

News Update on Religion and Church in China March 22 to June 29, 2012

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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). – The last “News Update” (2012, No. 2, pp. 3-19) covered the period December 2011 – March 2012.

March 22, 2012:

Bureau of Religious Affairs meets on new government document regulating the social welfare activities of the religions

Under the chairmanship of Wang Zuó'an, Director of the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA), representatives of the national organizations of the five great religions studied the document “Views on Encouraging Religious Groups to Carry Out Charitable Activities and the Regulation of the Same,” released jointly on Feb. 16, 2012 by the SARA together with the United Front Department of the Communist Party of China and various state ministries.

Liu Yuanlong, Vice Chairman of the Patriotic Association of the Chinese Catholic Church, declared at the meeting that the Commission on Philanthropy of the Patriotic Association, and the [official] Episcopal Conference should develop their role as a “platform” for the common efforts of local Catholic social service organizations. Furthermore, the SARA called for the preparation of the “Social Welfare Week of the Religions” planned for this year (www.catholicchurchinchina.org – March 29; for the German translation of the “Views” see *China heute* 2012, No. 2, pp. 98-102).

March 22, 2012:

Vatican Secretary of State Bertone on relations between the Vatican and China

In an interview with the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, Vatican Secretary of State Tarcisio Cardinal Bertone commented as follows on the future of the Vatican’s relationships with Beijing: “To start with, contacts with China exist, and dialogue has not been broken off, although at times it is difficult and has

its ‘ups and downs.’ The Catholic community in China lives, prays, and loves the Pope and the Church, and is intimately connected to the universal Church. Many ecclesiastical or Catholic institutions have relations of a high cultural value with the Chinese institutions. All this can only be of benefit to the relations with Beijing. Looking at the progress already made, one cannot rule out, but rather can foresee, and must encourage, a positive encounter between the Catholic Church, in its peaceful and humanizing mission, and the great Chinese people” (*La Stampa*, March 22).

March 25, 2012:

Elections in Hong Kong: The churches demand universal suffrage

In the run-up to the election of the new Chief Executive of Hong Kong on March 25, Christian churches raised their voices in support of the introduction of universal suffrage in the election of the Chief Executive as well as of the entire Legislative Council. Under the current system, entrepreneur Leung Chun-ying was elected with 689 out of 1,200 votes of the men and women electors, who are drawn mostly from the business world and from pro-Beijing groups. Leung has the support of the central government in Beijing. On March 23, the Hong Kong Christian Council held a prayer meeting in protest against the undemocratic elections. Cardinal John Tong Hon also called on people to pray on March 25 for direct elections before 2017, the year in which the citizens of Hong Kong are scheduled to be allowed to elect the Chief Executive in a direct vote. The newly elected Chief Executive is supposed to initiate this process. The Catholic weekly magazine, the *Sunday Examiner*, came out sharply in support of greater democracy and of direct elections: “Under this system, whoever is elected will lack legitimacy in the eyes of the public.” 2,000 protesters – including Christians – had spent the night outside the election venue. Pandemonium broke out when they attempted to storm the center (*AsiaNews* March 26; *ENI* March 23; *Sunday Examiner* March 24; April 7; www.faz.net March 25; see also *RCTC* 2012, No. 2, p. 15).

March 25, 2012:

New Anglican Bishop of Hong Kong installed

In the presence of 22 Anglican bishops from Asia, Europe, and North America, Andrew Chan Auming of Western Kowloon Diocese was installed as the new Anglican Bishop of Hong Kong on March 25 in St. John’s Cathedral. With him, there are now three active bishops in the Anglican Church of Hong Kong. Chan was ordained a priest in 1992 and completed his M.A. in Pastoral Theology at the University of London in 2004. The following year he was appointed the first Chinese pastor of St. John’s Cathedral (*UCAN* March 27).

March 26, 2012:

Controversies over priestly ordinations in Yunnan Province

Despite warnings and criticism both inside and outside China, Bishop Joseph Ma Yinglin of Kunming (not recognized by Rome), who is also the chairman of the official Chinese Bishops’ Conference, ordained six young men priests in the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Dali. Among the 16 concelebrants there were also an American Maryknoll priest studying in Dali as well as two Korean Benedictines, whose order is supporting the minor seminary of Dali. Their participation caused much criticism. The newly ordained belong to the Dioceses of Dali and Kunming as well as to the Apostolic Prefecture of Zhao-

tong, all three of which are located in Yunnan Province. The ordination was the first to take place since the erection of the Diocese of Dali in 1946. One of the three new priests of the diocese is of Tibetan origin, and the others belong to the Miao and to the Jingpo ethnic groups respectively. Until now, there were only three priests and three religious sisters in the Diocese of Dali to serve the 80,000 Catholics, most of whom belong to seven tribal groups living in remote mountain areas. According to a source in Dali, each priest must cover almost 60,000 km annually in order to visit all of the faithful (*UCAN* March 13 and 28).

April 4, 2012:

Qingming Festival: More and more Chinese are visiting the cemeteries

The three national holidays for the Qingming Festival in honor of the dead are inducing more and more Chinese to visit cemeteries and memorial sites. According to estimates, more than 520 million Chinese commemorated their deceased relatives in this way from April 2 to 5. One year ago the number of those participating in the rites had been estimated at about 60 million fewer. As the state news agency Xinhua reports, the railroads reported more than 20 million passengers during the first three days of April and they expect that there will be a further 7 million on the last memorial day. Despite the high number of travelers, there were no reports of major traffic jams or of accidents (*Xinhua* April 4; see also *China heute* 2008, No. 1-2, p. 15 [in German]; No. 3, pp. 76-77 [in German]; *RCTC* 2011, No. 1, p. 13).

April 8, 2012:

Two underground bishops released

On Easter Sunday Coadjutor Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin of Wenzhou (Zhejiang Province) and Bishop Peter Jin Lugang of Nanyang (Henan Province) were both set free.

On March 19, the 49 year old Bishop Shao, together with his Chancellor, Fr. Paul Jiang Sunian, had been taken away by government officials in order to take part in “learning classes.” In the process, among other things, he was escorted by government officials to the Diocese of Leshan (Sichuan Province) where he met up with Paul Lei Shiyin, who had received Episcopal ordination without Papal approval in June 2011 and who had been subsequently excommunicated by the Holy See. There is conjecture that Bishop Shao’s arrest had to do with last year’s secret consecration of Bishop John Wang Ruowang of Tianshui (Gansu Province), in which he and four other underground bishops had taken part.

Bishop Jin had been taken away on Holy Thursday, April 4, since the authorities wanted to prevent him from celebrating the Chrism Mass as well as the Easter liturgies. He was brought to a guest house and escorted by four officials to various tourist spots before he was finally released (*UCAN* April 16; see also *RCTC* 2012, No. 2, pp. 6-7 and 19).

