



United States Catholic China Bureau

China Church Quarterly

Issue No.84 Fall 2010

COMMUNIQUE ON EPISCOPAL ORDINATION IN CHENGDE, CHINA

The Holy See Press Office released the following English-language communique concerning an episcopal ordination at Chengde in the province of Hebei, Mainland China: "With regard to the episcopal ordination of Fr. Joseph Guo Jincal, which took place Saturday 20 November, information has been gathered about what happened and it is now possible to state clearly the following.

(1) The Holy Father received the news with deep regret, because the abovementioned episcopal ordination was conferred **without the apostolic mandate** and, therefore, constitutes a painful wound upon ecclesial communion and a grave violation of Catholic discipline.

(2) It is known that, in recent days, various bishops were subjected to pressures and restrictions on their freedom of movement, with the aim of forcing them to participate and confer the episcopal ordination. Such constraints, carried out by Chinese government and security authorities, constitute a grave violation of freedom of religion and conscience. The Holy See intends to carry out a detailed evaluation of what has happened, including consideration of the aspect of validity and the canonical position of the bishops involved.

(3) In any case, this has painful repercussions, in the first case, for Fr. Joseph Guo Jincal who, because of this episcopal ordination, finds himself in a most serious canonical condition before the Church in China and the universal Church, exposing himself also to the severe sanctions envisaged, in particular, by canon 1382 of the Code of Canon Law.

(4) This ordination not only does not **contribute to the good of the Catholics of Chengde**, but places them in a very delicate and difficult condition, also from the canonical point of view, and humiliates them, because the Chinese civil authorities wish to impose on them a pastor who is not in full communion, either with the Holy Father or with the other bishops throughout the world.



(5) Several times, during this current year, the Holy See has communicated clearly to the Chinese authorities its opposition to the episcopal ordination of Fr. Joseph Guo Jincal. In spite of this, the said authorities decided to proceed unilaterally, to the detriment of the atmosphere of respect that had been created with great effort with the Holy See and with the Catholic Church through the recent episcopal ordinations. **This claim to place themselves above the bishops and to guide the life of the ecclesial community** does not correspond to Catholic doctrine; it offends the Holy Father, the Church in China and the universal Church, and further complicates the present pastoral difficulties.

(6) Pope Benedict XVI, in the pastoral Letter of 2007, expressed the Holy See's willingness to engage in a respectful and constructive dialogue with the authorities of the People's Republic of China, with the aim of overcoming the difficulties and normalizing relations. In reaffirming this willingness, the Holy See notes with regret that the authorities allow the leadership of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, under the influence of Mr. Liu Bainian, to adopt attitudes that gravely damage the Catholic Church and hamper the aforesaid dialogue.

(7) The Catholics of the entire world are following with particular attention the troubled journey of the Church in China: the spiritual solidarity with which they accompany the vicissitudes of their Chinese brothers and sisters becomes a fervent prayer to the Lord of history, so that He may be close to them, increase their hope and fortitude, and give them consolation in moments of trial."

[Vatican City 11/24/2010]

Church News

A TURN FOR THE WORSE IN 2010

The first ten months of 2010 went well. Every year some unofficial Church personnel are being detained, but the pressure from the authorities was not unusually strong until the end of 2010. Two elderly bishops passed away during the year, but since most of the old bishops have gone to their rest, there probably will not be many funerals in 2011. Three bishops had a change of status without ordination: they all had been clandestinely ordained unofficial bishops and they were now officially installed as bishops of their diocese. In one instance, the participation of illicitly ordained Bishop Ma Yingling at the installation caused worries and discontent among the priests of that diocese. In another diocese, because of the local circumstances, the official installation of the formerly unofficial bishop caused much confusion and speculation over the bishop's role as well as that of the Holy See.

In 2010, ten bishops were ordained with the approval of both the Holy See and the Chinese Government. All were in their forties, except one aged 75. Yet, in November, one bishop was ordained under extreme pressure in Chengde. This happened in the hills of north-east Hebei, an old summer resort of the Manchu nobility. With the redrawing of the provincial borders, counties had been cut off and were not part of any diocese. **The government appointed 42-year-old Fr. Guo Jincal as the first bishop of Chengde.** After much arm twisting of the ordaining bishops, and in spite of the Vatican objections, he was ordained bishop on November 20.

