

## News Update on Religion and Church in China May 14 – September 28, 2011

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*The “News Update on Religion and Church in China” appears regularly in each issue of Religions & Christianity in Today’s China (RCTC). Since the editorial staff learns of some items only later, it can happen that there are chronological overlaps between “News Updates” of two consecutive issues of RCTC. In these cases stories referred to in earlier “News Updates” will not be repeated. All “News Updates” can be found online at the website of the China-Zentrum ([www.china-zentrum.de](http://www.china-zentrum.de)). – The last “News Update” (2011, No. 1, pp. 3-31) covered the period January 1 – June 8, 2011.*

**May 14–16, 2011:**

### **Conference on Zen Buddhism in Shijiazhuang – “Zen for Life”**

According to reports, three of the traditional interpretations of Zen Buddhism (Chin. *chan*) native to Hebei Province – the traditional schools of Zhaozhou-Zen and Linji (Jap. Rinzai)-Zen as well as the scarcely 20 year old concept of “Zen for Life” (*shenghuo chan*) were the object of a conference attended by scholars of Buddhism from China, Japan, and Korea as well as by a number of Buddhist monks. In his conference presentation, Zen master Jinghui described how the concept of “Zen for Life” came to be in 1991 as a result of his personal reflections. He explained that he had felt the need to offer modern man a form of Zen which would respond to his needs – something easy to understand and to practice – which would give strength through renunciation and peace and be anchored in the center of each individual’s life. Jinghui stated that contemporary society is suffering from a three-fold thirst: a thirst for faith and a moral life often lacking in society; a thirst for social harmony in the face of social changes; and a thirst for physical and spiritual health, for direction in life, and for inner detachment. This thirst is one reason for the steady increase in the number of adherents to Buddhism in China, he argued. Since 1993 the Bailin Monastery, of which Jinghui was at the time Abbot, has organized an annual “Summer Camp for Zen for Life” in which hundreds of young people from all over China have taken part.

The conference referred to above took place under the direction of the Hebei Academy for Social Sciences, the Hebei Bureau for Religious Affairs and the Hebei Buddhist Association. Also involved in the conference were the Bailin Zen Monastery in the Zhaoxian County and the Linji Monastery in the Zhangding County (conference report and Jinghui’s presentation in *Fayin* 2011, No. 6, pp. 13-17, 22f.).

June 14, 2011:

## Beijing house church accuses official Protestant church of collaboration with police

In a statement of the Shouwang Church, published on the website of the USA based China Aid Association, the claim is made that representatives of the official Protestant “Three Self” Church have been showing up in police stations on recent weekends with the intent of “educating” detained members of the Shouwang Church and of convincing them to switch allegiance to the official church. China Aid promptly called on Christians of the “free world to boycott all Three Self events.” The Shouwang Church, one of the most well-known of Beijing’s “house churches,” has been under intense pressure since April of 2011 because of its attempts to hold outdoor services due to lack of a suitable worship space.

According to its own reports, China Aid sponsored a June 14–16, 2011 legal rights workshop in Hangzhou (Zhejiang Province) for approximately 40 pastors and leaders of house churches from several Chinese provinces. Workshop participants learned their rights so that they can defend themselves e.g. in administrative lawsuits.

*Ecumenical News International* reports Bob Fu, president of China Aid, as saying that the situation of house churches in China has “worsened dramatically” since December of 2010 and that more and more house churches are finding themselves under pressure to join the “Three Self” movement. According to the same source, the Catholic Bishop of Hong Kong, John Tong, saw a correlation between these acts of repression and the harassment directed at human rights lawyers and activists, many of whom are Christians (*Ecumenical News International* June 24; [www.chinaaid.org](http://www.chinaaid.org) June 15, 17 and 21).

June 16, 2011:

## Taiwan’s Education Minister makes “Four Books” compulsory subject for secondary schools

As of August 2012 the classic Confucian books *Zhongyong* (Doctrine of the Mean), *Daxue* (Great Learning), *Lunyu* (Analects of Confucius), and *Mengzi* (Mencius) will once again be part of the mandatory high school curriculum. The decision to amend an earlier ruling on the curriculum proved to be controversial. As reported in the *Taipei Times*, a member of the curriculum commission stated that an ethical re-education of students was needed and that students had been more cultured in the days when Chinese culture had been an obligatory part of the curriculum. In another *Taipei Times* report, Lin Ching-sung (Qingsong), deputy director of the National Teachers’ Association, characterized the decision of the ministry as “majority violence and political bullying.” Confucianism is not the only source for culture and refinement, she said. On the other hand, a commentary in the *China Post* declared that students need to read the Four Books since they are ethnically and culturally Chinese, and the Chinese are Confucians. It added that the Democratic Progress Party’s opposition to the change in curriculum was a mistake (*The China Post* June 30; *Taipei Times* online June 18).

June 19, 2011:

## Leadership of official Catholic Church names first spokesman, website planned

*UCAN* reports that at their third joint session since their election, the leadership of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and of the Bishops’ Conference of the Catholic Church in China has appointed

Beijing priest Fr. Yang Yu as the official spokesman for both organizations. *UCAN* quotes Fr. Yang as saying that his role will involve “passing on accurate information about the Catholic Church in China to domestic and international media in a timely fashion.” Ordained in 2000, Fr. Yang is the vice-secretary general of the Bishops’ Conference, which is not recognized by Rome. He studied theology for six years in the USA and served as spiritual director at the major seminary of the Diocese of Beijing.

At the same joint meeting, there were calls to speed up the development of a common website for the two organizations in order to make known “our accurate guidelines for the leadership of the Church (*banjiao*).” According to them, some Church related media had, through “irresponsible articles,” damaged Church work and endangered the unity and the stability of the Church. The conference report says that it was necessary to respond by presenting positive information.

The new website ([www.catholicchurchinchina.org](http://www.catholicchurchinchina.org)) was launched in July. Before that, the state-sanctioned leadership of the Catholic Church had no internet presence (*UCAN* June 28; [www.catholicchurchinchina.org](http://www.catholicchurchinchina.org) July 2).

June 21, 2011:

## With papal approval, priest of official Church clandestinely consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of Handan (Hebei)



Coadjutor Bishop Sun Jigen. Photo: *UCAN*.

According to reports, the consecration of 43 year old Fr. Joseph Sun Jigen, who had both the papal mandate as well as the approval (in principle) of the Chinese authorities, was originally set for June 29. However, the government rejected the date and insisted that illegitimately consecrated Bishop Guo Jincai of Chengde participate in the consecration. In order to avoid this, the 89 year old diocesan Ordinary, Bishop Yang Xiangtai, clandestinely consecrated Fr. Sun Jigen bishop on June 21.

On June 26, police picked Sun Jigen up (still thinking him to be a simple priest) and brought him to Shijiazhuang where they detained him in a guest house. On June 27, a news item appeared on the diocesan website addressed to the United Front and the Religious Affairs Bureau of Handan City, in which the entire clergy of the diocese expressed their incomprehension and outrage. They denounced the incident and demanded the immediate release of the “bishop candidate.”

On June 29, the date originally planned for the consecration, most of the priests and Catholic families of the diocese found themselves under close police surveillance. Probably in an attempt to put pressure on the diocese to accept the participation of Bishop Guo in the consecration, on July 2 Fr. Huai Jianting, Chancellor of the Diocese of Handan, and Fr. Liu Xiuhua, a consultor of the diocese, were forcibly taken away by government forces. From them, the authorities eventually discovered that “Father” Sun Jigen had already been consecrated bishop. Bishop Sun was released from police custody on July 5, but as yet he has not been acknowledged as bishop by the authorities and therefore cannot exercise his office. Both Fr. Huai Jianting and Fr. Liu Xiuhua were also eventually released from custody, Fr. Huai Jianting only at the beginning of September.

