



United States Catholic China Bureau

# China Church Quarterly

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## Letter to Catholics in China

The Letter which Cardinal Ivan Dias, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, has addressed to the bishops and priests of mainland China, stems from deep affection for that Church which can be rightly proud of her heroic witness through five decades of so much suffering and tribulation.

**From this little gem three motives emerge.**

The first "*a word of encouragement for the clergy engaged in arduous pastoral ministry*". This is acknowledgement of the social, material and spiritual challenges facing ministers in the exercise of their pastoral mission. As a model they are offered Saint Jean Marie Vianney who, despite scarcity of structures, the perversity of his times and the poverty of his person, was able **to imitate and indeed identify himself with Jesus Christ**, the Supreme Shepherd of our souls. The priest, the Cardinal recalls, must be a man of God and a man for others. The two dimensions are interdependent and indispensable.

The second motive is a call not so much for unity, but rather for the re-composition of the unity of the Catholic Church in China, for which, the Cardinal recalls, so many have worked so long with the tact and passion and now the progress achieved is emerging. He acknowledges with satisfaction "*efforts, past and ongoing*". However, quoting words of the Holy Father's homily on the solemnity of the Apostles, Saints Peter and Paul (29 June 2010), he reiterates



Cardinal Ivan Dias urged the faithful to forgive the "past suffering" of Catholics in China and to pray for the unity of the Chinese church.

that **any form of division in the ecclesial Community is a sin**, and that unity demands radical discipleship of Christ who prayed to the Father, that all may be one.

The third motive is a confident look to the future of this matter, which, without a doubt, God guides in his providential love. Just as the past generations were **intrepid witnesses to Christ and to the unity of the Church**, so too the Christian communities of today are called to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to proclaim it to the multitudes who hunger and thirst for God. In the heart of Most Holy Mary, Our Lady Help of Christians, may they find the strength and the model for achieving this mission.

[Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) 7/29/2010]

### Europe's Chinese Under Discussion

Chinese people in Europe, particularly Catholics, were in the spotlight of the conference: "The Chinese in Europe - Trends and Catholic Perspectives" held in Freising, Germany on Sept 16-19. Around 100 participants from 13 countries participated, one third of them being Chinese Catholics, priests and nuns living or studying in Europe.

Archbishop Reinhard Marx of Munich delivered the opening lecture on the Catholic social doctrine within the context of the global challenges. Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun gave a talk on the present situation of the Church in China. There were two lectures from Professor Gregor Benton and Professor Michael Lackner, followed by **Bishop Ignatius Wang** of San Francisco who gave a presentation of "the Catholic Chinese in the United States." [UCA News, 9/13/10]

# Church News

## Chinese Spiritual Vacuum

Alongside China's astonishing economic boom, an almost unnoticed religious boom has quietly been taking place.

In the country's first major survey on religious beliefs, conducted in 2006, 31.4 percent of about 4,500 people questioned described themselves as religious. That amounts to more than 300 million religious believers, an astonishing number in an officially atheist country, and three times higher than the last official estimate, which had largely remained unchanged for years.

*"Chinese people don't know what to believe in anymore,"* says **Liu Zhongyu**, a professor at East China Normal University in Shanghai, who conducted the survey. *"And since the political atmosphere has relaxed, they turn to religion for comfort."*

One young evangelical **Christian missionary** travels from rural village to village in the Protestant heartland in eastern China to proselytize. She attributed her own conversion to the overwhelming pressures of China's education system. *"In high school, I felt very depressed,"* said the bright-eyed young woman, who gave her name as **Nicole**. *"I felt people had no direction, and I felt life was dry and boring. I felt the pressure of school was very high. God helped me and liberated me."* Although proselytizing is still illegal in China today, she and a group of friends are openly preaching in villages, without official interference.

China has come a long way from the dark days of the Cultural Revolution, which ended in 1976, when all religious practice was banned, and monks and clergy were sent to prison or to perform hard labor.

### Creating A 'Harmonious Society'

Since 2006, the position of China's government has been that religion can be a force for good toward the ultimate aim of creating a harmonious society. *"What is important is that the work should be done on a legal basis,"* **Ye Xiaowen**, the official then in charge of religious affairs, told state-run Xinhua news agency in July 2006, in his first interview in a decade.

China has a long history of peasant rebellions fueled by religious belief, and observers say the Communist government still views religion with caution, seeing it as a social issue and political issue which could affect social stability.

