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中國宗教評論

Religions & Christianity in Today's China

Vol. XIV 2024 No. 3

中国宗教评论

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Today we present to you the third issue 2024 of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* (中国宗教评论). This year we are a bit late as we wanted to include the first two contributions regarding the 11th European Catholic China Colloquium which was organized by the China-Zentrum and took place from 22 to 25 August 2024 in the Catholic-Social Institute in Siegburg/Germany. The topic of the colloquium was "Future Perspectives of the Catholic Church in China" with special focus on "Youth in China." Over 100 participants from 13 countries and regions took part in the conference. In the following issues we will peu à peu publish the proceedings, starting with this issue.

This issue first starts with the regular series of News Updates on recent events and general trends with regard to religions and especially Christianity in today's China.

You will then find a report of the Colloquium in Siegburg by Katharina Wenzel-Teuber, followed by the address of Monsignor Mirosław S. Wachowski, Undersecretary for Relations with States in the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, on 25 August 2024. China and its Catholic community are particularly close to Pope Francis and the Holy See, assured Msgr. Wachowski. For the future, he regarded the unity of the Catholic community in China and a good preparation of its bishops as the most important concerns, together with a proper formation and training of the clergy, women religious and lay faithful.

Katharina Wenzel-Teuber has again compiled "Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People's Republic of China" with an "Update for the Year 2023." In this year's statistical update, she is once again dealing with the discussion about "denomination-based" versus "deity-based" questioning methods when collecting data on the religious situation of the Chinese population. A report from the Pew Research Center is presented which analyzes the various methods used by the large scientific social surveys in China to measure religion and their results. In a study on the freely combined "mix-match" belief in Jesus Christ, two Chinese researchers also discuss the pros and cons of the two methods of questioning. In another study two sociologists have investigated whether a difference of religion between spouses affects marital satisfaction and whether there are differences between the sexes. There are new data from the 7th Chinese census of 2020 on the country's traditionally Muslim ethnic groups. For the Catholic Church in China, far more ordinations of priests were recorded in 2023 than in the pandemic-hit year of 2022. At the end of the statistical update, K. Wenzel-Teuber presents a Catholic app that uses an interactive map to find churches throughout China.

Religions & Christianity in Today's China is freely available on the website of the China-Zentrum, www.china-zentrum.de. Additionally, readers who subscribe to *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* will regularly receive e-mail updates providing web links to the contents of each newly published issue. – The China-Zentrum is a non-profit organization. For the publication of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* we are dependent on the generosity of our friends and readers. In order to help us cover inevitable costs, we would be very grateful if you could consider sending a voluntary contribution.

Sankt Augustin, September 2024 *The Editors*

News Update on Religion and Church in China April 8 – June 29, 2024

Compiled by Katharina Feith, Isabel Friemann (China InfoStelle) and Katharina Wenzel-Teuber
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 *2024, No. 2, pp. 3-22*) *covered the period December 3, 2023 – March 28, 2024.*

General

May 31, 2024:

Sixth Tone: Politics and digital progress endanger funeral supplies businesses

Government efforts to ban "superstitious" products and changing traditions are putting pressure on traders in a northern Chinese village known for its funeral and memorial supplies, writes the *Sixth Tone* portal, which is part of the Shanghai United Media Group, on May 31. The main street in Mibeizhuang village, Baoding city, Hebei province, stretches for one kilometer and is lined with "stores trading in death." 10,000 items for traditional Chinese funerals and memorial ceremonies, from paper flowers, paper replicas of cell phones or luxury cars, burial clothes to "spirit money" that is burned for deceased relatives, are offered here. The village accounts for 90% of the Chinese funeral supplies market, "recording an annual output of about 1 billion yuan ($137.94 million)." Usually, customers flock to the stores ahead of the annual Tomb-Sweeping Festival (Qingmingjie) in early April to commemorate the deceased, but this year they were slow to arrive. "Business is getting worse every year," *Sixth Tone* quoted a shop owner as saying. The decline of this once lucrative market is due to two major factors: "policy and progress." "In recent years, local authorities across the country, including in Baoding, have introduced 'civilized memorial' regulations targeting the manufacture or sale of 'feudal and superstitious' goods such as spirit money and other paper offerings. In addition, the emergence of new technologies is providing people with cheaper and more sustainable options for funeral and memorial ceremonies," thus the report. "In late March, local vendors received a text notification about the Baoding Civilized Memorial Initiative on their cell phones," according to *Sixth Tone*. Like similar measures introduced by cities in Jiangsu, Shandong, Guizhou, Hunan, Shaanxi and other provinces, the initiative aims to ban the memorial accessories. Violations of the new ruegulations will be punished

with heavy fines and confiscation of goods. A merchant whose business is on the verge of bankruptcy is quoted as saying that enforcement of the "civilized memorial" policy in Xiong County has become stricter in the past two years, "but there are too many traders, so it's difficult to tackle everyone." Plus, he adds, "people are quick to find ways to bend the rules." To bring death into the digital age, merchants are also trying to offer modern products, such as reusable electronic wreaths, which consist of a metal frame with artificial flowers and an LED screen and can be customized using a mobile phone app (*Sixth Tone* May 31). *kf*

Daoism

Around April 2024:

Baiyun Temple in Beijing publishes new "List of Monastic Rules" for Daoist clergy

In order to implement the National Conference on Religious Work's call for comprehensive and strict governance of religions and to deepen the Sinicization of Daoism, the Baiyun Temple (白云观, White Cloud Temple) and the Fire God Temple (火德真君庙) in Beijing jointly revised the "List of Monastic Rules" (清规榜) for their clergy and posted it on their premises as a sign of transparency. The list is attached verbatim to the report on the website of the Chinese Daoist Association (CDA) – which has its headquarters in the Baiyun Temple. The list contains 20 rules of punishment for various offenses, staggered according to their severity. The CDA published a similar list in 2015 entitled "Rule Agreement for Daoist Temples and Monasteries" (道教宫观规约).

Rule No. 1 in the new "List of Monastic Rules" of the two Beijing temples reads: "Love the country and religion, abide by the laws of the state. Anyone who violates this will be excommunicated (革出道门)." This is followed by a series of less serious offenses, such as "not taking part in the morning or evening recitation without reason" (No. 5) or "smoking in the palace hall, fasting hall or other public places of the temple" (No. 8), which are punished with the punishment of "reflecting on one's transgressions before the gods (神前思过)." Medium-serious offenses include, for example, "forming cliques and factions, stirring up rumors and causing incidents, destroying the harmony of the Daoist masses" (No. 12) and "drinking alcohol, eating meat and fish, killing animals" (No. 14); in mild cases the punishment is "reflecting on one's transgressions before the gods," in serious cases temporary exclusion from the community (迁单). The punishment of excommunication results from offenses such as "not returning to the monastery at night" (No. 16) or "betrayal of the master's school, arbitrary change of community or apostasy from the Daoist faith" (No. 20). The list is dated October 2023 (www.taoist.org.cn/showInfoContent.do?id=9854&p='p' [April 26]). *kwt*

May 19–25, 2024:

Training on the Sinicization of Daoism

"In order to deepen the Sinicization of Daoism in the new era and continuously raise the level of adaptation of Daoism to socialist society," the Chinese Daoist Association (CDA) and the Central Institute for Socialism jointly held the training course "Our country's Daoism adheres to the orientation towards Sinicization 2024" in Beijing from May 19 to 25, 2024. 58 Daoist representatives [Daoist priests and priestesses, according to the group photo] from all over China took part. Scholars from the Central Institute of Socialism, the Central Party School, various universities and cadres of the Central United Front combined theory with practical examples in their teaching; the guiding principle was Xi Jinping's Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for the New Era – according to the report on the CDA website (www.taoist.org.cn June 7). *kwt*

Buddhism

April 2024:

Reports: Authorities distribute new training manual to Tibetan Buddhist monks in Gansu

As *Radio Free Asia* (*RFA*) and the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) reported, the authorities have distributed a training manual to Buddhist monks in the monasteries of the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province. *RFA* said it had seen the manual, ICT cited information from Golok Jigme, a former political prisoner from the region. The manual contains 10 rules. Among them – according to the reports – is a ban on displaying photos of the Dalai Lama after his possible death. It also prohibits the monks from participating in the process of recognizing the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. The manual also prohibits monks from engaging in activities that undermine national unity, affect social stability in the name of religion, or require cooperation with separatist groups outside the country, a source told *RFA* (*ICT's Tibet Roundup* 2024, No. 6 [April 1–15]; *RFA* April 9). *kwt*

May 26, 2024:

Forum on the Sinicization of Buddhism and the History of the Lingyan Temple in Jinan

Over 60 representatives from politics, academia and the Buddhist circles of China attended the conference in Jinan (Shandong). It was organized by the Central Institute of Socialism in cooperation with Peking University, the Buddhist Association of Jinan City and the Lingyan Temple.

Xu Zhaogang, director of studies at the Central Institute of Socialism, said at the opening that the history of Buddhism in China is a history of its continuous Sinicization, which has made Buddhist culture an "inseparable, indispensable, irreplaceable and important part of Chinese culture and one of its central cultural genes." The process of Sinicization of Buddhism has created "a global model for the indigenization of religions," said Xu, according to a conference report by the United Front Department.

