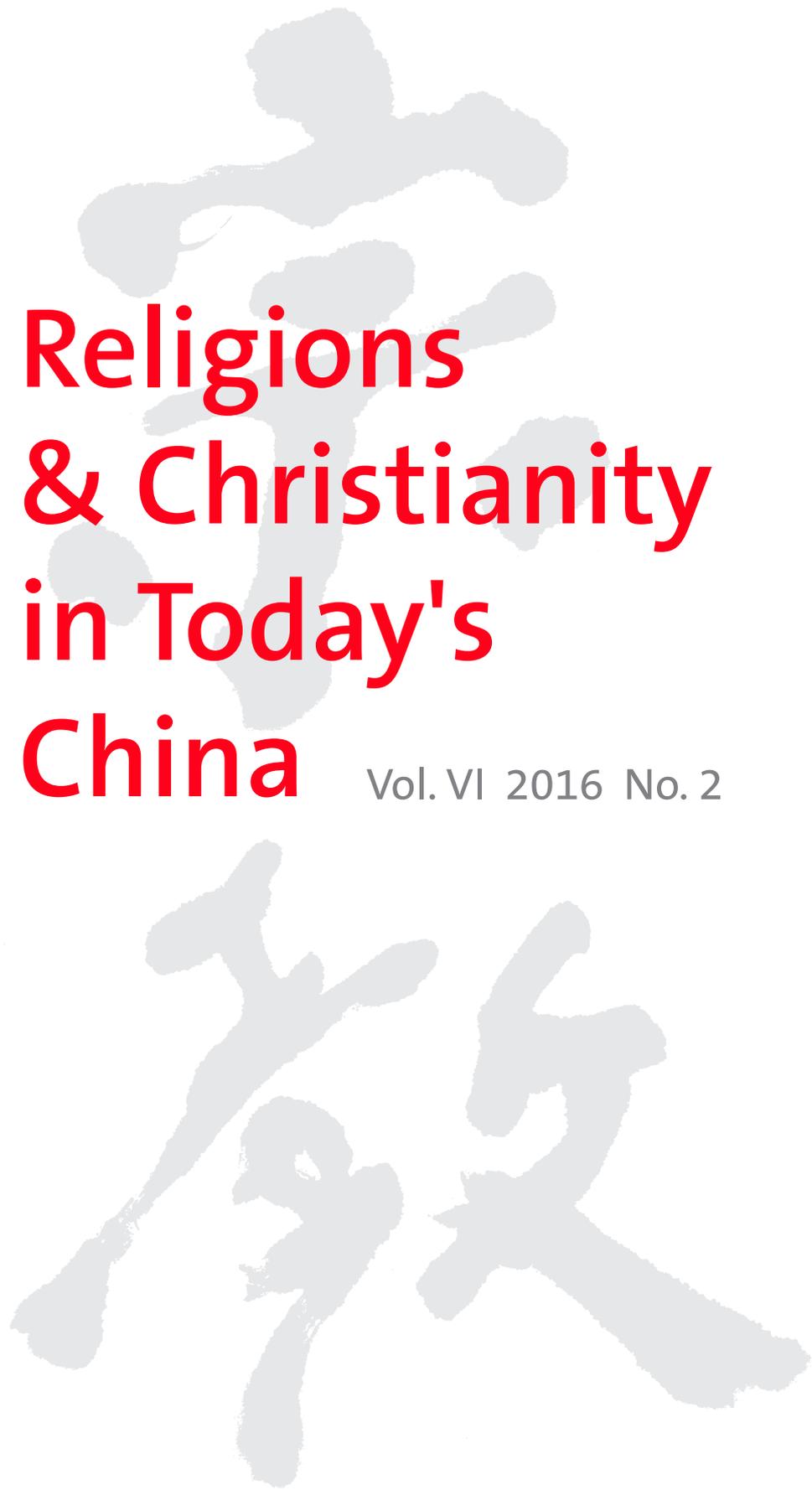


Religions  
& Christianity  
in Today's  
China

Vol. VI 2016 No. 2

中國宗教評論



## Contents

Editorial | 2

News Update on Religion and Church in China

November 10, 2015 – March 24, 2016 | 3

Compiled by Katharina Wenzel-Teuber and Katharina Feith

2015 Statistical Update on Religions and Churches

in the People's Republic of China | 20

Katharina Wenzel-Teuber

Report on the Experiences Made by Religious Sisters in Mainland China  
with Their Present Efforts in the Work of Evangelization | 44

Sr. Teresa Yu

The Priests' Responsibility in Communicating with Non-Christians | 57

Jean Charbonnier, MEP

Challenges and Opportunities of Formation Programmes for Chinese  
Students – The Example of Ireland | 61

Norman Jennings

Imprint – Legal Notice | 64

## Editorial

Dear Readers,

Today we would like to present to you the second issue in the year 2016 of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* (中国宗教评论).

This number includes the regular series of News Updates on recent events and general trends with regard to religions and especially Christianity in today's China, as well as the "2015 Statistical Update on Religions and Churches in the Peoples' Republic of China" by Katharina Wenzel-Teuber, with many details and trends on the various numerically measurable developments in the religions of China.

We continue further with the publication of the proceedings of the 9th European Catholic China Colloquium on the topic "Challenges of Evangelisation – China and Europe," which took place from 10–13 September 2015 in Konstancin/Warsaw, Poland. You will find a "Report on the Experiences Made by Religious Sisters in Mainland China with Their Present Efforts in the Work of Evangelization" by Sr. Teresa Yu from South China, as well as two reports regarding the formation and tasks of Chinese priests: "The Priests' Responsibility in Communicating with Non-Christians" by Fr. Jean Charbonnier MEP (France) and "Challenges and Opportunities of Formation Programmes for Chinese Students – The Example of Ireland" by Fr. Norman Jennings (Ireland). – In the coming issue of *RCTC* we will continue with the publication of further contributions to the Colloquium.

*Religions & Christianity in Today's China* is freely available on the website of the China-Zentrum, [www.china-zentrum.de](http://www.china-zentrum.de). Additionally, readers who subscribe to *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* will regularly receive e-mail updates providing web links to the contents of each newly published issue.

The China-Zentrum is a non-profit organization. For the publication of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* we are dependent on the generosity of our friends and readers. In order to help us cover inevitable costs, we would be very grateful if you could consider sending a voluntary contribution.

*Sankt Augustin, June 2016*

*The Editors*

## News Update on Religion and Church in China November 10, 2015 – March 24, 2016

*Compiled by Katharina Wenzel-Teuber and Katharina Feith  
Translated by David Streit*

*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 2016, No. 1, pp. 3-17) covered the period September 18 – November 30, 2015.*

**November 10, 2015:**

### **Deputy Director of State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) announces national conference on religious works**

Chen Zongrong, one of the deputy directors of the State Administration of Religious Affairs, said at a meeting of religious department officials from all the provinces of China, held in the city of Dali, that the central authorities [of both Party and state] are laying plans for a national conference on religious work to be held this year [i.e. 2015]. He said that at present, [the SARA] is in the process of revising the current “Regulations on Religious Affairs.” During 2016, the principal task in the field of religious policy will be to make the country aware of the spirit of the national conference on religious work and of the text of the revised “Regulations,” Chen remarked ([www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn) Nov. 11, 2015).

Such national conferences on religion serve to provide readjustment on matters of religious policy, but as of the end of March 2016, the announced conference had still not taken place. [It finally was held on April 22-23, 2016.].

**December 8, 2015:**

### **Pope Francis opens Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica to begin the “Year of Mercy” – Enthusiastic participation in China**

In Mainland China’s Catholic Church, the response to the Holy Year proclaimed by Pope Francis has been very great – both in the communities of the “underground” Church as well as in those of the state-approved official Church. In many dioceses the bishops have written pastoral letters for the occasion and Holy Doors have been solemnly opened in numerous designated churches. Parishioners throughout the country have been studying the Papal Bull “*Misericordiae vultus*” (with which Pope Francis announced the extraordinary Holy Year in April 2015) and are planning further activities during the course of the year.



In the Diocese of Zhengding (Hebei Province), Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo, who is not recognized by the government, presided the opening of the Holy Door of the Cathedral in Wuqiu Village on December 15, 2015. 10.000 Catholics from various underground dioceses took part in the celebration. Police was present but did not interfere. News and Photo: *AsiaNews* Dec. 15, 2015.



Solemn opening of the "Door of Mercy" in Tianjin on January 5, 2016. Photo: [chinacatholic.org](http://chinacatholic.org).

December 23, 2015:

## Leadership of the Chinese Islamic Association holds meeting – SARA requires that they “Hold fast to Sinicization”

Among the speakers at the 3rd session of the 9th (extended) Standing Committee of the Chinese Islamic Association (CIA) – official umbrella organization for all Muslims in China – was Jiang Jianyong, Vice Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. He said that since the 2nd session of the 9th Standing Committee, the CIA, following the general situation of the Party and the state, has deepened exegesis of the Qur'an, fought against religious extremism, further improved the organization of the Hajj, did a good job in social welfare and actively developed friendly exchange with foreign countries, thus serving the foreign relations of the state. Jiang called on the Muslims leaders to adhere to the principal of Sinicization and to prepare well for the 10th National Assembly of the representatives of Islam in China (www.chinaislam.net.cn Dec. 23, 2015).

December 27, 2015:

## National People's Congress passes China's first Anti-Terrorism Law

According to An Weixing, an official of the Ministry of Public Security who addressed the press conference held to mark the occasion, China is subject to a constantly growing terrorist threat. In an article published in *The Diplomat*, Zhou Zunyou of the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Criminal Law, noted that “most parts of the law involve granting enormous discretionary powers to a government that already has broad, intrusive competences. These new powers will inevitably affect fundamental human rights.”

“Religion” is explicitly mentioned in some articles of the Anti-Terrorism Law (反恐怖主义法). In article 4, which outlines the strategy for combating terrorism, the law states among other things: “The State combats all forms of extremism, such as the incitement to hatred and discrimination and the promotion of violence by distorting religious teachings and other methods in order to deprive terrorism of its ideological basis” (*The Diplomat* Jan. 23, 2016; *Reuters* Dec. 28, 2015; *Xinhua* Dec. 27, 2015; the Chinese text of the law and an unofficial English translation can be found at: www.chinalawtranslate.com).

December 28, 2015:

## Former vice-governor of Ningxia Province expelled from the Party for, among other things, “superstitious activities”. New rules on disciplinary punishments

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Communist Party of China has announced on its website that Bai Xueshan has been expelled from the Party because of “serious breaches of discipline.” Among other things, the Commission accused the former vice governor “of having practiced superstitious activities over a long period of time.” According to the *South China Morning Post*, which quoted *The Beijing News*, Bai was disciplined due to his “obsession with *fengshui*” – that is, with the geomantic principles that play a major role in traditional folk religiosity. He reportedly used his position as party secretary of Wuzhong City to improve the *fengshui* of the city by extending its boundaries

closer to the Yellow River and by installing fountains in various parts of the city as well as a giant bronze tripod.

On January 1, 2016, the revised “Regulations for disciplinary punishments of the Chinese Communist Party” took effect. For the first time, these regulations include punishments for Party members who organize superstitious activities or take part in them (article 58). Penalties are also provided for organizing or using religious activities to oppose the policies and decisions of the Party (article 55) as well as for organizing or attending religious secret societies or heretical organizations (article 50) (*AsiaNews* Jan. 4, 2016; [www.ccdi.gov.cn](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn) Dec. 28, 2015; *South China Morning Post* Dec. 29, 2015; *Xinhua* Dec. 28, 2015; the Chinese text of the new regulations can be found at: [www.ccdi.gov.cn/special/ljzl/tl\\_ljzl/201510/t20151022\\_63873.html](http://www.ccdi.gov.cn/special/ljzl/tl_ljzl/201510/t20151022_63873.html)).

From January 2016:

## New wave of cross dismantling by authorities in Zhejiang



The cross of the Protestant church in Dajing (Zhejiang) removed on March 10, 2016.  
Photo: [chinaaid.org](http://chinaaid.org).

Following the decline since September 2015 in the number of crosses forcibly removed from the roofs and steeples of Christian churches by public authorities in the Province of Zhejiang, January of 2016 has once again ushered in a renewed wave of cross demolitions. According to the US-based organization China Aid, during the two months between January 7 and March 3 alone, crosses were removed from 49 churches in Zhejiang, including two Catholic churches. In some cases, members of the congregation attempted to resist the authorities by blocking access to the church property. China Aid reported that the authorities countered by sending in teams of 20 to 100 persons to effect the demolition of the

crosses. According to the organization, in the context of the province-wide campaign “Three Remodelings, One Demolition” which involves both civil and religious structures, since the beginning of 2014 the crosses of approximately 2,000 Protestant and Catholic churches have been torn down in Zhejiang Province – and this despite the fact that most of the churches affected are legally registered with the government ([www.chinaaid.org](http://www.chinaaid.org) March 2, 5, 8, 15, 29, 2016; *UCAN* Feb. 2, 25, 2016). – Regarding the demolition of crosses, see also the entries of January 28 and March 23, 2016, as well as the reports and documentation in earlier editions of *China heute* and *RCTC* “News Updates.”

January 1, 2016:

## Two-child-policy officially takes effect

On January 1, 2016, the decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party adopted on October 29, 2015, to allow all couples in China to bring a second child into the world, officially took effect with a corresponding change in the law passed by the National People’s Congress. The government found itself forced to take this step, faced as it was by a rapidly aging society as well as by a labor shortage. The one-child policy, introduced in the late 1970s, had already been eased in recent years due to a disproportionate number of male births, the result of decades of selective abortions of unwanted

female children. The one-child-policy was accompanied by a whole system of heavy fines and resulted in many illegal existences caused by the failure of parents to register the births of subsequent children. – The new policy has been heralded with fanfare in much of the media, but it was also met by a number of warning voices. Reggie Littlejohn, for example, President of Women’s Rights Without Frontiers (quoted here from the *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner*), explained that at the core of the policy is not the number of children permitted, but the fact that the government is setting a limit on children and enforcing this limit coercively. “That will not change under a two-child policy,” she pointed out (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Jan. 9, 2016; *South China Morning Post* Dec. 28, 2015; Feb. 26, 2016). – See also the entry of Jan.14, 2016 as well as *RCTC* 2016, No. 1, p. 9.

January 5, 2016:

## Taiwanese university awards honorary doctorate to the Daoist deity Shennong



In the temple: Rector Wu holds the statue of the deity Shennong, clothed in doctoral robes and mortarboard. Photo: *Taipei Times*.

In Chiayi, 210 km south west of Taipei, the National Chung Cheng University bestowed an honorary doctorate upon the Daoist deity for agriculture, Shennong, as an expression of gratitude. The honor was bestowed because the university was built in 1989 on 131 hectares of arable land belonging to the Gufeng Temple, in which Shennong is venerated. Sixty of those hectares were donated to the university by the temple. University President Wu Jyh-Yang told the media that this

marks the first time in Taiwan and most probably in the whole world for a deity to receive a doctorate. President Wu decided that since universities have bestowed honorary doctorates on so many deserving personalities, it was high time for National Chung Cheng University to bestow its highest possible honor on the deity Shennong. For the conferment ceremony, the deity’s idol was clothed in a custom-tailored academic robe and its head was adorned with the traditional academic mortarboard (*Taipei Times* Jan. 6, 2016).

*Willi Boehi*

January 8, 2016:

## *Renmin ribao*: In the countryside of Henan Province, a 37-meter high statue of Mao has been demolished

As reported in the Party newspaper, local business people and residents of Zhushigang Village in the County of Tongxun, Henan Province, had originally raised the nearly 3 million yuan needed to pay for the erection of the statue, which was made of reinforced concrete and painted with gold-colored lacquer. The newspaper wrote that the statue had attracted the attention of Chinese society. According

to the local government, the statue had never been approved nor was it registered, the newspaper said. It reported that the statue has been torn down by a team sent by the local government, adding that the reasons for demolishing it remained unclear (*BBC* Jan. 5, 2016; [www.people.com.cn](http://www.people.com.cn) Jan. 8, 2016).

January 14, 2016:

## State Council publishes suggestions for resolving the problem of the registration of people without *hukou*

According to the regime-friendly *Global Times*, in China there are approximately 13 million people who are living without access to any social welfare or legal identity, since they are not in possession of a *hukou*, or household registration document. About 60 percent of those who find themselves in this predicament were born in violation of the one-child policy. If the parents of these second- and third-born children were unable to pay the heavy monetary penalties at the time of birth, the government refused to register their children. For them, any access to public education and health systems was systematically denied. With a special notice of the State Council these “illegals” or *heihu* (persons without household registration) are now to be accorded the right to legal registration. The letter from the State Council points out that there are eight types of people without *hukou* who can register without pre-conditions, as long as they can produce the necessary papers for it. This decree comes shortly after the introduction of the two-child-policy, which is in effect from January 1, 2016. *Global Times*, however, regards the whole process skeptically; most local governments, who are in charge of granting *hukou*, are biding their time and waiting for the central government to lay out more precise regulations before making a move, thus the *Global Times*. It is not yet clear – according to the paper – whether some kind of fines will still be expected when parents come to register their so-called “black children” (*General-Anzeiger* Dec. 12, 13, 2015; *Global Times* Jan. 27, 2016; the text of the document: “Suggestions for resolving the problem of registering a *hukou* for persons without a *hukou*” 关于解决无户口人员登记户口问题的意见 can be found at: [www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2016-01/14/content\\_10595.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2016-01/14/content_10595.htm)). – See also the entry of Jan. 1, 2016.

January 15–16, 2016:

## Directors of all province-level government departments for religious affairs meet in Beijing

At the meeting, the State Administration for Religious Affairs presented the results of its work in 2015 and set out its proposed goals for 2016. For 2015 the following achievements were reported:

The administration of sites for religious activities was further standardized, including the reporting for the record of the senior clergy of each site; the establishment of bank accounts and application for Certificates of Organization Code (组织机构代码证) by the sites for religious activities and institutes for religious education, as well as the further development of a database for religious work.

In the area of “supporting religious organizations in building their thinking,” among other things, the idea was drilled into the adherents of religions that the law of the state takes precedence over religious regulations; Catholics studied the “democratic administration of the Church” and Protestants reflected on the “Sinicization of Christianity.” Last year’s highlights in the area of international exchange were, among others, the Fourth Buddhist World Forum and a conference titled: “‘One Belt, One Road’ and International Religious Exchange.”

The report does not reveal any specific plans for 2016. According to state-owned CCTV, however, the SARA plans that the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association together with the [official] Chinese Catho-

lic Bishops' Conference and the Chinese Daoist Association shall issue identity cards for religious personnel by year's end to all Catholic and Daoist clergy respectively, as a follow-up on the 2015 campaign to issue I.D. cards to Buddhist religious personnel (www.sara.gov.cn Jan. 15, 2016; according to CCTV on www.china.ucanews.com Jan. 22, 2016). – On the issue of I.D. cards for religious personnel, see also *China heute* 2016, No. 1, pp. 4-6 (in German).

January 16, 2016:

## Elections in Taiwan: Opposition DPP party wins – Independent Catholic candidate elected Vice-President

In Taiwan's recent elections for president and Legislative Council, the opposition Democratic Progress Party (DPP) won a significant victory. In May of 2016, the DPP candidate Tsai Ing-wen, an ethnic Hakka, takes over from the Kuomintang Party's Ma Ying-jeou as President of the Republic of China on Taiwan. She is the first woman to take over the leadership of the country. Also for the first time, the DPP has managed to win a majority in the Legislative Council, Taiwan's parliament. According to comments of Taiwanese Catholics quoted by *UCAN*, change of ruling party has become normal in Taiwan; no matter who is at the helm of the country, "they have to listen to the people." Media in China close to Party and state called on Tsai Ing-wen to give up the "hallucination" of Taiwan's independence. Also elected alongside Tsai Ing-wen was Chen Chien-jen, a political independent, a committed Catholic and a Knight of the Order of the Holy Sepulcher. Politically independent, Chen will become Taiwan's first Catholic vice-president (*The Guardian / UK Reuters* Jan. 17, 2016; *UCAN* Jan. 18, 20, 2016).

