fr. CHEN noted that the Pope spoke about freedom and reconciliation: **"His message was not only for Americans; it was also for all the people in the world, I hope that the Catholic Church in China will have reconciliation, unity and dialogue both within the Church, and with the government,"** he said. Referring to some areas of China where the Catholic Church is divided into two communities: those registered with the government and those who view registration as a serious compromise, he felt **"Chinese Catholics should be able peacefully to celebrate the Eucharist together."**

Referring to the homily at the Mass at NY's Yankee Stadium, when the pope quoted from the Gospel of St. John: "Real freedom, then, is God's gracious gift, the fruit of conversion to his truth, the truth which makes us free," Fr. CHEN said he too is encouraged to learn more in order to "tell the truth to my people in China."

When the Pope went to the CUA Campus Center to meet with Catholic educators, Fr. CHEN again was also *"one of the few lucky persons able to touch the Pope's hands. His hands were so soft, he smiled to our group when he walked into the building."* Everyone from the Theological College was so happy to see him so closely. It is so different to see him in person than on TV. "He comes as a friend and a preacher of the Gospel." Like many thousands of others, the young priest was profoundly inspired by his papal encounter.

## Church Leaders Support Olympics

**Hong Kong coadjutor Bishop**

**John TONG Hon** and Macau diocese **Bishop Jose LAI Hung-Seng** have both accepted official invitations to attend the Opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics.



With the blessing of the Holy See and Cardinal ZEN, TONG said he wants to witness the success of the Olympics, as wished for by Pope Benedict XVI, earlier this year.

On April 30, special Masses were celebrated in many dioceses in China, as the Olympic torch arrived for its first relay leg on Chinese soil. Bishops Joseph LI Shan presided at a Mass at the *Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Beijing* concelebrated by more 20 priests and attended by an estimated 1000 people, including municipal officials and members of the *Beijing Olympic Organizing committee*.

Other dioceses have begun a 100 day Vigil of Prayer for Blessings in the games. **A group of 16 clergy, religious and lay leaders have been assigned to live at the Olympic Village as part of a team to serve the needs of all religious believers who will attend the games.**



US Catholic China Bureau's

### ***12<sup>th</sup> Religious Study Tour to China***

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*For more details*

*Contact 973-763-1131*

*or check our website*

**www.usccb.net**

**Estimated Costs: \$4,000**

**(dbl/occ)**

**All inclusive**



# Social Issues

*ED. Note: As the PR China is increasingly integrated into the global economy, the developed nations, such as the USA, which long enjoyed economic superiority, feel challenged by disadvantageous competition: Whenever China is in the picture, an historical perspective is always enlightening. Speakers at the Oct. 2007 US China Peoples Friendships Association Convention addressed these issues.*

## Humanizing China's Economy

China is currently grappling **with a number of significant social and economic challenges flowing from globalization in the 21st century.** A number of comparisons between China's current economy and the USA during the Great Depression can serve to highlight China's success and its willingness to open trade with other countries. In terms of progress, China is actually in a much better position now than the US was when the New Deal was enacted. Part of this has come about by China's inclusion into the WTO, which has allowed the country to achieve rapid growth through expanded international trade and investment; imitating the models of Germany, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

**China's government still has a long way to go to establish the rights and benefits of the people it represents.** State enterprises offer comprehensive social services like housing and healthcare, and encouraged the growth of home ownership; but public **education continues to rely on user charges,** which widen the divisions between the urban and rural sectors. **Access to medical services is also extremely limited.** Xinhua News Agency reported that "The latest national health survey (2003) revealed that 73% of people in rural areas who needed care, chose not to get it because of the cost." While *The Economist* reported that **migrant workers** often register themselves as farmers, rather than urban residents, because it gives them the opportunity to retain the small parcels of farmland allotted to them by the government. Such a benefit is considered to be more tangible than the promise of unemployment benefits, pensions, and subsidized health care which many correctly suspect will be reneged upon.

The **current Chinese per-capita income** and industrial and financial development in the last quarter century is also similar to that of the USA a century ago. Then, as now, hazardous working conditions and failed efforts to regulate pollution demonstrates (China's) need for industrial and financial reform. The recent **debacles in product quality** also echo early 20th century difficulties in the US that led to the creation of the FDA in 1907. On a positive note, **women's equality** is more wide-spread in modern China than it was in the US in 1900! [Dr. Paul B. Trescott]

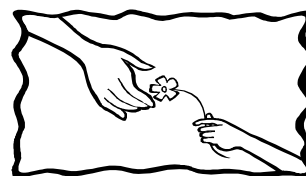
## Poverty and Equality

On a positive note, The Vice President of the *Chinese Peoples Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries*, reminded the participants that: China has become the first country to achieve the **Millennium Development Goal of reducing by half its number of people living in poverty.** Whereas the 1970s, China contained 20% of the world's poor, many reforms and guidelines since enacted have reduced the number of Chinese below the poverty line 86%, to about to 2.3% of China's population.

