

## News Update on Religion and Church in China November 14, 2018 – March 29, 2019

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*The “News Update on Religion and Church in China” appears regularly in each issue of Religions & Christianity in Today’s China (RCTC). Since the editorial staff learns of some items only later, it can happen that there are chronological overlaps between “News Updates” of two consecutive issues of RCTC. In these cases stories referred to in earlier “News Updates” will not be repeated. All “News Updates” can be found online at the website of the China-Zentrum ([www.china-zentrum.de](http://www.china-zentrum.de)). – The last “News Update” (RCTC 2019, No. 1, pp. 3-19) covered the period September 29 – November 26, 2018.*

### Politics, Human Rights

February 19, 2019:

#### An “app” for Xi Jinping’s teachings

This app has the Chinese name “Xue Xi qiang guo,” 学习强国, which can be translated: “learn to strengthen the country.” The app was released by the Propaganda Department of China’s Communist Party in collaboration with Ali Baba. It quickly became a success and by mid-February was by far the most popular app on Apple China’s web store. According to *The Standard* [Hong Kong], this popularity can be attributed to a decision by local governments and universities to “encourage” party members to download the app. As of February 19, the app had been downloaded 43.7 million times, a number confirmed in April by MERICS (The Mercator Institute for China Studies).

The Chinese name “Xue Xi” also conceals a play on words here, since in modern Chinese “xuexi” means “studying, learning.” Here, however, it also can be read as “studying Xi,” whereby “Xi” of course stands for the current Chinese President Xi Jinping. So this is therefore an app that can be used to study the teachings of Xi Jinping. MERICS describes the app as follows: “The app [...] offers a collection of speeches, videos and learning materials about Xi Jinpings’s take on how to make China a strong nation.” Users, who must first register and then sign in using their own names, receive points for completing certain tasks. These points can be used as a reference for their employers or the Communist Party. Building up a high score through repeated visits to the site, users become eligible for different kinds of rewards at a later date. *AsiaNews* reports that those with higher scores might receive tickets to local attractions, or coupons for some stores which agree to give extra discounts to high scorers (*AsiaNews*, April 1, 2019; MERICS *China Update*, April 2019; *The Standard* [Hongkong] Feb. 19, 2019).

March 15, 2019:

## At the conclusion of the UN Human Rights Council’s “Universal Periodic Review” of China, the country defends its “vocational training centers” in Xinjiang – Experts say there may be as many as 1.5 million people interned in them

China’s Deputy Foreign Minister Le Yucheng told the UN Human Rights Council that the authorities in Xinjiang have adopted measures against “violent terrorist crimes” and in support of “de-radicalization,” without which terrorist attacks would have escalated in Xinjiang and spread across China and around the world. “As the counter-terrorism situation improves, the training program will be gradually downsized,” Le said further, according to *Reuters*. Similarly, on March 12 of this year, Shohrat Zakir, governor of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, said in an aside during the National People’s Congress, that the vocational training centers would “gradually disappear.”

According to *Reuters*, on March 13, prior to the Human Rights Council meeting, Adrian Zenz, a leading independent researcher on China’s ethnic policies, said in a revision of his earlier figure of 1 million, that it is possible that as many as 1.5 million Uighurs and other Muslims are being held in the centers in Xinjiang (*AsiaNews* March 13, 2019; *Reuters* March 15, 2019; see also *China heute* 2018, No. 2, p. 76 [in German]; *RCTC* 2019, No. 1, pp. 8-10).

March 18, 2019:

## China publishes white paper “The Fight Against Terrorism and Extremism and Human Rights Protection in Xinjiang”

The White Paper contains, among other things, a kind of statistics on “violent terrorism” in Xinjiang between 1990 and 2016, including also the violent riots in Urumqi in 2009, as well as numerous attacks on civilians and police stations, especially in 2013 and 2014. One section deals with “assassinating religious leaders.” It says that, from 1993 to 2014, six mullahs or imams were attacked (four of them were killed, two were seriously wounded), all of whom held functions in national or local Islamic associations. According to the White Paper, since 2014 1,588 “violent and terrorist gangs” have been broken up and 12,995 terrorists arrested in Xinjiang. 30,645 people were punished for 4,858 illegal religious activities. According to the White Paper, the “education and training centers” serve to rehabilitate people guilty of minor crimes or breaches of law and to eradicate the influence of terrorism and extremism. “Trainees can have home visits on a regular basis and can ask for leave to attend to private affairs,” the White Paper claims. The organization of and participation in religious activities is prohibited in the centers since, “in accordance with the law, the centers adopt a policy of separating education and religion” (the full text in English can be found at [http://english.gov.cn/archive/white\\_paper/2019/03/18/content\\_281476567813306.htm](http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2019/03/18/content_281476567813306.htm)).

## Religious Policy

January 25, 2019:

## Guidelines published for the registration as a “legal person” of sites for religious activities

For years now, religious sites have repeatedly demanded the right to acquire the status of a legal person before the law in order to be able to carry out legally binding acts in their own name, for example, the

conclusion of contracts and the registration of property. The revised “Regulations on Religious Affairs,” which came into force on February 1, 2018, provide for the first time, in article 23, that sites for religious activities meeting the requirements for legal personhood, may register as legal persons with the civil affairs departments upon the consent of the respective local religious organization and the local religious affairs department. The “Notice of the National Administration for Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Civil Affairs on Handling the Registration of Sites for Religious Activities as Legal Persons” (国家宗教事务局 民政部关于宗教活动场所办理法人登记事项的通知) now sets out in detail the procedures to be followed when registering as a legal person. It was published online at [www.mca.gov.cn](http://www.mca.gov.cn) on January 25, 2019 and took effect on April 1 (see the German translation of this document in *China heute* 2019, No. 1, pp. 18-20).

According to an explanation published on the website of the Lingyin Temple, registration of a religious site as a legal person is voluntary.

The General Provisions of the Civil Law (GPCL) of the People’s Republic of China, to which the new provisions refer, recognize different categories of legal persons. Religious activity sites claiming the status as a legal person fall into the subcategory of “donation[-based?] legal persons” (捐助法人) of the category of “non-profit legal persons” (非营利法人) (see article 92 GPCL). According to article 93 GPCL, donation[-based] legal persons, in addition to a board of directors and an elected administrative body, must also have a “supervisory board” (监事会) and set up other oversight structures. As the Chinese semi-official *Global Times* points out, this will require having supervisors overseeing religious sites for the first time (*Global Times* Feb. 13, 2019; [www.lingyinsi.org](http://www.lingyinsi.org) Jan. 2, 2019).

