



United States Catholic China Bureau

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## Editor's Note:

China continues to move away from its militantly atheist and radically leftist years of the Cultural Revolution. After the death of Mao and the overthrow of the Gang of Four, Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Open Door policy gave China the "Well-off Society" (*xiao-kang shehui*) policy and the current tolerance of religion policy.

More and more, what China observers can notice is that Religions in China are being co-opted by the government in the implementation of its "Harmonious Society" (*he-xie shehui*) policy.

In this issue of CCQ, you will read about President Hu Jintao visiting the dying Bishop Fu Tieshan of Beijing, about "Chinese Going Crazy for Confucius", and about the award granted by Beijing to Amity Foundation, a "Christian NGO"...

In the same line, the People's Daily just reported about the third annual Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Interfaith Dialogue concluded in Nanjing. The two-day dialogue co-hosted by China and Italy served as a platform for religious, political leaders and academics to address their diversity and commonality of faith and deliberate on further tapping the potential of interfaith talks in enhancing mutual understanding.

Ye Xiaowen, Minister of China's State Administration for Religious Affairs said at the closing ceremony: "It has been proved by history that faith is an objective reality, it can neither be imposed nor deprived. China adheres to the policy of freedom of religious belief, and acknowledges the active role religion plays in building a harmonious society".

No mention of the "opium of the people"...

## USCCB Welcomes New Executive Director



The **Rev. Michel Marcil, S.J.** assumed the leadership of the *US Catholic China Bureau* on June 1, 2007. Fr. Michel, as he prefers to be known, comes to us with uncommon qualifications and credentials, and a commitment grounded in a "life-long love affair" with China. A Université de Montréal graduate, he holds a Masters in Philosophy with his dissertation "Are there Ethics in Karl Marx?" and later earned a Masters in Pastoral Theology.

Fr. Michel went to Taiwan in 1966 where he first studied Chinese language at Fujen University, then worked as Director at the *Cardinal Tien Cultural and Educational Center* where he also directed the *Taiwan Aborigine Service Program*. After studies in Theology he was ordained priest and worked in a Team Parish Project for two years.

Back in Montréal in 1978 as Deng Xiaoping was leading China into the "Reform and Open Door" policy, Fr. Michel was soon involved in the first regular contacts with Catholics in China and annual friendly visits to churches in China. Beginning in 1981 he served as the founding Director of *Amitié-Chine*, the 'Québec Catholic China Bureau', as co-founder of the bilingual *Canadian Catholic Roundtable on China* in Ottawa, and as co-Chair of the ecumenical *Canada-China Program* in Toronto.

In 1998 the Jesuit China Provincial Superior assigned Fr. Michel to work in Los Angeles, California, as Director of *Inter-Friendship House Association*, a Service Center for visiting Chinese scholars at UCLA and USC as well as Chaplain for different Chinese Catholic Groups in California such as the *Christian Service Community* and the *Chinese Marriage Encounter*.

In 2003 Fr. Michel was assigned to the *Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History* at the University of San Francisco where he was Research Fellow and Program Coordinator while ministering to the different Mandarin-speaking Chinese Catholic communities of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Fr. Michel also comes to us with a "life-long friendship" with Sr. Janet Carroll, MM. They first met as missionaries in Taiwan in the mid-sixties. They met again in the early eighties, when they both served as Directors of their respective "China-Bureaus". In 1998, at the invitation of Sr. Janet, Fr. Michel joined the USCCB Board of Directors. He now succeeds Deacon Charles Douglas Lovejoy as Executive Director. Fr. Michel comes into the same office as Sr. Janet, [who continues as our Senior Associate], joining this exciting transition to the future of the China Bureau.

# Church News

## Fu Tieshan, "tragic" figure of the Chinese Catholic Church Dies

*Bishop Michael FU Tieshan* of Beijing died on April 20<sup>th</sup> in Beijing Hospital, the medical centre for China's elite. Before his death, he received a visit from *President Hu Jintao*. Born in December of 1931, in the Qing Yuan district (Hebei), he entered the Minor Seminary at St. Savior [North] Church in Beijing diocese and was ordained in the 1950s.



During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), almost every bishop and priest was thrown into prison or sent to forced labor, including even those who had cooperated with the CCPA. FU was known to have spent some years as a farm laborer where he often told visitors he *learned valuable lessons for his priestly and pastoral life*.

