

## News Update on Religion and Church in China October 16 – December 7, 2022

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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” (RCTC 2022, No. 4, pp. 3-20) covered the period June 21 – September 29, 2022.*

### Politics

October 16–22 / 23, 2022:

#### 20th Chinese Communist Party Congress and third term for Xi Jinping

At the party congress, which ended on October 22, a new central committee was elected. As expected, on October 23, the latter re-elected Xi Jinping as Secretary General of the CCP, which means that, unlike his predecessors, he holds a third term in office and, due to a constitutional change, can also be elected President of the People’s Republic of China for a third time in March 2023. The seven newly elected members of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, the most powerful decision-making body of the CCP, are all considered ideological loyalists or longtime confidants of Xi, who has thus further strengthened his position in the party (cf. among others *MERICCS Europe China 360°* Nov. 10; *taz* Oct. 23; *Xinhua* Oct. 23).

The various sectors of Chinese society (including religions) were called upon months in advance to support the “victorious” holding of the congress; see also the entry of October 16–22, 2022 in the “Religious Policy” section. *kwt*

December 7, 2022:

#### China is effectively ending its zero-Covid policy

The Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism of the State Council published a circular on December 7 in which most of the strict corona prevention measures were lifted: the previous obligation to submit negative PCR tests in all situations is largely eliminated, nationwide lockdowns are no longer possible, infected people with mild symptoms no longer have to be in quarantine centers, people are given back

the freedom to move and travel, etc. At the time of writing (December 8, 2022) it was not yet clear what the new corona policy means for the practice of religion. During the various lockdowns, religious sites often had to remain closed much longer than other facilities open to the public.

The radical U-turn in the Chinese leadership's corona policy was preceded by nationwide protests against the zero-Covid policy. The protests were triggered by a fire in a high-rise building in Urumqi, in which, according to the authorities, 10 people died on November 24. According to various reports it is possible that significantly more people died; chat news suggest that some victims were locked in their apartments due to the lockdown (*Bitter Winter* Nov. 29; *China Daily* Dec. 7; *China. Table* Dec. 8). *kwt*

## Religious Policy

October 16–22, 2022:

### The 20th Chinese Communist Party Congress and religions – 4 Catholic bishops among those invited to the opening

At the opening of the congress, personalities from outside the party were also invited as guests, including ten (nine in a photo at *Xinde*) religious leaders. It was very noticeable that four of them were Catholic bishops – the former and the newly elected chairmen of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Bishops' Conference, Bishops Fang Xingyao, Ma Yinglin, Li Shan and Shen Bin. Also invited were Yang Faming and Adilijiang, president and vice president of the Chinese Islamic Association; Master Yanjue, president of the Chinese Buddhist Association; Li Guangfu, president of the Chinese Daoist Association; and Xu Xiaohong, chairman of the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China. In his speech on the opening day of the congress, Xi Jinping reiterated two core mottos of religious policy, namely, “adhere to the orientation of religions toward Sinicization” and “actively guide religions to adapt to socialist society” (*xinde.org* Oct. 16).

The websites of the official governing bodies of religions showed numerous reports of how local bodies and religious representatives across China collectively watched the televised broadcast of Xi's October 16 speech and held sessions to study the “spirit” of the party congress in the following weeks. *kwt*

## Protestant Churches

November 2022:

### Judicial actions against house churches

Furthermore, local authorities take precedence over house church activities. The tendency to criminally charge and convict them of corruption and white-collar crime seems to be increasing. This is the view held, among others, by Duihua Foundation, based in the US (cf. <https://duihua.org/prisoner-updates-2022-7-part-ii/>).

As reported, the Linfen Covenant Church was hit by arrests, confiscations and criminal charges in August and September (see *China heute* 2022, No. 3, p. 160 [in German]). Other people were arrested in November. A dissolution of the church was announced on November 20 on the website of Yaodu County, Shanxi Province (<https://msguancha.com/a/lanmu4/2022/1120/22382.html>).

Church leaders An Yankui and Zhang Chenghao, arrested in November 2021 for “illegally crossing the border” and attending a Christian conference in Malaysia (cf. *RCTC* 2022, No. 1, p. 9; No. 2, p. 10), who were also accused of having close ties to Pastor Wang Yi's anti-government Early Rainbow Covenant

Church, were sentenced to one year in prison on November 3, 2022, after 11 months in prison. Their release is expected soon (*Bitter Winter* Nov. 15).

