

China Church Quarterly

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From the Editor:



In many ways, the Year of the Horse (the cheerful Water Horse in the Chinese Zodiac)

offers us a very appropos portrait of contemporary Chinese society. Despite transitory realities, a profound underlying spirit animates the Chinese people -- a tenacious complement of strength and tendencies which will not be denied.

In Chinese folklore the horse is reputed to be impulsive, intuitive, never worried about the future, always eager to be on the go, and not too interested in long-term planning. Horses are sometimes impatient, but usually spontaneous and industrious, are marvelous entertainers and love to perform before crowds. This all results in an upbeat attitude toward life. Horses can also be independent, self-reliant and energetic. Being independent they are usually not too interested in the opinion of others, and occasionally they can be downright stubborn and inflexible.

As you read through this issue of CCQ, you may want to reflect on how these qualities undergird the people's response to social change and development in China today and how the Chinese weather critical transitional eras. Nothing portrays the quiet fidelity of the Chinese people under fire like the simple letter from a young Chinese priest (cf. p. 4) who vivifies the maxim: "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing affright you; all things are passing. God alone suffices."

Beijing's Irrepressible Religiosity

Spring Festival was traditionally the high point of a busy calendar of religious events that governed daily life in old Beijing. However, one by one, Beijing's ramshackle historic temples are disappearing. During Spring Festival, Beijingers still flock to visit temple fairs; but the temples -- once the heart of the capital's spiritual, commercial and civic life dating back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) -- have never recovered their importance.

In a landmark 700-page study, *Peking Temples and City Life 1400-1900*, Princeton Professor Naquin identified 2,500 religious sites and thinks she may have missed many. Of these, more than 1,000 were still active early in the first half of the 20th century. **Temples helped create Beijing culture.** Now most of them have gone, remembered, if at all, as bus stops and street names. **The whole city was planned as "a sacred space"**, according to French and Taoist scholars, working to identify the remaining temples. **"Beijing was ecumenical, tolerant of all religions, not like Rome.** In some ways, it was an open civilization compared to our own," one observed.

Seven major complexes, such as the *Temple of Heaven*, underpinned the state religion, which placed the emperor as a living god at the center of the universe and created a cult around the imperial family. The emperor's presence made **Beijing a unique religious center in East Asia** by turning it into **a sacred city for the followers of many faiths.** Here one could find several Taoist sects, dozens of Zen Buddhist and Tibetan Buddhist temples, monasteries and nunneries, ancient mosques as well as Roman Catholic churches and Confucian and shamanistic shrines.

In addition, the city was filled with temples built by locals and temporary visitors from all over China who worshipped a colorful crowd of deities. The *God of Literature* governed the fortunes of scholars who came to take the imperial examinations. The *Temple of Joy* was patronized by people in the entertainment business and decorated with the names of famous opera singers. There was the *God of Cannon*, worshipped by the Manchu bannermen. A Tang-dynasty temple was dedicated to Er Lang, nephew of the King of Heaven and his dog, which intervened on behalf of sick pets. Many prayed to the *Gods of Colds and Rheumatism* or sought the aid of such goddesses as Wei Shen, protectress of flowers and Xi Wang Mu mother of Western Heaven.

Character for Horse: MA
4700th Lunar New Year
began Feb. 12th

Eunuchs built many temples too, including one to *the God of the Kitchen Stove*. Rich families had their own ancestral temples and built shrines in their courtyard mansions.

After the People's Republic was established in 1949, most of the great state religious buildings were protected as museums; but many of the rest were turned into schools, warehouses and factories.

Lately, some of the most famous temples are being restored. The *Beijing Public Security Ministry* finally moved two years ago from the Dongyue Miao, once a vast, sprawling Taoist complex. Once the site of a month-long Spring Festival fair, its importance rivaled the *Baiyun Guan* ("*White Cloud Temple*"), on the other side of the city. Dating back to the Mongol Emperor *Kublai Khan*, it had 72 halls with life-size tableaux representing supernatural bureaucrats interrogating and judging the deeds of terrified mortals. While these have now been painstakingly restored or replaced by figures taken from other temples, the statue of *Dongyue Miao* remains an empty shell.

