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## Shanghai Diocese Bishop Ma's Bravery

Chinese Catholics worldwide rejoiced as a brave man in Shanghai diocese stood up for the principles of his faith. **Auxiliary Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin** proclaimed his allegiance to the Universal Church publicly during his Vatican-approved ordination on July 7. With unprecedented bravery and wisdom, the Shanghai diocese handled the ordination of Bishop Ma in a way that surprised all close observers of the China Church.

Episcopal ordinations in the "open" or government-sanctioned Church community have been abject failures. Ordainers of a legitimate bishop candidate were often forced to concelebrate with illicit bishops. In the last three illicit ordinations, all participating bishops were Vatican-approved. Those bishops involved often used the excuse that **they were "pressured" to take part.**

The ordination of Bishop Ma was originally a source of joy to the Shanghai diocese as it prepared to welcome its new pastor. But when a vice president of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China, himself an illicitly ordained bishop, was scheduled to take part in the ceremony, joy turned to sorrow.

When the diocese's protests were ignored, it adopted a series of strategies to protect the integrity of Church law and the dignity of the Catholic community. **First**, 90 percent of the diocese's priests opted not to attend the ordination. **Second**, seminarians that attended as choir members and altar servers donned purple albs, the color representing grief. **Then** as the bishops and priests prepared to enter the cathedral, a layperson stepped boldly forward to denounce the illicit bishop, causing a stir at the end of the procession.

Inside the cathedral, the co-ordaining bishops were seated far away from the main celebrant, Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian. At the key moment when all bishops bless the new bishop by laying hands on his head, after Bishop Jin and two other Vatican-approved laid their hands on him, Bishop Ma unexpectedly stood up and hugged the three remaining bishops, thereby avoiding the participation of the illicit Bishop in the



*Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin of Shanghai Diocese*

laying on of hands.

As he addressed the congregation after his ordination, Bishop Ma said he had been ordained as auxiliary bishop – the designation given him by the Vatican – and not coadjutor bishop, as the government had intended. **Loud applause erupted from the congregation after Bishop Ma declared that he would quit the government-sanctioned Catholic Patriotic Association.**

The consequences were swift in arriving. Shortly after the ordination ceremony concluded, Bishop Ma was taken away and has since been prohibited from assuming his duties as auxiliary bishop. But he has inspired the China Church and reminded its members that they must **put their faith ahead of their lives and their freedom.**

Bishop Ma's courage struck at the heart of illicit ordinations. In the future when illicit candidates bow their heads to the government, they will do so under greater pressure and at the risk of losing the support of their flock. Thank you, Shanghai diocese. The China Church has learned from your courage. Remain strong. **By fasting and prayer, we will be with you for upcoming challenges.** We will accompany you during the tough times ahead and welcome any ray of hope.

(\* Fr Zhong Guan is the penname of a priest in China)  
[UCA News]

# Church News

## China-Vatican Dialogue

Hong Kong's bishop, Cardinal John Tong Hon, expressing support for Shanghai's detained Bishop Ma Daqin, has urged Beijing and the Vatican to dialogue to resolve this dramatic situation.

Cardinal Tong emphasized that the ordination of a bishop is neither a political nor an economic matter and should not be treated as such. He said the Chinese government needs to respect human rights and religion for the sake of justice, human dignity and the welfare of the people and emphasized that this is the only way of achieving social harmony and a good international image. "I appreciated Bishop Ma's courage," Tong stated. The cardinal is a member of the **Commission for the Church in China set up by Benedict XVI in 2007**. He revealed that Ma's ordination had already produced some good fruit. It has brought the faithful of the "official" and "unregistered" Catholic communities closer together. This is "positive" for the Church in China, he stated.

The Hong Kong cardinal is an expert on the Church in China. **Since 1980 he has been head of the Holy Spirit Study Center** – the leading Catholic study centre on the Church in China. "We have heard that in Chinese ordinations some participating bishops were rewarded with money and other goods. It seems to me that this amounts to cases of corruption."

