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News update on religion and church in China June 21 - September 29, 2022

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News Update on Religion and Church in China June 21 – September 29, 2022

Compiled by Katharina Feith, Isabel Friemann (China InfoStelle) and Katharina Wenzel-Teuber, with contributions by Willi Boehi
Translated by David Streit SVD

The "News Update on Religion and Church in China" appears regularly in each issue of Religions & Christianity in Today's China (RCTC). *Since the editorial staff learns of some items only later, it can happen that there are chronological overlaps between "News Updates" of two consecutive issues of* RCTC. *In these cases stories referred to in earlier "News Updates" will not be repeated. All "News Updates" can be found online at the website of the China-Zentrum (www.china-zentrum.de). – The last "News Update"* (RCTC *2022, No. 3, pp. 3-19*) *covered the period March 30 – July 5, 2022.*

Politics

July 29–30, 2022:

Central conference on United Front work with a keynote speech by Xi Jinping

In his speech, Xi Jinping described the United Front as an "important magic weapon [*fabao* 法宝] to victoriously overcome the enemy, wield power, strengthen the country, and unite all Chinese sons and daughters at home and abroad, thus achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." Whether people's hearts can be won will determine success or failure of the party and the cause of the people, Xi said. He further said that with the unprecedented changes in the world, the role of the United Front in safeguarding the nation's sovereignty, security and development interests is more important than ever. He emphasized the necessity of establishing "consensus" (*gongshi* 共识). Referring to the religions that, according to the party doctrine, belong to the social groups to be united by the United Front, Xi repeated that it is necessary to "persist in the orientation of religions towards Sinicization." He had first put forward this sentence in his speech at the Central Conference on United Front Work in May 2015. Since the constitutional reform of March 2018, the religions have been directly overseen by the Chinese Communist Party's United Front Department (www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-07/30/content_5703635.htm). *kwt*

Religious Policy

July 26, 2022:

The new official list of *xiejiao* (heretical teachings) contains a UFO-related group for the first time

23 groups are identified as *xiejiao* 邪教 in the list that appeared on the portal of the state-run China Anti-Cult Network. They are classified according to their religious background as follows: Two are

listed as practicing "under the *qigong* banner" – Falungong 法轮功 and Riyue qigong 日月气功. Four use the name of Buddhism – Guanyin famen 观音法门, Lingxian zhen fozong 灵仙真佛宗 (True Buddha School), Yuandun famen 圆顿法门 and Huazang zongmen 华藏宗门. 16 practice in the name of Christianity, the most active of them according to the list are Quanneng shen 全能神 (Church of Almighty God), Mentuhui 门徒会 (Association of Disciples), Huhanpai 呼喊派 (Shouters), Sanban puren 三班仆人 (Three Grades of Servants) and Xueshui shengling 血水圣灵 (Bloody Holy Spirit). One group practices under the extraterrestrial banner, namely Yinhe lianbang 银河联邦 (Galactic Federation). According to *Bitter Winter*, the spread of UFO theories in China has increased significantly since the outbreak of the pandemic. According to *Bitter Winter*, the extraterrestrial category did not exist in the last *xiejiao* list from 2017 which contained 22 groups. The new list titled 警惕! 警惕! 警惕! 这些都是邪教 (Warning! Warning! Warning! These are all *xiejiao*) can be found at www.chinafxj.cn/n47/c805824/content.html; *Bitter Winter* explanations are at https://bitterwinter.org/xiejiao-china-updates-the-list-some-new-entries).

Article 300 of the Criminal Code deals with the criminal offense of the "organization and use of a secret society or a heretical cult organization or use of superstition to undermine the implementation of the law." According to a 2017 interpretation by the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Prosecutor's Office, certain activities aimed at spreading a *xiejiao* carry prison terms ranging from three to seven years. *kwt*

September 1, 2022:

End of the transition period for the mandatory acquisition of the new "Internet Religious Information Service License"

The websites of the official associations of the five state-recognized religions now all have the mandatory license, which must be displayed in the imprint at the bottom of the website. For example, the Chinese Daoist Association's website, www.taoist.org.cn, has the license number 国 (2022) 0000002, meaning it has the second license issued by the religious affairs authority at the national level. It has not yet been possible to obtain an overview of the extent to which other religious Internet services have been able to acquire a license or to continue their service; what is certain is that the range of services has become significantly smaller. Since March 1, 2022, according to the new "Measures on the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services," anyone who wants to publicly offer information about religion through an online medium must first obtain an "Internet Religious Information Service License" (互联网宗教信息服务许可证). Applicant organizations must demonstrate that they have qualified information reviewers. – See also the entry of September 1, 2022 in the section "Catholic Church." *kwt*

Religious Studies

September 5, 2022:

Online conference on Canon Law and Chinese Law with experts from Chinese, Italian and Pontifical Institutes, organized by the Pu Shi Institute of Social Science and the Università di Camerino

The Beijing-based Pu Shi Institute reported on its website: "Experts and scholars from the Peking University, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the China University of Political Science and Law, the University of Camerino, the University of Naples Federico II, the Pontifical University of Santa Croce

and the pontifical Dicastery on Legislative Texts discussed, among other things, 'Religions and the Rule of Law in China,' 'The Power [*quanli* 权力] of the [papal] Curia and the Global Catholic Church,' 'The Curia's Jurisdiction and its Relationship to the State,' 'The Autonomy of Local Churches in the Reorganization of the Roman Curia,' 'The Confrontation of Curial Power with the Article on Religion of the Chinese Constitution.'" According to the Pu Shi Institute, this was the first exchange of Chinese and Italian scholars on canon law (www.pacilution.com/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=12670).
The Pu Shi Institute was founded in 1999 by Professor Liu Peng as a non-governmental think tank dealing with the relationship between religion and state, in particular with legislation on religion. *kwt*

Daoism

July 20-21, 2022:

Online exchange between Daoists in China and in the West

The virtual meeting was organized by the Chinese Daoist Association (CDA). According to a report on CDA's website, the aim of the event was to "enhance exchange, deepen cooperation and promote the spread of Daoist culture outside of China." In addition to Daoists from the CDA, representatives of Daoist organizations from 13 countries in Europe, America and Oceania took part in the exchange. One or more relevant comrades from the CCP's Central United Front Department also attended. In his speech, CDA President Li Guangfu commended the Daoist organizations for their efforts in promoting the spread of Daoism in their respective countries. Daoism should contribute wisdom and strength to build a community of common destiny for mankind, he said. Li Guangfu suggested working together to train internationalized Daoist talents. The representatives of the overseas organizations presented their work, shared difficulties, and made suggestions for future exchanges (www.taoist.org.cn/showInfoContent.do?id=8182&p='p'). *kwt*