April 9, 2012:

First joint press conference of the official spokespersons of the “five major religions”

The press conference took place upon invitation from the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) and was conducted by a SARA representative. It was the first joint appearance of the spokes-

persons since the introduction of the “Press Information System” for the official religious communities by the SARA in December of 2011 (cf. *RCTC* 2012, No. 2, p. 7; for a list of the spokespersons see “People’s Republic of China: Religions and Churches. Statistical Overview 2011” in this issue of *RCTC*). The new spokespersons presented the current situation, as well as the working priorities of their respective religious communities. Some of the points mentioned were the Third Buddhist World Forum (see entry of April 26-27), the development of the Daoist and a Chinese-Islamic culture (*Zhongtu yisilan wenhua* 中土伊斯兰文化), the autonomous election and consecration of Catholic bishops, the development of Protestant theological thinking, as well as the social welfare activities of the YMCA and the YWCA. The Buddhist spokesperson, Master Puzheng, was asked about an affair that had come to light on the Chinese internet in which apparently “false” monks had deposited 100,000 Yuan in a bank and had checked into a hotel together with women. His response was to call for the intervention of the authorities (*Xinhua* April 9; www.sara.gov.cn April 9).

April 15–16, 2012:

First National Assembly since 1949 of the Chinese National Associations of the YMCA and YWCA (Young Men’s and Young Women’s Christian Associations)

180 delegates and special guests from all over China attended the congress in a Beijing hotel. The events of the conference corresponded to those of the national assemblies of the other official religious organizations: first, a speech by SARA Director Wang Zuo’an, then a work report, adaptation of the statutes, the election of chairpersons, and, finally, reception by the Director of the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party, Du Qinglin. A report on the website of the SARA spoke of the great importance of this first assembly of delegates in the “New China” and declared that they had reflected on the positioning of the Chinese National Associations of the YMCA and YWCA in the light of the “new situation” and had clarified the “direction of its future development.” For the YMCA, Pastor Xu Xiaohong was elected President, Chen Xin Vice-President, and Tu Hanqiao was installed as Director. For the YWCA, Mrs. Jin Wei was chosen as President, Pastor Mrs. Gao Ying as Vice-President, and Mrs. Yang Mingming as Director.

The report on the SARA website described the YMCA and the YWCA as “social service organizations with a Christian character” and more than 100 years’ presence in China, where they now have a presence in 10 Chinese cities. Since November 2009 the National Associations of YMCA and YWCA have come within the jurisdiction of the SARA – which explains why YMCA and YWCA have been mentioned more often in connection with Chinese religious policies in recent times (www.sara.gov.cn April 14, 15, and 16).

April 16, 2012:

Reform of China’s numerous public institutions planned

China’s extensive public institutions, which until now have been financed by the national budget and do not have earnings, are to undergo a fundamental reform. To reduce the financial burden on the government, of the existing institutions those with administrative roles will be turned or merged into government departments, while those which execute business operations are to be gradually transformed into enterprises. Those other institutions which provide social services will retain their current status as public institutions, but in the process their public welfare nature needs to be strengthened. It is planned that an efficient, clearly defined and regulated mechanism for public institutions will be established by

2020, whereby efforts will be particularly focused on improving the social welfare system as a whole and on equalizing social services between rural and urban areas and among different regions (*Xinhua* April 16 and 17, 2012).

Between April 19 and June 20, 2012:

Eight Tibetans immolate themselves in protest

As they did so, they demanded freedom for Tibet and the return of the Dalai Lama. With the exception of one 36 year old housewife and mother and one man over 50, most of the eight – of whom six died on the day they set fire to themselves – were young men in their early twenties. Three of the self-immolations occurred in the Ngaba Prefecture of Sichuan Province, three in Qinghai Province, and for the first time there were also two in the Tibetan capital city of Lhasa. According to reports, the self-immolation of two young Tibetans near the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa on May 27 triggered tightened restrictions, with checkpoints around the temple and the stationing of security forces in the other temples of Lhasa. It led to a considerable number of arrests, apparently mainly in an attempt to filter out and expel Tibetans from outside the Tibet Autonomous Region (i.e., from Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu) who were present in the area without residence permits. In connection with the self-immolations and other protests, in recent months Tibetans were also arrested in other places or were given prison sentences.

According to one statistic of the International Campaign for Tibet, since February 2009, 41 Tibetans have set themselves on fire (of whom 40 since March 16, 2011). 31 of the 41 are known to have died as a result of their burns. Of the 41, 35 were men. 25 of the 41 were from the Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Autonomous Tibetan and Qiang Prefecture in the north of Sichuan Province, which has thus become the epicenter of the wave of self-immolations. Among the Tibetans who set themselves on fire, 7 were monks and 9 were former monks of the Kirti Monastery in Ngaba.

The Chinese media, which also reported on the self-immolations, repeatedly accused the Dalai Lama and the “Dalai clique” of inciting them. The Tibetan government in exile rejected the accusations and claimed that the self-immolations were in fact the direct result of Beijing’s own policies on Tibet (lists at www.tibetoffice.ch and www.savetibet.org; numerous other reports in the media, see *TibetInfoNet News Digest* for this time period).

April 19, 2012:

At Easter, more than 22,000 baptisms in the Catholic communities of China



A Baptism in China – Easter 2012.
Photo: www.xinde.org.

According to a report of the Faith Institute for Cultural Studies in Shijiazhuang, which annually collects relevant data and publishes it in the newspaper *Xinde (Faith)*, this past Easter 22,104 baptisms were performed in 101 different dioceses. More than 75% of those baptized were adults. Many other baptisms occur as well, however, at different times of the year, and those have not yet been integrated into the statistics. In addition, by the reporting deadline of April 19, a number of communities had not yet submitted their reports. The figures for the individual cities and provinces respectively appear as follows: Beijing 500;

Shanghai 379; Tianjin 116; Chongqing 1,200; Liaoning 726; Heilongjiang 475; Jilin (two parishes) 75; Hebei 4,410; Shanxi 1,819; Inner Mongolia 852; Shaanxi 1,748; Gansu 198; Qinghai 13; Ningxia 87; Xinjiang 20; Henan 1,274; Hubei 376; Hunan 202; Jiangxi 156; Shandong 1,289; Jiangsu 385; Anhui 137; Zhejiang 1,122; Fujian 721; Sichuan 1,534; Guizhou 160; Yunnan 178; Tibet 3; Guangdong 1,427; Guangxi 514; and Hainan 8; making a grand total of 22,104. The number of baptisms in Hong Kong amounted to 3,500. At Easter in the three Chinese communities of New York City a total of 154 persons were baptized and 216 were confirmed (*AsiaNews* April 7; *Fides* April 12 and 20; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* April 7; *Vatican Information Service* April 24; *Xinde* April 20).

