

## News Update on Religion and Church in China December 2011 to March 2012

*Compiled by Katharina Feith, Jan Kwee, Anton Weber, Martin Welling,  
and Katharina Wenzel-Teuber*

*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” (2012, No. 1, pp. 3-18) covered the period September 15 – December 4, 2011.*

### December 2011:

#### **Zhu Weiqun: Party members are not allowed to believe in a religion. That would split the Communist Party.**

In the party magazine *Qiushi* (2011, No. 24, December 26, pp. 25-28), Zhu wrote: “If we let party members believe in religion ... this would inevitably result in splits in the Party’s ideology and its organization.” It would also shatter the status of Marxism as the leading ideology of the country, weaken the ability of the Party to fight against separatist movements, and would confuse the Party’s role to supervise religions. Zhu Weiqun is executive deputy minister of the United Front Work Department of China’s Communist Party and in charge of coordinating the Party’s policies on Tibetan affairs. According to Zhu, party members are increasingly taking part in religious activities, getting involved with leading figures from religious circles, and have even become de facto religious believers. Some party members have gone so far as to call for a lifting of the prohibition against membership in religious organizations, he wrote. But in his article, Zhu argued that whoever freely becomes a member of the Party accepts the Marxist worldview of dialectical materialism and has no business believing in a religion (see *The Hindu* Dec. 25, 2011; *South China Morning Post* Dec. 19, 2011; [www.chengmingmag.com/t318/select/318sel07.html](http://www.chengmingmag.com/t318/select/318sel07.html)).

### December 6–8, 2011:

#### **Fourth Forum on Catholic Studies in Beijing**

79 researchers in the field of religious studies gathered in Beijing to take part in the “Fourth Forum on Catholic Studies for Young Chinese Scholars” organized by the Beijing Institute for the Study of

Christianity and Culture and its Director Father Dr. Peter Zhao Jianmin. In all, some 64 papers were presented on a wide-ranging spectrum of themes touching on both historical as well as current topics of interest regarding the Catholic Church. The papers included topics such as: “The missionary activity of the Divine Word Missionaries in the late Qing period (1879–1908): the work of evangelization in China by St. Joseph Freinademetz”; “The missionary activities of Western missionaries in the Tibetan area during the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1846–1919)”; “Analysis of the current social service of the Catholic Church in China”; “The positive contribution of the Catholic understanding of freedom to the common good.” Forum participants praised the atmosphere at the conference as having a “free, tolerant, pluralistic, and open spirit.” Conference organizers hope to make the event more international in the future. The Institute has been organizing this type of forum at the beginning of December each year since 2008. The papers presented will eventually be published in the “Journal of Catholic Studies” (*Fides* Dec. 15, 2011; www.shangzhi.org).

**December 11, 2011:**

## **Underground priest and six seminarians die in a tragic car accident**

On December 11 there was a tragic traffic accident in the Diocese of Baoding (Hebei Province). A minibus carrying a priest and seven seminarians was involved in a head-on collision with a truck and overturned. A second truck which had been following then slammed into the overturned minibus, killing six of the seminarians outright and severely injuring the seventh. The priest driving the minibus, Fr. Joseph Shi Liming (39), was the formation director of Baoding’s underground seminary. Though badly injured, seminarian Gabriel Gao survived only because he had been thrown clear of the minibus in the initial collision. Baoding’s underground seminary is forced to change location frequently in order to stay out of the hands of the police.

The accident had an unusual sequel. The grave marker, erected on the occasion of the 100th day memorial of the underground priest’s death, was removed from the grave during the course of a police action. When relatives tried to resist, police officers smashed the grave marker with sledge hammers. They justified their action by claiming that since Fr. Shi Liming was not recognized as a priest by the government, it was not permitted to erect a grave marker with a text identifying him as such. A police contingent was on hand to prevent outsiders from arriving at the village to take part in the Requiem (*UCAN* Dec. 13 and 30, 2011; March 20, 2012).

**December 16, 2011:**

## **New guidelines for charitable organizations made public**

The Ministry for Civil Affairs has published new “Guidelines for the disclosure by charitable organizations of data regarding donations” (公益慈善捐助信息公开指引). The guidelines were issued in reaction to a scandal that came to light during the summer of 2011 (see *RCTC* 2012, No. 1, p. 96), which caused mistrust among members of the public and generated intense criticism. The guidelines’ purpose is to see to it that charitable organizations disclose information about what donations they receive, their fundraising methods, how they use the funds, and who their beneficiaries are. Charities are to provide such reports within 15 days of receiving a grant and within a month of having disbursed the money. In the case of emergency aid measures following serious accidents or natural catastrophes, such information is to be provided within 72 hours after donations are received. For ongoing projects lasting a longer time, they must provide such reports on the development of the project at regular intervals, at

least every six months. According to the report of the official news agency Xinhua, the new guidelines are meant to set a standard for charity groups to develop their own information publicity system, will help local governments work out rules for supervising charity groups, and are intended to provide the public with greater transparency, to encourage meaningful use of donated funds, and to increase donors' confidence in the charitable organizations (*Xinhua* Dec. 16, 2011).

December 19, 2011:

## Hong Kong Justice and Peace Commission calls for release of Chinese bishops and priests

Lina Chan Li-na, executive secretary of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Hong Kong, has appealed to the government to free incarcerated bishops and priests as well as detained human rights activist lawyer Gao Zhisheng by Christmas. Those detained are Bishops James Su Zhimin of Baoding, 79, and Cosmas Shi Enxiang of Yixian, 90, from Hebei Province. Both have been held in custody without formal arrest or open trial since 1997 and 2001, respectively. According to a report from UCAN, some 30 other priests are also being held in custody without formal arrest or trial. One Church observer, who wishes to remain anonymous, stated: "Until now, there is no news about them. We know that the government changed their names to make it hard to trace their whereabouts" (*UCAN* Dec. 19, 2011; see also the entry of Jan. 16, 2012).

