

## **Communiqué: Meeting On The Church In China**

VATICAN CITY, 2 APR 2009 (VIS) - The Holy See Press Office released the following communiqué:

"From 30 March to 1 April, the commission established by Benedict XVI in 2007 to study questions of importance concerning the life of the Catholic Church in China held its second meeting in the Vatican.

"With intense interest and a deep-felt desire to offer service to the Church in China, the commission examined the main theme of the meeting: the formation of seminarians and of consecrated people, and the permanent formation of priests.

"In association with the bishops of the Church in China - who bear prime responsibility for the ecclesial communities - it will be sought to promote a more adequate human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral formation of clergy and of consecrated people, who have the important task of acting as faithful disciples of Christ and as members of the Church, and of contributing to the good of their country as exemplary citizens. In this context, the words of the Holy Father Benedict XVI's 2007 Letter to Chinese Catholics shone out as guidance: 'The Church, always and everywhere missionary, is called to proclaim and to bear witness to the Gospel. The Church in China must also sense in her heart the missionary ardour of her Founder and Teacher. ... Now it is your turn, Chinese disciples of the Lord, to be courageous apostles of that Kingdom. I am sure that your response will be most generous'.

"The participants, drawing also on their own sometimes-harsh experiences, highlighted complex problems of the current ecclesial situation in China, problems deriving not just from internal difficulties of the Church, but also from the uneasy relations with the civil authorities. In this context, news of the re-arrest of Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding was greeted with profound anguish. Situations of this kind create obstacles to that constructive dialogue with the competent authorities which, as is known, the Holy Father in his above-mentioned Letter expressed the hope might be pursued. This is not, unfortunately, an isolated case. Other ecclesiastics are also deprived of their freedom and subject to undue pressures and limitations in their pastoral activities. To all of them the participants wish to send assurances of fraternal closeness and constant prayers in this time of Lent, illuminated by the Paschal Mystery.

"The meeting concluded with an audience with the Holy Father who, as Peter's Successor, perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity of the episcopate, underlined the importance of helping Catholics in China to tell others of the beauty and reasonableness of Christian faith, and to present it as the proposal offering the best answers from an intellectual and existential standpoint. The Pope also thanked those present for their commitment in the field of formation, and encouraged them to continue their service for the good of the Church in China".