Born in 1967, Coadjutor Bishop Sun (i.e., bishop with the right of succession) was ordained a priest in 1995, and in 1997 was appointed Chancellor of the Diocese of Handan where he served from 2001–2005 as Vicar General. Since 2005 he has been parish priest at Yongnian. In addition, since 1998 he has been a member of the Political Consultative Conference of the City of Handan. The Holy See named him coadjutor bishop in 2007 (*Asianews* June 27; *UCAN* June 20 and 29; July 4 and 11.; [www.hdcatholic.org](http://www.hdcatholic.org)).

The official Diocese of Handan was created in 1980 out of the original Dioceses of Yongnian and Daming. It has approximately 135,000 Catholics. The Diocese of Yongnian continues to exist as an “underground” diocese.

June 22, 2011:

## Delegation of the Turkish Bureau for Religious Affairs meets Vice-President Hui Liangyu

According to a 22 June *Xinhua* report, at their meeting in Beijing both sides expressed the desire to strengthen exchanges between the religious groups of their two countries. The Turkish delegation was headed by the head of the Bureau for Religious Affairs, Mehmet Görmez (*Xinhua* June 22).

June 22, 2011:

## Three priests in North Hebei “taken away” by authorities

*UCAN* reports in early August that the whereabouts of Frs. Cui Tai, Yan Zongzhi, and Zhang Jianlin, of the underground Diocese of Xuanhua, remain unknown since they were taken away by the authorities on June 22 (*UCAN* Aug. 4; see entry of July 23, 2011).

June 29, 2011:

## Episcopal consecration without papal approval in the Diocese of Leshan (Sichuan)

Bishop Fang Xingyao, Chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, consecrated Fr. Paul Lei Shiyin bishop. Bishops Fang Jianping of Tangshan, He Zeqing of Wanzhou, Li Jing of Ningxia, Li Shan of Beijing, Xiao Zejiang of Guizhou (Guiyang), and Zhao Fengchang of Liaocheng participated as co-consecrators. All seven consecrating bishops are recognized by Rome but, with the exception of Bishops Li Jing and Xiao Zejiang, it was not the first time that they had taken part in an illicit consecration.

Forty-eight year old Fr. Lei Shiyin had been elected bishop's candidate in a local election in March of 2010. According to *UCAN*, in the run-up to the ordination a “source close to the Vatican” had explained that the candidate has not been recognized by the Holy See and that he “canonically cannot be approved in future.” He himself knows the reason, as do many priests and bishops in circles close to him, the source said, adding that the leaders of the official Chinese Bishops' Conference were also aware of the seriousness of the case. Lei himself, in an interview with *UCAN*, said: “I don't believe, read or spread rumors. I don't fear speculation but do not wish to be speculated about.”



The consecration took place in the church Our Lady of the Rosary in Emeishan City. Photo: *UCAN*.

For many years now, Lei Shiyin has been a member of the Political Consultative Conference of the Chinese People. Since 2010 he is also the Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and Chairman of the Patriotic Association of Sichuan Province. The Diocese of Leshan has 70,000 Catholics.

The Diocese of Handan had originally scheduled an episcopal consecration for the same day but the consecration was anticipated and performed clandestinely on June 21 (see entry of June 21, 2011) (*Asianews* June 29; *UCAN* June 23, 28, and 29).

**June 29, 2011:**

## **Catholics in Hong Kong demonstrate for freedom of religion and against illicit episcopal consecrations in mainland China**

Following a Mass for the unity of the Church in China organized by the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Hong Kong and celebrated by the diocese's retired bishop, Cardinal Joseph Zen, Hong Kong Catholics went in procession to the liaison office of the Beijing central government. There, read from a prepared statement, they made the following demands of the Chinese government: respect for religious liberty; the release of all detained clergy; and the cessation of illegitimate episcopal consecrations. This was the first time that Cardinal Zen participated in such a protest march (*UCAN* June 30).

**June 30, 2011:**

## **Retired underground Bishop of Nanyang (Henan Province) installed as government-recognized bishop**

Ninety year old Bishop Joseph Zhu Baoyu, whose retirement had been accepted by the Pope last year, was installed during a Mass as the government-recognized Ordinary of the Diocese of Nanyang. According to Church sources, the Holy See did not know about Bishop Zhu's move or give him any instructions. *UCAN* reports that according to Church sources his decision also didn't get the backing of all members in his diocese, including Coadjutor Bishop Peter Jin Lugang and almost half the 21 diocesan priests. The sources believe that religious affairs officials persuaded Bishop Zhu to cooperate in this step and feared that this would split the diocese. Bishop Zhu, who has spent many years in prison or in work camps, was clandestinely consecrated bishop in 1995 with papal approval (*UCAN* June 30).

**July 1, 2011:**

## **China celebrates Communist Party's 90th anniversary**

In the run-up to the official state celebrations for the 90th anniversary of the foundation of the Chinese Communist Party, China's official religious bodies also marked the occasion by sponsoring events, most of which were in fact organized by the government's religious affairs departments (see *China heute* 2011, No. 3, pp. 140-142 [in German]).

July 1, 2011:

## New social insurance law goes into effect

China's new social insurance law makes insurance coverage obligatory for the following five categories: retirement, health, unemployment, work-related accidents, and maternity. Employers are required to pay premiums for all of them, no matter what the type of business activity or employment. The provision applies equally to state-owned as well as to foreign companies. Employees must also make a contribution towards the premiums but only for retirement, health, and unemployment insurance. The law affects not only city dwellers, but also extends to those living in the countryside and even to foreigners who are employed in China. Although local authorities may fix premiums differently according to the varying economic situations of their regions, it is now possible for employees to transfer premiums for retirement, health, and unemployment paid in one part of the country to other regions, which means that these premiums don't get lost in case of job changes to other provinces. In the case of work-related accidents workers' compensation covers the costs of medical treatment provided that these costs are not met by either the employer or by a third person who may have caused the accident (*China Briefing* March 13). *Jan Kwee*

July 4, 2011:

## Government announces easier registration of charity and social welfare NGOs

According to an article in the *Beijing Review*, the Minister for Civil Affairs, Li Ligu, has announced that new guidelines for NGOs will be issued. These will contain new and improved regulations with regard to donations, voluntary service, and the registration of NGOs. Provision is made that NGOs operating in the field of charitable social services will in future be able to register officially without being required to have the support of a government office, as has been the case until now. This relaxation of the rules does not, however, apply to other NGOs whose scope is, for example, in the realms of environmental protection, legal aid, etc. This will mean, according to *Asia Times Online*, that most of the already existing NGOs, of which about 3 million (or 90%) are not yet registered, will have to continue to work outside the framework of the law. The background to this planned change of the rules is a recently revealed corruption scandal, in which state supported relief organizations were involved, in particular the Chinese Red Cross. The scandal prompted a storm of public criticism. In addition, according to *Asia Times Online*, hundreds of millions of US\$ in funds from the UN, intended for the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria in China, were frozen due to insufficient participation by independent organizations in matters of public health (*Asia Times Online* Aug. 3; *Beijing Review* Aug. 4). *Jan Kwee*