Buddhism

July 2022:

Buddhist Association of Yunfu City in Guangdong calls on temples to oppose "illegal proselytization" by Tibetan Buddhist monks

In recent years, illegal missionary activities by Tibetan Buddhist monks in the interior [of Mainland China] have been a growing problem, the statement issued in July said. According to the text, this is a serious attack on the transmission of the teachings of Mayahana and Chan Buddhism. Some "lawless fellows" posing as Living Buddhas courted followers, swindled money and sex, or even supported separatist activities, the statement said. It claimed that according to government regulations, it is illegal for Tibetan Buddhist monks to leave Tibet without permission to spread the Dharma and accept disciples. "In order to safeguard the interests of believers and protect the pure transmission of the Buddha's teachings and the true lineage of Chan Buddhism," the Yunfu City Buddhist Association instructs local Buddhist associations and temples in their area to engage in opposing this proselytization. First, everyone should mainly devote themselves to Chan Buddhism, which the statement said is a historical mission since the great Chan master Huineng (638–713) came from Yunfu. Second, according to the statement, no monastery may accept monks of Tibetan Buddhism without permission or let them recruit followers secretly; the sangha of the monasteries is not allowed to spread the Dharma together with monks of Tibetan Buddhism or to study Tibetan Buddhism without permission, contrary

to religious policy and religious teachings and precepts. Third, infiltration by Tibetan Buddhist monks from abroad must also be resisted, the statement said. The text of the notice was made public by the Weiquanwang (Rights Protection Network) blog on July 22 (https://wqw2010.blogspot.com/2022/07/blog-post_22.html).

There have been reports for some time that the Chinese authorities are trying to stop the spread of Tibetan Buddhism among the Han people (see e.g. *RCTC* 2022, No. 2, p. 8, for a report by the International Campaign for Tibet). Also, according to Article 34 of the "Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel" of 2021, it is mandatory for religious clergy of all religions to obtain approval from the religious affairs authorities for cross-provincial religious activities. *kwt*

July 21, 2022:

Photos of memorial tablets for Japanese war criminals erected in the Xuanzang Temple in Nanjing went viral – "public outrage" and a call for increased surveillance of religious sites

According to Chinese media, a temple visitor discovered the tablets and took photos of them in February 2022. She informed the temple authorities, who immediately removed them. It wasn't until July 21 that someone posted photos of those tablets on Sina Weibo, where the hashtag "Nanjing Xuanzang Temple" received over 880 million clicks by the next day, according to the party-affiliated *Global Times*, and netizens called for severe punishment. On July 22, the monastery's abbot was removed for not having reported the incident to the authorities immediately in February. The temple was closed for "rectification," and the head of the municipality's religious bureau was also fired. On July 24, according to a report in the *Global Times*, the Nanjing municipal government announced the arrest of a woman named Wu Aping. The announcement said that in December 2017, Wu Aping brought memorial tablets with the names of five Japanese war criminals to the temple and told the monks that these were her friends; she paid for the installation of the tablets for five years in advance. All five, including Lieutenant General Tani Hisao and General Matsui Iwane, had been sentenced to death in war crimes trials in Nanjing or Tōkyō for their involvement in the Nanjing massacre. The Japanese troops had murdered 200,000 to 300,000 civilians and prisoners of war after their capture of the city of Nanjing in December 1937. Wu also had a plaque erected for the American missionary Minnie Vautrin, who at the time gave shelter to up to 10,000 Chinese refugees, especially women and children, in the Protestant Jinling Women's College in Nanjing, which she ran. At home in the USA, in 1941, Vautrin took her own life as a result of the trauma she had suffered during the war. According to the *Global Times*, Wu Aping confessed that she suffered mentally from the history of the massacre, turned to Buddhism, and thought of "solving resentment" and "getting rid of suffering" through the memorial tablets in the temple. Acting "out of a selfish and wrong initiative and understanding," she seriously violated "Buddhist teachings of promoting good and punishing evil," damaging public order and hurting people's feelings, the Nanjing government said on July 24, adding that Wu was suspected of the crime of "picking quarrels and making trouble."

According to the *Global Times*, the incident revealed "loopholes" in the city's management of religious sites. On July 26, the National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA) issued a circular calling on all sites for religious activities in the country to learn a lesson from the "bad incident at Xuanzang Temple" and engage in self-examination and rectification; it also called for more surveillance and inspection of religious sites, schools and organizations (bitterwinter.org July 29; globaltimes.cn July 22,25; scmp.com July 22; sixthtone.com July 27; www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/22070554-1.htm [NRAA circular]). *kwt*

September 29, 2022:

Kashag releases position paper on reincarnation of 14th Dalai Lama – he will "reach the ripe age of 113"

The paper of the Kashag (the cabinet of the Tibetan government-in-exile) recalls that with the enactment of the "Measures for the Administration of Reincarnations of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism" in 2007, the government of the People's Republic of China placed the recognition of reincarnations under its control, and that it also "uses various means to promote a false narrative on the issue of reincarnation in general; and on the reincarnation of the present Dalai Lama in particular" among the ordained and lay faithful in Tibet. The Kashag further says that "it is also a fact that the issue of reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama continues to be discussed within our community and without as well." Therefore, the Kashag feels it necessary to present a position paper for everyone's information. "The Kashag has firm belief that His Holiness will live to the ripe age of 113 as per propitious prescient and the repeated assurances of His Holiness the Dalai Lama," the paper states. It goes on to say that the statements made by the Dalai Lama since 1969 on the question of his reincarnation, and all future instructions are entirely at his discretion. "No government nor any individual has the right to interfere in this matter. [...] This religious activity has to be conducted as per the responsibilities that His Holiness the Dalai Lama enshrines and entrusts" (https://tibet.net/kashags-position-on-the-issue-of-reincarnation-of-his-holiness-the-14th-dalai-lama/). The paper also mentions the statement made by the Dalai Lama on September 24, 2011, on the issue of his reincarnation. At the time, he explained that the person who reincarnates has the sole authority to decide where or how their reincarnation occurs. The Dalai Lama turned 87 on July 6. *kwt*

