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Vatican Commission on the Church in China

The annual commission established by Benedict XVI in 2007 to study questions of importance concerning the life of the Catholic Church in China met in the Vatican from March 22 to 24.

The participants examined the question of the **human, spiritual and pastoral formation** of seminarians and consecrated people, as well as the permanent formation of priests. The difficulties that emerge in the field of formation and new pastoral requirements - connected with the task of evangelizing Chinese society - represent considerable challenges. The bishops in China, who are recognized as having full dignity and the responsibility to guide their ecclesial communities, are committed to formative work and, in union with them, fraternal collaboration will continue to be offered.

In the light of Holy Father's Letter to Chinese Catholics of 27 May 2007, the commission reflected on the way to **promote unity within the Catholic Church in China, and to overcome the difficulties she faces in her relationship with civil society**. Progress made in response to the Pope's call for authentic ecclesial communion was noted with satisfaction, a communion which is not expressed without a personal commitment to searching for truth and spiritual reconciliation. In the awareness that the journey of forgiveness and reconciliation cannot be undertaken in a day, there emerged the certainty that the entire Church accompanies this journey and will raise insistent prayers to this end, especially on 24 May, liturgical memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, and the Day of Prayer for the Church in China. The importance of taking tangible steps towards increasing and expressing spiritual ties between pastors and the faithful was also emphasized.

At the same time, the participants expressed the unanimous hope that all bishops in China may become increasingly committed to favoring the growth of unity, faith and life among all Catholics, avoiding gestures such as sacramental celebrations, episcopal ordinations and participation in meetings that run counter to communion with the Pope who appointed



Sacred Heart of Jesus Congregation. Fushun, China

them pastors, and create difficulties in the bosom of their respective ecclesial communities.

In keeping with the desire expressed by the Holy Father in the above-mentioned Letter, the commission reiterates its hope that, through respectful and open dialogue between the Holy See and the government authorities, the current difficulties may be overcome and a beneficial agreement be reached, of advantage to the Catholic community and to social coexistence. In this spirit, the participants join all Catholics in China in constant prayer that those bishops and priests who have long been deprived of their freedom may, as soon as possible, once again exercise their episcopal and priestly ministry in support of the faithful entrusted to their pastoral care.

In a meeting that took place at the end of the plenary assembly, **His Holiness underlined the need of ensuring solid formation**, based on friendship with Christ, for everyone preparing for the priesthood or consecrated life. This will be a guarantee of success in personal life and in pastoral work. The Holy Father reiterated the important role played by those in charge of formation and recalled that this is a priority task of bishops. Finally, he thanked the participants for their commitment in favor of the Catholic Church in China.

[Vatican Information Service]

Church News

The Case of Bishop AN Shuxin

1. The Case

A letter from Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone makes known the guidelines and suggestions of the Pope in relation to the case of Francis An Shuxin, the coadjutor bishop of Baoding accused of betrayal by some priests of his diocese for having decided to leave the clandestine condition. **Benedict XVI invites all to walk the path of reconciliation. And meanwhile he confirms Bishop An as head of the diocese.**

When disputes and issues arise among the children of the Church, it is often the case that all direct their gaze to the Bishop of Rome. It happened recently to the priests, religious and lay faithful of the Chinese Catholic community of Baoding, Hebei. There, for some years, hearts were divided over the case of Francis An Shuxin, the bishop ordained clandestinely since 2006, after 10 years of imprisonment and isolation, chose to leave the clandestine state and exercise his pastoral ministry in fidelity to the Pope and also in accordance with the procedures and requirements imposed by the government.

From the beginning, some of the underground priests had considered the decision of Bishop An as a type of about-face, coming to question the legitimacy of his episcopal authority. The controversy and reproaches reached their most virulent phase in the second half of 2009, when the opponents of Bishop An published as a proof of the alleged "betrayal" his willingness to accept an appointment in the diocesan structures of the Patriotic Association.