*"It doesn't matter to the Chinese government whether you are a farmers' union, a Boy Scout troop, the Red Cross or the Catholic Church,"* says Sister **Janet Carroll, M.M.** a nun who has been active in China for decades. *"If you gather people together, have authorities in place, financial means and some sort of organizational control over groups of people, the Chinese government wants to not only know about it, but also have a say about how it all functions."*

To that end, after the communist revolution in 1949, the government recognized five official religions: Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, Daoism and Islam. For each of them, Patriotic Associations were set up to supervise and monitor religious practice.

China adopted the religious policy of the Soviet Union, with a few adaptations, says the **Fr. Michel Marcil, S.J.** director of the U.S. Catholic China Bureau. *"They had no idea of what a religious policy was,"* he says. But Marcil says conversations with Chinese religious affairs officials last year have led him to believe there could be policy changes. They told him: *"We are now trying to find something which would be much more adapted to China and its present situation than what we took from Russia back in 1949."*

### Spread Religion Beyond Government Control

Across China, religious belief has blossomed and flourished — far outpacing the government's framework to control it — with a **profusion of charismatic movements and a revival in traditional Chinese religions**. Two-thirds of those who described themselves as religious in the 2006 survey said they were Buddhists, Taoists or worshippers of folk gods such as the Dragon King or the God of Fortune.

Another popular goddess is **Mazu**, who is believed to protect sailors. Although she is included in the Daoist and Buddhist pantheons, she — and many other indigenous popular gods — fall outside China's five official religions. However, the worship of **Mazu** recently has been reclassified as "cultural heritage" rather than religious practice, making it acceptable even for Communist Party members. Academics say that model is being used elsewhere in China for other indigenous folk religions.



There are also government attempts to support traditional Chinese practices such as **ancestor worship**. In 2009, the government declared the Qingming Festival — the traditional day for sweeping graves — a public holiday for the first time, allowing much larger numbers of people to sweep their ancestral graves. *"Now the government supports us,"* says **Shao Longshan**, his cheeks still tear-stained after bowing deeply in front of the grave of his late wife, at a cemetery on the outskirts of Shanghai, at the Qingming Festival in early April this year. *"Not only does this let the people who are alive remember those who have gone, but [it allows us to] keep the Chinese traditions and culture."*

The Chinese government has also **given extra support to Buddhism** in what scholars say is an attempt to counterbalance the explosion of Christian faith.

### Faith Growing Among The Young

Another recent development is that increasing numbers of younger people are practicing religion. The 2006 survey showed 62 percent of religious believers are 39 and under. This trend was evident at an unregistered meeting of Christians worshipping in a charismatic underground prayer meeting in the coastal city of **Wenzhou**, known as "China's Jerusalem." Many of the devout were young and obviously well-off. Such underground Christians have recently received surprisingly sympathetic coverage in the state-run media, raising hopes that their meetings may be legitimized.

One scholar, **Liu Peng**, from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences told the Global Times that "a huge gap" exists between the government's position on religion and Christians' needs. *"House churches also operate on a smaller scale, which means people's spiritual needs can be met more easily and they elect their own pastors. ... It's rather like the economic changes. When state-owned enterprises couldn't meet the public's needs, private businesses naturally appeared,"* he told the newspaper. That link between belief and wealth is also apparent in the emergence of "Christian boss," or **Christian entrepreneur**, in Wenzhou. Academics say they are helping the rapid spread of Christianity in China by building churches elsewhere to spread the "Wenzhou brand" of Christianity.



There has already been a significant relaxation of the government's religious policies over the past decade. New regulations passed in 2005 allow religious groups to send members overseas for study and to publish religious literature, among other things. For **Catholics**, this has led to many clergy being able to study in the U.S. and elsewhere. They are struggling with both the theory and practice of reconciling communities who have been divided for decades: the communities going to the state-sanctioned churches and the communities meeting in private houses.

The economic boom also is having unforeseen consequences for China's **Muslims**, in particular its female imams, who report difficulty recruiting new imam candidates, due to the paltry salaries. China is the only place in the world that has a tradition of independent female mosques, with their own ahong, or imams, to lead prayers and teach the Quran to women. But older female ahong report that the economic opportunities offered elsewhere mean that few women are drawn to the profession.

### Beijing Rethinking Its Stance?

On a wide range of religious issues, there's clearly pressure for change in China from the grassroots, and some observers have noticed a new responsiveness from the top down. *"This is not simply something from below, but it's being met from above in constructive ways as well,"* says **Tom Banchoff**, director of Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs.