In 1978, beginning with *DENG Xiaoping's Reform and Openness Policy*, religion once again reappeared in China. In 1979 Fr. Michael FU was ordained a bishop - among the first after the Cultural Revolution to accept episcopal election without prior approval of the Holy See. **FU Tieshan has been described at the most tragic figure of the Chinese Catholic Church:** shunned by the faithful of Beijing diocese for having continuously taken sides against the Pope, the Vatican and the interests of China's Catholics. Notwithstanding, FU's career was on a trajectory of success from a pragmatic viewpoint. Rewarded and praised by the authorities, he was promoted up the government and the CCPA's bureaucratic ladders, subsequently becoming Vice-President of the *People's National Assembly* and later a member of the Executive Commission. He also served as a Vice-president and Secretary General of the *Conference of Chinese Catholic Bishops*. In 1998, following the death of *Bishop ZONG Haide*, he became President of the CCPA.

Regrettably, in recent years, his penchant for entangling religion with politics was characterized by a rather servile acquiescence to the regime's aims. In 1989, a few days after the Tiananmen massacre, FU was the

only religious figure to defend on state television, DENG Xiao Ping's order to use tanks to clear students out of the Square.

On October 1st, 2000, in compliance with the CCPA's stance, FU denounced the Vatican for "*having dared*" to canonize 120 Chinese and foreign missionary martyrs, labeled as *instruments of colonialism*; and defining as "intolerable" the ceremony at Saint Peter's in Rome presided over by Pope John Paul II. In 2001, John Paul II sent a message to the Chinese people and authorities on the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Matteo Ricci's arrival in Beijing. The document asked "*not for privileges*", but for "*freedom*" for the Church to contribute "*to the good of the great Chinese people*." The Pope also asked forgiveness for any misunderstandings or negative signals of the past. Sadly, Fu Tieshan, together with the CCPA, dismissed this letter as "insufficient."

As the faithful increasingly abandoned the functions at which he appeared, Fu became more and more identified with elements in the CCPA bent on creating an independent Church, more beholden to self-serving ideological and economic interests. In recent years, illness gradually caused his withdrawal from public life.

With his death a unique chapter of the Church in China comes to an end. While commending his soul to God's mercy, we can also pray that with his passing, a new chapter may open under renewed episcopal leadership in the Beijing Diocese.

[citations from UCAN & other sources]

## Hankou Catholics Bid Farewell to Bishop Bernardine DONG

*Bishop Bernardine Dong Guangqing* of Hankou Diocese in central HuBei Province died of lung cancer on May 12. Born on April 1, 1917, Bishop Dong entered the Franciscan Order in 1934. In April 1958, following the expulsion of all the foreign missionary bishops in China, DONG and *Rev. YUAN Wenhua*, having requested, but been refused permission to assume episcopal leadership for the China Church, became the first two Chinese priests to accept election as bishops without prior approval of the Holy See. They served as bishops of Hankou and Wuchang, respectively until 1984, when

*Pope John Paul II* recognized Bishop DONG as the legitimate bishop of Hankou Diocese, which also includes Hanyang and Wuchang. Bishop Dong established a Major Seminary in Wuchang to train priests for Hubei and five other provinces in central and southern China. In 1988 he was elected to the *Chinese Peoples' Political Consultative Conference*.

*Anthony Lam Sui-ki*, of the *Holy Spirit Study Center* in Hong Kong observed that Bishop Dong's death marks the end of an era when certain priests were forced by the political environment to acquiesce in the practice of "self selection" in the China Church. Despite cooperating with the government, DONG faced political persecution during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), consigned to a *reform-thought-labor farm* for 10 years.

The death of Bishop Dong came three weeks after that of *Bishop Michael Fu Tieshan* in Beijing. Among the 51 such illicitly selected bishops ordained between 1958 and 1963, only two: *Thomas QIAN Yurong* of *XuZhou diocese in JiangSu* and *Anthony TU Shihua* of Hanyang in HuBei, are still living.

## Study in the Holy Land

Thirteen priests took part in a 4 week Scripture Study Program in the Israel organized by *the Catholic Biblical Federation* in Germany. The first program of its kind for Chinese seminary teachers, it included visits to biblical sites in Jerusalem and in Palestine and other areas. One priest, who teaches at Hebei/Shijiazhuang Seminary, said that before the trip Scripture was something abstract for him, but that this visit had made the subject *fresh and new*. Another priest said that he now understands the importance of interpreting Scripture in light of archeology, culture, geography, and the history of the Holy Land. The group also met with the Patriarchs of Armenian and Greek Orthodox Churches, and visited Jewish synagogues.

Asia Focus 3/07

**The USCCB's 11<sup>th</sup> Religious Study Tour** was in China 1-19 March 2007. Ten articles based on encounters during the tour appeared on the Catholic News Service Website at: <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/china/china.htm>.

**The 12<sup>th</sup> Religious Study Tour by USCCB will be offered in Spring 2009.**

## Oblates in China

*The Oblate China Education Service*, under the umbrella of *CARITAS/Hong Kong* supports students in remote areas with educational allowances and funding for basic projects, when local people provide the labor. Recently, 21 schools were visited in 9 days in Yunnan Province, near the *golden triangle* of Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam. Traveling over mountainous roads for 4-5 hours a day – the group visited schools and homes to check out school applications for assistance and evaluate existing ones. Some schools have up to a thousand students packed dozens to a room in poor conditions.