In recent days, however, the Chinese authorities have been putting pressure on the Church in Shanghai. Government officials there have interrogated seven priests and two nuns. "They each face long interrogations, up to eight hours a day. They cannot eat and rest well. We worry about their mental and physical health."

Catholics in Shanghai are rallying around the priests and Bishop Ma in various ways. Across mainland China, however, Catholics cannot rally for Bishop Ma's release. The authorities there have compelled Catholic webmasters to remove all reference to him from their websites. But **they cannot stop Catholics from praying** for the bishop who has given new hope to the Church in China.

[UCA News]

## Government Interfered Ordinations

The ordinations of bishops in China have for over half a century been victim to serious government interference and since late 2010, the window of religious freedom for the Church is closing.

An episcopal ordination is primarily a religious matter and such intervention by the Chinese government in the internal affairs of a religious body is unwarranted. A look at **Taiwan, Macau and Hong Kong**, shows that the ordination of a bishop is a celebration in which the whole community takes part. However, in China, churches are heavily guarded; religious personnel are under threat; the freedom of the bishop candidate and participating clergy is restricted and their movements are monitored.

Jesus Christ gave St. Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven". The key is a symbol of the authority to manage the Church. The Pope gives approval to all bishops, as it involves the authority of Church magisterium and communion of all the faithful. At episcopal ordinations the laying on of hands is a unique rite of authorisation derived from Christ and passed on from the apostles. Today, in the official Church community in China, both legitimate and illegitimate bishops mingle, thus obscuring what is valid and invalid in the Church.

Since the Pope's letter to the Church in China of 2007, episcopal ordinations in Xiamen, Yibin, Nanchong, Hunan and Shanghai **have all been arranged with one illegitimate bishop attending** and in some cases even laying on hands. The illicit ordinations in Chengde, Shantou, Leshan and Harbin purposely involved illegitimate bishops on the ordination team, again obscuring what is legitimate and illegitimate.

This makes the action of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin, an approved bishop in Shanghai, in preventing an illegitimate bishop from laying hands on him at his ordination extremely special. Bishop Ma also declared it was inconvenient for him to hold a position in the government Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, challenging government interference in Church matters.



Those who have taken part in illicit ordinations need to reflect on how hard they tried to resist, as many people have suffered because of their actions. They have created rifts and damaged the communion and unity among Catholics. **The unity of the priests and the faithful can protect bishops** from being forced to do things against their will, as happened in June 2011.

The Holy See has announced that the illegitimate bishops are **banned from administering the sacraments and managing their dioceses**; but this also leaves local people in difficult situations, as they have to live with these irregular situations. The letter of appointment by the Pope must be read at an ordination of a bishop, but unfortunately, in the mainland this is often not done and one from the bishops' conference of China takes its place. People say, "We can't do anything. This is mainland China."

[Hong Kong Sunday Examiner]



## Chinese Official Hits Back at Vatican

A senior official at China's government-sanctioned Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) has rebuffed Vatican claims that the Communist regime does not recognize the distinction between Church and State. In response, he has accused the Vatican of "playing politics" and overlooking the faith life of Chinese Catholics.

Now in his 70s, Lu Guocun headed the CPA in Guangdong province, served as national vice-president and is now honorary president of the provincial CPA. Lu said that Bishop Ma's resignation was his personal decision. "If he wants to do a show, he can do it," he added, suggesting that it was **the glare of publicity surrounding Bishop Ma's announcement** that irked the Chinese authorities.

Referring to the recent controversies over bishop appointments and the participation of illicit bishops in Vatican-sanctioned episcopal ordinations, Lu said that it is the Holy See that is responsible for the division of the China Church, when it threatened to excommunicate self-elected and ordained bishops, despite mediation assisted by the then Chinese premier Zhou Enlai. In his opinion, "The Vatican is playing more politics than China," he said.

However, Lu stressed his conviction that "the Pope is never against the Chinese people or the Communist government" but he is misled by "his assistants and aides" who "have different ideas, don't like the Communist party and are ready to do anything against it."

