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Pope Calls on Catholics Worldwide to Pray for Chinese Catholics

Pope Francis has called on Catholics worldwide to join in prayer with their fellow Catholics in China on May 24, to ask God to give them the grace *"to announce with humility and joy Jesus Christ, to be faithful to his Church and to the Pope, and to live their lives in service to their country in a way that is coherent with their Christian faith."*

Speaking for the first time publicly on the Church in China on May 22 at the public audience in St Peter's Square, Pope Francis called for prayer for the more than 12 million Catholics in China. He began by recalling that May 24 is **"a day dedicated to the liturgical memory of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, who is venerated with great devotion at the sanctuary of Sheshan in Shanghai"**, and then said:

"I invite all the Catholics of the world to join in prayer with their brothers and sisters who are in China to implore from God the grace to announce with humility and joy Christ who died and is risen, to be faithful to his Church and to the Successor of Peter, and to live their daily lives in service to their country and to their fellow citizens in a way that is coherent with the faith they profess. Making our own some words of a prayer to Our Lady at Sheshan, together with you I would like to invoke Mary in this way:

Our Lady of Sheshan, sustain all those in China, who, amid their daily trials, continue to believe, to hope, to love, so that they may never be afraid to speak of Jesus to the world, and of the world to Jesus.

Mary, Virgin most faithful, support Chinese Catholics, render their commitments, which are not easy, more and more precious in the eyes of the Lord, and nurture the affection and the participation of the Church in China in the journey of the Universal Church".



The Marian procession at the Sheshan Shrine

His predecessor, **Benedict XVI**, in his historic 2007 Letter to Catholics in China, decreed that May 24 be kept worldwide as **"a day of prayer for the Church in China"**. He also composed a prayer for the occasion and Pope Francis used part of that prayer in his prayer today.

The Jesuit Pope is well aware of the history of the Catholic Church in China and the delicate situation it is in today. He is constantly reminded of the Church in China by the small bronze statue of Our Lady of Sheshan that is standing in his room. It was given to him in the Sistine Chapel immediately after his election as pope on March 13, by **Hong Kong's Cardinal John Tong**.

On that occasion, the cardinal told him, **"The Catholics in China love you and will pray for you. Also, we ask for your care for all Chinese Catholics, and please pray for us!"** Pope Francis responded by recalling that **"Chinese Catholics have given many testimonies to the Universal Church"** and, he revealed, **"I never forget to pray for Chinese Catholics"**. Some days later, he confided to the cardinal, **"The Church in China is in my heart"**.

[Vatican Insider]

Church News

Pope Donates to Sichuan Relief

Pope Francis made a donation of US \$30,000 (\$232,350) to the earthquake victims in Sichuan province, China. This is what Robert Cardinal Sarah, the president of the **Pontifical Council Cor Unum, the papal relief fund**, announced on the opening day of an international conference on new forms of poverty in society held at the Caritas Institute of Higher Education in Tseung Kwan O on May 16.

The earthquake, which left around 200 people dead, thousands injured and tens of thousands homeless shook Sichuan province in the early morning on May 16.

Cardinal Sarah told the Sunday Examiner that Pope Francis had sent messages of sympathy to the suffering people of China at the time, but the follow up gift is a concrete sign of his concern for their well-being and expression of his sadness.

While noting that it is not a huge amount of money, he said that it is significant, and is an amount that **can be effectively handled by the small Church agencies and parishes in China** that will be given the money to use in their relief programs and distribute where they see fit.

"Aid is not just practical, but **must include a catechesis of charity** that comes in the concrete witness of Christians," Cardinal Sarah explained.

While it is known that a pope has previously given relief money to organizations in the People's Republic of China in times of an emergency, it is the first time that one has announced it publicly.

It is well known that money from Caritas, both in Hong Kong and internationally, has been channeled into China frequently at times of disaster, but **gifts from Cor Unum are a direct gift from the pope himself**, not an agency. Cardinal Sarah said that it had not yet been decided how the money will be transferred.

[Hong Kong Sunday Examiner]

Ricci Beatification Process

The beatification process for a 16th century Jesuit who played a key role in introducing Christianity to China is headed for the Vatican. Bishop Claudio Giuliodori, apostolic administrator of Macerata diocese in Italy, formally closed the diocesan phase of the sainthood process for **Father Matteo Ricci** on May 10.