July 4, 2011:

## Declaration by the Holy See on the episcopal consecration of Leshan

According to the Holy See's declaration: "Fr. Lei Shiyin, ordained without the papal mandate and hence illegitimately, has no authority to govern the diocesan Catholic community, and the Holy See does not recognize him as the bishop of the Diocese of Leshan. The effects of the sanction which he has incurred through violation of the norm of canon 1382 of the Code of Canon Law remain in place." A

July 12, 2011 comment of the Pontifical Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (see below) confirmed explicitly that this last sentence signifies that Lei Shiyin now finds himself in the state of automatic excommunication. The Holy See's declaration continued: "Fr. Lei Shiyin had for some time been informed that he was unacceptable to the Holy See as an episcopal candidate for proven and very grave reasons." The statement added that the consecrating bishops have also exposed themselves to the grave canonical sanctions laid down by the law of the Church (see text at: [http://press.catholica.va/news\\_services/bulletin/news/27798.php?index=27798&po\\_date=04.07.2011&lang=ge](http://press.catholica.va/news_services/bulletin/news/27798.php?index=27798&po_date=04.07.2011&lang=ge)).

July 7, 2011:

## Spokesman of Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and official Bishops' Conference regrets declaration by Holy See

The declaration of the Holy See of July 4 is regrettable and it does not further the unity of the Chinese Church but will lead to still more conflict and will impair the spread of the Gospel as well as the development of the Church, said a statement by Fr. Yang Yu, spokesman of the Patriotic Association of the Chinese Catholic Church and of the official Chinese Bishops' Conference. Fr. Yang added that Lei Shiyin is deeply appreciated by priests, sisters, and the faithful for his commitment to the Church, his faith, his piety, and his sincerity. He was elected on March 18, 2010 in accord with the Chinese Bishops' Conference's "Norms for the election and consecration of bishops" and was approved by the Conference following rigorous examination of all factors involved, Yang said. At present relations between China and the Vatican are not yet normalized, so there can be no objection to the Catholic Church of China electing and consecrating bishops to meet the urgent needs of evangelization and pastoral care in China, Yang stated (text of the statement at [www.catholicchurchinchina.org](http://www.catholicchurchinchina.org) July 9; see: *Asianews* July 11; *UCAN* July 11).

July 12, 2011:

## Statement of Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples on "Leshan case" confirms Fr. Lei Shiyin's excommunication and comments on status of consecrating bishops

Out of "pastoral concern" the Pontifical Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples has answered questions of the faithful in China regarding the declaration of the Holy See of July 4, 2011 (see above). Question 1: "Is Fr. Lei now in a state of *latae sententiae* excommunication?" The response is: "Yes!" He allowed himself to be consecrated without papal mandate, thereby incurring automatic excommunication, a fact which was subsequently made public by the Holy See in a declaration. The purpose of this penalty is to move Fr. Lei to turn immediately in repentance to the Holy See, and to move the Church in China to resist all illegitimate consecrations (2). Even in the case of the excommunication being lifted at a later date, Lei cannot be appointed bishop by the Holy See for proven and very grave reasons (6). As for the seven consecrating bishops, the imputability of their violation of Church law is presumed "unless it is otherwise apparent" (Canon 1321 §3). It is therefore presumed that they have incurred excommunication, unless the opposite is proven (7). This means that they may no longer exercise the functions of their office of bishop (8) and should immediately turn to the Holy See to ask for forgiveness and to give an explanation for the reasons why they acted as they did (9). – The document was published in Chinese and English on a newly launched blog of the Pontifical News Agency *Fides* ([catholicsinchina.blogspot.com](http://catholicsinchina.blogspot.com)) (see also the entries of June 29 and July 4, 2011).

July 12–22, 2011:

## “Summer camp” for seminarians from all over China held in Shijiazhuang



Taizé prayer during the Summer camp for seminarians.

Photo: *Xinde (Faith)* online.

The program included guided prayer times led by Brother Han-Yol (Taizé) and the Catholic composer Jerry Chu (Zhu) who lives in the USA; the study of different methods of Bible sharing; exchanges on music and evangelization and discussions with “model evangelists,” in addition to other activities. 83 major seminarians from all parts of China took part in the get-together at the Shijiazhuang major seminary under the leadership of Fr. Zhang Wenxi of the Faith Institute for Cultural Studies (Shijiazhuang). According to a report published on the website of *Xinde*, the participants especially appreciated the opportunity for sharing

with those from other regions of China. The Chairman of the Office for Evangelization of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences in Manila, Archbishop Thomas Menampampil, sent a word of greeting. According to one of the organizers, the summer camp was a response to requests of the Holy Father for whom the formation of Chinese priests is a cause very close to his heart (*Fides* Aug. 1; www.xinde.org Aug. 5).

July 12/13, 2011:

## Catholics in Hong Kong protest against planned illicit episcopal consecration in Shantou

On July 12, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Hong Kong protested in front of the liaison office of the Beijing central government against the impending episcopal consecration in Shantou (see entry of July 14, 2011) and against the pressure being exercised by authorities on those scheduled to act as consecrators. On July 13, Hong Kong Bishop John Tong called on Catholics to pray for their brothers and sisters on the mainland to have the strength to persevere in their faith. This message was distributed to all the parishes of Hong Kong. On the same day, Bishop Tong’s predecessor, Cardinal Zen, referring to himself as “Zen Ze-kiun, senior-citizen of Hong Kong,” published an urgent appeal in the *Apple Daily*, a popular Hong Kong newspaper: “Most Honorable Chairman Hu Jintao and dear Premier Wen Jiabao, please take the time to care about our Catholic Church. Take a good look at the rogue civil servants who violate the state Constitution, use violence to help the scum of the Church to force bishops, priests and laypeople to do things that go against their conscience. ... Please order them to stop at once!”

Shantou is located in Hong Kong’s neighboring Province of Guangdong and is a much loved pilgrimage destination for Hong Kong’s Catholics (*UCAN* July 12 and 13).



Banner of Hong Kong demonstrators claims cancellation of illegitimate consecration in Shantou. Photo: *UCAN*.



July 14, 2011:

## Episcopal consecration without papal mandate in Shantou (Guangdong) – eight Rome-acknowledged bishops pressured to participate

Fr. Joseph Huang Bingzhang was consecrated bishop in the Cathedral of Shantou by Bishop Fang Xingyao, Chairman of the Patriotic Association. The co-consecrators were the four bishops of Guangdong Province – Bishops Gan Junqiu of Guangzhou, Liang Jiansen of Jiangmen, Liao Hongqing of Meizhou, and Su Yongda of Zhanjiang – as well as the Bishops He Zeqing of Wanzhou, Shen Bin of Haimen, and Coadjutor Bishop Li Suguang of Nanchang. All eight bishops are recognized by both the Pope and by the government.

Three of the bishops from Guangdong had already been taken into custody by government officials between July 9–10. *Asianews* reported that Bishop Liang Jiansen was sobbing as he was taken away. Bishop Gan of Guangzhou had disappeared several days before. Two other bishops were probably also accompanied to the church by policemen, the *Sunday Examiner* reported. Less than half of the diocesan priests of Shantou were present for the consecration. Some had hidden themselves, but were found by the authorities and had to take part.