He added that if the Vatican were to be willing to talk seriously with China, **an agreed "mechanism" for the selection of bishops, like the one currently in place in Vietnam, could be found.** Vietnam recently opened diplomatic relations with the Vatican and in recent years both sides have partnered a system that allows the appointment of bishops from an agreed list of candidates.

Lu went on to assert that the CPA's original role in the 50s – acting as a bridge between the Church and the Communist leaders – is still valid in today's much-changed China. He cited the State resources that the CPA is capable of funneling towards the Church, for activities such as church restorations and pastoral activities. "The CPA is a social organization, and **for the government to deal with a social organization is simpler than with a religion,**" he said.

It is also thanks to the CPA, he added, that the Church has been able to "grow" and "change the mind of the people." But he admitted that despite an "improvement" in the relation of Catholics with the government, there hasn't been a "big success" in the field of evangelization. The Church still has an "image" problem among the Chinese people, being largely perceived as a "foreign religion" serving "colonial powers," he explained.

For Lu, "the Vatican rejected the CPA first" but it needs to **put down its bias and continue to talk** if it wants to help the growth of the Church in China. "The CPA has always been working for the good of the Church, helping the government to improve its management on religions. We don't want to be blamed by the people."

[UCA News]



A Catholic girl prays during an Mass in Hebei, China

## Shanghai Seminaries Cannot Re-open

In the most recent sign of the serious difficulties facing the Catholic Church in Shanghai, Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, head of the 'open' Church community in this megalopolis of 23 million people, **notified the two seminaries in the diocese that they cannot reopen for classes "until further notice"**.

The seminaries were due to open, after the summer holidays. Bishop Jin, 96, attributed the delay in opening the academic year at Sheshan major seminary and at Tailaiqiao Minor Seminary to "the current situation", without giving any further explanation.

Both seminaries are recognized by the government, and are part of the 'open' Church community. Sheshan is a regional seminary. It opened in 1982, and accepts candidates for the priesthood from the Shanghai municipality and from the five nearby provinces that make up the central-eastern region of China – Anhui, Fujian, Jiangsu, Jiangxi and Zhejiang. In 1992 it had 120 students for the priesthood, but today it has only **46 seminarians** – a historic low, reflecting a decline in vocations in this region.

Bishop Jin's announcement that the opening has been postponed took everyone in the Church by surprise. "The notice was brief but it shocked us," a priest said. Another Church source told the news agency that Church leaders in areas around Shanghai were planning to raise objections at the decision with the provincial authorities. "Sheshan is a regional seminary. It should not be embroiled in the ordination incident," a third Church source told the news agency.

Everyone in the diocese, however, priests and faithful alike, understood that Bishop Jin's mention of "**the current situation**" was a direct reference to the dramatic and tense situation created in the diocese, between the Catholic Church there and the government authorities in Shanghai and Beijing following the announcement by Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin that he was resigning from his posts in the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA).

The CCPA was set up by the Communist government in the late 1950s to control the Catholic Church in mainland China. Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2007 Letter to the Catholics in China declared that this body was "incompatible" with Church doctrine.

Bishop Ma's statement greatly upset the government authorities not only in Shanghai but also in Beijing. They saw it as the most serious challenge, and feared he had set a precedent that others could follow. He was later taken to the seminary in Sheshan, and has been confined there ever since. He is deprived of freedom of movement and freedom of speech.

After confining him at Sheshan, the CCPA and Bishops Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC) opened an investigation into the alleged breaking of official regulations at his ordination ceremony. They interviewed as many as 100 priests and nuns in the Shanghai diocese, and several bishops.

The courageous bishop remains confined in the seminary, where he spends his time praying, reading and reflecting in solitude. Right now, the seminary is a deserted place, surrounded by bamboo and other trees, at the foot of the famous Marian Shrine of Our Lady Help of Christians at Sheshan on the outskirts of Shanghai.