Until now, the **Beijing Municipal Government's long-standing policy** of refusing permission to religious bodies to reclaim vacated sites, **seems designed to prevent Beijing from recovering its identity as a center of religion.** The Communist Party still seems fearful of allowing residents to organize themselves independently in any way, especially after the 1989 Tiananmen Square chaos.

Since the crackdown against Falun Gong, it has been impossible for any group to obtain permission to open a new church or temple. One exception is the Miaofeng Shan temple complex on a hilltop, about an hour's drive west of Beijing's center. Once the most important pilgrimage center in North China dating back to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), it was completely destroyed in the 1960s. After it was rebuilt and reopened in 1993, thousands flocked there. **Its popularity reveals the extent of the quasi-religious social forces still suppressed in many quarters.**

[Adapted from SCMP/Beijing Bureau Chief Story]

China's Christian Roots Uncovered

A British conservationist, *Martin Palmer*, director of the Manchester-based Alliance of Religions and Conservation, has discovered ancient artworks that raise the **possibility of a significant Christian influence on Chinese civilization more than 1,300 years ago.** The site at *Louquantai* is part of a walled six-square-mile compound that is known to have had great religious significance during the Tang Dynasty. It functioned as an intellectual and spiritual center after *Laotse*, founder of Taoism, wrote his most famous works near where the monastery was later built.

The site is near the ancient capital of Xian in Northwest China, close to the Terra Cotta Warriors excavation, and includes two statues that may be depictions of Jonah and the Virgin Mary inside a 7th-century pagoda. The excavation work is supported by the New York-based *Asia Society* and benefactors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

A team of archaeologists expects to find the foundations of a Christian church and evidence that China's 7th-century Christian community was far more extensive than a minor sect. The fact that there was a Christian monastery inside such an important imperial compound shows us that Christianity must have attained a high level of acceptance. When St. Augustine came to Canterbury to convert Anglo-Saxons, the Church was already flourishing in China. **The site may reveal even more about the origins of Christianity than the Dead Sea Scrolls,** which showed that the salvational message of Christ was evident in other branches of Judaism. **There were early Christian influences in Taoism and Buddhism, and vice versa.**

Palmer observed, "*Christian symbolism has had a major influence on eastern religion, disproving the myth that the Middle Kingdom developed in isolation.*" **Martin Palmer is author of the recently published *Jesus Sutras: Re-discovering the Lost Scrolls of Taoist Christianity* (2001) Ballantine Publishing Co., US\$24.95.**

[London Times 2/23/02]

CHURCH NEWS

An Episcopal Model of Reconciliation

Bishop Odoric LIU Hede, OFM, died at the age of 90 after a brief hospitalization following a fall. A Franciscan Friar since 1929, he was imprisoned for twenty years (1958-1978) during the Cultural Revolution. Clandestinely ordained in the 'eighties for the diocese of Hankou in Central Hebei province, **Bishop Odoric emerged publicly in the early 'nineties, reconciling with his Franciscan confrere, Bishop Bernardine DONG GuangQing, of the open Church of Wuhan diocese.** Bishop Dong presided at Bishop Liu's funeral on December 13, 2001.

Although never officially recognized as a Bishop by the Chinese authorities, all the faithful and many state officials used this title when referring to him. **Bishop Liu served as the spiritual director of the South China Regional Major Seminary in Wuhan**, and is fondly remembered by his students as "a saint". In the words of one of them, "the reconciliation efforts of both Franciscan bishops are a great example to us priests."

[Zenit, 12/16/01]

Revered Bishop of Beijing Dies

The non-government recognized Bishop of Beijing, **Matthew PEI Shangde**, died at 83 in a hospital in Hebei province, where he was admitted some months ago. Since April 2001, Bishop Pei had been under house arrest and, even in hospital, was under close surveillance. Although seriously ill and in need of constant treatment, **the Bishop continued his pastoral ministry in Beijing and Hebei, promoting communion with the Universal Church.** During the Cultural Revolution, like many Catholics, he suffered hardship and trials. Released in 1980 he returned to Beijing and was quietly ordained Bishop in 1989. **His simple faith and meekness of heart earned him the friendship of many of the faithful and priests of both the official and unofficial Catholic communities.**

Commenting on *Pope John Paul II's* Message last October on the mission of *Matteo Ricci*, Bishop Pei said: "When I heard the Pope's words I had a deep desire to kneel in front of him and thank him for the profound paternal love that he sent to us through this message."

