

News Update on Religion and Church in China October – November 2012

Compiled by 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). – The last “News Update” (2012, No. 4, pp. 3-21) covered the period July to September 2012.

Between October 4 and November 30, 2012:

38 Tibetans set fire to themselves in protest – dramatic increase in self-immolations

Judging by the list published by savetibet.org, with the exception of four monks, a former monk, and a nun, it seems that most of the 38 Tibetans who set fire to themselves were lay people. This means that, between March 16, 2011, and the end of November 2012, a total of 89 Tibetans have set themselves on fire in various Tibetan areas of the PRC. According to a list published by the site tibetoffice.ch, 76 of them died of their burns. On one single day – November 7 – five men and women set fire to themselves, including three 15 and 16 year old monks from the Ngoshul Monastery in the Ngaba (Chinese Aba) Autonomous Tibetan and Qiang Prefecture in Sichuan Province. Some observers surmise that there might have been a connection with the 18th Party Congress, which began on November 8 (see below).

Robert Barnett, an expert on Tibet from Columbia University, spoke of a new phase in the self-immolations. “This is a very serious development, suggesting that Tibetans believe that this rising number of self-immolations will make a substantive difference to their political situation, and it could lead to more people burning themselves,” Barnett told *Radio Free Asia* (RFA, Oct. 29). According to Barnett, the first phase began in March 2011, when monks of the restive Kirti Monastery (Ngaba) set fire to themselves in protest against the crackdown by the security authorities against their monastery. The protests then spread to other Tibetan areas. The second phase involved laity who were not reacting to a specific provocation but perhaps wanted to express their sympathy with the monks and nuns, Barnett explained. Now it seems to him that a new development has occurred.

There have also been reports of reinforced countermeasures being carried out by local governments. In the Kanlho (Gannan) Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture in Gansu Province, where many of the most recent self-immolations have occurred, *Radio Free Asia* has reported that on October 21 the police offered a reward of RMB 50,000 (about EUR 6,200) for information on any planned self-immolations. *RFA*, citing various human rights organizations, reported that the authorities have arrested hundreds

of persons suspected of some connection with the self-immolations. On November 14, government authorities in the Malho (Huangnan) Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture in Qinghai Province, where many of the self-immolations have occurred, released a bulletin to all lower level government departments with instructions for corrective action. The directive ordered that benefits received by the households of self-immolators under public benefit policies, such as minimum income support or disaster relief, are to be cancelled and that all government projects in their villages are to be halted. Anyone organizing greetings [of condolence] or donations for the surviving family members of those who have burned themselves is to be prosecuted. If Lamas or democratic management committee members of monasteries are involved in the organizing of such activities, their monasteries are to be closed down and those involved in the organizing are to be punished (see a translation of the directive at www.tchrd.org Nov. 25).

In the November 9 edition of the *New York Times*, Andrew Jacobs wrote that many Chinese intellectuals and online commentators, who otherwise vigorously pursue stories of persecuted dissidents, corrupt officials, and illegal land grab, have fallen silent when it comes to the topic of the self-immolations. This silence is increasingly worrying to Tibetan rights activists, Jacobs said. In the article, Wang Lixiong, a Chinese expert on Tibet, stated that in the worldview of educated Chinese there is a subtle undercurrent of antipathy toward Tibetans (*New York Times* Nov. 9; *Radio Free Asia* Oct. 29; *The Washington Post* Oct. 30; www.tchrd.org Nov. 22, 25; Dec. 1. Lists can be found at www.savetibet.org and www.tibetoffice.ch).

October 7–28, 2012:

Synod of Bishops in Rome

During the 13th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme of “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith,” Cardinal John Tong of Hong Kong acted as one of the three “presidents delegate” selected by Pope Benedict XVI to run the sessions of the Synod (for more information, see *China heute* 2012, No. 4, pp. 213-214, 233-235 [in German]).