According to all reports, there was nothing subtle about the way the consecrating bishops were taken from their home dioceses, escorted to Chengde, and forced into the sanctuary for the Mass and ordination. For the first time the Holy See mentioned the need to investigate whether the ordination was valid, as in whether Fr. Guo Jincal is now a bishop in Apostolic Succession or the ceremony was **null and void due to coercion**. If null, he needs to be ordained bishop again under free circumstances for the Holy See and many local Catholics to consider him a bishop. The government is hardly likely to permit a second ordination ceremony. With or without Vatican approval, several more bishops are likely to be ordained in 2011.

The long awaited 8th National Assembly of Catholic Representatives met in Beijing from December 7 to 9. This was the first one in six years. There were over 300 names on the invitation list, including 64 out of the 100 some official bishops who attended and **excluding all the bishops of the unofficial Church communities.**

Due to advanced age, hospitalization, and, in the case of at least one bishop who ran away and became the object of a police hunt, only 45 bishops were seen on the opening day. Some arrived late, while others will have to explain why they did not come. Neither the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) nor the Public Security Bureau will accept "the Pope did not want me to attend", as a valid excuse.

Well in advance of the National Assembly, the Holy See Commission on China met at the Vatican March 22-24. It issued a communiqué stating that no bishop in China may participate in a meeting which would harm communion with the Holy Father, or concelebrate with illicitly ordained bishops. That message circulated in China. At the same time, money channeled through the CCPA was benefitting an increasing number of dioceses, seminaries, and parishes. Obviously there is a high financial price to pay for not cooperating with the government.

As expected, the National Assembly of Catholic Representatives first ratified almost unanimously the choice of Bishop Fang Xingyao of Shandong, -who has a mandate from the Holy See- as the new president of the CCPA. Then they ratified the choice of the officially recognized Bishop Ma Yinglin, as the new president of the Bishops Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC).

REACTION AND COUNTERACTION

On December 1, after the Episcopal ordination in Chengde and before the 8th National Assembly, Pope Benedict XVI asked Catholics worldwide *to pray* for the Church and especially for the bishops in China, in these "particularly difficult moments".



On December 17, the Holy See issued a strong communiqué blaming the Chinese authorities for **interfering in the internal affairs of the Catholic Church** and violating the consciences of bishops through coercion.

Various spokespersons for the Chinese government lost no time in blaming the Vatican for **interfering in China's internal affairs** and for misrepresenting the facts about religious freedom in China.

This volley of charges and countercharges could easily continue in 2011, or both sides could tacitly agree to a lull in the verbal artillery. If there is a light at the end of the tunnel of the China-Holy See relations, it is currently behind thick drapes. Readers are encouraged to pray, fast and perhaps even weep over the incidents of late 2010.

[HSSC, *China Bridge*, 16-01-11]

COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE HOLY SEE

1. With profound sorrow, the Holy See laments the fact that from 7 to 9 December 2010 there was held in Beijing the Eighth Assembly of Chinese Catholic Representatives. This was **imposed** on numerous Bishops, priests, religious and lay faithful. The manner in which it was convoked and its unfolding manifest a **repressive attitude** with regard to the exercise of religious liberty, which it was hoped had been consigned to the past in present-day China. The persistent desire to control the most intimate area of citizens' lives, namely their conscience, and to interfere in the internal life of the Catholic Church does no credit to China. On the contrary, it seems to be **a sign of fear and weakness** rather than of strength; of intransigent intolerance rather than of openness to freedom and to effective respect both of human dignity and of a correct distinction between the civil and religious spheres.

2. On several occasions the Holy See had let it be known, first and foremost to the Bishops, but also to all the faithful, and publicly, that they should not take part in the event. Each one of those who were present knows to what extent he or she is responsible before God and the Church. The Bishops in particular and the priests will also have to face the expectations of their respective communities, who look to their own Pastor and have a right to receive from him sure guidance in the faith and in the moral life.