January 18, 2016:

## Government website launches online reference site for the Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism

On the website *Zhongguo Xizang wang* (*China Tibet Online China*), it is now possible to retrieve information on the "Living Buddhas" of Tibetan Buddhism (Chinese: *huofo* 活佛, Tibetan: *tulku*, i.e. Buddhist masters identified as reincarnations of their predecessors) who have been officially recognized by the Chinese government. The site address is: <http://hf.tibet.cn>. On January 18, a first data packet containing material on 870 "Living Buddhas" was put online. Users must first register using their cell-phone number. According to official Chinese sources, there are 1,700 state recognized "Living Buddhas" in the People's Republic of China, 358 of whom are in the Tibet Autonomous Region. – For the discussion on „false Living Buddhas“, see *China heute* 2016, No. 1, pp. 4-6 (in German).

January 18, 2016:

## Human Rights Watch (HRW): Monitoring program of "village-based work teams" in Tibet to be extended

According to the New York based human rights organization, a program to prevent a recurrence of unrest in Tibet, begun by the central government in 2011 under the name of "Benefit the Masses" and originally introduced for a period of three years, is now to be extended indefinitely. Under the program, 21,000 cadres were sent from urban areas to live in groups of four or more people in all 5,000 villages in the Tibet Autonomous Region. According to HRW each team is to have at least one ethnic Tibetan;



Surveillance booth in the inner courtyard of an apartment building in the old city of Lhasa. Photo: Human Rights Watch.

the cadres are supposed to be replaced after one year. According to Chinese media reports, the “village-based work teams” (*zhucun gongzuo dui* 驻村工作队) have “five duties”: namely, the building up of Party and other organizations in the village; maintaining stability; establishing an educational program called “Feel the Party’s kindness”; promoting economic development and practical support. According to Human Rights Watch, the teams are to monitor the behavior of the population, collect information on individuals and put pressure on the villagers to speak up publicly against the Dalai Lama. HRW reports further that the program gobbles up more than 25% of the income of the Autonomous Region of Tibet (Human Rights Watch Jan. 8, 2016).

January 21, 2016:

## Confucian scholar issues renewed call for a ban on church construction in the city of Confucius’ birth

In a post on the Confucian website [www.rujiagz.com](http://www.rujiagz.com), Zeng Zhenyu, professor of Confucianism at the Shandong University and member of the Political Consultative Conference of Shandong Province, has called for a ban on the construction of Christian churches in Qufu. Zeng wrote that Qufu is supposed to be the holy city of the Chinese nation and that it is necessary to ban churches in Qufu in order to avoid “intense controversy” in Chinese society. Specifically, he is opposed to the planned erection of a permanent church building on the site of a provisional Protestant church in Qufu. According to various sources, Zeng’s call unleashed a lively debate across China’s social networking sites. Some of those posting comments were in agreement with Zeng. According to *UCAN*, one Weibo user wrote, Qufu should only allow the building of a church when the Vatican agrees to build a mosque. Others were of the opinion that the Christians living in Qufu have a right to practice their religion there. According to the local Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement (quoted in the *Global Times*), in 2011 the City of

Qufu was home to anywhere from 7,000 to 8,000 “registered” Christians and an estimated total of more than 10,000 “unregistered” Christians.

Toward the end of 2010, a group of Confucians had already protested successfully against the planned construction of a 41 m high neo-Gothic style Protestant church in Qufu. A Confucian by the name of Chen Ming who was involved in the protest at that time told *Time* magazine that this time the situation would be different, since the local pastor had promised that the church would be built in the local style and would not stand out from the other buildings (*Global Times* Jan. 26, 2016; *Huanqiu shibao* Jan. 28, 2016; *Time* Jan. 28, 2016; *UCAN* Jan. 27, 2016; see: *China heute* 2011, No. 1, p. 17 [in German]).

January 23, 2016:

## Stephen Lee Bun-sang is new Bishop of Macau



Macau's new Bishop, Stephen Lee Bun-sang. Photo: *UCAN*.

On January 23, 440th anniversary of the erection of the Diocese of Macau, Bishop Stephen Lee Bun-sang, former Auxiliary Bishop of Hong Kong, was installed as Bishop of Macau in the city's cathedral. He succeeds Bishop José Lai Hung-seng, who had asked Pope Francis relieve him of his office for reasons of health. Bishop Lai, 70 years old, had been appointed Coadjutor Bishop in 2001 and in 2003 took over from Bishop Domingos Lam as Ordinary of the diocese. In 2014, Bishop Lee, 59 years old and a native of Hong Kong, was consecrated Auxiliary Bishop of Hong Kong, together with Bishops Michael Yeung and Joseph Ha. Prior to that, he was Opus Dei's Regional Vicar for East Asia. The Diocese of Hong Kong said in a statement that although the local Church will miss

Bishop Lee, his new appointment will pave the way for closer cooperation between the two dioceses of Hong Kong and Macau. – Also many faithful from both Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland were present for the Mass of consecration in Macau's cathedral. Macau's emeritus Bishop Lai, Auxiliary Bishop Ha, three papal representatives from Hong Kong and Taipei and more than 50 priests from Macau and Hong Kong concelebrated. Bishop Lai expressed his hopes that Bishop Lee will maintain both of the centuries old missions of the Diocese of Macau, namely the proclamation of the Gospel and acting as a bridge of cultural exchange between East and West. – The day before the consecration, Bishops Lai and Lee were received by Chief Executive Fernando Chui Sai-on, who emphasized the respect for religious freedom guaranteed by Macau's Basic Law and expressed his government's expectations in terms of further co-operation with the Catholic Church in the areas of education, social welfare and humanitarian work. In a conversation with journalists, the new Bishop emphasized that family, education and the formation in the faith of young people were among the focal points of his ministry. – The Diocese of Macau has approximately 29,000 Catholics, of whom (according to statistics from 2013) 60% are Chinese and the rest are Macanese (Portuguese born in Macau) or other nationalities (*AsiaNews* Jan. 25, 2016; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Jan. 23, 30, 2016; *UCAN* Jan. 18, 2016; *Zenit* Jan. 20, 2016). For more on Bishop Stephen Lee, see also *China heute* 2014, No. 3, p. 150f. (in German).

January 25–26, 2016:

## Third round of negotiations in Rome between China and the Holy See

After official talks in June of 2014 and in October of 2015, Vatican representatives met for the third time with a Chinese delegation. An unconfirmed January 31 report in the Italian newspaper *Corriere*

*della Sera* said that at the recent negotiations an agreement had been reached on the appointment of bishops, namely, that Beijing would present a short list of acceptable names and that the Pope would then select one of them from the list and appoint him. The newspaper also wrote that the Pope, “for the first time since the severance of diplomatic relations,” will appoint [supposedly, “will publicly appoint” is meant] bishops (“probably three”) for vacant dioceses in China. According to *UCAN*, the three candidates referred to in the report probably are Fathers Ding Linbin (Changzhi, Shanxi), Ji Chengyi (Zhumadian, Henan) and Tang Yuange (Chengdu, Sichuan). Neither the Vatican nor the Chinese side would comment on the outcome of the discussions.

On December 11, 2015 (that is, before the 3rd round of talks) Bernardo Cervellera wrote in *AsiaNews* that according to information from China, “it would seem that the Beijing’s proposal is limited to complete recognition by the Holy See for all official bishops (even illegitimate and excommunicated bishops), without any mention of the underground bishops and those in prison; Vatican approval of the government recognized Council of Bishops, which excludes underground bishops; approval of the competency of this Council (and not the Pope) in the appointment of new candidates to the episcopacy who will be ‘democratically’ elected [...]. The Holy See must approve the appointments of the Bishops’ Conference and has only the possibility of a weak veto in ‘severe’ cases, which must be justified if used. If the Holy See’s justifications are considered ‘insufficient,’ the Bishops’ Conference may decide to proceed anyway.”

It is not clear what proposals Beijing laid on the table during the third round of discussions. Comments in the Party-affiliated Chinese *Global Times* (particularly a longer article of February 25) suggest, however, that an agreement on the appointment of bishops has not yet been reached. Plus, no further consecration of bishops has taken place yet.

As Fr. “Gan Baolu” mentioned on his blog on February 3, the reactions of Catholics in Mainland China to the report of *Corriere della Sera* were mixed. He wrote that many were glad but there were also opinions expressed on the internet that in the negotiations the Church was being “betrayed.” Gianni Valente, however, in a January 28 article in *Vatican Insider* quotes six Chinese “underground” clerics, who voiced their hope for an agreement between China and the Vatican. Among them is Bishop Wei Jingyi of Qiqihar, in whose diocese the Catholics pray three “Hail Marys” at every Mass in hopes of an agreement between both sides (*AsiaNews* Dec. 11, 2015; [www.chinacath.com](http://www.chinacath.com) Feb. 3, 2016; *Corriere della Sera* Jan. 30-31, 2016; *UCAN* Dec. 24, 2015; Feb. 3, 2016; *Vatican Insider* Jan. 28, 2016). – See also the entries of January 28 and of February 3, 2016.

January 28, 2016:

## Christian Council Chairman of Zhejiang Province arrested – Connection with removal of crosses thought likely

In January there were new arrests in connection with resistance to government dismantling of crosses from church buildings. The case of Gu Yuese caused quite a sensation since he was the pastor of Chongyi Church in Hangzhou, China’s largest officially approved “megachurch,” and also chairman of the Christian Council of Zhejiang Province. Gu was detained on January 28, after having been removed ten days earlier from his position as senior pastor of the Chongyi Church. On February 6 he was formally arrested on charges of having “misappropriated 10 million yuan.” According to China Aid, however, many Christians believe that the arrest was connected with Pastor Gu’s standing opposition to government removal of the crosses. For example, the provincial Christian Council, which was headed by Pastor Gu at that time, in an open letter to the religious authorities of the province on July 10, 2015, had called for a stop to the tearing down of the crosses. According to Bob Fu, China Aid’s director, Gu is the “highest ranking national church leader to be arrested since the Cultural Revolution.” On April 1, Gu was released, but he remains subject to “residential surveillance” ([www.chinaaid.org](http://www.chinaaid.org) Feb. 6, 23;

April 1, 2016; [www.chinachange.org](http://www.chinachange.org) Jan. 30, 2016; [www.hangzhouchurch.com](http://www.hangzhouchurch.com) Jan. 29, 2016; *South China Morning Post* Jan. 31, 2016; *UCAN* Feb. 2, 2016).

January 28, 2016:

## Papal interview in *Asia Times* for Chinese New Year expresses appreciation for the Chinese culture and stresses the need for dialogue

It was the first interview which Pope Francis dedicated exclusively to China. In it, the Pope once again expressed his admiration for China and its culture. When asked about the challenges created by an emerging China, he said that fear is not a good counselor. He stressed that there is no other way than through dialogue, explaining that “dialogue means: look, we have got to this point, I may or may not agree, but let us walk together [...]” Every people must be reconciled with itself and with its own history, thus the Pope. Reality has to be accepted as it is, he said. “The second step is to work to improve reality and to change its direction.” Pope Francis concluded the interview with New Year’s greetings to President Xi and to the Chinese people.

Francesco Sisci, the journalist who conducted the interview and who is a senior researcher at Renmin University in Beijing, wrote in a preliminary note that he did not want to ask the Pope about religious or political issues “of which other Popes, at other times had spoken” but that he wanted to ask him about issues that are in the minds of all Chinese so that the Pope could convey to the Chinese people “his enormous human empathy” (see the text of the interview at <http://atimes.com/2016/02/at-exclusive-pope-francis-urges-world-not-to-fear-chinas-rise/>).

Following February 3, 2016:

## Reaction to the Pope’s interview

Lu Kang, spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, declared on February 3: “We have taken note of the related reports” (i.e., of the interview). He added that China is sincerely trying to improve relations and would continue in a constructive dialogue based on the relevant principles. “We also hope the Vatican side takes a flexible, pragmatic attitude so as to create the conditions for an improvement of relations between the two sides.”

In its coverage of the interview on February 4, the party-affiliated *Global Times* quoted Liu Guopeng of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences as saying that China might possibly call for a greater say in the appointment of bishops than that agreed upon between Vatican and Vietnam. Liu also said that leaders of the two countries, sharing similarly strong political charisma and promoting bold and resolute reforms, may lead to surprising and promising results.

Websites of the Catholic Church in China carried reports of the interview (although Lucia Cheung described it on March 15 in *UCAN* as a “missed opportunity” that the complete text of the interview had not been published in Chinese). A blog post by “Gan Baolu” underlined that the call for reconciliation with one’s own history should also apply to the Chinese Church. The opinions of Catholics polled by *AsiaNews* and *UCAN* ranged from enthusiasm to skepticism. One Shanghai Catholic said: “Through the interview we feel that we are united with the Holy Father.” According to this Catholic, the Pope’s great demonstration of friendship was very wise. A priest in Xi’an remarked that propitiatory and flattering words have absolutely no effect on the government, and one Catholic from Wenzhou, in light of the ongoing campaign of dismantling crosses, said it was “definitely not” the right time for Sino-Vatican discussions.

Fr. Jeroom Heyndrickx CICM (Verbiest Institute, Leuven) in a *UCAN* comment expressed his hunch that Pope Francis might make a gesture of mercy in the course of 2016 by legitimizing the eight illegal bishops in China. According to Heyndrickx, “that seems to be quite possible in the logic of this Holy Year of Mercy. Many in China hope for it and if it happens, that would be a real breakthrough.” Catholics – both inside and outside China – are confronted once again with an old challenge, Fr. Heyndrickx writes and wonders: “Will they be united in following Pope Francis?” (*AsiaNews* Feb. 5, 2016; [www.chinacath.com](http://www.chinacath.com) Feb. 3, 2016; *Global Times* Feb. 4, 2016; *UCAN* Feb. 4, 5; March 15, 2016; [http://news.china.com.cn/world/2016-02/03/content\\_37730150.htm](http://news.china.com.cn/world/2016-02/03/content_37730150.htm)).

February 5, 2016:

## New document prohibits even retired Party cadres from believing in a religion

The document titled: “Views on Further Strengthening and Improving the Work Regarding Retired Cadres” (关于进一步加强和改进离退休干部工作的意见) has been adopted by the Party’s Central Committee and the State Council. The Party newspaper *Renmin ribao* announced the document on February 5 in the form of a summary followed by a question and answer text. To the question: What does the document require with regard to the education of retired party cadres? the last part of the answer runs: “It is clearly established that retired Party cadres may not believe in a religion and may not be allowed to participate in religious activities, resolutely combatting heretical organizations, taking care to dissociate their participation in ethnic activities and folk customs from religious belief” ([http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2016-02/05/nw.D110000renmrb\\_20160205\\_2-03.htm](http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2016-02/05/nw.D110000renmrb_20160205_2-03.htm)).

The “Regulations on the United Front Work of the Communist Party of China (For Trial Implementation)” released in 2015 had already expressly confirmed that members of the Communist Party are not allowed to believe in a religion (cf. *RCTC* 2015, No. 3-4, p. 42; for a German translation of the relevant chapter see *China heute* 2015, No. 3, p. 156). The fact that the Party sees the need for such a rule should be an indication that religious faith among party members is not uncommon. In the past there also have been occasional reports that, while distancing themselves from religion during their careers, some Party members have had the intention to resume their practice of religion after retirement.

February 6, 2016:

## Severe earthquake in southern Taiwan – Pope sends his condolences and donates \$50,000

During an earthquake measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale, 117 people lost their lives in Tainan City, 115 of whom were residents of a single high-rise building which collapsed. Numerous religious buildings were also damaged, including Daoist temples and at least two Catholic churches.

On February 7, Vatican Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, acting on behalf of the Holy Father, sent a telegram to Taiwan, assuring the injured and those left behind as well as the helpers and the authorities of the Pope’s sympathy and prayers and recommending the dead to the mercy of God. Later, the Pope sent the Bishops’ Conference of Taiwan \$50,000 through the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum* for the needs of the injured survivors and those left behind (*AsiaNews* Feb. 23, 2016; *UCAN* Feb. 8, 2016).

February 25, 2016:

## Meeting of Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the official Bishops' Conference – Agenda for 2016 includes the election of bishops, and also the Year of Mercy

At the joint meeting of the leaders of the two bodies in Beijing, high-level officials in charge of the United Front of the Communist Party and of the State Administration for Religious Affairs also took part. Bishop Ma Yinglin, Chairman of the official Bishops' Conference (and not recognized by Rome), presented the schedule of activities of the leadership of the two Church bodies for 2016.

Their plans include, among other things, reinforcing the building up of the patriotic organizations and promoting ideological education; pushing ahead actively in the election and ordination of bishops, in the democratic management and governance of the Church as well as in promoting research on inculturated theology. On that last point, there are plans to organize a 4th conference on inculturated theology. In addition, the plans call for a good reception of the "Holy Year of Mercy". For 2016 they further include continued efforts toward the standardization of teaching and administration of the theological seminaries; toward social welfare; toward the improvement of the official website and of the journal of the two Church bodies, as well as toward an improved accreditation and reporting to the records of the religious personnel. The last two points on the agenda were: "the further development of contacts with foreign countries" as well as preparations for the 9th National Assembly of the representatives of the Catholic Church in China – the highest "democratic" body of the official Church structures in China ([www.chinacatholic.cn](http://www.chinacatholic.cn) Feb. 26)

The plans, presented one month after the conclusion of the most recent Sino-Vatican negotiations, meet the requirements of China's religious policy and include several points on the structure and nature of the Church which are considered problematic from the perspective of Rome. Interestingly, the religious and political buzzword "self" (as in "independent self-government" of the Church) does not appear in the document.

Beginning of March 2016:

## Chinese lawyer issues a public call to stop the practice of transmitting defendants' confessions on television

Zhu Zhengfu, vice chairman of the All China Lawyers Association and a delegate of the Political Consultative Conference, criticized in Mainland China's media the transmission of the taped confessions of defendants on state television before their trials have even begun. The number of televised confessions has been growing in recent times. According to *Caixin* (and reported here by *South China Morning Post*), Zhu said that such televised confessions are not legally binding and cannot be considered an indication that someone is guilty. A staged confession does not help protect either the rights of the suspect or the justice system itself, Zhu argued.

The organization China Human Rights Defenders listed a number of persons who have made "TV confessions" in politically sensitive cases since 2013. They are, for the most part, journalists, bloggers, human rights advocates and lawyers. Recently, Chinese state television showed the video "confessions" of Gui Minhai, co-owner of a bookshop in Hong Kong specializing in books banned in the Mainland that focus on the personal lives of high-ranking Chinese leaders (January 17); of the Swede Peter Dahlin, founder of an NGO in China which supports human rights advocates (January 19); and also of the lawyer Zhang Kai, who had offered legal counsel to Christian congregations in Zhejiang on their response to the provincial government's campaign of removing crosses from church buildings (Febru-

ary 24) ([www.chrdnet.com](http://www.chrdnet.com) March 11, 2016; *Global Times* March 20, 2016; *South China Morning Post* March 2, 2016).

March 2, 2016:

### **Macau Daily Times: Mainland Chinese not allowed to study at the Catholic University in Macau**

The new bishop of Macau, Stephen Lee, was concerned and disgusted by the refusal of the Beijing central government to allow a group of mainland students to study at the Catholic University of Saint Joseph in Macau. The university had asked for at least 60 mainland students as part of its plans to increase its current student body of 1,300. It is foreseen that the students will move next year to the new Ilha Verde Campus. The only reason he could fathom for such a refusal was fear, “fear that we educate some Catholics and clash with the government,” thus the *Macau Daily Times*. Bishop Lee said that he was saddened by the refusal, since the Church’s relationship with mainland authorities had generally been improving.

