

## Jesuit Scholar Appointed Consultor

French Jesuit scholar **Benoit Vermander**, who researches religion and culture, has been appointed a Consultor to the *Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*.



Father Vermander, 47, director of the Jesuit-run *Taipei Ricci Institute*, was surprised at the appointment. Nonetheless, he rejoiced at "the possibility to contribute modestly" to "interreligious dialogue for peace and cooperation on the challenges that the world confronts," which he identified as "one of the greatest challenges of this time."

According to Vermander, religions help humankind redefine its future. He believes that interaction between religions results in a form of "spiritual empowerment," a way of helping people "go on their spiritual journey and become enlightened decision-makers, able to create a difference in their environments."

Father Vermander has headed the *Taipei Ricci Institute* since 1996, organizing dialogue and other sessions within the Chinese world on topics such as cultural diversity, sustainable development and spiritual empowerment.

On Oct. 24, he and his editorial team presented to the Pope a copy of the *Grand Ricci*, the largest-ever Chinese-French encyclopedic dictionary, published by the Ricci Institute in 2002. The Pope praised the compilation of the dictionary. Jesuits in Taiwan started work on the tome in 1951. [China Infodoc 11/07]

According to a recent survey of 4,500 people conducted by the *East China Normal University* in Shanghai, 31.4% of Chinese people over the age of 16 would consider themselves religious. Of those professing to be religious, around 12% were Christian.

[China Infodoc 11/07]

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Associate Editor: Sr. Janet Carroll, MM  
Layout & Design: Barbara Lewis McCarthy

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U.S. Catholic China Bureau, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079

Tel: 973-763-1131 E-mail: chinabur@shu.edu Web: www.usccb.net

## Late Italian Jesuit Remembered

A special Mass was held recently at Sacred Heart Church in Taipei to commemorate Italian **Father Francesco Belfiori, SJ**. Fr. Belfiori died in Italy on November 11, 2007. He was 82.

Fr. Belfiori first moved to Taiwan in 1954. He was ordained a priest in 1958 in the Philippines and returned to Taiwan in 1960. Belfiori is counted among Church persons from outside China who dedicated themselves to restoring contact between the Universal Church and the Church in China after the Cultural Revolution (1966-76).

From 1980, Father Belfiori served in Hong Kong. In 1991, when the Jesuits established a new Chinese province for their apostolates in China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, he was appointed to the China Jesuit Service, which also serves Chinese overseas, offering academic exchange programs, pastoral services and the China News Analysis newsletter.

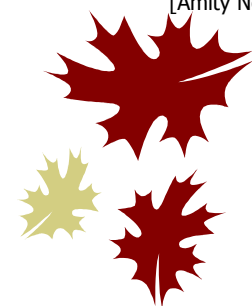
He returned to Italy in 2002 due to failing health. Fr. Belfiori was known for his generosity, loving heart, and dedication to the people he served. [UCA News 12/07]

## Religion and Public Welfare

The positive role of faith-based welfare organizations in China was discussed at the first **Forum on Religion and Public Welfare**, co-sponsored by the Amity and Jinde Charities at Renmin University last summer.

In his opening remarks, **Zhang Liwei**, *Associate General Secretary of the Amity Foundation*, said in his opening remarks: *We are convinced that religions can make a substantial contribution to society. China's social problems are too big and complex to be solved by the government alone. There are a lot of areas where organizations initiated by religious believers, such as Amity and Jinde, can play a positive role.* A recent study showed that NGOs with a religious background fared better in terms of their quality of service, mobilization of volunteers and efficiency in the use of natural resources than NGOs without such a background.

[Amity News, Fall 2007]



# Social Issues



## Olympic Games' Organizers Prepare for All Faiths

The needs of people of all religions will be comprehensively met during next year's Olympics. "Under the leadership of Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2008 Olympics, we have been studying the practices adopted by previous host countries in order to meet the needs of all athletes and visitors," **Ye Xiaowen**, director of the *State Administration of Religious Affairs*, said. *I promise the religious services provided during the Beijing Games will be as good as any provided at previous Games*, Ye told reporters during a group interview on the sidelines of the ongoing Party congress.