His organization holds annual meetings with Chinese religious affairs officials. He says this new attitude is evidenced by *"the fact there are centers for religious studies arising at universities around China with public support, the fact that there's now a discourse about the positive role that religion can play in Chinese society."*

This does represent a change in attitude, but at the same time, many accounts are emerging from within China of leaders of larger unsanctioned religious groups being subject to official harassment and persecution, sometimes ending up in detention and even jail. China's Communist leaders are, it appears, still struggling with how to deal with this unruly religious boom, and their cautious steps forward sometimes end up being counterbalanced by reflexive crackdowns at a local level.

[Louisa Lim, NPR - National Public Radio]

# Social Issues

## Religious Official Taipei Visits

The head of Taiwan's Bishops' Conference and the director of China's State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) have agreed on mainland priests going for further studies in Taiwan. *"The Taiwan Church is very happy to assist in this regard,"* Archbishop **John Hung Shan-chuan**, president of Taiwan's Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference, told ucanews.com.

**Wang Zuo'an**, director of SARA in mainland China, met with the prelate in his office on Sept. 16. The Chinese official was leading a 15-member delegation on a weeklong visit to Taiwan. The hour-long meeting between Archbishop Hung of Taipei and Wang was the first since the latter assumed office in September 2009.

Archbishop Hung said he spoke to Wang about the development of the Catholic Church in Taiwan. Wang also praised the work of Church people in *Taiwan and other places* in training mainland China priests. Archbishop Hung said their discussion did not touch on Beijing-Vatican relations. The Taiwan-born prelate said he has never been to mainland China but is willing to visit the *Vatican-recognized clergy* there.

Wang also met with **Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-hsi**, retired bishop of Kaohsiung and his successor Archbishop **Peter Liu Cheng-chung** on Sept. 19 to discuss cross-strait religious matters.

[UCA News, Taipei]

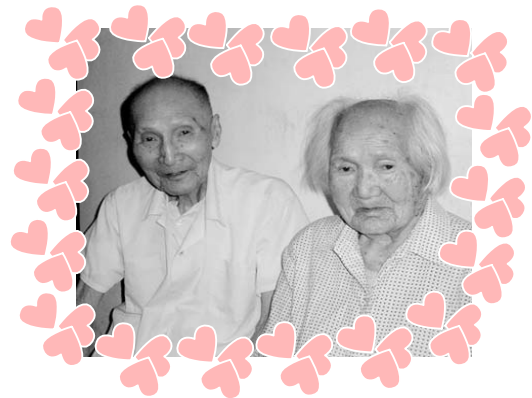
## Overseas learners

Approximately **40 million** students outside China are being taught Mandarin. At present there are 300 Confucius Institutes in 94 countries along with more than 300 Confucius Classrooms.

The symposium is being held in Shenyang, organized by The International Society for Chinese Language Teaching. More than 400 participants **from 38 countries** are attending the conference. Six famous Chinese teaching experts from North America, Europe, Africa, Chinese Mainland and Chinese Taiwan gave speeches on trends and developments of teaching Chinese.

Xu Jialu, president of The International Society for Chinese Language Teaching, said the symposium would enhance the work of international Chinese teaching. The **Confucius Institute** is a non-profit institution aimed at expanding the teaching of the Chinese language and promoting Chinese arts, music and philosophy worldwide. [Xinhua 8-19-2010]

## Secret of Marriage



While many of today's couples seem to be afflicted with the seven-year itch, **Zhang Mucheng, 101 and Xu Dongying, 102** are celebrating their **80th wedding anniversary**. Living in a century-old house in suburban Shanghai, the couple have seen it all - war, famine and hardship. They are often asked about the secret of their long marriage, *"We are from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), so we do things the old way,"* says Xu. *"Life is good, especially when you have a diligent wife,"* says Zhang.

The couple have five sons and three daughters. They lived a very simple, even frugal life, and helped raise their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. When asked what they understand "love" to mean, the couple say they don't know. *"We are not used to kissing and hugging,"* Xu says. *"We just feel good when we are together."*

With their children living with their own families, Xu and Zhang enjoy their time together. Zhang has lost some of his hearing, but Xu always repeats what's on TV for him. Xu has lost some of her eyesight, and Zhang is always happy to read her the newspaper. *"We have so many things to do together,"* Xu says. *"We don't have time for fights."*

[China Daily]

## Into the Next Decade

China's rise has been on everyone's lips in recent years. The growth of China's economy, the development of world-class cities, and the re-emergence of a vibrant intellectual class have been welcome developments, **good for China and good for the world**. There are many reasons why China's economy has taken off over the past three decades: the development of comparative advantage through the development of labor intensive industry, the pursuit of an export-oriented economy, the introduction of foreign direct investment (FDI), and the growth of the non-state economy, to name a few. But the most important factor was no doubt the **political stability** that has prevailed now for 30 years, an unprecedented length of time in China's modern history.