October 8, 2012:

New guidelines to prevent commercial use of Buddhist and Daoist religious sites

On October 8, the State Administration [Bureau] of Religious Affairs together with the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party and eight other government agencies (including the State Administration of Tourism) issued the document “Views on Dealing with Problems in the Administration of Buddhist and Daoist Temples and Monasteries” (*Guanyu chuli sheji fojiao simiao, daojiao gongguan guanli youguan wenti de yijian* 关于处理涉及佛教寺庙, 道教宫观管理有关问题的意见). The document was made public on October 22. The “Views” complain that companies or individuals are investing in the construction or operation of government-registered temples and monasteries, especially in tourist areas, and are entering into binding contracts with them in order to make a profit or even to go public on the stock markets. According to the document, there are also unregistered religious sites run with the help of fake Buddhist monks or Daoist priests where donations are gathered illegally or pilgrims pressured into spending large sums of money for incense or divinations. The document calls for a halt to these irregularities and for a more forceful restriction of religious activities to officially registered facilities and to religious personnel who are listed in the government files (for more information and a translation of the document, see *China heute* 2012, No. 4, pp. 208-212, 227-229 [in German]).

October 8, 2012:

Xinhua reports planned construction of “Buddhist theme park” in Gansu

The theme park will be located in Dunhuang in northwest China’s Gansu Province, a city renowned for its ancient Buddhist grottoes. According to the Dunhuang Tourism Bureau, the 20-hectare park will consist of a prayer square, a Buddhist relic study center, a hall for debating Buddhist scriptures, and a meditation center. RMB 3 billion are expected to be invested in the project (*Xinhua* Oct. 8).

October 8, 2012:

15th anniversary of disappearance of Bishop Su Zhimin

For 15 years, Bishop Su Zhimin, underground bishop of the Diocese of Baoding (Hebei Province), has been held in custody at an undisclosed location. During this time he has only been spotted once, in 2003, when he happened to be seen by relatives while being treated, under guard, in a hospital. According to the news agency *AsiaNews*, on the anniversary of the Bishop’s disappearance on October 8, 1997, his family has made a new request to the police to be informed of his whereabouts but was told that they did not know where he is. *AsiaNews* reported that Bishop Su Zhimin has already spent a total of 40 years of his life in prison or in labor camps (*AsiaNews* Oct. 18).

October 8, 2012:

Fr. Ismael Zuloaga, SJ, friend and promoter of the Chinese Church, dies in Manila

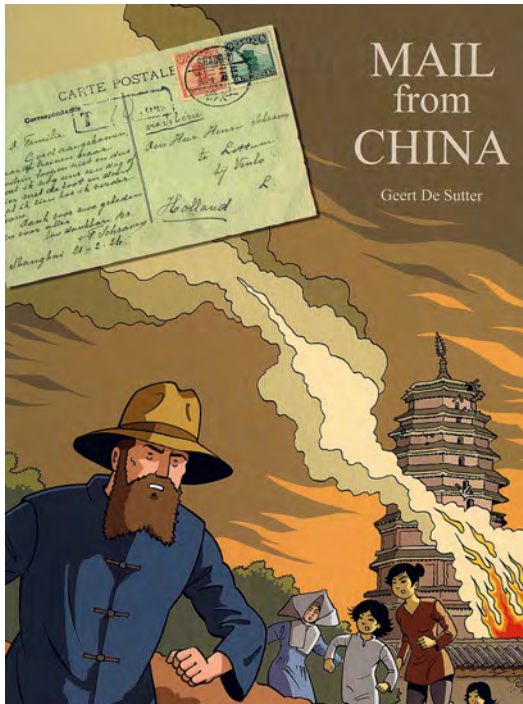
Born in Spain in 1927, from 1965 to 1985 Fr. Zuloaga directed the Xavier School in Manila, founded for the Chinese-Filipino community. He was the Jesuit Superior General’s delegate for China and for many years headed a China office in Manila. Among his many important contributions to the Church in Mainland China were his efforts to promote the formation of numerous Chinese priests and sisters in the Philippines (*Xinde* Nov. 29; *sjapc.net* Oct. 12).