As reported in the *Macau Daily Times*, following the appointment of Lee, there was some speculation that the Hong Kong born bishop might bring a dose of political activism along with him to Macau. His outspoken comments were in stark contrast with the more cautious standpoint of his predecessor Bishop Lai, thus the paper (*Macau Daily Times* March 2, 2016; *UCAN* March 9, 2016).

March 5, 2016:

### **Zhu Weiqun announces more detailed “Regulations on Religious Affairs”**

According to a report by *China Daily* quoting Zhu Weiqun, head of the Commission on Ethnic and Religious Affairs of the Political Consultative Conference, the first draft of the revised “Regulations on Religious Affairs” has been completed, and now opinions about the text are being solicited. The new version of the “Regulations,” the revision of which began in 2015, is more detailed than the previous, and takes into account some new developments of recent years, Zhu said. According to *China Daily*, the vice-chairman of the Chinese Daoist Association, Huang Xinyang, has stated that the regulations could be enacted in the coming nine months; he expects that they will serve to thwart attempts at fraud in the name of religion. Other official religious representatives are quoted as saying that they expect the revised regulations to be a help for the religions in their efforts to adapt to China’s socialist society and in curbing religious extremism. *China Daily* reports that experts are pleading for sites for religious activities to be accorded the status of a legal person under the law; this, they say, is key to protecting property rights. The newspaper, however, also points out the view of Liu Peng [Pu Shi Institute for Social Sciences in Beijing], who is of the opinion that a new law on religion would be more appropriate than a set of administrative regulations issued by the State Administration of Religious Affairs [*sic*] (*China Daily* March 9, 2106).

The “Regulations on Religious Affairs,” released by the State Council in 2004, are the first comprehensive legislative provision on religious affairs ever enacted by the People’s Republic of China. An English translation can be found at [www.sara.gov.cn/zcfg/xzfg/507.htm](http://www.sara.gov.cn/zcfg/xzfg/507.htm).

March 6, 2016:

## Taiwan: Praise for the good relations between the Vatican and the Republic of China (Taiwan)

According to Taiwan's Foreign Ministry, relations between the two sides are growing continually stronger, a report published on the governmental website *Taiwan Today* said. During the course of a Mass in the Cathedral of Taipei marking the 3rd anniversary of the Holy Father's election, Taiwan's Deputy Foreign Minister, Lee Chen-jan, said that both sides will continue their cooperation and their commitment to world peace. Among other things, Lee made mention of an ongoing exhibit at the National Palace Museum in Taipei of objects from the sacristy of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, among which are liturgical objects used by various Popes over the course of the centuries. The exhibit includes a chasuble (Mass vestment) worn by Pope Benedict XVI. Taiwan's [then] Vice-President-elect, Chen Chien-jen, a Catholic, expressed the hope that Taiwan's new government will continue to promote relations with the Holy See. Monsignor Paul Russell, the Holy See's Chargé d'Affaires in Taiwan, spoke of common convictions concerning democracy, freedom, human rights and détente between peoples and nations.

In January, Taiwan's President, Ma Ying-jeou, sent a letter to Pope Francis in response to the pontiff's January 1 message on the occasion of the World Day of Peace (*The China Post* Jan. 27, 2016; *Taiwan Today* March 8, 2016). – See also the entry of January 16, 2016.

March 16, 2016:

## China's National People's Congress adopts new Charity Law

In its final session, the 4th annual gathering of the 12th National People's Congress has adopted the first Chinese Charity Law (慈善法). The law had been more than ten years in the making. Experts from many academic, juridical, social and charitable domains as well as representatives from various charitable organizations were involved in the process. The law will take effect on September 1, 2016.

Quite a few foreign experts have already welcomed and praised the new law because it explicitly encourages the creation of charitable not-for-profit organizations in the form of foundations, social organizations or institutions for social services, and even encourages television, magazines and other media to plan coverage of such organizations and to provide positive information about their projects. Clear rules have been laid out for the establishment and registration of charities, giving them the right to fundraising campaigns. As for donations in kind which they receive from abroad, the import duties and sales tax will either be reduced or remitted. Conversely, transparent financial management is called for by the new law. Rights and obligations are formulated, including the obligation to issue receipts for donations. Timely reports will be required and there will be standard warnings and penalties for misconduct.

Critics both in China and abroad, however, note that individuals will not be allowed to conduct donation campaigns or fundraising activities without first registering (with the competent authorities for civil affairs); they fear that the government might use this law to engage in ever stricter monitoring of charitable organizations and their activities (*Radio Free Asia*, among others). The law, however, does contain a provision (article 26), according to which unregistered organizations may be able to collect donations for charitable purposes by working through organizations that are duly registered. Critics also see an excessive entanglement of government agencies and welfare organizations, something which will make it significantly more difficult to carry out projects which are unpopular with the government. Furthermore, many critics are bothered by article 15 (and article 104 regarding the leaking of state secrets), according to which charitable organizations may not be involved in or finance activi-

ties which endanger national security or public interest. Furthermore, no donations may be accepted, which are linked to conditions that violate governmental norms or violate social morals. International NGOs are not explicitly mentioned in the new Charity Law. Their administration will be regulated in a further measure “Foreign Non-Governmental Organizations Management Law” (境外非政府组织管理法), which is already being strongly criticized internationally [this law was passed on April 28, 2016] (MERICS Blog March 18, 2016; *Radio Free Asia* April 1, 2016). – The text of the law and an unofficial English translation can be found at <http://chinalawtranslate.com/2016charitylaw>. For the draft of the law on foreign NGOs, see *RCTC* 2015, No. 3-4, p. 20, and *China heute* 2015, No. 3, pp. 173-174 (in German).

*Martin Welling*

**March 16, 2016:**

### ***China Daily*: Churches in China suffer from lack of clergy – Numbers**

Citing members of the state-sanctioned church governing bodies, the official *China Daily* has published the following figures: According to the [official] Catholic Bishops’ Conference, there are only 3,316 priests and 5,622 religious sisters to serve more than 6 million Chinese Catholics. And according to Li Yuanlong, vice-president of the Patriotic Association, there are currently less than 800 candidates for the priesthood studying in the 10 approved seminaries. *China Daily* further reports that “the churches under the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China, which had more than 30 million [*sic*] registered followers as of last year” are also suffering from a lack of young clergy. According to Gao Feng, chairman of the China Christian Council, there are approximately 5,000 Protestant pastors, 6,000 elders and 190,000 “leaders of voluntary groups.” China’s approved Protestant seminaries produce about 800 graduates a year, but at the same time at least 400,000–500,000 people are being baptized annually into China’s Protestant churches (*China Daily* March 16, 2016).

**March 23, 2016:**

### **Arrested for providing legal advice to churches in Zhejiang Province, detained lawyer Zhang Kai is being released – Further releases and arrests**

The lawyer Zhang Kai founded the group “Lawyers for the protection of the Cross” in July of 2015, and had provided legal advice to more than 100 church congregations in Zhejiang Province who wanted to protect their crosses. On August 25, 2015, he was arrested on a number of charges, including that of leaking state secrets to foreign organizations. After 6 months of “residential surveillance in a designated location” (a kind of pre-trial detention), and during which time he was not allowed to meet either lawyers or family members, on February 25, 2016, a video was aired on state television in which he “confessed” that by his actions he had compromised national security, and in which he called on Chinese lawyers not to accept money from abroad.

Pastor Huang Yizi, leader of the Fengwo Church (Pingyang County, Wenzhou City), was released on February 5, 2016. He had been arrested on September 12, 2015, for opposing the government’s campaign to dismantle crosses and had also been subjected to “residential surveillance in a designated location” ([www.chinaaid.org](http://www.chinaaid.org) Feb. 5; March 23, 2016; [www.chrdnet.com](http://www.chrdnet.com) March 11, 2016). – On this topic, see also the entry for the beginning of March 2016.

March 24, 2016:

## German President meets with Bishop of Xi'an

The last stop of German President Joachim Gauck's first state visit in the People's Republic of China was the city of Xi'an where, in addition to the official ceremonies, the President also had time for a nearly one-hour conversation with the Bishop of Xi'an, Dang Mingyan. Bishop Dang initially showed his guests the historic 300-year-old cathedral and then, in an interview, introduced them to the work of the Catholic Church in Shaanxi Province and especially in the Diocese of Xi'an. During the interview, he focused especially on the social work of the diocese. Speaking later with *UCAN*, Bishop Dang said that President Gauck had appreciated the achievements of the diocese in the social sector and had invited Bishop Dang to visit Germany. Fr. Stephen Chen, the priest in charge of the Diocesan Social Service Center, described the President's visit as of "great significance in promoting the church's charitable work in China," thus *UCAN*. That same morning President Gauck had also visited the Shaanxi-Huiling Disabled Project, which has benefited from support provided by German-based Misereor for many years now.

The state visit to China, together with lifetime partner Daniela Schadt, which Germany's President undertook at the invitation of President Xi Jinping, took place from March 19 to 24. During the visit, stops were scheduled in Beijing, Shanghai and Xi'an. The President held political talks with President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang and other high-ranking representatives of the Chinese leadership, as well as with artists, students, representatives of religious communities and human rights lawyers. Gauck also gave a talk to students at Tongji University in Shanghai, during the course of which he addressed many critical issues. In the delegation accompanying the President were, among others, the Prelates Jüsten (head of the Catholic Liaison Office of the German Bishops' Conference in Berlin) and Dutzmann (Representative of the Protestant Church of Germany to the Federal Republic of Germany and to the European Union). In Xi'an, Gauck also attended a Protestant church service and spoke at the Great Mosque with the local Imam ([www.domradio.de](http://www.domradio.de) March 24, 2016; [www.stuttgarter-zeitung.de](http://www.stuttgarter-zeitung.de) March 21, 2016; *UCAN* April 1, 2016; [www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Berichte/DE/Joachim-Gauck/2016/03/160319-Reisechina.html](http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Berichte/DE/Joachim-Gauck/2016/03/160319-Reisechina.html)).



German President Gauck signs a guest book of the Diocese of Xi'an: "May God bless the Christians and the churches of this land! Joachim Gauck." To his right is Bishop Dang as well as Fr. Stephen Chen and Fr. Franz Li Jingxi (Rector of the seminary). Photo and text: Diocese of Xi'an.

With entries by Willi Boehi and Martin Welling

This "News Update" was first published in *China heute* 2016, No. 1, pp. 9-15 (in German).

## 2015 Statistical Update on Religions and Churches in the Peoples' Republic of China

*Katharina Wenzel-Teuber*  
*Translated by Jacqueline Mulberge*

Recording the number of adherents of the religions in the PR China remains a challenge. Chinese state universities, academies and government authorities all endeavor to do so, as do researchers and opinion research institutes outside Mainland China. Our annual statistical update compiles figures from available recent sources of various kinds. This time we present among other things two large statistical projects from official sources: In 2015 the “China Religion Survey” carried out by Renmin University published the first results of its survey of local religious affairs departments and heads of religious sites (see para. 1.1). The recording of all registered Buddhist and Daoist sites in the new online database of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) was completed in 2015 and enables new insights into the official religious landscape in China (see para. 2.3). Also presented here is an analysis of the composition of the Muslim population on the basis of data from the last census in 2010 (see para. 3.1). That is followed by data for the Christian churches, and Anthony Lam of the Holy Spirit Study Centre (Hong Kong) clarifies his thesis that the number of Catholics is decreasing after having reached its highest level (see para. 5.1). Although the statistical data for the individual religions remain contradictory, they yield an overall picture of vital religiosity in the People’s Republic of China.

### 1 Religions and Religiosity in General

#### 1.1 The Renmin University “China Religion Survey”

In many surveys, data on the topic of religion are gained from interviewing individuals or households – as with the “China Family Panel Studies” (CFPS), the results of which concerning religion were first published in 2014.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, religious institutions are the point of departure for the “China Religion Survey” (CRS, *Zhongguo zongjiao diaocha* 中

---

This article was first published under the title “Statistisches Update 2015 zu Religionen und Kirchen in der Volksrepublik China” in *China heute* 2016, No. 1, pp. 24-37.

1 China Family Panel Studies is an annual longitudinal survey. It has been carried out since 2010 by the Institute of Social Science Survey of Peking University and concentrates on the economic and non-economic wellbeing of the population. Since 2012 data on religiosity has also been gathered. The survey covers a fixed panel of 16,000 families/households in 25 of the 31 provinces, direct-controlled municipalities and autonomous regions of the PR China – excluded are Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia and Hainan. For a presentation of the religion-related results published in CFPS/SZW 2014 see Wenzel-Teuber 2015, pp. 21-28.

国宗教调查), carried out by the National Survey Research Center (NSRC) and the School of Philosophy of the Renmin University of China, with the first results published in 2015.

According to its own description, the CRS is “the first nationally representative survey on religious institutions, which collects data systematically on individual, institutional and regional levels.” From 2013–2015 the emphasis of the CRS research was on the sites for religious activities and the religious landscape at the county level. For that a sample of 4,383 sites for religious activities in 243 administrative units at the county level in 31 provinces of China was selected. The sample covered 8.5% of all counties of China. The interviews concentrated on the topics of organization, religious life, social interaction and relations between religions and State. Those surveyed (by means of two different questionnaires) were leading officials of the local religious affairs departments as well as heads<sup>2</sup> of the religious sites. Thus the focus of the survey is on the area of official religiosity. The data gathered – according to the description of the project – are meant “to provide high quality data for academic research and policy-making.”<sup>3</sup>

On 7 July 2015, the first CRS results were published on the blog of Wei Dedong 魏德东, Buddhism researcher and vice dean of the School of Philosophy of Renmin University, who directs the project together with Wang Weidong 王卫东, executive director of the NSRC.<sup>4</sup> State media as well as religious media in China quoted extensively from this report which comes up with the following data and remarks:

**The religions are basically adjusted to socialism**, which the author concludes from the following data: Religious sites are visited annually on average 3.8 times by the (local) religious affairs department and 1.8 times by the United Front department and make a return visit to these offices 3.5 or 1.3 times annually. 90% of the religious sites have a “modern management system” with “democratic management committees”; religious personnel of 30% of the sites hold positions in (local) state organizations such as the People’s Congress, the Political Consultative Conference or the Youth Federation. 60% of the heads of religious sites consider the degree of strictness of the religious policy appropriate. 40% of the religious sites are actively involved in social welfare.

That the religions in China “are willing to accept the guidance of the State” can be seen, according to the author’s view, from the fact that over 50% of the heads of religious sites surveyed object to the principle of separation of State and religion, while they predominantly favor administration of religion through judicial ways and state financial aid for

2 The Chinese term used by the CRS is *fuzeren* 负责人, literally “responsible person,” “person in charge.” Since the report presented below names both religious personnel and “responsible persons” for the religious sites in one breath with regard to age and education, presumably the “responsible persons” usually are senior clergy of the respective religion. The legal provision “Measures for Reporting for the Record the Holding of Chief Posts at Sites for Religious Activities” uses a different term for this, *zhuyao jiaozhi* 主要教职.

3 Cf. CRS 2015, as well as the Chinese and the English presentation of the CRS on the project website at <http://crs.ruc.edu.cn/index.php?r=info/introduce> and the questionnaire structure at <http://crs.ruc.edu.cn/index.php?r=info/document&cid=7>.

4 CRS 2015. The same text is to be found undated on the project website. Presumably Wei is the author of the text. An English summary that keeps close to the text with the title “A Closer Look at the China Religion Survey” can be found at ChinaSource, [www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinese-church-voices/a-closer-look-at-the-china-religion-survey](http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinese-church-voices/a-closer-look-at-the-china-religion-survey).

the construction of religious sites and the living costs of religious personnel, as well as a greater participation of religious personnel in political organs.

**Of the religious believers** more than half are under 60 years of age. 43% have completed elementary school or even less, and less than 5% have a university degree.

**The religious personnel** (*jiaozhi renyuan* 教职人员) are predominantly between 30 and 60 years of age. 11% have completed university studies or higher. The heads of religious sites surveyed are on average 55 years old, 21% are women, 15% have a university or higher education.

The average income of religious personnel is well under the average income of the surrounding local population. The monthly average income of religious personnel of the five major religions is around 506 yuan, that of the Buddhists even less at 397 yuan, while the Protestants receive around 656.8 yuan.<sup>5</sup> That means, the author writes, that the prevalent cliché of the “rich monk” is not valid and that religious personnel in fact lead a hard life. 41% of religious sites have no old age insurance for their religious personnel and 26% have no health insurance.

**Religious Sites.** Whereas – according to the author – the media criticize especially Buddhism due to the “admission ticket problem,” according to CRS only 6% of Buddhist and 7% of Daoist sites actually require admission fees. The sites of the other religions can generally be accessed without payment.

56% of the religious sites studied have an Organization Code Certificate [*zuzhi jigou daima zheng* 组织机构代码证; this code is an unchangeable nationwide number for firms, social and other organizations registered with the State], 47% have a bank account, 10% propagate their doctrine via a website, 10% make use of multi-media during religious activities.



Something of a rarity: Catholic St. Francis Church in the Diocese of Fengxiang (Shaanxi) built in Chinese style. The CRS view that 51% of Catholic churches are built in Chinese style (see below) would appear to be an overestimation.  
Photo: Mario Bard.

5 The information regarding the income of the Protestant religious personnel does not come from CRS 2015 but from the following article on the CRS: “Renda Zhongguo zongjiao diaocha baogao xianshi: Tianzhujiao zai shenzhi renyuan wenhua chengdu he shehui fuwu shang zou zai qianli” 人大中国宗教调查报告显示: 天主教在神职人员文化程度和社会服务上走在前列 (CRS-Report of Renmin University shows: Catholic religious personnel way ahead with regard to education and social services), *xdb* Aug. 20, 2015.

For the individual religions the author believes the CRS data lead to the following conclusions:

**Protestantism** is “the religion best adjusted to the Chinese social context.” More than half the Protestant churches were built after 1977; that, as the author observes, is unique among the five major religions and clearly points to rapid growth. 82% of the Protestant churches, according to CRS, are built “in Chinese style” in contrast to only 51% of the Catholic churches and 40% of the mosques. The Protestant church is the religion that has built the most religious sites within the past 3 years (12%), that offers the most small groups for the faithful (52%) and that most often makes use of projectors (40%).



Makes the most use of projectors: At a Sunday service in the technically well-equipped Protestant Haidian Church in Beijing hymn texts are projected on to a giant screen. Beneath it the choir can be seen, on the right is a luminous red cross and under the cross are the pastors. Photo: Martin Welling.

**Buddhist Temples** contribute on average per temple and per year 41,000 yuan for welfare, whereas the average for the sites of all religions is around 18,000 yuan.

**Although Daoism** is the “most indigenous” religion, 11% of all Daoist temples and monasteries practice “international exchange” and in this aspect they lead all five religions.

**The Catholic Church** takes first place when it comes to the educational level of its religious personnel: 43% of the Catholic personnel have a university qualification or higher; that is a far higher percentage of graduates than the average of all religions (18%).<sup>6</sup> Protestant religious personnel come in second place with a 13.2 percentage of graduates.<sup>7</sup>

**Islam** has the highest proportion among the five religions of young believers: 22.4% of Muslims are below 30 years old. The Catholic Church comes in second place with a 22%

6 It is not clear whether these figures include degrees conferred by institutes for religious education (e.g. theological seminaries). According to the “Measures for the Accreditation of Religious Personnel of the Chinese Catholic Church” of 2009, religious Sisters are also counted among them.

7 This number does not come from CRS 2015 but from *xdb* Aug. 20, 2015 (cf. footnote 5).

proportion of believers below the age of 30. Buddhism and Daoism both have the highest number of believers over the age of 60, namely 54.6% and 53.8% respectively.<sup>8</sup>

95% of the mosques have fully established the system of rules and regulations [prescribed by the State] and thus Islam leads in that area.