February 5, 2019:

### ***Bitter Winter*: Rewards for the destruction of village temples**

*Bitter Winter* – the news website of the Center for New Religious Studies (CESNUR) in Turin, Italy – reports that local governments in China’s Henan Province have found a “new way to undermine religion.” The authorities are apparently offering high rewards for the destruction of temples. Sources spoke of a meeting to promote “moral role models” in December 2018. There, two villages of Henan Province, Renlitun and Tianyao, were awarded a sum of 500,000 Yuan, about \$74,000 U.S. dollars, each. This reward had apparently been given to the citizens of Renlitun in return for the destruction of a temple in their village. The destruction was decided by local authorities, according to *Bitter Winter*, at a meeting held last September in the town of Tangzhuang, to which Renlitun belongs. The officials of Renlitun were obviously determined to carry out this task diligently. They made it clear to the inhabitants of the village that they were no longer to pray in the temple or to burn joss stick incense there. In addition, it was announced over loudspeakers that anyone who frequented the temple would have their minimum living subsidy or pension revoked and that their children would no longer be allowed to attend school. The temple was fenced off and reduced to a pile of rubble within two hours. The local people of the village had collected the funds for the temple using their own private contributions and they were not happy with the demolition of their temple.

It is now feared that a wave of destruction of local temples might occur, since such a high government reward would be “too tempting” for poor people of other villages ([bitterwinter.org](http://bitterwinter.org) Feb. 5, 2019).

March 20, 2019:

## Guangzhou City has promulgated a new legislation regulating rewards to be offered for denouncing “illegal religious activities,” with particular attention being focused on foreign organizations and persons

The new regulation aims at encouraging citizens to report to the authorities illegal religious activities conducted in the Guangzhou City area, the decree says. According to the regulation, reports can be made by telephone (telephone number 110 [sic!] or 12345), by letter or in person at the local Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau, Petition Center or Public Security Bureau. The confidential treatment of any information gathered is guaranteed.

The activities to be reported include: propagating extremism or endangering national or public security; the arbitrary [i.e. not state-approved] establishment of a religious site, conducting religious activities or accepting donations by organizations or sites not properly registered, etc. In addition, reports are to be made where, without authorization, religious citizens are organized to leave the mainland to participate in religious trainings, conferences, the hajj or other such activities, or religious education and training is carried out without authorization. All these items are from Chapter 8 “Legal Responsibility” of the new “Regulations on Religious Affairs.”

The amount of the reward varies depending on the denunciation: 1,000-3,000 yuan will be paid out for verified references to illegal religious organizations and individuals acting in an unlawful way; 3,000-5,000 yuan, if these organizations or persons are foreign, and 5,000-10,000 yuan, if the denunciation leads to the detection of leaders and structures of illegal foreign religious organizations. The “Measures of Guangzhou City for Rewarding the Population for Reporting Illegal Religious Activities” (广州市群众举报非法宗教活动奖励办法) were published on the website of the city’s Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau (<http://www.gzmzzj.gov.cn/mzzjswj/gfxwj/201903/353dee928bb14ee1a-76a86c07845c14e.shtml?from=singlemessage&isappinstalled=0#10006-weixin-1-52626-6b3bffd01fd-de4900130bc5a2751b6d1>). They are valid for five years.

According to various comments, the “Measures” issued by the City of Guangzhou are directed mainly against the Protestant house churches, which were particularly targeted by the authorities during this period (see the section on “Protestantism”). According to the *South China Morning Post*, numerous local governments in Henan Province have already created similar financial incentives for whistle-blowers, although the rewards offered are usually much lower (*AsiaNews* March 29, 2019; china.ucanews.com March 29, 2019; *South China Morning Post* March 29, 2019; *UCAN* April 2, 2019).

March 26, 2019:

## Wang Zuo’an’s fundamental article on Sinicization calls for different treatment of religions, while insisting on the self-election and consecration of bishops

Wang Zuo’an, deputy minister of the party’s United Work Front Department and director of the National Religious Affairs Administration, on March 26 published a signed commentary dealing with the Sinicization of religions. In his article, he explains that the persistence in the orientation of religions towards Sinicization, as demanded by Xi Jinping, requires “Four Persist,” including “Persist in the leadership of the party.”

His third point is: “Persist in differentiating between the various categories [of religions] when guiding them.” In promoting Sinicization, consistent basic principles must be followed, while at the same time

continuing to keep in mind the different situations of the religions of China, acting as needed according to religion and region, “differentiating between the categories when guiding and avoiding lumping everything together,” Wang argues.

For each religion Wang identifies well-known tasks, such as “humanistic Buddhism” and action against commercialization in Buddhism, promotion of Daoist “traditions of contemporary value,” “Confucian Koran interpretation” and combating extremism in Islam. In the field of Protestantism, reinforced construction of theological thinking is stressed as well as resistance to foreign infiltration and crackdown on illegal activities.

According to Wang Zu’an, Catholics must be led to “steadfastly adhere to the principle of independence, autonomy and self-government,” to develop research on the Sinicization of theological thinking, to advance the democratic leadership of the Church and to “actively and consistently carry out the self-election and consecration of bishops.” Members of the underground are to be “educated and transformed” and any “interference and subversion by foreign forces” is to be prevented.

Wang Meixiu, who carries out research on Catholicism at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told *UCAN* that this “shows that the government has kept their policies unchanged after signing the provisional agreement on bishops’ appointments” with the Vatican ([www.mzb.com.cn](http://www.mzb.com.cn) March 26, 2019; *UCAN* April 4, 2019).

## Buddhism

February 2, 2019:

### Giant Guanyin statue blown up in northern Hebei Province

*Bitter Winter* reports that on February 2 of this year, the statue, carved out of a cliff and the world’s largest of its kind, standing 57.9 meters high, was dynamited and reduced to rubble. The statue, known as the “Dripping-Water Guanyin” (滴水觀音), was located on the site of Huang’an Temple 皇安寺 in the north of Hebei Province. It had been completed only two years earlier. Using threats of arrest to discourage any resistance, the detonation of Guanyin was carried out away from the eyes of the public. To make it impossible to rebuild the statue, the entire statue together with its foundation was carefully destroyed.