Long prison sentences have been imposed on those who distribute Bibles without a license. In October, the court in Lingbao, Sanmenxia City, in Henan, on appeal, upheld a prison sentence of five years and six months imposed on Pastor Yang Jianxin 楊建新 in the summer of 2021 for illegal trade. Bookseller Chen Yu from Zhejiang Province is currently serving seven years in prison (cf. *RCTC* 2022, No. 2, p. 10). Preacher Chen Lijun 陳利軍 was taken into police custody in Luanchuan County, Henan Province on August 13 and has been officially detained since August 27. His wife Li Xiaoyan made an urgent appeal to other house churches for support. Chen Lijun is accused of illegal online trading in Christian books, the charge is fraud (詐騙罪) (*Bitter Winter* Nov. 4; [www.blogspot.com/2022/11/2022113086-1459\\_30.html](http://www.blogspot.com/2022/11/2022113086-1459_30.html)).

There are also reports of arrests and criminal proceedings as a result of preaching and evangelism by members of house churches in other provinces. For example, Qin Sifeng and Su Minjun, two missionaries from the Beijing Lampstand Christian Church, were arrested in Zibo, Shandong, in July while they were on their way to Yunnan. They were accused of conducting illegal business because they distributed a self-printed hymnal to Christian groups without authorization (*Bitter Winter* Nov. 11).

*Isabel Friemann, China Infostelle*

## November 23–27, 2022:

### “China Time” in Hamburg

From 23 to 27 November, in dialogue with the partner city Shanghai and other Chinese entities, the city of Hamburg organized the first China Time since 2018. A program under this name had already taken place seven times before over a longer period of time and with several events, usually at intervals of two years. The thematic focus this time was global climate change. A symposium was held at the City Hall to discuss EU-China cooperation in the field of environmental protection, as well as a series of dialogues focused on “global climate change.”

A bilingual German-Chinese service in the main church of St. Catherine was accompanied by a Chinese choir and instrumental music. Senior Pastor Dr. Murmann and theologian Lu Yifan led the liturgy, Pastor Dr. Liu Ruomin and Isabel Friemann held the dialogue sermon. The exhibition “Clear water, calm sea” opened with works by ten Chinese and Hamburg artists who examine the relationship between humans and nature against the background of the global climate crisis. The exhibition was on display in the church until December 11 (<https://chinatime.hamburg.de>).

*Isabel Friemann, China Infostelle*

## Late November / Early December 2022:

### Nanjing Union Theological seminary celebrates 70 years of existence

In late November and early December, the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (NJUTS) celebrated its 70th anniversary with a series of events. The prelude was a thanksgiving service in which the history of the seminary was described as a path of grace: the task of theological education is to honor God and serve the people. Representatives of the provincial government of Jiangsu, the city of Nanjing, the national CCC & TSPM bodies as well as former alumni, board members and students were invited to the five-part celebration both in person and online. In addition to the service, there was an academic

ceremony, workshops, a communion service and an exchange among the alumni. Amity Printing Co. printed a special 70th Anniversary Bible and presented it at the gala.

In a letter to friends and partners abroad, NJUTS President Rev. Dr. Gao Feng and Vice President Rev. Dr. Chen Yilu pointed out the tremendous development of the national seminary over the past five years. There are now 500 full-time students enrolled. In 2020, the first group of doctoral students received a certificate from NJUTS. There are currently 20 doctoral students, seven of them in systematics, three in the New Testament, two in Christian ethics and eight in a doctoral program of ministry. The letter expresses regret that the pandemic has prevented participation in on-campus events and hopes that the joy of the event will be shared in prayer and that the partnership in theological education will continue ([www.ccctspm.org/newsinfo/15887](http://www.ccctspm.org/newsinfo/15887); [www.njuts.cn/wen.asp?id=1392](http://www.njuts.cn/wen.asp?id=1392)).

*Isabel Friemann, China infostelle*

## Catholic Church

**November 8, 2022:**

### Meeting of official Catholic governing bodies approves “Regulations for Bishops’ Work,” plan for nationwide book of hymns and prayers

Nothing is known about the content of the “Regulations for the Bishop’s Work of Chinese Catholicism” (中国天主教主教工作条例). The published report merely states that these regulations would result in there being a statutory basis for the “administration of the bishops’ team.” It said that the new regulations would serve to implement the “comprehensive and strict governance of religions” (a new motto put forward by Xi Jinping at the National Conference on Religious Work on December 4, 2021) and would certainly promote the healthy transmission of Chinese Catholicism. The document was approved by the “Joint Assembly of Responsibles” and the “Standing Committees” of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Bishops’ Conference in an online meeting. At the same meeting, a draft work plan for the publication of a unified “Prayer Book” (祈祷本), “Hymn Book” (圣歌本), “Responsorial Psalter” (答唱咏) and “Prayers of the Believers” (信友祷词) was discussed, all for national use ([www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/22110282-1.htm](http://www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/22110282-1.htm)). *kwt*