Ricci was born in Macerata, central Italy, in 1552 and died on May 11, 1610 in what was then Peking. While in China, Ricci became the first Westerner to be invited into the Forbidden City, acted as a court advisor on Europe and its cultures, and obtained the emperor's protection and support.

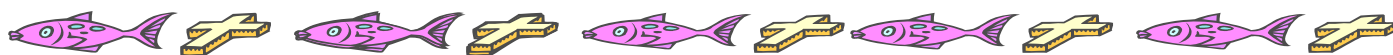
The initial process began in 1984 with the Jesuit being declared a "servant of God". It was reopened by Giuliodori in 2010, during celebrations marking **the 400th anniversary of the Jesuit's death**. Now, Riccis's cause will move to the Vatican, where it will be taken up by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

"We have a debt, the Church has a debt, humanity has debt to Father Matteo Ricci," Bishop Giuliodori said during the closing ceremony of the beatification process. He stressed that Ricci didn't try to affirm *"any kind of superiority of European civilization"* but acted only to spread his faith. **The bishop said he spoke of Ricci's beatification process during a recent audience with Pope Francis.**

The Jesuit pope, who wanted to be a missionary to Japan in his youth, said that Ricci plays a **"fundamental role"** because he **"opened up a new way of evangelizing,"** based on the inculturation of the faith. **"He did it thinking out of the box,"** the pope reportedly said.

According to Gianni Criveller, a Hong Kong-based missionary who headed the historical commission that served the beatification process, Ricci exemplifies a modern figure for his capacity to communicate globally, as proved by his numerous letters.

[UCA News]



Condolences for the Death of Bishop Jin

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

My deepest condolences to you all!

When the news of the death of our beloved Bishop JIN reached me, I felt very sad. **I still have fond memories of the Seminary in Sheshan, when Bishop JIN was still the Rector.** In those days, we not only had lectures, but also basketball games and outdoor hiking. I particularly like the Marian Month and your chanting. My good brother Daqin was the Choir Master. Bishop JIN willingly spent time with us, and especially enjoyed coffee time after lunch. In one way or another, we will all miss him.

Thanks to his invitation, I was able to come to Sheshan – the place of Our Lady, and to meet a number of you: priests, seminarians, sisters, and friends. By now, most of you have great responsibilities for different pastoral and social activities. **The loss of Bishop JIN made me suddenly feel very much united to you,** my dear Brothers and Sisters. I indeed dreamt to be with you and to share our thoughts and sentiments with each other.

This time I also truly desired to come to Shanghai and to be with you at prayer: as one of your brothers, without any rank or pretense. However, this is one of those times in which the decision is not my own, and this is a part of life. Even if in this commemoration I cannot be present with you physically, I certainly will stay close to you spiritually. Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Ps 133).

When Bishop JIN was under the intensive care, I reported it to the superiors here. **Even Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, showed his concern.** Now Bishop JIN passed on to the Lord. We certainly offer prayers for the deceased and deepest condolences to Shanghai Diocese.

I was deeply moved by the pictures of the funeral Mass of Bishop JIN. There are so many familiar faces and my thoughts go out to all of you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, and, in a special way, **to my dear brother Bishop Daqin,** who was also with you in spirit. The Church, like a choir, is in need of a good conductor, so as to turn the Gospel into a beautiful song.



During this time of sadness, we recall the promises of Jesus, our Savior, Who is Risen from the dead, and commend our dear Bishop JIN to His loving care through the intercession of **Mary, Our Lady of Sheshan.**

Yours Fraternally in the Lord,

Savio HON Tai Fai
Secretary of the Congregation for the
Evangelization of Peoples

[Agenzia Fides]

In Memory of George Cheng Chi Tsung



To us, faith is life—to serve, love, forgive, respect others to the best of our abilities. - George

Nov. 11, 1940 - June 13, 2013
The US Catholic China Bureau lost a faithful and joyful member of the Board of Directors. George was a wonderful Catholic, a family man, devoted to the service of the laity in China.
We will miss him, R.I.P.