The Holy Father united us, underground and official Catholics. Only he has the strength, the courage, the ability to vivify the spirit of Christianity, that is love and truth. As he said, 'we are not afraid to recognize the historical truth and to recognize our mistakes'; indeed this can only help us to improve our mission in the future."

Pope Applauds Reconciliation Efforts

In January, **the Chinese Regional Bishops in Taiwan** were in Rome for their *ad limina* visits, made every five years to report on conditions in their dioceses. **Pope John Paul II** told them he was sure their work to promote reconciliation within the divided Chinese Church would bear fruit. "Your efforts are aimed at promoting mutual understanding, reconciliation and fraternal love among all the Catholics of the great Chinese family. I am confident that these efforts, carried out in communion with other particular churches and the See of Peter, will help to overcome the difficulties of the past, so that ever new opportunities for dialogue and reciprocal human and spiritual enrichment may arise."

At another event, in an address to the diplomatic community in Rome, Taiwanese officials were cheered when the Pope referred to Taiwan and (mainland) China as the "Republic of China" and "People's Republic of China" respectively, hinting at acceptance of the "two-state solution", long favored by Taiwan. The Pope also expressed his pleasure that the two governments coexist in the WTO. For its part, China has set as a condition to improve relations, that the Vatican cut its diplomatic ties with Taiwan. [Newark Catholic Advocate]

New Vatican Charge d'Affaires

In January, the Holy See announced a new "Charge d'Affaires" of the Apostolic Nunciature in China. **Msgr. James Patrick Green** became the **Holy See's delegate in Taipei.** An American, Msgr. Green, 52, was formerly Counsellor at the Holy See Mission in Denmark. On the occasion, the *Bishops' Conference* in Taiwan, wishing Archbishop-designate Yllana, the former representative, well, lauded him for enhancing the relationship between the Holy See and Taiwan during his term of office since September, 1999.

New Year Greetings from A Young Pastor in China

[The following letter was received after Christmas from a young priest, Father Joseph, who studied for his M.Div. in the USA some years ago. Upon returning to China and, following ordination, he was assigned to a rural mountain area in the southeastern province of Fujian.]

"I was very happy to receive your Christmas greetings, your good wishes and your assurance that we are united in prayer. I also remembered you and the many friends! Thank you very much for your greetings and wishes, encouragement and gift I have received.

Things here at my parish are going well. Three months ago, we had a committee meeting to assume the rights which belong to the Parish Committee from the Patriotic Association. What I seek is not that I want power; but for the right and development of the Church. In another words, if the association does things in order, I can feel relaxed.

Now, I am busy with home-visiting and sending Chinese New Year greeting and blessing around. (Chinese New Year is February 12, the Year of Horse). I go with committee members. It is a wonderful way to show we care about the faithful and get to know them as I should. I will not visit my parents before February 12 because it is very important for the faithful to come to Church and give greetings to God and ask for a blessing of the New Year.

Here, as it is in many places in China, I have experienced the difficulty of ministry for many reasons. First, the ruling Communist Party would not allow any members to participate in any religious activity. Without joining the Party, one would not be in the ruling class and be promoted. Some of the Catholics were brought to church and baptized while they were infants. They know they are Catholic, but are also in public office, and avoid coming to the church. I need to understand their position and just cannot be hard on them. Another reason, many elderly Catholics were persecuted during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (50-60's), just because they were a Christians or went to Catholic School. It even happens to their new generation. Certainly, a few of them work piously for the Church. We visit these families to listen to their stories and understand what they and their families had gone through, and heal their brokenhearted.

Please let your parish and family know we continue to remember you in our prayers. You will always hold a special place in our hearts. Let us keep helping one another with some constant prayers."

[Following his New Year visit to his parents, young Fr. Joseph wrote once again:]

"I just returned from a two-week vacation in my parents' home town. I had a good time with my family. My parents send their hello to you. Even though it was my vacation, I had not much time to relax, as a nearby parish invited me to lead a retreat, and I attended a one-week meeting with twenty other priests who have returned from studies abroad. We discussed and shared many experiences about the Church in China after we returned and how to lead the Church into tomorrow."