Mao Baoling, head of the United Front Department of the Jinan Communist Party, said the forum was timely as Jinan was currently building a "brand for the practice of Sinicization of religions" called "Interaction on the Right [i.e., West] of the Sea – the Five Religions Walk Together" (会通海右·五教同行). – Such "brands" (品牌) for marketing state religious policies seem to be popular: Last year, several conferences were held in Shanghai under the city's religious policy brand "Talking about the Dao by the Sea" (海上论道) (see *RCTC* 2023, No. 4, p. 6), and Zhejiang Province has the brand "Zhijiang Asks about the Dao" (之江问道; see the entry for May 24–25, 2024 in the "Catholicism" section below).

Bitter Winter wrote in a commentary on the conference in Jinan that the Communist Party used the famous Lingyan Temple, founded in the 4th century, as an example of the template with which it reinterprets the history of Chinese Buddhism. Scholars associated with the United Front would use "Sinicization" in the case of Buddhism in the sense of "submission to state power" and claim that Buddhism in China has flourished whenever it has become "state Buddhism" and accepted state control (*Bitter Winter* June 19; www.zytzb.gov.cn May 29). *kwt*

June 18, 2024:

Xi Jinping visits the Lamaist Hongjue Temple in Xining, Qinghai Province

During an inspection tour in Qinghai on the afternoon of June 18, the Chinese president first visited a boarding school for children of various ethnic groups from the countryside in the provincial capital of

Xining, then the Hongjue Temple (宏觉寺). The temple belongs to the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. According to a report by Chinese state television CCTV, inside the temple Xi explained that in its thousand-year history the Hongjue Temple had played an important bridging role as a link between the (Chinese) central government and Tibetan Buddhism. [An article in *China Daily* on June 21 gives concrete examples of this.] Xi continued that it was important to preserve this valuable heritage and make new contributions to forging the sense of community of the Chinese nation and the unity of the nationalities. We must learn from the old generation of revolutionaries and do even better in the party's united front work, ethnic work and religious work in the new era, Xi said, according to CCTV.

Bitter Winter pointed out that Xi Jinping's father Xi Zhongxun, then deputy secretary of the CPC's Northwest Office and "an expert on religious affairs," was sent by Mao to Hongjue Temple in 1951 to meet the 10th Panchen Lama and arrange his return to his seat in Shigatse.

Several commentaries in Western media saw a connection between Xi's words in Xining and the passage of the "Resolve Tibet Act" by the US Congress on June 12 and the visit of seven US congress members to the Dalai Lama on June 19. According to *Reuters*, the US representatives told the Dalai Lama they would not allow China to influence the choice of his successor. They also signaled that Washington would put pressure on Beijing to resume talks with Tibetan leaders to resolve the Tibet issue, which have been suspended since 2010 (*Bitter Winter* June 25; *China Daily* June 21; www.cctv.com June 20; *Phayul* June 25; *Reuters* June 19). *kwt*

June 20, 2024:

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman on the issue of negotiations with the Tibetan government in exile and the Dalai Lama

The Prime Minister of the Tibetan government in exile said that he wanted to use the new US legislation [see above] to force China back to the negotiating table and that he also wanted to get other countries to put pressure on China in this regard; what does the Foreign Ministry say about this? In response to this question from *Bloomberg*, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian stated at the press conference on June 20: The "so-called 'Tibetan government in exile'" is a completely separatist political group and an illegal organization that violates China's constitution; it is not recognized by any country in the world. "When it comes to the contact and talks between the Chinese Central Government and the 14th Dalai Lama, our policy is consistent and clear. The key is that the 14th Dalai Lama must have a complete reflection on and thoroughly correct its political propositions" (www.fmprc.gov.cn June 20). *kwt*

Islam

April 8, 2024:

Bitter Winter: Circular from the Yuxi City Religious Affairs Bureau, Yunnan, against fasting by party members and minors during Ramadan

Bitter Winter says it received from local Muslim believers the copy of a document issued by the Yuxi City Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau. The document, dated March 13, 2024, bears the title "Urgent Notice on Conducting Investigations into the Participation of Party Members and Minors in Religious Activities Such as Fasting." The text, which *Bitter Winter* published as a photo and in English translation, states: "Fasting is a religious practice of Islam and belongs to religious activities. [...] In order to

prevent party members and minors from participating in religious activities such as fasting, the relevant matters are hereby regulated as follows: 1. Conduct comprehensive investigations and rectifications regarding the participation of party members in religious activities such as fasting. Educate the mass of party members to strictly abide by the political discipline of not believing in religion, and be firm Marxist atheists [...]. Those who are still not corrected after education shall be seriously dealt with in accordance with relevant regulations. 2. Conduct comprehensive investigations into the participation of minors in religious activities such as fasting. [...] Adhere to the principle of separating education and religion, strengthen the education and guidance of teachers, students and the broad masses of young people [...]. 3. Effectively prevent public opinion on the Internet [from criticizing these measures ...]." *Bitter Winter* quoted a Muslim community leader from Yuxi as saying that the document was a punishment for the Muslims in Yuxi because they had publicly protested against the (now implemented) "Sinicization" of the Najiaying Mosque (*Bitter Winter* April 08; cf. *RCTC* 2023, No. 3, pp. 6-7; 2024, No. 2, p. 11). *kwt*

May 15, 2024:

First three Hajj pilgrimage flights depart from China to Saudi Arabia with 1,053 passengers

769 of the pilgrims came from Gansu Province, 284 from Yunnan Province – according to a report on the website of the Chinese Islamic Association (CIA), the only organization authorized by the Chinese state for Hajj and Umrah for citizens of the PRC. The total number of Chinese Hajjis in 2024 is not announced on the CIA website. In unofficial media such as *Wego Travel Blog* and TikTok, a quota of 9,190 pilgrims is given for China, but this could not be verified. As has been the case for several years, the Chinese Hajj group held an "outstanding traditional culture of China exhibition" in Mecca on June 5, with performances on tea culture, embroidery, paper cutting, calligraphy and martial arts as well as culinary specialties. In addition to the head of the Chinese Hajj group and vice-chairman of the CIA, the Uighur Adilijiang Ajikelimu, the Chinese ambassador to Saudi Arabia and the Chinese consul general in Jeddah, representatives of the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, the city of Mecca and representatives of the pilgrim groups from Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia were also present at the exhibition. On June 22, the first Chinese Hajjis began their flight home. Prior to this, from May onwards, sermons on the topic of "Performing the Hajj properly according to the law – resisting the illegal Hajj" were held in over 3,300 mosques in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, reaching over 100,000 people, according to the CIA. – The CIA website does not mention whether there were any Chinese among the 1,300 heat victims of the Hajj 2024 – 80% of whom were unregistered pilgrims according to Saudi sources (www.chinaislam.net.cn May 16; June 3, 25; *Tagesschau* June 23). *kwt*

May 22, 2024:

Adrian Zenz in the ZDF (Second German Television) on the situation in Xinjiang

On May 22, German public-service television broadcaster ZDF in its "Auslandsjournal" featured a report by ZDF correspondent Elisabeth Schmidt about her trip to Xinjiang. In Schmidt's report, excerpts from an interview with anthropologist Adrian Zenz are reproduced. The researcher says: "According to my findings, the mass internment lasted exactly three years, from 2017 to the end of [20]19, which is also a typical period for similar police and security measures in China. But that does not mean that the mass internments are over, nor does it mean that new figures are not continuing to be arrested.

I actually have information that this is still the case." Elisabeth Schmidt then says: "According to the researcher, hundreds of thousands of Uighurs and Kazakhs in Xinjiang are still serving long prison sentences or are in forced labor." Later in the report, Zenz says: "The Chinese government's project was successful in the sense that the Uighurs were broken culturally, linguistically, ideologically, spiritually, that all resistance was broken. We must realize that what has happened and is still happening in Xinjiang represents the largest mass internment of an ethno-religious minority since World War II" (www.zdf.de/politik/auslandsjournal/auslandsjournal-vom-22-mai-2024-100.html, video available until August 22, 2024, own transcription and translation). – Adrian Zenz was the first to draw attention to the internment camps in Xinjiang, whose construction he documented with data from public tenders on the Chinese Internet (see *China heute* 2018, No. 2, pp. 76-77 [in German]). *kwt*

May 30–31, 2024:

4th Forum on Islam and the Maritime Silk Road – Yang Faming receives representatives of Muslims from Taiwan and talks about reunification

The conference in Pujiang (Fujian Province) brought together 130 scholars and Muslim representatives from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. The conference was organized by the Chinese Islamic Association (CIA) and the Pujiang Islamic Association. According to a report on the CIA website, the 30 conference papers revolved around the themes of "Integration between China and Abroad: Islamic Civilization and the Spirit of the Silk Road," "Destiny and Community: The Idea of Integration of Islam and Confucianism [伊儒会通] and Its Value for Today," "Walking Hand in Hand: Sinicizing Islam and Building a Common Spiritual Homeland," "Integration between Both Sides of the Taiwan Strait: The Role of Islamic Circles in Building a Model Zone for Integration and Development between Both Sides of the Strait."