The authorities had originally planned to have Bishop Pei Junmin from Liaoning as principal consecrator, but this was prevented by the priests of his diocese. According to reports in *Asianews* and *UCAN*, on July 7 all of the priests of the Diocese of Liaoning, who happened to all be together at that time for a session of ongoing formation, declared that the bishop should not take part in the consecration, and signed a corresponding declaration. The bishop also declared in the presence of his priests that he would not participate. The priests then remained in the cathedral, surrounding the bishop in order to protect him from being seized by the authorities until the ceremony

in Shantou was over. According to details in *Asianews*, Bishop Cai Bingrui of Xiamen had also been foreseen as one of the participants in the consecration but he succeeded in going into hiding.

Born in 1967, Huang Bingzhang was ordained a priest in 1991. He is the Chairman of the Patriotic Association of the Province of Guangdong and one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Patriotic Association at the national level. Since 1998 he has been a deputy in the National People's Congress. On May 11, 2011, under considerable pressure from the authorities, he was elected bishop by an electoral college made up of representatives of the diocese (*Asianews* July 8, 11, 12, and 14; *Sunday Examiner* July 24; *UCAN* July 8 and 14).



The Shantou consecration, documented on the website of the State Administration for Religious Affairs.



Evening prayer on July 10, 2011 in Shenyang Cathedral. Photo: Website of Liaoning Diocese [www.lnjq.org](http://www.lnjq.org).

July 15–25, 2011:

## 5,000 Tibetan monks, nuns, and lay people attend prayer festival at Lithang Gonchen Monastery

As reported in the *Tibet Post International* from Dharamsala, participants came to the event from the approximately 100 monasteries belonging to the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and of the Yungdrung Bon from the (traditional) East Tibet. The Lithang County lies in the Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture of Kardze (Ganzi) in the Province of Sichuan. Chinese authorities initially intervened to try to limit the number of participants to 1,000, but eventually gave up the attempt, the newspaper said. According to the report, in the course of the ceremonies a portrait of the Dalai Lama was enthroned. In addition to discussions on religious issues, social and cultural themes were also on the agenda, among which was the need to foster the Tibetan language and the unity of the Tibetan people. There were no reports of clashes between the authorities and the participants ([www.thetibetpost.com](http://www.thetibetpost.com) July 28; *Radio Free Asia* according to *TibetInfoNet Tibet News Digest* July 16–29).



Enthronement of a Dalai Lama portrait during the prayer festival in Lithang.  
Photo: *The Tibet Post International* July 28.

July 16, 2011:

## Holy See announces excommunication of a second bishop consecrated without papal approval

In the declaration on the consecration at Shantou on July 14, the text is almost word for word the same as the declaration on the consecration at Leshan on July 4 (see above entry). “Huang Bingzhang, having been ordained without papal mandate and hence illicitly, has incurred the sanctions [i.e., automatic excommunication] laid down by canon 1382 of the Code of Canon Law.” Huang had been informed quite some time before that he could not obtain papal approval as bishop-candidate since the diocese already had a legitimate bishop [Bishop Zhuang Jianjian, not recognized by the government], the declaration said. With regard to the consecrating bishops, it was noted that the Holy See had learned that some of them had informed the authorities of their unwillingness to take part in illicit consecrations and that they had [unsuccessfully] offered “various forms of resistance.” This resistance “is meritorious before God and calls for appreciation on the part of the whole Church” (English text at: [http://press.catholic.va/news\\_services/bulletin/news/27820.php?index=27820&lang=en](http://press.catholic.va/news_services/bulletin/news/27820.php?index=27820&lang=en)).

*Asianews* reported that on the following Sunday, the pastors in Guangdong’s churches released the Holy See’s declaration from the pulpit and called for fidelity to the Holy Father; the congregations applauded (*Asianews* July 18).

July 18, 2011:

## Deadly attack in Hotan – was ban on black veils for Muslim women the trigger?

Official Chinese reports indicate that in the course of an attack on a police station in the City of Hotan in the Autonomous Uighur Region of Xinjiang, 18 people were killed, of whom 14 were from among the attackers. *Xinhua* reported that the attack had been carried out by terrorist groups. According to the Hong Kong newspaper *South China Morning Post*, one of the Uighur men involved in the attack is supposed to have several times shouted a slogan referring to the recent ban on veils for Muslim women. A spokesperson for the local government told the newspaper that the authorities in recent months had begun a campaign against the wearing of the black veil and black full length robes, and had ordered religious leaders to instruct the faithful accordingly. According to the government spokesman, this manner of dress had become popular among the Uighur women since the severe ethnic riots in Xinjiang in July of 2009.

According to official reports, in the riots of July 5, 2009 at least 197 people lost their lives, most of whom were Han Chinese. Since then, according to Amnesty International, several dozen people were condemned to death or executed. Hundreds were jailed and many were given long prison sentences. Leading up to the 2nd anniversary of the riots it is reported that 8,370 new surveillance cameras were installed in Urumqi, adding to the 47,000 already in place (*Amnesty international* July 4; *Die Presse* July 5; *South China Morning Post* July 22; *Xinhua* July 31; see *China heute* 2009, No. 3, pp. 141-145 [in German]).

July 22, 2011:

## Zhuo Xinping in *China Daily*: Sino-Vatican relations at lowest ebb since 1950s

Quoting Bishop Guo Jincai, Chairman of the Patriotic Association, the official newspaper *China Daily* reported that seven dioceses were preparing for the consecration of their elected candidates for the office of bishop. He didn't give a precise timetable for the events. "Guo was the first bishop [to be] appointed by the [Patriotic] Association without papal approval since 2006," wrote the paper, indirectly implying thereby the approval of the Holy See for those bishops consecrated in the previous years. Further, the paper quoted an assessment of Zhuo Xinping, director of the Institute for World Religions of the Academy of Social Sciences, of the statement of the Vatican following the episcopal consecration held at Shantou. According to Zhuo, there had already been other episcopal consecrations in China without papal consent, but the excommunication of a bishop was "rare." It seems that Sino-Vatican relations have fallen to their lowest level since the 1950s, he said (*China Daily* July 22; see article "Sino-Vatican Relations Reach a New Low" in this issue of *RCTC*).

July 22–25, 2011:

## China's largest Muslim-food trade fair opens in northwestern Province of Qinghai

According to local government reports in Qinghai, 3,000 entrepreneurs from around China and 28 other countries took part in the 5th "China (Qinghai) International Halal Foods and Products Fair." The Expo was sponsored by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade and by the

provincial governments of Qinghai, Gansu, Shaanxi, and Xinjiang. The Chinese Islamic Association was listed as one of the “supporting organizations.” The Expo’s website reported that the Chinese *halal* industry has an annual growth rate of 10% (*Xinhua* July 22.; www.halalfair.org).

July 23, 2011:

## Catastrophic train wreck at Wenzhou – Reports on Catholic and Buddhist reactions

As reported in the Chinese Catholic newspaper *Xinde (Faith)*, a Catholic, together with a small group of volunteers, helped in the recovery of victims at the site of the accident. Catholics from the Diocese of Wenzhou visited the injured in the hospitals and donated blood, said the report. With the agreement of the health authorities concerned, three specially trained nuns of the Catholic Jinde Charities social service organization (with experience in post-earthquake counseling) flew to Wenzhou to make themselves available to provide psychological support for the victims and their families. According to *UCAN*, the Coadjutor Bishop of Wenzhou, Shao Zhumin, head of the Catholic underground community, called on the faithful to pray and to offer material help.