[Zealous and gifted young priests like Fr. Joseph are truly the hope of the future. In this season of Lent and in anticipation of Easter, let us pray for him and all our sisters and brothers in the Faith in China, who look forward to the promise of Resurrection.]

Christmas Reveling and Religious Observances

Christmas celebrations in China this year took on a distinctly western flavor, with **glittering decorations everywhere and attractive sales at shopping malls** and markets. Department stores touted special promotions and travel agencies held Christmas parties on board ships. Even hospitals offered preferential rates to those visiting doctors at Christmas. Bargain-conscious Chinese got in the holiday mood by shopping for sale items, and many **children were surprised and delighted to find toy-stuffed stockings hanging on their bedposts on Christmas morning.**

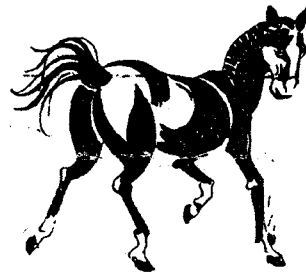
High-tech greetings played a prominent role this season, with Chinese sending up to six times the average number of short messages over computers and cell phones. Web portals and mobile carriers cashed in on this bonanza, and even **China's post offices issued stamped postcards with an image of a Chinese-style Santa Claus**, a "first" in Chinese postal history. Restaurants and karaoke bars stayed open much later than usual on Christmas Eve but last-minute reservations were hard to get, due to careful advance planning by revelers.

Many young people apparently look on the holiday more as an opportunity to go out with families and friends than as a time for religious reflection. One University professor summed it up by saying **"Chinese celebrating Christmas doesn't mean that they know all about the western Christmas spirit. It's only that we are better off now, and need an excuse to gather around with friends and enjoy ourselves."**

Nonetheless, **hundreds of thousands of christian and catholic worshippers, undaunted by the frosty temperatures, stood in long lines outside churches on Christmas Eve waiting for holiday services to begin.** Services were filled to overflowing with church members, surrounded by equal numbers of curious visitors. At one provincial church, 3000 people vied for standing-room-only space to hear five choirs, made up of 200 people, sing Christmas Carols in turn.

Chinese New Year With "Western Characteristics"

Chinese tradition, which has lost its luster for many young people, rebounded when the Year of the Horse galloped in. In this bustling time of family reunions and



tributes to ancestors commemorating the Lunar New Year, Chinese traditions abound, with some twists to embrace the ways of the west.

Valentine's Day fell on the third day of the Lunar New Year, and was enthusiastically welcomed alongside the age-old holiday routine. Couples strolling through the streets carried roses and chocolates in addition to the ubiquitous candied kabobs available from sidewalk vendors. Art gallery visitors could see exhibits of *Picasso's* block prints or Chinese poet *Li Bai's* poems and Spring Festival couplets. Young people passed on traditional New Year's greetings via cell phones, nearly paralyzing local mobile phone grids in some areas. In many of the red envelopes stuffed with New Year's cash for unmarried people were the newly-circulated euro notes.

Western-style restaurants were in holiday mode with traditional costumes for servers and red tassels and lanterns hanging for diners to enjoy. Paper-cuts were put up in *Kentucky Fried Chicken* and *McDonald's*, and *Motorola* and *Coca Cola* launched new ads referring to the Lunar New Year. At Central China TV's annual gala New Year's Eve concert, a performance demonstrated the Chinese people's eagerness to learn English.

In a timely manner, the Railway Ministry has invested more than 200 million yuan (US\$25 million) to improve railway carriages, including installing heating systems in carriages used in northern China. As people usually take their annual holidays during this period, the Chinese were expected to make more than 1.7 billion trips around the country either by road, rail or ferry during the 40-day New Year Festival (January 28-March 8).

[Peoples Daily 2/15/02]

China's Religious Policy Incongruent with World Status

[Rev. Peter J. Barry, researcher at the Hong Kong Holy Spirit Study Centre, cites two recent cases of religious crackdown and addresses the question of the relationship between politics and religion in China.]