**November 12 / December 4, 2022:**

### 10 Years of “Marriage Encounter” in the Diocese of Wenzhou – 17 Years of “Basic Community of Yongnian Catholics” in Shanghai

On November 12, 230 people attended the anniversary celebration of the diocesan “Marriage Encounter” (夫妇恳谈会), including priests, Sisters and married couples from all parishes of Wenzhou Diocese. Greetings were given by the “responsible person for the diocese” Father Ma Xianshi (the bishop of Wenzhou appointed by the Pope, Shao Zhumin, is not recognized by the State) as well as a priest and a couple from the presidium of the Chinese Marriage Encounter. The first spiritual directors of the Wenzhou group and several couples reported on their experiences ([xinde.org](http://xinde.org) Nov. 14). The idea of “Marriage Encounter” seminars, in which priests are always involved, originated in Spain in the 1950s and has spread worldwide.

In Shanghai, on December 4, the “Basic Community of Yongnian Catholics” (永年教友基基团) celebrated its 17th anniversary. Many Catholics from Yongnian, which is officially part of the Diocese of Handan in the Catholic-rich province of Hebei (and also continues to exist as an underground diocese

in its own right), work and live in Shanghai. Three priests – two from Shanghai Diocese and Zhu Xile from Handan Diocese – presided over the anniversary service, which was attended by 60 believers. Fr. Chen Zengqi of the Shanghai Diocese then gave a meditation on “Faith in the Pandemic.” Catholic Joseph Li, the head of the Basic Community, expressed his gratitude that the “little celebration” was possible at this special time with recurring Covid outbreaks (xinde.org Dec. 5).

These two examples show that activities of Church groups (at least in the official part of the Church) continue, even if less and less information is available about them. *kwt*

**November 24, 2022:**

## “Underground” Bishop of Yujiang is officially installed as “Auxiliary Bishop of Jiangxi Diocese”

According to the report on the official Catholic governing bodies’ website, Peng Weizhao 彭卫照 in Nanchang has been installed as Auxiliary Bishop of Jiangxi with the consent of the Catholic Commission for Ecclesiastical Affairs of the Province of Jiangxi and approbation by the Chinese Bishops’ Conference (not recognized by Rome). The ceremony was presided over by Bishop Li Suguang 李稣光. According to the report, Auxiliary Bishop Peng swore the following oath: “I will keep God’s commandments, diligently exercise the pastoral ministry of Auxiliary Bishop, faithfully preach the gospel and lead the laity and clergy of the Diocese of Jiangxi to uphold the constitution and laws of the country, to preserve the unity of the country and the harmony of society, to love the country and the Church, to uphold the principle of the independence, autonomy and self-government of the Church, to uphold the orientation of our country’s Church toward Sinicization, and to actively guide Catholicism to adapt to socialist society in order to contribute to the realization of the “Chinese dream of a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/22110464-1.htm).

According to the Vatican hierarchy, Jiangxi Province has five dioceses, namely the Archdiocese of Nanchang and four suffragan bishoprics, including the Diocese of Yujiang. These five were merged in 1985 by the official Church and the authorities without consultation with Rome to form the “Jiangxi Diocese.” Bishop Li Suguang, who was consecrated in 2010 with papal and official approval, is Archbishop of Nanchang from the Vatican point of view, and “Bishop of Jiangxi” from the official Chinese point of view. Bishop Peng Weizhao, who is now 56, studied at the National Seminary in Beijing. He was secretly ordained Bishop of Yujiang on April 10, 2014 with a papal appointment, succeeding the aged “Underground” Bishop Zeng Jingmu 曾景牧 (1919–2016). It was probably for this reason that he was imprisoned for almost six months soon after. He was released on November 14, 2014, but was not allowed to exercise his office as bishop.