3. It is known, moreover, that many Bishops and priests were forced to take part in the Assembly. The Holy See condemns this grave violation of their human rights, particularly their freedom of religion and of conscience. Moreover, the Holy See expresses its deepest esteem for those who, in different ways, have borne witness to their faith with courage **and it invites the others to pray, to do penance and, through their works, to reaffirm their own will to follow Christ with love, in full communion with the universal Church.**

4. Addressing those whose hearts are full of dismay and profound suffering, those who are wondering how it is possible that their own Bishop or their own priests should have taken part in the Assembly, the Holy See asks them to remain steadfast and patient in the faith; it invites them to take account of the pressures experienced by many of their Pastors and to pray for them; it exhorts them to continue courageously supporting them in the face of the unjust impositions that they encounter in the exercise of their ministry.

5. During the Assembly, among other things, the leaders of the **so-called** Episcopal Conference and of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association were appointed. Concerning these **two entities**, and concerning the Assembly itself, the words written by Pope Benedict XVI in his 2007 Letter to the Church in China continue to apply .

In particular, the present College of Catholic Bishops of China cannot be recognized as an Episcopal Conference by the Apostolic See: the "clandestine" Bishops, those not recognized by the Government but in communion with the Pope, are not part of it; it includes Bishops who are still illegitimate, and it is governed by statutes that contain elements incompatible with Catholic doctrine. It is deeply deplorable that an illegitimate Bishop has been appointed as its President.

Furthermore, regarding the declared purpose to implement the principles of **independence and autonomy, self-management and democratic administration** of the Church, it should be remembered that this is incompatible with Catholic doctrine, which from the time of the ancient Creeds professes the Church to be "one, holy, catholic and apostolic". It is therefore lamentable also that a legitimate Bishop has been appointed President of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.



6. **This is not the path that the Church must follow** in the context of a great and noble nation, which attracts the attention of world opinion for its significant achievements in so many spheres, but still finds it hard to implement the demands of genuine religious freedom, despite the fact that it professes in its Constitution to respect that freedom. What is more, the Assembly has rendered more difficult the path of reconciliation between Catholics of the "clandestine communities" and those of the "official communities", thereby inflicting a deep wound not only upon the Church in China but also upon the universal Church.

7. The Holy See profoundly regrets the fact that the celebration of the above-mentioned Assembly, as also the recent episcopal ordination without the indispensable Papal mandate, **have unilaterally damaged the dialogue and the climate of trust** that had been established in its relations with the Government of the People's Republic of China. The Holy See, while reaffirming its own wish to dialogue honestly, feels bound to state that unacceptable and hostile acts such as those just mentioned provoke among the faithful, both in China and elsewhere, a grave loss of the trust that is necessary for overcoming the difficulties and building a correct relationship with the Church, for the sake of the common good.

8. In the light of what has happened, the Holy Father's invitation – addressed on 1 December 2010 to all the Catholics of the world to pray for the Church in China which is going through a particularly difficult time – remains pressing.

[VIS Dec 17, 2010]

Pope Makes Appeal

Following his catechesis in today's general audience, Benedict XVI made some remarks concerning the situation of the Church in China.

"To your prayers", he told the faithful gathered in the Paul VI Hall, "and to those of Catholics all over the world, I entrust the Church in China which, as you know, is experiencing particularly difficult moments. Let us ask the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, to support all Chinese bishops, who are so dear to me, that they may bear courageous witness to their faith, placing all their hope in the Savior Whom we await. Let us also entrust to the Virgin all the Catholics of that beloved country so that, through her intercession, they may live a truly Christian existence in communion with the universal Church, thus also contributing to the harmony and common good of their noble people".

[VATICAN CITY, DEC 1, 2010]

China Rejects Vatican

A spokesperson for the **State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA)** said: "In a statement dated Dec. 17, the Vatican condemned the National Congress of Catholic Representatives which elected the new leadership of the Catholic Church in China and accused China of violating religious freedom.

The December 7 - 9 Congress elected the heads and other senior members of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC). The Congress, which is held every five years to amend the CCPA's and BCCCC's constitutions, elects a new leadership and set future agenda. It does not deal with Catholic doctrines or violate the fundamental Catholic faith, and there is no question of getting recognition by any foreign organization or state.

In China, religious freedom is protected by the Chinese Constitution, and it is a misinterpretation by the Vatican to **declare the incompatibility of Catholic doctrine with the Chinese Catholic church's principle of independent self-governance**. China's Constitution grants Chinese citizens freedom of religious beliefs, but requires the independence of religious organizations and of religious affairs in China from foreign influence. Under this constitutional provision, **the Catholic Church and other religions in China adhered to the principle of self-governance and self-support**.