According to CRS, the religious circles wish above all for more religious sites and religious personnel to meet the growing demand. The foremost wishes addressed to the religious policy are for approval to build new religious sites (50%), for registration of religious sites (32%) and for accreditation of religious personnel (23%).

Since the results of the CRS until now are not available in the form of a more academic, systematically elaborated essay, it is difficult to evaluate. It remains to be noted that the study brings numerical data in a field that surveys among the general population naturally cannot cover – the officially organized religiosity and religious policy.

## 1.2 China as Most Atheistic Nation of the World in the WIN/Gallup-Poll on Religiosity and Atheism

If one shares the view of a survey published on 13 March 2015 by WIN/Gallup, 61% of China's population are convinced atheists and thus China is the least religious country in the world. The opinion poll institute asked 63,898 persons in 65 countries (among them 1,150 persons in China) the following question:

*Irrespective whether you attend a place of worship or not, would you say you are:*

- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| – A religious person  | – Not a religious person |
| – A convinced atheist | – Do not know            |

In China 7% described themselves as a religious person, 29% as not a religious person and 61% as a convinced atheist. With that China had by far the highest percentage of atheists worldwide, followed by Hong Kong (26% religious persons, 36% not religious persons, 34% atheists), Japan (31% atheists), Czech Republic (30% atheists) and Spain (20% atheists). Taiwan was missing from the list of countries studied. At the other end of the scale Thailand had worldwide the highest percentage of religious persons (94%), followed by Armenia (93%), Bangladesh (93%), Georgia (93%) and Morocco (93%). In the world average, 63% of those surveyed by the WIN/Gallup poll described themselves as religious, 22% as not religious and 11% as atheist.

It was not possible to find out how the questions of the WIN/Gallup poll were formulated in Chinese. As Chinese academics have pointed out, for many in the Chinese context the term *zongjiao* 宗教 (religion) – a term that only entered the Chinese language from Japanese in the 19th century – is difficult to understand. These difficulties of understanding lead to many responding in surveys that they have no religious faith, although, however, they are not “atheists in the strict sense of the word,” but often adhere to some religious beliefs or practices.<sup>9</sup> For instance, during the Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (CSLS)

8 The figures of the age structure of Muslims, Catholics, Buddhists and Daoists are not from CRS 2015 but from the following article on the CRS: Yuen Yeuk-laam, “Islam has most number of young believers followed by Catholicism. Religious Chinese are younger: report,” *Global Times* July 8, 2015.

9 As for example in CFPS/SZW 2014, pp. 12-14; cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2015, p. 22.

carried out in 2007, 58% of those surveyed stated that they did not believe in a religion; a large number of them, however, answered additional questions concerning religious practices or religious beliefs in the broadest sense positively, so that only a remaining 15% appeared as “real atheists.”<sup>10</sup>

## 2 Buddhism, Daoism and Popular Beliefs

Older surveys still give a certain orientation for this large sector of religious life in China, such as the Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (CSLS) of 2007 mentioned above. Among others, the CSLS produced the following results:

- 185 million consider themselves Buddhists, i.e. 18% of the population over 16 years.
- 17.3 million have taken the triple refuge (in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), i.e. have formalized their adherence to Buddhism through ritual.
- 12 million of the adult population clearly identify with Daoism.
- 173 million have exercised some Daoist practices or participated in them, but these are difficult to distinguish from popular religion.

### 2.1 Buddhism

33,652 registered sites for religious activities (according to the online database of the SARA, see Table 1 below), of which:

- 28,087 Han-Chinese Buddhism
- 3,860 Tibetan Buddhism
- 1,705 Theravada-Buddhism

222,000 Buddhist monks and nuns (according to SARA 2014),<sup>11</sup> of which:

- 72,000 Han-Chinese Buddhism
- 148,000 Tibetan Buddhism
- 2,000 Theravada-Buddhism

38 Buddhist academies (SARA 2014)

The number of monks and nuns of Tibetan Buddhism solely for the Autonomous Region of Tibet is given in official Chinese sources as 46,000 persons<sup>12</sup> – that is 31% of the 148,000 monks and nuns of Tibetan Buddhism that the SARA 2014 gives for the entire PR China.

For the “Living Buddhas” of Tibetan Buddhism (Chinese: *huofo* 活佛, Tibetan: *tulku*, i.e. Buddhist masters identified as reincarnations of their predecessors) recognized by the Chinese State, a separate online reference system (<http://hf.tibet.cn>) was set up on the state website *China Tibet Online* (*Zhongguo Xizang wang* 中国西藏网). It went online on

10 For the CSLS, from May to July 2007, a sample of 7,021 individuals aged 16 to 75 years was interviewed in 56 selected localities of different size as to their religious self-identification. In July 2010, Yang Fenggang from the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University (West Lafayette, USA) presented the results of the study in Beijing. For CSLS see also Wenzel-Teuber 2012, pp. 30-36.

11 This source contains extracts from a reader for the study of the socialist theory of religion with Chinese characteristics compiled by the SARA.

12 For example in State Council Information Office 2015; cf. *RCTC* 2015, Nos. 3-4, p. 8.

January 18, 2016 with a first data packet of 870 “Living Buddhas.” Access is only possible after registration with a mobile phone number and for a limited time. – According to official Chinese information there are 1,700 state recognized “Living Buddhas” in the PR China, 358 of them in the Autonomous Region of Tibet.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.2 Daoism

8,269 registered sites for religious activities (according to the online database of the SARA, see Table 1 below), of which:

3,945 Quanzhen-Tradition

4,324 Zhengyi-Tradition

48,000 Daoist monks/nuns and priests (*daoshi* 道士) (SARA 2014)

5 Daoist academies (SARA 2014)

## 2.3 Registered Buddhist and Daoist Sites in the New Online Database of the SARA

All state registered Buddhist and Daoist sites for religious activities in the 31 provinces or autonomous regions (AR) as well as direct-controlled municipalities (DCM) of the PR China can now be retrieved from a database. This was set up on the SARA website and has been online since April 17, 2014. At the time the SARA pointed out in an accompanying statement that only legally registered religious sites are allowed to carry out religious activities. In other words, the database serves in first place to enable better control of the religious sites by the authorities. The inclusion of Buddhist and Daoist data was concluded on 15 December 2015. According to the website the data were made available by the religious affairs bureaus of the provinces as well as by the Chinese Buddhist Association and the Chinese Daoist Association. They will be regularly updated.

On the SARA website the tab “Zongjiao huodong changsuo jiben xinxi” 宗教活动场所基本信息 (basic data on the sites for religious activities, URL [www.sara.gov.cn/csjobxx/](http://www.sara.gov.cn/csjobxx/)) links to a search engine in which one can select the province, city and county, as well as the religion and the school of thought or sect within the religion. One obtains lists of the religious sites containing the name of the religion and the school, the name and full address of the respective religious site, as well as the name of the person responsible for the site. A search query of the data uploaded to date produced the figures compiled in Table 1.<sup>14</sup>

A glance at Table 1 shows a few peculiarities:

The number of registered Buddhist and Daoist sites in relation to population size is strikingly different from province to province. Thus highly populated Shandong with its

13 State Council Information Office 2015 and Huang Jingjing. “Monks rebuff allegations that religion is under tighter control,” *Global Times* Feb. 13, 2016. – On the discussion regarding “false Living Buddhas” see *China heute* 2016, No. 1, pp. 4-6 (in German).

14 The database was first introduced in Wenzel-Teuber 2015, pp. 29-31 and the numbers for the Buddhist and Daoist sites in 14 provinces (= the first 14 provinces in Table 1) uploaded until the end of 2014 were listed. A new search on March 17, 2016 showed that the numbers for these provinces have remained unchanged since the first search on February 13, 2015 – with the exception of slightly higher numbers for Jiangxi.

Table 1: SARA's "Basic Data on the Sites for Religious Activities," Numbers of All Previously Registered Buddhist and Daoist Sites according to Province (in Brackets the Total Population of the Province in Millions), Religion and School (Retrieval of Data by Search Queries Run on March 17, 2016)

Sites Province (AR, DCM)	Buddhist total	Of which: Han- Chinese Buddhism	Tibetan Buddhism	Therevada- Buddhism	Daoist total	Of which: Quan- zhen- Tradition	Zhengyi- Tradition	Total
Beijing (19.6)	26	25	1	0	13	9	4	39
Tianjin (12.9)	19	19	0	0	0	0	0	19
Shanxi (35.7)	439	430	9	0	43	29	14	482
Liaoning (43.7)	735	709	26	0	100	98	2	835
Heilongjiang (38.3)	88	87	1	0	9	9	0	97
Shanghai (23)	108	108	0	0	32	1	31	140
Zhejiang (54.4)	4,057	4,056	1	0	1,659	562	1,097	5,716
Anhui (59.5)	1,335	1,335	0	0	60	32	28	1,395
Jiangxi (44.6)	3,260	3,259	1	0	1,010	135	875	4,270
Shandong (95.8)	214	214	0	0	87	87	0	301
Henan (94)	715	715	0	0	474	333	141	1,189
Hainan (8.8)	20	20	0	0	1	0	1	21
Chongqing (28.8)	277	277	0	0	32	25	7	309
Gansu (25.6)	756	530	226	0	615	609	6	1,371
Jilin (27.5)	204	203	1	0	36	35	1	240
Fujian (36.9)	3,396	3,396	0	0	918	57	861	4,314
Guangdong (104.3)	1,554	1,554	0	0	218	129	89	1,772
Guangxi (46)	221	221	0	0	8	2	6	229
Hubei (57.2)	1,995	1,990	5	0	642	549	93	2,637
Jiangsu (78.7)	1,016	1,016	0	0	140	4	136	1,156
Guizhou (34.7)	475	475	0	0	28	8	20	503
Hebei (71.9)	756	754	2	0	213	184	29	969
Hunan (65.7)	3,231	3,229	2	0	955	241	714	4,186
Inner Mongolia (24.7)	301	131	170	0	7	6	1	308
Ningxia (6.3)	411	411	0	0	151	81	70	562
Qinghai (5.6)	801	26	775	0	15	15	0	816
Shaanxi (37.3)	595	594	1	0	417	417	0	1,012
Sichuan (80.4)	2,195	1,412	783	0	225	190	35	2,420
Tibet (3)	1,786	6	1,780	0	0	0	0	1,786
Xinjiang (21.8)	57	17	40	0	1	0	1	58
Yunnan (46)	2,609	868	36	1,705	160	98	62	2,769
Total	33,652	28,087	3,860	1,705	8,269	3,945	4,324	41,921

Source: [www.sara.gov.cn/csjsx/](http://www.sara.gov.cn/csjsx/). Population numbers according to the 2010 census, [www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/pccj/rkpc/6rp/indexch.htm](http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/pccj/rkpc/6rp/indexch.htm).

95.8 million inhabitants has only 30 registered Buddhist and Daoist sites – giving one site for more than 300,000 inhabitants. In Fujian, on the other hand, there are only just over 8,500 inhabitants per site, in neighboring Zhejiang there are around 9,500 inhabitants per site. In Tianjin Municipality the ratio is especially unfavorable (one Buddhist or Daoist site per 680,000 inhabitants) as also in Beijing (one site per 500,000 inhabitants). The Autonomous Region of Tibet has the most sites (all Buddhist, there are no Daoist sites there) in relation to population with one site per 1,680 inhabitants.

The numerical ratio of the 33,652 Buddhist to the 8,269 Daoist registered sites in China is on average 4:1, but it varies considerably from one region to another.



Map: [d-maps.com/carte.php?num\\_car=27749&lang=de](http://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=27749&lang=de)

#### Provinces of China – Map and List of Abbreviations

AH Anhui, CQ Chongqing, FJ Fujian, GD Guangdong, GS Gansu, GX Guangxi, GZ Guizhou, HB Hubei, Heb Hebei, Hen Henan, HL Heilongjiang, HN Hunan, JL Jilin, JS Jiangsu, JX Jiangxi, LN Liaoning, NM Inner Mongolia, NX Ningxia, QH Qinghai, SC Sichuan, SD Shandong, SN Shaanxi, SX Shanxi, XJ Xinjiang, YN Yunnan, ZJ Zhejiang.

The majority of registered Buddhist sites belong to the Han Chinese Buddhism (28,087 sites). Of the 3,860 registered sites of Tibetan Buddhism, the majority are in the Autonomous Region of Tibet (1,780 sites), as well as in the Tibetan areas in Sichuan (783 sites), Qinghai (775 sites) and Gansu (226 sites). Tibetan Buddhism also has many adherents among the Mongols (Inner Mongolia: 170 sites). All 1,705 sites of Theravada-Buddhism are in Yunnan Province, which borders on Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam.

A slight majority of the registered Daoist sites belong to the Zhengyi-Tradition, but the ratio of sites of the Quanzhen- and Zhengyi-Traditions varies greatly from province to province.

The numbers in the SARA database clearly reflect some regional characteristics of the religious map of multi-ethnic PR China. Altogether, however, it seems likely that the figures of the SARA database mirror not only the religious reality but above all the differing ways of handling religious affairs and the official registration of religious sites by the authorities in the various provinces. In any case only a part of the religious activities take place within the officially registered sites and there are numerous non-registered religious sites.

Presumably in coming years the data on the religious sites of the other religions will be gradually filled in.



A young woman offering incense sticks in the Yonghegong Lama temple, one of the 26 registered Buddhist temples in Beijing. Photo: Katharina Feith.

## 2.4 Popular Belief in the City of Wenzhou (Zhejiang Province)

Until now, the traditional popular belief in the PR China is not officially recognized as a religion. There are increasing attempts at regulating the administration and registration of sites for popular belief activities on the local level but few statistics. Therefore, here we present some – surprisingly high – local data:

The City of Wenzhou has 8,579 registered sites of over 20 m<sup>2</sup> in size for activities of popular belief, far more than registered sites of the “five major religions,” which together number 3,961. These numbers are given by the Bureau for Religious and Ethnic Affairs of Wenzhou in a report about the adoption of the city’s 2013–2020 plan for sites for religious and popular belief activities that appeared on the SARA website on February 4, 2015.<sup>15</sup>

## 3 Islam

Approx. 23 million	population of the 10 predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities according to the census of 2010, that is 1.74% of the total population (Liu Xiaochun 2014, see below)
35,000	large and smaller mosques (SARA 2014)
40,000	mosques, of which 24,000 in Xinjiang, as well as around one hundred mosques for women (Guo-Xinhua 2016)
50,000	ahongs (imams) and mullahs (SARA 2014)
10	Qur’an institutes (SARA 2014)

15 “Wenzhou shi ‘Zongjiao ji minjian xinyang huodong changsuo zhuanxiang gui Hua’ huo shi zhengfu pizhun” 温州市《宗教及民间信仰活动场所专项规划》获市政府批准 (“Plan for religious and popular belief sites” of Wenzhou City approved by the City government), [www.sara.gov.cn//dfgz/203712.htm](http://www.sara.gov.cn//dfgz/203712.htm); cf. *RCTC* 2015, No. 2, p. 17.

### 3.1 Analysis of the Data of Muslim Ethnic Groups from the Chinese Census of 2010

Ten ethnic groups in the multi-ethnic People's Republic of China are considered Muslim. In the statistics presented by Chinese authorities or academics the number of their population is generally equated with the population of the Muslims in China. Consequently these numbers take into consideration neither the members of these ten ethnic groups who do not practice Islam or who adhere to a different religion, nor converts to Islam from traditionally non-Muslim ethnic groups. Nor do they differentiate between the many different Muslim schools and Sufi orders. Since ethnicity is officially recorded (whereas religious affiliation is not), the population structure of these ethnically defined Muslims can be more precisely analyzed than among the adherents of other religions. Liu Xiaochun of the Department for Resource Management of Tangshan Normal University – a member of the Hui ethnic group himself – published in 2014 just such an analysis in the periodical *Huizu yanjiu* on the basis of data from the last, Sixth National Population Census of 2010. It is presented in the following.

#### Muslim Population according to Ethnicity

According to the census of 2010, the Muslim population of the People's Republic of China comprises 23,142 million people. Their percentage of the total population has risen from 1.37% in 1953 to 1.74%. Two ethnic groups account together for almost 90% of all Muslims. They are the (mainly) Chinese-speaking Hui, with 10,586 million (45.74% of all Muslims – in 1982 the Hui were still 49.5% of all Muslims) and the Turkic people of the Uyghurs, who on account of a higher growth rate are almost as numerous with 10,069 million (43.51% – 1982: 40.8%).<sup>16</sup> Together with eight smaller Muslim ethnic groups they make up the following total picture:

Table 2: Muslim Population according to Ethnicity

Ethnic group	Population 2010 (persons)	Percentage of the total Muslim population (%)
Hui	10,586,000	45.74
Uyghur	10,069,000	43.51
Kazakh	1,462,600	6.32
Dongxiang	621,500	2.69
Kirghiz	186,700	Less than 1
Salar	130,600	Less than 1
Tadzhik	51,100	Less than 1
Uzbek	10,600	Less than 1
Bao'an	20,000	Less than 1
Tatar	3,556	Less than 1

Data: 2010 census. Table compiled according to Liu Xiaochun 2014, p. 71.

<sup>16</sup> Liu Xiaochun 2014, pp. 70-71.

### Regional Distribution, Mobility and Degree of Urbanization

Muslims live everywhere in China but in differing concentrations. The census data of 2010 show the following picture according to Liu Xiaochun:

At the provincial level, Xinjiang is the only region in which more than half the population (58.26%) is Muslim, followed by Ningxia (34.5%) and Qinghai (16.9%). Traditionally the Hui are dispersed all over China with local concentrations. 99.3% of the Uyghur, on the other hand, live in Xinjiang, only just about 70,000 Uyghurs live outside of Xinjiang, with the greatest group being in Beijing (6,975 persons). The other eight Muslim ethnic groups also live predominantly in the Northwest of the People's Republic of China:<sup>17</sup>

Table 3: Distribution of the Different Muslim Ethnic Groups according to Main Provinces of Settlement

Ethnic group	Main province of settlement with percentage of the respective ethnic group living in the corresponding province (%)
Hui	Ningxia 20, Gansu 11.9, Xinjiang 9.3, Henan 9.0, Qinghai 7.9, Yunnan 6.6, Hebei 5.4, Shandong 5.1
Uyghur	Xinjiang 99.3
Kazakh	Xinjiang 97
Dongxiang	Gansu 87.9, Xinjiang 9.9
Kirghiz	Xinjiang 96.7, Tibet 1.4
Salar	Qinghai 82.0, Gansu 10.3
Tadzhik	Xinjiang 92.5, Zhejiang 6.6
Uzbek	Xinjiang 95.7
Bao'an	Gansu 90.5, Qinghai 4.5
Tatar	Xinjiang 91.1

Data: 2010 census, according to Liu Xiaochun 2014, p. 72, Table 1.

Since – as Liu writes – “Muslims are good business people,” many Muslims have moved to other regions since the beginning of the policy of opening, especially to the east of China, where the Muslim population has increased. In some provinces (Northeast China, Shanxi, Anhui, Hubei, Hunan, Chongqing, Sichuan) on the other hand the number of Muslims has decreased since the census in the year 2000. That is due mainly to the decrease in the Hui population in these provinces, for which Liu states two reasons: the lower birthrate of the Hui and their migration to coastal areas or other economically developed regions. Thus in 2010, in the three provinces of Northeast China there were 47,900 Muslims (47,700 Hui) less than in the year 2000.<sup>18</sup>

According to the census of 2010, 21.5% of all Muslims lived in cities (*chengshi* 城市), 15% in towns (*zhen* 镇), and 63.5% in villages in the countryside (*xiangcun* 乡村). Thus the Muslims showed a far lesser degree of urbanization than the average population of the PR China (30.3% city, 20% town, 49.7% village). There were, however, clear differences between the ethnic groups. 46.41% of the Uzbeks, 39.82% of the Tatars and 34.07% of the Hui lived in cities compared to only 13.22% of the Salars and 11.53 of the Uyghurs. Among the remaining Muslim ethnic groups urbanization was less than 10%. The degree

<sup>17</sup> Liu Xiaochun 2014, pp. 71-72.