Traditionally, there has been a strong Underground Catholic community in Jiangxi Province. As *AsiaNews* reported, more than two years ago the authorities put Bishop Peng and the clergy of the Yujiang Diocese under massive pressure to join the official Church, which they refused to do at the time. On September 22, 2022, according to *AsiaNews*, Bishop Peng announced to his priests that he was stepping down as head of the Yujiang Diocese, which was a precondition for his new post; on October 11, he attended in the ceremony of laying the foundation stone for the new bishop’s house of the official Diocese of Jiangxi in Nanchang. According to *AsiaNews*, Yujiang Diocese priests, who continue to resist pressure to register with the official Church bodies, have expressed disappointment with Bishop Peng’s decision. In a communiqué, the Vatican assessed Msgr. Peng’s installation as a violation of the spirit and substance of the Provisional Sino-Vatican Agreement on the Appointment of Bishops (see entry of November 26, 2022 in the section “Sino-Vatican Relations”) (*AsiaNews* July 8, 2020; Nov. 24, 26, 2022; *UCAN* June 9, Nov. 19, 2014).

For more information on the case of Bishop Peng, the reaction of the Holy See and the extension of the provisional Sino-Vatican agreement see *China heute* 2022, No. 4, pp. 280-210 (in German). *kwt*

## Sino-Vatican Relations

October 22, 2022:

### Holy See announces renewal of Provisional Sino-Vatican Agreement on the Appointments of Bishops

On the day that the agreement, signed on September 22, 2018 and first extended on October 22, 2020 would have expired, the Holy See announced that both sides had agreed to extend the “validity” (Italian: *validità*) of the agreement for another two years (which implies that no change appears to have been made to the content of the agreement, which remains classified). The Holy See’s communiqué further declared that the “Vatican Party is committed to continuing a respectful and constructive dialogue with the Chinese Party” (<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/10/22/0788/01620.html>).

October 22 was the last day of the 20th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. On October 23 Xi Jinping was re-elected General Secretary of the CCP (see above). Observers suspected that the extension had already been agreed upon at the meeting of the delegations from both sides in Tianjin at the end of August / beginning of September this year (see *RCTC* 2022, No. 4, pp. 13-14). The Vatican accompanied the announcement of the agreement’s extension by publishing interviews with Curial Cardinals Pietro Parolin and Luis Antonio Tagle (see [www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2022-10/cardinal-pietro-parolin-interview-provisional-agreement-china.html](http://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2022-10/cardinal-pietro-parolin-interview-provisional-agreement-china.html) and [www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2022-10/tagle-why-holy-see-is-renewing-the-provisional-agreement.html](http://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2022-10/tagle-why-holy-see-is-renewing-the-provisional-agreement.html)). *kwt*

October 24, 2022:

### Chinese foreign ministry spokesman confirms extension of Sino-Vatican provisional agreement

Two days after the publication of the communiqué by the Vatican Press Office, the Chinese side confirmed the extension during the regular press conference held by its Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin. He spoke of “friendly consultations” and stated that both sides would continue to maintain close communication and “work for the sound implementation of the provisional agreement” (see [http://us.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/fyrth/202210/t20221024\\_10791171.htm](http://us.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/fyrth/202210/t20221024_10791171.htm)). *kwt*

November 15, 2022:

### Vatican official comments on China

A Vatican official, Msgr. Camillus Johnpillai, Office Manager at the Dicastery for Evangelization, told journalists at the conference “Euntes in mundum universum” on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the establishment of the Congregation “de Propaganda Fide” (1622–2022) at the Pontifical Urban University (November 16–18, 2022), that the Church must be “realistic” in its engagement with authoritarian governments such as in China and Vietnam. The path that the Vatican has chosen with China is one of “the options we have that we can do. We can’t create another option that doesn’t exist,” *Crux* reported Johnpillai’s comments on November 16, 2022. “So, we need to be more realistic in the way we engage with politicians, not only with China, but there are also other countries, like Vietnam, for example. Every country has its uniqueness, its characteristics,” said Msgr. Johnpillai. The first step in sending someone new or creating new dioceses et cetera is that “we must always ask for the *nulla*

osta of the government,” he said. Asked what contribution his department has made regarding episcopal appointments in China, Johnpillai said among others “Whereas appointments in other countries are more routine, China is unique.” Johnpillai also mentioned that members of the Dicastery for Evangelization meet with members of the Vatican’s Secretariat of State on a weekly basis to evaluate “how to proceed, because here we are in a political situation that is very different than other dioceses.” “The Secretariat of State is well informed on the situation,” he said, saying “every decision, above all the appointment, the nomination, it is always in collaboration with the section that is responsible for China within the Secretariat of State.” “After the agreement, the nominations are going forward,” he continued. Msgr. Johnpillai noted that some have criticized the Vatican for not making the terms of the agreement public, referring to it as a “secret” deal. Johnpillai said “secret” is “a word that requires a certain interpretation, but the Chinese government follows everything that we do. Nothing is secret in the end” (<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-asia/2022/11/vatican-official-says-its-important-to-be-realistic-on-engagement-with-china> Nov. 16). *kf*