December 23, 2011:

## Bringing "The Good News" to Ou hai prison (Wenzhou)



Members of the Cathedral parish team meet the prisoners. Photo: [www.xinde.org](http://www.xinde.org).

According to a report in the Catholic journal *Xinde* (*Faith Weekly*), members of the Cathedral parish of the Diocese of Wenzhou in Zhejiang and Sisters of the Congregation of St. Thérèse of Lisieux managed to obtain from the director of the Ou hai prison (1,300 inmates) the so far unheard of permission to pay a visit to the prisoners there at Christmas time. Led by Fr. Li Baoping, seminarian Liu Delong, and Sr. Qiu Xinmei, who had taken care of arranging the necessary contacts, on December 23 a team of 11 parishioners entered the prison and were met with a large red "welcome banner" bearing the words "Visit of a group of kind-hearted Catholic people." By coin-

idence, a team of the local Wenzhou television station happened to be filming in the prison at the very time and their presence and film provided welcome publicity for the group's visit. Following a presentation to the group by prison staff on the life in the correctional facility, the parishioners were able to meet the prisoners face to face. During their visit the parishioners were able to distribute to the inmates little presents of soap, toothpaste, hand towels, and other small items for daily use. One by one, the parishioners shook hands with the prisoners – both male and female – and encouraged them by expressing at least a little bit of the warmth and affection of the Christmas message. Many of the prisoners were grateful and deeply touched by the visit. Among the prisoners there were at least one Catholic and one Protestant. Tears streaming down their faces, they proclaimed: "Jesus loves me!" (*Xinde* Jan. 5, 2012).

December 26, 2011:

## Celebrations to mark Mao's birthday

As reported in the news agency *Xinhua*, on December 26, the 118th birthday of Mao Zedong, tens of thousands of Chinese travelled to his birthplace at Shaoshan in Hunan Province and also to the Mao Mausoleum located on the Tian'anmen Square in Beijing in order to burn incense, eat noodles (symbol of longevity), and to sing the "Red songs." The local tourist bureau reported that during 2011 more than 7.5 million visitors came to see the house where Mao was born (*Xinhua* Dec. 27, 2011).

December 27, 2011:

## New document on social security insurance coverage for clerics

In its document titled "Notice on further steps to resolve the problem of social security for religious personnel," the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) and four other ministries laid out regulations intended to deal with some still unresolved questions arising from the 2010 integration of (officially recognized and registered) religious personnel into the country's social security systems. On January 9, 2012 at the National Conference on Religious Work in Harbin (see below) Jiang Jianshui, Vice-Director of the SARA, reported that the process of providing social security coverage for religious personnel in Beijing, Fujian, and Sichuan has almost been completed. All Beijing clerics now have a social security card. In Anhui, Henan, Hubei, Yunnan, Gansu, Qinghai, and Xinjiang 80% now have health and retirement insurance. In a further 8 provinces 50% are now insured; in Hebei, Liaoning, and Chongqing the figure is 40% and in the remaining areas the process is currently underway, the report said. According to Jiang, some problems still occur due to high mobility among some clerics and also due to the fact that some of them are not able to come up with the required premium because of their very low salaries (*Xinhua* Jan. 9, 2012, according to [www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn). The full text of the new document can be found at: [www.sara.gov.cn/zcfg/zc/12066.htm](http://www.sara.gov.cn/zcfg/zc/12066.htm). For the 2010 document on this question and the developments leading up to it, see *China heute* 2010, No. 3, pp. 140-142, 158-160 [in German]).

December 30, 2011:

## Underground bishop of Tianshui taken away



Bishop Wang Ruowang. Photo: UCAN.

Bishop John Wang Ruowang of Tianshui (Gansu Province) has been taken away together with some of his priests and forced to attend "study sessions." The 50 year old underground bishop was secretly consecrated with a Papal mandate in 2011. On December 30 he was taken by government officials from the church in Taijing to a guest house in the city of Tianshui. According to a source "he is safe and sound. His mindset is positive," and he could be reached via his mobile phone. When contacted, the bishop himself said he was undergoing "education and conversion classes." The source said that the bishop expects that sooner or later all underground priests of the diocese would have to attend such classes.

Meanwhile, since January 4 seven other diocesan priests were also taken away for "study sessions." Two of them were released a few days later but have been ordered to study the documents they were given at home. According to sources, the detentions are all to be seen as connected with the secret consecra-

tion of Bishop Wang. Last year Pope Benedict XVI also named Fr. Bosco Zhao Jianzhang as coadjutor bishop. Fr. Zhao is currently responsible for the official Church in Tianshui. As of now, his consecration has not yet taken place (*UCAN* Jan. 11, 2012).

December 30, 2011:

## Ningxia: Clashes between Muslims and police over mosque demolition

According to reports coming from the Hong Kong Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, on the evening of December 30 there were violent clashes between police and the Muslim villagers in the village of Taoshan, in the town of Hexi in Tongxin County, which is part of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in the northwest of China. Following an attempt to forcibly tear down a large mosque, violent clashes erupted between the more than 1,000 armed police and several hundred local Hui Muslims. The authorities had declared the newly renovated mosque to be an “illegal religious site.” According to reports from the villagers two people were killed and 50 injured. The police station of Hexi denied the figures given by the information center. According to them, there were a few people injured, but no one was killed. It was also confirmed that the mosque has now been razed to the ground. The renovation of the mosque, built in 1987, had been financed with the help of donations from Muslims from Ningxia and the neighboring province of Gansu (*Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy* Jan. 2, 2012; *South China Morning Post* Jan. 3, 2012; *Zeenews.com* Jan. 2, 2012).