As part of the forum, Yang Faming, Chairman of the CIA, received the former Chairman of the Chinese Muslim Association, Republic of China (Taiwan) (中國回教協會), Ma Xiaoqi. Yang told Ma that he hoped that the Islamic circles on both sides of the Taiwan Strait would work together to build a community of shared destiny on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and help to achieve peaceful reunification as soon as possible. According to a report on the CIA website, Ma Xiaoqi spoke of the deep friendship between the Muslims on both sides and expressed the hope that they would jointly contribute to the nation's rejuvenation (www.chinaislam.net.cn June 01 [2 reports]). *kwt*

June 18, 2024:

Human Rights Watch (HRW): Hundreds of village names with religious, cultural or historical meaning have been changed in Xinjiang – "White Mosque Village" becomes "Unity Village"

Researchers at HRW, based in New York, analyzed data that the National Bureau of Statistics publishes annually in the list of "Administrative Division Codes for Statistical Purposes" (统计用区划代码) on its website. The researchers found that between 2009 and 2023, the names of 3,652 of the 23,000 villages recorded for Xinjiang were changed. HRW described four-fifths of the changes as mundane. In about 630 cases, however, the names had been changed in such a way that references to the religion, culture or history of the Uyghurs disappeared.

The word *mazar* 麻扎 (shrine, burial place) was most frequently removed from village names: in 2009, 47 villages had it in their names, in 2023 only 6. The word *hoja* 霍加 (religious teacher) appeared in the names of 28 villages in 2016, but only 3 remained by 2023. *Meschit* 美其特 (mosque) disappeared from the names of all 17 villages with this term. 10 of 13 villages with *haniqa* 哈尼喀 (Sufi meeting house) in their names were renamed. Place name components meaning sultan (6 times), caliph/ruler (7 times) or palace (9 times) disappeared completely. The most common components of the new, changed village names were *xingfu* 幸福 (happiness, 79 times), *tuanjie* 团结 (unity, union [of ethnic groups], 69 times) and *hexie* 和谐 (harmony, 55 times). According to the HRW report, most of the name changes were made between 2017 and 2019, with over 90% of the affected villages located in the Kashgar, Hotan and Aksu prefectures.

Two of the examples cited by HRW: The "Dutar Village" 都塔尔村 (Dutar is a Central Asian lute) in Karakax County was renamed "Red Flag Village" 红旗村 in 2022. In 2018, the "White Mosque Village" (阿克美其特村) in Akto County became the "Unity Village" (团结村). Maya Wang of HRW judged that these name changes "appear part of Chinese government efforts to erase the cultural and religious expressions of Uyghurs" (www.hrw.org/news/2024/06/18/china-hundreds-uyghur-village-names-change). *kwt*

Judaism

May 11–12, 2024:

Symposium on the 30th anniversary of the Center for Judaic and Inter-religious Studies of Shandong University in Jinan and 4th Annual Conference on Judaism in China

According to the report on the website of the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the organizers were the Center for Judaic and Inter-religious Studies of Shandong University in cooperation with the Institute for Jewish and Israel Studies of Nanjing University and the Center for Israel Studies of Henan University, 80 conference papers were received and more than a hundred academics participated. The content included Jewish history and writings, Jewish thought and current issues. Prof. Fu Youde, Director of the Center for Judaic and Inter-religious Studies, gave an overview of the development of the center over the past thirty years. Among the participants were professors from centers or institutes for research on Judaism, Jewish culture and Israel at Peking University, Nanjing University, Henan University, the Heilongjiang Institute of Foreign Languages in Harbin and the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (http://iwr.cssn.cn/xw/202405/t20240524_5754599.shtml 24.05.2024). *kf*

Protestant Churches

April 9, 2024:

Imprisonment and fines for community elders in Sichuan

On March 15, retired community leader Hao Ming 郝鸣 and his successor Elder Wu Jiannan 武建男 were released on bail after two and a half years in custody. Three weeks later, the verdict was handed down: three years in prison, suspended for five years, and an additional fine of 30,000 yuan. Both had been officially charged with fraud for accepting donations from the community. The Qiuyu Qingcaodi

Church in Deyang City, Sichuan Province, is an unregistered house church that has publicly protested the persecution of Pastor Wang Yi's Rainbow Covenant Church. Community meetings were broken up by police forces, and arrests and house searches were carried out. While other community members were released, Hao Ming and Wu Jiannan remained in prison after their arrest on November 17, 2021 (*Bitter Winter* April 15; https://boxun.com/archives/365956; cf. *RCTC* 2022, No. 1, p. 8).
Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle

April 15, 2024:

Five-year prison sentence for selling Bibles

In Inner Mongolia, Ban Yanchao 班颜超 was sentenced to five years in prison on April 15 after pleading guilty to the charges of "illegal economic activity" (非法经营罪). She and nine members of her Christian group had been arrested three years earlier for the unauthorized sale of Bibles. Although the Bibles were officially printed by the National Chinese Christian Council and even sold below the purchase price for evangelism purposes, the distribution was punished as a serious crime. The main defendant, Wang Honglan 王洪兰, who had already been sentenced to five years in a labor camp and one year in prison in previous cases, faces a sentence of up to 15 years in prison. Her husband Ji Heying and four other members of the Christian group were released on bail in mid-April after three years in prison, their trial is still pending. Wang Honglan and three other defendants are still in prison. There were no statements about the progress of their trial. Ban Yanchao's release has been set for April 2026 (*Bitter Winter* April 29; www.rfa.org/mandarin April 26; cf. *RCTC* 2023, No. 3, p. 8).
Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle

May 28, 2024:

Painter and sculptor Yan Zhengxue has died

On May 28, the famous artist and human rights activist Yan Zhengxue 严正学 died in Beijing at the age of 80. His oil paintings were exhibited in a solo exhibition at the capital's National Art Museum in 1988. During the protests on Tian'anmen Square a year later, Yan took part in the actions as the leader of a critical artist group and then moved to the Yuanmingyuan artist village in northern Beijing. Because of his criticism of the suppression of the democracy movement and the CCP's legal system, expressed both in his artwork and verbally, Yan Zhengxue was arrested in 1993 and sentenced to two years in a labor camp in Beidahuang, Inner Mongolia. According to his own statements, he was tortured there with solitary confinement and electric shocks, among other things. During this time, he created almost 100 large-format acrylic paintings, some of which were later exhibited at home and abroad. From 2006 to 2009, Yan served another prison sentence. In 2010, he was placed on the negative list of 100 Chinese public intellectuals. In 2010, he also exhibited his sculptures of Lin Zhao and Zhang Zhixin as a symbol of the search for the "Chinese soul" in Beijing's art district 798. Both women were staunch supporters of communism and had been executed for criticizing the government during the Cultural Revolution. Lin Zhao had written numerous poems and prose texts with her own blood. Her story was also traced in the documentary "Searching for Lin Zhao's Soul" by filmmaker Hu Jie.
According to *Bitter Winter*, Yan Zhengxue was a Christian and a member of the Beijing Holy Love Fellowship House Church. Members of the community were prohibited by police from attending the funeral ceremony on May 30 (*Bitter Winter* June 3; www.rfa.org/mandarin May 28).
Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle

June 3, 2024:

On the death of theologian Jürgen Moltmann

On June 3, the professor of systematic theology Jürgen Moltmann died in Tübingen at the age of 98, which led to numerous obituaries, especially in Chinese social networks. His "Theology of Hope" was received at Chinese theological seminars in Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan, as well as discussed at universities. In 1994, the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies (ISCS) in Hong Kong published a Chinese translation of *The Crucified God* (original 1972, Chinese title 被钉十字架的上帝), which was reprinted in China in 1997, and in 1999 a translation of the book *God in Creation* (original 1985, Chinese title 创造中的上帝). Numerous other translations of Moltmann's works as well as volumes of conference papers were published by the ISCS in the following decades.

His writings also became known and disseminated through Moltmann's intensive personal contacts and travels in Chinese-speaking countries. In October 1999, Prof. Moltmann visited Chong Chi College in Hong Kong. There, a conference was held in his honor, where he was able to discuss directly with leading Chinese theologians and researchers of Christianity. In order to further stimulate academic dialogue, the ISCS and the China-Zentrum in Sankt Augustin jointly organized a Chinese-German conference in Berlin in 2001 under the motto "Translation and Reception: The Encounter of Christianity with the Chinese Culture," at which Prof. Moltmann received an invitation to visit Qinghua University in Beijing, among other things. In 2002, a symposium on "Sino-Theology" was held at Chung Yuan Christian University in Taiwan, which led to in-depth discussions between Moltmann and eight Chinese theologians from Hong Kong and Taiwan. In 2004, he travelled to Beijing with his wife Prof. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel for talks and lectures at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and universities. Another Chinese conference with Jürgen Moltmann, Daniel Yeung, Zhuo Xinping, He Guanghu, Yang Huilin and other Christianity experts took place in Beijing in 2014. The last major dialogue forum with the German theologian was organized by the Chinese University of Hong Kong together with the ISCS in April 2018. More than twenty of his students and former doctoral students from China, such as Dr. Hong Liang, took part (杨照楠 [Daniel Yeung], 怀念莫尔特曼教授与我们一起走过的日子 [Our Memories of Prof. Jürgen Moltmann], ISCS June 7).

