

Christianity in Historic Context

At the 8th **National Conference of Chinese Protestant Churches**, in January, Chinese Christians discussed with zeal and enthusiasm how Western Christian civilization merged into Chinese civilization from two perspectives: (1) Christianity's part in the bitter history of the Chinese Nation; (2) Christianity's role today in the rejuvenation of the Nation.

Of the four ancient global civilizations, only Chinese civilization has come down in a continuous line, without interruption of alien cultures. However, when Protestant Christianity entered China in the mid-19th century, the Nation had been reduced to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society, and was dominated by 'super powers' of the time. Focused on spreading the Gospel, sometimes Christianity was unwittingly a tool of imperialism, colonialism, and cultural aggression. Some Western missionaries also believed that China could only be converted to Christianity by uprooting and restructuring the culture. **[Ed. Note: This was also true of Catholic Christianity of the era; though not true when Christianity first entered China in its dynastic heyday in the 7th, 12th and 16th centuries.]**

By the early 20th century more farsighted Chinese Christians launched a self-support movement to foster a more indigenous Christianity. When the PRC was established in 1949, Protestant Chinese Christians, holding high the "*Three-Self Patriotic Movement*," per force cut ties with Western powers. As acknowledged by Bishop Ding Guangxun, [K.H.Ting] honorary chairman of the *National Committee of TSPM* and honorary President of the *Chinese Christian Council*, the China Christian Church received a new lease of life. Though aggrieved over the poverty, backwardness and humiliation of their country, Christians were pleased with the emancipation of the Chinese people and achievements they had made.

Today, Chinese Christians stand ready to "blaze a new trail," striking Christianity's roots into the Chinese soil. A new path has been forged, though not always with clear sailing. Christianity in China still faces a new test in the entirely new situation. **The unanimous consensus reached at the recent Conference is that Christianity can be adapted to the basic national conditions of the Chinese society,** as Christians become the *Salt, the Light and the Yeast in Society*. [China Infodoc 01/08]

China Christian Church Women

In September 2007 *Theresa Carino* of the Hong Kong **Amity Foundation** office, in cooperation with the *Overseas Relations Office of the CCC/TSPM*, facilitated a 10-day visit of a ten-woman delegation from ATESEA (Association for Theological education in Southeast Asia) to Christian seminaries and churches in Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing and Xi'an. In rich and exciting encounters with women leaders from the CCC/TSPM, the group discovered that feminist theology has been taught at Nanjing Seminary for several years; and Xian Bible School will follow next year. **Today 50% of Protestant seminary students are women; and women's ordination has been common since the 1980s.** In Beijing, six out of eleven churches are led by senior women pastors. At least 1,000 ordained women ministers - making up a third of all the ordained ministers in China - obviously make women a force in Chinese Church life. [ANS 12/07]

Jesuit Bishop of Xian Xian Dies

Jesuit Bishop John Liu Dinghan of Cangzhou Diocese (Xianxian), known for his strong faith and special contribution to priestly formation, died in Hebei Province, on December 20, at the age of 90. From 1955 to 1979, Bishop Liu was imprisoned 20 years in labor camps. He was ordained as bishop of Cangzhou in 1982. The 151-year-old diocese, centered in Xianxian, and now led by 45-year-old *Bishop Joseph LI Liangui*, is known for its numerous priestly and religious vocations. There are 104 priests, some 240 religious sisters, and around 200 churches and chapels serving some 65,000 Catholics.



**Early Bird Deadline for
USCCB's
23rd National Catholic
China Conference
is May 31st**

*Experiencing Jesus Christ through Chinese Eyes:
Continuing Cross-Cultural Conversations*

Download registration form now at www.usccb.net
or call 973-763-1131 for more details.

Social Issues

Top 10 Economic Stories in 2007

1. **Property Rights Law** passed in March, granted equal protection to public and private properties for the first time.
2. **Labor Contract Law** passed in June, requires employers to provide written contracts to their workers, restricts the use of temporary laborers and extends long-term job security.
3. **Comprehensive Health Insurance:** A pilot program will provide medical care for children, the elderly, disabled, low-income earners and unemployed **in urban areas**.
4. **Sovereign Wealth Fund:** The China Investment Corp (CIC) was created in September to obtain better financial returns on China's \$1.4 trillion in currency reserves.
5. **Socio-Economic Development:** The 17th NPC of the CCP set the goal to have the per capita GDP by 2020 be double that of 2000.
6. **Stock Market:** The benchmark **Shanghai Composite Index surpassed 6000 points and fluctuated dramatically**. The Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchanges comprise over 130 million accounts.
7. **First Lunar Probe** (launched on October 24), marked a milestone in China's aerospace history.
8. **Environmental Criteria:** Energy savings and decreased emission of pollutants were added to the key indicators for **evaluating the performance of government officials**.
9. **Monetary Policy:** China's stance was shifted from "prudent" to "tight." The Consumer Price Index as an inflation barometer rose to 6.9%.
10. **Public Holidays:** 3 *Golden Week* holidays were scrapped in favor of three more traditional one-day public holidays: *Tomb-Sweeping Day*, the *Dragon Boat Festival*, and the *Mid-Autumn Festival*.