April 19, 2012:

Episcopal ordination in Nanchong, Sichuan Province



Bishop Chen Gong'ao, photographed when he was still a priest. Photo: UCAN.

Forty-seven year old Fr. Joseph Chen Gong'ao had already received approval from the Vatican to be ordained bishop back in 2002 and was elected in the diocese as candidate in 2010, but he postponed the ordination ceremony to ensure that no illegitimate bishop would take part in the consecration. Unfortunately, he didn't succeed. Five legitimate bishops took part in the ordination in Nanchong on April 19 but so, too, did Msgr. Paul Lei Shiyin from Leshan, who had been ordained on June 29, 2011 without papal mandate and who was subsequently excommunicated by the Holy See. The legitimate bishops were Peter Fang Jianping of Tangshan as principal consecrator (following his participation in an illicit episcopal ordination in 2011, he had begged Rome for forgiveness and had been reconciled), Joseph Li Jing of Ningxia, Paul He Zeqing of Wanzhou, Paul Xiao Zejiang of Guiyang, and Peter Luo Xuegang of Yibin. Lei Shiyin's participation in the rite unleashed a storm of criticism in China as well as abroad. Archbishop Savio Hon, Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, commenting on the incident to *AsiaNews* (April 19) said: "He had failed to respect the person of the new bishop and the community. He should have considered the needs of others and certainly not taken part." Bishop Chen is known for his fidelity to the Church and as a good missionary. Since 2005 he functioned as administrator of the diocese and since 2008 he was the Rector of Sichuan Province's major seminary. He states that the major focus for his future work will be the ongoing formation of the clergy and of the laity. In addition, Bishop Chen would like to build a new cathedral since the current one was damaged in the Wenchuan earthquake in 2008. The episcopal see of Nanchong had been vacant since the death of Bishop Huang Woze in 2004 (*AsiaNews* April 18 and 19; *Sunday Examiner* April 28; *UCAN* April 17 and 19; *www.vaticaninsider.com* April 18 and 19).

April 20, 2012:

Dalai Lama appoints American abbot of a Tibetan monastery in India

Nicholas Vreeland, Director of the Tibet Center in New York, will be enthroned on July 7, 2012, as Abbot of Rato Monastery in southern India. A press report of the Tibet Center indicated that this is a historic moment, for it is the first time that a Westerner will be named Abbot of an important Tibetan monastery. In an interview, Vreeland explained that the Dalai Lama wants to bring Western ideas into

the monastic system of Tibetan Buddhism, since he recognizes that new air needs to be brought into these institutions. Vreeland, son of a U.S. diplomat and himself a photographer, became a monk in 1985 and underwent his monastic formation in the Rato Monastery. In 1998 he was awarded a Geshe degree. The original Rato Monastery was founded near Lhasa in the 14th century. In 1983 it was re-founded in exile in India (www.huffingtonpost.com June 27; www.nicholasvreeland.com; www.pbs.org June 15; www.thetibetcenter.org May 10).

April 24, 2012:

450th birthday of Xu Guangqi, Chinese scholar, statesman, and convert (1562–1633)

This important man was remembered in his home town of Shanghai by politicians, scientists, and Church representatives (see also *China heute* 2012, No. 2, pp. 75-76 and 111-118 [in German]).

April 24, 2012:

Indian state government drops criminal conspiracy charges against Karmapa

According to an official of the Home Office of the northern Indian State of Himachal Pradesh in a conversation with *AFP*, the police and state district attorney had no material evidence to pursue the indictment. On May 21 the court approved the decision of the government to remove his name from the charge sheet. The trial against nine others accused in the case will continue.

On December 7, 2011, the State of Himachal Pradesh brought charges of criminal conspiracy against Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the 17th Karmapa Lama. The background to the accusations was the discovery during a raid on January 28, 2011, of cash in various currencies (among them Chinese RMB) valued at more than 1 million \$US in the Gyuto Monastery in Dharamsala, residence in exile of the 26 year old Karmapa. Following this event, the Indian media circulated the suspicion that the Karmapa, who had fled from the PR China to India in 1999, was a Chinese spy (cf. *RCTC* 2011, No. 1, p. 6-7). He himself denied this and his office explained that the monies found were in reality the free-will offerings given by the faithful (including offerings from Tibetans from the People's Republic of China). In January of 2011 Xu Zhitao of the United Front Department of the Communist Party of China had also rejected the accusation of espionage.

The Karmapa is the leader of the Karma Kagyu school and, as such, is one of the highest ranking leaders of Tibetan Buddhism (*AFP* April 24; *Global Times* April 25; *IANS* April 24; May 21; *Phayul* April 24).

April 25, 2012:

New Bishop for Hunan ordained

Fr. Methodius Qu Ailin was ordained bishop on April 25 in the Cathedral of Changsha, the province capital. The 51 year-old bishop is recognized by both Rome and by the Chinese government. Bishop Joseph Li Shan of Beijing was the principal consecrator. Other bishops concelebrating were John Lu Peisen of Yanzhou (Shandong), John Baptist Li Suguang of Nanchang (Jiangxi), Paul Liang Jiansen of Jiangmen (Guangdong), and John Baptist Tan Yanquan of Nanning (Guangxi), all of whom are rec-

ognized by Rome. As had occurred at the ordination in Nanchong (see entry above for April 19), this time, too, an illegitimate bishop took part in the ceremony, Joseph Liu Xinhong of Wuhu (Anhui), who had been ordained bishop without the approval of the Holy See in 2006.

Bishop Qu Ailin was named administrator of the Diocese of Hunan in 1999. The see had been vacant since the death of Bishop Simon Qu Tianxi of Changsha in 2000. From the Vatican's perspective, the Province of Hunan has four dioceses and five apostolic prefectures. In 1991 the official Church authorities carried out a restructuring into six dioceses, and in 1999 merged them into Hunan Diocese. Since Rome did not recognize these administrative changes, Bishop Qu is considered to be Bishop of Changsha and administrator of all the other Church territories in the province. Only 200 faithful attended the consecration ceremony (*UCAN* April 23 and 25).

April 26, 2012:

China reveals plan to multiply the number of social workers

China plans to increase the number of social workers to 1.45 million by the year 2020. That is an extraordinarily ambitious goal considering that the country only has slightly more than 200,000 social workers at present. Furthermore, it would clearly seem to outstrip the capabilities of the existing educational establishments, which confer only 20,000 master degrees in social work annually. Li Liguo, Minister of Civil Affairs, told the state news agency *Xinhua* that “the range of colleges and universities training social workers will be expanded.” In order to obtain qualified social workers, Li promised higher wages as well as preferential treatment for well-trained professionals. According to him, this way the number of social workers will increase to half a million by 2015, before being almost tripled in the ensuing five years. This goal was confirmed on April 26 when party and government officials published their “Long-term plan (2011–2020) for developing a national social work system” (*Xinhua* May 9).