In the growing controversy, guidelines and suggestions from the Apostolic See arrived several times to the Catholic community in Hebei. The latest, most recent and most authoritative invitation to reconciliation came from the Pope: a letter from the Vatican to the diocese of Baoding in which **Benedict XVI confirms the episcopal authority of Francis An and desires that all diocesan priests recognize this**, despite the position taken up by the bishop in the Patriotic Association.

2. The Letter: "Dear Brother Bishop"

The letter, written on behalf of the Pope by the Secretary of State Tarcisio Bertone, is a reply to the letter sent to Benedict XVI by Francis An himself on 12 November 2009, with which the bishop referred his



Francis An Shuxin,
the Coadjutor Bishop
Of Baoding

case to the Pope asking him for specific directions on what to do. Bertone refers in the opening lines to the Pope's appreciation for the "sentiments of faithfulness to Christ and the Church and your filial devotion to the Successor of Peter" expressed by Bishop An in his letter. Then, afterwards, the papal guidelines relating to the troubled events in the diocese are provided.

Benedict XVI makes known the "great attention" with which he follows the life of the Church in China, with specific regard to the diocesan communities "living in particularly difficult situations". The Pope declares himself "spiritually close" to Bishop An, and sends a special blessing to Bishop Su Zhimin, which recalls the condition of segregation that prevents him from exercising his proper episcopal ministry for the benefit of the people entrusted to his pastoral care.

In the central part, the letter focuses directly on the choices made by Bishop An that most aroused contestations by a part of the clergy of the diocese. One of the main charges directed against An was his choice to celebrate a Mass along with John Su Changshan, "official" bishop of Baoding, recognized as such by the government but not by the Apostolic See. Regarding that incident, the letter says that "everyone is now in a position to know that this occurred because Your Excellency was aware that Bishop Su Changshan ardently desired and insistently requested full communion with the Holy Father".

Afterwards, the papal letter touches the sore point of the role of vice president of the Diocesan Patriotic Association that Bishop An has agreed to assume. With not insignificant subtlety, the text does not mention any 'enrolment' of An in the patriotic organization, seeing that the bishop limited himself to verbally accepting the position. The guidelines are clear and concrete: "In your specific situation, such a decision should have been avoided. Nevertheless, in

the present circumstances **it seems preferable for Your Excellency not to give up, on your own initiative, the possibility you have at present of acting in an official way and to accompany and lead all your priests, whether official or clandestine**". It is assured that the Apostolic See will continue to monitor the situation in Baoding. "In the meanwhile", the letter recommends, with a suggestion implicitly addressed to the entire diocese of Hebei, "The Holy See counts on the obedience which the entire clergy of Baoding owes you in the absence of Bishop Su Zhimin". In the final part of the letter, Cardinal Bertone asks to make known to the Catholic community of Baoding the directions received from the Pope, "in the manner you consider most opportune". Because of this, from the second week of March, the full version of the text has appeared in Chinese and English on the website of the diocese.

3. Some Comments: No winners or losers

In that magisterial document it was recognized that the procedures for the approval of local communities by the civil authorities, necessary in order to function publicly, may involve difficult and controversial choices for the consciences of Catholics. Therefore, in each single concrete case, and "after having restated the principles", the operational decisions are left "to **the individual bishop who, having consulted his presbyterate, is better able to know the local situation, to weigh the concrete possibilities of choice and to evaluate the possible consequences within the diocesan community**". The Pope had also taken into account that the questionable choices of the individual bishop might not find the consensus of all the priests and faithful. In this case, it was hoped that these decisions be upheld, however, "even if painfully", to maintain the unity of the diocesan community with its own pastor.

Precisely the controversial issue of Bishop An's relations with the Patriotic Association itself also gave the Holy See the opportunity to follow guidelines set by the Pope himself in his letter of June 2007. In the complex pastoral situation of Baoding the direct involvement of the bishop in the patriotic body rekindled the malaise and disputes between those clandestine priests and faithful, and it is written that such involvement "should have been avoided". But once the bishop decided to accept the post of vice president of the Diocesan Patriotic Association, the Apostolic See acknowledged his decision and did not ask him to go back. **The "presence" of Bishop An in the patriotic organisms did not delegitimize his episcopal authority in the eyes of the Holy See.**

The letter suggested to An not to leave on his own initiative the condition in which he finds himself, which now allows him to exercise publicly his role of leader and guide for all the priests of the diocese, "whether official or clandestine".