October 9, 2012:

75th anniversary of the murder by Japanese soldiers of Bishop Schraven and companions – apology by the Japanese Bishops’ Conference

On October 9, 1937, the Dutch missionary Bishop Frans Schraven was killed by Japanese soldiers in the City of Zhengding (Hebei Province) together with eight other Europeans: six Vincentians, a Trappist monk, and a layman. They were all apparently killed for refusing to hand over 200 Chinese women to the soldiers. When the Japanese occupied the city, thousands of people had taken refuge on the grounds of the cathedral.

For the occasion of the 75th anniversary, the Msgr. Schraven Foundation, founded to promote study of the incident and the beatification of the martyrs, organized a series of commemorative events. In an Oct. 14 liturgy at Broekhuizenvorst (Limburg, Netherlands), the home parish of Frans Schraven, the



Bishop Schraven on the cover of the comic book by Geert de Sutter.

the diocese Shijiazhuang. The underground community headed by Bishop Jia Zhiguo continues to use the name of Zhengding for the diocese (Msgr. Schraven Foundation Press Release Oct. 21; *UCAN* Oct. 9; www.mgrschraven.nl).

Japanese priest Fr. Fukamizu Masakata read a letter in which Archbishop Leo June Ikenaga, SJ, apologized on behalf of the Japanese Bishops' Conference for the murder and for other cases of misbehavior carried out by Japanese in the past. In reply, Hong Kong native Archbishop Savio Hon (Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples) asked Fr. Fukamizu to bring "the same peace of Christ, which we share today, to our Japanese brothers and sisters." In an afternoon lecture, the theologian Erik Borgman (Tilburg University) linked Schraven's life with reflections on sexual violence today. The day before, two books had been presented, one of which was in comic book format and featured the life and death in China of Bishop Schraven. The comic book *Mail from China*, with illustrations by the Belgian comic artist Geert de Sutter, was published in Dutch, English, French, and German.

The Cathedral of Zhengding was confiscated in the late 1940s and is now part of a military hospital. In the 1980s the official Church moved the cathedral to the provincial capital of Shijiazhuang and renamed

October 11, 2012:

Writer Mo Yan awarded 2012 Nobel Prize in Literature

Mo Yan (who was born in 1955 as Guan Moye) is the first writer living in China to be so honored (Gao Xingjian, a Chinese author with French citizenship, was awarded the prize in 2000). Mo Yan is a native of Gaomi in the northern Chinese Province of Shandong. Many of his stories and novels are set in his country home, including his novel *Red Sorghum* (1987), which became famous even outside of China because of the film version created by Zhang Yimou. Mo Yan sees his work as part of the tradition of the realistic folk narrators of China, although he admits to also being influenced by the magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez. Five of his novels are already available in German translation. In China, the award to Mo Yan generally triggered satisfaction, as the award was given to an established author and member of the Chinese Writers' Association and not to a dissident like Liu Xiaobo, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010. In Western countries, the decision of the Nobel Committee for Mo Yan was partly met with critical views and the writer was accused of conformity to the ruling political system.

Barbara Hoster

Mid-October 2012:

Five-month crackdown against North Korean refugees in Yanbian ends

According to the official Chinese press, the campaign, which began in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in Jilin Province on May 15, 2012, was directed against foreigners illegally working and living there. Observers abroad, however, spoke of a concerted campaign against North Korean refugees. Yanbian, on the border with North Korea, has a population of 2.3 million, 40% of whom are ethnic Koreans. *UCAN* estimates that there are from 10,000 to 15,000 North Korean defectors and illegal migrants in Yanbian. Pastor Chun Ki-won, founder of Durihana, a Seoul based evangelical group which provides aid to North Korean refugees in Yanbian, told *UCAN* that such campaigns are nothing new, but that they have recently increased in intensity. According to Pastor Chun, the current campaign is limiting the Church's ability to help the refugees because if illegal North Koreans are found in one of the many churches of Yanbian, the church runs the danger of losing its registration and being closed down. Apart from sensitive times, however, Christianity in Yanbian is remarkably free, said Bob Fu, president of the US-based organization China Aid. He mentioned that Yanbian even has a functioning university which is openly run by Christian missionaries (*China Daily* May 25; *The Chosun Ilbo* May 25; *Global Times* May 25; *UCAN* Oct. 24).