End of December 2011:

## New official system of “spokespersons” introduced for the five religions – The YMCA/YWCA get their own spokesperson as well

At the end of December 2011 a new “Press Information System” (*xinwen fabu zhidu* 新闻发布制度) was introduced for the official national governing bodies of the religions in the People’s Republic of China. As *Xinhua* reported on behalf of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) the nine newly named press spokespersons of the religious organizations are now to be the ones competent to make available to the media and to the public “authoritative” news and documents – including news about “sudden large-scale incidents in the religious field.” Those chosen as spokespersons have been especially trained by the SARA. In addition to the governing bodies of the five major religions, the Protestant YMCA/YWCA has now also appointed a spokesperson, thereby joining the other Protestant governing bodies of the Three Self Patriotic Movement and the Chinese Christian Council. One spokesman, Fr. Yang Yu, had already been appointed for the official Catholic Church on June 19, 2011. Thus far he has produced, among other things, a July 7, 2011 response to the Vatican declaration on the Episcopal consecration of Leshan (*Xinhua* Dec. 22, 2011, according to [sara.gov.cn/xwzx/xwj/11900.htm](http://sara.gov.cn/xwzx/xwj/11900.htm)); a list of the new spokespersons can be found there and in *China heute* 2012, No. 1, p. 28. See also *RCTC* 2011, No. 2, pp. 92-93, 97).

January 2012:

## Shanghai Bishop's pastoral letter for Chinese New Year advocates canonization of Xu Guangqi

The pastoral letter of 95 year old Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, released on the occasion of the Chinese New Year celebrations, makes a strong case for the canonization of the founder of the Catholic Church in Shanghai, Xu Guangqi (1562–1633). This year the Diocese of Shanghai is celebrating the 450th birthday of its great pioneer in the faith. Xu Guangqi was the first with the rank of Mandarin to be baptized and he worked energetically for the spread of the faith and for the survival of the Church. In his pastoral letter, in order to show appreciation for his versatile talents, his deep faith, and his openness to progress and development, Bishop Jin named him a true “man for all seasons” (Chinese text at [www.catholicsh.org/NewListIn.aspx?InfosID=3968&InfoCategoryID=233](http://www.catholicsh.org/NewListIn.aspx?InfosID=3968&InfoCategoryID=233); German translation in *China heute* 2012, No. 1, pp. 39-46).

Between January 6 and March 30, 2012:

## 20 Tibetans – mostly monks – set themselves on fire in protest

As they did so, they shouted slogans calling for the return of the Dalai Lama and freedom for Tibet. Most of them were very young, although there was also one elderly reincarnated Lama among them (Sopa Tulku) as well as the former disciplinarian and teacher of a monastery (Dhamchoe Sangpo). There were also several lay persons and a nun.

- *January 6*: Ten-nyi (20), monk of the Kirti monastery, Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) District, Sichuan. He died the same day.
- *January 6*: Tsultrim (20), Ngaba. He died on January 7th.
- *January 8*: Sonam Wangyal (Sopa Tulku) (42), Darlag (Dari) County, Golog (Guoluo) District, Qinghai. He died the same day.
- *January 14*: Lobsang Jamyang (22), Ngaba, former monk of the Aduk monastery. He died the same day.
- *February 8*: Rigzin Dorje (19), Me'uruma, Ngaba County; former monk of the Kirti monastery. Condition unknown.
- *February 9*: Sonam Rabyang (42), monk of the Lab monastery in Tridu, Yushu District, Qinghai. Condition unknown.
- *February 11*: Tenzin Choedron (18), nun of the Mame Dechen Choekhorling monastery, Ngaba District. She died on February 13.
- *February 13*: Lobsang Gyatso (19), monk of the Kirti monastery, Ngaba. Condition unknown.
- *February 17*: Dhamchoe Sangpo (38), monk of the Bongthak monastery, Themchen (Tianjun) County, Haixi District, Qinghai. He died the same day.
- *February 19*: Nangdrol (18), Zamthang monastery, Zamthang (Rangtang) County, Ngaba District. He died the same day.
- *March 3*: Tsering Kyi (20), Machu (Maqu), Kanlho (Gannan) District, Gansu, middle school student. She died the same day.
- *March 4*: Rinchen (33), Ngaba, mother of 4 children. She died the same day.
- *March 5*: Dorjee (18), Ngaba. He died the same day.
- *March 10*: Gyepo (18), monk of the Kirti monastery, Ngaba. He died the same day.
- *March 14*: Jamyang Palden (34), monk of the Rongbo Gonchen monastery, Rebkong (Tongren) County, Qinghai. Condition unknown.
- *March 16*: Lobsang Tsultrim (20), monk of the Kirti monastery, Ngaba. He died on March 19.

- *March 17*: Sonam Dhargye (43), Rebkong (Tongren) County, Qinghai; father of a family. He died the same day.
- *March 28*: Sherab (20), Ngaba. He died the same day.
- *March 30*: Tenpa Dhargyal (22) and Chime Palden (21), both from the Gyalrong Tsodun Kirti monastery, Ngaba. Condition unknown.

The focal points for the incidents were the Kirti monastery and the Autonomous Tibetan District of Ngaba (Aba) in Sichuan Province. The first to set himself on fire was a monk of the Kirti monastery in February of 2009. 12 others followed his example during the course of 2011 (see, among others, *RCTC* 2012, No. 1, pp. 5-6, 13). (Lists on [www.tibetoffice.ch](http://www.tibetoffice.ch) and [www.tchrd.org](http://www.tchrd.org); numerous other reports in the media, see also: *TibetInfoNet News Digest* for that time period.)