*Bitter Winter* has also reported this case in connection with other cases of destruction of Buddhist statues. It said that this destruction was a far-reaching campaign in the wake of the government’s general tightening of its control over religion. In an April 19 article entitled “The War on Buddhism Continues to Escalate,” Shen Xinran documents this development on the *Bitter Winter* website with official documents on temple closures and photos of the destruction of Buddhist statues in Shandong, Jiangxi and Hebei provinces ([bitterwinter.org](http://bitterwinter.org) March 1, 2019).

March 18, 2019:

### Dalai Lama interviewed about the question of his rebirth

The 83-year-old leader of Tibetan Buddhism told *Reuters* that it was possible that his reincarnation would be found in India, where he has been living in exile for 60 years. “In future, in case you see two Dalai Lamas come, one from here, in free country, one chosen by Chinese, then nobody will trust, nobody will respect (the one chosen by China). So that’s an additional problem for the Chinese! It’s possible, it can happen,” said the Dalai Lama. The role of the Dalai Lama after his death could be discussed by the Tibetans in India later in the year, he said. “If the majority of (Tibetan people) really want to keep this institution, then this institution will remain,” the Dalai Lama said (*Reuters* March 19, 2019).

## Islam

November 27, 2018:

### **Global Times: Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region signs anti-terrorism cooperation agreement with Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region**

As the *Global Times* reported, citing the *Ningxia Daily*, Ningxia Autonomous Region Party leader Zhang Yunsheng traveled to Xinjiang to “learn how Xinjiang fights terrorism and legally manages religious affairs” – the article mentions, among other things, Xinjiang’s application of new technologies such as “big data” in the fight against terrorism. The two autonomous regions have signed a cooperation agreement on combating terrorism. Because of the ancient Silk Road, Xinjiang and Ningxia are culturally and religiously similar; that is why Ningxia wants to learn from Xinjiang, Zhang said. For some time now, Muslims of the Chinese-speaking Hui nationality have feared that the harsh policies against the Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang could also be transferred to them. In Ningxia, they represent a particularly high percentage of the total population. In August of 2018, authorities there decided to call off their plans to demolish the Weizhou Grand Mosque following protests by thousands of Hui Muslims (hundreds according to some reports) (see: *RCTC* 2018, No. 4, p. 13). On December 29, 2018, the authorities in Weishan County, Yunnan Province, closed three Hui mosques that, according to them, had been illegally built and carried out “illegal religious education,” the *South China Morning Post* reported (*AsiaNews* Dec. 4, 2018; *Global Times* Nov. 27, 2018; *The Guardian* Jan. 15, 2019; *South China Morning Post* Dec. 31, 2018).

January 5, 2019:

### **Chinese Islamic Association (CIA) hosts conference on Five-Year Plan for the Sinicization of Islam**

According to a report posted on the website of the Chinese Islamic Association, participants at the meeting in Beijing discussed an “Outline of the Five-Year Work Plan on Adhering to the Orientation Towards Sinicization of Our Country’s Islam (2018–2022)” (坚持我国伊斯兰教中国化方向五年工作规划纲要[2018—2022]). Jin Rubin, deputy chairman of the CIA, told the *Global Times* on January 6 that the contents of the “Outline” would soon be released after further revisions and that it had already been made available to local Islamic associations. The text of the “Outline” was published in the CIA’s journal *Zhongguo musulin (China Muslim)* 2019, No. 1, on pp. 5-8.

A five-year plan for the Sinicization of Protestantism was published as early as March of 2018 and a five-year plan for the Sinicization of Catholicism was published in May of 2018 (see German translation of the latter in *China heute* 2018, No. 4, pp. 220-228). According to Xi Jinping, Sinicization is a central requirement for all religions in China (*www.chinainislam.net.cn* Jan. 5, 2019; *Global Times* Jan. 6, 2019).

## Christianity in General

December 15, 2019:

### **Commercial Christmas prohibited in Langfang, Hebei Province**

The *Global Times* reports that in the northern Chinese city of Langfang, Hebei Province, a local government announcement dated 15 December 2018, was circulated before Christmas. Many journalists

interpreted this announcement to mean that for Christmas of 2018 every kind of Christmas themed advertisement or decoration was to be forbidden. Christmas trees would not be allowed in the streets; shops were forbidden to display any kind of Christmas decoration. Street vendors were completely prohibited from selling any sort of Christmas items. City employees were instructed to take steps between December 23 and Christmas Day to ensure that the instructions in the public notice were strictly complied with. The *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) also reported that all members of the public were especially encouraged to report any public violations of the new rules to the authorities. Every public space should be kept free of Christmas decorations and anything even vaguely reminiscent of Christmas. The SCMP linked this action to a nationwide crackdown on Christian communities. According to a worker in the city administration quoted by the SCMP, however, the measure was actually directed against illegal street sales and not specifically against the Christian feast of Christmas (*AsiaNews* Dec. 22, 2018; *Global Times* Dec. 17, 2018; *South China Morning Post* Dec. 19, 2018; *UCAN* Dec. 20, 2018).

**December 24, 2018:**

### School principal in Sixian, Anhui: Christmas is a “burning shame”

According to *AsiaNews*, on December 24, 2018, principal Dong Xuefeng of the primary school in Huangwei Town, Sixian County gathered school children at the school to give them a speech about rejecting Christmas. He said that allowing Christmas in China was a “burning shame” because it had come to China in the course of the colonization of Chinese territory in the 19th century by the imperialist Western powers that had humiliated China. One student gave a short speech after the principal’s address, calling on fellow students and the whole population to celebrate Mao Zedong’s birthday, which falls on December 26, rather than the birthday of Jesus Christ.

The *South China Morning Post* reported that this form of educating young people to reject foreign ideas and strengthen being Chinese is officially endorsed by the authorities. The Chinese government is trying more and more to remove all vestiges of Western holidays from the calendar. *AsiaNews* reported as well that students are being required to take an oath to uphold Chinese culture and reject the “invasion” of Western culture (*AsiaNews* Dec. 27, 2018; *South China Morning Post* Dec. 26, 2018).

## Protestantism

**November 14–16, 2018:**

### International Bible Conference in China

An international conference on the Bible in China was held in Shanghai for the 8th consecutive year, organized by Yan Kejia of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, in cooperation with the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture and with the support of the United Bible Societies. The focus of the conference was “Migration and Community.” Among the participants were 60 theology students from the seminaries of Shanghai, Jiangsu and Shandong, as well as members of the respective faculties. The importance of social engagement in society was underlined as well as the importance of continued exchange in the international community (ubscp.org Dec. 4, 2018).

*Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

**December 9, 2018:**

### Arrest of Pastor Wang Yi of Chengdu

On December 9, 2018, Pastor Wang Yi, his wife Jiang Rong and about 100 other members of the un-registered Early Rain Covenant Church were arrested in Chengdu. Most of the church members were

released shortly thereafter. Pastor Wang had still not been allowed to contact a lawyer. He was charged with “incitement against the power of the state.” The church was closed. On December 24, 2018, 44 other members of the community, including 11 children, were arrested at gatherings in private homes on Christmas Eve and detained overnight.

Wang Yi was already a well-known essayist and human rights lawyer in China before he was baptized in 2005 at the age of 33. He was ordained in 2011 and took over leadership of the Early Rain Covenant Church as senior pastor. He maintained good relations with writers and journalists in the USA and in Europe which brought him a lot of international recognition and respect. In 2006, for example, he had talks in the White House with then President Bush. Every year the Early Rain Covenant Church held a worship service for the victims of the Tian’anmen massacre on June 4, 1989. For this reason, the community had previously been closed for a time. On August 30, 2018, Wang Yi published a House Church Declaration, in which he confessed that Jesus Christ’s authority was supreme as opposed to the state’s claims to power and criticized the increasing repression of house churches which he maintains are legal. His declaration went viral and within the week, it was signed by 279 other house churches across China (see *RCTC* 2018, No. 4, p. 17)

Among some Chinese house churches, Pastor Wang is considered a controversial figure, a political activist who uses the Christian message to give his concerns mass appeal and international support. In the fall of 2018, Wang wrote a call to civil disobedience, which he had prepared for publication in the event of his arrest. An English translation of the text can be found at *China Partnership*: [www.china-partnership.org/blog/2018/12/my-declaration-of-faithful-disobedience](http://www.china-partnership.org/blog/2018/12/my-declaration-of-faithful-disobedience) (*AsiaNews* March 7, 2019; *faz.net* March 1, 2019; *nytimes.com* March 25, 2019).

*Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

**December 15, 2018:**

## Closure of the Rongguili Church in Guangzhou

During the children’s service on this Saturday morning, security forces entered South China’s largest and most well-known house church to close it down. About 60 uniformed and civil servants stopped the service. The authorities then proceeded to confiscate books and property of the community and concluded by taking down the personal details of all those who were present. They also carried out a series of interrogations.

The history of Rongguili Church in Guangzhou dates back to the 1950s. The former leader of the church, Pastor Samuel Lamb, spent 20 years in labor camps before being able to resume community activities in 1978. He died in 2013 at the age of 88 (*South China Morning Post* Dec. 16, 2018).

*Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

**March 11, 2019:**

## Xu Xiaohong speaks at the plenary session of the Political Consultative Conference

The most senior representative of China’s official protestant church, Pastor Xu Xiaohong 徐晓鸿, elected in November 2018 as the new chairman of the Protestant Patriotic Three-Self Movement, delivered a speech to the plenary session of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference in Beijing on March 11, in which he insisted that Christianity in China is on the road to Sinicization in accord with the country’s socialist society. In a harsh tone, Xu describes the need for Christianity to decisively shake off every element that bears a “Western” imprint. The core values of socialism must be realized



in order to contribute to the renaissance of the Chinese nation and the fulfillment of the “Chinese dream” (a recording from CCTV as well as the text of his speech can be found at: [www.ccctspm.org/newsinfo/11768](http://www.ccctspm.org/newsinfo/11768); *Xinhua* March 12, 2019).

*Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

**March 23, 2019:**

## Chinese authorities shut down the Shouwang Protestant church in Beijing

On March 23, 2019, the meeting rooms and activities of the Shouwang church in Beijing were closed and church members were denied access. More than 20 members of the church had to give the details of their ID cards to the police and were then interrogated. The Shouwang house church, located in the capital’s university district, has been plagued by arrests and house arrests for many years now. A 2006 application for registration by the church was turned down by the authorities on the grounds that the pastor had not obtained official state approval prior to his ordination. Due to the confiscation of their meeting rooms, since April 2011 the church has been holding its worship services outdoors in parks and city streets (*AsiaNews* March 27, 2019).

*Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle*

## Catholic Church

**From December 13, 2018:**

## Developments in the Diocese of Mindong after Bishop Guo Xijin stepped aside in favor of Bishop Zhan Silu



Vatican Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli (center) with Bishop Guo Xijin (left) and Bishop Zhan Silu (right) on December 12, 2018 at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing. Celli had brought the two bishops the appointments to their new pastoral duties, which meant an exchange of their roles in the diocese. See the entry for December 12, 2018 in the section “Sino-Vatican relations”. Photo: *UCAN* / supplied.

On December 13, after returning from a meeting with the Vatican delegation in Beijing (see the December 12, 2018 entry in the “Sino-Vatican Relations” section), Bishop Guo Xijin gathered all his priests together. He informed them that he was no longer bishop of the Diocese of Mindong and asked the priests to accept and obey Bishop Zhan Silu; none of the priests present rebelled at his announcement – reported one of those priests, Fr. Luo Wen, in a post on his blog. Fr. Luo argued that the diocese had gone underground decades ago out of loyalty to the Pope, so it was only logical to obey the Pope now and ac-

cept Bishop Zhan as the legitimate bishop of the Diocese of Mindong (see [www.asianews.it/news-en/Mindong-Priest:-The-'faithful'-Church-subject-to-the-Pope-yesterday-and-today-45795.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mindong-Priest:-The-'faithful'-Church-subject-to-the-Pope-yesterday-and-today-45795.html)).

Bishop Guo Xijin himself on December 14 was quoted by the semi-official *Global Times* as saying that it had been decided that he would become auxiliary bishop and that Bishop Zhan Silu would take over the position as diocesan bishop in Mindong. The *Global Times* quoted Bishop Guo as saying that the underground Church and the state sanctioned Church in Mindong would merge after the transfer. Asked if the underground Church would accept this change, Guo told the *Global Times*: “There’s nothing to worry about, as this is God’s will.” He said that he still did not know how and when the official handover will take place and whether he will then receive a “bishop’s license” from the Chinese government; he would continue to work in pastoral care, but would discuss the administration of the diocese with Bishop Zhan.

The readiness of Bishop Guo Xijin, and apparently also of his priests, to submit to the leadership of the formerly illegitimate Bishop Zhan Silu is all the more remarkable since in the Diocese of Mindong the underground has always been the dominant part of the Church. According to *AsiaNews*, at least 80,000 of the more than 90,000 faithful in the diocese belong to the underground.