Most students are boarders as the schools are so remote they cannot travel home each evening. These visits help the principals and teachers see that the Oblates follow up on things and will check into how the funding is used. The most rewarding part of the trips was meeting the students who received the educational allowances – a reminder of the good work the service does.

COD Newsletter 5/07

## Cardinal Zen to Stay



*Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen* reports that *Pope Benedict XVI* has rejected his request to retire as the head of the city's Catholic Church so he could continue to oversee China affairs. Zen, who has already reached the retirement age for diocesan bishops at 75, said he has been informed by the Vatican that he

should stay on as Hong Kong bishop despite his repeated request to be relieved from duty.

"His Holiness Benedict XVI has decided that I carry on as the Bishop of Hong Kong and, in that position, do whatever I can to participate in the concerns for the Church in China in collaboration with the Holy See until it will be arranged otherwise," Zen said in a statement.

The Shanghai-born Zen has been involved in the move to improve diplomatic ties with Beijing. In January, the Vatican said it was setting up a permanent commission to handle China affairs and promised a Papal Pastoral Letter to China's Catholics.

AFP 3/07

## The Anticipated Papal Letter for Chinese Catholics

In recent years, many friends of the China Church have followed with interest the diplomatic *'pas de deux'* of the Vatican with China. Every now and then, in search of a scoop, press agencies will report the answers to the questions asked by reporters to Chinese or to Vatican officials at a press conference.

Since January the press is aware that *Pope Benedict XVI* is preparing to issue a pastoral letter to Catholics in China. So there was no surprise when on June 19, reporters in Beijing asked the question at a regular press conference with China's foreign ministry spokesperson, *Mr. Qin Gang*.

Reporters recalled that, in the Italian Catholic Daily *Avvenire* on June 3, *Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone* announced that *"the text of the letter has been definitively approved by the Holy Father, and now the process is under way for the various translations and for technical aspects of its publication."* Reporters also knew that the Holy See is expected to provide a copy of the letter to the Chinese authorities before it becomes public.

In that context, the questions asked by the reporters in Beijing on June 19 seemed like an attempt on their part to find out whether Beijing had already received a copy of the Pope's letter. China is likely reluctant to let people construe that they have indeed received the letter, if they ever did. No doubt Beijing would prefer to react after the letter has become public, not react to an anticipated papal letter.

Mr. Qin Gang said nothing new. He just re-iterated what China's foreign ministry repeatedly states regarding normalization of China-Vatican relations: that the Vatican must not interfere in China's internal affairs in the name of religion, and that it must sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

Many observers of the Catholic Church in China anticipate that Pope Benedict XVI's Pastoral letter will be a very positive document, calling for greater efforts towards reconciliation and unity of the Catholic Church in China, as well as conciliatory goals to restore Vatican-China diplomatic relations.

To another question, Mr. Qin Gang refused to comment 'in advance' on the "Vietnam model" for the choice of

the successor to the late *Msgr. Fu Tieshan* as Bishop of Beijing, proposed by *Cardinal Jean Baptiste Pham Minh Man* of Ho Chi Min City in a letter dated May 22 to two officials from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and State Administration for Religious Affairs.

Cardinal Man suggested that the *Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China* (BCCCC) –not any other organization - call for a meeting of all mainland bishops: have them first reflect, pray, discuss, and understand more about each other, and then have them nominate candidates chosen from the bishops who are presently in office. Then the Holy See will submit its list, from among these candidates, to the Chinese government for its opinion. Once the Chinese Government gives its consent, the Holy See would appoint the new Beijing bishop. [Citations from UCAN and other sources]

## Statistics for China's Catholic Church

<b>Catholics</b>	12,000,000
<b>Churches</b>	6,000
<b>Dioceses</b>	138
<b>Bishops:</b>	
Registered	67
Unregistered	44
<b>Priests:</b>	
Registered	1,870
Unregistered	1,100
	[nearly 300 are elderly priests]
<b>Seminaries:</b>	
National Institute of Theology & Philosophy	1
Regional Major seminaries	5
Provincial seminaries	5
Diocesan seminaries	10
Unregistered seminaries	Est. 10
<b>Seminarians:</b>	
Major	650
Minor	530
Unofficial: all levels	Est. 350
<b>Religious Women:</b>	
Registered	3,430
Unregistered	1,220
<b>Sisters in Formation:</b>	
Registered	320
Unregistered	230
<b>Houses of Formation:</b>	
Registered	40
Unregistered	20

Source: Tripod Vol. XXVII, No. 144, Spring 2007