October 20, 2012:

Celebration marks 70 years of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the Republic of China (Taiwan)

UCAN reported that the ceremony to mark the occasion in Taipei was intentionally kept very low-key so as not to upset the government in Beijing. During a liturgy in the Cathedral of Taipei, the Holy See's Chargé d'Affaires in Taiwan, Msgr. Paul Russell, and the Deputy Foreign Minister of Taiwan, Vanessa Shih, both addressed those present. Archbishop Hung Shan-chuan presided at the liturgy (*UCAN* Oct. 22).

October 25, 2012:

Fernando Cardinal Filoni publishes article advocating dialogue at the highest levels

In his article entitled "Five years after the publication of Benedict XVI's Letter to the Church in China," Fernando Cardinal Filoni discussed its timeliness given the complicated situation of the Church in China. Cardinal Filoni is the Prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. His article, which was published in *Tripod* No. 167, pp. 5-12, first appeared on the website of the Holy Spirit Study Centre of the Diocese of Hong Kong (www.hsstudyc.org.hk) (*Vatican Insider* Oct. 25; for background information see also *China heute* 2012, No. 4, pp. 214-215 [in German]).

October 26, 2012:

Government think tank recommends loosening China's family planning policy

A report published by the China Development Research Foundation states that the annual growth rate of China's population has decreased in the last decade to 0.57%. According to a summary of the report published by *Xinhua*, it is now no longer excessive population growth that presents the key challenge to China in its family planning policy, but rather structural problems. Among the direct and indirect negative side effects of the birth control policies introduced in 1980s, the report lists social conflicts, high administrative costs, long-term gender imbalance, and an aging population. Over the next three years the government should loosen the one-child policy in those regions where it had been strictly enforced, the report recommended. After 2020 there should no longer be a need for government sponsored family planning. From 2026 China is expected to have an ultra-low birth rate and the government should begin to encourage families to have more children, the report said (*Xinhua* Oct. 26). The China Development Research Foundation comes under the Development Research Center of the State Council.

October 27 – November 1, 2012:

Hong Kong hosts conference on lay ministry in international Chinese communities

The conference was attended by 170 lay people from 50 parishes in Hong Kong, the U.S., Canada, Mauritius, France, Italy, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Taiwan, and Macau. The conference theme was "From serving to witnessing – promoting the spirit and light of Christ." Flowing from the "Year of the Laity" of the Diocese of Hong Kong, the conference highlighted the services that the laity perform in their communities, but also dealt with the problems and concerns which are part of believers' lives in a secularized world. In a video message from the Synod of Bishops in Rome, Cardinal John Tong, Bishop of Hong Kong, noted that many lay people are over-dependent on their pastoral leaders in their ministries, and as a result can miss the point of the real mission of the laity as described in the Vatican II document *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. The conference, chaired by the chairman of Hong Kong's Committee for the Year of the Laity, Vicar General Dominic Chan Chin-ming, was characterized by a spirit of prayer, the exchange of faith and life experiences, missionary commitment, and the willingness to learn from each other. Conference participants visited various parishes and hospitals in order to familiarize themselves with the commitment of the laity in Hong Kong. As part of a second, reciprocal step, ten small groups of lay people from Hong Kong will visit international Chinese communities. Cardinal Tong, who in the meantime had returned from the Synod of Bishops in Rome, bade farewell to the conference participants during the course of a solemn Mass on the Solemnity of All Saints (sundayex.catholic.org.hk Nov. 10). *Martin Welling*

October 29 – November 7, 2012:

First course for foreign students at the Chinese Daoist Academy

19 participants from France, Belgium, Switzerland, Portugal, Italy, Mexico, and Venezuela attended the course, which focused on Daoist ritual. Participants also received instruction on the basic tenets and history of Daoism. At the closing ceremony at the Baiyun Temple in Beijing, representatives of the



Daoist Association, of the State Administration of Religious Affairs, and the Mexican Daoist Jingwei, Chairman of the Mexican Daoist Association, all gave presentations (www.sara.gov.cn Nov. 2; www.taoist.org.cn).