<sup>18</sup> Liu Xiaochun 2014, p. 72.

of urbanization of Muslim ethnic groups in the areas where they live in greater concentration is much lower than in the other provinces. For instance the degree of urbanization of the Hui in Ningxia is only 16.7%, in Shanghai however 91.92%, in Jiangsu 72.99% and in Guangdong 89.20%.<sup>19</sup>

### Educational Level

According to Liu Xiaochun a comparison of the data of the census of 2000 with that of 2010 shows that the educational level of the Muslim ethnic groups has risen considerably; yet in the majority of cases it is still below the average of the population as a whole. Only the Uzbeks and Tatars are educated to an above average level, the Hui are above the country average with *benke* 本科 (Bachelor) qualifications. On average Muslim men have higher educational qualifications than Muslim women.<sup>20</sup>

Table 4: Educational Qualifications in the Muslim Population (%)

Ethnic Group	No schooling	Elementary school	Junior middle school	Senior middle school	Technical college	Bachelor	Master
Population as a whole	5.00	28.75	41.70	15.03	5.52	3.67	0.33
Muslims	6.21	39.21	36.99	9.78	4.77	2.87	0.17
Hui	8.56	35.64	33.63	12.81	5.21	3.84	0.31
Uyghur	3.50	41.58	41.99	6.58	4.30	2.00	0.05
Kazakh	1.59	36.31	41.02	12.26	6.09	2.66	0.07
Dongxiang	17.65	64.83	12.42	3.09	1.28	0.71	0.02
Kirghiz	3.15	45.71	33.19	9.75	6.06	2.08	0.06
Salar	21.18	51.53	16.88	5.31	3.01	2.01	0.08
Tadzhik	3.50	49.78	29.98	9.05	6.52	1.14	0.03
Uzbek	2.04	29.27	29.77	17.64	11.24	9.58	0.46
Bao'an	11.02	59.61	17.36	6.86	3.43	1.66	0.06
Tatar	1.41	21.89	29.81	19.82	13.13	13.35	0.59

Data: 2010 census, according to Liu Xiaochun 2014, p. 73, Table 2.

### Professions

According to the data of the 2010 census, 69.52% of the Muslim population worked in agriculture, forestry, pasture farming or fishing – considerably more than the average in the total population, where the percentage lay around 48.36%. Only among the Uzbeks was the number working in farming lower than the nationwide average; among the Tad-

19 Liu Xiaochun 2014, pp. 72-73. – CFPS/SZW 2014 came to quite a different result, namely an above average high degree of urbanization of the Muslims in the comparison of the five major religions. According to this study the Muslim population in cities amounted to 1.2%, definitely more than in towns (0.3%) and in the countryside (0.4%). The survey was, however, actually only carried out in 25 provinces and excluded three provinces or autonomous regions with a high proportion of Muslim ethnic groups in the population (Xinjiang, Qinghai and Ningxia). Cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2015, pp. 21-22 and 26.

20 Liu Xiaochun 2014, pp. 73-74. A table with educational qualifications according to sex on p. 74, which is not reproduced here, shows that also in the total Chinese population men generally have higher educational qualifications than women.

zhiks, Dongxiang and Uyghurs it was over 80%. 6.1% of the Muslim population works in wholesale or retail trading, making that the second highest means of income. Among the Hui and the Uzbeks the numbers in wholesale and retail business were above the nationwide average. The proportion of the Muslim population in professions in the IT branch is lower than the national average (although here the Hui are above the national average), as well as in research and technology. The proportion working in education is higher among the Muslims than in the national average, especially among the Uzbeks, Tatars, Kazakhs, Kirghiz and Uyghurs, which in the opinion of Liu Xiaochun is a basis for further raising the educational level of the Muslim population.<sup>21</sup>

### Birthrate and Life Expectancy

Table 5: Women of Childbearing Age according to the Number of Their Children

	1 child	2 children	3 children	4 children	5 or more children
Muslim women	50.50%	33.72%	12.56%	2.42%	0.8%
All women	62.02%	31.46%	5.27%	0.97%	0.28%

Data: 2010 census. Table compiled from information in Liu Xiaochun 2014, p. 75.

The percentage of women with 3 or more children is considerably higher among the Muslim population than the national average. Liu sees in this a reflection of the state regulation according to which members of ethnic minorities are allowed to have more children. It is interesting to note that the ratio of sex, of boys to girls, is more balanced in the Muslim ethnic groups than among other ethnic groups in China [where there is known to be a problematic surplus of boys]. For this finding, Liu gives as a reason that “in Islam there is no concept of preferring boys to girls.”<sup>22</sup>



High life expectancy due to healthy nutritional habits: *Halal* foodstuffs produced according to Islamic regulations enjoy a good reputation also among the Han Chinese. Muslim restaurants are greatly popular, as here in the Muslim quarter at the Great Mosque of Xi'an. Photo: Barbara Hoster.

21 Liu Xiaochun 2014, pp. 74-75.

22 Liu Xiaochun 2014, p. 75.

The 2010 census showed that the Muslim ethnic groups produced 2.53% of all centenarians and older than centenarian in China. This ratio was considerably higher than the ratio of Muslims to the total population of 1.74%, which according to Liu's opinion is connected "inseparably to the good nutritional and living habits of the Muslims."<sup>23</sup>

## 4 Protestantism

### Believers

- 20 million Protestant Christians, of whom 70% are in rural areas, according to the information of the official Protestant bodies – Three-Self Patriotic Movement and China Christian Council.<sup>24</sup>
- 23.05 million Chinese, of whom 67.5% are baptized, consider themselves Protestant Christians (regardless of membership in formal or informal groups) – according to a household survey conducted in 2008/2009 by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS 2010).<sup>25</sup> The figure of 23 million is also given by SARA 2014.
- 23-40 million Protestant Christians (1.7–2.9% of the population) is the figure given by the state-run *Global Times* as the consensus of academic experts at a symposium held in Shanghai on 5/6 August 2014 for the 60th anniversary of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China.<sup>26</sup>
- 58.04 million Protestant Christians (4.3% of the population) is the estimate of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (PFRPL 2011).

Some international estimates of various sources are even higher. One example is the evangelical mission organization Asia Harvest which arrives at 83.5 million Protestant Christians in Mainland China.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore the Protestant churches of China have

- 21 (official) theological seminaries with 300 professors and 3,700 students (CCC-TSPM 2013).
- 56,000 churches and meeting places (SARA 2014).
- 48,000 male and female pastors and preachers (SARA 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Liu Xiaochun 2014, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> For some years these figures have been on the website of the official Protestant bodies under [www.ccctspm.org/quanguolianghui/lianghuijianjie.html](http://www.ccctspm.org/quanguolianghui/lianghuijianjie.html) (last accessed on Feb. 25, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> The results of the CASS study were presented in Malek 2011, pp. 32-33 and 51-53. For the resulting discussion, see Wenzel-Teuber 2012, pp. 30-32.

<sup>26</sup> Chang Meng, "Protestants in China estimated at 23–40 million," *Global Times* Aug. 7, 2014, [www.globaltimes.cn/content/874757.shtml](http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/874757.shtml).

<sup>27</sup> [Asiaharvest.org/wp-content/themes/asia/docs/christians-in-china/China.htm](http://Asiaharvest.org/wp-content/themes/asia/docs/christians-in-china/China.htm) (last accessed Feb. 25, 2015). Asia Harvest states 84 million Protestants for China incl. Hong Kong and Macau; after subtracting the numbers given by Asia Harvest for Hong Kong and Macau there remain 83.5 million for Mainland China. The same table gives the number of Catholics in China as 21.3 million (Mainland China 20.8 million).

## 5 Catholic Church

The following figures regarding the Catholic Church in Mainland China in 2015 are based – apart from the sources already mentioned – on data provided by the Holy Spirit Study Centre (HSSC)<sup>28</sup> of the Diocese of Hong Kong, which specializes in studies on the Catholic Church in Mainland China. We also give the data presented by the official Catholic governing bodies – this time according to a report by Bishop Fang Xingyao, Chairperson of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (Fang-PA 2014). Further important sources are the reports in the Catholic newspaper *Xinde* 信德 (*Faith*) (*xdb*) based in Shijiazhuang, and its website [www.chinacatholic.org](http://www.chinacatholic.org) (*xdo*), as well as the Faith Institute for Cultural Studies (FICS) which works under the same roof, the popular Catholic website *Zhongguo tianzhujiào zaixiàn* 中国天主教在线 [www.chinacath.com](http://www.chinacath.com) and the Catholic news agency UCAN (Hong Kong/Bangkok).

### Number of Catholics

Between 9 and 10.5 million – total number of Catholics according to estimates of the HSSC, including both the official part of the Church and the Catholics in the underground.

5.7 million number of Catholics according to SARA 2014.

6 million number of Catholics according to information of the official Catholic governing bodies (Fang-PA 2014).

9 million Catholics (0.7% of the population) according to estimates of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (PFRPL 2011).

13 million Catholics (1% of the population) according to data in the “UCAN Directory.”

### Dioceses

138 of which 116 are active, 22 inactive (HSSC)

97 according to the figures of the official Church

### Bishops

112 99 of whom are in ministry, 13 not in ministry (HSSC)

Of the 99 bishops in ministry there are

70 bishops in the official Church (HSSC)

29 bishops in the underground Church (HSSC)

According to data from various sources 8 of the Chinese bishops are illegitimate, i.e. not recognized by the Pope.<sup>29</sup>

28 We thank the Holy Spirit Study Centre for making available the figures regarding the Catholic Church in Mainland China (draft of February 15, 2016, status as of December 31, 2015) quoted in the following.

29 See Charbonnier 2013, p. 13, as well as Gerard O’Connell: “Progress with China?”, *America Magazine* May 11, 2015.

### Priests

- 2,500 in the official Church (HSSC)<sup>30</sup>
- 1,300 in the underground Church (HSSC)

### Seminaries and Seminarians

- 9 major seminaries (seminaries for philosophy and theology) with 425 seminarians (HSSC)
- 10-12 minor seminaries with 300 seminarians (HSSC)
- 10 underground seminaries with around 200 seminarians (HSSC)

### Sisters

- 3,170 in the official Church in about 87 congregations (HSSC)
- 1,391 in the underground Church in about 37 congregations (HSSC)
- 6,000 in about 70 congregations, with 3,000 in final vows (Fang-PA 2014)

### Sisters' Novitiates

- 87 in the official Church, with 50 Sisters in formation (HSSC)
- 37 in the underground Church, with 100 Sisters in formation (HSSC)

### Churches

- 6,000 churches and oratories (SARA 2014; Fang-PA 2014)

### Baptisms

For years now, the official Catholic governing bodies have given the annual number of baptisms in Mainland China's Catholic Church as 100,000 (Fang-PA 2014).

In 2014, for the eighth time running, FICS together with the Catholic paper *Xinde* provided baptismal statistics for Easter, the most significant baptism date in the year. For the first time the Institute worked on it in collaboration with the Chinese Catholic Research Office (Zhongguo tianzhujiao yanjiushi 中国天主教研究室) which is under the umbrella of the Patriotic Association and the official Bishops' Conference.

According to this data, at Easter 2015, 19,681 persons were baptized in the Catholic parishes of Mainland China (cf. Table 6), almost as many as at Easter 2014 (20,004 baptisms). Baptisms in the underground Church are probably only partially recorded. Since some dioceses have baptisms several times a year, the figures for Easter do not indicate the total number of baptisms.

<sup>30</sup> Data from the official governing bodies of the Chinese Catholic Church on the numbers of priests are partially higher than those given by HSSC for the official Church. According to Fang-PA 2014 the Catholic Church in China has 2,800 "young" priests (i.e. those trained after 1982).

Table 6: Baptisms in the Dioceses of Mainland China at Easter 2015

Province / municipality	Diocese	Number
Anhui		293
Beijing		500
Chongqing	Chongqing	300
	Wanzhou	212
Fujian total 1,577	Fuzhou	1,413
	Minbei	94
	Mindong	10
	Xiamen	60
Gansu total 387	Lanzhou	240
	Pingliang	49
	Tianshui	98
Guangdong total 1,085	Guangzhou	258
	Jiangmen	50
	Meizhou	338
	Shantou	267
	Shenzhen	98
	Zhanjiang	74
Guangxi total 504	Beihai	185
	Guilin	2
	Nanning	307
	Wuzhou	10
Guizhou		217
Hainan		12
Hebei total 3,368	Baoding	89
	Cangzhou (incl. Langfang)	500
	Chengde	45
	Handan	860
	Hengshui	148
	Shijiazhuang	243
	Tangshan	218
	Xingtai	1,141
	Zhangjiakou	124
	Heilongjiang	
Henan total 1,118	Anyang	540
	Kaifeng	52
	Nanyang	96
	Puyang	62
	Shangqiu	107
	Xinxiang	118
	Xinyang	39
	Zhengzhou	53
	Zhumadian	51
	Hubei total 339	Chibi
Jingzhou [Shashi]		24
Wuhan		126
Xiangfan		56
Yichang		28
Hunan		112
Jiangsu total 414	Haimen	42
	Nanjing	183
	Suzhou	46
	Xuzhou	143
Jiangxi		110
Jilin		154
Liaoning		635
Inner Mongolia total 604	Bameng	138
	Baotou	97
	Chifeng	96
	Hohhot	143
	Jining	130
Ningxia		50
Qinghai		26
Shaanxi total 1,420	Ankang	27
	Fengxiang	68
	Hanzhong	148
	Sanyuan	300
	Weinan	92
	Xi'an	187
	Yan'an	493
	Zhouzhi	105
Shandong total 1,052	Heze	98
	Jinan	213
	Liaocheng	104
	Linyi	248
	Qingdao	60
	Weifang	56
	Yantai	10
	Yanzhou	90
	Zibo [Zhoucun]	173
	Shanghai	
Shanxi total 1,523	Changzhi	50
	Datong	23
	Fenyang	350
	Jinzhong	115
	Linfen	141
	Shuozhou	132
	Taiyuan	568
	Xinzhou	30
Yuncheng	114	
Sichuan total 835	Chengdu	225
	Leshan	193
	Nanchong	270
	Xichang	48
Yibin	99	
Tianjin		63
Tibet Auton. Region		18
Xinjiang		44
Yunnan total 318	Dali	32
	Kunming	136
	Zhaotong	150
Zhejiang total 1,803	Hangzhou	148
	Ningbo	241
	Taizhou	23
	Wenzhou	1,391
<b>Total</b>		<b>19,681</b>

Source: *xdb* April 23, 2015.

At present far more people are baptized in the cities than in the countryside, states the report in *xdb*, and those are predominantly people who have come to the city for studies or work. The report stresses the importance of courses for catechumens, through which the baptismal candidates are systematically prepared for baptism in many places. In Xi'an for example these courses take about half a year, comprise 100 lesson units and close with an examination.

According to the report, the majority of those baptized were adults, thus first generation Christians. In Beijing, Shenzhen and Guizhou only adults were baptized at Easter (there was a different date for children). In the three provinces of Northeast China, in Yunnan and in Inner Mongolia 90% of those baptized at Easter were adults.

The dioceses of Hebei Province are still in first place with regard to absolute numbers (3,368) although with around 600 newly baptized less than in the previous year. In a few other dioceses the number of Easter baptisms also decreased. On the other hand, from



Alongside the catechumen courses for baptismal candidates (see above) the ongoing formation of the faithful after baptism has an increasingly important role. Here a young priest is giving a Bible course in the parish of Xilin, Tangshan Diocese, in early 2016. Photo: *xdo*.

2014 to 2015 the numbers of baptisms have more than doubled, for instance, in the Dioceses of Wenzhou (from 641 to 1,391) and Lanzhou (from 108 to 240). The increase was even greater in the Dioceses of Fuzhou (from 300 to 1,413), Pingliang (from 4 to 49) or Xinjiang (from 0 to 44) (*xdb* April 23, 2015).

**In the Diocese of Hong Kong** around 3,600 adults were baptized at Easter 2015.<sup>31</sup>

#### Possible Death of a Bishop in 2015

Shi Enxiang 师恩祥, Cosmas (1921–2015?), Yixian (Heb)

Bishop Shi was arrested in 2001 and has been missing ever since. It was reported that he died in custody in January 2015, however, that was later denied by the authorities.

#### Episcopal Consecration in 2015

Zhang Yinlin 张银林, Joseph, Anyang (Hen), August 4

#### Priestly Ordinations



New priest Wang Yueming distributing Holy Communion after his ordination in Tianjin on May 5, 2015. Photo: *xdo*.

31 Easter pastoral letter of John Cardinal Tong, Bishop of Hong Kong. End of March 2015, [www.catholic.org.hk/v2/en/message\\_bishop/y2015\\_easter.html](http://www.catholic.org.hk/v2/en/message_bishop/y2015_easter.html).

53 deacons were ordained as priests in Mainland China in 2015 (see Table 7). This was considerably less than in previous years – in 2014 there were 78, in 2013, 66 and in 2012, 78 ordinations. The figures come from different sources and are certainly incomplete; there were most probably additional ordinations in the underground Church which are not included here. According to some reports, there were isolated instances of members of religious congregations among the new priests.

Table 7: Priestly Ordinations in the Catholic Church of Mainland China in 2015

Diocese	Number of ordained	Ordination date	Names of ordained
Anyang (Hen)	2	April 25	Yu Songqiang 于松强, Li Jianhua 李建华
Fengxiang (SN)	3	Jan. 7 May 17	Hou Xinlong 候新龙, Li Pengliang 李鹏亮, Zhao Kai 赵凯
Guangxi	6	May 1	Wang Xianxing 王仙星, Hu Jing 胡景, Liu Wenpu 刘文普, Jiang Xinjian 江信坚, Mo Qingjian 莫庆坚, Ling Xingwang 零兴旺
Guangzhou (GD)	2	June 24	Zhang Junhe 张军和, Liu Yuzhi 刘育智
Guizhou	2	Sept. 6	Huang Dongxue 黄东学, Lei Yuanyao 雷远瑶
Haimen (JS)	1	May 9	Gao Dihua 高弟华
Harbin (HL)	3	Aug. 6	Zhang Xin 张新, Qu Mingwei 曲明伟, Fan Wengang 范文刚
Hengshui (Heb)	3	May 14	Guo Guiquan 郭桂全, Ma Aoding 马奥定, Zhang Shilun 张世伦
Jilin	1	June 11	Xu Feng 徐峰
Jinzhong (SX)	2	May 14	Wu Yuanjie 武渊杰, Qiao Jianqing 乔建青
Leshan (SC)	1	June 29	Wang Yu 王宇
Luoyang (Hen)	1	Sept. 22	Mu Yuanchao 慕愿超
Nanchang (JX)	1	Oct. 17	Sun Yongbin 孙勇彬
Nanchong (SC)	1	May 14	Xu Yongtao 徐永涛
Sanyuan (SN)	4	Oct. 28	Han Zhidu 韩智都, Zhang Lifeng 张立峰, Qin Ta 秦塔, Dou Teng 窦腾
Taiyuan (SX)	5	Nov. 21	Ren Jin 任瑾, Zhang Huijie 张慧杰, Qin Yudong 秦育东, Liu Ruo-qiang 刘若强, Liu Genqiang 刘良强
Tianjin	1	May 9	Wang Yueming 王月明
Tianshui (GS)	1	Aug. 23	Li Maolu 李茂禄
Xianxian (Heb)	4	June 11	Zhang Di 张迪, Liu Chongsheng 刘重生, Zhou Yan 周岩, Zhang Lun 张伦
Xinjiang	1	June 11	Jiang Ruixiang 江瑞祥
Zhaoxian/ Xingtai (Heb)	7	June 1	Wang Jian 王建, Ju Yunpei 巨云沛, Rong Gangyi 戎刚毅, Cheng Shichao 程士超, Cheng Hongfei 成鸿飞, Li Shuangzhi 李双志, Du Jianchao 杜建超
Zhoucun (SD)	1	Nov. 7	Jiang Yiyuan 姜贻元
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>		

Sources (2015): chinacath.com Aug. 9; gzcatholic.org June 27; sctzj.com July 10; xdo May 10, 11, 13, 15, 16 and 20; June 2 and 12; Aug. 26; Sept. 7; Oct. 18 and 30; Nov. 7 and 22; [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_500cf6040102vkph.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_500cf6040102vkph.html) and others.