January 9, 2012

## The State Administration for Religious Affairs reports progress in the record filing of clerics, in achieving financial supervision over places of worship, and in building up a databank of religious information

According to Jiang Jianshui, Vice Director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), in a speech at the National Conference on Religious Work in Harbin, during 2011 the process of recognizing religious personnel by the (official) religious communities and of their record filing with the government authorities (as laid down in the 2007 “Measures for Reporting Religious Personnel for the Record”) has been speeded up. As Jiang reported, 99% of religious office holders have been officially recognized and filed in ten province level administration units (Beijing, Tianjin, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Shandong, Hubei, Tibet, Gansu, Ningxia, and Xinjiang). In a further 11 units (including Hebei), the figure is 85% and in six others 70%. This process is also underway in Shanghai, Guangdong, Guizhou, and Xinjiang. Most of the national religious organizations have already issued “ID cards for religious office holders” to the majority of those filed. Some difficulties arose due to the mobility of many clerics and also due to the lack of a country-wide, centralized management information system, Jiang said.

According to Jiang, 2011 also saw progress in the implementation of the “Administrative Measures for Financial Supervision of Sites for Religious Activities (Trial Implementation).” The majority of the larger places of worship already have introduced a system of financial administration with respective bookkeeping and financial statements but there are still some difficulties to be overcome with regard to smaller places of worship, Jiang explained. Both processes should be completed by the end of 2012. It was also announced that in 2011 the SARA had begun building up a national databank of information for religious work (*Xinhua* Jan. 8 and 9, 2012, according to [www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn); see also *China heute* 2007, No. 1-2, pp. 23-33 [in German]).

January 9, 2012:

## Shenzhen: Chinese-African Symposium on poverty reduction

In a three-day symposium, which opened in Shenzhen on January 9, the focus was on collaboration between China and African countries in the war on poverty. 50 government officials, scholars, and entrepreneurs from China and Africa as well as representatives of international organizations held talks on the possibilities for reducing poverty. The symposium was organized by the International Poverty Reduction Centre in China, the United Nations Development Program, and by Shenzhen University (*Xinhua* Jan. 9, 2012).

January 11, 2012:

## ***Global Times* compares the Dalai Lama with Falungong**

In connection with the recent series of self-immolations in Tibet, the *Global Times*, an English language newspaper which is part of the People's Daily media group, accused the "Dalai group" of cruelly pressuring the young monks and of misusing them for political purposes. It was stated that the previous round of self-immolation suicides in China had been carried out by members of the Falungong movement. "Hopefully the Dalai group will not become another cult," the *Global Times* wrote (www.globaltimes.cn Jan. 11, 2012).

January 13, 2012:

## **Civil rights activist Yu Jie has left China**

In a surprise move, the 38 year old Chinese writer Yu Jie, long critical of the regime, has fled China together with his family. Yu, who in his book "China's Best Actor: Wen Jiabao" accused the Premier of hypocrisy over democratic values, wrote in an e-mail shortly after his arrival in the United States that he could no longer withstand the growing pressure being placed on him by Beijing. He wrote: "My safety was seriously threatened." A scholar in the field of literature, Yu is a Protestant Christian and was an active member of a house church. He had already been under house arrest for a considerable time. Yu is a friend of the imprisoned Chinese Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo and was one of the co-authors of "Charter 08," a manifesto calling for freedom and democracy in China (*South China Morning Post* Jan. 13, 2012; www.faz.net Jan. 12, 2012).

January 16, 2012:

## ***AsiaNews* appeals for release of imprisoned Chinese bishops and priests**

In an open letter addressed to both President Hu Jintao and the Chinese ambassador in Italy, Ding Wei, the news agency *AsiaNews* has appealed for the release of three bishops and six priests, who have either disappeared while in police custody or who are currently known to be detained in prison without trial. According to *AsiaNews* their release could be a gesture of friendship and hope for Catholics and for human rights activists, as well as a sign of true hope in the days leading up to the Lunar New Year, which falls on January 23 this year. *AsiaNews* appended a list, which identifies the following bishops and priests as either "disappeared" or "in prison": underground bishop James Su Zhimin (79) of Baoding, Hebei (arrested in 1997, present whereabouts unknown); underground Bishop Cosmas Shi Enxiang (90) of Yixian, Hebei (arrested in 2001, present whereabouts unknown); Fr. Joseph Lu Genjun, underground vicar general of Baoding (disappeared in 2006, present whereabouts unknown); Fr. Zhang Jianlin and Fr. Cui Tai, both underground priests from Xuanhua, Hebei (taken away on June 22, 2011 by officials of the Bureau for Religious Affairs, present whereabouts unknown); Fr. Liu Honggen, underground priest from Baoding (arrested on December 27, 2006 together with 8 other priests, currently in prison at Qingyuan); Fr. Ma Wuyong, underground priest from Baoding (arrested in August of 2004 together with 8 other priests, currently also in prison at Qingyuan); Fr. Wang Chengli, underground priest from Heze, Shandong (sentenced on August 25, 2011 to two and a half years of "re-education through labor," currently at the forced labor camp at Jining); Bischof Wu Qinjing of Zhouzhi, Shaanxi (secretly ordained, under house arrest at the minor seminary of Xi'an since November of 2007) (*AsiaNews* Jan. 16, 2012).



January 30, 2012:

## Arrest of six priests of the Diocese of Suiyuan (Inner Mongolia) – further acts of repression follow



Rector Joseph Ban Zhanxiong. Photo: *UCAN*.

Six priests of the underground diocese of Suiyuan were arrested on January 30 in Erenhot, one of the border towns on the border to Outer Mongolia. Among them was the rector of the underground seminary, Fr. Joseph Ban Zhanxiong. The seminary was closed on February 14th, and the seminarians were sent home.