By the end of the period under review for this issue, *AsiaNews* reported in early April that the Chinese religious authorities continue to withhold recognition of Bishop Guo Xijin as auxiliary bishop and threatened to bar him from participating in this year’s Chrism Mass in the diocese during Holy Week unless he agrees to join the Patriotic Association. On Holy Thursday 2019, Bishop Zhan and Auxiliary Bishop Guo were finally able to celebrate the Mass of the Lord’s Supper together in the cathedral with more than 50 priests of the diocese’s underground community concelebrating (*AsiaNews* Dec. 13, 20, 2018; April 3, 18, 2019; *Global Times* Dec. 14, 2018; *UCAN* Dec. 19, 2018).

December 18, 2018:

## “Conference Commemorating 60 Years of Self-Election and Self-Consecration of Bishops of Chinese Catholicism” in Nanjing



Conference Commemorating 60 Years of Self-Election and Self-Consecration of Bishops of Chinese Catholicism.  
Photo: *AsiaNews* / Internet.

More than 200 people participated in the morning’s conference in Nanjing, including 48 bishops (i.e., the majority of the 57 officiating bishops of the official Church), together with more than 100 priests and women religious. Wang Zu’an, Deputy Minister of the United Front Department of the Chinese Communist Party and director of the National Religious Affairs Administration, delivered an address at the conference. In his speech, according to *AsiaNews*, he stressed that the principle of independence and self-government will never be abolished “at any time or under any circumstances.”

In the afternoon of the same day, also in Nanjing, the General Assembly of the Commission of Chinese Catholicism met, with more than 200 people in attendance. There, Bishop Shen Bin, Vice Chairman of the Chinese Bishops’ Conference and of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (PA), formulated the hope for the adherence of Catholicism to Sinicization, to the love of land and religion, to autonomous self-government and democratic administration of the Church as well as to reinforced self-construction (of the official governing boards).

It was on April 13, 1958, that for the first time two Chinese priests were consecrated bishops without having first been appointed by the Pope – Bishop Dong Guangqing of Hankou and Bishop Yuan Wenhua of Wuchang. The plan to celebrate 60 years of autonomous episcopal ordinations was announced in February 2018. According to a comment by *AsiaNews*, the signing of the preliminary agreement with the Vatican on the appointment of bishops in September of 2018 does not seem to have distracted the government from its goal of an “autonomous Church” (*AsiaNews* Dec. 18, 2018; www.chinacatholic.cn Dec. 21, 2018).

December 28, 2018:

## Bishop Tan Yanquan of Nanning accused of embezzlement of diocesan funds. Clergy and faithful resist church demolition

According to a report by *UCAN*, Bishop Joseph Tan Yanquan of Nanning, Guangxi Province, is suspected to have embezzled 27 million yuan (about US \$ 4 million) to “open at least five private companies, using church development to illegally raise funds, and selling church property illegally.”

In a joint letter to the Municipal Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee, with a copy to the United Front, more than 200 priests, nuns, Church staff and lay people of the diocese have called for a full investigation into the bishop’s finances and have accused the bishop of violating the country’s financial and economic laws and regulations. According to the letter, the diocese has no longer been able to fund its normal pastoral work or pay the living expenses of clerics and Church personnel. The decision to prosecute the bishop was made after it came to light that Bishop Tan had arbitrarily concluded a contract with a property company, according to which the church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to be newly built would be extended to 20 floors and the building would then be sold. Priests and faithful blocked the entrance on December 28, 2018 to prevent land developers from entering the property and called the police. The authorities were finally able to prevent the demolition work. The bishop is said to have tens of millions in debts (*UCAN* Jan. 15, 2019).

January 22, 2019:

## Former Underground Bishop Zhuang Jianjian officially becomes the bishop emeritus of Shantou. He was present but did not concelebrate in the mass with Bishop Huang Bingzhang.



Bishop Zhuang Jianjian. Photo: *UCAN* / supplied.

The 88-year-old Underground Bishop Zhuang had been asked by the Holy See to vacate his bishopric in favor of the formerly excommunicated 52-year-old Bishop Huang Bingzhang, who had been recognized by the Pope this past September. Bishop Zhuang told *UCAN* on December 17 that he had not retired. At the retirement ceremony in the church of Hepo, Diocese of Shantou, in addition to the bishops Zhuang and Huang, the four other bishops from Guangdong Province participated, as well as Bishop Shen Bin from Haimen, vice chairman of the Patriotic Association and the official Bishops’ Conference. He read out the certificate issued by the Bishops’ Conference, by which

Bishop Zhuang is now recognized as emeritus bishop also by the Chinese state. At the ceremony, Bishop Zhuang and Bishop Huang both delivered addresses. Bishop Zhuang, however, did not take part in the following Mass which was presided over by Bishop Huang Bingzhang (*AsiaNews* Jan. 23, 2019; www.chinacatholic.cn Jan. 24, 2019; *UCAN* Dec. 19, 2018; Jan. 25, 2019).

January 30, 2019:

## Underground Bishop Jin Lugang of Nanyang officially installed as Coadjutor Bishop



Bishop Jin Lugang.  
Photo: *AsiaNews* / Internet.

The ceremony took place at Nanyang Cathedral, Henan Province, and was chaired by Bishop Yang Yongqiang, Bishop of Zhoucun (Shandong) and Vice President of the Official Chinese Bishops' Conference. 63-year-old Bishop Peter Jin Lugang, 98-year-old Bishop Joseph Zhu Baoyu of Nanyang, Bishop Zhang Yinlin of Anyang (Henan) and 250 of the faithful, along with priests and nuns took part in the celebration, which was held amid strong security.

The situation in the diocese had been quite complicated in the last few years. Until 2010 Bishop Zhu as diocesan bishop was working in the underground. In 2010, Bishop Zhu having turned 89, Pope Benedict XVI accepted his resignation and appointed Bishop Jin Lugang, who had been secretly ordained co-

adjutor bishop in 2007, as Ordinary of Nanyang Diocese. Shortly after resigning, *AsiaNews* said, Bishop Zhu, perhaps under pressure, asked for recognition from the government, which eventually installed him as the Ordinary of the diocese in 2011. Bishop Jin, on the other hand, was only recognized as a priest by the government until his current installation as Coadjutor Bishop.

Bishop Jin is the first bishop to have been publicly installed since the conclusion of the Sino-Vatican Provisional Agreement of September 2018. Official statements emphasized that the ceremony was held with the approval of both the Bishops' Conference and the Patriotic Association.