Concluding ceremony in the Baiyun Temple.
Photo: www.taoist.org.cn.

October 31 – November 1, 2012:

Study session on Protestant and Catholic affairs organized by SARA deals with house churches, bishops' ordinations, and theology

Leaders of the departments on Protestantism and Catholicism from among the religious affairs bureaus of 30 provinces and autonomous regions or cities met in Chongqing at a conference organized by the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA). According to a report on the SARA website, Jiang Jianyong, Vice-Director of the SARA, mentioned the following specific goals to be achieved: “Privately constructed Protestant meeting places must be regulated in an appropriate manner and an effective management method must be found to maintain stability in the Protestant communities. The task of electing and ordaining Catholic bishops must be carried forward in a well thought out manner and a new approach must be sought to managing dioceses so as to promote the healthy development of the Chinese Catholic Church.” In the Protestant church the “construction of theological thought” needs to be deepened and results of these efforts need to be published and promoted, Jiang said. He further noted that Catholic circles must be guided to develop an “inculturated theology” [*bendihua shenxue* 本地化神学] and to promote the democratic administration of the Church. The participants of the study session also spent time discussing the charitable activities of the churches (www.sara.gov.cn Nov. 7).

November 3, 2012:

Auxiliary Bishop Ma Daqin adds new entries on his blog

Shanghai Auxiliary Bishop Ma Daqin, who was not allowed to take office and who has been limited in his freedom of movement since he was consecrated on July 7 and immediately announced his withdrawal from the Catholic Patriotic Association (see *China heute* 2012, Nr. 3, pp. 142-145 and *RCTC* 2012, Nr. 4, pp. 6f., 9, 16f.), has once again published new content on his personal blog. On November 3, he wrote that he was happy that his parents were no longer alive because otherwise they would worry very much about him. He wrote that although he had been invited to “drink tea” [i.e., been summoned to talks by government officials] and had been warned many times not to have any illusions, he continues to be free in his thoughts (*UCAN* Nov. 5; *Vatican Insider* Nov. 9). After his last entry of November 3, there have so far not been any further updates on his blog. On November 30, readers of his blog began a novena for the intentions of Bishop Ma, the Diocese of Shanghai and the Chinese Church.

November 4, 2012:

Bishop Jin Luxian publishes pastoral letter on the Year of Faith – Special activities for the Year of Faith throughout Mainland China



In his letter the 96 year old Bishop of Shanghai, Jin Luxian, reflects on his own personal journey of faith. There have been many special activities throughout the Chinese Church in preparation for the international “Year of Faith” proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI, which started on October 11, 2012; they were continued during October and November (for earlier activities, see *RCTC* 2012, Nr. 4, p. 11).

The title page of the pastoral letter with the logo of the Year of Faith and the Chinese character for “faith.”

November 5, 2012:

SARA director signs new guidelines for teachers and awarding of degrees at religious educational institutions

The “Measures for the Recognition of the Status, for Titles, and Appointment of Teaching Personnel at Institutes for Religious Education” (*Zongjiao yuanxiao jiaoshi zige rending he zhicheng pingshen pinren banfa* 宗教院校教师资格认定和职称评审聘任办法) and the “Measures for the Awarding of Academic Degrees by Institutes for Religious Education” (*Zongjiao yuanxiao xuewei shouyu banfa* 宗教院校学位授予办法) complete the legal framework for religious institutes, a November 23 press release of the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) declared. The two new documents are added to the already existing “Measures for the Establishment of Institutes for Religious Education” of 2007 (German translation in *China heute* 2008, No. 1-2, pp. 20-22) and the “Measures for the Employment of Foreign Experts by Institutes for Religious Education” of 1998. According to the press release, the first draft of both new documents had already been drawn up in 2006 before being subjected to a multi-year review process. Both directives will go into effect on a trial basis beginning January 1, 2013 (see www.sara.gov.cn for the text of the documents and the press release).