**November 22 / 28, 2022:**

## **Pope Francis in an interview on dialogue with China**

The Pope gave the interview, published November 28 in *America* magazine, on November 22. When asked about criticism of his silence on human rights abuses in China, the Pope said: “It is not a matter of speaking or silence. That is not the reality. The reality is to dialogue or not to dialogue. And one dialogs up to the point that is possible. [...] Dialogue is the way of the best diplomacy. With China I have opted for the way of dialogue. It is slow, it has its failures, it has its successes, but I cannot find another way. And I want to underline this: The Chinese people are a people of great wisdom and deserve my respect and my admiration. I take off my hat to them. And for this reason I try to dialogue, because it is not that we are going to conquer people. No! There are Christians there. They have to be cared for, so that they may be good Chinese and good Christians” (for the whole interview, see [www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/11/28/pope-francis-interview-america-244225](http://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/11/28/pope-francis-interview-america-244225)). *kwt*

**November 26, 2022:**

## **Vatican criticizes Bishop Peng’s installation as “Auxiliary Bishop of Jiangxi” in disregard of the agreement, but reiterates its willingness to continue the dialogue**

The Holy See has “with surprise and regret” taken note of the news of the “installation ceremony” of Monsignor John Peng Weizhao, Bishop of Yujiang, as “Auxiliary Bishop of Jiangxi”, a “diocese not recognized by the Holy See” – said a communiqué published by the Press Office of the Holy See on November 26. “In fact, this event did not happen in accordance with the spirit of dialogue that exists between the Vatican and the Chinese side, as well as what was stipulated in the Provisional Agreement on the Appointment of Bishops of September 22, 2018,” the communiqué continues. Furthermore – the text of the statement says – the “civil recognition” of the bishop was preceded by “long-lasting and strong pressure” from the authorities. “The Holy See hopes that such incidents will not recur, awaits appropriate communications from the authorities on this matter and reaffirms its full readiness to continue respectful dialogue on all issues of common interest.” This was the first time since the agreement was signed in 2018 that the Vatican protested against the actions of the Chinese side in the form of a press release.

On November 28, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian replied to a journalist's question that he was not aware of the specific situation. He pointed out that "the sustained improvement of ties between China and the Vatican has also contributed to the harmonious development of Catholicism in China." He further said that China is "ready to work with the Vatican to continue to expand common understandings on friendly ties and jointly uphold the spirit of the provisional agreement" (for the text of both statements, see <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/11/26/0880/01842.html> and [www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/202211/t20221128\\_10981836.html](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202211/t20221128_10981836.html)). *kwt*

## Hong Kong

October 24, 2022:

### Archbishop Savio Hon Tai Fai, SDB appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Malta

The archbishop, who was born in Hong Kong in 1950, was previously the apostolic nuncio in Greece. Archbishop Hon was appointed Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples on December 23, 2010, after working as a professor of theology at Holy Spirit Seminary College in Hong Kong. From June 6 to October 21, 2016, he served as Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Agaña, Guam. On September 28, 2017 he was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Greece, his first post in the diplomatic service (<https://church.mt/mgr-savio-hon-tai-fai-appointed-apostolic-nuncio-to-malta/Oct.24>). *kf*

November 12, 2022:

### School pressure leads to suicide among Hong Kong youth

According to a study, reported by *AsiaNews* on November 12, school pressure and the growing competitiveness of even very young students is one of the causes for suicide among young people in Hong Kong. This is according to a report by the Hong Kong Social Welfare Department, which found suicide to be the second leading cause of death among minors (22.8%) between 2016 and 2018, the period which is the subject of the study. The highest suicide rate was recorded among 15-17 year olds with 39 cases out of a total of 259 deaths (or 15%). The average number of weekly study hours for kindergarten, elementary school and middle school students is 49.1, 66.5 and 76.5 hours, respectively. A Hong Kong student has to take up to nine subjects a day, a number well above that of Shanghai (five to seven subjects) or Taiwan (five subjects).