April 26, 2012:

Communiqué of Vatican's China Commission released

The fifth plenary meeting of the Commission for the Catholic Church in China established by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007 was held at the Vatican from April 23–25, 2012. The aim of the commission is to study questions of importance concerning the life of the Catholic Church in China. Among the approximately 30 participants were leaders of the Roman dicasteries, Chinese bishops from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, as well as representatives of religious orders. At the end of the gathering the commission released a communiqué entitled “May the Face of the Church Shine Forth with Clarity in the Midst of the Noble Chinese People.” The principal theme of the meeting were the tasks and formation of the lay faithful in China, in view also of the upcoming “Year of Faith.” In addition, they discussed, among other things, problems associated with the illicit consecration of bishops as well as the ongoing formation of priests, seminarians, and religious sisters (*UCAN* May 10; *Vatican Information Service VIS* April 21 and 26; *Vatican Insider* May 1; for the text of the communiqué, see www.vatican.va).

April 26–27, 2012:

Third World Buddhist Forum meets in Hong Kong

Approximately 1,000 Buddhist monks, nuns, lay people, and scholars from 50 countries met to discuss in lectures and 7 sub-forums the main theme “Common Aspirations and Actions toward a Harmoni-

ous World". The organizers were the Chinese Buddhist Association, the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, and the Chinese Association for Religious and Cultural Exchange with its Director Wang Zuo'an, who is at the same time Director of the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA).

At the opening of the Forum, the 22 year old official Panchen Lama, appointed by the Chinese government (but not recognized by the Dalai Lama), held his first public discourse outside Mainland China, something which observers interpreted as an attempt on the part of China to create international recognition for him.

In conjunction with the Forum, a relic of the Buddha, a skull fragment excavated in 2010 at the Qixia Temple in Nanjing, was exposed in the Hong Kong Coliseum for the veneration of the faithful. According to Master Xuecheng, Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association, the relic should bring good luck and blessings to the citizens of Hong Kong on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of their return to China. The Forum also adopted a – very general – final declaration.

The First World Buddhist Forum took place in Hangzhou and Putuoshan in 2006 (cf. *China heute* 2006, No. 3, pp. 66 and 81 [in German]). The Second World Buddhist Forum was in Wuxi and Taipei in 2009 (*ibid.* 2009, No. 2, pp. 78 and 95-96 [in German]) (*South China Morning Post* April 27; *Xinhua* April 26 and 27; www.longquanzs.org March 27; www.sara.gov.cn/ztzz/dsjsbjlt2012/ [= sub-page on the Forum at the website of the SARA. The text of the final declaration can also be found there]).

May 2012:

Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples speaks out on China

In an interview with the Catholic periodical *30 Giorni* (2012, No. 5) Cardinal Fernando Filoni, who in May of 2011 became the leader of the Vatican Congregation which is also responsible for the Chinese Church, spoke out on a number of topics, among which was the question of episcopal consecrations in China. People need to stop seeing bishops as officials, he said, or else everything will remain conditioned by a political vision. For bishops, other selection criteria are needed than for party or government officials; this must be respected, the Cardinal said. Naturally, as citizens bishops need to be loyal to their homeland, "giving to Caesar what is Caesar's, but not at the expense of giving to God what is God's. As successors of the apostles, it is required of them to be faithful in all things to the Church's doctrine. This is not an 'order' of the Pope. The faithful want it first of all. It is the faithful who actually then judge the suitability and dignity of their own bishops," Filoni explained. According to him, the people of God in China has "an extraordinary *sensus fidei*, purified by years of suffering" (*Vatican Insider* June 20; text of the interview can be found at www.30giorni.it/articoli_id_78430_11.htm).

May 2012:

Catholic Church in Hong Kong prays for Chen Guangcheng

After four years in prison, followed by house arrest, on April 22 the dissident Chen Guangcheng succeeded in escaping. Protection in the U.S. Embassy in Beijing was given to Chen, who fights against forced abortions and sterilization. On May 2 he was transferred to a hospital in the company of a diplomat. On May 19 Chen was to be allowed to leave for the United States with his wife and two children. The Catholic Church in Hong Kong called on local priests to include Chen in their prayers during all Masses from April 28 to May 6. They also supported his claims that the officers who had tortured him physically during his detention should be punished, that his family should be ensured safety, and that corruption among officials should be stopped. The Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong Dio-

cese also condemned the abuse suffered by Chen and urged the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association to pray for him. The commission expected from Bishop Fang Xingyao, bishop in Chen's hometown of Linyi, not to stay silent in the face of government pressure, but to support Chen: The Chinese Church should fight not only for religious freedom, but also for the personal rights of the people. Zhang Mingxuan, a prominent Protestant house church pastor in Henan Province, pointed out: Chen is not a Christian, but we Chinese Christians pray for all those in pursuit of the truth" (*ENI* May 1; *Hong Kong Sunday Examiner* May 12; *South China Morning Post* May 10; *Taipei Times* May 20; *The Wall Street Journal* May 5).

May 7, 2012:

Bishops' Conference of Taiwan met in spring for the promotion of permanent, married deacons

During their spring gathering, the regional Bishops' Conference of Taiwan decided to promote the office of permanent, married deacons in order to help meet the problems of the generally advanced age of the clergy and the overall lack of priests. Since Taiwan, unlike Hong Kong and Macau, has no experience with married deacons, the Archdiocese of Taipei will start up an appropriate pilot project. In future, these permanent deacons will be assigned above all in the more than 600 communities of the island which are currently without priests. Furthermore, on completion of philosophy and theology, they should also be encouraged to go on for another degree, so that they can be useful in specific areas of the Church for which priests are not necessarily suitable, such as financial management, information technology, construction, etc. (*Fides* May 7).

May 9, 2012:

Vatican communiqué triggers backlash from China's official Church

In response to the communiqué issued following the plenary meeting of the Vatican's China Commission (see entry of April 26), on May 9 a commentary by a lay person under the pen name Xiaoyang (meaning "lamb") appeared on the joint website of the Patriotic Association and the official Bishops' Conference. It said, among other things, that the communiqué from Rome hurt the solidarity of Catholics in China and was of no benefit for the Church's pastoral and evangelical work. Some members of the Commission were accused of misunderstanding the situation of the Church in China and genuine needs of clergy and faithful. Xiaoyang cited the 100,000 persons baptized annually across the country, as well as other achievements in the pastoral and social fields, as evidence for the success of the Chinese Church and justified the Episcopal consecrations carried out independently of Rome. The commentary went on to say that the Vatican's China Commission "arrogantly places itself above the Chinese clergy, finds fault with our bishops, and destroys the unity and communion within the China Church." Alluding to the communiqué's call for prayer for the Church in China on May 24, the article also ended with a prayer to the Mother of God, so that "those people who do not understand the China Church do no more things that hurt charity and communion." One day later, Fr. Joseph Yang Yu, spokesperson of both the Patriotic Association and the Bishops' Conference, came out in support of the commentary and declared that it represented the thoughts of many Chinese Catholics. Yang defended the Chinese bishops and asserted that their consecration and the sacraments they confer are all valid and licit (*UCAN* May 11; www.catholicchurchinchina.org).