## 5.1 Decrease in the Number of Catholics and Vocation Crisis

Last year for the first time the Holy Spirit Study Centre (HSSC), which since 2005 has reported the number of Catholics in Mainland China as 12 million, corrected the figures

Table 8: Number of Seminarians in the Catholic Church of Mainland China (1996–2014)

Year	Open Church		Underground Church	Total
	Major seminaries (candidates for the priesthood)	Minor seminaries (pupils)		
1996	1,000	600	700	2,300
1998	1,000	600	800	2,400
2000	900	700	800	2,400
2002	870	800	800	2,470
2004	710	740	800	2,250
2006	650	530	400	1,580
2008	610	550	400	1,560
2010	630	600	550	1,780
2012	533	490	450	1,473
2014	560	400	300	1,260

According to the table in Lam 2015, p. 42.

Table 9: Number of Sisters in Formation in the Catholic Church of Mainland China (1996–2014)

Year	Sisters in formation	Open Church	Underground Church	Total
1996		1,500	1,000	2,500
1998		1,500	1,000	2,500
2000		1,500	1,000	2,500
2002		900	900	1,800
2004		600	600	1,200
2006		320	230	550
2008		200	200	400
2010		100	100	200
2012		50	100	150
2014		50	106	156

According to the table in Lam 2015, p. 43.

down to 10.5 million. In an essay in *Tripod* No. 179 (winter 2015) Anthony Lam of the HSSC gave the reason behind this decision.

Lam first recalls that, with regard to the number of Catholics in Mainland China, there has always been a discrepancy between the figures given from outside Mainland China (including from the HSSC) and the figures given in China itself from the official side. Thus in 1988 Lam estimated 8 million Catholics, whereas the official Chinese number was 3.5 million; in 2005 Lam estimated 12 million Catholics, the official Chinese figure rose to 5.3 million. Lam ascribes the discrepancy between estimates from without and official Chinese data, which remained more or less in the same ratio, to the problem of Church “above ground” and “underground” and to the non-registered population, i.e. to the fact that some distant Catholic villages did not report births that exceeded the number allowed.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Lam 2015, pp. 38-39.

In 1998, or 2000 at the latest, according to Lam, the number of Catholics in Mainland China reached a “plateau,” i.e. a situation where the numbers of new members just balanced out the loss of members and no further growth took place. According to Lam, if we work on the premise of 12 million Catholics and on the general life expectancy in China as 75.6 years and if the average age of those baptized is conservatively set at 18 years, then it would take 210,000 new faithful annually just to balance the natural decrease in population – without counting other losses of Catholics (such as poaching by the “Eastern Lightning” sect). If really – as claimed by the official Church – annually around 100,000 people were baptized in the Church “above ground,” and as many again in the “underground,” one could reach the necessary number, Lam writes. He believes, however, that the number of baptisms in the official Church must be far lower, around 30,000 to 35,000 annually, since according to surveys of FISC, in the open parishes only an average of 21,500 people are baptized each year at Easter. Taking this situation into consideration, as well as all available data, Lam comes to the conclusion that the number of Catholics in Mainland China, taking the official Church and the underground Church together, is currently around 10.5 million.<sup>33</sup>

Anthony Lam cites several factors that are responsible for a decrease in numbers of Catholics in China, including also the inevitable change from rural parishes to modern, urban Church communities caused by globalization. The decrease in the number of faithful, according to Lam, leads to an aging Church which is one of the causes of the serious crisis of priestly and religious vocations.<sup>34</sup> Lam proves this crisis with two lists (see Tables 8 and 9 above).

The number of priestly ordinations is also decreasing correspondingly. Lam suggests that formation capacities released through the decrease in vocations could be used for the ongoing formation of the middle-aged priests. More Catholic lay persons should be trained, so that these can take on part of the work of the clergy later on. Lam additionally recommends promotion of the currently non-existent training of late vocations. In dealing with the challenges of urbanization he is of the opinion that the experiences of the Church in Hong Kong could be helpful.<sup>35</sup>

## List of Sources and Abbreviations

CASS [Chinese Academy of Social Sciences] 2010: Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan shijie zongjiao yanjiusuo ketizu 中国社会科学院世界宗教研究所课题组 (Research Group from the Institute of World Religions, CASS), “Zhongguo jidujiao ruhu wenjuan diaocha baogao” 中国基督教入户问卷调查报告 (An In-House Questionnaire Survey on Christianity in China), in: Jin Ze 金泽 – Qiu Yonghui 邱永辉

33 Lam 2015, pp. 39-40. He writes that a colleague in HSSC reached the number of 9-12 million Catholics in independent calculations, which corresponds to his result.

34 Lam 2015, pp. 41-42 and 37. – Lam’s theory of the aging of the Church is in contrast to the CRS study cited above, which reports that the Catholic Church has, after Islam, the second highest proportion (22%) of young believers under 30 years of age.

35 Lam 2015, pp. 45 and 42.

- (eds.), *Zhongguo zongjiao baogao (2010)* 中国宗教报告 *Annual Report on Religions in China (2010)* (Zongjiao lanpishu 宗教蓝皮书 Blue Book of Religions), Beijing 2010, pp. 190-212.
- CCC-TSPM [China Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement] 2013: Wang Dongyun 王冬昀 *et al.*, “Zhongguo jidujiao di jiu ci daibiao huiyi zai Beijing longzhong kaimu” 中国基督教第九次代表会议在北京隆重开幕 (Solemn Opening of the 9th National Assembly of Chinese Protestants in Beijing), Sept. 8, 2013, [www.ccctspm.org/news/ccctspm/2013/98/1398528.html](http://www.ccctspm.org/news/ccctspm/2013/98/1398528.html).
- CFPS/SZW [China Family Panel Studies / *Shijie zongjiao wenhua*] 2014: Beijing daxue zongjiao wenhua yanjiusuo ketizu 北京大学宗教文化研究所课题组 (Research Team for Religious Culture of Peking University), text composed by Lu Yunfeng 卢云峰, “Dangdai Zhongguo zongjiao zhuangkuang baogao – jiyu CFPS (2012) diaocha shuju” 当代中国宗教状况报告—基于 CFPS (2012) 调查数据 (Report on the Religious Situation in Today’s China – Based on Data from CFPS [2012]), in: *Shijie zongjiao wenhua* 世界宗教文化 (The World Religious Cultures) 2014, No. 1, pp. 11-25. A version of this text can be found online at [iwr.cass.cn/ddzjyjs/lw/201403/t20140311\\_16499.html](http://iwr.cass.cn/ddzjyjs/lw/201403/t20140311_16499.html).
- Charbonnier, Jean 2013, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China* 2014, Singapore.
- CRS [China Religion Survey, *Zhongguo zongjiao diaocha* 中国宗教调查] 2015: “Zhongguo renmin daxue fabu ‘Zhongguo zongjiao diaocha baogao (2015)’” 中国人民大学发布《中国宗教调查报告 (2015)》 (Renmin University of China Publishes “Report on CRS [2015]”), on July 7, 2015, uploaded to the blog of Wei Dedong 魏德东 (Renmin University): [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_3d25d0c90102vpc2.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_3d25d0c90102vpc2.html). The same text was also published undated on the website of the National Survey Research Center of Renmin University: <http://nsrc.ruc.edu.cn/news/510>.
- CSLS [Chinese Spiritual Life Survey]: Fenggang Yang with Anning Hu – Fan Jiang – R.J. Leamaster – Jun Lu – Zhenyu Tang (Center on Religion and Chinese Society, Purdue University), “Quantifying Religions in China,” 5-page manuscript of a presentation at the 7th Annual Conference for the Social Scientific Study of Religion in China, Beijing, July 26–27, 2010.
- Fang-PA 2014: Fang Xingyao 房兴耀 [Chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association], “Xieshou shenzhang jiaoyou gong yuan Zhongguo meng. Qingzhu Zhonghua renmin gongheguo chengli 65 zhounian” 携手神长教友共圆中国梦. 庆祝中华人民共和国成立65周年 (Clerics and faithful together hand in hand fulfill the Chinese dream. On the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the founding of the PR China), in: *Zhongguo tianzhujiao* 中国天主教 (Catholic Church in China) 2014, No. 5, pp. 4-6.
- Guo-Xinhua 2016: “Quanguo zhengxie weiyuan Guo Chengzhen: Zhongguo musilin zongjiao xinyang ziyou dedao qieshi baozhang” 全国政协委员郭承真: 中国穆斯林宗教信仰自由得到切实保障 (Member of the Political Consultative Conference Guo Chengzhen: Freedom of Religious Belief of the Chinese Muslims fully Protected), *Xinhua* March 2, 2016, according to [www.sara.gov.cn/mtjj/332597.htm](http://www.sara.gov.cn/mtjj/332597.htm).

- HSSC: Holy Spirit Study Centre (Shengshen yanjiu zhongxin 聖神研究中心, Hong Kong).
- Lam 2015: Lin Ruiqi 林瑞琪, “Zhongguo jiaoyou renshu biandong yu shengzhao weiji” 中國教友人數變動與聖召危機 (Changes in the Number of Chinese Catholics and Vocation Crisis), in: *Ding* 鼎 / *Tripod* No. 179, Winter 2015, pp. 37-45.
- Liu Xiaochun 刘晓春 2014, “Jiyu renkou diaocha de Zhongguo musuln renkou tezheng fenxi” 基于人口调查的中国穆斯林人口特征分析 (Traits of the Muslims of China Based on Census Data Analysis), in: *Huizu yanjiu* 回族研究 (Journal of Hui Muslim Minority Studies) 2014, No. 1, pp. 70-76.
- Malek, Roman 2011, “People’s Republic of China: Churches and Religions. Annual Statistical Overview 2010/2011,” translated by David Streit, in: *RCTC*, No. 1, pp. 32-59.
- PFRPL 2011: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (ed.), “Global Christianity. A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Christian Population” (with “Appendix C: Methodology for China”), [www.pewforum.org/Christian/Global-Christianity-worlds-christian-population.aspx](http://www.pewforum.org/Christian/Global-Christianity-worlds-christian-population.aspx), published Dec. 19., 2011.
- SARA [State Administration for Religious Affairs] 2014: Guojia zongjiao shiwuju dangzu lilun xuexi zhongxinzu 国家宗教事务局党组理论学习中心组 (Central Group for Theoretical Studies of the Party Group in the SARA) (ed.), “Woguo zongjiao de jiben qingkuang. Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi zongjiao lilun xuexi duben jixuan zhi er” 我国宗教的基本情况. 《中国特色社会主义宗教理论学习读本》节选之二 (The Fundamental Situation of the Religions in Our Country. Excerpt No. 2 from the *Reader for the Study of the Socialist Theory of Religion with Chinese Characteristics*), *Zhongguo minzubao* 中国民族报 March 19, 2014, uploaded to the website of the SARA on April 1, 2014 under [www.sara.gov.cn/llyj/63734.htm](http://www.sara.gov.cn/llyj/63734.htm).
- State Council Information Office 2015: “Tibet’s Path of Development Is Driven by an Irresistible Historical Tide,” [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-04-15/c\\_134152612.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-04-15/c_134152612.htm).
- Wenzel-Teuber, Katharina 2012, “People’s Republic of China: Religions and Churches. Statistical Overview 2011,” translated by David Streit, in: *RCTC* 2012, No. 3, pp. 29-54.
- Wenzel-Teuber, Katharina 2015, “2014 Statistical Update on Religions and Churches in the People’s Republic of China,” translated by Jacqueline Mulberge, in: *RCTC* 2015, No. 2, pp. 20-41.
- xdb*: *Xinde* 信德 (*Faith*) (Shijiazhuang), print edition.
- xdo*: *Xinde* 信德 (*Faith*) (Shijiazhuang), online edition at [www.chinacatholic.org](http://www.chinacatholic.org).

## Report on the Experiences Made by Religious Sisters in Mainland China with Their Present Efforts in the Work of Evangelization

*Sr. Teresa Yu*

*Translated by Anton Weber*

### I. The Context in Which We Are Working

#### 1. The Social Background of Present Day China

In order to come to an understanding of the evangelization work the Chinese sisters are doing, it is of utmost importance to be familiar with the local Chinese culture and the present economic situation. China has a history of 2,400 years of a feudal social system; within this feudal system the social position of women was very low, they were not allowed to receive an education, because the ancestors often realized that those women who had received education frequently did not know their place and would act in a way that violates women's moral code of behavior. The Confucian moral injunctions: *sanchong side* 三从四德 mean: 三从: children have to obey their father, the wife her husband, and when the husband dies, she has to obey her son; 四德: the four virtues – the virtue of the woman, the word of the woman, the appearance of the woman, the service of the woman. This was the norm for how the virtue of a woman was defined in old China in order to safeguard the stability of the family. There was a need to guarantee the patriarchal order for the benefit of the family, following the principal of “separating the inner from the outside,” and the doctrine “male respect, female humbleness.” According to the Confucian code of ethics regarding women, they are defined by virtue, conduct and self-cultivation as the norm of behavior. Even the great Confucius says: “Only women and people of low moral standards are hard to educate, if you get too close to them, they become arrogant and impudent; if you keep distance from them, they become angry and resentful.” (*Lunyu*, “Yanghuo”)

Beginning from the reform movement and opening up in 1978 until today, China's economy has made tremendous progress. However, faced with a complex value system, people in general lacked the ability to differentiate and easily got lost in a big haze. On February 12, 2014 the Central Government made an official statement on the core values of Socialism, the content: “prosperity, democracy, civilization, harmony, freedom, equality,

---

Sr. Teresa Yu is from South China. This text is her contribution to the 9th European Catholic China Colloquium “Challenges of Evangelisation – China and Europe,” Konstancin/Warsaw, September 10–13, 2015.

justice, rule of law, patriotism, diligence, honesty, friendship.” It is stressed that this comprises in condensed form the concept of values commonly acknowledged by the Chinese Communist Party and the entire society, it represents the inner aspirations of Chinese Socialism with its special characteristics, something the entire population is striving for, being the soul of the country’s invigoration, the foundation on which the country is established, the basis of a strong country. This picture of the central values of the country is to stand for the common ideal of society and the spiritual home of all the countless millions of Chinese people.

Through the emphasis on these central values it becomes obvious that the current society is rather lacking in any concept and orientation regarding its values. Professor Guo Yiping from the Central Party School said it in an article: “There are three big problems that might bring China to a road of no return!” (Guo Yiping 郭一平, “San da wenti, keneng rang Zhongguo zou shang bu gui lu! 三大问题, 可能让中国走上不归路!”, www.peopleinfo.cn, November 11, 2015). Once he said it so loudly that even the deaf could hear it, when he raised the attention and conscience of a great number of Chinese people. He wrote in his article:

*There are 30 years of reforms, the economy has considerably developed, but the belief of the people is lost. Money has become the shining sun in the hearts of the Chinese people. Money has become the primary and leading value in the value system, this definitely will create trouble. It is the biggest problem left over from the 30 years of reform. All the present chaos comes forth from the loss of faith. A value system has emerged in which, by common understanding of the entire population, money is considered the leading value.*

## 2. The Rise of Chinese Female Religious Orders under the Particular Circumstances of the Chinese Church

The Church living under these circumstances was also going through the experience of this kind of brutal and senseless encounter. Everybody knows that during the fifties of the last century the Chinese Church had to suffer complete confusion and go through great changes. The disturbances caused by religious persecution swept through all of China. Foreign missionaries were expelled from the country; the local bishops, priests, sisters and a great number of believers were put in chains and thrown into prison, following Christ on his way to the cross. There were no churches left, no chapels for prayers, nothing of a religious atmosphere at all; all in all there was just one real, atheist country. Faith was buried in the hearts of those loyal faithful who were still waiting for the resurrection of Christ. The Church, as on Holy Saturday, entered into deep silence and into mourning for more than 30 years; it was a time of suffering. This period produced heroes, the trials generated countless martyrs and saints worthy to be praised with songs and tears, shedding their blood, generously giving their life for the Lord. Thanks to their earnest intercession in heaven, finally at the beginning of the 80ies the Chinese Church could see the dawn of a new era; facing a thousand things to be done, she began on top of a mound of miserable ruins the difficult and hard work of reconstruction.

Fr. Heyndrickx once said:

*There is no doubt, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, established in 1957, did a lot of damage to the Catholic Church, not so much because she set up the so-called Patriotic Church, thus causing a division among the ordinary people, but rather because she brought a split right into the inner self of the sole, one Chinese Catholic Church. (Nan Huairen wenhua xiehui 南怀仁文化协会 (ed.), Yongyuan de Zhonghua chaoshengzhe 永远的中华朝圣者, Guangqi wenhua shiye 2007, p. 85.)*

The actual problem with this “inner splitting,” or better the creation of an “upper-ground” and an “under-ground” community through interference from outside, is not so much the result of an inner separation of the Church due to conflict and hostility, but much more due to a historic procedure. Because to “implement ‘the principles of independence and autonomy, self-management and democratic administration of the Church’ is incompatible with Catholic doctrine, which from the time of the ancient Creeds professes the Church to be ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic.’” (Pope Benedict XVI in his open letter to the Chinese Church, no. 7). Within those years that the Church has gone public, the two communities of the “upper-ground” and the “under-ground”, by continuing to fight over diverse and confusing theories and crossing verbal swords, have enormously reduced the power of evangelization. Pondering on this painful experience, both groups strongly feel that the Church can only survive if she grows and develops. By placing the blame on each other they hurt the basic spirit; then it is still better to roll up the sleeves, everyone going ahead looking for one’s own road of growth. The recent more than ten years were relatively quiet, each one keeping busy with spreading the Gospel and doing formation work with their personnel. Actually, it is exactly as one bishop put it: “The fact that there exists an ‘upper-ground’ and an ‘under-ground’ community has, seen from a certain perspective, the benefit that some more free room can be won from the government for the Church to survive, and that she is able to gain to a greater extent the right to be in communion with the Universal Church.”

From last year [2014] up to now, while nobody knows from where this hurricane came blowing, they started violently tearing down crosses from Protestant and Catholic churches. On April 28 it started in Yongjia County, Wenzhou City. The big Protestant church in Sanjiang, that had been built in 2012, costing 30 million and covering an area of more than 10,000 m<sup>2</sup> was the first one to be leveled to the ground in no time; until today within the province of Zhejiang more than 1,200 crosses were torn down.