Clearly the postponement of the seminaries' opening is directly linked to the fact that Bishop Ma is being confined at Sheshan seminary. It seems that the government authorities need more time to resolve his case without losing face. [Vatican Insider]

## 80 New Seminarians in Formation

**Nine Chinese continental Major Seminaries** opened the new school year in the month of September, as every year, except that of the Diocese of Shanghai, the Seminary of She Shan. According to information, there are **80 new seminarians** (one more than last year) who will begin the long journey of vocational formation that will last seven years. As always, the Seminary of **He Bei** counts the highest number of entries: 26 new seminarians this year. In addition, there are 13 new seminarians for the **National Seminary** and **Shen Yang**; 12 for **Ji Lin** and **Shaan Xi**; 2 for **Beijing** and **Si Chuan**. The Seminaries of **San Xi** and **Zhong Nan** have no new seminarians for this year. In total there are now **486 seminarians** preparing for priesthood in 9 seminaries. In June 52 seminarians who graduated completed their period of formation: 20 belonging to the seminar of He Bei, 16 to that of Shan Xi, 11 to the National and Shaan Xi; 5 in Ji Lin.

[Agenzia Fides]





# Social Issues

## President Hu Jintao's Unity Call



Chinese President Hu Jintao has called for unity in the Communist Party in the face of "unprecedented challenges", in a speech he gave this year. State-run newspapers carried front-page coverage of Mr Hu's speech - an indication of its importance. Mr Hu emphasised to top officials that **the current path of economic development would continue**. China is set to unveil new leaders at a party congress due **November 8**. In his speech to provincial officials and ministers in Beijing Mr Hu stressed the need for political unity.

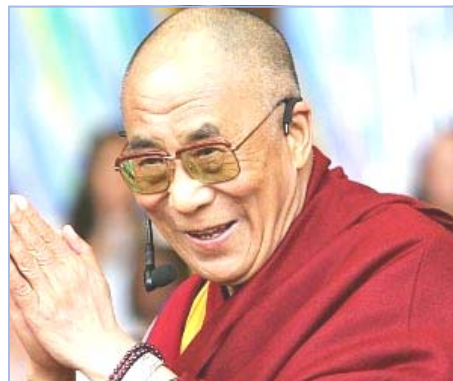
State media reports of the speech made no mention of scandal-hit politician Bo Xilai, the former party leader in Chongqing who was listed to become one of China's top leaders before he became embroiled in a scandal involving the death of a British businessman. The scandal surrounding Mr Bo, seen as the biggest political shake-up in China in years, made headlines and exposed divisions in the Communist Party leadership.

"We confront unprecedented opportunities and also confront unprecedented challenges to the domestic and overseas situation. We must unwaveringly take the correct course pioneered by the party and the people over a long period, and neither flinch in the face of any dangers nor be distracted by any interference." Mr Hu also said in his speech that economic growth had shown that the current path was the right one, saying: "**Only reform and opening up can develop China**". We must not be afraid of any risks, and not be confused by any distractions."

He also urged the party to "unite around the CPC [Communist Party of China] Central Committee and be well prepared for the congress," Xinhua reported. China is due to replace its leaders in a shift that

happens once every decade, marking the move from one generation of Communist Party leaders to the next.

[BBC News]



## Dalai Lama: Marxism is Finished

The Communist economic system "is based on ideas that are barely 200 years old and whose influence is declining, whilst Buddhism and other religions have thousands of years and continue to attract the world's attention," the Dalai Lama told a group of Vietnamese executives. "Even if the world Marx imagined has some points that can be shared, **the way regimes control human life and thought is unacceptable**," he told his audience, made up mostly of liberal managers and economists from Vietnam.

The group of 102 delegates represent Vietnam's Tibetan Buddhists. About half are from the North and half from the South. They are members of the Vietnamese CEO's Club, a liberal group tolerated by the regime. Tibet's spiritual leader met them in Dharamsala where Tibetan exiles are holding a big summit to decide the approach to take vis-à-vis the wave of self-immolations that has swept their homeland.