As Father Sergio Ticozzi, PIME, who knows the local situation very well, writes in a report published by *AsiaNews* on February 13, Bishop Jin and eight of his priests have been trying for at least three years to find a way to register officially, without however being obliged to become members of the Patriotic Association. The priests already worked publicly in churches, but were not recognized as "official" priests (*AsiaNews* Jan. 30, 2019; Feb. 13, 2019; *UCAN* Feb. 1, 2019; www.chinacatholic.cn Jan. 31, 2019).

February 1, 2019:

## *AsiaNews*: Massive oppression against seven underground communities in the Diocese of Qiqihar

According to a report by *AsiaNews*, activities in at least seven underground communities in the Diocese of Qiqihar, Heilongjiang Province, have been violently suppressed in the previous months – beginning shortly after the signing of the Sino-Vatican Agreement in late September 2018. Members of the United Front, police and representatives of the Religious Affairs Bureau have invaded the churches during mass celebrations, interrupted the liturgy, driven the faithful out of the churches, threatened them and decreed the closure of the communities. Even the priests were driven away. According to *AsiaNews*, the communities, as well as underground Bishop Joseph Wei Jingyi, in the past have had good relations

with the local authorities. In addition, the excommunication of the official bishop of this area, Bishop Joseph Yue Fushen of Harbin, was lifted. *AsiaNews* suspects that these latest acts of oppression have to do with the “Regulations on Religious Affairs” of February 2018. The news service printed a report from the communities concerned detailing the measures taken against them.

In addition, on December 18-19, 2018, part of the convent of the underground Sisters of St. Teresa in the village of Pingan / Qiqihar was destroyed. According to authorities, it was an illegally built building, which Bishop Wei also confirmed. According to Bishop Wei, the Sisters were able to persuade the officials to leave the chapel and living quarters. Housing for the Sisters was found elsewhere.

In an interview with *Vatican Insider*, Bishop Wei, who is still not yet recognized by the government, emphasized that in the past, choosing to go underground had been a necessity to preserve the integrity of the Catholic faith. Following the Provisional Agreement, for historical reasons part of the underground community would continue to exist for some time, “but this situation will soon end as history moves forward.” Some may continue to think in ideological terms, but that too would change over time. “Each community gradually walks towards reconciliation with joy and gratitude”, the bishop continued, “Today we are all winners, those who believe in Jesus both from the open and underground communities” (*AsiaNews* Dec. 20, 2018; Feb. 1, 2019; *UCAN* Dec. 21, 2018; *Vatican Insider* Dec. 28, 2018).

March 29, 2019:

## Underground Bishop Cui Tai of Xuanhua arrested again



Bishop Cui Tai in August 2018, as he was being taken away by the authorities for a session of political instruction. Photo: *UCAN* / supplied.

68-year-old Coadjutor Bishop Augustinus Cui Tai of Xuanhua, Hebei Province, was picked up by government officials and taken to an unknown location on March 29. One day earlier, his Vicar General Fr. Zhang Jianlin had already been arrested by officials from the Provincial Bureau of Religious Affairs.

Bishop Cui has been repeatedly arrested or placed under house arrest since 2007. Most recently, he was released in January after he had been arrested in mid-April of 2018. The background for all of this is an ongoing conflict between a group of official priests and the bishop and his priests in the underground. According to a report in *AsiaNews* on March 29, Bishop Cui has been struggling to maintain his authority as bishop against Fr. Zhang Li, among others, who had transferred from the underground to the official Church and who has accused the bishop of not following the Vatican’s instructions. Fr. Zhang Li claims that the provisional agreement between China

and the Vatican means the end of the underground Church, and that all believers and bishops should now join the official Church. Bishop Cui and his Vicar General had appealed to the Holy See and on December 23, 2018, had suspended Fr. Zhang Li from the priestly ministry. On March 3, Bishop Cui issued a statement confirming Fr. Zhang’s suspension. It states, among other things, that Fr. Zhang Li “with an unauthorized manner massively promoted the so-called communion [among the underground and open communities], leading to confusion and a counterproductive result of division,” thus quoted in *UCAN*. Bishop Cui also criticized the charismatic activities of Fr. Zhang. According to the statement, Fr. Zhang had a wrong understanding of charism and exaggerated it with charismatic healings. Fr. Zhang leads a charismatic Pentecostal group in collaboration with a Protestant pastor. Both

the government and the official Church are said to be strongly supportive of Fr. Zhang. According to the statement of an unnamed underground priest quoted by *UCAN*, the government wants to paralyze the underground diocese so that it can pass into official hands. Bishop Cui refuses to join the official Church and register as a member of the Patriotic Association (*AsiaNews* March 9, 29, 2019; *UCAN* March 8, 29, 2019).

## Sino-Vatican Relations

December 12, 2018:

### In Beijing, Vatican representative presents to seven formerly illegitimate and two underground bishops' appointments for their pastoral responsibilities

Various media had already reported this in December of 2018. On February 3, 2019, the Vatican newspaper, *Osservatore Romano* (*OR*), published an official note on the process (see complete English translation at [www.asianews.it/news-en/Osservatore-Romano:-Note-on-the-Catholic-Church-in-China-46153.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Osservatore-Romano:-Note-on-the-Catholic-Church-in-China-46153.html)). The Vatican delegation was led by Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli.

According to the *OR*, on December 12 the nine bishops received an “announcement from the Holy See” concerning “their pastoral responsibilities.” The last seven illegitimate Chinese bishops ordained without a papal mandate had been received into full ecclesial communion in September 2018 (according to *OR*, on September 8, an official announcement by the Holy See was issued on September 22, the date of the signing of the Provisional Sino-Vatican Agreement on the Appointment of Bishops). On December 12, they were now named by the Pope as bishops (ordinaries) of the respective dioceses (as they have always been from the Chinese government’s point of view).

The *OR* lists the appointments as follows: Joseph Guo Jincai as the first bishop of Chengde, Joseph Huang Bingzhang as Bishop of Shantou, Joseph Liu Xinhong as Bishop in Anhui, Joseph Ma Yinglin as Bishop of Kunming, Joseph Yue Fusheng as Bishop in Heilongjiang, Vincent Zhan Silu as Bishop of Funing / Mindong and Paul Lei Shiyin as Bishop of Leshan. The wording “Bishop in Anhui” or “Bishop in Heilongjiang” obviously stems from the fact that these two provinces are not dioceses in the eyes of the Vatican. Since there were already bishops appointed by the pope but not recognized by the government in the Diocese of Shantou and the Diocese of Funing / Mindong, these two underground bishops had to vacate their seats, one by demotion, the other one by retirement: According to the *OR*, Vincent Guo Xijin has become Auxiliary Bishop of Funing / Mindong and Peter Zhuang Jianjian has become Bishop Emeritus of Shantou.