May 10–12, 2012:

International conference on religion and social service meets in Nanjing

Under the title of “Religion and Social Services: Building a Harmonious Society,” the conference brought together 55 scholars and social service practitioners from China and abroad to exchange views on the development work and social work of religious communities and faith-based organizations. Among the organizers were the Protestant Amity Foundation and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Behavioral Research at Nanjing University (see also: *China heute* 2012, No. 2, pp. 83-88 [in German]).

May 13, 2012:

First Matteo Ricci museum opens

In Zhaoqing, Guangdong Province, the first Chinese museum has opened that is completely dedicated to the Jesuit missionary Fr. Matteo Ricci (1552–1610). The museum was realized as a cooperative effort between the Catholic Church and the civil authorities. The “Museum of Cultural Exchange between China and the West” is located near the ruins of the first church which Ricci and his confrère Michele Ruggieri were allowed to build after their arrival in China. The exhibits include writings, items of clothing, and scientific instruments that illustrate Ricci’s life and his contribution to the exchange between cultures. Since the museum is located in a popular tourist spot, Fr. Gabriele Li Jiafang, parish priest of a nearby parish, is hoping that “more and more people will come to know the Catholic faith and the life and works of this great missionary” (*Fides* May 16; *UCAN* May 15).

May 14, 2012:

National People’s Congress adopts revised Criminal Procedure Law

With the amendment of the Criminal Procedure Law, the National People’s Congress of China has for the first time included a provision with regard to the respect for and the protection of human rights in another law besides the Constitution. There were also other important amendments to this law (see also *China heute* 2012, No. 2, p. 72 [in German]).

May 18, 2012:

UCAN: Hong Kong’s sole M.A. program in Catholic studies at Hong Kong universities to close

According to a *UCAN* report of May 18, Hong Kong’s first and only master’s degree program in Catholic studies, which had been inaugurated at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2005, will be closing down this September. Fr. Patrick Taveirne, the director of the university’s Centre for Catholic Studies, admitted that it had been difficult to operate such a course at a secular university. For one thing, they had not been able to obtain a full-time professor with a specialization in Catholic studies, he continued; the center had been established with the financial support of the Diocese of Hong Kong in cooperation with the university’s Department of Cultural and Religious Studies. Although the program had been quite popular at the outset, the number of M.A. candidates enrolled in the faculty slowly declined, ac-

ording to Professor John Lai Tsz-pang, coordinator of the M.A. program for Religious Studies. During this recent academic year there were only five M.A. candidates specializing in Catholicism, he said, for the specialties in Daoism and Buddhism, the number of candidates was even smaller, and those programs will also be terminated in September. Only the M.A. program in Protestantism will survive into the next academic year; it is run by Chung Chi College's Divinity School (*Sunday Examiner* June 2; *UCAN* May 18).

May 20, 2012:

22nd national day for helping the disabled

As part of the 22nd national day for helping the disabled, Chinese Vice-Premier Hui Liangyu urged greater efforts to secure the basic cultural rights of people with disabilities. According to official statistics, there are more than 85 million persons in China living with a disability. Since the beginning of this current school year, more than 80,000 disabled school-age children were not able to go to school, partly because of poverty, but 56% could not do so because of their disability. The problem is especially acute in rural areas. Often the training offered is not tailored to the needs of the disabled. Local authorities are being encouraged to make home tutors available and to provide educational training for parents, as well as financial support for families who have children with disabilities. In addition, the government is increasing its efforts to create jobs for the disabled. The internet, in particular, seems to have an important role to play: more than 30,000 disabled people are currently managing online stores at the site Taobao.com (*Xinhua* May 20 and 31).

May 22, 2012:

Phayul: Geshema degree becomes a reality for Tibetan nuns

The decision that women may now officially obtain a Geshe degree, the highest academic degree of Tibetan Buddhism, was taken in May of this year at a meeting organized by the Department for Religion and Culture of the Tibetan government in exile in Dharamsala, at which, among others, the teachers of six women's monasteries and representatives of the Institute for Buddhist Dialectic Studies took part. A spokesperson for the ministry explained that for years the Dalai Lama has been a strong supporter of the Geshema degree. On August 21, 2011, the nun Kelsang Wangmo, originally from Germany, was the first woman to earn the Geshe title (*Phayul* May 22).

May 24, 2012:

The Day of Prayer for the Church in China

instituted by Pope Benedict XVI was celebrated for the 5th time (see also *China heute* 2012, No. 2, pp. 76-77 [in German]).

May 24, 2012:

Underground Bishop Li Yi of Changzhi dies

On the World Day of Prayer for the Church in China, 88 year old Msgr. Ermenegildus Li Yi OFM, Bishop of Changzhi (Lu'an) in Shanxi Province, died. Bishop Li was born on November 13, 1923 in

the City of Changzhi and entered the Order of Friars Minor in 1943. He completed his studies of philosophy and theology at the major seminaries of Jinan and Hankou, where he was ordained a priest on February 6, 1949. After his ordination Fr. Li taught at a Catholic middle school in Macau and was also active in a parish there, where he took a particular interest in helping refugees from the North of China. From 1951 to 1955 he studied history at the University of Tianjin. From 1958 he worked as a parish priest in his home diocese of Changzhi. At the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 he was arrested and until his release in 1985 spent almost 20 years in prison. Afterwards, he was once again able to resume his pastoral activities in the churches of Anyang and Machang. On January 28, 1998, he was secretly ordained bishop of the Diocese of Changzhi, although the government refused to recognize him as bishop. Approximately 55,000 Catholics belong to the Diocese of Changzhi (*Fides* May 31; *UCAN* May 30).

May/June 2012:

Falungong reports mass petitions in Hebei and Heilongjiang

According to the Falun Dafa Information Center (FDIC) – the press office of Falungong in New York – the readiness of the populace in China to intervene in protest against the abduction or torture of Falungong adherents is growing. In a petition dated May 31, 2012, according to a FDIC report, within two weeks 15,000 Chinese in Northeast China had signed and sealed with their thumbprint a demand that the death of the Falungong adherent Qin Yueming be investigated. Qin is believed to have died on February 26, 2011, in the Jiamusi Prison (Heilongjiang Province) as a result of torture to which he had been subjected.