On January 31, the diocesan administrator, Fr. Gao Jiangping, and one other priest were arrested and taken to an undisclosed location. The other priests were in hiding. After a short time, four of those arrested on January 30 were

released, but with the obligation of reporting to the police station every day and of submitting to study sessions. According to further reports by *UCAN*, on February 13 they were forced to concelebrate with Bishop Meng Qinglu and two other official priests. 20 government officials were on hand to witness the Mass in the city of Baotou and immediately afterwards took the priests away again, it said. *AsiaNews* is of the opinion that the attacks were in connection, among other things, with conflicts within the diocese, which in turn were connected with the “ambiguity of the official bishop, Msgr. Paul Meng Qinglu” of Hohhot. Paul Meng is recognized by both the Holy See and by the Chinese government. At his consecration he had expressed his hope for reconciliation with the underground Church. However, in November of 2011 he took part in the illicit Episcopal consecration in Chengde and in December of 2010 was appointed Vice-President of the Patriotic Association. *UCAN* also mentions disputes concerning the transfer of priests.

Approximately 30,000 faithful belong to the underground diocese of Suiyuan, which has 35 priests and 90 nuns. It covers a large territory which includes the central and southern parts of Inner Mongolia. As far as the government is concerned, the diocese is part of the official Diocese of Hohhot. In recent years, prior to the current harassment, the diocese had been able to develop undisturbed and the priests were able to go peacefully about their pastoral work (*AsiaNews* Feb. 2 and 24, 2012; *UCAN* Jan. 31, Feb. 8 and 23, 2012).

End of January 2012:

## Course for Volunteers in the Diocese of Shanghai

The end of January saw the beginning of the first course for volunteers of the year 2012. The course was organized by the Guangqi Social Service Center of the Diocese of Shanghai, which was founded in 2005. The center’s different groups exchanged accounts of the experiences gained during their volunteer service the previous year. The volunteers were mainly involved in the following areas: scholarship programs for students from underprivileged families; assistance to the elderly; work with migrant workers and volunteer services in the area of health. Volunteers were also brought in to respond to natural disasters (*Fides* Feb. 1, 2012; for an article on the center, see *China heute* 2010, No. 1, pp. 45-47 [in German]).

February 1, 2012:

## Chiang Han-sun is the new President of Fu Jen Catholic University in Taipei

Celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the re-opening of Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan reached their high point on December 8, 2011 in Hsinchuang (Xinzhuang), Taipei, in the presence of Church and civil dignitaries (including among others Zenon Cardinal Grocholewski, Prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education, and Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-fai of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples). Earlier, on December 3, there had been the groundbreaking for the construction of a US\$ 132 million dollar university hospital. On February 1, 2012 in a dignified ceremony, outgoing President of Fu Jen Catholic University, Prof. Bernard Li, handed over his office to his successor, Vincent Chiang Han-Sun (Jiang Hansheng). The 61 year old Chiang is a doctor of urology (he received his doctorate at the Technical University of Munich) and was already serving as Dean of the Medical School as well as the University's Vice-President. The new president said that Fu Jen University was not only an institute of higher learning that could be proud of its more than 170,000 graduates, but he also pointed to a visionary goal: by 2025 he wants Fu Jen to belong to the 200 best universities of the entire world ([www.pro.fju.edu.tw/press\\_show.asp?press\\_id=1301](http://www.pro.fju.edu.tw/press_show.asp?press_id=1301)).

February 4, 2012:

## German Chancellor Angela Merkel visits Bishop Joseph Gan Junqiu of Guangzhou

During the course of her official visit to the People's Republic of China, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany paid a visit, arranged at her request, to the Catholic Bishop of Guangzhou. The bishop said after her visit that Chancellor Merkel had encouraged him "to set up more charitable organizations such as nurseries and homes for the aged to promote social harmony, freedom, and equality" (*UCAN* Feb. 10, 2012; cf. *China heute* 2012, No. 1, p. 5-6 [in German]).



Bishop Joseph Gan Junqiu showing the German chancellor the church.  
Photo: *UCAN*.

February 5, 2012:

## Underground Administrator of Kunming, Dali, and Zhaotong dies



Fr. Lawrence Zhang Wenchang (Photo: *UCAN*) has died at the age of 92 in the Autonomous County of Shilin of the Yi nationality. A member of the Sani ethnic group, a sub-group of the Yi people, Fr. Zhang was the Apostolic Administrator of the three ecclesiastical territories in Yunnan Province: Kunming, Dali, and Zhaotong. As underground administrator, he had no ties whatsoever to the official Church, and had been living under police surveillance for years in the city of

Kunming. The Diocese of Kunming has not had a bishop recognized by Rome for more than 60 years. The current official Bishop of Kunming is Joseph Ma Yinglin, who was consecrated in 2006 without papal mandate. Fr. Zhang was born in 1920, studied at the major seminary of Kunming, and was ordained a priest in 1946. He spent almost 25 years in prison and in labor camps between 1958 and 1982. He was officially rehabilitated in 1987 and in 2000 was appointed by Rome Administrator of the Dioceses of Kunming and Dali as well as of the Apostolic Prefecture of Zhaotong (UCAN Feb. 7, 2012).

**February 9, 2012:**

## **Introduction of annual “study month on religious policy and legislation”**

The State Administration for Religious Affairs has sent out a corresponding circular, dated February 9, to all of its branch offices on the provincial level. According to the bulletin every year, between June 1 and June 30, they are to organize appropriate study activities for the leaders of all religious organizations and places of worship and for their co-workers. Included are all office holders, teachers, and students in religious educational institutions as well as the faithful. The aim of this program is to “strengthen their national, civic, and legal awareness.” An obligatory reading list with three titles was appended to the document. By the end of July 2012, all provincial level Bureaus for Religious Affairs are required to report back to the central office in writing, with accompanying photos of their activities (the text of the document can be found at: [www.sara.gov.cn/zzjg/zjwhcbs/xxfb13/12407.htm](http://www.sara.gov.cn/zzjg/zjwhcbs/xxfb13/12407.htm)).