Islam

September 14, 2022:

Radio Free Asia: Doudian Mosque in Beijing is being remodeled to remove Arabic stylistic elements – "Sinicizing" other Hui mosques

According to *Radio Free Asia* (*RFA*), the mosque in Doudiancun 窦店村 in Beijing's Fangshan district, which was only completed in 2013, is the largest in northern China, offering space for 1,500 worshippers. Photos on the Internet show it in oriental style with domes and minarets. According to the *RFA*, the conversions began in August and are expected to be completed by May 1, 2023. The broadcaster reports that Xi Wuyi recently posted photos and descriptions of the renovation of the Doudian Mosque, commenting that it "shows the orderly progress of ... Sinicization of religion in China." Xi Wuyi is a Marxism researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and has frequently criticized religious phenomena.

An article from the time of the construction of the Doudian Mosque illustrates the change in the attitude of political planners over the past 11 years. An author named Li Hong wrote in the September 2013 issue of *Zhongguo minzu* (China's Nationalities) magazine that a quarter of Doudiancun's population is of Muslim Hui nationality; there had been a mosque there since 1713. In 2010, according to Li Hong, a development plan was drawn up in which Doudiancun was intended as a "village with ethnic characteristics." The "majestic" new mosque with its "strong Islamic characteristics," complemented by a 1,550-meter-long "commercial street with ethnic-Muslim characteristics," should also attract Muslims from the surrounding area, promote trade and tourism and publicize the "Doudiancun brand," Li Hong wrote back in 2013.

According to *RFA*, in July 2021, the authorities also announced the reconstruction of the Dongguan Mosque 东关清真大寺 in Xining, Qinghai Province, another large oriental-style structure with a dome and minarets. *Bitter Winter* pointed out that in a CCTV television report on a visit by Wang Yang, Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, to Xining in late June this year, a board with pictures of Dongguan Mosque before and after the "rectification" (*zhenggai* 整改) could be seen – in the "after" image, the dome is replaced with a curved Chinese roof and the minaret is turned into a pagoda (http://nrra.gov.cn/art/2022/7/1/art_624_195728.html, scene at the end of the film).

According to information from *Bitter Winter*, the golden dome of the Shanghai Hui Cemetery in Weijiajiao has also been removed during the lockdown in Shanghai. It further reported that on August 24, 2022, the "Sinicization" of the Zhaotong East Mosque 昭通东大寺 in Yunnan Province has started (bitterwinter.org Sept. 23; rfa.org Sept. 13; www.56-china.com.cn/show-case-1027.html). *kwt*

Protestant Churches

July 13, 2022:

Pastor Geng Zejun sentenced to one year and three months in prison

On July 13, 2022, the Huinong District Court of Shizuishan City, Ningxia Autonomous Region heard the case of Pastor Geng Zejun 耿则军 and community workers Luo Shiping and Wang Sufang of the local Church of the Rock 石教会. They were charged with organizing illegal gatherings. Bibles, hymnals and RMB 250,000 (about 36,000 Euros) were confiscated by the authorities during a raid in January. Pastor Geng Zejun insisted during the trial that he did not want to cooperate with the official church, saying that gatherings of Christians is not a crime. He was sentenced to one year and three months in prison. The two community sisters were each sentenced to six months in prison (bitterwinter.org Aug. 22; chinaaid.net Aug. 19).

Isabel Friemann, China Infostelle

August 17, 2022:

Arrest of Nu Minority Pastor in Yunnan

Although he has a degree from Yunnan Provincial Theological Seminary, an institution of the Chinese Christian Council, Pastor Wang Shunping 王顺平 was arrested on August 17. The charge is "suspicion of organizing and financing illegal gatherings." Pastor Wang belongs to the Nu ethnic group. He is currently being held in the Fugong County Detention Center (bitterwinter.org Sept. 19; chinaaid.net Sept. 19).

Isabel Friemann, China Infostelle

August 21, 2022:

Ban on the Fengsheng House Church in Xi'an

In an open letter on August 10, 2022, Lian Changnian 廉长年, senior pastor of the Fengsheng Church 丰盛教堂, founded more than 30 years ago, denounced the actions of the Shilipu District police against members of his congregation. He describes arrests, house searches, questioning at the door and threats

that the children will lose their jobs and educational opportunities. In addition, Pastor Lian rejects allegations of corruption against him. He calls for prayer and intercession in solidarity with the police authority. On August 21, Xi'an City issued a written ban on Fengsheng Church as an illegal organization that is unregistered and holding events and using social media without permission (bitterwinter.org Aug. 11; https://msguancha.com/a /lanmu13/2022/0823/22187.html; Twitter: Paul@cngovdefraud Aug. 21).

Isabel Friemann, China Infostelle

August 31 – September 8, 2022:

Chinese representation at the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe

Various delegations from China took part in the 11th assembly of the WCC, which took place in Karlsruhe/Germany from 31 August to 8 September. In addition to the seven-member delegation from the China Christian Council (CCC) led by President Rev. Wu Wei from Shanghai, the Lutheran Church Association from Hong Kong and the Presbyterian Church from Taiwan were also represented at the international assembly. The issue of the national unity of the country was controversially discussed in several workshops.

Isabel Friemann, China Infostelle

August 31 – September 8, 2022:

Chinese Christian Council in the Central Committee of the WCC

For the second time, Rev. Dr. Lin Manhong was elected as a deputy of the China Christian Council. Ms. Lin is the Chair of the Theological Education Department at the CCC and a Lecturer in Chinese Church History at the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. One of her particular concerns is to include a greater focus on global ecumenism in theological education. Rev. Kan Baoping, who represented the CCC at a WCC assembly for the third time, did not stand for re-election to the body. Ms. Gu Jingqin, head of the International Relations Department of the Christian Council and the Three-Self Movement, took his place.

Isabel Friemann, China Infostelle

September 9, 2022:

Sunshine Reformed Church banned as an illegal organization

On September 9, the Civil Affairs Bureau of Changchun City, Jilin Province classified Sunshine Reformed Church 阳光之家归正教会 as an unregistered, illegal civil and social organization. All other community activities are prohibited. A church service on August 21 was interrupted by police forces and Pastor Guo Muyun 郭幕云 and eight other church members were arrested (bitterwinter.org Sept. 20; http://mzj.changchun.gov.cn/zwdt/tzgg/202209/t20220907_3060330.html; www.rfa.org/mandarin/Xinwen/2-09162022093205.html).