The new documents reveal a tendency to unify and bring religious institutes into formal approximation to the state university system. They also reveal a tendency towards centralization (control of awarding of degrees etc. by setting up new working groups to be located at the national religious organizations; all major steps are to be reported to the SARA for entry into the records). Despite the formal harmonization, the degrees of religious schools continue to “be valid only within the religious circles” (Article 23 of the Measures for the Awarding of Academic Degrees). Special procedures for the awarding of academic degrees will be published for institutes of Tibetan Buddhism (*ibid.* Article 24).

November 6 and 8, 2012:

Amity Press in Nanjing celebrates printing of 100 millionth Bible – 60 million for distribution in Mainland China



A look at the production of the Amity press – May 2012.
Photo: Martin Welling.

“China has become the largest printer and user of the Bible in the world,” Ms. Guo Wei, director of the Foreign Affairs Department of the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA), said at the November 8 celebration in Nanjing to mark the printing of the 100 millionth Bible. The Amity Printing Company Ltd, according to *China Daily* the sole authorized printer of Bibles in China, was founded in 1988 as a joint venture between the Amity Foundation and the United Bible Societies (UBS). Chinese Protestants set up the Amity Foundation in Nanjing in 1985 in order to provide social services. The UBS has a decades’ long history of supporting the printing of Bibles in China through donations of Bible quality paper, etc. 40 million copies of the Bible in more than 90 languages have been printed for export to 70 countries throughout the whole world. The remaining 60 million, in Chinese and in the languages of nine ethnic minorities, as well as in Braille, have been distributed in China itself.

On November 6, the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the China Christian Council sponsored a “Symposium on the printing of the 60 millionth Bible by the Chinese Protestant Church.” SARA Vice-Director Jiang Jianyong explained in his address that the 60 million Bibles now completely cover the Bible needs of the Chinese faithful even in the most remote villages. According to Jiang, the SARA continues to support autonomous Bible printing and distribution by the Chinese Church. [Import of Bibles into China, except for personal use is not allowed. Furthermore, Bibles may only be sold by the churches, not in normal bookstores.] According to Liu Yuanlong, Vice-Chairman of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, in the past decade the Amity Printing Company Ltd has also printed 3 million Bibles for the Catholic Church in China (*China Daily* Nov. 10; *UCAN* Nov. 20; www.sara.gov.cn Nov. 7; www.unitedbiblesocieties.org Nov. 12).

November 6, 2012:

Death of Bishop Guo Chuanzhen (Jinan)

In Jinan, Shandong Province, retired Auxiliary Bishop Samuel Guo Chuanzhen, OFM, has died on November 6 at the age of 94. Bishop Guo was born April 14, 1918 in Jinan and was ordained a priest in 1944. In 1945 he began higher studies in history at Fu-Jen Catholic University in Beijing, but was forced to break off his studies and return to his diocese in 1949 with the founding of the People’s Republic of China. There he worked as a pastor and as a teacher in the minor seminary. He endured 16 years of labor camps and house arrest. In 1982 he was finally allowed to take up pastoral work once

again. In 1983, Fr. Guo Chuanzhen founded the Holy Spirit Seminary of Shandong, where he served as rector. On April 24, 1988, he was ordained bishop without a Papal mandate, although Rome did later recognize him.

Bishop Joseph Zhang Xianwang celebrated the Requiem Mass for Bishop Guo on November 8, 2012, in the Cathedral of Jinan. Following the liturgy, Bishop Guo was buried in the diocesan cemetery in Huzhuang.