With these directions, the potential effectiveness and pastoral appropriateness of the criteria set out in the Letter to Chinese Catholics in 2007, can be glimpsed by all. That text entrusted to the bishops the judgment about how to move in local circumstances, taking into account the contexts and circumstances. **Bishop An acted within the criteria and the possibilities considered in the Papal Letter of 2007.** And the Holy See, adhering in the facts to that apostolic collegiality that is also the assuming of shared responsibility, renewed its confidence in him, confirmed him in his episcopal authority and asked everyone to follow him.

Thus, by suggestions, the directions repropounded in the letter also allow a glimpse of where a possible new beginning for the troubled diocese in Hebei may come from. This does not have to determine who won and who lost; also because there are never any winners but only losers in sectarian tendencies that may be in the name of the intransigent attachment to their own beliefs eventually finish by lacerating the communion and complicating the access of the faithful to the means of the life of grace. Instead it is properly the sacramental nature of the Church that can reveal itself in the relationships among its members, including the relationship between the bishop and his priests. It can sustain over time, with patience, without undue outside pressures, that miracle of **reconciliation that can only pass through the hearts and minds of individuals, embracing all and forgiving everything**. So that thus it may be easier for all Christians of Baoding "to live a calm and tranquil life, full of piety and dignity", as Saint Paul wrote in his first Letter to his friend Timothy (1Timothy 2, 2).

[30 Giorni Online]

The
Cathedral of
Baoding,
Hebei



Social Issues

No Political Dissent

The Chinese leadership is continuing the ruthless stifling of any serious political dissent. That is bad news for China and the world.

The most recent reminder came when **Gao Zhisheng**, a crusading human rights lawyer, resurfaced. For more than a year, he had disappeared into the clutches of the government security network and many people had feared that he was dead.

Mr. Gao was a dynamic advocate, pushing constitutional reform and representing controversial cases. But in a sometimes tearful interview with The Associated Press, he announced that he would abandon activism in hopes of being able to reunite with his family. "I don't have the capacity to persevere," he said.

Mr. Gao refused to discuss his ordeal, but we have no reason not to assume the worst. He was jailed on two previous occasions, and he later described his brutal torture by police, including electric shocks to his genitals.

This latest disappearance has been devastating for Mr. Gao and his family, which had been under constant police surveillance for years. Press reports said that his teenage daughter had tried to commit suicide. His wife and children escaped to the United States last year.

Chinese authorities also are doing their best to break two other men of conscience who are still being held. Family members said the government had rejected a request for a medical parole for **Hu Jia**, who has shown signs of possible liver cancer. He gained prominence fighting to protect AIDS patients, environmental causes and democratic rights before being charged two years ago with subverting state power.

In February, a Beijing appeals court upheld an 11-year sentence for **Liu Xiaobo**, who was convicted of subversion for helping organize the Charter 08 manifesto that called for sweeping political reforms.

[The New York Times]

Labor Unrest

China has been hit with a recent wave of labor unrest, including strikes and partial shutdowns of factories. A seemingly endless supply of cheap labor is drying up, and workers are no longer willing to endure sweatshop-like conditions.

China's export-driven growth has long been linked to its abundance of workers, mostly migrants from the impoverished countryside to toil long hours in factories for meager wages. If they were unhappy, they rarely expressed it through action.

Now all of that has started to change. Shifting demographics, including years of effective population control through the government's "one child" policy, have left China short of younger workers, particularly in **the crucial 15-25 age group** that many factories rely on most. They are more aware of their rights. And having grown up in a more prosperous China, they are demanding a fairer share.