A compilation of Jürgen Moltmann's encounters and discussions with the Chinese Christian world can be found in the book *Moltmann and China. Theological Encounters from Hong Kong to Beijing*, edited by Jason Lam and Naomi Thurston, Leiden: Brill 2023.

Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle

From June 4, 2024:

Five days of police custody for commemoration of Tian'anmen

June 4, 1989 is a date that does not exist on the Chinese Internet. An organized commemoration of the bloody suppression of the democracy movement is not tolerated. Fu Lijun, a member of the officially dissolved but still active in smaller private groups Rainbow Covenant Church in Chengdu, was arrested by security forces at seven in the morning on June 4 after uploading music and prayers in remembrance via WeChat. The preventive detention was lifted on June 10. – Pastor Wang Yi, founder of the Rainbow Covenant Church, was sentenced to nine years in prison in December 2019 for "incitement to overthrow" (*Bitter Winter* June 10; cf. *RCTC* 2020, No. 2, p. 9).

Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle

Catholic Church

April 9, 2024:

The Diocese of Shanghai reports over 400 baptisms in 2024 so far

According to preliminary statistics from the diocese, 470 people were baptized in Shanghai up to this date in 2024, 349 of them on Easter night – traditionally the most important baptism date of the year (www.xinde.org April 8). *kwt*

May 2024:

Over 10,000 believers make a pilgrimage to the Marian shrine on Sheshan near Shanghai in the Month of May

On the website of the Diocese of Shanghai there is a list of the registered pilgrim groups for the pilgrimage to the Marian shrine on Sheshan in May 2024, in which the pilgrim groups are entered with their place of origin, number of people and name of the accompanying priest. The total number of registered pilgrims according to this list is 13,893 (own addition). This was certainly not the actual number, as many groups registered an obviously estimated, round number of pilgrims and on the other hand perhaps not all groups are on the list, but it gives an indication of the scale. The groups on the list came from the diocese of Shanghai and dioceses in the neighboring provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang. The diocese's website also provides information on the registration process, including the forms from the Shanghai Religious Affairs Bureau for the reporting of inter-provincial religious activities for the record (we reported on this last year, see *RCTC* 2023, No. 3, p. 12).
During the procession to the basilica on May 1, not a replica of the well-known Madonna from the top of the basilica's steeple was carried, as was the case until last year, but a copy of the statue "Mary Help of Christians" from the high altar. This is shown in photos on the diocese's website and on *Xinde* (www.catholicsh.org May 1, 2023; May 16; www.xinde.org May 3). – In other parts of China, too, there were pilgrimages to regional Marian shrines in May. *kwt*



During this year's procession to the basilica on May 1, no longer a replica of the well-known Madonna from the top of the basilica's steeple was carried, but a copy of the statue "Mary Help of Christians" from the high altar. Photo: www.xinde.org.

May 4–5, 2024:

Course on end-of-life care in the Diocese of Tangshan

How can I help my relatives to die in peace and how do I feel about death myself? The parish of Wujiazhuang in the Diocese of Tangshan (Hebei province) invited Sister Chen Birong from the Congregation of Helpers of the Poor Souls in Purgatory of the Diocese of Xingtai to speak on these questions. Over 30 believers took part in the course. They then declared their willingness to participate in the parish's hospice service – according to the report (www.xinde.org May 6). *kwt*

May 12, 2024:

Chinese College in Leuven: 100-hour pastoral renewal course in Chinese completed

22 priests from China completed the course, which has traditionally been organized twice a year by the Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation in Leuven since 2015, but had to be paused during the Corona period. In addition to the lessons, the program also included a pilgrimage to Banneux in Belgium and a pilgrimage to Rome, where the group met Pope Francis. They were also received by Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle in the Dicastery for Evangelization and concelebrated the Eucharist with Archbishop Claudio Celli in St. Peter's Basilica. "After their graduation they now prepare to return to their parishes in various dioceses in China where they are parish priests," writes Fr. Jeroom Heyndrickx CICM. At the end, the participants received a certificate signed by Cardinal de Kesel, the chairman of the foundation. The new director of the Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation is Dr. Hugo Vanheeswijck. *kf*

May 22, 2024:

China Aid reports: Two Catholic priests from the Baoding diocese in Hebei province abducted

According to the report, which refers to the Chinese Catholic website *Catholic Online*, underground Fr. Chen Hekun was picked up from his home in Zhangjiakou on April 29 and has been missing since then, China Aid wrote on May 22; there were indications that he is being held in Anxin County. The reasons for his arrest were unknown, thus the report. Fr. Chen comes from a Catholic family in Anxin, Baoding City. He worked as dean of the Baoding underground seminary, among other things, according to the China Aid report, and had been under surveillance for a long time. Furthermore, according to the report, Fr. Chi Huitian disappeared on April 17. The police announced that he had been sent back to his hometown of Xingtai. The reasons for his arrest were also unknown. In the past, priests in the diocese of Baoding who did not register officially have disappeared for a time and are under strong pressure from the authorities (China Aid May 22; see also the Chinese report at www.chinaaid.net/2024/05/blog-post_85.html). *kf*

May 24–25, 2024:

1st Academic Conference on the Sinicization of Catholicism in Zhejiang Province

The conference with 128 participants took place in Ningbo. It was organized by the Catholic "Two Associations" of Zhejiang Province, hosted by the Catholic Patriotic Association of Ningbo and the Di-

ocese of Ningbo, and co-organized by the Faith Cultural Institute from Shijiazhuang (Hebei Province). One of the main speakers at the opening was Bishop Yang Yongqiang of Zhoucun in Shandong Province – this was probably a harbinger of his installation as bishop of Hangzhou (which is the provincial capital of Zhejiang) a month later (see below). The representative of the Zhejiang religious affairs authority emphasized, among other things, the demand that the principle of the independence of the Church be upheld. There were 31 specialist lectures. Local Bishop Jin Yangke of Ningbo gave the closing remarks. The conference ended with everyone singing the song "Mother of God of China."
The conference's supporting program included the exhibition "Biblical Stories and Chinese Ink Painting" with pictures by the Catholic painter Chen Hu.
The conference and exhibition were held under the motto "Zhijiang Asks about the Dao" (之江问道). This slogan was introduced in 2022 by the provincial umbrella organizations of the five religions as a "brand" for the Sinicization of religions, with "Zhijiang" standing for both the Qiantangjiang River and Zhejiang Province. Shanghai, Jinan and Zhejiang (and possibly other provinces) now have such a religious-political "brand" (see the entry from May 26, 2024 in the "Buddhism" section) (www.mzw.zj.gov.cn Sept. 29, 2022; www.xinde.org May 27). *kwt*

June 18–19, 2024:

9th Conference on the Sinicization of Catholicism in Liaoning

The conference in Shenyang, whose organizer is not named in the official report [presumably the province's Catholic "Two Associations"], was attended by over 60 priests, sisters and lay representatives from Liaoning. According to the report, 14 speakers selected by the local Catholic "Two Associations" in Liaoning spoke about how to "combine the Bible and Church teachings and precepts with traditional culture and core socialist values." During the seminar, Liaoning Catholicism (*sic*!) established commissions for pastoral care and evangelization, for vocation, formation and liturgy, for real estate work, for Sinicized theology, for charity and social services, and for the laity. In his speech, Bishop Pei Junmin analyzed the current problems of the Liaoning Diocese, including the shrinking number of believers and the lack of vocations. The diocese currently has 88 clergy, 168 nuns and around 70,000 believers – according to the report (www.xinde.org June 24). *kwt*

June 27, 2024:

Bishop Yang Yongqiang of Zhoucun (Shandong) is installed as Bishop of Hangzhou (Zhejiang) – first bishop transfer with "double approval" in the People's Republic of China

Hangzhou is the capital of the coastal province of Zhejiang. The installation took place with a papal appointment announced on June 22 (see entry in the "Sino-Vatican Relations" section below). However, the papal appointment was not mentioned in the official report on the website of the Catholic "Two Associations" of Zhejiang about the installation ceremony in Hangzhou. The official report states that the ceremony was presided over by the Secretary General of the Diocese of Hangzhou, Fr. Zheng Jiaomao. Fr. Yang Yu, Secretary General of the Chinese Bishops' Conference, read the "Letter of Approval of the Bishops' Conference Regarding the Transfer of Bishop Yang Yongqiang to the Position of Bishop of Hangzhou Diocese." Bishop Shen Bin of Shanghai, Chairman of the Bishops' Conference, gave a speech. Also present were Bishops Jin Yangke of Ningbo (Zhejiang), Lü Peisen of Yanzhou (Shandong) and all priests and sisters as well as lay representatives of the Diocese of Hangzhou.