Social Issues

China Tightens Rules for Appointment of Bishops

In a move destined to further **complicate, and even worsen relations** between Beijing and the Vatican, the Chinese authorities have revised significantly the regulations governing the process for the election and ordination of bishops for the Catholic Church in mainland China.

The revised regulations give the government-backed Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC) **"overarching control" and the final say on who can become a bishop in the mainland.** The BCCCC is a body established by Beijing, but not recognized by the Holy See as a Bishops' Conference.

The new ruling was approved in April but has only been made public now. It replaces a less strict regulation that had been in place since 1993 regarding the process for the election of bishops in the Church. The 1993 text had 6 regulations whereas the new one has 16. The revised text includes a demand that **Catholic bishops must support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and its socialist system.**

Under the 1993 regulations, a diocese was only required to fulfill the procedure at a provincial level and, unless they were faced with pressure from Beijing, local officials would often turn a blind eye to this process if the local diocese had good relations with the local authorities. That will no longer be the case.

The new regulations specify that a diocese has to **seek agreement from the Beijing-based BCCCC and the Bureau for Religious Affairs** to begin the process of electing and ordaining a new bishop, **Anthony Lam Sui-ki**, senior researcher at the Holy Spirit Study Centre in Hong Kong, explained. It seems these revised regulations are aimed at strengthening the authority of those two state entities. The regulations also dictate how to set up an election committee.

"The revision is a regression as it blocks the normalization of Church life in China," Anthony Lam said. He interpreted the revision as a reminder to bishops approved by the Holy See that they have "to be brave and not to be frightened by the authorities."

Given the revised regulations, "Some dioceses might be forced **to ordain their bishops secretly to prevent an illicit bishop presence in Vatican-approved Episcopal ordinations,**" Kwun Ping-hung, a Church observer, said.

Four years ago, in 2009, the Holy See and China seemed to be close to reaching a basic agreement on the appointment of bishops, a subject that has been one of the major obstacles – though by no means the only one – to harmonious relations between the two sides. That agreement could not be concluded, however, due to Beijing's underlying insistence that while the Pope could raise objections over a candidate to be bishop, the final decision would remain with the Chinese.

Since then, and especially since 2011, Sino-Vatican relations have deteriorated. Some bishops have been ordained without the Pope's approval and in spite of the Holy See's objections, illegitimate bishops have been inserted into ordinations that had papal approval, and Shanghai's new bishop, Ma Daqin, was deposed by the Chinese authorities at the end of 2012.

This latest move by Beijing will **certainly** not contribute to the improvement of relations between the Holy See and China. While it is not clear how much the new leadership in Beijing is actually behind this revision of the regulations, in any case, their publication has come as a cold shower **on those who were beginning to nurture the hope that the path to rapprochement between the two sides might be opened again** given that there is a new political leadership in Beijing and a new Pope in the Vatican.

[Vatican Insider]

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Tiananmen Activist Keen to Spread Gospel

Pastor Zhang Boli, a 1989 Tiananmen activist, says Christianity is the mainland's best hope.

The former student leader of the **Tiananmen pro-democracy movement** had been on the run for six months after it was crushed by the military, moving from village to village in remote Heilongjiang, assuming different identities. As he was about to faint, he remembered something taught to him by a Christian woman: **pray**. He decided to dedicate his life to God.

The next morning, he was rescued by Russian peasants who found him lying unconscious covered in thick snow. The Soviet Union refused to allow Zhang to cross to the West for fear of offending Beijing, but instead allowed him **to slip back into Heilongjiang** without alerting the mainland authorities.

For the next year-and-a-half, Zhang survived on hunting and fishing, until he eventually made his way to **Shenzhen**, where he fled to **Hong Kong** on a speedboat on June 13, 1991. Three days later, he travelled to the **United States**, where he was granted political asylum. Today, Zhang is a pastor at the Harvest Christian Chinese Church in **Virginia**. His days as a student clamouring for democracy at Tiananmen Square seem like a lifetime away.

Although he is barred from returning to China, Zhang has not stopped caring for his country. **Chinese people live in a society plagued by corruption, inequality, a moral crisis and lawlessness**, Zhang said, and needed Christianity more than ever.

