

Vatican Information Service: POPE TO WRITE A LETTER TO CHINESE CATHOLICS

VATICAN CITY, JAN 20, 2007 (VIS) - The Holy See Press Office today released the following communiqué at the close of a meeting held in the Vatican from January 19 to 20, on the situation of the Catholic Church in China.

"Pope Benedict XVI, in the desire to deepen his knowledge of the situation of the Catholic Church in China, called a special meeting which took place in the Vatican Apostolic Palace on January 19 and 20, 2007.

"The meeting was presided by Cardinal Secretary of State Tarcisio Bertone S.D.B., and attended by representatives of the Chinese episcopate (Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) and by the people who, for the Holy See, follow the Chinese question most closely. The wide-ranging and intricate debate was characterized by a frank and fraternal cordiality.

"In the light of the troubled history of the Church in China and of the principal events of recent years, consideration was given to the most serious and urgent ecclesial problems. Problems which call for adequate solutions based on the fundamental principles of the Church's divine constitution and religious freedom. The inspiring witness of the bishops, priests and lay faithful was recognized with profound appreciation; without giving way to compromise they have maintained their loyalty to the See of Peter, sometimes at the cost of grave suffering. It was noted with particular joy that today almost all of the bishops and priests are in communion with the Supreme Pontiff.

"There has, moreover, been a surprising numerical growth of the ecclesial community which, in China as elsewhere, is called to bear witness to Christ, to look ahead with hope and, in announcing the Gospel, to measure itself against the new challenges that society is facing.

"From the multiplicity of the participants' contributions, what emerged was the will to continue along the path of respectful and constructive dialogue with the governing authorities, in order to overcome the misunderstandings of the past. The hope was also expressed that a normalization of relations at all levels could be achieved so as to facilitate a peaceful and fruitful life of faith in the Church, and to work together for the good of the Chinese people and for peace in the world.

"The Holy Father, who was fully informed of the proposals reached in the course of the meeting, has benevolently decided to address a Letter to Catholics in China."

OP/CATHOLIC CHURCH CHINA/...

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