Isabel Friemann, China Infostelle

Catholic Church

July 10, 2022:

James Su Zhimin: 90th birthday of a missing underground bishop

July 10 marked the 90th birthday of underground Bishop Su Zhimin of Baoding Diocese in Hebei. At least, according to a report by *Bitter Winter*, his birthday was usually celebrated on this day, although some official documents give July 1, 1932 as his date of birth. However, the bishop has been in prison since 1997 and was last seen accidentally by relatives in a hospital in 2003; it has never been confirmed whether he is still alive. The authorities had strictly forbidden celebrations, but according to *Bitter Winter*, Catholics still gathered for Mass and prayer in private rooms. The situation in one of the previous strongholds of the underground Church in China is difficult. The second bishop in Baoding, An Shuxin, was also imprisoned until 2006. After his release, he joined the Patriotic Association and was appointed diocesan administrator by the Vatican. With his entry into the official Church, the situation in Baoding became complicated as many priests and believers did not want to follow Bishop An. In a June 15, 2022, "Pastoral Letter on the civil registration of the clergy in the Diocese of Baoding," Bishop An referred to himself as "head of the diocese," and said that over the past few months, more than 30 priests have joined him, the "diocesan bishop," and had celebrated Church services together with him, that is, had registered. Those who do not follow him would be denied the sacraments. Since the publication of the "Pastoral guidelines of the Holy See concerning the civil registration of clergy in China" on June 28, 2019, the government everywhere has been putting strong pressure on underground priests to register. This is having an effect in many places, although the resistance in Baoding is still high and many believers do not accept the registered priests. At least ten priests from the diocese have been arrested since January 2022.

Bishop Su Zhimin was arrested three times between 1956 and 1975. After his release in 1979 he studied in the underground and was ordained a priest in 1981 at the age of 49. A year later he was arrested again and released in 1986. He was ordained a bishop in the underground in 1993 and appointed diocesan bishop of Baoding by the Holy See in 1995. This was followed by further arrests and house arrest. In 2015, *Bitter Winter* said, his family was told that the bishop was alive and would be released if the Vatican "improved" its relations with China. Catholics in Baoding had hoped this would happen after the signing of the 2018 Sino-Vatican agreement on the appointment of bishops, but it has not happened. It is possible that the bishop is no longer alive (*AsiaNews* July 15; www.bitterwinter.org July 12). *kf*

July 16/17, 2022:

Beijing Cathedral reopens after six months of pandemic-related closure with baptism of 101 catechumens – "first Holy Mass of the year" in Hohhot

"Before dawn on July 16, the day of reopening, the faithful, both young and old, were waiting outside the gate [of the Beijing Cathedral], rejoicing at being able to resume their spiritual, liturgical and pastoral activities in the presence of their beloved community," writes the *Fides* news agency. In the afternoon, the participants of the baptismal course were baptized, received Holy Communion for the first time and were confirmed by Bishop Li Shan of Beijing.

On July 17, according to a report by *Xinde*, the Eastern Church in the city of Hohhot in Inner Mongolia was allowed to reopen and "the first Holy Mass of the year" was celebrated there by Bishop Meng Qinglu. In the diocese of Xi'an, too, churches were able to reopen in July after being closed as a preventive measure (Agenzia *Fides* July 18; xinde.org July 18).

However, lockdowns and church closures continue to occur at the local level in different parts of China. *kwt*

August 18–20, 2022:

10th National Assembly of Representatives of Chinese Catholicism meets in Wuhan

The highest body of official Catholicism elected a new leadership of the official Catholic governing bodies, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA) and the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference. Bishop Li Shan of Beijing became the new chairman of the CPA. Bishop Shen Bin of Haimen was elected president of the Bishops' Conference. A report on the work of the past six years was presented and approved, and the statutes of the two governing bodies were revised. According to official figures, 345 clergy, religious sisters and lay Catholics took part in the congress. On August 23, the newly elected leadership was received by Wang Yang, chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Also present was You Quan, head of the Chinese Communist Party's United Front Department (see subpage of the 10th National Assembly on the CPA and the Bishops' Conference website: www.chinacatholic.cn/html/folder/22070577-1.htm; *Xinhua* Aug. 23). – For details and background see the article and the partial translation of the work report in *China heute* 2022, No. 3, pp. 140-143; 167-171 (in German). *kwt*

August 26, 2022:

Beihan Church in Taiyuan demolished

In the diocese of Taiyuan, the Catholic church in Beihan Village, Wanbailin District, was partly demolished and partly blown up by the authorities. This is shown by photos in a post on the web portal www.163.com. The demolition of the imposing, two-towered Gothic church is obviously related to urban development. The entire village of Beihan had been demolished earlier, and numerous new blocks of high-rise buildings can be seen in the photos. The bell tower of the church, which was modeled on Notre Dame in Paris, measured 40 meters. The church was rebuilt in 1990 on the site of an earlier church and only completed in 2012. The village is to be transformed into a new shopping, theatre, cultural, leisure and tourism center, the report says. The villagers have been resettled (www.163.com/dy/article/HFRQID090553Q2Y8.html). *kf*

August 28, 2022:

Bishop Ye Ronghua of Ankang has passed away

The bishop of Ankang Catholic Diocese in Shaanxi has died at the age of 91 after a long illness. John Baptist Ye Ronghua was born on June 20, 1931 into a Catholic family in a village near Hanzhong, Shaanxi Province. From 1945 he attended the Hanzhong Diocese Minor Seminary and later the Kaifeng Regional Seminary in Henan, where he studied until 1958. He spent ten years in labor camps during the Cultural Revolution. It was not until December 10, 1981, that Ye Ronghua was ordained a priest and worked as a pastor in various parishes. In 1987 Bishop Li Du'an of Xi'an sent him to the Diocese of Ankang to rebuild the small Catholic community in a poor region of Shaanxi. On December 10, 2000, Bishop Li Du'an ordained him fifth Bishop of the Diocese of Ankang. On November 30, 2016,

with the permission of the Holy See and the authorities, Wang Xiaoxun was ordained coadjutor bishop of Ankang (*AsiaNews* Aug. 29; www.xinde.org Aug. 28). *kf*