The Diocese of Jinan has 30,000 Catholics, 40 priests, and 20 sisters. There are 11 established parishes with a total of approximately 60 chapels and places where Mass is celebrated (*Fides* Nov. 19; *UCAN* Nov. 7). *Katharina Feith*

November 8–14, 2012:

18th National Congress of Chinese Communist Party

Congress members elected Xi Jinping Chairman of the Party. In March of 2013 he and Li Keqiang are expected to take over the offices of President and Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China, respectively. Among the changes enacted in the Party's constitution, the "scientific development concept" of Hu Jintao has been added to the list of the Party's guiding ideologies. Also added was the important role of "building up an ecological civilization."

The State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) reported on November 9 that personalities and the faithful of all religions had enthusiastically followed the opening of the Party Congress live on TV. The SARA report was supplemented with relevant photos. The Catholic news agency *UCAN* pointed out that during his career Xi Jinping has held important government posts in provinces with relatively high numbers of Catholics, such as Hebei (about 1 million Catholics), Fujian (370,000), Zhejiang (over 200,000), and Shanghai (160,000). Some Mainland Chinese Christians interviewed by *UCAN* believed that no major improvements are to be expected under Xi in terms of religious freedom. In a November 6 interview published by *UCAN*, Cardinal John Tong of Hong Kong said that the Chinese government is a collective leadership and that [Xi], even if he wished to change things, would not be able to make any drastic changes – only "step by step."

On November 6, Amnesty International reported that on the eve of the Party Congress human rights activists and lawyers were subjected to an intensified crackdown, and that at least 130 people had either been arrested or had been subject to restrictions on their personal freedom (*Amnesty International* Nov. 8; *UCAN* Nov. 6, 15; *Xinhua* Nov. 14, 18; www.sara.gov.cn Nov. 9, 14).

November 16, 2012:

Five street children in Guizhou found dead in dumpster

According to local officials in the District of Qixinguan, Bijie City, the five boys, aged 9–12 years, all brothers or cousins with the surname Tao, were killed by carbon monoxide poisoning. Presumably they had lit a fire in the dumpster, which served them as a shelter, in order to keep warm. Four of the five boys had dropped out of school, according to *Xinhua*.

There are many children like the Tao cousins in Guizhou, said Tian Jie of the Dishui Charity Association. He told the *Global Times* that often the parents are migrant workers who leave their children at home with their grandparents, or sometimes even without anyone to look after them. Guizhou is one of the poorest provinces in China. The death of the five boys reportedly sparked an intense debate on the Chinese Internet and on Weibo (*Global Times* Nov. 19, 20; *Xinhua* Nov. 18, 20).

November 21, 2012:

End of this year's Hajj for Chinese Muslims



Zhang Lebin, Vice-Director of the SARA, greets returning Hajjis. Photo: sara.gov.cn.

About 13,800 Muslims from all parts of China took part in this year's Hajj. Thus, the pilgrim numbers in recent years have remained roughly the same, with the official figures being more than 13,000 pilgrims in 2010 and 13,700 in 2011. As in recent years the pilgrimage had been centrally organized by the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) and the Chinese Islamic Association. The last of the 41 charter flights to return home landed in Beijing on November 21. According to a report by SARA, the organization of the Hajj was especially complicated this year. The report describes in particular the efforts to keep the cost of the flights stable

despite rising oil prices. The pilgrims were accompanied on the Hajj by a 60-member steering committee, some 200 guides, 100 imams, 50 doctors and nurses, and a few dozen cooks (www.sara.gov.cn Nov. 21).

November 22, 2012:

Bishop K.H. Ting, longtime leading figure of the official Protestant church, dies at 97

Bishop K.H. Ting (Ding Guangxun) played a key role in the reconstruction of the official Protestant church and in urging a policy of greater religious freedom after the persecutions of the Cultural Revolution. He was also a controversial figure due to his closeness to the Communist Party as far back as the 1950ies. K.H. Ting was born in Shanghai in 1915. In 1942 he was ordained an Anglican vicar and was made a bishop in 1953. For many years he headed the Jinling Union Theological Seminary and made a substantial contribution to the theological field in the context of a socialist China. Bishop Ting was the last living Protestant bishop in Mainland China.