"Right now the majority of migrant workers are in their 20s. They were born in the 1980s, and are more sensitive to the disparity between the wealth of the city and their own poverty," said Cai He, dean of sociology at Sun Yat-sen University. "The younger people received a better education. They surf the Internet, use mobile phones and watch TV. **Their awareness of their rights is much stronger than the older migrant workers,**" Cai added.

These young workers are asserting those rights in the form of work stoppages, slowdowns and demands for higher wages and shorter hours. The unrest was highlighted by a strike at Honda's transmission factory in the city of Foshan. The Japanese carmaker had to shut its four assembly plants in China.

Around the same time, the Taiwanese-owned Foxconn electronics plant in Shenzhen, which assembles Apple iPhones and iPads, was struck by 10 suicides among its workers and three suicide attempts, which labor activists blamed on the stress of long overtime hours.

[The Washington Post]



Chinese Hiding Babies

"I am the biggest offender against the one-child policy in China!" laughed Fu Yang, a wiry and energetic 47-year-old man. "I had seven daughters in just ten years."

Mr. Fu and his wife are among the millions of **Chinese parents who risk threats, fines and even imprisonment in order to defy the country's one-child policy.** The couple, who now live a prosperous life in a small village outside the southern city of Xiamen, have had to flee across three provinces and hide their children with friends in the past.

"There were some difficult times," Mr. Fu conceded. "We were chased around and we had to live like beggars. But I never thought about doing otherwise. I'm aware that many people do not want their daughters, but we have a decent respect for life," he said.

Since 1978, China's government has limited each couple to one child in a bid to stem the growth of the world's largest population. To police the law, neighborhood committees keep a close eye out for any pregnancies, and Family Planning officials have the power to force women to have abortions and sterilizations, as well as to monitor their contraception.

The policy does not apply to everyone. In the countryside, parents are allowed to try for a second child if their first is a girl. Couples who are both single children themselves are also allowed to have two children.

But for parents who do not comply with the law, the penalties can be harsh. Workers in state-owned companies can lose their jobs. Others face huge fines, the possible demolition of their homes, or even a prison term.

"When they eventually found out I had seven daughters, they tried to tear down our house, but fortunately I have good connections: my uncle is the head of the village," said Mr. Fu. "They also wanted to fine me 600,000 Yuan (\$88,235). Eventually they knocked down a small part of my old house and I paid them 2,000 Yuan," he added.

Mr. Fu said that he had already encouraged his eldest daughter, who has recently born him a grandson, to continue to procreate. "I told her: no matter what the cost, she should have more kids," he said.

In millions of other cases, families are also prepared to take the risk and break the law, according to research by Liang Zhongtang, a demographer and former member of the expert committee of China's National Population and Family Planning Commission.

[The Telegraph, UK]



China Army

Western countries led by the United States and some of China's neighbors, including Japan, have regularly urged Beijing to show greater openness in defense matters, particularly in the light of its rapid military expansion.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA), which started as a communist rebel force, has invested heavily in weapons and equipment in recent years. With almost 2.3 million people serving in the PLA's ranks, it is now almost certainly the world's largest employer.

In 2010 Beijing set its defense budget at 532 billion Yuan (\$78 billion), but the figure is widely considered to be under-estimation. The Stockholm-based International Peace Research Institute said in a report released this week that China had likely spent 100 billion dollars on its military in 2009.

But the lack of clear data has cast doubt on China's aims and ambitions as it expands not only land, sea and air forces but also into space and cyberspace. It has also shown a desire to develop a rapid reaction force to defend its economic interests and energy supply routes.

In an effort to convince the doubters of its good faith and wholly defensive intentions, the PLA is now making a point of being open with foreigners. In April **the armed forces invited foreign journalists and military attaches to a presentation** on its latest jet fighter, the J-10, at an airbase at Tianjin, outside the capital Beijing.

Then in May, the army took French journalists on a press tour featuring talks with defense ministry officials, a presentation on China's anti-piracy mission off Somalia and a tour of select army units, but no pictures were allowed. British reporters are next in line for an invitation.