September 1, 2022:

Situation of the Catholic online media *Xinde* and *Xiao zhushou* following the end of the transition period for license acquisition

The Catholic newspaper *Xinde* 信德 (*Faith*) based in Shijiazhuang, which has not been allowed to appear in print since autumn 2020, was able to obtain the new mandatory "Internet Religious Information Services License" for its website www.xinde.org and its public WeChat account in August. In a September 1 editorial, author Ye Sheng ("Voice in the Desert") wrote that the new regulations have forced some services on the Xinde website to be discontinued and related content to be removed. "We only hope that we can continue to provide services to the best of our ability by figuring out how to adapt and transform our development within the scope that politics allows," Ye Sheng wrote. For some time now, *Xinde* has been publishing significantly less news from Church life in local dioceses and parishes than before, but continues to post reports about the universal Church from *Vatican News* almost every day. The popular Beijing-based Catholic app *Tianzhujiao xiao zhushou* 天主教小助手 (CathAssist), which had offered many materials related to spiritual life such as daily readings, Liturgy of the Hours, Bible and catechism, announced on August 23 that despite best efforts it had not been able to acquire the necessary license and therefore had to discontinue its service. The app was no longer accessible, causing great regret. Apparently, however, a solution could be found, involving a new start with a direct connection to the Diocese of Beijing. With the new name *Wanyou zhenyuan* 万有真原 (True Origin of All Things) and the address www.wanyouzhenyuan.cn, the work of the app will continue. The announcement of its re-launch on September 21 reads: "Thank God, we have good news for everyone: Beijing Diocese's Xishiku Church *Wanyou zhenyuan* app (developed with *Tianzhujiao xiao zhushou*'s team) is now accessible to all." The new app, which has many similarities to the old one (details could not be checked), has obtained an "Internet Religious Information Services License". *kwt*

September 9, 2022:

Death of Shen Baozhi, General Secretary of the Diocese of Shanghai

According to official death notices from the Shanghai Catholic Patriotic Association, the Church Affairs Commission, the Shanghai Diocese and the Catholic Intelligentsia Association of Shanghai, Fr. Berchmans Shen Baozhi died on September 9 at the age of 96 after a long illness. The obituary lists his positions in the Patriotic Association and in the Diocese of Shanghai. From the 1960s he was vice chairman of the Shanghai Patriotic Association and General Secretary of the diocese. Among other things, he was also a member of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Shanghai for five legislative periods.

Shen Baozhi was an influential but problematic figure in the diocese. He lived in a civil marriage. The obituary states that the funeral service will be kept simple at Shen Baozhi's request (www.shtzjlh.org/news_detail.aspx?newsid=2023&newscateid=1&cateid=1). *kf*

Sino-Vatican Relations

July 19, 2022:

Archbishop Gallagher, Vatican "Foreign Minister," in an interview on relations with China and the Agreement

Commenting on the results after four years of the agreement, the archbishop said: "The balance sheet, I suppose, is not terribly impressive. We've had six episcopal appointments, and there are some others in the pipeline. So it's not without results. I suppose we would have liked to see more results, and there's much work to be done. But the agreement is delivering to a certain extent. The agreement could deliver more, but we have had Covid, and the delegations have not been able to meet in recent years. So, we're working on that now, and we're trying to move forward and make the agreement work and work better."
In the interview conducted by *America* magazine's Gerard O'Connell, Gallagher reconfirmed that the agreement dealt only with the appointment of bishops and that delegations would only speak on that subject. In his view, the agreement has the function of being a sort of confidence-building measure, "if we can work successfully with the Chinese authorities on the appointment of bishops, then that obviously helps both parties to begin to examine other questions as well." The archbishop confirmed that beforehand there had been discussion such as on the opening of an office of the Holy See in Beijing. When asked why the text of the agreement had never been published, he said: "The text of the agreement was drawn up before I came into office [in November 2014], and it was never substantially changed since I came into this job. I'm led to believe that right from the beginning, it was decided by common consent that the text would not be published, at least not until it's signed definitively. Furthermore, there is an undertaking to try and improve the text. When we see that maybe certain things don't work as well as they should, then that may be the moment when the text could be modified and improved." The archbishop also said that he thinks it would be premature to sign the agreement definitively. He also confirmed that there is a desire to gradually have face-to-face meetings at a higher level [than that of the foreign ministers who met on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference back in 2020], saying: "There's a desire, yes. This is the desire to see the bar raised progressively so that Cardinal Pietro Parolin would meet somebody higher than [Foreign Minister] Wang Yi, but not the president, and thus eventually, possibly, preparing the way for a meeting between Xi Jinping and the Holy Father."
With regard to the arrest of Cardinal Joseph Zen in Hong Kong on May 12, Archbishop Gallagher said that the Holy See was very concerned by the arrest of Cardinal Zen. "I think his arrest was something that for us was very surprising, and we hope that the matter can be resolved satisfactorily in the near future." Concerning the restriction of freedoms in Hong Kong, Gallagher said: "I think we will be encouraging our people to make the best of the freedom that they have, of the space that they have, as we would do in many countries of the world (www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2022/07/19/vatican-china-hong-kong-pope-francis-243379).
Archbishop Gallagher also spoke about the renewal of the Vatican missions in Taipei and Hong Kong, which were announced on the same day; see the entries of July 19, 2022 in the "Hong Kong" and "Taiwan" sections. *kf*

Late August to early September:

Vatican delegation travels to China for negotiations – Meeting with underground Bishop Shi Hongzhen of Tianjin

Cardinal Secretary of State Parolin mentioned the delegation visit to China in an interview on September 2 (see entry below). *Catholic News Agency* gave the date of the China visit as August 28 to Sep-

tember 2, 2022. It was the first meeting of delegations from both sides in over two years. This time the meeting took place in Tianjin and not in Beijing, probably because of concerns about possible COVID infections on the Chinese side (according to Lucia Cheung on her blog). As reported by Giorgio Bernardelli in *AsiaNews* and by Cheung, the Vatican delegation led by Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli was also able to meet the 92-year-old Bishop of Tianjin, Melchior Shi Hongzhen, who is not recognized by the government. According to Bernardelli, he is under house arrest. In Tianjin Diocese, which has around 100,000 believers, there has been no official bishop recognized by the authorities since 2005. According to Cheung, the Vatican long ago appointed Fr. Yang Wanyuan as Bishop Shi's successor. She wondered if the delegation's visit to the old bishop meant that the Chinese side had agreed; however, according to Cheung, Father Yang's name was not on the list of delegates to the 10th National Assembly, which in turn speaks against his imminent ordination as bishop (*AsiaNews* Sept. 11; luciacheungoffice.medium.com Sept. 4; *Vatican News* Sept. 3). *kwt*