Bishop Josef Yang Yongqiang 杨永强 was born on April 11, 1970 in Boxing County, Shandong Province. He studied from 1987 to 1989 at the Holy Spirit Seminary in Jinan (Shandong) and from 1989 to 1995 at the Sheshan Seminary in Shanghai. In 1995 he was ordained a priest by the Shanghai Bishop Jin Luxian. From 1996 to 2003 he was a pastor in the Diocese of Zhoucun. From 2003 to 2004 he completed a bachelor's course at the National Seminary in Beijing, after which he taught. On November 15, 2010, he was consecrated coadjutor bishop of Zhoucun, and in 2013 he became the Ordinary bishop of Zhoucun. Bishop Yang is one of the vice presidents of the Chinese Bishops' Conference (which is not recognized by Rome). The last bishop in Hangzhou, Cao Xiangde, died in 2021; he was consecrated in 2000 without a papal mandate and subsequently legitimized by the Pope in 2008, but without jurisdiction as a local bishop (www.zjcatholic.org/detail/713 [June 28]; *Fides* June 22). *kwt*

June 29, 2024:

35 Catholics complete faith-deepening course at the Sheshan Seminary in Shanghai

The course began in September 2023. On weekends, the participants were taught the main subjects of Introduction to the New Testament, Introduction to the Old Testament and "Faith Education in the Family" [the latter a very important topic given the major restrictions on the Church's youth work by the authorities]. During the graduation ceremony on June 29, Vicar General Wu Jianlin also gave the graduates political admonitions to take away. After the ceremony, those present planted a pomegranate tree together on the seminary grounds (www.catholicsh.org July 01). *kwt*

End of June 2024:

Jinde Charities gets involved in the flood disaster in Meizhou, Guangdong Province

From mid-June, heavy rains triggered a flood disaster in the Meizhou region of Guangdong Province. On behalf of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Bishops' Conference, the Catholic aid organization Jinde Charities, based in Shijiazhuang, took part in the disaster relief in cooperation with the Meizhou Diocese. On June 28, Jinde Charities signed donation agreements amounting to 220,000 RMB with a primary school and a kindergarten in the region to purchase new equipment, helping them to resume classes as soon as possible. Jinde had previously purchased relief supplies such as rice, soybean oil and noodles regionally through the local authorities and the Meizhou Diocese with donations from all over China and sent them to some of the affected places (www.xinde.org June 30). *kwt*

Sino-Vatican Relations

May 20, 2024:

Conference on the first Chinese Council in Shanghai in 1924 at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan

The conference entitled "La chiesa in Cina tra località e universalità nel 100° anniversario del Primo Concilio Cinese" was organized by various departments of the university and lasted one morning. As

far as can be seen from the conference program, it was characterized by the participation of a number of Chinese scholars, including well-known researchers of Christianity – four of the six lectures were given by Chinese people. Yan Kejia (Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences) spoke on "The Catholic Church and the May Fourth Movement," Li Tiangang (Fudan University) on Ma Xiangbo's contribution to the Catholic Church in Shanghai in the 1920s, Chen Zhixiong (Macao Polytechnic University) on the Shanghai philanthropist Lo Pa-hong, and Xie Sijie (Sun Yat-sen University) on "The Chinese bishops and the establishment of the Church hierarchy [in China]." The Italian speakers focused more directly on the Council: Msgr. Bruno Fabio Pighin (Faculty of Canon Law Venice San Pio X) on the role of Celso Costantini, and Paolo de Giovanni (Università Sacro Cuore) on Rome's reaction and the approval of the Council documents. Moderators or discussants were Agostino Giovagnoli (Università Sacro Cuore), Wang Meixiu and Yan Zhaohui (both Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) and Zhang Zhigang (Shandong University). Greetings were given by Bishop Claudio Giuliodori and Bishop Meng Qinglu of Hohhot, among others (program: www.sissco.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/LA-CHIESA-IN-CINA-_locandina_2024-20-5.pdf). – Some of the Chinese participants also came to the conference at the Urbaniana the next day. *kwt*

May 21, 2024:

Bishop Shen Bin, Cardinal Parolin and Cardinal Tagle speak at the conference on the first Chinese Council in Shanghai in 1924 at the Urbaniana – video message from Pope Francis

The international conference was entitled "100 anni dal Concilium Sinense: tra storia e presente" (100 years since the Concilium Sinense: Between history and the present). It was organized by the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome in cooperation with the papal news agency *Fides* and the Pastoral Commission for China.

The conference was scheduled at short notice and attracted a great deal of attention in Church circles and the media. The reason for this was the extremely high-level participation from both the Vatican and the state-supported governing bodies of the Chinese Catholic Church and Chinese academia. Bishop Shen Bin of Shanghai, as bishop of the see that hosted the first Chinese Council, was invited to speak at the conference; he is also the chairman of the official Chinese Bishops' Conference. Another Chinese speaker at the conference, the theologian Tan Lizhu, is Secretary General of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, who holds the second highest office in the Vatican after Pope Francis, and Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, were the most senior Vatican speakers at the conference. The Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a leading state think tank on religious issues, was represented by its director, Zheng Xiaoyun, and the expert on Catholicism, Liu Guopeng (see the conference program at www.urbaniana.va/it/news-ed-eventi/news/convegno-internazionale.html). The audience – around 250 people, according to eyewitnesses' estimates – included many priests, seminarians and sisters from China who are studying in Rome, as well as people associated with the Chinese Church from various European countries.

Pope Francis emphasized in his video message that the participants of the 1924 Council "all made an authentic synodal journey and signed the provisions that opened up new paths, so that the Catholic Church in China could also increasingly have a Chinese face." Bishop Shen Bin was critical of the "colonialist thinking" of many missionaries. He expressed the view, among other things, that the Church in China must be faithful to the Gospel and, together with the Chinese people, must promote the great rejuvenation of the nation and follow the path of Sinicization (see www.fides.org/en/news/75004-VATICAN_Pope_Francis_at_the_Conference_dedicated_to_the_Concilium_Sinense_

The_Lord_in_China_has_safeguarded_the_faith_of_God_s_people [message Pope Francis]; www.fides.org/en/news/75006-VATICAN_Rooted_in_China_to_continue_the_work_of_those_who_preceded_us_and_open_new_horizons_for_the_pro-clamation_of_the_Gospel [speech Bishop Shen]; www.fides.org/en/news/75008-VATICAN_Cardinal_Parolin_communion_is_the_best_guarantee_of_a_faith_free_from_external_political_interests [speech Cardinal Parolin]; www.fides.org/en/news/75009-VATICAN_Cardinal_Tagle_the_new_beginning_of_the_Council_of_Shanghai_and_the_mission_of_the_Church_today [speech Cardinal Tagle]). For more information on the conference, see *China heute* 2024, No. 2, pp. 71-73 (in German). *kwt*

May 21, 2024:

Cardinal Secretary of State Parolin on the sidelines of the Shanghai Council conference on the Holy See's hope for a "presence in China"

On the sidelines of the conference, the cardinal answered a journalist's question as follows, according to *AsiaNews*: "For a long time now, we had hoped to have a stable presence in China, even if it might not initially take the form of a papal representation, an apostolic nunciature. Our goal is to strengthen and deepen our contacts, which can also take various forms." Even the "recognition of the bishops' conferences [*sic*!] is the subject of discussion, and includes all Chinese bishops. But we are still working on this topic," said Parolin (according to *AsiaNews* May 21). *kwt*

May 22 and 29, 2024:

Spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry and spokeswoman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the Chinese State Council on the Vatican's desire for a permanent office in China

At his regular press conference on May 22, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin was asked by *Reuters*: "The Vatican has said it would like to establish a permanent office in China [...]. Will China allow the Vatican to open an office in Beijing without full diplomatic relationship being established?" Wang Wenbin replied: "In recent years, China and the Vatican have maintained engagement, had in-depth communication on bilateral relations and international hotspot issues and increased understanding and trust. China is ready to work with the Vatican for the steady improvement of relations" (www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202405/t20240522_11309866.html).

Zhu Fenglian, spokeswoman for the Taiwan Affairs Office, said at her press conference on May 29 when asked how she assessed the Vatican's request: "The relevant authority has already expressed its position on this. The One-China principle is a generally accepted code of conduct for international relations and a general consensus of the international community. The countries concerned should properly handle Taiwan-related issues in accord with the One-China principle" (www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/xwfbh/202405/t20240529_12623891.htm). *kwt*

June 20, 2024:

Cardinal Parolin: Dialogue with China on the application of the agreement "which will be renewed at the end of this year"

On the sidelines of the presentation of a book on Cardinal Celso Costantini (1876–1958) at the Pontifical Urban University, Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin answered questions from journalists.

According to *Vatican News*, he said: "With China, we are dialoguing as we have been for some time. We are trying to find the best procedures also for the application of the Agreement signed at the time and which will be renewed at the end of this year." He said that Pope Francis "has a great appreciation indeed and does not miss an opportunity to express it towards the Chinese people and the Chinese nation. Perhaps it is because he is a Jesuit, so he has all the heritage of the past ..." Parolin was also asked about a possible trip by the Pope to China. "If there were openness on the part of the Chinese," Pope Francis would go to China "immediately," said Parolin, according to *Vatican News*. However, the conditions for such a trip did not seem to him to be in place so far.

