
China Church Quarterly

No.91 Jan - Mar 2013

US Catholic China Bureau, Berkeley CA

Pope Francis Faces Tough Road to Dialogue with China

St. Francis of Assisi, from whom Pope Francis seeks the inspiration for his papacy, ran into brick walls in trying to enter into dialogue with Islam. He sent five brothers to Morocco in 1212, and they were murdered. He tried to go himself, but poor health turned him back. He was also blocked by discord within his own ranks.

Fr. Jerom Heyndrickx predicts that Pope Francis will also face obstacles in the long haul challenge of opening a dialogue with China. However, he notes that he has a long history of inspiration to fall back on in his overtures to the Middle Kingdom. In 1964, **Pope Paul VI** wrote an encyclical on dialogue, *Ecclesiam Suam*, and he walked that path with China, at a time that was more critical than it is today, as the **Cultural Revolution** was just beginning. In 1970, the same pope visited the Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome where he pleaded for China to be accepted into the *United Nations*. On July 11, Beijing released **Maryknoll Bishop James Walsh**, who had been behind bars for 15 years. "In the same year, Pope Paul visited Asia and Australia, but he wanted to send a positive message to China as well," Fr. Heyndrickx claims.

Fr. Heyndrickx recalls that "pro-China media in the then-British colony remained **silent** about the papal visit, whereas the pro-Taiwan media was sharply **critical**. The pressure may also have come from the then-colonial power and prevailed upon the pope to drop his plan to include a greeting to China in his Mass at the Happy Valley Stadium. In the event, all **Paul VI** did say was, ... *and I greet all the Chinese people wherever they may be...*"

Although **Bishop Cassidy** presented his credentials in Taipei, his stay was a short one and in 1972, the Australian diplomat was replaced by a temporary observer at the Vatican embassy. However, at the time expectations were high. All the talk at the Vatican embassy in Taipei at the reception to mark the ninth anniversary of Pope Paul's pontificate was, "*Next year in Beijing.*" Those receptions are still taking place in Taipei and the current Vatican diplomatic representative is still a *chargé d'affaires ad interim*.



Pope Francis meets with Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI

Fr. Heyndrickx notes that in 1958 **Fr. Dong Guangqing** was ordained a bishop in Wuhan without papal approval. **Pope Pius XII** condemned the ordination and referred to the prescribed excommunication, **but did not promulgate it**. Pope John Paul II **also refrained** from promulgating excommunication in 2000, when five bishops were illegally ordained. These gestures are positive outreaches from the Holy See towards China in what he calls a search for dialogue. However, he says that the response from Beijing was disappointing. **Pope Benedict XVI** and **Pope John Paul** also followed the same path in their approach to China.

This has bequeathed to **Pope Francis** a history which Fr. Heyndrickx says carries a message both for the new leaders in Beijing, as well as the Church in the Vatican. "Pope Francis may experience also that dialogue with China will not bring quick success and he too may find out that there are different opinions in the Church on entering into dialogue or not." Nevertheless, it is in the spirit of St. Francis to **persevere** in seeking dialogue, reconciliation and unity. "In fact that's where we all meet with what Christ preaches in the gospel."

[Hong Kong Sunday Examiner]

Social Issues

Xi Vows to Push for 'Peaceful Reunification' with Taiwan

Party leader marks high-level Beijing meeting by assuring honorary Kuomintang chairman of his desire to develop relations with Taiwan

Communist Party leader Xi Jinping told the visiting honorary chairman of **Taiwan's** Kuomintang, Lien Chan, that his team would continue to build cross-strait ties and strive for "**peaceful reunification**" with the island.

"The **new** Communist Party **leadership** will continue to push forward the peaceful development of relations between the two sides and advance the cause of peaceful reunification," Xinhua quoted Xi as saying at the meeting in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

The meeting marked the highest-level cross-strait meeting since the party's leadership change in November, and was closely watched in **Taiwan** and abroad because Xi's remarks were expected to shed some light on future policy towards Taiwan.

It also roughly indicated the line-up of the mainland's new **Taiwan** policy team, with the presence of Yu Zhengsheng, appointed chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Politburo member Wang Huning, and Li Zhanshu chief of the party's General Office. Outgoing State Councillor Dai Bingguo and Taiwan Affairs Office director Wang Yi were also present.

Xi, who succeeded Hu Jintao as president, told Lien that his team would "*pragmatically forge ahead*" with achievements in relations that would enrich residents on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

During the meeting, Xi, who spent 17 years working in Fujian province, across the strait from **Taiwan**, said he had been "continuously paying close attention to the cross-strait situation". He asked Lien to convey greetings to Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou, whose policy of **engaging Beijing** since taking office in 2008 has sharply reduced hostility between **Taiwan** and the mainland.