*AsiaNews* reported that Archbishop Celli presented Bishop Guo Xijin with a letter signed by Secretary-of-State Parolin and Cardinal Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, asking Guo to step down and hand over his position as the ordinary to Bishop Zhan. The plan for such a “castling” of bishops (to use a concept from the game of chess) in Shantou and Mindong was already revealed in January 2018 by *AsiaNews* and Cardinal Zen (see *China heute* 2018, No. 1, pp. 4-5, 19-21 [in German]; *RCTC* 2018, No. 2, pp. 20-21). The official *Global Times* also reported a number of times on the visit of the Vatican delegation and the bishop appointments (*AsiaNews* Dec. 13, 2018; *Global Times* Dec. 14, 15, 16, 2018; *Osservatore Romano* Feb. 3, 2019; *UCAN* Dec. 19, 2018).

For further developments in Mindong and Shantou see the entries of From December 13, 2018 and January 22, 2019 in the section “Catholic Church.”

January 7, 2019:

## **Pope Francis, in his New Year's speech to the diplomatic corps, comments on the interim agreement between the Holy See and China**

Referring to progress in the Holy See's relations with Vietnam, the Pope said to the diplomats accredited to the Vatican: "So too with the signing of the Provisional Agreement between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China on the Appointment of Bishops in China, which took place on 22 September last. As you know, that Agreement is the result of a lengthy and thoughtful institutional dialogue that led to the determination of certain stable elements of cooperation between the Apostolic See and the civil authorities." He continued: "As I noted in my Message to the Catholics of China and to the universal Church, I had already readmitted to full ecclesial communion the remaining official bishops ordained without pontifical mandate, and urged them to work generously for the reconciliation of Chinese Catholics and for a renewed effort of evangelization. I thank the Lord that, for the first time after so many years, all the bishops in China are in full communion with the Successor of Peter and with the universal Church. A visible sign of this was the participation of two bishops from Continental China in the recent Synod on young people." Looking to the future, the Pope said: "It is to be hoped that further contacts regarding the application of the signed Provisional Agreement will help resolve questions that remain open and make needed room for an effective enjoyment of religious freedom" ([www.w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/january/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190107\\_corpo-diplomatico.html](http://www.w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/january/documents/papa-francesco_20190107_corpo-diplomatico.html)).

January 14, 2019:

## **Interview with researcher on Catholicism, Liu Guopeng, raises controversy – He had declared the idea of a national Catholic Church in China “definitely overcome”**

*Vatican Insider* journalist Gianni Valente conducted an interesting interview with Liu Guopeng, a member of the state Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. In the interview, Liu said that the preliminary agreement on episcopal appointments between China and the Holy See definitively overcomes the idea of creating a national Church in China separate from the rest of the universal Church and is history, even if certain related formulas in the official language will still continue to be used for some time. The Chinese government has acknowledged the primacy of the Pope and has taken note that the Church in China is part of the Universal Church and that all Chinese Catholics are in full communion with the Pope, Liu stated. On the issue of the Patriotic Association (PA), Liu said that the agreement changed the function of the PA and that its task was no longer to negate the role of the Pope. According to Liu, the registration with the PA had thus become a symbol, a formality, which shows that the clerics are loyal to the government, something which he considered “very natural.” Since all bishops are now recognized by the Pope, Liu believes that it is just a matter of time before the Holy See recognizes the legitimacy of the Chinese Bishops' Conference.

As Francesco Sisci explained 5 days later in *Settimana News*, Huang Yashi, a journalist from the *Central News Agency* in Taiwan, picked up the interview and said that Liu Guopeng's statement that China recognizes the primacy of the Pope was a de facto violation of the Chinese constitution and the principles of party leadership that forbid foreign interference in domestic [religious] affairs. Sisci published a counter-statement by Liu Guopeng. In it, Liu said his comments had been distorted. He declared that, writing as a scholar, he does not intend to replace the national authorities as a spokesman on

religious policy, and in no way ignores the line between science and politics (text of the interview can be found at [www.lastampa.it/2019/01/14/vaticaninsider/when-beijing-wanted-its-own-chinese-pope-MkfxPnj0ZZLutAfLeo2KiM/pagina.html](http://www.lastampa.it/2019/01/14/vaticaninsider/when-beijing-wanted-its-own-chinese-pope-MkfxPnj0ZZLutAfLeo2KiM/pagina.html); [settimananews.it](http://settimananews.it) Jan. 19, 2019).

January 15–19, 2019:

## Bishop Guo Jincai attends a meeting of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)

The meeting in Bangkok was attended by Asian cardinals and bishops, as well as representatives of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, according to a report on the website of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and official Chinese Bishops' Conference. Chengde's Bishop Guo Jincai, who was only legitimized by Pope Francis in September 2018, was the first official episcopal participant from Mainland China to attend a FABC meeting.

So far, the Chinese authorities had not allowed the bishops to participate in the international bodies of the Church hierarchy. Bishop Guo Jincai and Bishop Yang Xiaoting of Yan'an were the first Mainland bishops to be able to attend the General Assembly of the World Bishops' Synod in October 2018, shortly after the conclusion of the provisional Sino-Vatican Agreement. However, no Mainland bishop participated in the Vatican "anti-abuse summit" in February 2019 (see above). There was also no public representative of the Mainland Church for World Youth Day, which took place in late January 2019 in Panama ([chinacatholic.cn](http://chinacatholic.cn) Jan. 24, 2019; *UCAN* Feb. 1; March 1, 2019; see: *RCTC* 2018, No. 4, pp. 26-27; 2019, No. 1, pp. 16-17).

February 3, 2019:

## Interview with Cardinal Filoni on the situation of the Catholic Church in China

On February 3, *Osservatore Romano* published a long interview with the Prefect of the Pontifical Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Fernando Cardinal Filoni. In it, the Cardinal emphasizes that "while sharing some of the concerns expressed by many parties" following the signing of the preliminary agreement on the appointment of bishops on 22 September 2018, he feels that "within the Catholic Church in China there is a great expectation of reconciliation, unity, and renewal for a more decisive revival of the work of evangelization." He said that he had always "observed their desire that the Church in China might return to a sense of 'normality' within the Catholic Church." Cardinal Filoni notes that membership in the Patriotic Association is not even required by Chinese law and therefore ought not to be forced upon Catholics. Regarding the underground, he said: "The underground status will fade away, but not the people involved."