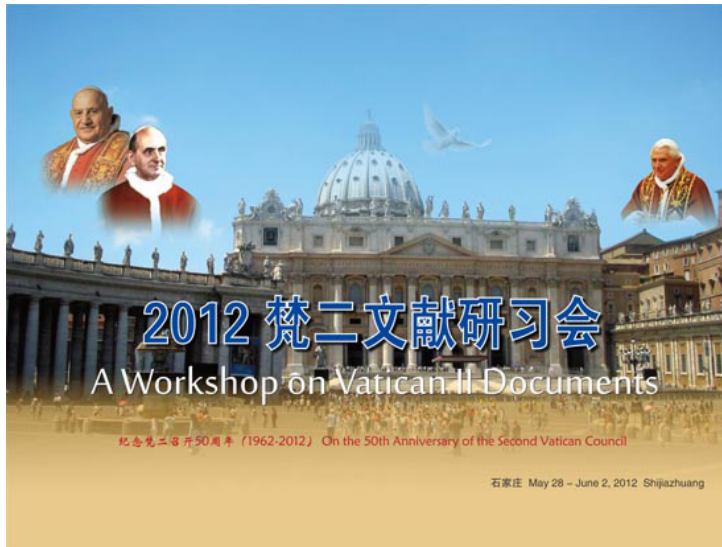
Furthermore, according to the FDIC, 300 villagers of Zhouguantun (Botou, Cangzhou City, Hebei Province) had signed a petition on behalf of the Falungong adherent Wang Xiaodong, who had been arrested on February 25, 2012, although they later withdrew the petition following intimidation by the authorities. This case was also taken up by Amnesty International and, according to a Falungong source, it was discussed in the highest political circles. A further example of neighborly support is said to have occurred on June 9, 2012 in Tangshan (Hebei).

The Beijing lawyer Dong Qianhong was quoted by the Falungong-friendly newspaper *Epoch Times* as having said that the situation is improving and that meanwhile many judges and police officers are no longer treating Falungong adherents like common criminals and it seems that in recent times, at least to some extent, less severe sentences are being handed down (Amnesty International UA-152/2012, May 31; *Epoch Times* April 15; Falun Dafa Information Center May 28 and 31; June 22 and 30; cf. *RCTC* 2012, No. 1, pp. 13-14).

May 29 to June 1, 2012:

“A Workshop on Vatican II Documents” in Shijiazhuang

After many years' delay in getting to know the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), for the celebrations of the jubilee [50 years since the start of the Council] the Catholic Church in China has finally caught up with the universal Church – declared a representative of the organizers of the workshop, the Faith Institute for Cultural Studies in Shijiazhuang. The participants occupied themselves with the study of the various Council documents. They had come from 30 dioceses of Mainland China, and among them were 10 bishops, auxiliary bishops, bishop candidates, and diocesan administrators. There were also 50 priests as well as 33 representatives of 29 men's (!) and women's religious congregations. Among the lecturers coming from outside China there were, among others, Fr. Fang Zhirong



Three Popes and St. Peter's Basilica adorn the poster of the workshop.

SJ (Fu Jen University, Taiwan), Fr. Jeroom Heyndrickx CICM (Verbiest Institute KULeuven), as well as Vicar-General Dominic Chan and Liturgy Commission Chairman Thomas Law of the Diocese of Hong Kong.

On the occasion of the Council's jubilee, the Shijiazhuang based Catholic newspaper *Xinde (Faith)* has declared the Council to be its principal theme for 2012 and has urged its readers to send in articles (*Xinde* June 14; *UCAN* June 12).

May 30, 2012:

Father Ma Daqin elected as candidate for bishop in Shanghai

With 160 votes in favor, representatives of the Diocese of Shanghai, including diocesan priests, religious sisters, and lay persons, have elected Fr. Thaddeus Ma Daqin as candidate to be the new Coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Shanghai. Among the votes in the government-required way of "democratic" election, two voters rejected and 28 abstained from voting. A further 15 representatives declined to appear for the election. Fr. Ma, born in Shanghai and the Dean in Pudong, was the only candidate for the position. He had recently received approval from the Vatican. Ninety-five year old Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian SJ presided over the election and also cast his vote. The ordination will take place on July 7 in Shanghai, and is to be carried out by Bishop Jin, who had appointed Fr. Ma to be his Vicar General last December. Fr. Ma Daqin was ordained priest on December 18, 1994, upon completion of his studies at Sheshan Seminary. For a couple of years he had worked as editor at the diocesan Guangqi Press. With its 150,000 Catholics, Shanghai counts among the largest and most prominent dioceses of China. The diocese also has an underground bishop, 94 year old Bishop Joseph Fan Zhongliang SJ, who has been ailing for many years and who is currently under house arrest (*UCAN* May 30; see also *RCTC* 2012, No. 2, p. 18).



Vicar General Fr. Ma Daqin in May of 2012. Photo: Martin Welling.

June 3, 2012:

Sisters' convent in Beijing to host "Open Door" day

After last year's positive experiences, the St. Joseph's Sisters of the Diocese of Beijing have once again decided to open their doors, inviting anyone who might be interested in learning about the history, life, and activities of the sisters to drop in for a visit. The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph was founded in 1872 by Bishop Louis-Gabriel Delaplace CM, then Apostolic Vicar of Beijing, as one of the first diocesan congregations of sisters in China. The convent was reopened in 1986 and today counts 50 sisters, most of whom are involved mainly in parish activities (*Fides* June 15).

June 4, 2012:

Memorial services in Hong Kong and Taipei commemorate Tiananmen massacre

On the evening of June 4, in Victoria Park, a record number of Hong Kong citizens participated in a gathering to commemorate the victims of the 1989 massacre at Beijing's Tiananmen Square. The organizers spoke of 180,000 participants, but the police gave the number of 85,000. Among the participants there were many young families, school children, high school and university students, as well as many persons coming from Mainland China. According to the *South China Morning Post*, the event took place against the backdrop of growing public fears that freedom in Hong Kong will be eroded when Leung Chun-ying takes power as the new Chief Executive on July 1, 2012. Before the actual beginning of the demonstration, more than 1,000 Catholics gathered to pray together in Victoria Park. Hundreds of people in Taiwan also commemorated the victims of the massacre. 300 people took part in a prayer vigil and concert in Taipei (*AsiaNews* June 5; *Sunday Examiner* June 9; *South China Morning Post* June 5; *Taiwanese Central News Agency* June 4).

June 4–5, 2012:

Call to action against "religious fraud" at 1st Exchange of Experiences on the Management of Religious Sites

Two hundred representatives of the official national organizations of the five major religions, as well as representatives of the provincial religious affairs authorities throughout China took part in this Exchange of Experiences organized by the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) in Shanghai. At an accompanying press conference, a SARA representative announced that the SARA wants to curb "a growing trend of religious fraud," such as false Buddhist monks and Daoist priests, fake temples which are actually commercial enterprises, abuses such as arbitrarily collected fees, etc. Since – according to the SARA representative – these abuses occur mainly at non-registered sites, the SARA wants to make public a list of all registered sites for religious activities and of all religious personnel filed for the record with the government. A database of this information is being built up so that the faithful will be able to identify religious fraudsters and imposters. Master Xuecheng, Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association, declared on the same occasion that monks who peddle amulets and offer fortune-telling and divination for a fee on the street are mostly fakes.