The year 2001 was a banner year for China. The country won the bid to host the Olympics for 2008, its national football team obtained a place in the 2002 world cup and, after a 15-year wait, it gained entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO). All these successes seem to indicate that **China has now finally become a full-fledged member of the community of nations.**

However, despite this apparently smooth rise to prominence on the world stage, **some disturbing events have taken place in the religious sector since November**, when China was in the process of entering the WTO. Among other instances of harassment and repression, Catholic media reported that bishops and priests not affiliated with the "open" Church were detained by government officials for up to five weeks to encourage them to join the Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA).

These campaigns seem to be implementing the directives of a government document: "Concerning the Strengthening of Catholic Church Work in the New Circumstances", issued August 16, 1999. This document urged the setting up of CPA bodies in places where they do not yet exist, in preparation for the possible establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the Vatican.

However, many **Church communities that do not have CPA bodies**, or even many of those that do, **do not favor the organization, because of its avowed principle to promote the independent running of the Church.** To some Chinese Catholics, this means cutting the Church off from the Pope, its symbol of unity.

The CPA's primary allegiance is as a liaison to the government; and its representatives are seen as an instrument of the government control of the Church. Therefore, most Catholic communities do not want this organization within their boundaries. Does this mean that members of these communities do not support socialism? By no means.

President Jiang Zemin said at a conference on religion last fall, that China opts for a policy of separation of politics and religion. On the contrary, instead of separation, the imposition of the CPA on the Catholic community binds that religious body even more closely to the political structure.

The relation between politics and religion in China is at the heart of the matter. In China, more work needs to be done on **striking a balance in the relations between State and Church**, or between politics and religion. **The following are questions that might be addressed:** Can China balance the relationship between politics and religion? Is there a need for the CPA, or for that matter, the Religious Affairs Bureau? Can the whole top-heavy structure for the control of religion be dismantled? For Catholics, can matters be worked out with the Pope? Can we hope for the day when real religious freedom will exist in China?

China's religious officials themselves are asking similar questions. **Dr. Li Pingye** of the *United Front Work Department*, in an article she wrote in 2000, concludes: *"Everything in the world is moving in the direction of pluralism. To seek world peace and understanding among different peoples and different religions, for dialogue and communication to take place among them, it is necessary to re-think the delicate relations between religion and politics ... Educated circles among China's religions should deeply study these questions and come up with their own answers."* The writer agrees with Doctor Li's ideas, except that she should have added: *"Educated circles in the Chinese government should also study these questions."*

How China handles the religious question will determine China's greatness. In my view, **to arrive at first-class status in the family of nations -- which many friends at home and abroad hope for China -- it must completely revamp its religious policy.**

[Asia Focus 1/11/02]

SOCIAL ISSUES

China's View of Top News Events

(in chronological order):

1. **Earthquake in Gujarat, India**, kills 20,000, injures 167,000.
2. **Human Genome Sequence Revealed**.
3. **Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Escalates**.
4. **Organization of Africa Unity Transformed into African Union (AU)** to cope with globalization.
5. **September 11 Terror Attacks in USA** arouse shock and condemnation in the international community.
6. **Afghan Taliban Regime Collapses**. The US launches large-scale military attack. Afghan interim government is formed.
7. **Successful APEC Summit in Shanghai** reaches broad consensus.
8. **China Enters WTO** as 143rd full member state.
9. **US Unilaterally Withdraws from Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty**, severely damaging international security and strategic stability.
10. **World Economic Slowdown** among major players, causes "domino effect" for all countries, worsened by 9/11 attacks. [Xinhua]

Human Rights Bi-monthly Launched

Human Rights, China's first professional magazine on this issue, was launched in Beijing in February. As an important aspect of social advancement, it opens an **access for the international community to understand China's human rights conditions, and aims to expound China's basic standpoints**. The hope is that *Human Rights* magazine will act as a medium and a window through which people in China have dialogue and exchange with foreign academic circles.

ZHAO Qizheng, director-general of the *State Council Information Office (SCIO)* said, "*The launch of Human Rights magazine complies with the development of human rights across the world, and is of immense importance to human rights studies and education in China.*" He hoped that the magazine would devote itself not only to the theoretical or academic aspect of the issue, but also to practical problems in China's human rights conditions, and contribute proposals to the government on ways of solving them.