[China Infodoc 12/07]

Challenges of Pre-Affluence Aging

Expert opinion holds that, propelled by a relatively low birthrate and longer lifespan, **China will be an irreversibly aging society throughout the 21st century**. One internationally recognized benchmark of an aging nation is when 10% of the population is above the age of 60. By 2005 11% of China's population was in this age bracket.

China's old-age security and care institutions must also be seen in the context of traditional respect for the elderly and the concept of filial piety; and the serious economic and social ramifications they pose, coming in advance of China's economic affluence. At the time developed countries turned gray, their per capita GDP ranged between \$5000 and \$10,000. China's current per capita GDP is little more than \$1,000. While the Chinese government and society as a whole are working hard to resolve the issue **developments in the aging service industry struggle to keep pace with the relentless growth and demands of the aging population, particularly those in the "empty-nest" and disabled groups**.

[China Today 11/07]

A New Paradigm in Leadership

While the phenomenon of China's economic development is seen by many as something *new under the sun*, nothing is farther from the truth. **Until the 14thC, China was a world leader in almost every aspect of science, culture and civilization**. According to *Angus Maddison* in *World Economy: A Millennial Perspective*, from the time of Christ until 1870, China's economy was consistently the largest in the world. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica until the 18th century more than half of the world's books were written in Chinese, including historical writings, novels, treatises on government and law and speculative thought*.

If we think of the last 5,000 years as a 5,000 meter race ... China was in the lead for the first 4,800 meters! Only in the last 200 years has China stumbled and fallen behind. What is truly miraculous is that **in a mere 25 years China has raced back into the forefront!**

[China Source, Winter 2007]

Exchanges on Rule of Law

A key goal of the *Dui Hua Foundation* is the promotion of dialogue between China and the United States on issues related to human rights, transparency, and the rule of law. To this end, Dui Hua has been looking for opportunities for exchanges on topics of concern to both countries. In 2006 and 2007, Dui Hua hosted Chinese human rights experts on visits to the San Francisco Bay Area and arranged visits to a variety of local detention facilities, court proceedings, and other activities. These exchanges have highlighted positive aspects of the American criminal justice system, such as the openness of criminal trials, as well as some more problematic aspects, such as terrible overcrowding in the prison system.

In 2007, Dui Hua attempted to pursue more exchange by accepting an invitation to give a series of lectures to Chinese audiences and also gain unprecedented access to Chinese prisons and detention facilities. **The experience showed that many Chinese officials and scholars are eager to exchange ideas with foreign visitors on matters of criminal justice and rule of law, but serious barriers remain to making such dialogues truly two-way.**

Dui Hua executive director *John Kamm* traveled to Hubei Province in central China in November 2007. Despite being unable to visit detention facilities or raise individual cases during the trip to Hubei, Dui Hua came away from the program feeling a measure of success and optimism. Though things that had been more common in the past – visits to prisons and submission of prisoner lists – appear more difficult to accomplish in the current climate, there nevertheless seems to be an opening in China through which the exchange of information and opinions on legal issues can take place. By continuing to engage in such exchanges, Dui Hua hopes not only to provide Chinese partners with information helpful to China's efforts to modernize its legal institutions, but also to impart the importance of a more open and transparent criminal justice system.

[See www.duihua.org.]

US Catholic China Bureau's

12th Religious Study Tour to China

April 18 - May 5, 2009

Visit places of cultural and religious significance

Estimated Costs: \$4,000 (dbl/occ)

Contact 973-763-1131 for more details.