The CCPA and the BCCCC endorsed this principle in their new constitutions adopted at the Congress. The BCCCC's constitution says: "The BCCCC fulfills her Pastoral Mission for the Faith and Evangelization according to the power and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit endowed upon His disciples". On the dogma and moral teachings of the Church, the constitution says that the BCCCC is "in union with the Successor of St. Peter, the Head of the Community of the Disciples."

The Vatican declares the incompatibility of the constitutions with Catholic doctrine. Has the Vatican not read the two constitutions? Or is it obscuring the boundary between faith and politics on purpose? This Vatican practice of seeking to push political ideology through religious belief is "very dangerous". **It could have serious repercussions** for the development of the Catholic Church in China.





Fr. Joseph Guo Jincui was ordained Bishop without papal mandate

The National Congress of Catholic Representatives was established over 50 years ago, is a democratic assembly of Chinese Catholics that has the full respect of the Chinese government. The Vatican has resorted to various methods to prevent the Congress to convene in recent years, including by threatening to "punish" the Chinese Catholic clergy who attend it. Who is actually using coercive measures and demanding Catholics to betray their conscience? Isn't it crystal clear? The senior leaders of the two organizations were elected with a majority of the vote, reflecting the will of the Congress's representatives. In condemning the elected leadership, the Vatican has trampled and shown its contempt for the democratic will of the Catholic clergy and laymen in China. **This condemnation is extremely arbitrary and rude.** Does a Chinese religious organization have to get a 'majestic authorization' or 'gracious approval' from a foreign group to elect its leadership?

The Vatican is unilaterally causing the current "regretful situation in China-Vatican relations." Hoping to improve China-Vatican relations, China had shown its willingness to have sincere and constructive dialogue with the Vatican in recent years. Despite China's efforts, some people in the Vatican always stymied Chinese efforts to improve relations by making unreasonable demands, calling the Vatican's condemnation of the Congress the latest example of such moves. The Vatican, moreover, has interfered in the internal affairs of China's Catholic Church in both open and clandestine ways in an attempt to control the Church.

China hopes the Vatican could speak and act prudently, so as not to further damage the relationship and to allow talks between the two sides."

[BEIJING, Dec. 22, Xinhua]



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



ISBN: 1084-8401

Editor: Michel Marcil, SJ
Proofreader: Lawrence E. Frizzell, D.Phil.
Layout/Production: Mengpin Hsiao

Subscriptions: US/Canada: US\$10.00
Overseas: US\$15.00 - airmail

U.S. Catholic China Bureau,
Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079
Tel: 973-763-1131 E-mail: chinabur@shu.edu
www.usccb.net

Cardinal Zen's Report

This is Card. Zen's report before his fellow cardinals and the Pope before the Consistory.

"At most in China, there is freedom of worship, but the government has in no way relaxed its policy of absolute control over religion and the Catholic Church, manipulating ordinations and corrupting bishops, even those legitimized by the pope." This is the sad overview submitted by Card. Joseph Zen to his brother cardinals, on the day of discussion and reflection convoked by the pope on 19 November, before the last Consistory. In the text published in full, the retired bishop of Hong Kong emphasizes that there is hesitation even in Vatican policy, which may lead to a wrong interpretation of the directions of Benedict XVI, in his letter to the Catholics of China.

"I think it is my duty, given this special opportunity to inform my eminent brothers, that there is still no religious freedom in China. There is too much optimism around something that does not correspond to reality. Some have no way of knowing the reality, others close their eyes to reality, others still see religious freedom in a very simplistic way.

If you were to visit China (which I do not recommend, because your visits will be manipulated and exploited for propaganda purposes), you would see beautiful churches full of people who pray and sing, as in any other city in the Christian world. But **religious freedom cannot just be reduced to freedom of worship.**

It is much more. Some will protest this. Some people have written: "Beijing wants the bishops called for by the Pope". If only it were true! The fact is that there is an ongoing "tug of war" in which I do not know who has conceded most ground.