Lien Chan shakes hands with Xi Jinping in Beijing.

Analysts said Monday's talks indicated that the party's new leadership would maintain the momentum between Beijing and Taiwan. More importantly, given Xi's considerable work experience in handling cross-strait affairs, he might venture into "*deeper water*" - political talks.

Professor Wang Kung-yi, a political expert from Tamkang University in Taipei, said the talks provided a glimpse of "**the baseline of Xi's cross-strait policy**".

"But we must also note what Xi said about '**new achievements**' in cross-strait ties, as this shows the new mainland leadership will not just be satisfied with what Hu has achieved," Wang said.

He said that before pressing for political dialogue, Xi was expected to push for "**more social integration**", putting more emphasis on reaching out to people in southern Taiwan - a pro-independence stronghold.

Lien told a news conference later that political contacts "should be given a proper level of attention" to come to grips with the thorny issue of "one-China".



Taiwan President Meets Pope

Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou and First Lady Christine Chow's participation in the inaugural mass of Pope Francis' pontificate in St. Peter's Square is being seen as a success and that it also requires caution.

In Taiwan, the afternoon and evening bulletins broadcast live images with President Ma **sitting in the front row** during the ceremony. After Mass, when Pope Francis received the State representatives, Ma became **the first president of Taiwan to meet a Pope**.

The President and his wife had arrived in Rome on March 17, and attended mass on the 19th at the Vatican, which is **the only European country** to have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The island has full diplomatic relations with only 23 countries in the world, although the Taiwanese can now travel to **114 states** without a visa.

Ma Ying-jeou said that in the few words exchanged with the pope, he was able to **congratulate** him and **express his gratitude** for all that the Church does in Taiwan. The president said that he comes from a Catholic family and, as a child together with his grandmother, often frequented the parish in the district of Wanhua, Taipei.

He pointed out that the Church has always been supportive to Taiwan, and that *"personally, I learned French and English when I was at the university, thanks to a nun and a Catholic priest."* He also stated that all the humanitarian work for the disabled and the poor carried out by Catholic institutions on the island *"is well-known to all Taiwanese."*

One sensitive issue concerns the fact that in recent days Beijing had said that the Holy See should **"cut off diplomatic relations with Taiwan."** In recent years the Government of Ma Ying-jeou has been very cooperative with Beijing and focused on **easing tensions** that had arisen in previous decades. Both Taipei and Beijing want to continue on this line which brings advantages and development for both sides. The Deputy Foreign Minister Shih Yea-ping said that



Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou's participates at Mass for the beginning of Pope Francis' pontificate and personal encounter with him.

Garfie Li, spokesman for the president, recalls that on the morning of March 18, while visiting the Taiwanese embassy to the Holy See, Ma Ying-jeou said that the reaction from the Chinese government, "according to some" **was less harsh than in the past**. However, he pointed out that every call from the Chinese leadership **"should not be taken lightly"** and that Taiwan **should always** be cautious in its relations with the continent in a constructive manner. In this sense, he explicitly mentioned the **"three lines** of national defense": institutionalized relations with China, soft power and international support.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman, Calvin Ho pointed out that the opportunity to participate in the inaugural Mass of the pontificate, was also an occasion for Ma Ying-jeou to meet **many diplomats and foreign heads of state** during the period of his stay in Rome. In addition, in the face to face meeting with Pope Francis, the television images focused importantly on Ma Ying-jeou and his wife while they were talking with **Angela Merkel** and Vice President **Joe Biden**."

[Taipei, AsiaNews]



Taiwan Row a First Diplomatic Test for Pope Francis

Beijing's reaction to Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou's attendance at the inauguration of Pope Francis is the **first taste of a long-running dispute** that the new Argentine pontiff may have.

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying has called on the Vatican – one of only **23 sovereign states** in the world that recognize Taipei instead of Beijing – to sever diplomatic ties with the island. The Vatican should "*recognize the Chinese government as the sole legal representative of all China*", the spokeswoman said on Sunday. She also said Beijing hoped Francis would "*take concrete steps to create conditions for the improvement of China-Vatican relations*".

The last time a Taiwanese leader visited the Vatican was in 2005, when then president Chen Shui-bian attended the **funeral of pope John Paul II**. An incensed Beijing filed a protest to Italy for issuing Chen a visa.