### Toward Democratic Governance

The economic reforms that China launched in 1978 unleashed more than three decades of unprecedented growth. Those reforms themselves arose out of political changes in China, but now economic reforms are creating conditions that are, in turn, leading to profound changes in politics and governance.

China's political reform is largely a matter of governance reform, which has been evolving significantly since the process of "reform and opening up" began in 1978. There are five roads on the map of **China's journey toward democratic governance**: from monistic governance towards pluralistic governance; from centralization towards decentralization; from the rule of man towards the rule of law; from regulatory government towards service-oriented government; and from Party democracy towards social democracy.

China's model of governance has its own characteristics. Through 30 years since the opening-up policies began, China is now well on the way to forming a unique governance model that is different from both traditional socialist models and Western capitalist models. The core value of governance is that **stability** is placed above everything else. The protection and preservation of social stability and order is an overriding objective for all public governance. For China this value is particularly important. Without **social and political stability**, there cannot be rapid economic development or secure living conditions for the people. Thus all Chinese leaders, from Deng Xiaoping until now, regard "**stability above all**" as a core value of governance, and use this as the principle standard in evaluating public governance. In the end, both the rule of law and the rule of man are important elements of governance.

[GlobalAsia, Summer 2010]

## In Memoriam



### Death of Abbot Timothy Kelly, OSB

The U.S. Catholic China Bureau is saddened to report to CCQ readers that Abbot Timothy Kelly, OSB a former Board member of the Board of Directors of the USCCB, died on 7 Oct, 2010.

These last two years, we had the privilege to work with Abbot Timothy in his project of Translation of Theological Textbooks for the Chinese seminarians. We have already received the first four applications for textbook translation, the first fruits of his work.

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# Education

## THE U.S.C.C.B: A NEW VISION

The inspirational closing speech of Fr. Mark DeStephano, SJ, the Chairman of the board of the USCCB

✦ **Fr. Michel Marcil, SJ** - our Executive Director has discussed something of our roots and the changes that have been taking place; China and our Bureau are, indeed, at a watershed moment.

✦ I am here to ask you to imagine the future; a future between two thriving branches of the Church: China and the U.S.

✦ I ask you to let your imaginations explore freely, to articulate a new vision of the role the U.S.C.C.B. might play in fostering a deep and abiding relationship between our two churches and our two peoples.

✦ This shared future can only be realized through broad cooperation, an **active sharing of faith experiences between Chinese and Americans**, a fostering of sympathetic listening, understanding, and compassion. Only then will our actions truly be meaningful.

✦ The new vision I propose to you today is that of a broader and deeper democratization of the USCCB; an appeal to shared visions, shared goals, and shared involvement.

✦ The time for simply raising funds in parishes and publishing a newsletter has passed.

✦ The New USCCB must become, in my estimation, a clearinghouse of information and activities related to the Church in China.

✦ Our work must be with efforts to make ourselves better known, such that we might take a greater role of leadership in the area of U.S. - China Church relations.

✦ We, **as a group**, must become better informed, better educated, and better advised about the Church in China.

✦ I propose the establishment of a council of scholars of the Catholic Church in China, to which we will invite the greatest scholarly minds available, to come together regularly to share their research and their insights.

✦ Our Board must become better prepared; I urge that we undertake a formal program of formation, reading, and discussion, to be conducted online; after a trial period, I propose that this formation program be extended to include anyone who wishes to become better



✦ We have already begun to connect with other great clearinghouses of information of the Church in China, such as the Holy Spirit Center in Hong Kong, the Verbiest Center in Belgium, the Ricci Institute at the University of San Francisco, and the Berkley Center at Georgetown University.

✦ I propose that we work our way towards becoming the major source of information to which the American bishops will turn when they want advice, training, or greater interaction with the Church in China.

✦ Our Bureau must have a greater Chinese presence – a goal that we have been working towards, but to which we must continue to strive.

✦ I propose that we do our best to bring more Chinese to Board meetings and conferences so that they can teach us about the reality of the Church in China today.

✦ I envision a USCCB that is truly a clearinghouse for all information about the Church in China.

✦ Through the inspiration and guidance of **Fr. Rob Carbonneau**, the Director of the Passionist Archives in Union City, NJ, we have taken a first step in linking archival sources to Asian Studies programs and the next generation of American Catholics; this initiative also links the Passionist Archives with my home institution, St. Peter's College (SPC).