The fact that recently there have been no illicit Episcopal ordinations is certainly a good thing [1]. But, considering the fact that the Chinese government continues to raise its voice, that our opportunities to investigate are so limited and that there is fear of increased unrest, a real risk exists that young unworthy bishops will be approved and serve for decades.

I wonder why has no agreement yet been reached guaranteeing the Pope's initiative in selecting bishops, while acknowledging the opinion of the Chinese government? I do not know how negotiations between the two sides are going, because we are not [among] the experts and we are not informed of anything. But among those experts who closely follow these events, the overall impression is that on "our"

side there is a strategy of compromise, if not indefinite, at least for the time being.

On the other side there is, however, no intention to change. **The Chinese Communists have always stood by the religious policy of absolute control.** We all know that the Communists crush those who are weak, while in front of the firm, sometimes they can also change their attitude.

There was the papal letter to the Church in China, already more than three years ago, a masterpiece of balance between the clarity of truth and magnanimity for a dialogue. Unfortunately I have to say that [it] was not taken seriously by everyone. There are those who are allowed to express themselves in a different way, there are some who give a distorted interpretation to it, citing expressions out of context.

After lengthy discussion at the Commission for the Church in China, it was decided to send a clear order to the bishops not to attend the planned so-called "Assembly of Representatives of the Church in China", but there are still those who say, "we understand the difficulties the bishops meet by not going".

Dear brothers, I suppose you are aware of recent events: they are again trying to make an Episcopal ordination without pontifical mandate. For this reason they seized bishops, put pressure on others: they are grave offenses to religious freedom and personal dignity. I appreciate the timely, accurate and dignified statement of the Secretary of State. Among other things, there is reason to suspect that such attempts are not even from above, but from those who over the years have gained positions of power and benefits and do not want things to change.

Let us pray to Our Lady, Help of Christians, so that the eyes of the Chinese supreme leaders of our nation may be opened, so they may stop these evil and shameful moves and strive to allow our people true and full religious freedom, which also be to the benefit and honor of our motherland. We pray that the strategy on "our" part can get back on track, so that it may honestly abide by the direction of the Letter of the Holy Father. Hopefully it is not too late for good change of direction."

[1] *Two days later was the ordination under pressure of Fr. Guo Jincai.*

Social Issues

China's Political Succession

After the Olympics in 2008, the 60th Anniversary of the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 2009 and the 2010 Shanghai World Fair, the next important item on China's agenda was the **Fifth Plenary Session of the 17th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party**, scheduled to convene in Beijing on October 2010.

This Plenary Session [*plenum*] received broad attention by both Chinese and foreign media because, in addition to the traditional topics of the five-year plan, three very difficult topics of greater interest were discussed: personnel changes that will decide the nation's next leader and the scope of any political and economic reforms.

Tackling China's growing wealth gap dominated the agenda, Xinhua News reported. *"The widening gap between the rich and the poor is the severe social reality faced by China's Communist Party and government,"* Xinhua said. *"It hinders the harmonious development of the world's most populous country"*.

This was the concern that President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao were bringing to the Central Committee. The rising income gaps in China easily could spark more riots, more strikes and more of other social unrest in 2011 than it did in 2010, when - unreported by the press - a total of 90,000 incidents were documented. This wealth gap might threaten the 61-year rule of the Communist Party. Xinhua cited the World Bank's finding that the Gini coefficient (*a measure of inequality*) already reached 0.47 in 2009, exceeding the 0.4 mark that is a **predictor of social unrest**. When Deng Xiaoping launched his *"Reform and Opening"* policy thirty years ago, the coefficient was only at 0.21-0.27, said Xinhua.

This fear of social unrest can explain the election of a third party candidate, Xi Jinping, as the successor of President Hu Jintao in 2013. This election also tells us about the direction the plenum majority wants the Communist Party to take, in order to bring about the needed and urgent political and economic reforms. For this reason, the first priority for the Communist Party is **to maintain social stability** at all cost. Otherwise, impossible to implement any economic or political reform adopted by the Central Committee. One can expect a greater control of public gatherings and censure of communications.



Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping was elected to succeed President Hu Jintao in 2013.

For the same reason, on October 20, one could read the People's Daily editorial calling the party members to reject Western-style democratic notions, criticizing multiparty democracy and separation of powers as inefficient and divisive. "China system of socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics has proven best suited for China's conditions and must be upheld and strengthened," said the editorial.