In a July 29 report, the state news agency *Xinhua* said that Buddhist temples in Zhejiang, Shanghai, Hubei, and Hebei had organized prayer vigils for the victims and had recited Sutras “to free the souls of the dead from their suffering.”

40 people died and approximately 200 were injured in the collision between two high-speed trains. Within China the authorities were criticized and accused by public opinion of attempting to cover up the causes of the accident (*South China Morning Post* July 28 and 31; *taz* Aug. 1; *UCAN* July 25; *Xinde* Aug. 10; www.xinde.org July 24).

July 23, 2011:

## Fr. Chen Hailong (Diocese of Xuanhua) released from detention



Fr. Chen Hailong. Photo: *UCAN*.

imprisonment in solitary confinement. On April 13 the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Hong Kong called on the government in Zhangjiakou (North Hebei) to end the constant persecution of the Catholic underground Church in Hebei Province, where Xuanhua is located (*UCAN* Aug. 4; see entry of June 22, 2011 above; entries of April 8, 2011, and April 13, 2011, in: *RCTC* 2011, No. 1, pp. 13, 14, 15).

*UCAN*, relying on local sources, said that during his almost four month long detention in a government guesthouse interrogators repeatedly questioned Fr. Chen Hailong about the whereabouts of the more than 80 year old Bishop Thomas Zhao Kexun of Xuanhua, who is in hiding somewhere in the underground. They also tried to convince him to accept the principle of an independent Church (independent from Rome, that is) and to accept a “priest card” issued by the official Church. After having been arrested in Beijing in April of this year, he spent two of his four months’

July 25, 2011:

## Response of State Administration for Religious Affairs to statements of Holy See on consecrations of Leshan and Shantou

In the first official response of the Chinese government to declarations of the Holy See following the two episcopal consecrations of Leshan and Shantou it was stated that the Vatican's threat of "so-called 'excommunication'" for the bishops involved was "extremely unreasonable and rude" and had deeply hurt the Chinese Catholic Church. The Vatican had already threatened excommunication back in the 1950s, a step which prompted the Catholic Church of China to begin electing and consecrating its own bishops, the statement said. It demanded, the Vatican should rescind the excommunications and return to the path of genuine dialogue (see text of reply in *China heute* 2011, No. 3, p. 162 [in German]; *UCAN* July 25).

August 1, 2011:

## Catholic Jinde Charities now officially registered as charitable foundation

In the Catholic newspaper *Xinde (Faith)* the organization reported on its own behalf that on May 31, 2011 it had succeeded in registering as a foundation with the Office for Civil Affairs of Hebei Province. Henceforth, its official name is Hebei Jinde gongyi jijinhui (Hebei Jinde Charities Foundation). Originally registered in 2006 under the name Hebei Jinde gongyi shiye fuwu zhongxin (Hebei Jinde Charities Service Center), its popular name Jinde Charities will continue to be used in future. The transformation into a foundation on August 1 included establishment of a new donation account and a new official seal. Jinde's fund-raising director, Maria Hu Limin, explained to *UCAN* that the principal difference is that Jinde can now issue "standardized receipts to donors that are printed by the State's Financial Bureau." She said, as a next step, Jinde hopes to further raise its foundation status so as to be able to undertake public fund-raising (state regulations distinguish between "public fundraising foundations" *gongmu jijinhui* and "non-public fundraising foundations" *fei gongmu jijinhui*). The organization was founded in May 1997 under the name Beifang Jinde and received first government approval in August 1998. It was the first Catholic social-charitable organization in the People's Republic of China. Under the motto "Practicing charity – Witnessing Faith" Jinde works, according to its own description, in the following activities: emergency aid, development and social projects, education and ongoing education projects, scholarships or grants (also for clerical vocations), prevention of AIDS and human trafficking, as well as in care for the elderly (*UCAN* Aug. 9; *Xinde* Aug. 10; [www.jinde.org](http://www.jinde.org)).

August 1, 2011:

## Chinese Protestant periodical *Tianfeng* goes online

In a trial phase lasting until Sept. 30, the journal was available to be read online free of charge. As of Oct. 1, 2011 the periodical can be accessed by purchasing a subscription. The print edition will continue to appear as before. The online and print editions are identical. With this step, the media apostolate of the Protestant church in China has taken a major step forward, claimed an editorial in *Tianfeng*. *Tianfeng* is the official organ of the Protestant "Three Self Movement" and of the Chinese Christian Council. The online edition can be found at <http://tianfeng.ccctspm.org/tianfeng/>.

On Aug. 8, 2011 the Chinese language edition of the website for the Bible Ministry Exhibition of the official Protestant church in China also went online. Its English version had already gone online earlier (<http://china.bibleinchina.org>). The Bible Ministry Exhibition has been traveling around the world for several years now ([www.ccctspm.org](http://www.ccctspm.org) Aug. 1 and 8).

**August 8, 2011:**

## Following new disturbances, Xinjiang Communist Party head orders “harsh crackdown on religious extremists”

Local media reported that Party Secretary Zhang Chunxian ordered local officials to rely on the public to help them curb illegal religious activities and to crack down on the use of religion to incite violence or organize terrorist attacks. According to *Xinhua*, the Imams of Xinjiang were also called on to fight illegal religious activities. On August 16, the Xinjiang Public Security Department announced a tough campaign against “violent criminal activities” which was to last from August 11 to October 5.

According to official reports, on July 30 and 31 thirteen people were killed and 44 wounded in two violent attacks. Both times the attackers were presumed to be Uighurs. On Sept. 13, courts in Hotan and Kashgar condemned two persons to death in connection with the attacks and sentenced two others to 19 years in prison.

Commentators criticized Beijing for trying to solve ethnic tensions in Xinjiang by means of investments and economic development, without making any changes in its policies on education, language, and religion in the Uighur region (*South China Morning Post* Aug. 1; *Xinhua* July 31; Aug. 8; Sept. 14; *Zhongguo xinwen she* Aug. 16)

**August 9–21, 2011:**

## Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama visits Tibetan monasteries in Gansu Province

*Xinhua*, the state news agency, reported that in the course of his visits to five Tibetan monasteries the 21 year old Panchen Lama conducted religious rituals for more than 50,000 Tibetan Buddhists. The Labrang Monastery was among those he visited. During a seminar with religious representatives in Gannan, according to *Xinhua* he was impressed by the religious freedom evident in the region.

According to Western media reports, the visit of the government-appointed Panchen Lama met with resistance on the part of the monks of the Labrang Monastery. Fliers had supposedly been distributed in the monastery with the message that the Panchen Lama was not welcome there. Police security measures were reportedly tightened in advance of the visit, and visits by foreign tourists were forbidden for the duration (*AFP*, *VOA* according to *TibetInfoNet Tibet News Digest* July 30 – Aug. 12; *Xinhua* Aug. 22).

**August 10, 2011:**

## Party newspaper picks up on Irish Prime Minister’s indictment of Vatican

*People’s Daily Online* wrote that the Irish Prime Minister has accused the Vatican of interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state in connection with the child abuse scandal. The report explained

that the history of Europe has been a constant struggle against the power of the Church. According to the *People's Daily Online*, this is the historical burden of the West and its own problem, but China has the right to question the Vatican claim to be the sole authority for the appointment of priests (*sic*) in distant countries (*People's Daily Online* 10 Aug.).