**February 13, 2012:**

## **CPJ: Ten of the 27 journalists currently in prison in China are Tibetans**

This assertion was made by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, New York) in its global annual census on imprisoned journalists. Six other journalists detained in China are thought to be Uyghurs (according to *TibetInfoNet News Digest* Feb. 11–24).

**February 15, 2012:**

## **The Bishop of Macerata begins Taiwan visit**

Bishop Claudio Giuliodori of Macerata, Italy, birthplace of Matteo Ricci, paid a week-long visit to Taiwan this February. One purpose of this visit was to locate witnesses who might possibly help advance the beatification process of Matteo Ricci. His spiritual heritage “of mutual respect and open-minded dialogue between East and West is still relevant today,” said Bishop Giuliodori in a conversation with Archbishop John Hung Shan-chuan (Hong Shanchuan) SVD, which took place in the course of a meeting with Church leaders at the Taipei Archdiocese curia on February 16. In the course of the conversation, the bishop also mentioned the Li Madou Study Center (Li Madou is the Chinese name of Matteo Ricci), which was founded in his diocese for the purpose “to serve Chinese clergy who pursue studies in Europe and to hold theological seminars.” He also expressed the hope that the Diocese of Shanghai will speed up its cause for Paul Xu Guangqi, Ricci’s collaborator in China, so that “the two Catholic sages of East and West would be canonized together.” Bishop Giuliodori also visited Paul Cardinal Shan Kuo-hsi (Shan Guoxi) in the Diocese of Kaohsiung (Gaoxiong) as well as the Diocese of Tainan, where

he unveiled statues of Matteo Ricci and Xu Guangqi's granddaughter, Candida Xu (1607–1689) (*UCAN* Feb. 17 and 21, 2012).

February 17, 2012:

## Chinese Minister of Health calls for a campaign against corruption

In a statement published on the website of the Ministry of Health, Minister Chen Zhu is quoted as calling on the health authorities and officials “to step up supervision of medical workers’ practices and the operations of both public and private hospitals.” The fight against corruption in the purchase and sale of medicines and of medical equipment needs to be carried out more intensely and the system of remuneration of hospital personnel needs to be reformed, Zhu stated. He also challenged all hospitals and hospital personnel to improve the quality of their service. After numerous reports of conflicts between doctors and patients, which, on occasion, have even resulted in physical assaults, the malfunctioning relationship between doctors and patients has aroused great concern. The ministry wants to improve existing emergency measures for the management of conflicts over medical treatment and improve the security and safety of hospital employees. At the same time, the ministry called on the general public to remain alert to any possible misconduct on the part of doctors (*Xinhua* Feb. 18 and 24, 2012; March 15, 2012).

February 18, 2012:

## Bishop John Tong of Hong Kong becomes new member of the College of Cardinals



Cardinal Tong at a press conference in Hong Kong on March 2.  
Photo: *UCAN*.

Bishop John Tong Hon, Bishop of Hong Kong, is among the 22 prelates whom Pope Benedict XVI, during the Consistory in St. Peter's in Rome, has made members of the College of Cardinals. The 72 year old is the 7th Chinese Cardinal in the history of the Church and the 3rd Cardinal of the Diocese of Hong Kong, succeeding the deceased John Baptist Cardinal Wu Cheng-chung and Joseph Cardinal Zen Ze-kiun, who retired as bishop of Hong Kong in 2009. John Tong characterized his elevation to the rank of cardinal as a sign of the Holy Father's great appreciation and concern for the Church in China and an encouragement to the Diocese of Hong Kong in

its efforts to achieve reconciliation and the restoration of full unity between the Church of China and the universal Church. In the Vatican, Cardinal Tong is, among other things, a consultant of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and a member of the China Commission (see *China heute* 2012, No. 1, pp. 4-5 [in German]).

February 19, 2012:

## Demands made by the Diocese of Hong Kong to the government of the Special Administrative Region

In the run-up to the election of the new administrative head of Hong Kong on March 25, 2012, the Diocese of Hong Kong has spoken out decisively in a statement titled: “Some expectations concerning the future SAR government envisioned by the Catholic Church in Hong Kong.” Most importantly, the Church is advocating the introduction of universal suffrage for the election of the Chief Executive and all the members of the Legislative Council. In addition, four areas were mentioned in which there are great shortcomings and for which, in the mind of the Church, the government has undertaken far too little. They are: housing – especially for young people; medical care; education, and retirement protection. In all of these areas suggestions were made for the adoption of remedial measures in view of the increase of social disparity and economic recession. Given the number of broken marriages, the Diocese of Hong Kong is calling on the government to shoulder the responsibility for the protection of marriage and family (*South China Morning Post* Feb. 21, 2012; [sundayex.catholic.org.hk/](http://sundayex.catholic.org.hk/)).

February 27, 2012:

## New campaign launched: “Practice Lei Feng spirit”



"Pop icon" Lei Feng on a *Beijing Review* cover.