This time, the Vatican has emphasized it has not sent out specific invitations. "*No one is privileged, no one is refused, everyone is welcome if they say they are coming,*" Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi said. Li Xiaoyong, spokesman for the Chinese embassy in Rome, said: "There will be no delegation from China. **China has expressed its congratulations. We hope that with the guidance of the new pontiff, the Vatican side can take a step towards us for a dialogue with mutual respect.**"

China's communist regime **broke ties** with the Vatican in 1951 and six years later set up its own Chinese Catholic "church", which does not recognize the pope as its head, while the Vatican continues to direct its own Catholics in China, those who go to "open" churches for Mass and also those who prefer to go to "underground" churches.

Anthony E Clark, an expert on the faith in China, who teaches Chinese history at Whitworth University, said: "China's official stance toward the Vatican is that the pope should have **no governing role** in China's Catholic community."

Relations worsened under Benedict XVI, with the Vatican excommunicating at least **three bishops** ordained by the official church in China and Chinese authorities curtailing the freedoms of prelates. The dispute is reminiscent of historical disputes between the Vatican and the lay governments of Europe.

The Argentine pope would be well equipped to deal with Asian affairs because of his experience of working under Argentina's authoritarian regime and his advocacy on poverty issues during an economic crisis there. The Vatican had signalled it **was willing to sever diplomatic ties** with Taiwan and that the ball was in China's court. Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kion, the archbishop emeritus of Hong Kong, agreed. "*All the popes have been very understanding with Beijing. Now it is up to China's new leadership,*" he said. The dispute has left mainland Catholics – a minority among the estimated 67 million Christians of all denominations – feeling vulnerable. There are believed to be up to 12 million Catholics on the mainland.

Bishop John Fang Xingyao, chairman of the **state-sanctioned** Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, was quoted by Hong Kong's South China Morning Post as saying he hoped the new pope would "*turn over a new leaf*" in relations. "*Given that God has chosen the new Pope as a leader, I'm sure he would grant him the ability to build better relations,*" Fang said.

In negotiating the difficult diplomatic waters, Francis could take inspiration from **Matteo Ricci**, a fellow Jesuit and a fluent Mandarin speaker who became a famous missionary in China at the end of the 16th century.

Ricci's book "**The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven**" argued that Confucianism, the great Chinese philosophy, and Christianity were not opposed but in fact very similar.

[South China Morning Post]



Xi 's Vision of Chinese Dream

Broadcast live on almost every major television channel, Mr Xi called for a "great renaissance of the Chinese nation". Again and again he invoked the "**Chinese Dream**", a call to arms that would bring the country's increasingly fragmented society together. "*Today our country is standing proudly at the Eastern end of the world,*" said Mr Xi, as he invoked China's rich history and culture with a flourish. "After thousands of years, what brings our people together now is a fate we all share to make the country rich and the people happy".

It is a constant source of preoccupation in China that while it was **the most advanced country** in the world during the middle ages, it failed to make the breakthroughs of the **Renaissance** and then the **Enlightenment** and subsequently fell into decay as a world power before being subjected to a "century of humiliation" at the hands of colonizing powers. Mr Xi seems keen to fill it with a sense that the country could recreate its glorious history. Unlike the American Dream, however, which highlights the opportunity for any **individual** to achieve success through hard work, the Chinese Dream owes much **to collectivism**. "*The Chinese spirit brings us together and builds our country together,*" said Mr Xi. "To create the **Chinese Dream** we must unite all Chinese power. As long as we stay united, we will share the opportunity to make our dreams come true".

And while Mr Xi said the Communist Party's leadership was essential to achieving future prosperity, he added that the Party "will have to listen to the people's voice all the time and answer their frustrations. We need to share the fruits of development with all the people **more equally**." As China's middle class expands, and the public's aspirations grow, the Party has begun crafting a narrative that will continue to gel its 1.3 billion citizens together. "The '**Chinese Dream**' is well on its way to becoming a popular political term for the coming decade," wrote Wang Yiwei, a professor at Renmin university, in an opinion piece for the Global Times newspaper.

"The **Chinese Dream** goes beyond economic development, to focus on what path China will choose after it becomes developed," he added, saying that it involved greater human rights, a focus on happiness, values and rights, and the proud sense that China could once again provide scientific **knowledge** and an **economic and development** model that would influence other countries.

"**Western universal values have suffocated diversity in the world** in modern times. Insightful Europeans have realized that the Western civilization lacks momentum in dealing with an uncertain world, and is even unable to get rid of the debt crisis. They consider the *Chinese civilization* to be a good alternative to the *Western civilization*," opined the People's Daily, the Party mouthpiece, recently.