Tai Yuan Diocese Youth Center

Tai Yuan Diocese is located in the Shan Xi Province, and has a long and rich history of evangelization, with many heroic martyrs. The area was evangelized by the famous Jesuit, Fr. Giulio Aleni in 1620, a companion of Fr. Matteo Ricci, and by his successor, Belgian Jesuit Alphonsus A. Vagnoni, known as the Apostle of Shan Xi. The diocese was created in 1890. Today, it has 27 churches, 90 sites of prayer and missions, 50 priests, 30 religious, and about 80,000 lay faithful. **Many of the martyrs beatified in 1946 and canonized by John Paul II in 2000 were from this diocese.**

On February 12 one hundred and fifty youth delegates from Tai Yuan Diocese gathered for the grand opening of a Youth Center. An appeal was made to all young people, to actively participate in the life of the Church, and in the local community, by **placing their youthful enthusiasm at the service of evangelization.** The priest also asked the young people to strengthen their faith through the Word of God and prayer, thereby increasing the efficacy of their service and the eloquence of their testimony.

Appeal for Victims of Snowstorms

JINDE Charities (*Beifang Jinde Catholic Social Service Centre*), a charitable association that coordinates Catholic aid groups in China, has made a universal appeal for help on behalf of the victims of the Winter snowstorms, using exhortations on fraternal charity from the Lenten Message of Pope Benedict XVI.

This year the Lunar New Year coincided with the beginning of the Lenten Season. The Pope's Lenten message invited the faithful all over the world to be *"armed with prayer, fasting and the practice of almsgiving, so as to arrive at the celebration of the Easter Feast, renewed in spirit."* Jinde Charities Director, **Rev. J.B. Zhang Shijiang**, called upon Chinese Catholics to *"follow the Pope's teaching, offering from the gifts that we have received, those which we want to give to others, to the people who are suffering from cold, from hunger... Let us offer our fasting for them. The resources from only one parish or only one diocese are limited; but when we unite the resources of all the faithful, problems can be solved, at least for a certain specific area."*

China Infodoc 02/08

Briefly Noted...

- **Church Life Featured on National TV:** In January China T.V.'s international channel featured a 15 minute program on life in Catholic communities in China. According to *Faith Fortnightly*, the program described life in Catholic communities in Beijing, Shanghai and Chong Qing, with brief shots of a Mass and the faithful receiving communion, a parish choir, and life in a seminary, with an interview with former Seminary Rector, **Rev. LI Jin**, now Bishop of Ning Xia. The program concluded with a presentation of the *Guang Qi Catholic Publishing House* of Shanghai diocese. [Fides 01/08]
- **Adoptions to USA:** Since the early 1980s, over 70,000 Chinese children have been adopted by U.S. families. Figures released by the *U.S. State Department* reveal **China as the largest source of adopted children**. From October 2006 to October 2007, American families adopted 5,453 Chinese orphans. To ensure children enter a sound home environment in America, PRC regulations require that adopting parents be between the ages of 30 and 50, and in sound health.
- **PRC State Sponsored Study Abroad: In 2008 the China Scholarship Council (CSC) plans to select 12,000 people**, including 6,000 graduate students, **for study abroad**, the largest number since the opening-up policy commenced in the late 1970s. Founded in 1996, the CSC has sent 25,000 students to study abroad, with a return rate of 97.5%. **Preferred study fields** are energy, resources, the environment, agriculture, manufacturing, information technology, space science, oceanography, nanometer technology, as well as humanities and applied social sciences.
- **Christian Understanding of Becoming Parents** by *Raphael GAO Chao Peng*, 2008, based on the author's dissertation for the STD degree at *Catholic University of America* in May 2007. Fr. GAO is currently teaching Pastoral Theology at Sheshan Major Seminary in Shanghai. **Manuscript is available in book form at Amazon.com.**
- **Roman Missal in Simplified Chinese.** Faith Press has published a new edition of the Roman Missal in simplified Chinese characters, with horizontal arrangement, in order to better meet the current needs of younger clergy and the faithful who are accustomed to these stylistic changes. It is well-bound with a reasonable price, and contains the additional *Errata Corrige*. The new edition of the Missal can be viewed on the internet, along with other useful information on the subject: <http://www.chinacatholic.org/XindeFB/jd.html>.
- **Resources for Catholic Seminaries in China:** Several US publishers – including *Paulist Press* and Maryknoll's *Orbis Books, Inc.* – are collaborating to supply surplus books for China's major seminaries to supplement their meager libraries. While English language texts have limited usefulness, many major seminarians do have a working knowledge of English, due to it being taught as a second language from primary school on through to college. In addition, as growing numbers of faculty at these institutions have studied abroad [in the Philippines, USA, the UK and Australia], they can use these resources to supplement their teaching. Orbis Books also recently shipped 7 copies each of 240 titles to Fr. *Alberto Rossa*, in Macau, who distributes them to diocesan seminaries in southern China.

New Leadership for USCCB:

The Board of USCCB met in Chicago February 22-23 and outlined major elements of a new **Strategic 5 Year Plan**.

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