A new propaganda campaign has been launched to mark the 50th anniversary of a man who, already in Mao's time, had become a moral icon of a highly stylized national hero. To the slogan coined by Mao, “Learn from Lei Feng,” has now been added the motto “Practice Lei Feng spirit.” – The 22 year old soldier Lei Feng died in an accident in 1962 and after his death he became famous because of his diary entries, in which he had written down his thoughts and good deeds. These were to make of him a moral role model for the whole country. According to the *South China Morning Post*, the new campaign aims at improving the moral standards of the people by means of the visible characteristics of Lei Feng's personality (such as helpfulness, selflessness, kindness, and humility) and at shoring up the stability of society. *UCAN* points out that, despite almost 50 straight years of continuous campaigns, modern Chinese society is riddled with corruption, food scandals, mismanagement, inconsiderateness, and injustice, with traditional Chinese moral values increasingly falling into oblivion. The government hopes that this new propaganda campaign, which presents a more human portrait of this long idealized national idol, will counteract this tendency (*South China Morning Post* Feb. 28, 2012; *UCAN* March 18, 2012).

February 27, 2012:

## New document on the encouragement and regulation of charitable activities of religious groups

A new document, jointly issued by six government departments, and bearing the title “Views on the encouragement and regulation of charitable activities of religious groups” (关于鼓励和规范宗教界从

事公益慈善活动的意见), welcomes the charitable activities of religious groups and affirms that they will benefit from tax advantages and state subsidies, provided that they register [though often quite difficult]. But, according to the new regulations, they are not allowed to propagate any religious content along with their charitable work and they must operate free from foreign influence. For this reason they may not accept subsidies and donations from abroad if there are any religious or political conditions attached to them. In addition, religious charitable organizations are required to operate under the close supervision, management, and inspection of the corresponding government departments under whose authority they function. When making out their annual plan of charitable action, they must report to the religious affairs departments above the county level. According to an *AsiaNews* source, the real goal of the new regulations “is to stop the flow of money to the Islamic groups and the Tibetans: these groups are religious, but also have a strong political aspect that the government wants to slow down at all costs” (*AsiaNews* Feb. 3, 2012; *South China Morning Post* Feb. 28, 2012).

**March 5, 2012:**

### **Wen Jiabao announces program to alleviate poverty and promote rural development – last year the official poverty threshold was raised**

At the opening of the 5th session of the National People’s Congress in Beijing on March 5, the Chinese Premier announced the introduction of a program to alleviate poverty and promote the development of rural areas for the period 2011–2020. The program is meant to benefit those regions of China which are particularly poor. The target regions are the 11 mountainous regions and those parts of the provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai which are inhabited mainly by Tibetans, as well as the more southern area of the Autonomous Region of Xinjiang. The government considers the ever widening gap in material goods between urban and rural populations, between coastal regions and the provinces of the interior, as well as the obvious difference between rich and the poor, as a source of ongoing worry. For example, in 2010 the average income for a city dweller was 3.23 times higher than that of farmers. In the Province of Guizhou, one of the poorest of all Chinese provinces, the gross domestic product is at present only one sixth of that of Shanghai, yet approximately 15 million people live in the province with 45% of that population living below the newly defined poverty level, which the Chinese government adjusted on November 29, 2011, raising it to a net income of 2,300 Yuan a year for the rural population. Included among the measures to combat poverty is a plan to relocate a total of 1.5 million poor villagers away from those areas of Guizhou Province, which are unfit for human habitation due to the rocky nature of the soil (*Xinhua* Nov. 29, 2011; Feb. 13, 2012; March 12, 2012).

**March 7, 2012:**

### **Xindra Tenzin Chodrak: 27,000 monks and nuns in Tibet have been added to the state healthcare system**

In addition, 14,000 monks have joined pension programs, and 4,300 monks coming from poor families have received allowances for minimum living standards, said Xindra Tenzin Chodrak, deputy director of the Standing Committee of the People’s Congress of the Autonomous Region of Tibet during a panel discussion at the National People’s Congress. All of the 46,000 monks and nuns, who are currently living in monasteries in the Autonomous Region of Tibet, will eventually be included in the social security system. Padma Choling, chairman of the Autonomous Region, said at the same meeting that the Dalai Lama and his followers have been attempting to attract young Tibetans. He added that the

government doesn't need to compete with the Dalai Lama, rather, the key to raising the government's popularity is going to be improving the standard of people's livelihood (*Xinhua* March 7, 2012; see also *RCTC* 2012, No. 1, p. 15).

March 11, 2012:

## The Catholic Church in Taiwan keeps its distance from anti-nuclear protests



Indigenous people demand the removal of nuclear storage facilities from Lanyu Island. Photo: *UCAN*.

In connection with the first anniversary of the catastrophic Tsunami and the associated atomic energy disaster in Fukushima, leading figures of the Protestant churches, the Buddhists, Muslims, and of the Daoist Zhengyi sect issued a common statement in which they warn against the use of nuclear energy and call on the government to eliminate this form of energy in Taiwan and to promote the development of sustainable green energy. Together with 70 other groups and with thousands of other Taiwanese they took part on March 11 in public protests in the cities of Taipei, Taichung (Taizhong), and Kaohsiung (Gaoxiang). *UCAN* has reported that the Catholic Church

neither signed the statement nor has it taken an official public position against the use of atomic energy. A spokesman for the Bishops' Conference explained that the Church in Taiwan was consciously conforming to a decision of Vatican policy to maintain a neutral position in the controversy over the peaceful use of nuclear energy. However, "Church leaders had no objection to Catholics wanting to join the protests in a personal capacity," according to an official from the Bishops' Conference who did not wish to be quoted by name (*UCAN* March 12, 2012).