That editorial was following a series of calls for political reforms from Premier Wen Jiabao, as well as the awarding of the **Nobel Peace Prize** - just two weeks before the plenum - to imprisoned Chinese dissident writer Liu Xiaobo, who urged reforms to China's single party Communist system and the Leninist-style government. Wen's comments have been countered by statements from hard-liners criticizing any change that challenges the party's leadership. Liu's award meanwhile, has embarrassed and angered the government, which has describe the move as part of **a Western plot to interfere in China's internal affairs and alter its political system**. People will notice these were exactly the same words used to describe the student-led pro-democracy movement on Tien An Men Square back in 1989.

For our readers, this background information could also explain the surprise deterioration of relations between the Holy See and China at the end of 2010. One cannot but notice the coincidence of the Bishop ordination under extreme pressure in Chengde on November 19, the same day the Pope was presiding the Consistory of Cardinals in the Vatican. And again on December 9, when the Eight National Assembly of Catholic Representatives was meeting in Beijing the same day Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize *in absentia* in Sweden.

Reading Notes



➤ Ricci Documentary

On October 7, 2010, Jesuit Father Jeremy Clarke, an assistant professor of history at Boston College, premiered his film "**Beyond Ricci: Celebrating 400 Years of the Chinese Catholic Church**," which he wrote, produced and directed, at Boston College. Jesuit Father James McDermott assisted Fr. Clarke with the documentary, which tells the story of Ricci's life.

Running 53 minutes, the documentary starts off in Macau, where Ricci began his Jesuit duties in 1582. From there, it followed his journey throughout eight Chinese cities and then describes his accomplishments, such as his skills in cartography and translation and his knowledge of Chinese culture. The film then goes on to show how Catholicism has grown in China since Ricci's arrival in the late 16th century.

➤ **Playing Our Game: Why China's Rise Doesn't Threaten the West** Edward Steinfeld. Oxford University Press, USA (August 5, 2010), 280 pages.

Steinfeld explores the monumental economic and political ramifications of China's integration into global production. By examining how contemporary Chinese enterprises actually engage the global economy and participate in a global division of labor, the book challenges the idea that Chinese firms are rising at their Western counterparts' expense. It also challenges the claim that political change in China has lagged behind economic transformation. Steinfeld argues instead that the Chinese growth story is fundamentally about China's internalization of the rules and practices of advanced industrial nations. China has grown not by conjuring up its own unique political-economic institutions, but instead by increasingly harmonizing with our own. The results within China – on the economic front as well as politically – have been nothing short of revolutionary.

➤ Know the China Programs of Verbiest

The **Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation** is named after the Belgian Jesuit Missionary Ferdinand Verbiest who was a famous astronomer and teacher of Emperor Kangxi in the 18th century. The foundation was established by CICM missionaries in 1982 at the Leuven University (Belgium).

The Verbiest Foundation is chaired by **Cardinal Godfried Danneels of Malines (Belgium)**. Members represent the missionary congregations: CICM, OFM, Brothers of Charity. The foundation sponsors the activities of **the Verbiest Institute at Louvain University and of the Verbiest Institute in Taipei**. Since May 1, 2009 the foundation also sponsors the Chinese College Leuven. Through these institutes it promotes academic research on the history of the Chinese Catholic Church and pastoral cooperation with the Church in China.

The most efficient way to help the Church in China is to invest in the formation of Church personnel. Therefore the Foundation offers support for **the formation of ministers** (priests, religious, lay catechists) for the Catholic Church in China. The Foundation offers scholarships for the formation of priests, religious and also lay ministers. Priority goes to supporting **formation programs inside China**. We invite also priests and religious to come abroad for obtaining a more specialized **formation in the field of evangelization** in institutes in Europe, the USA and the Philippines. Scholars are expected to return to China and teach in Catholic seminaries and formation institutes.



Paul Braeckmans represents the Verbiest Foundation in the USA. His contact address is at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, LA., in cooperation with Fr. Lui, pastor of the parish. Tel: (626) 282-8017; Fax: (323) 264-2524; Email: paulbraeckmans@yahoo.com. Website of Verbiest Institute: <http://www.kuleuven.be/verbiest/>