On the occasion of his cremation on November 27, the official news agency *Xinhua* described him as an "outstanding patriotic religious leader, a famous public figure, a close friend of the Communist Party of China, as well as Vice-Chairman of the 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th National Committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference." *Xinhua* also mentioned his positions as Chairman (Honorary Chairman at the end) of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Church and of the China Christian Council, Honorary Rector of Jinling Seminary and Chief Executive of the Amity Foundation. It noted that Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping, Jiang Zemin, Wu Bangguo, Wen Jiaobao, Jia Qinglin, Li Keqiang, and other political leaders had visited Bishop Ting in the hospital before his death or had sent their condolences. The report concluded with an appended list of some 160 figures who had expressed their condolences at Bishop Ting's death (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung* Dec. 4; *South China Morning Post* Nov. 29; *Xinhua* Nov. 28; www.sara.gov.cn Nov. 23). An appraisal of Bishop Ting can be found in Winfried Glüer's obituary in *China heute* 2012, No. 4, pp. 241-244 (in German).



Bishop K.H. Ting.
Photo: amityfoundation.org.

November 25, 2012:

80 religious sisters help good causes by running in the Beijing Marathon



"Sister, run!"
Photo: jinde.org.

The sisters, who came from 22 different religious congregations throughout China, were joined in their efforts by a group of 10 volunteers. They took part in the marathon in order to raise funds for 30 different projects. 17 sisters ran the "mini marathon," 58 managed to run half the official distance and 5 sisters were able to complete the entire race. The sisters' participation in the marathon was reported by a number of different media. On November 24, supplementary collections in the Cathedral and the North Church of Beijing raised a total of RMB 36,182.12 (about EUR 4,500) to support the sisters' projects. Sisters have taken part in the Beijing Marathon each year since 2009. The race usually draws about 30,000 participants. Fr. Dahai Ren, Director of Jinde Charities which co-organized the sisters' charity run, said that he hoped that the sisters' participation in the marathon would make the Church's charitable works better known and that their gesture would help to make the Church's voice heard more clearly in Chinese society (*Fides* Nov. 28; www.xinde.org Dec. 7).

November 26, 2012:

New law adopted for the protection of the mentally ill

According to estimates of the Ministry of Health, China currently has approximately 16 million persons who suffer from some form of mental illness. The new law (*Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Jingshen weisheng fa* 中华人民共和国精神卫生法) is intended to protect the rights and interests of such persons and to improve the development of mental health care as well as the regulations governing the provision of service for the mentally ill. It is hoped that the new law will help prevent abuses in forced psychiatric treatment and prevent unnecessary treatments and admissions to psychiatric hospitals. The dignity, safety, and property of the mentally ill, as well as the privacy of their medical records, must be safeguarded. In future, all sectors of society, including the government, NGOs, and the patients' families, should be responsible for preventive measures and for the treatment of psychiatric disorders. The law not only makes provisions for promoting mental health, for the prevention of mental disorders and their diagnosis and treatment, it also regulates the rehabilitation of patients, the security measures needed and outlines the legal responsibility of those dealing with the mentally ill. Overall, the new law – which will go into effect on May 1, 2013 – represents significant and long-awaited progress, al-

though some improvements in the law's provisions are still desirable. For example, in the section of the law that forbids the psychiatric examination and evaluation of a person without the patient's consent (Article 27), some exceptions still need to be critically evaluated. In arranging for inpatient psychiatric treatment a request can be made for a second and even a third evaluation and medical opinion by a different doctor (Article 32). It is also required that studies on mental health should be performed only by qualified psychiatrists (Article 29), of whom (according to *Xinhua*) there are currently only about 20,000 in China (*Xinhua* Oct. 26, 2012). *Jan Kwee*

Contributions by Katharina Feith, Barbara Hoster, Jan Kwee, and Martin Welling (items indicated).

This "News Update" was first published in *China heute* 2012, No. 4, pp. 216-221 (in German). Unless otherwise indicated, all source references in the "News Update" refer to the year 2012.