At this moment in our history, although many difficulties remain, there are also at the same time plenty of opportunities, fortunate circumstances and challenges, mutually interwoven, engendering one another and hard to separate, facing us; we might as well call the situation: two sides of one entity. The Church is like a seed buried in the earth and sleeping for many years; as soon as it is caught by the first ray of sun, the ears of grain will begin to germinate with irresistible force. The number of the faithful is increasing dramatically. At the beginning of the 80ies, everywhere throughout the country the Church was backward both economically and culturally. A few old priests and sisters who had returned from prison were in urgent need of evangelizers who would help the faithful to study the Bible

and to teach the catechism. Then, by the end of the 80ies and the beginning of the 90ies, all over the country a great number of women's religious congregations could be observed arising and rapidly growing. Some of the sisters came from convents which had been established before the Liberation (1949) and were fortunate enough to survive the disaster and could come back from various places and start some community life anew. Some of them were familiar with the medical profession, some had served as doctors. These started teaching the younger generation the medical know-how and setting up clinics. Thereafter the convents grew overcrowded with vocations for religious life; Hebei Province became the place with the greatest number of faithful and religious vocations in the whole country. The beginning of the 80ies was the time of revival of the religious congregations. Some congregations even had more than 50 applicants in just one year. Presently in Hebei Province there are about 1,000 sisters belonging to the upper-ground and 700 belonging to the under-ground. In the whole country there are about 60 congregations with about 3,000 sisters belonging to the upper-ground and ca. 30 congregations with 2,000 sisters belonging to the under-ground. The congregation with the largest number has about 300 sisters, the one with the smallest number has 10 sisters. Most of the sisters are involved in pastoral work in the parishes. Besides this there are 120 clinics, 30 homes for the aged, more than 20 kindergartens, 6 orphanages, 11 rehabilitation centers, 5 offices for AIDS care, 4 leprosy service centers, 14 family care centers and students' help centers, 1 institution for retarded children. Furthermore there are shops for devotional articles, liturgical garments, candles, etc.

One thing is still worthy of mention – in Eastern China, Fujian Province, there is a rather unique form of religious life, the so-called “virgins”. Their religious charism is taken from the former Dominican Order; they lead a religious life at home and serve in the parishes, taking care of 5 homes for the aged, 1 orphanage and 1 kindergarten. In all there are 680 members.

## II. The Experiences of the Sisters with Evangelization

### 1. The Various Tasks Performed by the Sisters

#### A. Ordinary Pastoral Activities in the Parish together with the Faithful

China is a large country with an enormous population, confronting the Church with a huge area to develop. In certain areas the Church is developing with considerable speed but she is urgently in need of evangelizers to do a proper job. Up to now the Church still does not have a suitable and healthy system within the country to train lay people and entrust them fulltime with the spreading of the Gospel and thus solve the problem of worrying about the future. She relies on amateurs who are doing it in their spare time without receiving any remuneration for their services. Therefore most of the pastoral work in the parishes is the responsibility of sisters. Most of the sisters' congregations are diocesan with roots in the local Church and serving the local Church. There is no need to cross diocesan borders or take up overseas connections, thereby causing trouble. In recent years, as efforts to educate the faithful have increased, the pastoral work in the parishes

has become much more alive. Just to mention one example, in a church in the South with many Catholics, about 6,000, all the faithful are very busy during the day with their own business, but at night the church is quite similar to a school. They have 13 classes in all for various kinds of studies, for Bible studies, for catechetical studies, Church music, marital guidance, spiritual guidance, every week there is one study period. On Sundays there are 5 more study classes for the youth. Every class has 40 participants, with age groupings from the elementary school up to the adult groups of 40 to 50 years of age. During the summer vacation every year in July and August there is additional enthusiasm, with more than 500 students coming together in the church to attend the summer courses every night for 15 days. The heavy burden of arranging the study programs is borne by two sisters; for the summer activities they ask some competent lay Catholics to assist with teaching. For the music education a professional teacher is hired to give the classes and some able musicians from among the faithful are asked to help with the preparation. For the Sunday classes, 20 teachers from the kindergarten are volunteering to teach the children for free. The rest of the classes of religious instruction and faith education are given by the sisters. The three priests of the parish are busy enough taking care of the sacramental service to the 25,000 faithful belonging to this parish, but they are also ready to give classes in their spare time. In this parish more than 150 adults receive baptism every year, and also about 150 infants are baptized. The faithful are all very active, they arrange classes for catechumens, pre-marital guidance, care for the terminally sick, arrange visits to the sick, disabled, aged and weak among the faithful, they are also doing pastoral ministry in the hospitals (CPE), etc. Those serving in the hospitals are divided into 10 groups, each group has 10 people, and in all there are 100 people going to the hospitals in daily rotation, paying visits, praying for the sick and giving consolation and comfort.

## **B. Health Services during the Past Years**

While most of the sisters are directly engaged in pastoral ministry in the parishes, the second field of their activity is health care. Countrywide they provide health care in about 120 clinics. In the provinces of Shanxi, Shaanxi and Hebei practically all congregations run health care units or even hospitals. Sometimes these are as old as the congregations. Some of the congregations opened a clinic right within the compound of the church, providing medical service and at the same time being involved with evangelizing. In recent years the government is dealing rather strictly with health organizations and keeping them under supervision, checking up on medical expertise and testing the equipment; quite a few of the smaller clinics had to close down. But many could still continue and even proved to be among the best. For instance the congregation of The Missionary Little Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Linfen Diocese, Shanxi Province, with 60 sisters: more than half of them are serving in the field of health care. The congregation manages three hospitals: the Catholic Huozhou Tongde Hospital; in Linfen City the Catholic Lourdes Eye Clinic and the Catholic Hongdong Hongde Eye Clinic. They are all non-profit-hospitals, their spirit of universal love and their very special way of serving the people in the Linfen area and in the whole province are well-known everywhere.

### C. Charity and Care Services

Following the country's intensifying of the reform movement, a huge agricultural country of 800 million farmers was rapidly transformed into an industrialized and commercialized country, with the result that the young people from the country villages, in order to make a better living, started swarming into the cities in big crowds, bringing their wives and children along with them but leaving behind their old parents to take care of their home with nobody looking after them. Further, due to the Chinese policy of family planning, the younger generation grew less while the whole society began to age more rapidly; arranging a place for the aged to live and to nourish them became a matter of vital importance. Empty nests with only the elderly left are found everywhere, a great opportunity for the sisters to come in with their service. During the past more than ten years, the congregations have established more than 30 homes for the aged in various places. With loving care service and half profit institutions they attend to the lonely, weak and underprivileged population, helping them with their everyday life. Some of the places are rented, rather simple and outdated. This holds true especially for the homes of the aged run by the under-ground congregations. Some did not have any authorization from the government because their personal identity wasn't even acknowledged, so it followed that an originally purely compassionate, social project virtually became a religious institution. The situation was quite difficult, but it couldn't stop the sisters from giving their loving service to the aged. In Fujian the sisters of the congregation of the Little Sisters of the Merciful Heart in 2004 set up the "Renai Home"; they took into their care all those who had nobody at all on whom to rely, to help those left alone on the streets, the sick old people and those with mental disorders. Their everyday life, medical care until their passing away and their funeral, everything was taken care of in one coordinated process, administered by the sisters, including all expenses to be shouldered. "Renai Home" started by taking in three women with mental disorders left on the streets. Up till now they have taken in 84 people for care, among them 11 with a mental disorder; at the moment they still have in their home 43 people, 8 of them with a mental disorder, and 15 who can't take care of themselves. Their services are very much respected and honored by the people, even the government officials acknowledge it. However, what worries them is that the 20 years rent will expire soon, the house is dilapidated and they have no license. How to provide these old and sick and disabled people with a proper place to stay?

### D. Setting Up of Stations for Spiritual Care and Guidance

Now people are searching for money and reputation as never before, but in their hearts and on the spiritual level there is complete emptiness. They have lost any feeling for values. Life is completely emotionalized, pressure and stress are taking control, a sense of insecurity has become an observable characteristic in the attitude of the people of our times. According to a special report by Wu Xiaodong in the *Phoenix Weekly* 2009, No. 12 under the title "Investigation on the present situation of mental illness in Mainland China" (Wu Xiaodong 吴晓东, "Dalu xinli binghuan xianzhuang diaocha" 大陆心理疾患现状调查,

in: *Phoenix Weekly* 鳳凰周刊 2009, Vol. 12, No. 325; <http://blog.sina.com.cn/phoenix-weekly>) he mentions:

*A report of the Center for research and intervention on mental crisis in Beijing shows that in 1990 China had 25,600,000 cases of people with depression. According to related statistics of the experts, now in our country those suffering under depression already amount to 4% to 8% of the whole population, around 55,000,000 people. Besides this, a conservative estimate by the international conference on mental health says, in China probably 190,000,000 people need professional mental counseling service or treatment once in their lifetime.*

It is obvious that many frustrated souls in China are trying hard to find some sort of spiritual home. Establishing stations of rest for these exhausted souls will without doubt be good news for the future of Chinese society. Many religious congregations are right now moving in this direction, however, lack of professional personnel, lack of a suitable environment and the absence of funds for appropriate equipment create problems. They can only organize retreats for the faithful of the parish, provide some spiritual guidance or pay visits to the faithful and listen to their sorrows. In some of the better developed dioceses and congregations they have already set up formal retreat centers, provide counseling, and have formation centers and faith education institutes at their disposal, like the Life-Fountain Center in Hebei, the Ci'en Retreat Center in Hebei which is open for all priests, sisters and faithful in the whole country, offering retreats, spiritual guidance and all kinds of constructive activities throughout the year. The Hebei Ci'en Retreat Center officially started its services in September 2012, providing the brothers and sisters with prayer sessions, study sessions, spiritual exercises, encounters with God, encounters with oneself, encounters and reconciliation with others and with all creation, re-establishing the proper order and harmony of life, providing help to find one's inner peace and adjustment, healing and integration. The Retreat Center has 8 sisters working for the center, 6 of them with professional expertise in counseling, 11 of the employees are foreign helpers and laborers. The concrete annual program comprises individually guided retreats, accompanied spiritual renewal sessions, special training courses for religious persons entering midlife called: "Religious persons stepping into adulthood" and a three-month course for persons of the Consecrated Life who are burnt out from many years of service and are due for a sabbatical renewal year. According to an estimate from the end of this June, already around 2,000 persons have so far taken advantage of the services offered.

### E. Family Visits

The administration of homes for the aged is encountering a lot of difficulties; for example, for a Chinese it is hard to avoid facing the Chinese mentality that considers it unfilial behavior towards one's parents to send them into an old folks home. In recent years in some places they have tried to directly approach impoverished areas in order to look for people who need help, to offer compassion and provide services to the least of Christ's brothers and sisters. Beginning from 2007, the virgins in Fujian together with the faithful of the parishes have gone up to distant mountain areas to visit the sick and abandoned in

their homes and offer them loving care and help. Every Wednesday and Thursday they go regularly to carry out this charitable activity, sending all kinds of articles and food to the sick and aged, cleaning their homes, washing their clothes and cooking for them, and even bathing those who are not able to do it themselves, taking meals together with them, singing songs with them and entertaining them with various programs and sharing the Gospel message with them. At the moment they have more than 230 people participating in this service program; it is very much appreciated by the people. After the activities we often hear the people in the village saying: “The Catholic Church is doing a great job!” Every year due to this service there are about 40 people who receive baptism.

In one of the dioceses in Zhejiang Province, starting in 2006 the sisters, with the support of the diocese, have adopted a new, rather original approach to help families in the impoverished areas. They are providing the students who have left their home and dropped their studies with the possibility to continue their studies. They are mostly children from single parent families or orphans or from families where the parents are absent for a long time and are far away making a living, while the children are with their grandparents, missing the experience of a loving and peaceful family life. On one hand the sisters are trying through various channels to make contact with ordinary people but run the risk of being misunderstood and unjustly blamed of having a hidden agenda. They go from one house to the other, inquiring whether there are any homeless children; it's like looking after the lost sheep. On the other hand they have to try to find people who are financially better off and also ready to do something for the poor. With them they set up a charity partnership group whose members provide scholarships for the students. During the summer and winter vacation the students stay with their charity partner family to experience the atmosphere and love of a real family life and the joy of coming home. Besides this the sisters go to the school every month or to the family to visit them and bring their living expenses for that month and any necessary items, but especially to provide the students, who often suffer in their hearts from feelings of inferiority, with some particular guidance. Every year during the winter and summer vacation they bring the students who are interested to know more about the Church and her faith to the church to attend a catechumen course, free of charge for the services. 42 so far have registered for baptism and want to join the Church. Until now 109 students have already received this favorable treatment and have made their way from elementary school up to university. Among them are also quite a few who are non-Christians.

## 2. Challenges and Difficulties Encountered by the Sisters during Evangelization Work

### A. Environmental Limits and Restrictions, No Stable Dwelling Place

Busy with evangelization activities, the sisters very urgently need a decent place where they can stay and rest and enjoy community life. But the situation of the sisters involved in parish work in Mainland China is very particular. Usually two sisters live together in the church, taking care of the Catholics and their faith life in one or more parishes, including organizing the liturgy, visiting the sick and the old, assisting those who are approaching

the end of their life, arranging for study groups according to age. The study sessions are usually at night, the distances between the parishes being 5 or 6 km, some with distances of up to 20 and 30 km further away. Returning after the study sessions is naturally often quite inconvenient, so they will remain in the parish. In the course of one year they return to the convent once or twice for one or two months at different intervals. The rest of the time they stay in one or more parishes. In some of the convents the sisters answer the requests of parish priests according to need, doing their service in different phases, staying for two to three months and after finishing, returning to the convent. In this way the life of the community in every convent, besides the monthly recollection, has to be arranged according to the actual situation of each community. Furthermore, a considerable part of the under-ground communities do not have their own convent, they live at the homes of the faithful, but none of them can possibly take in the sisters of the whole community. Community life then becomes a great challenge. Moreover, if two sisters are living in a parish and also the priest has his residence there, life, cooperation and human relations can definitely cause a lot of inconvenience. Sisters who work in a clinic might have similar difficulties. Over the whole year two sisters are busy with their health service, they hardly have time to go back and participate in the community life. In the long run their sense of belonging to the community will become very weak. This will create a real conflict between the community life of the sister and her efforts for evangelization. The reasons creating problems appear to be quite realistic ones, the small number of sisters, the large demands coming from the faithful, the big area to be covered, the lack of a suitable place for the sisters to stay.

Not only the residence of the sisters causes problems, in many places where the sisters are administering homes for the aged, the living quarters create many difficulties. Although the government is now encouraging the private sector to establish old folks homes, as soon as this undertaking has to do with “sisters” who are not recognized by the government as “sisters”, this will be considered outside the norm, and to apply for a license will become extremely difficult. At the moment some old folks homes are short of means, the living quarters are rather primitive. A few times fire had broken out in some of the homes for the aged in the country, which caused the government to implement controls more strictly. Administering services without a license faces imminent danger, the order to close down might come anytime. A home for the aged in the South-East of China under the administration of a sister’s congregation that has more than twenty sisters and whose main occupation is taking care of this home for the aged, had to close two years ago. The place was rented, and when the government wanted to use it, the building was demolished and the inhabitants relocated. And since the sisters were without a license, they were not refunded. To make things worse, the congregation was not on good terms with the diocese, in the parishes they served also many problems existed. Now the sisters are very scared, they have troubles within the congregation and are worrying very much about their survival.

## **B. Lack of Maturity of the Congregation, Especially in Terms of a Sound Administration, No Clear Concept regarding the Characteristic Charism of the Congregation**

More or less one hundred congregations exist within the country, most of them founded in the 80ies and 90ies of the last century. The greater part of them was set up as new congregations by bishops and priests who were released from labor camps or who helped former congregations to become re-established. There was urgent need of them for propagating the faith. They did not understand much about the essentials of a religious congregation and about the procedure to establish one. Regarding congregations that had a history of a hundred years and were in need of renewal, they were rather confused about what Vatican II had to say about the new understanding of religious life in communities. For some of the congregations, in the beginning only the bishops and priests felt authorized to arrange matters for them and manage their spiritual affairs and needs. The costs of living were distributed by the diocese, expenses for traveling had to be reported, medical expenses were fixed depending on the situation, all was similar to the treatment of employees of an organization working for the diocese. The congregation seems to belong to the diocese, the relation between them is one of hanging on for survival. Due to the growing number of members and the expansion of activities, the problems of extensive increase, the shortcomings of human nature become more visible, cooperation will run into difficulties. Moreover, since a great number of sisters are working in the parishes, doing low priced manual labor or are involved in free-of-charge activities, they will have no income. In some rich, big cities and areas along the seashore where the faithful generously support the sisters, they can still barely sustain themselves. If some sisters' convents succeed in harmoniously living together with the diocese, the diocese might, when the congregation is meeting particular difficulties, make up the deficiency and help without hesitation; however, if the relation is hardened and stiff, then that's another cup of tea. If they are not independent economically, administration is defective and will for sure influence the work of evangelization. If in matters of the transfer of sisters, their communication with the outside world, a conflict of opinions exists with the priest, what rights does the sister actually still have, what is her identity? Is she a catechist? A social worker? No. ... There is still something more: in recent years the number of priests and sisters who have close and regular contacts with the Church overseas or are returning from studies abroad has increased to quite some extent. These sisters more and more realize that their congregation has to be independent and autonomous, develop their own activities or demand remuneration for their services and the energy they have invested. This, however, will cause misunderstandings, making people believe that the sisters are displeased with the actual situation and looking for another opportunity. Due to all kinds of reasons, presently the relationship of a considerable number of congregations in the country with the diocese is tense or even falling apart. Two years ago a congregation with more than 20 sisters in Henan Province was forced to dissolve because of the reasons mentioned; more than half of them entered another, neighboring congregation, the rest of them chose their own way out. In spite of things being like this, other congregations in the country are doing very

well and show a healthy development. They have their own projects or from the beginning the congregation was following its own standards and norms.

All these unhappy experiences are closely connected to the fact that the congregation was not able to live out its proper charism. Young congregations with young sisters did not experience a “charism fully alive” and have no idea of how to live a charism, so they are not able to demonstrate the special characteristic of their community. We are very grateful that in 2011 an Italian professor visited every congregation, explaining to them their proper charism and mission, so that the sisters could form a clear concept of their own charism. With regard to living out one’s charism, I believe that the Lord will provide guidance to any group of good sisters who are striving to grow in holiness, so they will be able to live out their charism, make it visible and let it become fully alive.

### **C. Insufficient Education, Particularly regarding Personal Maturity, Spiritual Formation and Professional Training**

The formation program of a congregation will safeguard a congregation’s growth to maturity. When the congregation was just established, the sisters all received their formation under the guidance of old sisters who were following the traditional concept. The observation of rules and regulations was stressed, blind obedience was expected, reasonable demands of human nature were neglected or even suppressed. Everything was unduly spiritualized, turning consecrated life into a high-sounding edifice in the air. Beginning from 2004 the Chinese Province of the Jesuits started a formation program for spirituality in Mainland China. Thereafter the priests and sisters who had studied abroad came back and set up all kinds of formation courses, working programs, and the sisters gradually realized the importance of formation of personality and character. True spiritual formation includes body, mind and soul growing into one integrated entity. However, the Chinese area is very large, congregations are spread all over the country, the level of openness is not the same everywhere, and an overall education system is hard to achieve. It is particularly difficult to find qualified formators and spiritual directors for all the congregations. The sisters entering religious life mostly have high school education as their cultural level, a few might have graduated from university, after 3 to 5 years they will usually pronounce their first religious vows. After their vows only a small number will continue to study philosophy and theology or enter some professional education program. If the sisters pass their initial stage of training and reach a certain level of personal maturity and also show some deeper understanding of the values of the Gospel message, body, mind and soul being equally developed, then they will receive further systematic formation. They then will start spreading the Gospel in a rather complex and intricate, secularized human society where values are dictated by materialism and hedonism, and give witness to the truth without being absorbed by a secularized atmosphere. This surely will not be easy for them. All the more if the formation left many deficiencies still remaining; how can an immature personality spread the Gospel? This concerns particularly those who belonged to the older generation and received no proper education but are now entering midlife and are still entrusted with burdens of responsibility on behalf of the congregation. It is like a boat

leaking underneath, paddling towards the ocean and its great turbulent waves in order to go fishing; isn't this risking to sink into its depths?