After Mr Xi, **Li Keqiang**, the new Chinese prime minister, took staged questions from the media for over an hour-and-a-half, spelling out some concrete proposals for combatting bureaucracy and government waste. "Put simply, we need to leave *to the market and society* what they can do well, and on the part of *the government* we need to manage well those areas which fall into our purview," he said. A lawyer by training, Mr Li advanced a vision of a much cleaner China. "**Law should have a sacred place in our society**. No matter who you are, and what you intend to do, you should not step beyond the boundary of the law," he said.

And perhaps in a reference to his predecessor, Wen Jiabao, whose family has reportedly amassed a £1.8 billion fortune, Mr Li said: "**Clean government should start with oneself**. Only when one is upright himself can he or she ask others to be upright. Since we have chosen public office we should give up all thought of making money. We will accept the supervision of the whole public and the media." He promised that, during his ten years of office, no new government buildings would be commissioned, the number of bureaucrats on the payroll decreased, and that spending on hospitality and overseas travel will fall. Like Mr Xi, Mr Li also struck a rather more philosophical tone than is common at the highest level of the Party. "Through my reading, my handling of various matters and my cultural upbringing, I have learned the following: Follow the great path, **put the people first**, and work for the benefit of everyone under heaven," he said.

[The Telegraph, UK]

ISBN: 1084-8401

Editor: Michel Marcil, SJ

Proofreader: John A. Baumann, SJ

Layout/Production: Mengpin Hsiao

Subscriptions: US/Canada: US\$10.00

Overseas: US\$15.00 - airmail

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Church News

Crisis in China-Vatican Relations

Bishop Thaddeus Ma's appointment as bishop last July was considered as the potential beginning of a new phase in relations between China and the Vatican. Because of his personal background, the young **Thaddeus Ma Daqin** was someone who could have healed the rifts between the illegal "*underground*" community and the official community.

It took a long time before **Mgr. Ma Daqin's** appointment became official. Shanghai, the city where most of China's so-called "illegal" Catholic population is concentrated, already has a bishop, Giuseppe Fan Zhongliang, whom the Holy See considers to be the head of the diocese. He has been seriously ill for a number of years. But the most prominent figure is elderly Jesuit bishop **Aloysius Jin Luxian** who leads the official community and who the Holy See recognized as coadjutor bishop. After a long negotiation process and an election which involved the entire Catholic community, a new young bishop was chosen last July and approved by both the government's CPCA and the Vatican.

After his Episcopal ordination Mass in Xujiahui Cathedral on 7 July last year, the new bishop gave a public statement saying he wanted to give up his tasks in the Patriotic Association. His announcement sparked a reaction from **political leaders who removed him** immediately, confining him to the seminary of Sheshan. Right from the start therefore, **Mgr. Ma Daqin** has not been able to exercise his Episcopal ministry.

The bishop is **accused** of forbidding an illegitimate bishop, not recognized by Rome, to attend his consecration ceremony. He is **accused** of obeying the Pope, considering himself an auxiliary bishop rather than a coadjutor bishop, the title given to him by the CPCA. Above all, he is **accused** of publicly declaring his resignation from the CPCA, a declaration that is in line with the Vatican's most recent provisions.

The **Council of Chinese Bishops** and the CPCA's dismissal of Mgr. Ma Daqin was illegal in the eyes of the Holy See, as only the Pope can dismiss a bishop. The Vatican's initial reaction was the same as that of **Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-fai**, Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. He recalled that the "*so-called Chinese Episcopal Conference* was never recognized by the Holy See."

Hon defended **Mgr. Ma Daqin's** decision to quit the CPCA. The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples "supports Bishop Ma who made a courageous gesture of truth, out of love for the Holy Father." Hon also sent out an appeal to China's leadership: "I would like to see the new leaders of the People's Republic of China bring a new vision of relations between politics and the relationship between Church and State, **leaving aside the methods which do nobody any good** and fail to bring harmony to the Chinese Church, to society or to international relations."

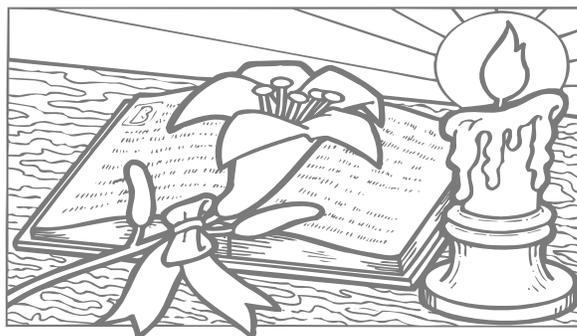
[Vatican Insider]

Bishop Ding Guangxun's Funeral

The complex life of **Bishop Ding Guangxun**, who died last week aged 97, was perfectly illustrated at his funeral. A controversial figure with both religious and political roles, he was the head of the mainland's *state-sanctioned Protestant church* and also "a close friend of the Communist Party".