Premier Pledges Action on Challenges

In a speech to parliament, **Premier ZHU Rongji** highlighted the biggest threats to the Communist Party's grip on power as China braces for its first full year in the *World Trade Organization*; and the run-up to a sensitive leadership change. *Zhu, Jiang Zemin* and NPC chief *LI Peng* are expected to step down from their Communist Party posts later this year. The National People's Congress is held every five years.

The straight-talking Premier lambasted corrupt and wasteful bureaucrats, who wined and dined while farmers toiled under crippling local government levies; and retrenched workers struggled to survive without social security benefits.

In his Work Report to the annual two-week session of the *National People's Congress*, **Zhu also stressed the need for stable relations with Taiwan before the leadership change by pledging to expand political and economic exchanges**. He also promoted a controversial plan put forward by *President JIANG Zemin*, to allow private entrepreneurs into the Communist Party in a bid to make it more relevant to modern China. [Reuters 3/5/02]

First National AIDS Conference

Attendees at a four-day AIDS and STD conference in November were told that the **total number of HIV-positive people in China is increasing rapidly and will probably top ten million in ten years**. It is spreading from specific groups, such as drug users and prostitutes, to the general population, according to *DAI Zhicheng*, Secretary-General of the Conference.

Peter Piot, executive director of the UN Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), said, "... *what happens in China will determine the global burden of HIV/AIDS.*"

North American Ecumenical Roundtable on China

April 14-15, 2002

Techny Conference Center

Following USCCB National China Conference

A group of China-related persons met last fall to "brainstorm" possible vehicles for North Americans to continue to share their ecumenical commitment to the Churches in China. They were representative of the *Foundation for Theological Education in Southeast Asia, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, the Ricci Institute at the University of San Francisco and the U.S. Catholic China Bureau.*

Goals of the Roundtable envisioned include:

- ❖ **Sharing learnings** for Christians in North America from partnership with Chinese Christians
- ❖ Communication and possible **collaboration** between/among persons and groups maintaining relationships with the churches of China
- ❖ Promotion of the **development of a contextual Chinese theology** which addresses the post-liberation, contemporary realities of China
- ❖ Assist in the development of a **more mutual use of Chinese Christian terms**
- ❖ **Encourage spiritual formation** within the Chinese seminary curricula
- ❖ Assist in **collating lists of Chinese publications** on Christianity
- ❖ Participate in **interfacing the Chinese university departments of religion and the Chinese seminaries**
- ❖ Assist Chinese students in the USA/Canada in their **participation in interfaith dialogue** so they can stimulate interfaith dialogue on their return to China
- ❖ Facilitate the **sharing of library resources** for the Chinese seminaries and university departments of religion

The Roundtable will further define its purposes/goals at the April meeting.

For further information, contact:

Marvin D. Hoff, Executive Director
 Foundation for Theological Education in SE Asia
 313 Glengarry Ct., Holland, MI 49423
 Phone/Fax: (616) 355-4370
 E-mail: <jmhoff@egl.net>

"Spiritual Growth and Social Change in China"

The **19th National Catholic China Conference** will meet April 12-14 at Techny Towers Center near Chicago. Well over 100 persons are pre-registered to participate.

Keynote speakers: *Robert Schreiter, CSSP*, on "Challenges of Globalizational Reconciliation in the Churches"; *Wilhelm Mueller, SVD*, on "China's Christians as Catalysts of Social Change". A **Panel** of young clergy from China: reflecting on the theme from pastoral, formational and psycho-social developmental perspectives; and **Workshops** addressing topics on Higher Education in China; Christian Social Services; Catholic Spirituality Survey Report; AIDS/HIV Education in China; and Religious Freedoms.

On Saturday evening, April 13th, Bishop John Tong, Auxiliary Bishop of the Hong Kong diocese, will deliver a lecture on the Conference theme which is open to the public.

(Info at 973-763-1131 or 773-274-9111)

Preceding the Conference, the **U.S. Catholic China Bureau Board of Directors Annual Meeting** will also be held at Techny, April 10-11.

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Layout and Design: Ann S. Lieber

U.S. Catholic China Bureau
 Seton Hall University South Orange, NJ 07079

Tel: 973-763-1131 *FAX:* 973-763-1543

E-mail: chinabur@shu.edu

Website: www.usccb.net

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