[AsiaNews]

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## The Chinese Communist Party Must Guarantee Religious Freedom to Save Itself

*Some rethinking about the state, the party and freedom is needed in light of the crisis of Marxism, the loss of faith in the party, and the corruption of its members. The state must not favor any religion, but allow individuals to choose freely their faith. Here is the fourth installment of an analysis by Liu Peng, of the Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.*

### Solution: faith innovation

It is a fact that our minds cannot remain in a vacuum. **When the official ideology ceases to be the voluntary faith for the majority of the population**, the people will seek substitutes according to their own needs. Religion is becoming more and more popular in China. The reasons are complex; however the impotence and weakness of the official belief system, the fact that "Party members do not believe in the Party," and the fact that many Party members have lost their political faith in Marxism are certainly important considerations.

Aside from the growing popularity of traditional religions, newer religions and a wide range of spiritual belief systems are also gaining currency. The reasons for **this growing popularity of religion** are complex and mostly internal. They cannot be explained away using simple slogans such as "western religious power penetration," or "cultural and educational backwardness," or "the cheater meets the fool." How to treat religion and how to realize faith innovation are currently pressing tasks for the self-preservation of the Chinese Communist Party.

In order to solve the problem of belief in China today, one should not divorce himself from the current realities and context and only look back to Confucianism and feudal rites or Maoism. It is true that in the past, these belief systems effectively solved the issue of faith; however, they are not suitable for the 21st century, with its globalization and explosion of information. In order to solve the problem today, we must be innovative in matters of faith while drawing on historical traditions.

The so-called traditions are the soft power of China. The time-honoured Chinese culture is the foundation on which China has built its belief systems. Its power and influence have spread over both time and space and have surpassed any political system or doctrine. **Faith innovation is the opening up of a new road with new thoughts and new methods to meet the practical needs of a new-era faith.** What is the practical need then? It is finding the belief system for the individuals and the nation. This is a great challenge.

Facing the challenge means facing up to reality. The top priority of the Chinese Communist Party is to remain at the helm of state. Preserving Marxism and holding onto power are not necessarily related to leading the Chinese nation to advance. The harsh reality is that **Chinese people accept the leadership of the Communist Party, but the majority does not sincerely believe in it and will not voluntarily make it their spiritual pillar.**

As the party holding power, the objective of the Chinese Communist Party should not be to maintain a certain doctrine by taking advantage of its power, but to align the power with any idea that represents the will of the people, since ideology is supposed to serve political power, not the other way around. **When one ideology ceases to be effective, it must be replaced with a new substitute.** If the old ideology is retained, despite its negative effects, the only result will be superficial loyalty in form. This, however, brings substantial damage to the Party's interests.

Therefore, the Communist Party must propose a brand new and widely acknowledged common understanding for social development. **This common understanding must represent the public will and the current circumstances.** Only in this way can it become the core value of contemporary China as well as the shared belief system of the Chinese in the next era. This belief system can be neither old-style Marxism nor a particular religion because the belief of the Party differs from religion and does not represent any religion. In terms of the relationship between the state and religion, it is impossible for China to adopt a system of Unification of Church and State or to set up a state religion.

In such a context, the Chinese Communist Party needs to separate political faith from religious belief and separate the requirement of the Party members from those of the common public. The objective of the Party should be how to remain at the helm rather than how to guard a philosophical doctrine. **Marxism should be treated as the Party ideology,** moving from facing the whole society to facing the Party itself.

Meanwhile the Party should put forward a common understanding which is rooted in Chinese cultural tradition and accepted by the whole society and nation as the common belief for the Chinese nation. It would be neither Marxism nor a religion; therefore, Marxism should not be required as a compulsory belief for the public. In short, the situation the Party needs to work towards is that of **the Party having its own belief, the multi-ethnic nation having a common understanding (faith), and every individual enjoying his own faith.** The three kinds of faith differ in level, focus, and scale. They overlap, but do not contradict each other.

The so-called national faith refers to the national psychology and wishes of the current era. It represents the common will and ideal shared by all. Today, what meets the demands of the public can be summed up in the slogan "harmonious as one," which is an expression of the idea "nature and man in one." This rich and tolerant worldview is rooted in traditional Chinese culture and extends the concept of "harmonious society" beyond the political arena.