A religious service center will be set up in the Olympic Village to provide a diverse range of services to meet the needs of athletes from various religious convictions. Athletes and those who accompany them will be able to enjoy different dishes specially made in accordance with their religious beliefs.

**Liu Bainian**, vice-president of the *Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association*, said a temporary Catholic church will be set up in the Olympic Village and all churches in Beijing will be open to Catholic visitors.

In Qingdao and Tianjin, where events will also be held, Catholic churches there have begun offering English Masses twice a month in preparation for the Olympics. The dioceses have also invited foreign musicians to train their choirs to help them sing hymns in English.

[China Infodoc 10/07; Asia Focus 9/07]

## Loving and helping the poor a priority for Han Dan diocese

For many years Han Dan diocese in China has given priority to helping the weaker members of society. According to the diocesan web site, the *Diocesan Centre for Catholic Social Service* has become a point of reference and represents the diocese in society. The centre organizes assistance according to need. Visiting the sick, the disabled and broken families are the daily activities of the Center, whose members offer moral

comfort and concrete help. Recently women religious of the *Jinde Catholic Association* were asked to give a talk on the prevention of AIDS. Interestingly, the volunteers at the Center are not all Christians, and the funds are donated and managed by Christians and non-Christians. **So besides being appreciated for its good work the Center also offers living witness of collaboration between the Catholic community and society.**

Han Dan diocese has a population of 8,380,000 including 130,000 Catholics. It has over 100 churches and chapels, 58 priests, 40 seminarians and 200 women religious members of 2 diocesan congregations. The diocese runs several dispensaries, medical centers, and social assistance centers. [Fides 05/10/2007]

## 43,000 Post Doctoral Researchers

At the First Plenary Session of the 4th China Postdoctoral Science Foundation (CPSF) Council, it was announced that at the end of 2006, China had a total enrollment of 43,865 post doctoral researchers, and 26,890 are on the waiting list.

Reportedly, among the postdoctoral researchers, 36,944 are in the natural sciences, and 6,871 in social sciences, accounting for 84.3% and 15.6% of the total. In the field of natural sciences, 11,354 researchers are engaged in basic scientific research, 30.7% of the total; and 25,640 are in applied scientific research, accounting for 69.3% of the total.

At present, 1,363 mobile post-doctoral sites have been established in China. Among them, there are 1,111 natural science sites and 252 sites for the social sciences, respectively 81.5% and 18.5% of all stations. There are 1,318 post-doctoral worksites for major fields of economic and social development, such as machinery, information, chemistry, energy, environment, agriculture, construction, and pharmaceuticals. According to preliminary estimates, employed post doctorates are on average 33.3 years of age, natural and social science researchers are on average 33.1 years of age, and business post doctoral researchers are on average 33.9 years of age. [People's Daily 06/07]

## Officials Punished for Extravagance

Nearly 5,000 officials were punished for extravagance in the first half of 2007 according to the *Chinese Ministry of Supervision* (MOS). An investigation was launched on officials who over spent public money on banquets, overseas tours, purchase of luxurious cars or entertainment.

The government took disciplinary action against 4,866 of the *Communist Party of China* who violated party or government rules against squandering public funds. The central authorities have urged government officials at all levels to implement the country's anti-corruption policies and called on all officials to practice a frugal working style instead of wasting public funds. [China View 2007]

## Aging in China

One of the internationally recognized benchmarks of an aging population is when 10% of the population is above the age of 60. That China is an aging country is confirmed by 2005 statistics which place 144 million Chinese citizens – 11% of the population – in the over-60 age bracket.

Propelled by a relatively low birthrate and longer lifespan, China's huge population will long continue to be gray. Expert opinion holds that China will be an irreversibly aging society throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By 2051 the Chinese population above the age of 60 is expected to reach a peak of 437 million – approximately **double** the projected number of children and adolescents.

The aging phenomenon is more complicated, and has more serious ramifications in China than in more developed countries, because it occurs in advance of China's economic affluence. At the time developed countries turned gray, their per capita GDP ranged between \$5,000 and \$10,000. China's current per capita GDP is little more than \$1,000.