September 2, 2022:

Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin is convinced in an interview that the agreement on the appointment of bishops will be renewed

Cardinal Parolin gave the interview to the Italian news channel *Tg2* on September 2, here we quote the summary of the interview that appeared in *Vatican News* the next day. Parolin mentioned that a delegation from the Holy See had just returned from talks in China. "When you negotiate with someone, you must always start from recognizing their good faith. Otherwise, the negotiation makes no sense," said Parolin. He acknowledged that there have been many difficulties and that there is a long way to go. From the conviction expressed by Cardinal Parolin immediately after the delegation's return that the agreement should be renewed, Lucia Cheung and Giorgio Bernardelli concluded that the agreement had actually already been renewed at the delegations' meeting, even though an official announcement would probably be made on a day closer to its formal expiry date (October 22). However, both suspected that under these circumstances – contrary to hopes Cardinal Parolin and Archbishop Gallagher had expressed in interviews – there was probably no adjustment to the agreement, since the Chinese negotiators would have needed more time for consultations with higher authorities in the event of major changes, especially since the new Chinese official responsible for religious affairs, Cui Maohu, has only been in office since June and is not very familiar with the subject. But, according to Cheung, if the talks in late August had failed because of the Vatican's wishes to fine-tune the agreement, it could have taken a long time before they could be resumed because of the upcoming party congress and the new formation of the Chinese leadership (*AsiaNews* Sept. 11; luciacheungoffice.medium.com Sept. 4; *Vatican News* Sept. 3). – For more on developments (up to Mid-September 2022) concerning the question of renewal of the Provisional Agreement between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China on the Appointment of Bishops see also *China heute* 2022, No. 3, pp. 143-145 (in German). *kwt*

September 13–15, 2022:

Pope Francis visits Kazakhstan, expresses willingness to visit China – and does not meet President Xi, but receives an appreciative reaction from the Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman

The Pope attended the Seventh Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in the Kazakh capital of Nur-Sultan, and Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Nur-Sultan on September 14. On

the outbound flight on September 13, according to *Reuters*, when asked if he would meet Xi there, Pope Francis said: "I don't have any news about that," and further: "I am always ready to go to China." Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning at her press conference the following day said: "[I] appreciate the friendship and goodwill conveyed by Pope Francis. China and the Vatican maintain good communication. We are also ready to keep our dialogue and cooperation with the Vatican going and actively advance the process of improving relations." *Reuters* correspondent Philipp Pullella, citing a Vatican source, reported that the Vatican had informed China that the Pope was willing to meet President Xi in Nur-Sultan but China had said there was not enough time. Cardinal Parolin, on the other hand, told the newspaper *Il Messaggero* on September 14 that there had been no contacts prior to the trip and that none were planned (fmprc.gov.cn Sept. 14; ilmessaggero.it Sept. 14; *Reuters* Sept. 13, 15). *kwt*

September 14, 2022:

Cardinal Secretary of State Parolin in an interview on the possible relocation of the Vatican China Office from Hong Kong to Beijing and on the future of the Nunciature in Taiwan

When asked: "Would you be willing to move the office from Hong Kong to Beijing?" the cardinal, who at that time was in Kazakhstan, told the newspaper *Il Messaggero*: "It doesn't seem like a new idea to me, we've put it up again and again. We are waiting for a signal from Beijing, which has not yet arrived." The newspaper also asked about the Vatican nunciature in Taiwan: "Are you ready to close it or reduce its importance as China demands?" Parolin replied: "For now, everything will remain as it is" (ilmessaggero.it September 14).

In Hong Kong, the Holy See has an unofficial representation, the Study Mission, which deals with issues of the Mainland Church (not the Hong Kong Church). The Holy See maintains full diplomatic relations with Taiwan (Republic of China). The heads of the representations in Hong Kong and Taipei were replaced in July after a vacancy of more than five months; see the entries of July 19, 2022 in the sections "Hong Kong" and "Taiwan". *kwt*

September 15, 2022:

Pope Francis on his return flight from Kazakhstan on the dialogue with China and the trial of Cardinal Zen in Hong Kong

At the press conference on the plane, when asked by a journalist about religious freedom in China and the trial of Cardinal Zen, Pope Francis said: "To understand China takes a century, and we do not live for a century. The Chinese mentality is a rich mentality, and when it gets a little sick, it loses its richness; it is capable of making mistakes. In order to understand, we have chosen the path of dialogue, open to dialogue. There is a bilateral Vatican-Chinese commission that is going well, slowly, because the Chinese pace is slow, they have an eternity to go forward: they are a people of endless patience." Then the Pope said: "It is not easy to understand the Chinese mentality, but it should be respected, I always respect this. And here in the Vatican, there is a dialogue commission that is going well, chaired by Cardinal Parolin, and he is the person right now who knows the most about China and dialogue with the Chinese. It is a slow process, but steps forward are always being made." He continued: "Qualifying China as undemocratic, I don't wish to, because it's such a complex country ... Yes, it is true that there are things that seem undemocratic to us, that is true. Cardinal Zen, an elderly man, is going to

trial these days, I think. He says what he feels, and it is evident that there are limitations there. More than qualifying, because it is difficult, and I do not wish to qualify, they are impressions; more than to qualify, I try to support the path of dialogue. Then, in dialogue many things become clear, and not only about the Church, but also about other areas; for example the extent of China, the governors of the provinces are all diverse. There are different cultures within China, it is a giant, and understanding China is an enormous thing. But one should not have to lose patience [...]" (www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2022/september/documents/2022915-kazakhstan-voloritorno.html). *kwt*

Event preview outside the reporting period of this News Update: October 22, 2022:

Holy See announces second extension of the Provisional Agreement on the Appointment of Bishops for another two years