Cardinal Parolin gave a speech at the presentation of the book "Cardinal Celso Costantini – Bridge builder between East and West" by Msgr. Bruno Pighin. The Italian historian is postulator in the beatification process for Cardinal Costantini (*Vatican News* June 20). – Costantini from 1922 to 1933 was the first Apostolic Delegate of the Holy See in China. *kwt*

June 22, 2024:

Vatican announces papal appointment of Bishop Yang Yongqiang as bishop of Hangzhou

The Holy See Press Office's Summary of Bulletin of June 22 states under "Resignations and appointments": "In the context of the dialogue regarding the application of the Provisional Agreement between the Holy See and the People's Republic of China, on 12 June 2024, the Holy Father appointed Bishop Joseph Yang Yongqiang as bishop of Hangzhou, Chinese Province of Zhejiang, transferring him from the see of Zhoucun, Chinese Province of Shandong" (https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2024/06/22/240622b.html).

Since 2023, the Vatican has begun to regularly announce appointments of Chinese bishops in the official Bulletin of the Holy See, instead of through its news agency *Vatican News* as before. Bishop Yang is the first case in which the papal appointment was publicly announced (as is generally the case) before the actual installation or ordination. It should also be noted that the Pope did not appoint Bishop Yang as "Archbishop of Hangzhou" and Metropolitan, although Hangzhou is an archdiocese according to the Vatican hierarchy. So far, transfers of bishops have been rare in China. *kwt*

Hong Kong

April 18, 2024:

Radio Free Asia: 291 Hong Kong residents arrested in the past four years in connection with the 2020 national security law

All were arrested on charges of allegedly endangering national security. A report by *Radio Free Asia* (April 18) cites data from the Hong Kong Security Bureau, which states that those arrested range in age from 15 to 90.

The data was released after the Security Bureau was questioned by members of the Legislative Council about the "authorities' expenditure used to explain to the public the legislation for the second national security law, commonly known as Article 23, which was passed last month," thus the report. In its response, the Security Bureau said that as of March 8, more than 700,000 national security-related reports had been received by its hotline. In addition, as of December last year, among the 10,279 people arrested in connection with the 2019 Anti-Extradition Law, 35 people were wanted by the court for

failing to appear for court dates, and 26 people released on bail had failed to report to the police. – As of March 8, 218 men and 73 women were among the 291 arrested. More than 170 people and five companies have been prosecuted, and 112 people have been convicted or are awaiting judgment. The oldest person arrested was the former Bishop of Hong Kong, Cardinal Joseph Zen, now 92 years old, and the youngest was a 15-year-old secondary-school student. *kf*

April 22–26, 2024:

Cardinal Chow visits dioceses in Guangdong Province with delegation

After his trip to Beijing in April 2023, Cardinal Chow led a 10-member delegation to Guangzhou (Canton), Shantou and Shenzhen this April. It was his first visit to these dioceses. The delegation also included Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha Chi-shing OFM and the three Vicar Generals Father Peter Choy Wai-man, Father Paul Kam Po-wai and Father Joseph Chan Wing-chiu, as well as members of the diocesan curia and Caritas Hong Kong. According to the *Sunday Examiner*, the delegation met Bishops Gan Junqiu of Guangzhou, Su Yongda of Zhanjiang [Beihai] and Huang Bingzhang of Shantou. "The visit was not publicised, as it was only intended to bring the dioceses in South China closer together," the report said. The delegation exchanged ideas on various topics, such as youth ministry, catechism and family issues. They also gained insights into, for example, the commitment of lay people, the importance of upholding Catholic marriage and the importance of environmental protection. Cardinal Chow was impressed by the large number of parishes that a priest has to look after in China. As an example, he mentioned two priests who looked after 31 parishes in Shantou. On April 23, the delegation visited Guangzhou Cathedral and celebrated Mass with three bishops in the cathedral chapel. Father Joseph Yim Tak-lung, Chief-Executive of Caritas Hong Kong, presented the work of Caritas. On the same day, a visit to the Huanghuagang Mausoleum commemorating the 72 martyrs of the Guangzhou Uprising of 1911 took place. On April 24, the delegation visited the construction site of the new Bishop's House in Shantou. Bishop Huang presided over a Mass in Shantou Cathedral, concelebrated by Cardinal Chow and other priests. Hundreds of believers attended the Mass. Visits to two other churches in Shantou followed on April 25, and to two churches in Shenzhen on April 26. During a sharing session at Christ the King Church, the Diocesan Catechetical Centre was introduced. The work of Hong Kong's diocesan catechetical center was also presented in Christ the King Church in Shenzhen. The delegation also discussed with Church representatives the possibilities of future cooperation with Hong Kong in a regular formation center in China, according to the *Sunday Examiner*. – Cardinal Chow compared the Church in Guangdong with the Church in Vietnam, which he also visited in April. "Both have continued under communist/socialist rule for many years and are functioning well, with individuals evangelising in a creative manner." The cardinal described the cultivation of friendship with respect as the bottom line of the trip. "We must acknowledge and respect the culture and customs of others while still maintaining our faith in God. They are eager to communicate with us but have their own way of doing things," said the cardinal. "I think we all have a clear feeling that we belong to one family in Church, and we feel so joyful," said Cardinal Chow, summing up the trip (*Sunday Examiner* May 3; the official report of the Catholic Church of Guangdong can be found at www.xinde.org April 30). *kf*

May 5, 2024:

Study on Hong Kong migrants in the UK

A study sponsored in London by the British and Foreign Bible Society, reported by *AsiaNews* on May 5, measures the impact of the arrival of more than 200,000 Hong Kongers in the country over the past

three years. Among Chinese in the UK, 18% are now Christians, a far higher percentage than in China, Taiwan or Hong Kong. But interest in Christianity is also growing among those who do not belong to any religious denomination, is one of the findings. How are the new arrivals from Hong Kong with British passports changing the face of the Chinese diaspora? And what impact are they having on the Christian communities already established in the UK? These issues were recently addressed in a three-part article published on the website www.chinasource.org by the sociologist of religions Huang Yinxuan, who coordinated the research project "The Bible and the Chinese Community in Britain" for the British and Foreign Bible Society at the London School of Theology between 2021 and 2023. Huang summarizes the data collected and speaks of an average annual growth rate of Chinese Christian communities in Britain of 28.8%: In the three years studied, 32 new Chinese churches, congregations and Christian organizations were established. The greatest growth was recorded in those communities where prayers are held in Cantonese. The arrival of immigrants with British passports has also led to the emergence of "two unique forms of churches." The first consists of 10 churches founded by Christian leaders from Hong Kong with often distinct political and social positions and in obvious contrast to the existing Chinese churches, thus the author. The second are small Chinese communities within non-Chinese churches, which are largely the result of parish reception programs designed specifically for immigrant Christians from Hong Kong. Overall, the majority of Chinese in the UK report no religious affiliation (62.4%). About 18% of respondents said they were Christian, 8.5% more than the second largest religious group, Buddhists. The study defines the Chinese Christian community in the UK as "a typical immigrant-majority transnational church," composed predominantly of first-generation immigrants (only 12.3% of its members were born in the UK). Regarding the interest in Christianity among non-Christians, one aspect in particular stood out, namely, according to Huang, "its ability to provide alternative answers and explanations to key issues and challenges of the age in which they live" (see also www.chinasource.org/resource-library/blog-entries [Topic: Chinese Diaspora], Feb. 21; March 19; May 29). *kf*

May 8, 2024:

Impact of young families leaving Hong Kong: 47% of older people live alone

AsiaNews reported on May 8 that the Methodist Centre in Hong Kong had conducted a study on the impact of young Hong Kongers' emigration on the lives of parents and relatives aged over 75 who were left behind. They were, thus the report, the indirect victims of the exodus of young families due to the crackdown by security forces following the 2019 protests and the introduction of the Hong Kong national security law in 2020. The Methodist Centre has been working in the field of social work in Wan Chai district since 1980. Around 200,000 Hong Kongers – mostly young families – have moved to the UK alone, taking advantage of having both a British and Hong Kong passport. The Methodist Centre surveyed more than 200 older adults between June and December last year, of whom around 47% said that one or more of their children had left Hong Kong in the past three years. About 31% of the left-behind seniors in Hong Kong are aged 75 and over, and 75% are now being cared for by either their partners or other elderly relatives and friends. According to Tsui Hong-wang, the Methodist Centre's seniors and health services manager, in many cases the children sold their homes in Hong Kong and took their savings with them before emigrating. The events, the report said, had unfolded so quickly that people were unable to prepare for this traumatic situation, "causing much concern and distress." For this reason, the Christian charity is launching a Medical Home Care Programme for lonely seniors, supported by social workers, nurses, physiotherapists, speech therapists and dieticians. The elderly often face everyday problems that are difficult to manage from a distance. "In such a difficult context,

Hong Kong authorities seem to be much more concerned about their battle against the symbols of the pro-democracy movement than the wounds left in society by harsh repression," the report said. *kf*

May 22, 2024:

Pope Francis receives delegation from the Hong Kong Christian Council

The Hong Kong Christian Council was founded in 1954 and is a member of the World Council of Churches and the Christian Conference of Asia. Cardinal Stephen Chow, SJ, the Catholic Bishop of Hong Kong, was also part of the delegation. In his address, the Pope thanked everyone for the visit and called it "a true consolation: to see all brothers united, Christian brothers and sisters united." The Pope recalled the late Orthodox Bishop Zizioulas, who had said that unity between the Christian churches could only be achieved "on the day of the final judgment." "In the meantime," he said, "we must pray together and work together." "This is very important," continued Pope Francis: "working together, because we all believe in Jesus Christ; praying together, praying for unity." At the end, the Pope asked those present to pray the Lord's Prayer with him (*Vatican News* May 22; www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/may/documents/20240522-hong-kong-christian-council.html). *kf*

June 4, 2024:

Once again no official commemoration of the victims at Tian'anmen Square 35 years ago

This year too, it was officially not possible in Hong Kong to commemorate the victims of the Tian'anmen massacre of June 4, 1989 in Beijing. The last major memorial vigil in Victoria Park took place in 2019, after which it was banned. Today, a fair is held there in the days around June 4. Nevertheless, there were isolated signs of commemoration also this year, including from Christians. In May, a group of evangelical Christians started an online prayer initiative with a Chinese prayer in the spirit of commemoration. Anyone who identified with the content was asked to sign, and the text was then to be published as a paid advertisement on June 2 in the evangelical Hong Kong weekly newspaper *Christian Times*. The June 2 edition of the newspaper had an almost blank front page. The newspaper's online edition of June 1 said it could only respond to the current situation by turning paragraphs into empty squares and white space, adding that society had become restrictive. – On May 30, Cardinal Chow of Hong Kong published an article in the Catholic *Sunday Examiner* on what he called "the life sapping event that took place 35 years ago in the capital city." "What happened 35 years ago has left a deep wound in parts of our psyche," thus the Cardinal. At the same time, the Cardinal pleaded for forgiveness so that "reconciliation and healing may stand a better chance of becoming a reality." In this context, he also spoke of God's unconditional love. "Even though to forgive does not mean to forget, it does offer a pre-condition for our inner freedom and a brighter future for all," the Cardinal wrote.
He ended his text with a prayer which says: "Oh, the Lord of history! In prayers I have walked with the victims and their families in the past 35 years; With no lack of occasional reflections and fluctuating sadness that seems unending at times. Yet at the same time, I am holding fast to my hope in the risen Lord who has gone through death himself. Now, I come before you in prayer. In faith and hope, I entrust you, Lord, with the country's democratic development. You who are forever just and wise. Let me put on your yoke and learn from you. That I may have a glimpse through your goodness and humility, the eternal desire of life. Moving forward in love, supporting each other in addressing our contradictions, let us enjoy the beauty of trinitarian communion. Oh Lord, please guide us! Please walk with us, the people of China! Amen." (*AsiaNews* May 15, 31; *China Aid* May 14; *Hong Kong Free Press* June 2). *kf*

Macau

April 25–26, 2024:

Bishop Lee of Macau visits Shanghai Diocese

According to a report from the Shanghai Religious and Ethnic Affairs Administration, Bishop Lee Bun Sang of Macau, accompanied by priests and believers, visited the Shanghai Diocese on April 25-26. The visit, according to the report, was led by the Religious Affairs Administration and the official bodies of the Shanghai Diocese. The guests were accompanied by some priests of the diocese. Bishop Shen Bin of Shanghai Diocese warmly welcomed Bishop Lee to Xujiahui Cathedral, thus the report; there was a mutual exchange, and the bishops exchanged gifts. Bishop Lee said he hoped for more cultural and academic exchanges and a strengthening of mutual friendship. Bishop Shen invited the clergy and believers from Macau to experience the change and growth of the city and Church of Shanghai. According to the report, the delegation visited the Religious Affairs Bureau on the afternoon of April 25, accompanied by Bishop Shen. Visits were also made to the seminary and the Sheshan Basilica, the Xu Guangqi Memorial, the Bishop's House, the Church of Christ the King in Huangpu, the city center and the site of the first CCP Party Congress (www.xinde.org April 29). *kf*
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June 26–29, 2024:

Conference "Primum Concilium Sinense (Shanghai Council), History and Significance, International Symposium on the Centenary of the First Council for China (1924–2024)"

The only major and academically well-attended event in China to mark the centenary of the first National Council of the Catholic Church in China took place in the Don Bosco Auditorium of Saint Joseph's University in Ilha Verde in Macau. A conference report can be found in *China heute* 2024, No. 2, pp. 74-75 (in German).

Taiwan

May 19, 2024:

Papal Nuncio of the Philippines attends President Lai's inauguration in Taipei

The inauguration of Lai Ching-te as the new President of the Republic of China (Taiwan) was also attended by the US-born Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, Archbishop Charles John Brown, as Papal Envoy. On May 21, a personal meeting took place in the Presidential Office. Archbishop Brown was accompanied by the Chargé d'Affaires Msgr. Stefano Mazzotti of the Apostolic Nunciature in Taipei. The text of President Lai's speech, published in English on the website of the Presidential Office, is as follows: "I would like to begin by thanking Archbishop Brown for serving as papal envoy to attend my and Vice President Bi-khim Hsiao's inauguration ceremony. On behalf of the people and government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), I extend my sincere welcome and gratitude. In recent years, Taiwan and the Holy See have continued to advance our friendship through mutual visits at various levels. Taiwan has responded to Pope Francis's call for increased international humanitarian aid by taking on

more responsibilities. We have worked hand in hand with the Holy See to administer humanitarian aid and contribute more to the international community. At the onset of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Taiwan followed the Holy See's lead and sent warmth to Ukraine: We donated supplies including power generation equipment, made-in-Taiwan thermal clothing, and medicine. Taiwan also supported infrastructure projects that are helping Ukrainians rebuild their homeland. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Pope Francis for his message of condolences and his prayers for those affected as well as for emergency personnel after the earthquake in Taiwan last month. We are deeply appreciative of his warm gesture. Moving forward, Taiwan will continue to cooperate with the Holy See to jointly safeguard regional peace and stability and protect freedom of religion or belief. In closing, I want to thank Archbishop Brown once again for visiting Taiwan and wish you a successful visit. Please convey our greetings from Taiwan to the Pope" (*Reuters* May 19; https://english.president.gov.tw/NEWS/6738 May 21). *kf*

May 22–25, 2024:

Fukkienese-Taiwan Conference on Indigenization of Catholicism

From May 22 to 25, the Catholic Diocese of Xiamen in mainland China and the Catholic Diocese of Tainan in Taiwan, under the leadership of the Catholic "Two Associations" of Fujian Province, jointly held a conference on the inculturation of Catholicism in Fujian and Taiwan, entitled "Walking Together in Love – Hand in Hand." The conference was held in Xiamen. "This is the first time that the Catholic circles of Fujian and Taiwan have carried out exchanges and cooperation in the form of an academic conference," said the Xiamen Diocese report on *Xinde*. Bishop Cai Bingrui of Xiamen, Bishop Huang Min-cheng of Tainan, Archbishop Chung An-zu of Taipei and nearly a hundred guests, clergy, academics and believers attended the meeting and visited Xiamen, Zhangzhou and other places. During the meeting, thus the report, 15 clergy, experts and scholars from the Catholic dioceses of Xiamen, Tainan and Chiayi, as well as Xiamen University, Huaqiao University and Fu Jen University in Taipei addressed the theme of "Historical Origins of the Catholic Church in Fujian and Taiwan, the Development of the Church and the Process of Inculturation of Theology" and discussed evangelization and pastoral care, cultural integration and faith practice, reviewing the historical origins and interactions of Catholicism on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and the successes of the respective churches in inculturation, and exchanging views on the future of inculturation of Catholic theology on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, according to the report. – After the conference, the delegation from Taiwan travelled to Gaopu, Xiamen, the hometown of the late Archbishop Cheng Tsai-fa of Taipei, visited the Catholic churches of Lingdong and Zhangzhou as well as the Catholic church of Houban, the hometown of priest Li Bulei, who went to Taiwan in 1859 (report of the Diocese of Xiamen on www.xinde.org May 28). *kf*

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"Searching for the Narrow Door"

11th European Catholic China Colloquium deals with the situation of young people in China

Katharina Wenzel-Teuber
Translated by Sr. Jacqueline Mulberge SSpS



Prof. He Guanghu talking to young people at the 11th European Catholic China Colloquium.
Photo: China-Zentrum.

More than 100 participants from 13 countries and regions met from 22–25 August 2024 in the Catholic-Social Institute in Siegburg/Germany, to discuss the future of the Church in China. Chinese persons from Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong formed half the participants – including priests and religious, as well as Christian lay persons, of whom many currently live in Europe as students or pastors. Contributing to the diversity of the dialogue was the fact that the participants belonged to different Christian denominations. Speakers at the conference included among others Cardinal Stephen Chow SJ of Hong Kong and Msgr. Mirosław Wachowski, Undersecretary for Relations with States in the Secretariat of State of the Holy See. Cologne Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki celebrated Holy Mass with the conference participants. The 11th European Catholic China Colloquium was organised by the China-Zentrum in St. Augustin.