✦ Our vision for the future is to establish a network of the archives of all those American dioceses and religious orders that engaged in activities in China, especially in the early twentieth century.

✦ The site of the Passionist archives in Union city, NJ, a wonderful and spacious building, may also serve as an excellent new location for the operations of the USCCB.





✦ I am also pleased to announce that we have begun discussions with SPC, which has expressed an interest in housing the USCCB on its campus.

✦ Should this move occur, the USCCB would become involved in academic life, by working closely with the Asian Studies program and with academic departments to offer lectures, sponsor speakers, train students in archival work, and host cultural events that will make Chinese culture and the Church in China come alive.

✦ I propose that the Bureau fully exploit the academic aspect of its mission to inform American Catholics about the Church in China.

✦ One necessary step in the vision is to bond ever more closely with Chinese Catholic Communities here in the U.S., and actively seeking new ways to get them actively involved in our work.

✦ I urge that we reach out more actively to Chinese priests and nuns, especially through associations to which they already belong.

✦ We must become a household word to every Chinese Catholic community in the country.

✦ As we face a bright future, we must also rejoice in our past. I will urge our Board to authorize the publication of various monographs, papers, and, perhaps, books that chronicle the birth and growth of the USCCB over the last two decades in preparation to the USCCB 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

✦ I urge an expansion of our search for new grant monies so as to continue our book translation project and foster other projects that bring direct aid to the people of and in China.

✦ We must expand our Missionary Cooperation Project by involving more speakers, more dioceses, and more parish pastors who are willing to offer their help.

✦ Perhaps through our cooperation with **George Cheng's** Inter-Friendship House and with, Catholic academic institutions such as SPC, we should explore more opportunities to bring Chinese scholars of the Church in China to do research here in the U.S.

✦ Likewise, we must make greater efforts to prepare Catholic lay volunteers to do work in China.

✦ To American news and information media, the USCCB must become the face and the voice of the Catholic Church in China.

✦ We must write more timely book reviews, articles, and opinion-papers that keep the plight of the Church in China in the forefront of the American Catholic consciousness.

✦ We gladly accept the challenge of engaging with religious policy makers from the P.R.C., with scholars for Chinese Institutes, and with officials of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. We hope for contributions to the forging of a new, more tolerant policy and practice of openness to Roman Catholicism in China.

✦ In January we will honor **Roger Cardinal Mahoney** with the Bureau's Ricci Award, in recognition of the Cardinal's support of the USCCB since its inception, and his tireless work for the good of the People and the Church of China.

✦ In short, we must implement every aspect of the strategic plan developed by the Board one year ago through the inspiration and guidance of past chairwoman **Dr. Regina Wolfe**.

✦ This is the USCCB I imagine, that I long for: democratic, participatory, welcoming, prepared, proactive, living, and prayerful.

[Rev. Mark DeStephano, SJ, USCCB Board Chair]

# Reading Notes

- **Chinese Christians in America: Conversion, Assimilation, and Adhesive Identities** Fenggang Yang. *University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-271-01917-4. 238 pages, including appendix, notes, bibliography, index.*



## Review by Dr. G. Wright Doyle :

Though this book came out more than ten years ago, it remains relevant today. That is why I dare to write such a tardy review. Don't let the subtitle put you off. It's added to declare Yang's thesis, which is that "the Chinese Christian Church [in America] helps its members to construct an evangelical Protestant identity, a conservative American identity, and a cosmopolitan Chinese identity."

Clearly written, tightly organized, well-documented, this volume helps us understand the multiple roles played by the Chinese Church in America in the lives of its members. Along the way, we learn a great deal about the aspirations, struggles, and profound transformation of Chinese who become committed evangelical Christians in their adopted land.

Though most of his research and information deal with one congregation in suburban Washington, D.C., Yang draws upon wider sources to make significant generalizations that apply to immigrants from "Greater China" in other parts of the United States. It thus constitutes required reading for those who would understand the growing population of Chinese Christians.

## Matteo Ricci Award



United States Catholic China Bureau

## Save the Date

An evening honoring

His Eminence Roger

Cardinal Mahony

**Wednesday, January 26, 2011**

*A Chinese banquet in Los Angeles*

Contact us by phone (973) 763-1131 or  
e-mail [dlvejy@verizon.net](mailto:dlvejy@verizon.net)



US Catholic China Bureau's

## Religious Study Tour to China

October 10-20, 2011

*Visit places of cultural and  
religious significance*

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*For more details  
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Estimated Costs: \$3,000 (dbl/occ)  
All inclusive

\$300 deposit due with registration