Chinese society, which is in a state of transition, is lacking in harmony so it is proper and wise to adopt "harmonious as one" as the slogan for our time. This will help maintain stability in China in the coming years and conforms to the wishes of people from all of Chinese ethnic groups. Since peace and harmony are common themes worldwide, the Communist Party should try to make "**harmonious as one**" a standard for the whole world.

Without a belief system that is unanimously acknowledged as the standard, the national common good cannot be realized, and the Achilles' heel of China's rise will not be solved. Practically speaking, upholding the slogan of "harmonious as one" will gain overseas support, since whoever opposes it will be opposing the will of the general public. If we truly adopt the slogan of "harmonious as one," and strive for harmony between each other, between man and nature, man and the environment, then both the micro - and macro- situations in China will greatly improve.

Once a common understanding and national faith have been achieved, the Chinese Communist Party needs to transform ideologically **from a revolutionary party to a ruling party.** Its key missions need to be improving government administration, cadre management, and executive capacity. With regards to the matter of individual faith, the Party should acknowledge the fact that it is harmful that the majority are not bound by religious faith or a moral standard.



The reason why graft and official corruption has become the serious problem that it is today is because **fake beliefs** have drowned out pious faiths, **party loyalty** has transmuted into dependence on those in power and the naked pursuit of power and profits.

If the Chinese Communist Party were to loosen its control over the area of personal belief and treat religion as a personal matter, then the Party would be able to reconcile the various religions and develop a harmonious society. Accordingly, the Party would gain the approval and appreciation from domestic and international religious followers. Supported by a faith pillar, especially a religious one, a person can improve his moral character.

The purpose of the above discussion is not to encourage the establishment of new religions, but to bring innovation to the matter of belief at different levels. **For the state**, belief means the national common understanding, plus Chinese culture; **for the Party**, it is Marxism plus Chinese culture; **for the individual**, it is freedom of belief plus Chinese culture. The state, party, and the individual all have their beliefs, each with a different emphasis but all rooted in Chinese culture.

If the above goals can be achieved, then the general quality and power of the Party will definitely increase. In addition, the common understanding of a national faith will be established, individuals will have the freedom to choose their spiritual faith products, and the imbalance between the spiritual development and material development will be greatly eased.

The Chinese nation is a great nation. As long as the Chinese do not bury their heads in the sand, and as long as Chinese society has a common understanding shared by the majority, and the Chinese have valid faiths and spiritual pillars freely chosen, the problems of belief will be solved and the dream for China's "rise" to "power" will come true.

[AsiaNews]

# Reading Notes



- **Mission to China: Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Encounter with the East.**  
Mary Laven. Faber & Faber. 2012. 304 pp.

Mary Laven lectures in History at the University of Cambridge, and is a Fellow of Jesus College. In this book, Mary tells the extraordinary story of the first Jesuit mission to China. Confronting enormous challenges, the Italian priest Matteo Ricci gained permission to settle in the Forbidden City. Living among eunuchs and mandarins, wearing the clothes of Confucian scholars, Ricci and his associates strove to master the language and culture of their hosts. In "*Mission to China*" Mary Laven brings this remote world vividly to life.

- **The Catholic Church in China: 1978 to the Present**  
Cindy Yik-yi CHU. Palgrave Macmillan (October 16, 2012). 188pp.

This book traces the history of the Catholic Church in China since the country opened up to the world in December 1978. It comprehensively studies the Chinese Catholic Church on various levels, including an analysis of Sino-Vatican relations, the control over the Catholic Church by the Beijing government, the supervision of local Church activities, and the consecration of government-approved bishops, the formation of priests, and the everyday lives of Chinese Catholics.

- **Christianity in Contemporary China: Socio-cultural perspectives (Routledge Studies in Asian Rel)**  
Editor: Francis Khék Gee Lim. Routledge; 1 edition (September 24, 2012). 280pp.

Francis Khék Gee Lim teaches in the Division of Sociology at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. This book applies socio-cultural methods in the study of contemporary Christianity. Contributions by top scholars in the field are structured in the following sections: Enchantment, Nation and History, Civil Society, and Negotiating Boundaries.



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