However, new challenges have also arisen: 22.23 million urban residents earn less than US\$40 per month, the minimum standard for urban residents. **China's poor population is unevenly distributed. Poverty in central and western China is more serious than in other parts of the country.** The PRC government has provided about US\$1.8 billion for a special fund to support the development of infrastructure, industrialization of agriculture, and labor transfer training. They have also lessened the agriculture tax that has been collected in China for the past two and a half millennia; and exempted rural students from paying tuition and school fees.

**The government is also exploring ways of establishing a comprehensive social welfare system.** In the next five years, more attention will be paid to achieving balanced development, creating equal opportunities, and promoting social justice so that the usual problem of the poor getting poorer and the rich becoming richer will not occur. According to the CPAFFC Vice President, **China is still developing. It is maintaining a scientific outlook into the practice of eradicating poverty that is people-oriented, comprehensive, coordinated, and sustained.**

[US-China Review Winter'08]



## Earthquake Devastates Sichuan

At 14:28 on May 12, 2008 an earthquake measuring 8.0 on the Richer scale hit *Wenchuan County* and other mountainous regions in Sichuan Province. The massive earthquake resulted in widespread human death, destruction of infrastructure and uncounted financial loss. The death toll has been estimated at over 80,000. More than 500,000 people have been injured. Hundreds of thousands of houses collapsed or were destroyed. After the earthquake, many church buildings in that area have been razed to the ground or are so damaged as to be unusable.

At the time, both USCCB's Executive Director and Senior Associate were on a pastoral visit to several dioceses in central, western and northeast China.

***Fr. Michel Marcel S.J. offers the following reflection:***

"On May 12, 2008, Sr. Janet Carroll MM and I were a thousand miles away at the Shrine of *Our Lady Help of Christians* at Sheshan, in Shanghai; pilgrims there to pray with the Catholic Church in China in union with Pope Benedict's call to the universal Church in his Pastoral Letter of June 2007. We did not expect a natural disaster would happen while we were in China, let alone an earthquake of such catastrophic proportions. **The quake made more than buildings of Sichuan tremble... it shook the hearts and minds of its people...**

The government immediately launched a vast rescue operation and dispatched the army to the areas worst affected. Journalists, both Chinese and foreign, were allowed to go to Sichuan Province to cover the whole event and feed the audio-visual media and the written press with live and direct information continuously.

The first shock came with the early images of the awful destruction caused by the earthquake, seeing initial cell phone videos of the earthquake as it happened and hearing the voices of those few individuals who had miraculously escaped death. This was followed by the sad images of people searching for signs of their loved ones among the rubble, soon replaced by moving images of rescue workers finally locating survivors. The spontaneous words spoken by those victims, the efforts of their rescuers to free them from the ruins, the shouts of joy when they triumphed and their tremendous sorrow when they failed moved listeners to tears. The words that erupted from the heart were not the usual cant! Words from the Chinese people themselves... words so fresh, so different, so true, so moving, so comforting...

The true face of the Chinese people unmasked, showing how good at heart, how generous, how courageous, how beautiful and lovable they were... Songs heard on TV with words like "*Only love can...*" or "*Because of love we...*" or on the front page of Shenyang Evening Paper, this headline: "*Look up to the sky ! It is still time to pray. Out of ten thousand impossibilities, there is still the possibility of one miracle of life to happen !*".

\* \* \* \*

## Responses from the Religious Sector

### Pontifical Council: COR UNUM

On May 29th, under cover of a letter from the President of Cor Unum, Cardinal Cordes the **Holy See announced a donation from Pope Benedict XVI of US\$100,000.**, as a sign of his solicitude for the victims of the earthquake in Sichuan and the neighboring provinces. The funds were channeled through *Jinde Charities in Hebei Province*, an officially registered NGO of the Catholic Church in China.

**Christians in China and all around the world have responded very spontaneously** with donations and volunteer services in earthquake areas. All of the parishes of the country celebrated Masses for the deceased, and gathered funds and donations for rebuilding. **Many groups of volunteers especially medically trained young Sisters immediately left for Sichuan to offer their assistance with medical care and the distribution of food and water.** Local Chinese authorities expressed their gratitude, in a meeting held to report on the immediate damages suffered by the Catholic community.