**August 12–23, 2011:**

## **Pastoral care at Summer Universiade in southern Chinese City of Shenzhen**

For the more than 10,000 student athletes from around the world, there were prayer rooms available in the “Religious Service Center” of the Universiade Village. There was a room each provided for Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims as well as several that could be used in common by other religious groups. 107 members of staff, including 14 religious personnel from the four religions mentioned above, looked after the needs of the athletes. For Catholics, there were two priests and two sisters of the Diocese of Beijing. Catholic parishes in the city also increased the number of English-language Masses.

The bi-annual World Student Games are organized by the International University Sports Federation (*UCAN* Aug. 9; *Xinde* Aug. 20; *www.fisu.net* Aug. 17).

**August 15, 2011:**

## **Reports of another Tibetan monk setting himself on fire**

According to the Free Tibet Network in London, 29 year old monk Tsewang Norbu from Nyitso Monastery in Tawu doused himself with gasoline and set himself on fire, shouting “We Tibetans want freedom” and “Long live the Dalai Lama.” Without giving details, *Xinhua* reported the death of the monk on a bridge in Tawu (Chinese: Daofu) in the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi), Sichuan Province (*Radio Free Asia* Aug. 15; *TibetInfoNet Tibet News Digest* Aug. 13–26).

**August 16–21, 2011:**

## **Limited Chinese participation at World Youth Day in Madrid**

Madrid’s Catholic World Youth Day was attended by 800 delegates from Hong Kong, the largest group ever sent by the diocese to a World Youth Day. More than 550 young people came from Taiwan and at least 300 from Singapore. It was reported that also Catholics from both sides of the mainland Chinese Church were present, but that due to the problem of obtaining exit permits they were there only in small, informal groups (*UCAN* July 29; Aug. 2; *Vatican Radio* Aug. 17; private reports).

**August 18, 2011:**

## **United Front official: Over 75% of Chinese intellectuals are not members of Communist Party**

According to Chen Xiping, Vice Minister of the United Front Department of the Chinese Communist Party of China, around 90 million of the 120 million Chinese people with a university degree are not

party members. They are nevertheless an important part of the country's United Front, declared Chen at a seminar organized by the United Front Department and the Ministry of Education (*Xinhua* Aug. 18).

August 20/21, 2011:

## Underground leaders of Diocese of Tianshui (Gansu Province) detained



Fr. Wang Ruohan.  
Photo: UCAN.

Diocesan administrator Fr. Wang Ruohan, retired Bishop Msgr. Wang Milu, and Fr. Wang Ruowang (all blood brothers), several other priests, and about twenty parish lay leaders were reportedly detained for several days, interrogated and required to participate in “study sessions.” They were released on August 25. *Asianews* reported that until now the underground community of Tianshui had enjoyed a rather relaxed relationship with local authorities. It is presumed that the authorities now want to convince them to accept the official candidate for bishop.

Since the resignation of Bishop Wang Milu in 2003 and the death of the official Bishop Zhao Jinglong in 2004, the see has been vacant. On the official side, the administrator and official bishop's candidate is Fr. Zhao Jianzhang, a nephew of Bishop Zhao. The Tianshui Diocese with 20,000 Catholics has 27 priests, 15 of whom belong to the underground (*Asianews* Aug. 24 and 26; *UCAN* Aug. 23).

August 21, 2011:

## Tibetan Buddhism: First woman awarded title of Geshe

The Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in Dharamsala, India, has bestowed the title of Geshe on a Buddhist nun, Kelsang Wangmo, who is originally from Germany. The title of Geshe is the highest academic degree of Tibetan Buddhism. No woman has ever attained this title in the entire history of Tibetan Buddhism since nuns in Tibet traditionally did not pursue any kind of formal academic studies ([tibetconnections.org](http://tibetconnections.org) according to *TibetInfoNet Tibet News Digest* Aug. 13–26).

August 23, 2011:

## Taiwan: Religions pray for peace on anniversary of Jinmen bombing and centennial of the Republic

30,000 believers and religious leaders of Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant, Daoist, Yiguandao, Tiandijiao, and other religious groups in Taiwan prayed together for love and peace in Taiwan and around the world. Among the participants, reports listed Master Xingyun of the Buddhist Foguanshan Monastery, Cardinal Shan SJ, Archbishop Peter Liu Cheng-chung of Gaoxiong, and Taiwan's President Ma Yingjiu. The Buddha's Light International Association had invited them to the inter-religious prayer service for peace on the site of the Fo Guang Shan Buddha Memorial Center in Gaoxiong. The program included religious songs and dances of the various religious groups.





On August 23, 1958 troops of the People's Republic of China began a 44-day bombardment of the Jinmen (Kinmen, Quemoy) Island which lies just off the mainland coast but belongs to Taiwan (*UCAN* Aug. 25; [www.kwongwah.com.my](http://www.kwongwah.com.my) Aug. 24; [www.bltv.tv](http://www.bltv.tv)).

TV-screenshot during liturgical dance of Catholic participants.  
Photo: [www.bltv.tv](http://www.bltv.tv).

to August 23, 2011:

## Study trip brings leaders of official Catholic Church to Harbin

16 bishops, some priests, lay people, and one sister took part in the week-long tour organized jointly by the Communist Party's United Front Department and the State Administration for Religious Affairs. Most of the tour participants allegedly had taken part in the two episcopal ordinations of Leshan and Shantou, carried out without papal approval. At first, according to Chinese Church sources, the tour destination of Harbin triggered concerns that another illegitimate ordination was in the works. *Asianews* reported rumors that Fr. Yue Fusheng of the Diocese of Harbin is in line to be ordained bishop in the coming months but has no papal appointment. So far, the priests of the Diocese of Harbin oppose this consecration, according to *Asianews* (Aug. 18; *UCAN* Aug. 22).

August 25, 2011:

## Diocesan Administrator of Heze (Shandong) sentenced to three years in labor camp

48 year old Fr. Wang Chengli, Administrator of the underground Diocese of Heze, was arrested August 3 while in the house of a layman in Luquan (Dongming County). Arrested together with him, Frs. Zhao Wuji, Li Xianyang, and Sun Guicun were released on August 7 and 8 (Sun's release, however, was only temporary). *UCAN* sources suspected that the arrests were intended to either force the priests to join the Patriotic Association, or were connected with the episcopal consecration planned for the official part of the diocese. According to *Asianews*, on August 25 Fr. Wang Chengli was sentenced to three years of "reeducation through labor." *UCAN* reports that the Diocese of Heze has "a handful" of underground priests and four official priests. Their last bishop, Msgr. Wang Dianduo, died in 2004 (*Asianews* Aug. 6 and 26; *UCAN* Aug. 12).

August 25 and 28, 2011:

## Zhang Qingli, Party Secretary of Tibet Autonomous Region moves to Hebei Province

Zhang had been Party Secretary in Tibet since May 2006. The riots in Tibet in the spring of 2008 and the crackdown suppressing them occurred during his tenure there. On August 28 his appointment

as party secretary of Hebei Province was announced. The news agency *Reuters* speculated about the background and consequences of his move from “heavily Buddhist Tibet” to “heavily Catholic Hebei.” About a quarter of China’s 8–12 million Catholics live in Hebei, with a strong proportion of underground communities. Of the province’s 70 million inhabitants, Catholics form a minority of only about 4% of the population. Zhang Qingli’s successor in Tibet, Chen Quanguo, had been Governor of Hebei Province until 2011 (*Reuters* Aug. 29; *Xinhua* Aug. 25 and 28).