Photographs of the funeral showed two settings. There was a *non-religious one*, attended by officials, with Ding's body covered by a national flag, a portrait of him in a banner reading "Mourning Bishop **Ding Guangxun**". And then there was a *religious one*, with his body covered by a white sheet with a cross, a portrait of him in a bishop's robe, and a banner reading "Bishop **Ding Guangxun**, rest in peace in the Lord's arms". The central government's representative, Yu Zhengsheng, attended the funeral in the non-religious setting.

Ding's critics had accused him of collaborating with the atheist Communist regime by advocating a theological campaign that advanced the party's interests. But others paid tribute to **his efforts to push for greater religious freedom** within the confines of the Communist system.



Remembering Fr. Vincent Lebbe

Apart from being the face of the state-sanctioned church as head of the **Three-Self Patriotic Movement** and **China Christian Council**, he was also a **Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference** vice-chairman for nearly 20 years and a member of the **National People's Congress**.

Born into a Christian family in 1915, Ding graduated from Shanghai's prestigious St John's University with a theology degree in 1942 and was ordained as an **Anglican vicar** that same year. In 1954, he was among 138 Christian leaders who **pledged support** for the Communist Party. The Three-Self Patriotic Movement mandated that **all mainland churches sever foreign ties** and declare loyalty to the party.

Many Christians reviled his stance that the church "*should be in tune with socialism*" and his underplaying of the core Christian belief that salvation is achieved through faith in Jesus Christ. He also advocated "*theological reconstruction*", an attempt to create an indigenous Christian theology devoid of foreign influence. "He was promoting what was favorable towards *advancing* the [official] brand of socialism, such as *safeguarding* Communist rule, *ensuring* stability, the unification of the country," said the **Chinese University of Hong Kong's** divinity professor Ying Fuk-Tsang.

Ding's critics **accused** him of reducing the church's role to one serving the atheist government. They say he deliberately undermined core Christian values in exchange for the state's support. Reverend Jin Tianming of Shouwang house church, one of China's most influential churches, said Ding stressed "the compromise of faith". "But Christianity should influence society; faith should not be about following [political] trends," Jin said.

Ying said Ding should nonetheless be credited for rebuilding the church after the **Cultural Revolution** and pushing the government to adopt policies favorable to religious freedom. He said Ding also spearheaded reforms in the state-sanctioned church, making it *less political* and *servicing believers' spiritual needs*. "He made contributions as well as mistakes, and **no other Christian figures had as much influence as he did**," Ying said.

[South China Morning Post]

After **Belgian Lazarist Father Vincent Lebbe** arrived in China in 1901, he had a marked effect on Christianity in the country and in the northeast city of Tianjin. He was vicar general of the Tianjin diocese which celebrates its centenary this year. It hosted a commemorative symposium over two days. Nearly 100 scholars and guests attended the event and **discussed the relevance** of Fr. Lebbe's work in today's society.

The Belgian missionary, who was known by his Chinese name **Lei Mingyuan**, embraced the Chinese during an era of colonial occupation. He was a member of a movement calling for the Church leadership to **relinquish the protection of foreign powers** and to become truly Chinese.

His advocacy led Pope Benedict XV to issue the missionary encyclical **Maximm Illud** of 1919, which reminded bishops and superiors of the Catholic missions that their goal must be carried out selflessly as they trained local clergy. Then in 1926, Pope Pius XI appointed **the first batch of native Chinese bishops**.

Beforehand, in 1915, Fr. Lebbe published the first Chinese Catholic daily – **Yishi Bao (Social Welfare Newspaper)** – which was known for its accurate reporting and became widely read in northern China. The newspaper played a key role in the 'Lao Xikai Incident' in 1916 when Fr. Lebbe openly denounced an attempt by the French consul **to expand the French concession in Tianjin** with the collusion of Church authorities who then removed him from the city and sent him back to Europe.

Fr. Francis Li, an academic dean at the Shaanxi Catholic Seminary in central China, said Fr. Lebbe's words and deeds were a timely reminder that it is **people** who are central to faith and social development. "There is an urgent need for the **Catholic Church to expand** its social influence and raise up ... ethics to enhance peoples' morality," said the priest, who holds a doctorate in dogmatic theology from Germany.

Tianjin diocese, which includes two bishops **not recognized** by the Chinese government, about 40 priests and 100,000 faithful, has organized several other events to mark its centenary. The diocese held a Eucharistic Congress in May, an evangelistic assembly in June and a music concert in September.





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