An English translation of the entire interview can be found at [www.asianews.it/news-en/Card.-Filoni:-The-China-Holy-See-Agreement-is-historic,-but-I-share-some-perplexities-46151.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Card.-Filoni:-The-China-Holy-See-Agreement-is-historic,-but-I-share-some-perplexities-46151.html).

February 21–24, 2019:

## The Vatican conference on "The Protection of Minors in the Church" is being held without the participation of bishops from Mainland China

Archbishop John Hung Shan-chuan SVD of Taipei participated as president of the Chinese Regional Episcopal Conference (in Taiwan). The official list of participants included him among the presidents



of the episcopal conferences for China. As the ordinary, or local bishop, of Macau (China) Bishop Stephen Lee Bun-sang was included in the official list of participants (see [www.pbc2019.org/home](http://www.pbc2019.org/home)). Despite the Sino-Vatican agreement on episcopal appointments of September 22, 2018, no bishop from Mainland China was at the “anti-abuse summit.” However, the Mainland Catholic newspaper *Xinde* (*Faith*, Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province) did report on the conference. It published the list of 21 “reflection points” that Pope Francis had presented to participants of the anti-abuse summit as well as a summary of his closing address (*UCAN* March 19, 2019; *Xinde* March 5, 2019, p. 8; see also *China heute* 2019, No. 1, p. 4 [in German]).

## Hong Kong

January 3/5, 2019:

### Death of Bishop Yeung Ming-cheung and appointment of Cardinal Tong as Apostolic Administrator

On January 3, at the age of 73, the incumbent bishop of Hong Kong, Michael Yeung Ming-cheung, died. Bishop Yeung had only been in office for 17 months. The bishop grew up in Hong Kong although he was originally from Shanghai. Before his episcopal consecration in 2014, he held various duties in both the pastoral and administrative fields, including a period from 2003 to 2014 when he served as director of Caritas Hong Kong. In a surprise move on January 5, 79-year-old Cardinal John Tong, who had already been bishop of the diocese from 2009 to 2017, was appointed once again as Apostolic Administrator by the Vatican.

The funeral mass for Bishop Yeung, before a congregation of more than 2,000 worshippers, was celebrated on January 11 in Hong Kong’s Cathedral. A number of government officials were also in attendance including the Territory’s head of government, Chief Executive Carrie Lam, who is a practicing Catholic. In his homily, Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha OFM emphasized that Bishop Yeung had always been committed to responding to the needs of society and saw youth as the first priority of his pastoral commitment. Bishop Yeung was buried at St. Michael’s Catholic Cemetery in Happy Valley alongside John Cardinal Wu Cheng-chung (*AsiaNews* Jan. 7, 11, 2019; *China heute* 2017, No. 3, pp. 143-144; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Jan. 19, 2019; *South China Morning Post* Jan. 3, 8, 9, 11, 2019; *UCAN* Jan. 7, 11, 28, 2019).

February 2, 2019:

### The Holy See’s representative, Msgr. Ante Jozic, bids farewell to Hong Kong

Following his appointment as Archbishop and his February 2, 2019 nomination as the future Apostolic Nuncio of the Ivory Coast in West Africa, Msgr. Ante Jozic ended his tenure as Head of the Holy See’s Study Mission in Hong Kong, a position which he held since 2009. The Study Mission serves as a “quasi-diplomatic representation” of the Holy See for Mainland China. His episcopal consecration, to be presided over by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, was scheduled for May 1 at Jozic’s home diocese of Split, Croatia. Tragically, Msgr. Jozic suffered injuries in a serious traffic accident in Split on April 7 so that his consecration has been postponed to a later, as yet unspecified date. Reports indicate that Msgr. Jozic is currently on the mend (*Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* Feb. 16, 2019; March 2, 2019).

February 5, 2019:

## Chinese New Year

According to the lunar calendar, the Year of the Pig began in China and East Asia. The pig is considered chivalrous, honest and a good companion. For the meaning of the pig in Chinese culture see the contribution of Barbara Hoster in *China heute* 2019, No. 1, pp. 46-47 (in German).

February 5, 2019:

## Chinese New Year: Leaders of the six religions send greetings for the Year of the Pig

In their traditional annual New Year message, the colloquium of the religious leaders of Hong Kong sent greetings and prayers to the residents of the territory. The signatories are Most Ven. Kuan Yun, President of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association; John Cardinal Tong Hon of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong; Dr. Tong Yun Kai, President of the Confucius Academy; Ibrahim Sat Che Sang, Chairperson of the Chinese Muslim Cultural and Fraternal Association; Rev. Dr. Eric So Shing Yit, Chairman of the Hong Kong Christian Council, and Leung Tak Wah, Chairman of the Hong Kong Taoist Association. In their message, they address topics such as: youth, fair land use, concern for the elderly, housing, education and internet use. The religious leaders addressed a special word of greeting on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 40th year since its reform and opening. Hong Kong's religious leaders also address their greetings to the "mother country" with the desire that religions may develop in concord (*AsiaNews* Feb. 5, 2019).

## Taiwan

March 1, 2019:

## Taiwan: Cardinal Filoni is Pope's Envoy at the Eucharistic Congress in Taiwan



Cardinal Filoni during the Eucharistic Procession at the Fourth Eucharistic Congress of Taiwan on March 1, 2019. Photo: UCAN / supplied.

The Fourth Eucharistic Congress of Taiwan, which took place on March 1st in a sports stadium in Yunlin County, Chiayi, drew a crowd of more than 10,000 people. Fernando Cardinal Filoni, Prefect of the Pontifical Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, took part in the Congress as the Special Envoy of Pope Francis. During their last 'ad Limina' visit to the Vatican on May 14, 2018, the bishops of Taiwan had personally invited Pope Francis to visit Taiwan. In his homily, Cardinal Filoni emphasized that the task of evangelization was entrusted not only to missionaries but to every bishop, priest, religious and lay persons, including children. The congress, with its theme from the Psalms, "All my springs of joy are in you" (Psalm 87, 7) can be seen in line with the upcoming

52nd International Eucharistic Congress which will be held in Budapest in September of 2020 (*AsiaNews* Jan. 10, 2019; *UCAN* March 6, 2019).

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