The Communiqué published by the Press Office of the Holy See reads: "After appropriate consultation and assessment, the Holy See and the People's Republic of China have agreed to extend for another two years the Provisional Agreement regarding the appointment of Bishops, which was signed on 22 September 2018 and previously extended on 22 October 2020. The Vatican Party is committed to continuing a respectful and constructive dialogue with the Chinese Party for a productive implementation of the Accord and further development of bilateral relations, with a view to fostering the mission of the Catholic Church and the good of the Chinese people."
On October 24, during Regular Press Conference, China Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin confirmed the renewal of the agreement, he said: "On October 22, after friendly consultations, China and the Vatican agreed to a two-year extension of the provisional agreement on the appointment of bishops. The two sides will continue to maintain close communication and consultation, work for the sound implementation of the provisional agreement and continuously advance the process of improving relations" (https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2022/10/22/0788/01620.html; http://us.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/fyrth/202210/t20221024_10791171.htm). *kwt*

Hong Kong

July 19, 2022:

New representative of the Holy See in Hong Kong

The new head of the Holy See Study Mission in Hong Kong, the unofficial representation of the Holy See to Mainland China, is Monsignor José Luis Diaz Mariblanca Sanchez, *Avvenire* reports. The Spaniard from the Archdiocese of Toledo most recently worked in the Vatican Secretariat of State. The Study Mission belongs to the nunciature in the Philippines. Since 2007, two clerics have been working in Hong Kong in the diplomatic service. Monsignor Diaz has been active in the nunciatures in Indonesia and Algeria. Monsignor Alvaro Ernesto Izurieta y Sea from the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires, who has been in Hong Kong since 2020, works with him in the Hong Kong Study Mission (*Avvenire* July 19). *kf*

September 26, 2022:

Trial of Cardinal Joseph Zen begins in Hong Kong

The trial of Cardinal Zen and four democracy activists should have started in the West Kowloon Court on September 19, but was postponed by the chief judge, Ada Yim, because of her COVID infection.

Zen, the 90-year-old Bishop Emeritus of Hong Kong, was arrested by Hong Kong security police on May 11 along with three other activists, but was released on bail a few hours later. Initially, the accusation was "collusion with foreign forces," i.e. violation of the national security law. However, they were later accused of failing to properly register a humanitarian fund they managed. That's what the process is about now. The "612 Humanitarian Relief Fund" supported pro-democracy protesters of 2019 in paying for the legal and medical expenses they faced. The fund was dissolved in October 2021. In addition to Cardinal Zen, the co-defendants of the trial are lawyer Margaret Ng, pop singer Denise Ho, former Legislative Council member Cyd Ho and cultural scholar Hui Po-Keung. *AsiaNews* reported on September 28 that the hearing unexpectedly lasted only two days. Judge Ada Yim said there was enough evidence to bring charges. The trial is scheduled to resume on October 26. However, *Domradio* quoted the *South China Morning Post* as saying that the police, on the basis of the security law, are conducting a parallel investigation to the trial of Zen and the others on charges of "collusion with foreign forces." Cardinal colleagues such as Cardinal Fernando Filoni and Cardinal Gerhard Müller spoke out in support of Cardinal Zen. In a joint motion for a resolution on July 6, the European Parliament condemned Zen's arrest and called for the charges against Zen and the other four trustees to be dropped (*AFP* Sept. 26; *AsiaNews* Sept. 28; *Avvenire* Sept. 23; *CNN* Sept. 26; *Domradio* Sept. 26; Il *Messaggero* Sept. 1; *Vatican News* Sept. 15; www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2022-0358_DE.html). See also the report in the information section. *kf*

Macau

June 26, 2022:

Catholic weekly newspaper *Macau Observer* is closed

The four-page newsletter, edited by lay Catholics, ceased publication on June 26 with the 1,138th issue. The Chinese-language newspaper first appeared on January 1, 1995. The *Observatório de Macau* 澳門觀察報 was initially published every two weeks and sold at newsstands. The publisher was the Catholic Lay Council of Macau. When the newspaper was first launched, according to a January 15, 1995 article by *UCAN*, the newspaper intended to publish reports on social issues, news analysis, commentary on political events, religion and belief and reader comments. It was meant to be a window for religious freedom. An editorial in the last issue said that the aim of the publication was to look at the local community from a different perspective and to provide an additional channel for the people of Macau to communicate and [express their views]. The newspaper was mainly created by volunteers. *kf*

Taiwan

June 21, 2022 – February 5, 2023:

The Museum of World Religions presents an exhibition on death

Entitled "Bright as Night, Dark as Day. A Walk with Death" (生死晝夜: 於死亡中前行), the Museum of World Religions in Yonghe, south of Taipei, opened an exhibition on death on June 21, 2022.
Why do we fear death? This is one of the many questions that inspire reflection in the museum's corridor. There is no correct answer, the museum's director Ma Yu-chuan 馬幼娟 admitted in a June 21 interview with the *Taipei Times*. But she learned it the hard way, since she couldn't reconcile with her father, who died suddenly in an accident. At least she makes sure she is affectionate to her mother, who suffered a stroke in January. Death is still one of the major taboos, Director Ma added and said that the museum's founder, Buddhist master Hsin Dao 心道, was concerned that guests might feel uncomfort-

able visiting the exhibition. But Ma personally disagrees, as the exhibition gives guests plenty of room to think and contemplate what death is and why they fear it.
First, the exhibition depicts death, judgment and life after death in the various religions. Then, in an empty space for reflection, visitors are invited to write down their reflections on life and death, which then are displayed on a screen. After this interactive experience of rebirth, they are released into daily life. The museum's long-term goal is "to enable people to reflect on their inner selves by drawing from the perspectives of life and death of different religions."
So far, the museum has presented different phases of life such as old age, childhood and marriage. The impressive exhibition about death runs until February 5, 2023.
Willi Boehi

July 11, 2022:

Conference at the Embassy of Taiwan at the Vatican: "Beautiful Taiwan, the Field of God"