**August 29–30, 2011:**

### Three monks of Kirti Monastery sentenced to long prison terms due to self-immolation of fellow monk

According to *Xinhua*, in the case of the monk Phuntsok Rigzin, who had set fire to himself on March 16, 2011 – apparently in protest against the Chinese government –, on August 29 the county court at Maerkang (Barkham) sentenced another monk of Kirti Monastery to 11 years in prison for the murder of Rigzin Phuntsog. Drongdru (Lobsang Tsondru) was the dead monk’s uncle and teacher. The reason given for his conviction was that he had prevented emergency treatment by hiding his nephew who later died of his burns. On August 30, two other monks, Tenzin Tsering and Tenchum, were sentenced to 13 and 10 years in prison, charged with having planned, instigated, and assisted in the self-immolation of their fellow monk, Rigzin Phuntsog. Both had pleaded guilty in court and had shown remorse. According to *Xinhua*, some Tibetan monks welcomed the verdict, because they felt that the convicted monks had acted “against dharma and against the law.”

According to the TCHRD, two other monks of Kirti Monastery, Lobsang Gyatso and Lobsang Khedup (arrested in May 2011), were sentenced in July 2011 to three years in prison, but the indictment against them was not known. In late July, *Phayul* reported the conviction of another of the monastery’s monks to three years in prison. State officials and police are continuing their “siege” of the monastery, the report said (*English.news.cn* Aug. 31; *TibetInfoNet Tibet News Digest* Aug. 2–15; 16–29; Aug. 27 – Sept. 9; see entries of March 16, 2011, and April 21/22, 2011, in: *RCTC* 2011, No. 1, pp. 11 and 17).

**August 30 to September 10, 2011:**

### Anglican church leaders from Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia visit China

The 11 Primates of the Global South of the Anglican Communion accepted an invitation from Wang Zuo’an, Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), who had visited Anglican provinces in Africa in May 2011.

Anglican Archbishop John Dew of Singapore led the delegation. In a written statement at the end of their trip, the church leaders said that they were impressed by the growth and activities of the Church in China, by the Amity Printing Press, which prints many Bibles for Africa, and by the Amity Foundation. “We are also excited by the invitation by the Church in China, with the support and encouragement of SARA, to develop a long-term relationship with the Global South of the Anglican Communion,” the statement said. According to the church leaders, the majority of Anglicans no longer find themselves in the West, but in the churches of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. They were deeply saddened, the Primates said in their statement, by the erosion of orthodoxy in many Anglican churches of the West, which extended even to the ordination of actively homosexual priests and bishops.

On September 2, the delegation visited the offices of the Patriotic Association and the official Conference of Bishops of the Chinese Catholic Church and met the Chairman of the latter, Bishop Ma Yinglin.

An unnamed Anglican source in Hong Kong told *UCAN* that the Anglican Church in Hong Kong had nothing to do with the delegation (*UCAN* Sept. 7; [www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn) Aug. 31; text of the statement at [www.globalsouthanglican.org](http://www.globalsouthanglican.org) Sept. 14).

August 31, 2011:

## Muslims celebrate end of Ramadan – Restrictions on fasting in Xinjiang

Millions of Muslims in China celebrated the festival of the “Breaking of the Fast”, the state news agency *Xinhua* reported. The government of Xinjiang had declared August 31 a public holiday to give the faithful time for worship and celebration, said the report. Tens of thousands of Muslims attended the morning worship services in Urumqi and there were no incidents, according to the city’s party secretary. *Xinhua* reported that Pakistan’s President Asif Ali Zardari, who had come to the opening of the China-Eurasia Expo, prayed on the feast day in a makeshift mosque at a hotel in Urumqi.

In contrast the *Los Angeles Times* reported, that government policy towards Ramadan in Xinjiang has gotten stricter every year since 1993. According to the newspaper, ordinary people could pray and fast, but those who go to school, study, or work for the government are not allowed to live religiously. The report said that during Ramadan teachers in Kashgar accompanied their students to the canteen for lunch to make sure that they did not fast and restaurants had been forbidden to close during the day throughout Ramadan. In the opinion of Dru Gladney from Pomona College in California, the actions of the Xinjiang authorities against religion are counterproductive. According to him the result is that more and more people come to see religion as a form of resistance rather than of personal piety (*Los Angeles Times* Sept. 11; *Xinhua* Aug. 31).

August 31, 2011:

## House church leader Zhang Rongliang released early from prison

The China Aid Association reports that Zhang Rongliang was released early, nine months before the end of his prison sentence. According to the U.S. based organization, Zhang was arrested in 2004 and convicted in July 2006 to seven and a half years in prison for “passport acquisition by fraud” and “illegal border crossing.” Zhang Rongliang is the leader of the Protestant Fangcheng house-church movement in Henan and the house-church network “China for Christ,” which has, according to China Aid, an estimated 10 million members ([www.chinaaid.org](http://www.chinaaid.org) Sept. 15).

August 31, 2011:

## Catholic Church resists introduction of “moral and national education” in Hong Kong schools

The Catholic Education Office of the Diocese of Hong Kong took a negative stance on a paper submitted for public consultation by the Hong Kong government Bureau of Education on May 13, 2011 as an introduction to a new compulsory school subject called “moral and national education.” The diocese issued its statement on the last day of the consultation period, saying that the plan was a step backwards and that the goal of “quality citizenship” seems to involve blind and absolute support of the state. In its written statement the diocese declares that in the eyes of the Catholic Church respect for

human dignity, striving for a meaningful life, holiness, and transcendence are more fundamental values than patriotism. According to *UCAN*, the Catholic Education Office also fears that the new subject would necessarily involve a reduction in time available for religious instruction. 111 of the 572 primary schools and 87 of the 533 secondary schools in Hong Kong are Catholic schools.

The proposed school subject is also debated by the public in Hong Kong. The *South China Morning Post* reports that many are asking themselves whether Beijing-style propaganda is now going to be introduced into Hong Kong's school system (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Sept. 9; *South China Morning Post* Sept. 5; *UCAN* Sept. 21).

### September 2011:

## Dispute between bishops and authorities over dismissal of rector causes delay in opening of classes at major seminary in Taiyuan

45 year old Fr. Chang Tongxi, Rector of the Montecorvino Seminary in Taiyuan since 2009, was relieved of his post on June 18 by the seminary's Board of Directors. The meeting was attended by the Chairman, Bishop Huo Cheng of Fenyang, two other bishops, and two diocesan administrators. The reason for the dismissal is allegedly the embezzlement of seminary funds as well as problems in Chang's personal behavior. *Asianews* reported that Chang appealed to the provincial Bureau for Religious Affairs, which in August called for his reinstatement as rector and threatened otherwise to close the seminary for an indefinite period. According to *UCAN*, the authorities argue that the seminary board had acted without official permission and had violated the Regulations on Religious Affairs. Church sources told *UCAN* that government interference had only complicated the situation and explained that the question of seminary leadership is a purely internal Church matter. The new academic year should have begun in early September. The Montecorvino Seminary opened in 1985 and is responsible for the training of priests for the dioceses of Shanxi Province. It currently has about 70 seminarians (*Asianews* Sept. 19; *UCAN* Sept. 15).



The Montecorvino Seminary.  
Photo: *UCAN*.

### September 6–10, 2011:

## State Administration for Religious Affairs conducts ongoing education at local level for Protestant church leadership committees

150 participants from all over China came to Beijing for the "Second Training Course for Christian Patriots in 2011." It is said to have covered "hot topics" such as the party guidelines for religious work and the enhancement of legal awareness in religious circles. As topics explicitly mentioned in the announcement of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) are state regulations regarding the reporting of religious personnel for the record and the monitoring of the finances of sites for religious activities ([www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn) Sept. 7). – SARA also regularly conducts similar training sessions for religious personnel of the other recognized religions.