The Exchange of Experiences apparently did not deal with the problem of the generally non-registered, and therefore illegal, places of worship and religious performers of traditional Chinese popular religion. While there are suggestions for religious policies dealing with these groups (cf. *China heute* 2011,

No. 2, pp. 87-89, and 103-106 [in German]), it seems that the Exchange of Experiences in Shanghai means a step backwards (*China Daily* online June 6; *Xinhua* June 6; www.sara.gov.cn June 4 and 5).

June 5, 2012:

State Administration for Religious Affairs releases new measures for the record filing of Catholic bishops

The “Measures for Reporting Bishops of the Chinese Catholic Church for the Record (Trial Implementation)” (*Zhongguo tianzhujiao zhujiao beian banfa [shixing]* 中国天主教主教备案办法 [试行]) assign to the Patriotic Association and to the official Bishops’ Conference the leading role in the mandatory filing of applications for reporting Catholic bishops for the record with the state authorities. For details, see *China heute* 2012, No. 2, pp. 72-73 (in German). Chinese text of the document at www.sara.gov.cn/zcfg/15179.htm. A German translation will be published in *China heute* 2012, No. 3.

June 8, 2012:

UCAN: Priest convicted of murder

Fr. Joseph Shang Kanfa of Hailun, Heilongjiang Province, was sentenced to 15 years in prison for having beaten to death the ex-husband of a parishioner in a brawl last year. The man had shown up at the construction site of the new Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ Church in Hailun City, looking for his ex-wife and armed with a screwdriver. When the priest tried to intervene, a fight broke out, in which the man was struck on the head. He later died in hospital. Fr. Shang is to serve his prison sentence in Bei’an City. He had worked for 18 years in his parish following his ordination to the priesthood in 1993 (*UCAN* June 8).

June 9–16, 2012:

First meeting of a World Council of Churches commission in China

The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs of the World Council of Churches (WCC) has met in Nanjing and Shanghai. The host organizations were the Chinese Christian Council (a member of the WCC) and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church in China. The program included a seminar on the theme of “Understanding China” at which Pastor Gao Feng, President of the Chinese Christian Council, described the Protestant church in China as autonomous, post-denominational, rapidly growing, and facing many challenges, among which are the lack of ordained pastors in many communities and a general lack of theological formation among lay leaders. At the seminar a representative of the State Administration for Religious Affairs also reported on the role of the religions in the building up of a harmonious society. WCC General Secretary Olav Fykse Tveit spoke on several occasions, including one session with students and professors of the Nanjing Theological Seminary. An entry visa to China had been denied to former Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik, a Lutheran pastor, who had been invited to be one of the moderators of the conference. In an interview with the *International Ecumenical News*, Bondevik speculated that the denial might possibly have been connected to the awarding by the Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee of the peace prize in 2010 to the dissident Liu Xiaobo (*ENI* June 15.; *UCAN* June 14; www.oikoumene.org May 30; June 15).

June 10, 2012:

Mass protests in Hong Kong following the death of civil rights activist Li Wangyang



Demonstrators in Hong Kong with photos of Li Wangyang, who died under unclear circumstances.
Photo: UCAN.

According to estimates of the organizers, at least 25,000 people marched in protest to the liaison office of the People's Republic of China to demand an investigation into the alleged suicide of Li Wangyang in Hunan Province. Official police estimates put the number of protesters at 5,400. The 62 year old Li, who had been an advocate of workers' rights and who had spent more than 20 years in prison following the Tian'anmen massacre, was reported to have hanged himself on June 6. His relatives doubt this. Li had lost most of his sight and hearing as a result of torture while he was in prison. At the beginning of June, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Tian'anmen massacre, Li had given an interview to a Hong Kong journalist in which he described the torture he had endured and spoke out on behalf of a democratic China and an end to the one-party rule. On June 6 he was found dead in his hospital room and his body was cremated on June 10.

More than 30 organizations, including both Catholic and Protestant groups, co-organized the protest march. The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, one of the sponsors, organized a prayer vigil before the march began. Approximately 100 Catholic demonstrators offered prayers for Li and for his family as well as for all of the dissidents in China (*AsiaNews* June 11; *ENI* June 11; *Kyodo News Service* June 10; *Der Standard* June 11).

June 11, 2012:

State Council publishes “National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2012–2015)”

This second human rights action plan of the Chinese government also contains a section on the freedom of religious belief. Apart from the general principles anchored in the Chinese constitution, several

points were mentioned which belong to the agenda of Chinese policy on religion: improvement of management measures for Muslim pilgrimages [to Mecca], the encouragement for religious believers to get involved in charity activities, and the implementing of regulations regarding social security for religious personnel (an English version of the document can be found at news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-06/11/c_131645029.htm).

June 12, 2012:

Chinese delegation walks out of general conference of World Fellowship of Buddhists in Yeosu (Korea) to protest against the participation of Tibetans in exile

At first, according to media reports, the secretary general of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB), under pressure from the delegation of the Chinese Buddhist Association, had forced three Tibetan delegates to leave the assembly. Later on, however, at the opening ceremonies on June 12, when the Tibetans refused to leave, the 17 member Chinese delegation walked out of the conference and returned to China the following day. According to the *Taipei Times*, Chinese delegations have attended other WFB gatherings where Tibetan delegations were present, but this time the composition of the Tibetan delegation seems to have been a stumbling block, including as it did the former Prime Minister Samdhong Rinpoche and one further minister of the Tibetan government in exile.

In a statement on June 14, the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, the organizer of the conference, accused the Chinese delegation of disrespect towards a religious event and pointed out that the Tibetans are officially members of the WFB. The Jogye Order also said it would have to seriously reconsider its relationship with the Chinese Buddhists. The next day a spokesman for the Chinese Buddhist Association accused the Jogye Order of breaking its word and of interfering in China's internal affairs. The World Fellowship of Buddhists was founded in Sri Lanka in 1950 and is headquartered in Bangkok. Its general conference takes place every second year, and had been planned this year at Yeosu from June 11–16 (*AFP* June 15; *Taipei Times* June 16; *Xinhua* June 16; *Yonhap* June 14).

June 15, 2012:

Archbishop Savio Hon on the question of a possible illegitimate episcopal consecration in Harbin

In response to questions from *AsiaNews* about rumors of an episcopal consecration being planned without Papal mandate in Harbin in Heilongjiang Province (see entry of June 29), Archbishop Hon, Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, which is also responsible for the Chinese Church, stated that should such an unlawful episcopal ordination occur, “it would be very, very serious” and would hurt the whole Church and especially the Church in China. He had heard that the faithful in Harbin were praying and fasting that such an ordination would not take place, Hon said. He also believed that the candidate, Fr. Joseph Yue Fusheng, would not want to become bishop without the Papal mandate and prayed that he [“this brother”] would decide to choose loyalty to the Pope. Hon stated that the “mingling of bishops” [i.e. legitimate bishops being obliged to attend illegitimate ordinations and the contrary, illegitimate bishops attending ordinations of bishops with Papal mandate] is part of a strategy intended “to confuse the difference between legitimate and illegitimate” (*AsiaNews* June 15).