March 14, 2012:

## Wen Jiabao deplors self-immolations carried out by Tibetans

At a press conference, the Chinese Premier commented on the recent phenomenon of the self-immolations in some areas of Tibet by a number of monks. "We are opposed to such extreme actions that have disturbed and undermined social harmony," Wen declared. He also said that the young Tibetans involved were innocent and that "we feel deeply distressed by their actions." With or without the direct participation of the Dalai Lama, the so-called "Tibetan Government in Exile" in Dharamsala is a combination of politics and religion with the express purpose of separating Tibet from the Motherland, something about which China has a very clear position, Wen stated. He added that the economy in Tibet needs to be developed, but at the same time environmental concerns and the cultural traditions need to be considered. "We respect the religious freedom of the Tibetan people," Wen said (*Xinhua* March 14, 2012, from [www.sara.gov.cn](http://www.sara.gov.cn)).

March 15, 2012:

## **UCAN: 20–30 theology students from the Mainland are studying in Taiwan**

UCAN has reported on an interesting development in cooperation between Taiwan and Mainland China in the realm of theological formation. According to reports by the president of the Bishop's Conference of Taiwan, Archbishop John Hung Shan-chuan (Hong Shanchuan) SVD, at the beginning of 2012 between 20 and 30 priests, sisters, and brothers from Mainland China ranging from 20–30 years of age are now studying at the Faculty of Theology of Fu Jen Catholic University in Hsinchuang (Xinzhuang), Taipei. This possibility arose out of a) the willingness of Taiwan to admit students from Mainland China in particular to private universities on the island; and b) from an agreement at the end of 2011 between the government of Taiwan and the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education that academic titles and degrees of the Faculty of Theology of Fu Jen are to be officially recognized in Taiwan (see *RCTC* 2012, No. 1, p. 17-18); and last but not least c) because of negotiations initiated almost two years ago and carried forward by Archbishop Hung with Wang Zu'án, Director of China's State Administration for Religious Affairs. The first group of students from the Mainland began their studies at Fu Jen in the fall of 2011. Taiwan is currently working on developing this program further. Archbishop John Hung sees advantages for the Church on the Mainland, inasmuch as the students will receive a solid theological formation within the framework of the universal Church, but he also sees advantages for the Church of Taiwan, which hopes to see some help in view of the low number of vocations from the island, even if the laws of Taiwan as they now stand would severely limit the possibility for clerics or religious sisters from Mainland China to be assigned for pastoral work in Taiwan (*UCAN* March 15, 2012).

March 18, 2012:

## **Shanghai: Priesthood ordinations – after resignation of the auxiliary bishop, nomination of new vicar general**

Seven deacons – six from Shaanxi Province and one from Inner Mongolia – were ordained priests by 95 year old Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian on March 18, eve of the Feast of St. Joseph, in the cathedral church of Shanghai. The ordination had originally been scheduled for last December 10, but it had to be postponed at the last moment after Bishop Jin broke a rib in a fall. A cloud hung over the ordination due to the absence of 49 year old Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Xing Wenzhi, who had not appeared in public for many months. According to a report in *Eglises d'Asie*, after months of rumors, Bishop Jin had finally announced the resignation of his auxiliary bishop. In the week before Christmas Jin named Fr. Thaddeus Ma Daqin, born and bred in Shanghai, as Vicar General of the diocese. Initially, Fr. Ma worked in the underground. For some years now, he has been taking on important assignments in the diocese (*Eglises d'Asie* March 21, 2012; *UCAN* Jan. 13, 2012, *Vatican Insider* Dec. 30, 2011).

March 19, 2012:

## **Tibet Daily calls for tighter controls of “migrant” monks and a long-term mechanism for the management of Tibet’s monasteries**

In an editorial, the Party newspaper *Xizang ribao* (*Tibet Daily*, Lhasa) has called for stricter controls, especially with regard to “migrant” monks and nuns (*liudong sengni* 流动僧尼) and for strengthening the



building up of the institutes for Tibetan Buddhism. The paper also wants to see the controls tightened over the reincarnation of Living Buddhas and a “long-term mechanism for the management of the monasteries (*simiao guanli de changxiao jizhi* 寺庙管理的长效机制)” to be put in place. According to the *South China Morning Post*, Padma Choling, chairman of the Autonomous Region of Tibet, has confirmed during a session of the National People’s Congress that government cadres would be stationed within the Tibetan monasteries on a permanent basis, and that 21,000 cadres have already been placed in 5,451 villages of the Autonomous Region.

According to a March 16 report from Human Rights Watch, the new policy, known as the “Complete Long-Term Management Mechanism for Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries,” is a new form of government surveillance: The “democratic management committees” which had previously been elected by the monks (even though under supervision) and which were comprised entirely of monks will now be placed under the direct control of non-elected administrative committees, on which the inserted government cadres will be members (Human Rights Watch March 16, 2012; *South China Morning Post* March 20, 2012).

March 19, 2012:

## Underground Bishop of Wenzhou taken away by the government to attend “learning classes”



Coadjutor Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin (right) and Father Paul Jiang Sunian of Wenzhou.  
Photo: *UCAN*.

49 year old Coadjutor Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin of Wenzhou and his chancellor Fr. Paul Jiang Sunian were taken away by government officials so that they could take part in “learning classes.” In 2007, the Vatican appointed Bishop Shao leader of the underground Church in Wenzhou and he is not recognized by the government. Local Church sources quoted government officials saying that they would be allowed back soon, if the two of them are “intelligent enough in their learning.” If that does not turn out to be the case, they will be detained longer. “This implies their release depends on whether they accept the government’s religious policies,” said one of the

sources. Several of the seventeen priests of the underground diocese were also summoned for interrogation. It is more than likely that all of this is a direct result of the secret Episcopal ordination in Tianshui Diocese in Gansu Province last year. Apparently the government is trying to find out who was involved in that ordination. Bishop John Wang Ruowang of Tianshui was also taken away for “learning classes” at the end of December (*UCAN* March 22, 2012, see entry of December 30, 2011).

This “News Update” was first published in *China heute* 2012, No. 1, pp. 7-14 (in German).