At a Press Conference on June 5, local clergy and lay leaders, along with directors of *Jinde Charities* and **CARITAS Germany** provided feedback and suggestions. CARITAS' has contracted with *Wen Chuan County* where the epicenter was located, to provide rice, cooking oil and other necessities to the local population. Six bishops have already visited the earthquake site where many Catholic Sisters are serving in the midst of tens of thousands people who are desperately in need of physical, psychological, and moral assistance. *The people living in the areas recovering from the earthquake are very grateful for the prayers and personal donation sent to them by the Pope, and for all the work being carried out by the international community in response to this tragic event.*

[Fides: 6-6-08]

## Congratulations to Spring 2008 Graduates Maryknoll Education and Formation Project



***Fr. Joseph Lin Jin De***  
M.A. in Spiritual Direction  
Fordham University, Bronx, NY  
FuZhou Diocese



***Sem. John Huang Wen Hong***  
B.A. in Philosophy  
St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA  
XinJiang Diocese



***Sem. Joseph Liu Jie***  
M.A. in Theology  
Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit, MI  
XianXian Diocese



***Sem. Jacob Wang Jin Fu***  
M.A. in Theology  
Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit, MI  
XinJiang Diocese



***Sem. John Chen Yong Li***  
M.Div., S.T.B. & M.A. Scripture  
Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit, MI  
XinJiang Diocese



***Fr. John Ren Da Hai***  
M.A. in liturgy  
St. John's University, Collegeville, MN  
TangShan Diocese



***Fr. John Chen Guang Qian***  
S.T.L. in Theology  
Institute of Marriage & Family  
Studies Washington, D.C.  
XiAn Diocese



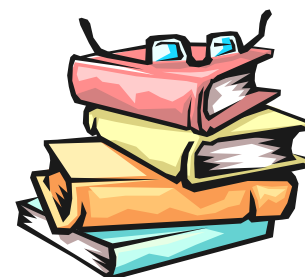
***Fr. Joseph Li Zhan Jiang***  
S.T.D. in Systematic Theology  
Weston Jesuit School of Theology,  
Cambridge, MA  
Shijiazhuang Diocese



***Sem. Paul Zhang Ting Hu***  
B.A. in philosophy  
Catholic University  
of America, Washington, D.C.  
XinJiang Diocese

# Reading Notes

- **Contextualization of Christianity in China: An Evaluation in Modern Perspective.** Edited by Peter Chen-Main Wang. Institut Monumenta Serica, Sankt Augustin. 316 pp. Euro 40. The papers of the International Symposium on the "Contextualization of Christianity in China: An Evaluation in Modern Perspective" held in Leiden University in 2002. It delves into a diverse number of topics such as Sinology, history, theology, missiology, philosophy, and political science.
- **The Bible Diary.** Claretian Publications, 2008. 448 pp. Father Pedro Chi-kin, co-organizer of *The Bible Diary*, hopes that his book will encourage Chinese Catholics to read the Bible. The Diary, which contains a calendar, daily scriptural readings, reflections, and prayers meant to integrate faith and life, is compiled from reflections made by Catholics from mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. The passages are taken from the Chinese edition of the Bible published by *Studium Biblicum Franciscum* in Hong Kong.
- **Introducing Asian American theologies.:** Jonathan Y. Tan Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, Inc. 2008 212 pp. \$24. pb. Acclaimed as a lucid, concise and helpful summary, the work surveys the theological landscape of Asian American Christians in all major denominations: Catholic, Protestant and Independent. It also serves to introduce into wider theological discourse, the histories and experiences of a rapidly growing segment of US churches.
- **China's New Rulers: The Secret Files.** Andrew J. Nathan and Bruce Gilley. New York Review Books, 2002. 237 pp. \$21.95. Offers comprehensive profiles of China's present top leaders, technocrats who rule by consensus and pragmatism and excel at staying in power by giving people what they need and want in the way of consumer products, entertainment and minimal interference as long as the people do not criticize them.
- **China's Brave Leaders—and Other Tales for Global Times.** Jeffrey Wasserstrom. Indiana University Press, 2007. 210 pp. \$21.95. This book is described as "a playful look at serious issues, provided by a scholar who devotes his working life to teaching about China." The serious issues examined include all industrial societies under the general heading of "tales for global times;" and address the homogenization of cultures, ecological degradation, rapacious capitalism, patriotism, nationalism, and the erosion of human freedom through censorship and surveillance.



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