June 18, 2012:

Beijing authorities publish textbook on ethos of government officials in ancient and modern China – conscience as the principal criterion

The four-volume collection, the publication of which had been reported in the newspaper *Beijing ribao* (*Beijing Daily*), contains examples from both ancient and modern times on the theme of moral conduct of officials. It also contains proverbs as well as Confucian and Daoist maxims. It is titled *Zhongguo gu jin guande yanjiu* 中国古今官德研究 (Studies on Virtue for Officials in Ancient and Modern China) and is intended to be used as educational material for the prevention of bribery and corruption among party cadres in Beijing. It was compiled by the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences and the Beijing Communist Party's Disciplinary Committee. According to *Beijing ribao*, the textbook says in its preface that the decisive criterion for good or bad officials is the conscience, and declares: "He who exercises his office based on his conscience is a good civil servant and whoever suppresses his conscience when exercising his office is a bad civil servant" (凭着良心为官, 好官也; 昧着良心为官, 坏官也).

According to the *South China Morning Post* the news of the publication was received with skepticism. In order to be successful in the fight against corruption, Beijing must implement the rule of law and allow public criticism of the government, the paper said, citing the economist Hu Xingdou of the Beijing Institute of Technology (*AsiaNews* June 19.; *Beijing ribao* June 18 [bjrb.bjd.com.cn/html/2012-06/18/content_100510.htm]; *South China Morning Post* June 19; *Xinhua* June 18).

June 18–24, 2012:

Head of Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations visits China

Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfejew) of Wolokolamsk, among other activities, took part in the second consultation of the Russian-Chinese Group for Contacts and Cooperation in Religious Affairs. The visit was in response to an invitation by the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs (see also *China heute* 2012, No. 2, pp. 73-75 [in German]).

June 25, 2012:

Radio Free Asia: Muslims convicted following clash with police

According to a report from Radio Free Asia, 14 Hui Muslims were condemned to up to 6 years imprisonment, after they had tried to prevent the demolition of a mosque by the police (see also *RCTC* 2012, No. 2, p. 7). The violent clash occurred on December 30 in the village of Taoshan, in Tongxin County of the Ningxia Autonomous Region of the Hui people in the Northwest of China. The mosque, however, was finally razed to the ground. According to the testimony of village residents, at least two people were killed in the clash and another 50 were said to have been wounded. In a rare reaction, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation consisting of 57 nations condemned the violence and the "heavy-handed" response of local authorities and called on China to respect the rights of Muslims to construct and maintain their places of worship and to freely attend religious services (*Radio Free Asia* June 25).

June 27, 2012:

International Catholic Migration Commission expects a larger number of immigrants to arrive in Asia

According to Johan Ketelers, Secretary-General of the Geneva-based International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), “Asia should prepare for a dramatic change in international migration trends due to the worsening debt crisis in Europe.” High tech talent may in future also look for job opportunities in Asian countries such as China and India, thus Keteler. His remarks came at the third meeting of the Asia Working Group formed by the Office for Human Development of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences and the ICMC, which concluded on June 27 in Hsinchu (Xinzhu, Taiwan). Keteler also mentioned that in China today, European experts may have fewer job opportunities than in previous years due to the fact that many Chinese graduates who studied abroad are now returning home to work, due to difficulties getting a job where they had studied. Bishops, priests, and laity from India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam took part in the four-day long meeting (*UCAN* June 27).

June 27–28, 2012:

Patriotic Association and official Bishops’ Conference host conference on Second Vatican Council – Vatican II claimed as the basis for an independent Church in China



The church of the National Seminary in Beijing is at the center of the conference poster. It was built in the style of Beijing’s Temple of Heaven.

The spirit of Vatican II is serving as an ideological foundation for the principle of an independent, self-governed Chinese Church, said Zhou Yongzhi, Vice-Secretary General of the Patriotic Association (PA) of the Chinese Catholic Church, in his lecture at the conference. His words were reported by *UCAN*. Another Vice-Secretary General of the PA, Wang Huaimao, declared at the conference that China, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, was a decade ahead of its times in introducing the reforms of the 1950s [i.e., the creation of the Patriotic Association in 1957 and the first episcopal consecration without Papal mandate in 1958] all of which served as a practical demonstration and as stepping stones for the progressive spirit of the Council. Bishop Ma Yinglin, Chairman of the official Chinese Bishops' Conference, opened the meeting, which took place at the National Seminary in Beijing. According to information released by the organizers, 60 specialists took part, including Protestant theologians. *UCAN* reported that of the 10 bishops present, four (including Ma Yinglin) were not recognized by Rome (*UCAN* June 28; www.catholicchurchinchina June 26 and 27, the conference poster can also be found there).

June 29, 2012:

Excommunicated Bishop Lei Shiyin ordains four priests – two episcopal consecrations postponed

On the symbolic day of Saints Peter and Paul, Lei Shiyin ordained four deacons as priests. He had been consecrated Bishop of Leshan exactly one year before in defiance of the directives from Rome. A fifth deacon refused to allow himself to be ordained by the excommunicated bishop, reported *UCAN* (relying on local sources). The other four are said to have been convinced to agree after the diocese allegedly promised them automobiles and a sum of money.

Archbishop Savio Hon of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples declared on June 30, in a statement made to *Vatican Insider*, that Lei Shiyin had committed a “sacrilege.” Since he is currently under penalty of excommunication, he is not permitted to either receive or administer any sacrament, Hon said.

Originally there were also two episcopal consecrations in Harbin and in Shanghai scheduled for June 29. They were postponed and re-scheduled for July 6 and 7 respectively. Referring to these two consecrations, Savio Hon said in the same interview that it is “absolutely forbidden” for a priest to be ordained bishop without Papal mandate, and added that whoever does so incurs automatic excommunication. Hon further pointed out that it is also forbidden and a serious violation of Church law for an illegitimate bishop to take part in an Episcopal consecration that has the Pope's approval.

In Harbin, Fr. Yue Fusheng is scheduled to be consecrated Bishop of Heilongjiang without Papal mandate. Fr. Ma Daqin in Shanghai does have the required Papal mandate, but there will be an illegitimate bishop taking part in the rite (*UCAN* June 29; *Vatican Insider* June 30).

All sources cited in this “News Update” refer to the year 2012, unless otherwise indicated. This “News Update” was first published in German in *China heute* 2012, No. 2, pp. 89-97.