[Agence France-Presse]



Education

Trip to China

This trip included visits to the East Church in Beijing, the Wuchang Church in Wuhan and Our Lady of Sheshan Pilgrimage visit.

After arriving in Beijing, we met with **Father John Wang, Heping**, Ph.D., who is associate pastor of the East Catholic Church in Beijing. Fr. Wang informed us that he has an RCIA class of 60 catechumens who meet each Friday evening to prepare to enter the Catholic Church.

There are two daily Masses, and four Masses on the weekend. Fr. Feng is the pastor.

The Church is located next to a large pedestrian shopping mall which is normally teeming with shoppers and visitors. Many of these people wander into the Church. Soothing Church music welcomes the visitors. Guides are available to visitors to talk about Catholicism. There is a list for people to sign up for RCIA classes.

A small gift shop sells religious articles in the back of the Church. There is another shop in the parish center. A large rose garden adorns the east side of the Church. There are trees, benches and flora in the front square of the church; alongside an attractive waterfall. Many people avail of the serene surroundings for rest and socialization.

It is also a popular place for doing Tai Chi exercises; and, for couples to pose for wedding pictures. In fact, Fr. John states he has many requests to preside at wedding for the local community and for expatriates based in Beijing.

We heard about the events at the South Church, the Diocesan Cathedral, in honor of Mateo Ricci, SJ. And we're given to understand that symposium was by invitation only.

In Wuhan, we visited the Churches in Hankou, Hanyang and Wuchang (the three city districts which comprise Wuhan). There was a Mass in English in Wuchang on Sunday afternoon. There also are English Masses in Beijing Churches. The Church in Wuchang and Hanyang had choirs practicing when we visited. Participants at the English Mass included students and workers from Nigeria, Liberia, Brazil, Poland and France.



In the city of Shanghai we prayed at the Cathedral Church, and made a pilgrimage to **Our Lady of Sheshan** Mountain. We also visited the extraordinary World Expo along the Huangpo River. There were very few people on the Mountain. And, we were told that that was because pilgrims were discouraged from attending due to the expected crowds from the World Expo. At the mid-level of the mountain pilgrimage there was a church. We joined the congregation for the Mass. Afterwards, we trudged up to the Basilica, at the top of the hill. We noticed the security camera along this upper section of the climb. We were the only visitors on that rainy, muggy morning at the Basilica.

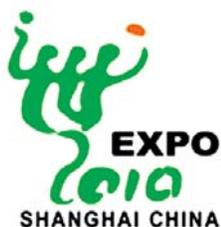
Then we toured the nearby museum of Astronomy. There were objects, telescopes used hundreds of years ago; and, in a separate building there was a more contemporary display of astronomical discoveries.

Before ending our journey, we went by subway to the Shanghai Museum of Art. They had a very large exhibit devoted to the works of Jesuit Fr. Mateo Ricci.

In Shanghai, our travels were assisted by the kind hospitality of **Sister Mary Pan, Xiufang** and **Fr. Joseph Lan, Xiaopeng**. It was an awesome visit to a few places in China.

[Fr. Tom Glennon , USCCB Board]

Shanghai World Expo



The 2010 Shanghai World Expo opened on Friday night, attracting the attention of the world and international participation and earning heartfelt congratulations.

Some 20 world leaders attended the opening ceremony and toured the Expo, including **French President Nicolas Sarkozy** and **South Korean President Lee Myung Bak**. Chinese President Hu Jintao met **Prime Minister of the Netherlands Jan Peter Balkenende** in Shanghai Saturday.

While meeting European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso in Shanghai Saturday, President Hu thanked the EU for its participation in the Shanghai World Expo, the organization's first presence at a World Expo held outside the EU countries.

"The Expo itself will provide us with an opportunity to build stronger economic, diplomatic and cultural ties with China as we showcase our country, our arts and culture, and our values," he said.