September 12, 2011:

## ***Xinhua*: Government spends 990 million Yuan on reconstruction of 87 Tibetan monasteries in Yushu**

63 percent of the 87 monasteries destroyed by an earthquake in the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Yushu (Qinghai Province) have now been restored, according to the state news agency *Xinhua*. The ruins of the almost totally destroyed Trangu Monastery will be preserved as a memorial, and a new monastery is being built nearby, said the article. 23 monks of the Trangu Monastery died in the quake on April 13, 2010, which killed a total of 2,700 people.

September 13–15, 2011:

## **9th National Assembly of Representatives of Islam in China convenes in Beijing**



354 representatives of various Muslim nationalities came to the meeting. Representatives of the Party and regime, including the Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), Wang Zu'án, took part in the opening session. As spokesman for the delegates of the other four religions, Bishop Ma Yinglin, newly elected chairman of the government-recognized Catholic Bishops' Conference, offered a word of greeting to the assembly. According to the official website of the Islamic Association of China (IAC), the assembly approved (as usual) a report on the work of the past 5 years and a revision of the association's statutes. It also adopted a logo for the association and elected a new leadership team. Grand Imam Chen Guangyuan was re-elected as Chairman of the IAC, and Guo Chengzhen, who is also secretary-general, was among the 18 vice chairmen elected. He said in his closing address, among other things, that the new leadership would give unwavering support to the Party and the government in the carrying out of religious work, would promote Islam's adaptation to socialism, further deepen the work of exegesis of the Koran, and would strengthen the Hajj organization ([www.chinaislam.net.cn](http://www.chinaislam.net.cn) Sept. 13 and 15).

The delegates follow the addresses of the leaders (above) and take a vote (center). The old and new Chairman of the Chinese Islamic Association, Grand Imam Chen Guangyuan, during his opening address (below). Photos: [www.chinaislam.net](http://www.chinaislam.net) and [www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn).

September 14, 2011:

## **ENI reports on involvement of Chinese companies in church construction in Africa**

Chinese construction companies, which are very influential across Africa in road and bridge construction, have in recent years also won a growing number of bids for church buildings. In a recent report,

*Ecumenical News International (ENI)* gave the example of Kenya. According to *ENI*, the firm China Zhongxing Construction Ltd. is building a new office complex for the Catholic Archdiocese of Nairobi, on whose behalf it has already built residential quarters for diocesan employees. The company has also built a church for the Faith Evangelistic Ministries, a Pentecostal group in Kenya. Another construction company, China Fushun (Fubeco Ltd.), built new headquarters for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya and is currently building a Catholic church in Kiambu, near Nairobi. Church representatives told *ENI* that the Chinese construction companies are reliable and fast, and that their prices are lower than those of other companies.

September 16, 2011:

## Secretaries general of official bodies of “five major religions” reject U.S. criticism regarding religious freedom in China

According to the secretaries general, the criticism of China published by the U.S. Department of State on September 13 in the “July–December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report” was unjustified. The United States should stop using religion as an opportunity to interfere in China’s internal affairs, the religious leaders said at a joint meeting in Beijing. In a similar statement issued in May 2011, they had also rejected the annual report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (*Xinhua* Sept. 16; [www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/)).

September 24, 2011:

## Statement of Dalai Lama on issue of his reincarnation

In a nearly 4,000-word statement, the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, wrote that as long as he was physically and mentally fit, he wanted to lay down clear guidelines for the recognition of the next Dalai Lama so that there will be no room for doubt or deception. The main part of the Dalai Lama’s statement contains an explanation of the Tulku system and methods for the recognition of reincarnations in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. In his concluding remarks, the Dalai Lama said that, since a reincarnation takes place either due to voluntary choice of the person concerned, or at least because of his karma and prayers, the one who reincarnates is the only legitimate authority on where or how he will be reborn, no one else can tamper with this. When he nears the age of 90, he said, he will consult the high Lamas of Tibetan Buddhism, the Tibetan public, and others who follow Tibetan Buddhism as to whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not. If it is decided to continue with it, the responsibility for the recognition of the next Dalai Lama will lie primarily with the relevant officials of the Dalai Lama’s Gaden Phodrang Trust. He [the Dalai Lama] will leave clear written instructions for this event. He concludes that apart from the reincarnation recognized by these legitimate methods, no other candidate is to be recognized who is chosen by anyone else such as, for example, a candidate in the People’s Republic of China, chosen for political reasons ([www.dalailama.com/messages/tibet/reincarnation-statement](http://www.dalailama.com/messages/tibet/reincarnation-statement)).

September 26, 2011:

## Government spokesman responds to statement of Dalai Lama

The title of the Dalai Lama must be conferred by the Chinese central government or it is not legal, said Hong Lei, spokesman for China’s Foreign Ministry in a press conference. “The 14th Dalai Lama himself

was conferred the title by the government of the Republic of China. There has never been a case of a previous Dalai determining the next Dalai,” said Hong Lei. He added that the Chinese government has already adopted administrative measures to deal with the reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism. China’s policy of freedom of religious belief naturally includes, said Hong Lei, respect for this particular form of choice of successors. Nevertheless, all reincarnations of Living Buddhas, the Dalai Lama included, must respect religious rules, historical standards, and state laws (quoted according to *South China Morning Post* Sept. 27).

**September 26, 2011:**

## **Two more Tibetan monks from Kirti Monastery set themselves on fire**

According to the Free Tibet Campaign in London, the two monks, Lobsang Kalsang and Lobsang Konchok, both 18 or 19 years old, called for religious freedom and shouted “Long live the Dalai Lama,” before setting themselves on fire. The *Xinhua* news agency reported that they were rescued by the police and given emergency medical attention. According to the Free Tibet Campaign, one of the monks was a brother of Rigzin Phuntsog, the monk of Kirti Monastery who had burned himself in protest on March 16. Three other Kirti monks, including an uncle of the two brothers, were sentenced to long prison sentences on August 29 and 30 (see above) in connection with Rigzin Phuntsog’s death. Kirti Monastery, with about 2,500 monks, is located in the Ngawa (Aba) Prefecture of Sichuan Province. Since Phuntsog set himself on fire in March the monastery has been under intense pressure from the authorities. A Tibetan monk from another monastery in the Tawu County died by self-immolation on August 15 (see above) (*The Guardian* 26 Sept.; *Xinhua* 26 Sept.; [www.freetibet.org](http://www.freetibet.org) 26 Sept.; see also: *RCTC* 2011, No. 1, pp. 11 and 17).

**September 28, 2011:**

## **Wang Zuo’an: China wants to improve relations with Vatican based on the “Two Principles”**

Starting from the “Two Principles,” China wants to conduct a sincere dialogue with the Vatican, working together to find solutions to the bilateral issues, the Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs said at a press conference in Washington, where he opened the “Bible Ministry Exhibition of the Protestant Church in China.” The two principles [frequently repeated by the Chinese side] are that: 1) the Vatican must sever its diplomatic relations with Taiwan; and 2) the Vatican must not interfere in China’s internal affairs under the pretext of religious affairs (according to [www.china.com.cn](http://www.china.com.cn) Sept. 29).

*Collaboration: Jan Kwee (items indicated)*

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