"Christian concepts such as love, tolerance, forgiveness ... are all good for China. To me, **spreading the gospel is more meaningful than engaging in pro-democracy activities**. Democratic values are based on concepts such as the equality of all people in the eyes of God and their rights and dignity," he said. "I can't see another ideology more suitable for China."

Zhang said many people lost faith in the Communist Party after the June 4 crackdown and feared that if another pro-democracy movement started, "the conflict would likely be more intense because people have bottled up more grievances".

Christianity could play a role in democratization and help promote social justice, he said. Zhang cited an estimated figure of 80 million protestant Christians on the mainland and said they could be a powerful force in building civil society.

"It can change people's hearts and bring its influence 'like salt and light' in the world," he said, paraphrasing Jesus' words from the Book of Matthew. **"Christianity never talks of toppling regimes, it can only make society better,"** he said.

[South China Morning Post]

Clampdown on Law Firms

A number of lawyers in China who have taken on human rights briefs, **are still waiting for their licences to practice law to be reviewed**. Legal procedure in China requires all lawyers to undergo a review of their licences each year.

The deadline for completion is May 31, but one week past the date, dozens of lawyers and law firms are confined to limbo. The problem of delayed licence review has been critical since 2011, when a clampdown on the legal profession was introduced. Rights groups in China say that **the annual review of licences** seems to have only one express purpose - to exert state control over the legal profession.

The founder of the United States of America (US)-based rights group, **ChinaAid**, named 17 lawyers in China that it claims it knows are waiting in limbo on their licence renewal.

A veteran journalist based in Beijing, Gao Yu, blamed **tight controls** on freedom of speech around topics like the rule of law for what she termed a weakness in the Chinese legal profession. "I think that the Chinese media is very tightly controlled, and it is getting worse with every passing generation," Gao said. "Now, everything **is moving backwards**, including progress towards democracy, constitutional government and universal values," she concluded.

[Sunday Examiner]

Bao Tong, Official Jailed over Tiananmen

Bao Tong, the most senior party official jailed over the Tiananmen pro-democracy movement, said the crackdown must be "**completely repudiated**" if China is to move forward. "Like the Cultural Revolution must be totally repudiated, June 4 must be completely repudiated." "**Like Mao was the symbol for the Cultural Revolution, Deng was the symbol of the June 4 [crackdown].**"

Bao was director of the party's Political Reform Office and a member of the Central Committee when the government used armed troops and tanks to crush the student-led movement on June 4, killing hundreds, maybe thousands, of civilians.

"I think every Chinese - officials or ordinary people, those who **were persecuted** or **benefited** - should all reflect upon this issue," he said. Bao, 81, was jailed for seven years, detained for a further year and has been under house arrest since his release in 1997.

He said he was **impressed** by President Xi Jinping's emphasis on the importance of constitutional rule, but was "**perplexed**" that it was followed by what appeared to be a tightening of ideological control in recent weeks. It was also reported that university staff have been ordered to steer clear of **seven taboo topics** in lessons, including **press freedom** and **civil Rights**.

Bao's house arrest makes it difficult for friends to visit as they are routinely harassed. He said he had no regrets about his fate, but he grieved for his countrymen, who had been deprived of free speech for more than two decades. The silencing of dissident voices had disastrous consequences, he said. "If you cover the mouths of a hundred people, there could still be hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of mouths still speaking. **But if they silence 1.3 billion people, that's frightening.**"

After the army opened fire in 1989, **lively debates** on university campuses and the streets of Beijing **died down**; the **state press**, which had **grown bolder** during the 1980s, **was silenced**; legislation planned to protect **press freedom** was **quashed**; and **political reforms** were **abandoned**. "If all these mouths were still talking, I think our society wouldn't be as depraved as it is now," he said. "**Corruption, exploitation, the lack of respect for law, these had the support of tanks and machine guns.**"

Bao, once the political secretary to the Politburo Standing Committee, blamed the barring of free speech after June 4 for the rampant **corruption, inequality, environmental degradation and moral crises of today**.

Bao was **accused by a court** in 1992 of "leaking a state secret" and "inciting counter-revolutionary propaganda" during the pro-democracy movement. He **denied the charges**. Then an indictment in 1992 accused him of telling his staff that Zhao would step down. He insisted these accusations were groundless, but the court still convicted him of revealing an unspecified "important state secret".