China's ballooning aging population poses serious economic and social challenges. Seniors are estimated to spend three to five times more on medication than their juniors. Developments in the aging service industry cannot keep pace with the relentless growth and demands of the aging population, particularly those in the "empty-nest," advanced-age and disabled groups.

The Chinese government and society as a whole feel keenly the pressure exerted by the aging population and are working hard to resolve the issue. China Today 11/07

## Mattel Apologizes to China



Mattel Inc. tried to save face with Chinese officials recently, taking the blame for the massive recall of millions of Chinese-made toys, as it strives to mend a strained relationship with the nation that makes most of its toys.

The world's largest toy maker sent a top executive to personally apologize to China's product safety chief, *Li Changjiang*, as reporters and company lawyers looked on. *Mattel takes full responsibility for these recalls and apologizes personally to you, the Chinese people, and all of our customers who received the toys*, Thomas Debrowski, Mattel's executive vice-president for worldwide operations, told Li.

The apology came ahead of an expected visit to China by Mattel's Chairman and Chief Executive Robert A. Eckert. *Eric Johnson*, a professor of operations management at Dartmouth College said the staging of Mattel's apology as a public event was telling. *This was all about saving face, which is very important in the Chinese culture*, he said. The *mea culpa* could help reshape the debate surrounding Chinese-made toys.

Debrowski acknowledged that the **vast majority of the products recalled were the result of a design flaw in Mattel's design, not through a manufacturing flaw in China's manufacturers**. Lead-tainted toys accounted for only a small percentage of all toys recalled, he added.

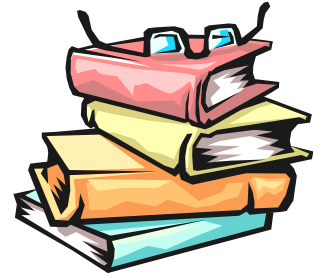
Since the recalls, Mattel has announced plans to upgrade its safety system by certifying suppliers and increasing the frequency of random, unannounced inspections. Mattel first established a presence in China 25 years ago and now makes about 65 percent of its products there. More than 80 percent of all toys sold in the U.S. are made in the Asian nation.

[China Infodoc 09/07]



# Reading Notes

- **Jin Luxian Wenji (Jin Luxian's anthology).** *Jin Luxian.* Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House 2007. This book brings together articles previously published by Shanghai diocese's Guang Qi Press, including homilies, pastoral letters and teachings for local priests, nuns and laypeople. It also includes four travel journals, four speeches he made overseas and his doctoral dissertation. Bishop Jin was ordained in 1945; he is proficient in several languages, including English, French, German and Italian. After returning from studies in Europe and becoming rector of the Jesuit Seminary in Xujiahui, he was arrested in 1955 and spent 18 years in prison and 9 years in re-education camps. He was released in 1982 and ordained auxiliary bishop of Shanghai in 1985 without papal mandate. He has been recognized by the Holy See in recent years. This book was published with the approval of the central government, but as an "internal publication." This means it can be sold only in designated places and not in public bookstores. It can be ordered through Guang Qi Press or the publisher.
- **Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity.** Telling the stories of Chinese Christians across the centuries and around the world. The BDCC is an electronic database in both English and Chinese recording the lives and works of Chinese Christians from the Tang Dynasty to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A work in progress, the BDCC will eventually include biographies of Chinese believers from the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the present, as well as some foreigners who are part of the overall story. Contributions of stories of Chinese Christians are welcome: go to [www.bdcconline.net](http://www.bdcconline.net) for more details.



*Congratulations to the December 2007 Graduates in the Maryknoll Society sponsored Chinese Seminary Teachers & Formators Project!*



Fr. John Ren Da Hai  
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St. John's University, MN



Sem. John Huang Wen Hong  
B.A. Philosophy  
St. Vincent's College, PA



Fr. Joseph Lin Jin De  
M.A. Spiritual Direction  
Fordham University, NY



## 23<sup>rd</sup> National Catholic China Conference

3-5 October 2008 - Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, IL (proximate to St. Louis, MO)

### Continuing Cross Cultural Conversations

*Following on the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, the proposed theme will focus on youth: Christian and other religious believers, students, business people and so forth.*

For more details see enclosed flyer/registration form or call 973-763-1131.