Chairman and CEO of the U.S. Greater China Corporation, John W. Allen, told Xinhua in an email interview after the opening ceremony that "like the Beijing Olympics, the Shanghai Expo is bigger and better than any previous such event and will definitely set the standard for the future."

Allen echoed Chinese President Hu Jintao's remarks that the Expo was a "showcase of the best achievement of human civilization."

[Beijing, Xinhua]



College Entrance Exams

Police, security guards and volunteers manned test venues as high-stakes college entrance exams began across China following a string of deadly attacks on schoolchildren.

Seventeen youngsters were killed and more than 50 wounded in five major assaults in the last two months. They were unrelated and carried out by lone attackers, three of whom had histories of mental illness.

Tens of thousands of paramilitary police have been deployed across the country to enforce security during testing. At one middle school in Beijing, a half-dozen police guarded the front gate as hundreds of students and their parents milled outside waiting for the venue to open.

In southern China's Guangxi region, boarding school teachers will walk their students to the exam sites. In Henan and Anhui provinces, emergency response teams were prepared for any disturbances, including those caused by bad weather, food poisoning or traffic accidents.

"All the relevant departments and local governments are fully prepared to respond to emergencies during the exam," Liu Junyi, vice director of the exam center under the Ministry of Education said. The stepped-up security measures were in addition to routine restrictions put in place during the two-day exams, all designed to minimize distractions to test-takers.

Each year, about **10 million high school seniors across China take the "gaokao," the exam that is the sole determinant for entry into university**. About 68 percent of the test takers this year are expected get into a college.

[The Associated Press]

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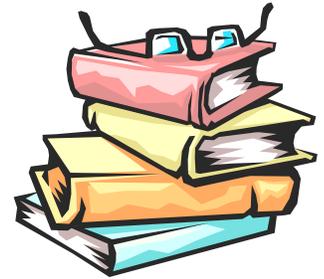
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Reading Notes



➤ **What Were “The Directives of Matteo Ricci” Regarding the Chinese Rites?**

Paul A. Rule, Ph.D. *Pacific Rim Report # 54, University of San Francisco, Center for the Pacific Rim, Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History. 8 pages.*

The paper was originally presented by Rule at an international symposium at Taiwan’s Fu Jen University in April 2010. The content is based on Rule’s work for the Institute’s Chinese Rites Controversy Project. Ask a copy at ricci@usfca.edu.

➤ **Holy Eros: Pathways to a Passionate God** *James D. Whitehead, Evelyn Eaton*

Whitehead. Orbis Books, 224 pp. 2010 Catholic Press association Award winner – 1st Place spirituality (paperback)

The Whiteheads explore the vital energy of eros, as the gift of a loving Creator who would bring us to life in abundance.

James D. and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, long associated with the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University in Chicago and with the Ricci Institute for Chinese Western Cultural History at the University of San Francisco, have coauthored a dozen groundbreaking books on religion and psychology including Christian Life patterns (100,000 sold). They have also taught in Shanghai, China.

➤ **The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation** *Mark Hathaway, Leonardo Boff. Orbis Books, 448 pp. 2010 Catholic Press Association Award Winner - 1st Place Faith and Science (paperback)*

Humanity and the Earth itself stand at an important crossroad. The combined dynamics of deepening poverty and accelerating ecological degradation create a powerful vortex of despair and destruction. And yet Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff believe we still have the opportunity to act fruitfully and change direction. Drawing on insights from quantum physics, deep ecology, and the new cosmology, they articulate a new vision of liberating action. In the ancient image of the Tao--the principle of living in balance with the wisdom of the cosmos--they lay out a path of spiritual renewal, ecological transformation, and authentic liberation. In 1988, Fr. Michel Marcil, SJ served as guide and interpreter to Leonardo Boff and his Brazilian companions in their first trip to China.

Mark Hathaway serves as South America program coordinator for the United Church of Canada. Leonardo Boff is a Brazilian theologian and the author of many books, including Ecology and Liberation and Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor.



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* We have invited a Bishop, a priest, a sister and one lay couple from China to update us on the Church in China and to explore with us possible partnership in mission.

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