Besides, the China of today is no longer the same as before, its economy has dramatically developed, the standard of education of its citizens is rising every day, the society is in rapid progress, but the hearts are lonely as never before. The expectations and requests of the faithful towards the priests and sisters are extremely high, they expect that priests and sisters will help them not only in matters of faith, knowledge and proficiency, but hope even more that they can offer assistance with regards to their marriage, family problems, education of their children, personal relations, psychological matters, etc. and provide solutions. Facing these expectations quite often the only thing we can do is to admit our limits. In all frankness, we have to acknowledge our own limits, as well as the limitations of the Church in trying to help them, not being able to match their needs at all. We only ask the faithful to read their prayers, abide by the rules and regulations, not to divorce and tell them some excellent theories. Facing the pains and troubles in their hearts, the tragic situation of their marriage with all their difficulties, we don't dare to touch. If it is like this, how can we leave their broken hearts without comfort and consolation? How can we let them feel that Christ's Gospel message is providing them with joy and fortune? Furthermore, in today's secularized world, inclined to hedonism, to live out our consecrated life with its three vows has already become an extra challenge and trial. If we find it difficult to live out joy and freedom in our hearts, how can we bring joy to other people? If our relation with the Lord is distant and strange and our prayer tasteless, how can we bring God's love to people who are suffering? If our evangelizing is doctrine oriented teaching but lacking witness coming from a deep spiritual experience, then our evangelizing has lost its essential drive.

In China the Church still can be considered a weak and marginalized group, constantly behind the mainstream of society. We have no outstanding talents as at the beginning of evangelization at the time of Matteo Ricci, well-known far and wide, nor some influential organizations with great projects introducing the Church into society and making her known, this is also a difficulty we constantly have to face.

Due to many reasons the sisters everywhere feel less capable than they would wish, and they are suffering a lot of pressure. But being convinced that a thousand mile journey begins with the first step, we have to grasp this very moment, then the Lord will do the rest.

#### **D. The Supply Doesn't Meet the Demand, Lack of Qualified Catechists**

According to an estimate of the 2014 *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, the number of Catholics in China is about 12 million, ca. 3,500 priests, ca. 5,000 sisters. More of them are in the North rather than in the South; Hebei Province alone has more than 1,500,000 Catholics. In every diocese the number of priests and sisters in relation to the number of Catholics is partly more, partly less; however, supply does not meet demand; there is a shortage of evangelizers everywhere, this is a phenomenon all over the country. For example, the Diocese of Wenzhou has 120,000 Catholics, about 50 priests, 100 sisters, 188 parishes. Wenzhou City has 6.2 million inhabitants. Even without considering evangelization

of the non-Christians, just trying to keep and consolidate the present number of Catholics by developing all kinds of parish activities, how do you remunerate the 100 sisters who are doing their service right now? Furthermore, among these many sisters, not all are able to cope with the responsibility entrusted to them. If one is taking up too heavy a burden for her to carry, if she is forcing herself to do what is beyond her ability, isn't she just going to suffer? Actually these kinds of things happen quite often. The faithful have their expectations, the priest has his requests, maybe too much for a sister, she might just feel helpless, these are all facts the sisters now have to face in their evangelization work.

## Conclusion

An overall survey of the situation of the sisters doing evangelization work in China shows that there are those who weep going out to sow their seed, and there are those who come back singing for joy as they bring in their harvest. We are trying to cross the river by feeling the stones, but there are also some who are not aware of the power of the river and are carried away by the water. In a country like China, governed by socialism with special characteristics, Chinese sisters' congregations also have their local characteristics. Even though the prospects look rather difficult and challenging, God's grace will be all the more rich. God's Spirit will in an extraordinary way give guidance to the Church of China and carry it forward. We strongly believe that the Chinese Church of tomorrow will be better off, and Chinese sisters' congregations will be closer to sanctity. Finally, let us all pray to the Lord, and please – offer suggestions, contribute personal and material support, give generously and help each other. We also sincerely welcome publishing houses that have texts translated into Chinese, to provide intellectual property rights free of charge to support Chinese publishing houses, that God's wisdom may spread even farther and wider.

## The Priests' Responsibility in Communicating with Non-Christians

*Jean Charbonnier, MEP*

My concern with this question originates from the experience of Chinese priests who spent about five years in France for theological studies. A few of them were from the Diocese of Zhouzhi in Shaanxi. Some of these students were supported by our Paris Foreign Missions Society, others by the Assumptionists. At least five of them failed to find their way into a Church ministry after going back to China. Some got married and came back to France. Others felt that there was no room for them in their diocese, all the churches having their parish priest. Without holding a post as a parish priest, they would have no income and no work. They were priests for Catholics. They were not aware that priests may be good shepherds to all men.

### A. What Are the Reasons for This Lack of Awareness?

1. The remote cause may be their growing up in **the ritual Catholic family tradition** of a village Catholic community, strongly structured around reception of sacraments and practice of devotions. The parish priest in such a community is fully occupied in administering the sacraments. He is highly respected whatever his lifestyle. Even among very poor farmers, he lives a comfortable life. If he gets in touch with non-Catholics, it is usually to care for catechumens who are brought to Church by Catholic friends.

2. A further cause may have to be sought in a **Seminary formation** that stresses canonical duties in the administration of sacraments and self-discipline in keeping away from the evils of a pagan society that is becoming worse and worse with modernity. Some openings, however, may be secured when non-Catholic lecturers are invited to give courses in the seminary on local religions, history, social sciences. Deacons may have a year of pastoral experience before they are called to priesthood. Has the course in apologetics been updated? Are they prepared for a meaningful dialogue in which they respect and understand the views of their partner?

3. For a number of priests sent to Europe there may be a **lack of pastoral experience**. They were sent to Europe immediately after being ordained or even before. Once in Europe, they suffer in learning the foreign language, abstract theological expressions and

---

Fr. Jean Charbonnier MEP, Missions Etrangères de Paris, France. This text is his contribution to the 9th European Catholic China Colloquium "Challenges of Evangelisation – China and Europe," Konstancin/Warsaw, September 10–13, 2015.

methods of work based on a critical approach which is not familiar to them. Few offer a pastoral service even among Chinese Catholics. They enjoy comfortable surroundings and can easily acquire gadgets of an enjoyable life. Challenged by non-believers, they do not know how to witness the essentials of our Faith. They fail to understand the meaning of Christian faith in daily life and are not prepared to discuss it with non-Christians.

## B. Can the Non-parochial Experience of French Priests Apply to the Chinese Context?

One or two decades before the 2nd Vatican Council, a number of initiatives were taken by priests who advocated immersion among non-Christians. Charles de Foucauld's witness among Tuaregs in the Sahara inspired Fr. René Voillaume's book *Au Coeur des masses*. The Little Brothers and Sisters of Jesus were founded to live God's saving love among non-Christians. This would inspire priests as well. The "Mission de France" was founded with priests who could exercise their priestly ministry outside the parish context. Also priests of the Prado in Lyon were ready to share the life of workers in the secular world. A number of vocations to the priesthood came from lay apostolate movements such as the Young Christian Workers. "Catholic Action" developed in the 50ies with a purpose of sharing the Gospel spirit and witnessing its requirements in a secularized society.

In Europe, the purpose of these movements and foundations was to reach out to areas of society which had drifted away from the Church. Priests had to drop their clerical habit and outlook in trying to reconcile with people who had suffered from the Church in their school education or from the behavior of some Church people. Educated people often were trained in the spirit of the French Revolution and of the French philosophers who had prepared the revolution, such as Voltaire and Rousseau. It was a spirit of revolt against the authority of the Church and its privileges. Such hostility does not exist in China even though Marxist leaders may have absorbed some western criticism of religion. Enlightened Chinese intellectuals hostile to religion learn from Auguste Comte. They have a scientist's approach to the superstitions of "feudal" society. But Christianity to them is in fact associated with modernity. Their defiance of Christianity is due to their historic experience. They keep in mind the imperialistic role of Christianity due to the French protectorate during the colonial era. They have a patriotic, anti-foreign mind.

In China, religion never enjoyed the power it had acquired in western society. Religions are part of the existence and accepted as such. Christianity today may even be favored as an ingredient of democratization and sound modernity. The process of urbanization in China destroys traditional village communities. New dynamic Catholic life develops in large cities. Catholics are urged to interiorize their faith and make it a basis of their vision of existence (人生观). Daily mixing with non-Christians, they have more opportunities to give an account of their ideals. Are the priests prepared to respond to these challenges and to guide the faithful in their mission to the world?

## C. Updating priestly formation in the Chinese context

The ability of the priest to communicate and dialogue depends on psychological and intellectual foundations. Training in the seminary may have to be updated to take these requirements into account.

Psychological formation may be improved by providing more opportunities for encounters with non-religious youth or youth belonging to other religions. There may be programs of vacation time immersions in non-Catholic surroundings or services in cooperation with non-Catholic welfare organizations. Self-centeredness, fear of exchange, the escape into silence have to be checked and fought against. Sociability, welcome of unknown people, propensity to trust others have to be developed.

Intellectual formation should include the critical approach of Chinese writers who opened the way to a sense of personal responsibility and social consciousness. While loving their Chinese heritage, some of these modern writers were critical of the formalistic and hypocritical aspects of the Confucian tradition.

Catholic urge for inculturation has been too much focused on the Confucian stream. Other streams of the Chinese culture might be closer to the gospel message. The Daoist masters encourage inner liberation and creativity. Buddhist criticism of the ego and concern with suffering souls may be associated with the Christian mystery of salvation. Modern writers of the New Literature movement in the 1920ies applied to the Chinese conservative context what they learned from the criticism of traditional Christianity by Western writers. They denounced the servile mentality produced by conservative Confucian norms. Lu Xun in his *Nahan* 呐喊 collection of short stories was inspired by Russian Christian writers and by Nietzsche in his criticism of a paralyzing type of Christianity. He also drew inspiration from the Chinese stream of Zhuangzi and of Buddhist thought. It would be appropriate to introduce the study of his works in the seminary cycle of philosophy. Political cadres may not agree on this.

Seminarians and young priests might learn from communicating with university students who do research work on Christian history and thought with a scientific and objective approach. The Beijing theological course for university students initiated by Fr. Peter Zhao Jianmin is a great experience which should inspire seminary students.

## D. The Status and Mission of Priests in Secular Society

In the Church mission to the world there is a scope for priests involved in secular activities. As priests, however, they come under the bishop's authority and have to fulfil their mission in communion with their fellow priests. This may be achieved in different ways:

### Religious Priests

Priests who belong to a religious society, Jesuits, Franciscans, Lazarists, are secured in their vocation by their rules, their spirit and their regular links with their community. In China, however, they are not supposed to belong to religious societies which have supe-

rriors overseas. This may deprive them of gatherings and spiritual exercises which would support their faith.

### Priests' Societies

Are there priests' societies in China offering a strong link and support to the members?

Do associations such as "priests of the Sacred Heart" provide strong links and moral support to their members?

Priests in China are diocesan priests. Do their bishops enjoy enough authority and personal links with them? Is there a senate of priests and are there regular meetings of priests in the various districts of a diocese?

### Challenges to Priests in Secular Surroundings

Are priests involved in secular commitments different from lay people? Why should they keep loyal to their priesthood?

Does their priesthood mean a specific contribution to evangelization?

Practically their main difference with lay people is their celibacy. It may be a sign of their belonging to Christ. It may be a reminder that as priests they are called to act as "another Christ" with a mission to teach and sanctify. *Sacerdos oportet docere et sanctificare*. In Europe secularized Catholics may be aware of this and expect this service from a priest. In China, being celibate is not so meaningful, but it can be explained.

Can these priests teach the faith? Eventually they may assist in parish work and preach the homily at the Sunday mass. But their mission to announce the Gospel of Salvation is fulfilled in friendly dialogues with their co-workers, or with their students if they teach. They just have to answer their questions in a meaningful way. How can they "sanctify"? They may help on occasion by hearing confessions, but their way to sanctify is more in communicating the call to holiness through their own witness to humility, service, charity.

Can a parish be asked to support a **resident priest** committed to external missions?

It is probably the case for a number of priests. It is no problem in Europe. Do Chinese authorities tolerate a mixture of professional service in a hospital or in a school with other services in the Catholic community?

In any case, these reflections and suggestions call for an updating with reference to the latest developments in the Church life in China. It is up to the Chinese priests to find their own way. They may find outstanding models in their own ranks.

## Challenges and Opportunities of Formation Programmes for Chinese Students – The Example of Ireland

*Norman Jennings*

### Introduction

My name is Norman Jennings and I am a priest member of St Columban's Missionary Society. I was ordained in 1966 having studied philosophy and theology in a pre-Vatican 2 seminary. After Ordination I was sent on mission to South Korea where I spent the next 12 years. After studying Pastoral theology and Counselling in the US and becoming a supervisor in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) I was assigned to the Columban Formation in Maynooth, Ireland, in 1983. I was a member of the formation team for 10 years and Rector for the last 6 years. Since 2000 I have been a member of the Columban out-reach to the Church in China and Co-ordinator of the China Formation Programme where suitable personnel from China are sponsored by the Columban Fathers to study in Ireland and having received their degrees return to China to teach in a seminary or Formation programme.

### Student Formation in Ireland in 1983

With the decrease in numbers joining seminaries in Ireland a “rationalization process” had taken place after Vatican 2. Academic training was offered in one or two Colleges/seminaries, e.g. Maynooth and Kimmage, and other areas of Formation – spiritual, pastoral, psychological – were done by each Congregation separately in their Formation House. This meant that Societies like the Columban Fathers had to move from their “own” seminary in Dalgan Park, Navan, to the seminary in Maynooth in order for students to receive their academic training. This was a huge paradigm shift for us. The Formation staff were trained to deal with the spiritual, pastoral, psychological aspects of formation, so apart from the academic, the needs of each student were addressed in the Formation House where both the staff and students lived.

---

Fr. Norman Jennings, St. Columban's Missionary Society, Ireland. This text is his contribution to the 9th European Catholic China Colloquium “Challenges of Evangelisation – China and Europe,” Konstancin/Warsaw, September 10–13, 2015.

I was responsible for the Pastoral Training and Supervision of the students. Students did pastoral ministry every week and reflected on their experience in a small group of no more than 6/7 students. Each student spoke out of his own personal experience and what he considered to be the needs of the patients he had visited. He wrote this up in a verbatim outline so his experience was available in writing to the other members of the group.

## Two Important Changes from the Pre-Vatican 2 Model

The first change was that the Academic Training was separated from the other areas of Formation, so whether the student had reached the required academic standard to progress to the next stage of his training was decided by the College he attended and not by his Formation team.

Secondly, the group process modality was now integral to the pastoral, spiritual and psychological training and development of each student. Students were expected to participate in the group, not only by sharing their knowledge and thoughts about the subject under discussion but also what feelings or emotions came up for them as they reflected on how best to use this learning in the pastoral situation. A holistic approach to learning was fostered and the focus of the formation was on integration. On the whole I found that the young seminarians were much more in touch with their feelings and much more open to sharing them than my generation was. At times they did not find it easy to share out of their experience but nevertheless they were open to the process.

## Contact with China

In the mid-80ies Columbans were again able to enter China and meet with Bishops, Priests and Sisters. After some time Columbans began to receive requests from Bishops and Religious Superiors to help with the on-going formation of Chinese Priests, Sisters and lay people. In the mid-90ies we began to sponsor Priests, Religious Sisters and lay people recommended by their Bishop or Religious Superior to come to study in Ireland with the understanding that, having completed their studies, they would return to China and be at the service of their local diocese or Catholic community.

**Two Important Points:** The Priests and Sisters who came to Ireland to study had completed their seminary/religious formation and were ordained or finally Professed. They were not students.

Their formation had taken place in seminaries/religious houses that were based on the pre-Vatican 2 model with its emphasis on academic learning. They had received little or no training in the process model of formation/education which was in place in formation programmes and educational establishments in Ireland at this time.

## Challenges for Chinese Students

Coming from a pre-Vatican 2 model of seminary training into a process orientated model where the emphasis was on sharing what the particular learning (theology, scripture, etc.) meant to them and how it affected them personally was very difficult for most. One major difficulty was language. Sharing one's thoughts and feelings needed a higher standard of English than was required for academic study. We found that, having arrived in Ireland, most students needed an intensive English language course before undertaking their study.

Secondly, sharing their thoughts and feelings in a public way was foreign to them. We realised that most students only did this type of sharing in the sacrament of penance when in the seminary or formation houses. They found it difficult in the beginning to distinguish between sharing their feelings and emotions in the reflective process and sharing their moral faults and failures. They thought wrongly that we were asking them to share their moral faults and failures which of course we were not requesting. Moral faults and failures (sins) were confessional matter for sharing only in confession and not in a process group. They struggled with this distinction. Nevertheless we continued to emphasise that the ability to share one's feelings be they positive or negative in a process group is a good way of integrating the rational with the emotional parts of oneself into the mature whole.

## Opportunities for Chinese Students

As well as the academic courses in Theology and Scripture available in Dublin, the Jesuits in Manresa offer courses in Spiritual Direction which introduce students to the basic principles of Spiritual Direction. Fr. Michael O'Sullivan also gives an excellent one year MA course in Spirituality.

There are also two Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) centres in Dublin, at the Mater hospital and at St Vincent's hospital. The Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, Ireland, is concerned with a holistic approach to health, well-being and personal development with a special focus on spiritual and religious care. Courses are offered up to and including Supervisory level in Clinical Pastoral Education.

Chinese students coming to Ireland will experience an Irish Church that is coming to terms with a serious decline in its influence and is facing a big challenge to its significance and relevance among the young and the middle-aged. Formerly this was not the case. But the students will also find a lot of people in Ireland coming from a strong faith background trying to make sense of their faith today and how best to pass it on to the next generation. In this situation they may be surprised to find the topics of faith, religion and spirituality featuring very regularly in the papers and discussed on radio and TV. When living in Ireland they will become part of this struggle.

## Imprint – Legal Notice

ISSN 2192-9289

**Publisher:**

China-Zentrum e.V.  
Arnold-Janssen-Str. 22  
53757 Sankt Augustin  
Germany

**Managing editors:**

Katharina Feith, Katharina Wenzel-Teuber

**Assistant editor and layout:**

Eveline Warode

**Web editor:**

Jan Kwee

**Collaborators of this issue:**

Sr. Jacqueline Mulberge SSPS  
Fr. David Streit SVD

**Calligraphy:**

Yang Xusheng

**Editorial submission deadline:**

June 9, 2016

**Contact:**

China-Zentrum e.V.  
Arnold-Janssen-Str. 22  
53757 Sankt Augustin  
Germany  
Phone: +49 (0) 2241 237 432  
Fax: +49 (0) 2241 205 841  
www.china-zentrum.de

**Bank account:**

Name of the bank: Steyler Bank GmbH  
Bank address: Arnold-Janssen-Str. 22,  
53757 Sankt Augustin, Germany  
Account holder: China-Zentrum e.V.  
Account number: 17 881  
Bank code: 386 215 00  
IBAN DE 94 3862 1500 0000 0178 81  
BIC GENODED1STB

**Religions & Christianity in Today's China** is an e-journal published four times a year. It is freely available on the website of the China-Zentrum, [www.china-zentrum.de](http://www.china-zentrum.de). Part of the contributions of each issue are translated from *China heute. Informationen über Religion und Christentum im chinesischen Raum*, the German language journal of the China-Zentrum.

The articles and news items featured do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publisher.

The articles of the Journal **Religions & Christianity in Today's China** are copyrighted and must be treated like any other published articles. Users may read, download, copy, distribute, print, search or link to the texts of these articles for personal or academic purposes. Reprints in other media and all commercial uses must receive prior written authorization from the editors.

For the publication of **Religions & Christianity in Today's China** the China-Zentrum is dependent on the generosity of its friends and readers. In order to help us cover inevitable costs, we ask that you consider sending in a voluntary contribution. If you so wish, for tax purposes we can issue you a receipt for your donation that will be recognized by German tax authorities.