[South China Morning Post]

Xi: CPC Campaign a Thorough Cleanup

Xi Jinping, leader of the Communist Party of China (CPC), said that the CPC's upcoming year-long campaign will be a "thorough cleanup" of undesirable work styles such as **formalism, bureaucratism, hedonism** and **extravagance**. "The main task of the campaign is a focus on building work styles," Xi said at a high-profile conference held to deploy the campaign.

Party members should be **critical** and **self-critical** in the spirit of rectifying improper work styles, Xi said. "**Winning or losing public support** is an issue that concerns the CPC's survival or extinction."

The Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee decided to launch a campaign to **boost ties between CPC members and the public** from the latter half of this year. The campaign will focus on CPC organs and officials at or above the county level who will be required to reflect on their own practices and correct any misconduct.

The conference was also attended by the other six members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, including Li Keqiang, Zhang Dejiang, Yu Zhengsheng, Liu Yunshan, Wang Qishan and Zhang Gaoli.

[Xinhua]



Praise for Reformer Hu Yaoban

The mainland mourned late **reformist leader Hu Yaobang** on April 15, the 24th anniversary of his death - the first time he has been commemorated under the leadership of **President Xi Jinping**, whose father was his ally.

The former Communist Party chief, who was purged in 1987, remains a relatively sensitive figure as his sudden death in 1989 sparked commemorative activities that later turned into the Tiananmen pro-democracy movement. The protests ended in the bloody June 4 crackdown.

Hu was an ally of **Xi Zhongxun**, late father of **Xi Jinping**, and a respected communist revolutionary. When Hu was forced by conservative party elders to resign for condoning widespread student protests the year before, the elder Xi stood by him. Since Xi Jinping assumed power as party chief in November, there has been speculation over whether he will follow in his father's footsteps and embrace liberal reforms. Analysts say that by showing affection for Hu, people were hoping for signs of Xi's support for reform.

Hu was fondly remembered by many for spearheading economic and political reforms, as well as his rehabilitation of hundreds of thousands wrongly persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, including the elder Xi. **Although the party officially restored Hu's reputation posthumously in 2005** on the 90th anniversary of his birth, public mention of him remained rare and former premier Wen Jiabao made headlines when People's Daily published an article on his eulogy of Hu in 2010.

The Shanghai-based Liberation Daily published an article by Zhou Ruijin, its former editor-in-chief, **praising Hu for pushing reforms against all odds**. While Hu faced ideological obstacles in the 1980s, Xi is up against "even bigger, more comprehensive and deeper conflicts and vested interests", it said. "When we have reached the historical stage where we need to give reform a strong push, it is very meaningful and timely to commemorate Hu Yaobang now," Zhou wrote. As we remember Hu Yaobang, we should, just like him, have the determination to reform and the courage to innovate."



In Zhou's commentary for the Hong Kong-based Phoenix News website, he went further, saying: **"If Deng Xiaoping was the chief architect of China's reform and opening, then Hu Yaobang deserves to be called its chief engineer."** Zhou also praised Hu's endorsement of Xi Zhongxun's work in liberalising the economy in Guangdong in the late '70s.

Hu's son, Hu Dehua, also paid tribute to his father, saying he hoped **the new leadership would show similar courage in carrying out political reform despite facing bigger obstacles**. "Today, you need even greater wisdom, courage, magnanimity and compassion. We hope they will continue to reform and liberalize." Hu Dehua said many constitutional rights, such as **freedom of speech and publication**, had not been granted to citizens, and there were **no laws to safeguard those rights**. "We hope the leaders will solve these problems, otherwise they will become even more serious."

Independent political commentator Chen Ziming said it was unlikely that Zhou's article was backed by Xi and there had been no evidence that the president supported political reform. He said it was probably state media testing the tolerance of Hu's legacy **"to see whether they could go one step further"**. Veteran journalist and historian Yang Jisheng also noted that Xi had not mentioned political reform since he became party chief, although he emphasised the importance of adhering to Marxism and Mao's thoughts.

Scores of Hu supporters tried to pay tribute to him at his former home in Beijing yesterday. Several managed to get in, while dozens were turned away.

[South China Morning Post]





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