The meeting marked the 80th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of China (Taiwan) and the Holy See. The event was organized by the Embassy. "Missionaries not only established hospitals, schools, orphanages, and retired homes, but also helped sustain the local language and culture," said Ambassador Matthew S. M. Lee, recalling the importance of the Catholic Church's presence in Taiwan.
Ambassador Lee and the Secretary of the Dicastery for Evangelization, Msgr. Protase Rugambwa, gave the introductory addresses. The lectures were given by three priests who have lived and worked in Taiwan: Fr. Gianni Criveller PIME, Camillian Missionary Fr. Felice Chech and the Under-secretary of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue Fr. Paulin Batairwa Kubuya SX. Prof. Peter Kuo Hsiuoung Chiang moderated. Among the more than 80 participants were members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, religious from various congregations, journalists and friends of the Embassy. Members of various religious congregations briefly shared their missionary experiences in Taiwan.
Also on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of diplomatic relations, on July 1 the Embassy opened the exhibition "Friendly Taiwan meets Fratelli Tutti. Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition." – The embassy's website states: "All these events wish to emphasize how much the Church's century-long presence has been vital for the development of Taiwan, as stated in the past by President Tsai Ing-wen" (*Vatican News* July 13; www.taiwanembassy.org/va_en/post/4420.html). *kf*

July 19, 2022:

New representative of the Holy See in Taiwan

The Holy See's new Chargé d'Affaires ad interim in Taiwan is Msgr. Stefano Mazzotti, according to a July 19 report in *Avvenire*. Msgr. Mazzotti was ordained in 2001 for the Diocese of Terni-Narni-Amelia in Italy and has served in the Holy See's diplomatic service in the Philippines, Portugal, France, Egypt and in the Secretariat of State in the Italian office. The Holy See maintains diplomatic relations with the Republic of China in Taiwan, although no nuncio has resided there since 1972, but a Chargé d'Affaires (*Avvenire* July 19). *kf*

September 2, 2022:

Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Cheng of Taipei has passed away

Archbishop Emeritus Joseph Cheng Tsai-fa has died at the age of 90. From 2004 to 2007 he presided over the Archdiocese of Taipei. Previously, Cheng was bishop of Tainan and Apostolic Administrator of Kinmen and Matsu (*AsiaNews* Sept. 9). *kf*

September 4, 2022:

Chen Chien-jen at the beatification of Pope John Paul I in the Vatican

Former Vice President of the Republic of China in Taiwan (2016-2020), Chen Chien-jen, represented President Tsai Ing-wen when he attended the beatification of Pope John Paul I at the Vatican on September 4. At a reception prior to the celebrations, the Catholic epidemiologist met Pope Francis, brought President Tsai's greetings and asked for prayers for Taiwan. The Pope replied that they should pray together for peace in the world. Chen gave the Pope a documentary about the work of the Catholic missionaries in Taiwan. Chen and his delegation of six visited the Taiwan Embassy to the Holy See and praised the efforts of Vatican diplomats. The Vatican is the only country in Europe that maintains diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

A visit to the exhibition "Friendly Taiwan meets Fratelli Tutti. Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition," a meeting at the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and with the Sovereign Order of Malta to promote international relations with the Island in terms of humanitarian relations were also on the programme. Chen Chien-jen has also been a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences since 2021. He has already visited the Vatican in 2016, 2018 and 2019, where he also attended the canonization of Mother Teresa (*Taipei Times* Sept. 4, 5).

Willi Boehi

September 12, 2022:

Poll in Taiwan: Strong support for the death penalty

A vast majority of Taiwan's population opposes abolition of the death penalty, a Foundation for the People poll released September 12, 2022 has found. 86.9 percent of respondents were against its abolition, while only 12.4 percent were in favor of ending these violent deaths. However, 79.9 percent believed the current administration of President Tsai Ing-wen has essentially ceased this controversial practice. 88.8 percent of those surveyed were dissatisfied with Tsai's government because there had only been two executions in the past six years. 90.3 percent believed that the 38 people sentenced to death across the island should be executed soon. Only 10.4 percent of respondents agreed with President Tsai that abolishing the death penalty is a universal goal. On the other hand, 88.1 percent still believe that this brutal punishment helps to prevent serious crimes. Johnny Chiang 江啟臣, member of the Legislative Council for the KMT and chairman of the Foundation, told the *Taipei Times* on September 13 that opposition to abolition of the death penalty spanned age groups and party affiliations among the 1,050 respondents to the poll. 73.6 percent of those surveyed were dissatisfied with public safety, while 25.5 percent were satisfied.

The survey came at a critical time, as two police officers had just been shot dead in cold blood in southern Tainan. The shadows of the state of emergency (1949–1987) are probably still having an effect here.

Some, especially in the older generation, like to remember the time of martial law, because it was said that the streets were still safe and life was easy.
Willi Boehi

Singapore

August 30, 2022:

Newly created Cardinal William Goh wants to found interfaith research center

William Cardinal Goh, Archbishop of Singapore, who was elevated to the status of cardinal on August 27, announced in an interview with *Fides* on August 30, 2022 that he would set up a research institute to study the relationship between religions. He wants to promote religious harmony in Asia by strengthening dialogue between the different religions. Religious leaders understand each other well, respect each other and support each other, he said. For the country's Catholics, this meant first and foremost getting to know other religions. But interfaith dialogue was for people who are passionate and mature in their faith. It was very important to know your own faith, the Cardinal continued. In this sense, every believer could be an authentic witness of Christ with people of other religions. Of Singapore's 5.6 million population, 360,000 are Catholics in 32 parishes. Cardinal Go, 64, has led the Archdiocese of Singapore since 2013. He is the first cardinal of Singapore. With a total of six new cardinals from Asia, the number of possible Pope electors among the Asian cardinals increases to 21 out of a total of 132. Cardinal Goh is currently the only ethnic Chinese among the possible electors. Born in Singapore in 1957 to a Chinese family, he was ordained a priest in 1985 after studies in Singapore and Rome and became Archbishop of Singapore in 2013.
On September 8, more than 3,500 people celebrated Mass with the new cardinal in Singapore, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong with his wife. The cardinal said in his homily that Singapore is a model for interfaith harmony in the world. Religious leaders and the government worked hand in hand for the good of society instead of working against each other. – At the consistory in Rome, one of the few cardinals not present was Joseph Cardinal Zen of Hong Kong. He may still not have been in possession of his passport, which was taken from him after his brief arrest on May 11 (*Domradio* Aug. 27; *Eglises d'Asie* Sept. 10; *Licas* Aug. 29, Sept. 12; *Vatican News* Aug. 30; see also *RCTC* 2022, No. 2, p. 19f.). *kf*

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