Chow Tak-fai, principal of Tai Kok Catholic Primary School, stressed to *Eglises d'Asie* that, "The key to happy learning is not to change the way you teach, but to inspire, instill motivation and encourage students, spurring them to work hard at things that interest them" (*AsiaNews* Nov. 12). *kf*

November 15, 2022:

### Autistic Falun Gong practitioner sentenced in Hong Kong

According to *Bitter Winter*, from August to December 2021, Chen Taisen had posted messages denouncing organ harvesting from political prisoners in China and inviting people to unauthorized Falun Gong meetings, including on Christmas Eve. Falun Gong is not yet banned in Hong Kong, but



there are subtle ways of harassment, *Bitter Winter* said. On November 15, 2022, the 23-year-old was sentenced to one year in prison. Authorities claimed that he incited to “revolution” and attacking police officers: He was arrested in December 2021 (*Bitter Winter* Nov. 25). *kf*

**November 15-16, 2022:**

## **Second Online Conference on Sinicized Catholic Theology by Bishops’ Conference/Patriotic Association and Holy Spirit Study Centre**

After a similar meeting in 2021, which *Reuters* only reported on three months later, this time an official report was found on the website of the Chinese Bishops’ Conference and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. On the Beijing side, the conference was organized by the Theological Commission of the Bishops’ Conference and Patriotic Association, and 50 “experts and clerics” took part. Starting with the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* of the Second Vatican Council, the importance of Bible translation and interpretation for the Sinicization of the Church was discussed. The President of the Chinese Bishops’ Conference, Bishop Shen Bin, and Cardinal John Tong of Hong Kong spoke at the opening. Eleven lectures were given. Moderators included Bishop Chow of Hong Kong, Bishop Yang Xiaoting, Chairman of the Theological Commission of the Bishops’ Conference and Patriotic Association, and Vicar General Peter Choy of Hong Kong. Bishop Shen Bin called 2022 an important year both because of the 20th Party Congress and because of the arrival of the first Apostolic Nuncio to China, Cardinal Celso Costantini, 100 years ago. Among other things, Costantini advocated an accurate translation of the entire Bible into Chinese. Cardinal Tong said that the Church needs to train more young theologians and scholars in order to develop a path of evangelization that is appropriate to the religious and social culture of contemporary China. The report also lists the individual speakers: Dr. Tan Lizhu, General Secretary of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association; Professor You Bin, President of the Institute of Religious Studies, Central Nationalities University; Researcher Zhao Xiaoyang, Director of the Department of Social Research, Institute of Modern History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; Father Zhang Wenxi, head of the Bible Department of the Patriotic Association and Bishops’ Conference; lay woman Li Jianfeng, guest lecturer at the National Seminary; Father Liu Jinping of Taiyuan Diocese; Seminarian Liu Dechong from Wenzhou Diocese; Pastor Liu Wei, teacher at (Nanjing) Jinling Union Theological seminary; Father Simon Wong Kam Man of Holy Spirit Seminary College in Hong Kong; Prof. Edmund Kwok, Board Member of the Holy Spirit Study Centre in Hong Kong, and Priest Geng Zhanhe, also of Holy Spirit Seminary College. After the two days, it said, the participants agreed that the Bible is the spiritual foundation of the Church and that the sinicization of the Church in China requires in-depth study of Bible translation, interpretation and preaching ([www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/22110425-1.htm](http://www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/22110425-1.htm) Nov. 18; see also *RCTC* 2022, No. 2, p. 14). *kf*

**November 25, 2022:**

## **Cardinal Zen fined**

On November 25, the trial of Cardinal Zen and other pro-democracy activists ended. The 90-year-old cardinal was fined 4,000 Hong Kong dollars (approx. 480 euros), as were lawyer Margaret Ng, former Legislative Council member Cyd Ho, pop singer Denise Ho and cultural scholar Hui Po Keung. Sze Ching-wee, the sixth defendant in the lawsuit over a relief fund, has to pay a fine equivalent to 320 euros. At a hearing, Judge Ada Yim ruled that the defendants failed to properly register the now (October 2021) defunct 612 Relief Fund. The fund provided financial assistance to protesters from 2019 to

pay for their legal and medical treatment costs. According to the *South China Morning Post*, police are to continue investigating allegations of “collusion with foreign forces” under the security law. Cardinal Zen told the press he hoped the case would not be linked to freedom of religion (*AsiaNews* Nov. 25; *Catholic News Agency* Nov. 27; *China. Table* Nov. 29; *UCAN* Nov. 28; *Vatican News* Nov. 25; *mingpao.com* Nov. 25). *kf*

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