How are young people in China, in society as well as in the Church? Their concerns and wishes are often more similar to those of young people elsewhere in the world than to those of older generations in China, according to several conference contributions. Since the pandemic, many young persons feel exhausted, depressed and disoriented. At the same time they are worried about not finding work. Unlike their parents' generation, they no longer believe that they can achieve a constantly higher standard of living through their own efforts. Suicides among the young have increased. At the same time, more and more young people in China are refusing to meet the traditional expectations of their parents – marriage, family, career, property. In a world full of uncertainties, they are looking for the "narrow door" to their own, individual path in life – that is how a young Catholic woman from China described it. From Taiwan, Ms. Sun Shu-Kuan from the Youth Ministry Office of the Divine Word Missionaries in Chiayi reported that some young people have not wanted to take off their face masks since the pandemic and have retreated behind their mobile phones. At first, it is difficult to persuade them to build relationships and allow community.

While in Mainland China the government tries to keep young people away from religion and often prohibits the participation of minors in religious activities, the churches in Taiwan and Hong Kong have their own schools and universities and can offer a variety of youth programs. Fr. Robert Wong SVD, a student chaplain at Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan, said he moved his office to the lobby of a student dormitory to be closer to students. In Hong Kong, the number of young detainees has risen drastically since the major protests of 2019. The Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong founded for them the project "Light up." According to Cardinal Chow, the aim is to enable young people in prison to continue their studies, to prepare them for entry into working life and to support their reintegration into society. Hong Kong society needs reconciliation and healing, the Cardinal said. In addition, the massive emigration from Hong Kong is also noticeable in the parishes. Often, 40- to 45-year-old couples emigrate with their children, including many lay guides.

Bruno Lepeu MEP, a French priest working in Hong Kong, drew hopeful conclusions from his survey among young committed Catholics in Mainland China. While the Church in China is still very clerical, according to Lepeu's observation, young people want a fraternal Church in which they can actively participate. In this way the young renew the Church, said Lepeu. On the other hand, Chinese Catholic students in Europe experience the churches there ambivalently, as the Chinese Jesuit Ren Andao reported. On the one hand, they value the freedom and plurality of religious expressions, but on the other, they often feel that European churches are too institutionalized and that disputes between religious conservatives and progressives are "too political."

The protection of children and adolescents from sexual abuse was also a topic at the conference. The Chinese priest Josef Gao presented his draft of a prevention concept for the Chinese Church, which he developed at the Catholic University of Applied Sciences of North Rhine-Westphalia in Cologne. It is true that no cases of abuse have been officially reported in the Chinese Church so far. But it must be prepared and act to protect children and prevent sexual abuse, Gao said.

Again and again during the conference, the pressure on the Christian churches in Mainland China by the very restrictive state religious policy was addressed. Catholic, Protestant and also the few Orthodox communities in the country are experiencing massive surveillance, ideological pressure, regimentation, restriction and sometimes even the prohibition of their work. However, the social anthropologist Mark McLeister of the University of Edinburgh was able to identify in his studies of Protestant churches in China that the official requirements at the local level are sometimes treated with a pragmatism that creates room for manoeuvre. In the city he examined, two pastors had even set up a small church group only for cadres and party members. Their existence is kept secret because members of the Communist Party in China are not allowed to participate in religious activities.

Theology must not remain silent about the suffering of the people, said the well-known researcher in Christianity He Guanghu, professor emeritus at Renmin University in Beijing. In view of wars and tensions in the world, he called on Chinese theologians to develop a comparative "theology of nations" and "theology of systems." It is particularly necessary to analyse Chinese nationalism – he said – which has long been penetrated, supported, distorted and manipulated by an overpowering State (statism).

China and its Catholic community are particularly close to Pope Francis and the Holy See, assured Msgr. Wachowski, the last speaker of the Colloquium. For the future, he regarded the unity of the Catholic community in China and a good preparation of its bishops as the most important concerns, together with a good formation and training of the clergy, women religious and lay faithful.

The first European Catholic China Colloquium was held in Verona in 1992. Since then, these colloquia have been an important setting for the networking of people and institutions associated with the Christian churches in China.

China-Zentrum, 28 August 2024

This report is also online in German on the "Startseite" of the website www.china-zentrum.de and under:
https://www.china-zentrum.de/artikel/auf-der-suche-nach-dem-engen-tor-11-europaeisches-katholisches-china-kolloquium-beschaeftigt-sich-mit-der-situation-junger-menschen-in-china

Address of Monsignor Mirosław S. Wachowski Undersecretary for Relations with States 11th European Catholic China Colloquium Siegburg, 25 August 2024

Dear friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I sincerely thank the organizers of the Conference for the invitation to participate in these days of study and shared reflection on the theme of the Church in China. It seems almost unnecessary to recall how much that country and its Catholic community are at the centre of the pastoral concern of Pope Francis and of the Holy See. I am certain that the same is true for all of you present.



Monsignor Mirosław S. Wachowski (left), Undersecretary for Relations with States in the Secretariat of State of the Holy See, with Monsignor Wolfgang Huber (right), Missio Munich and Board Director of the China-Zentrum. Photo: China-Zentrum.

Since no one can fully anticipate how events and situations will evolve over time, it is difficult to know what the future of the Church in China will be like. Nevertheless, this is the topic on which I was asked to speak. I can affirm, however, that what is true for other ecclesial situations is also valid for the Church in China, namely, that if some elements are more predictable, others are instead entrusted to the action of the Spirit, who blows where he wills.

In order to set our sights beyond the present situation, let us use some recent insights offered recently by Pope Francis as our point of reference: "In China, the Lord has preserved the faith of the people of God along the way. The faith of the people of God has been a compass pointing the way throughout history [...] until today" (*Video Message of Pope Francis to the International Conference "100 years since the Concilium Sinense: between history and the present"*, 21 May 2024). In my opinion, we can also add that the same will be true for the future: just as the Spirit has always sustained the life of the Church, he will continue to do so in the future, enlightening clergy and lay faithful along the way. Among the many elements that must be taken into account, it is certain that the faith of Chinese Catholics, their missionary openness and their desire to live the Gospel will be the most decisive resources for their future. Today, there is no lack of encouraging signs in this regard. The Church in China is a community that celebrates its faith and devotion, including a particular love for the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Sacred Heart of Christ. It is a community that proclaims the Gospel, baptizes and lives charity. Here it is important to mention the edifying testimonies concerning the aid given to flood and earthquake victims, the assistance given to the sick, orphans and those who live in the so-called "existential peripheries". To a certain extent, the Chinese Church challenges the current way of thinking in order to deal with new social emergencies, for instance by promoting so-called "zero dowry marriages". It is a community that studies its own history and wants to become ever more aware of it. Precisely because of their love for their own land and country, Chinese Catholics nurture a sincere and widespread desire to live their faith in full communion with the universal Church and the Successor of Peter. This rich ecclesial experience is certainly a treasure to be preserved, but it is above all a resource from which to draw in the future, a "pledge of future happiness", to use Saint Paul's definition of the Holy Spirit and the fruits he scatters among the faithful (cf. *Eph* 1:13-14; 2 *Cor* 1:22).

The Holy See, for its part, is eager and ready to accompany the beloved Chinese people and the Catholic faithful of the country on their journey. When considering the future of the Church in China in connection with the actions and perspective of the Apostolic See, the issues commonly given most attention include the Provisional Agreement on the Appointment of Bishops, its implementation and renewal; the canonical recognition of the collegial body of bishops; and the reordering of the boundaries of ecclesiastical circumscriptions. These are certainly relevant topics, on which the Parties have been working for some time with commitment, dedication and sincerity. However, from an ecclesial point of view, these elements have, so to speak, an instrumental character. Despite their great importance, they do not constitute ends in themselves but rather means aimed at nurturing the life and continued progress of the Catholic Church in China. It is precisely this last point that captures the driving force behind Pope Francis's constant care for China as well as the actions of the Holy See.

Looking to the future, this pastoral solicitude is expressed, in particular, through certain desires, or priorities, that are considered fundamental for allowing the Catholic Church in the country to have an increasingly lively and peaceful existence, one capable of fully living the Gospel and witnessing it to the world. Of these desires, three appear to be central and most urgent: the unity of the Catholic community in the country, the good preparation of

its pastors, and the proper formation of the clergy and laity. I believe that these issues will be among the most decisive for the future of the Church in China.

The Unity of the Catholic Community

This requirement stems directly from the communion that embodies and reveals the very essence of the Church. By realizing this communion of love and unity, the Church manifests herself as a "sacrament", that is, a sign and instrument of intimate union with God and the entire human race. This is particularly relevant for believers in the People's Republic of China. Indeed, we cannot fail to notice the challenges the Church has been facing for some time now in overcoming – both internally and in its relations with civil society – tensions, divisions and recriminations. In this regard, Pope Benedict XVI, in his *Letter to Chinese Catholics*, already reminded us that there are many necessary things for the Church's journey through history, but if unity inspired by charity is lacking, "all will be in vain" (27 May 2007, 6).

In this regard, the Holy See aims to base its actions on some fundamental criteria. The first is attention to the experience of the Chinese faithful and clergy, which is characterized by very complex and, at times, painful historical events. This attention leads to a profound respect for the pastoral and spiritual needs of individuals and communities, an understanding of fears that still remain for some and respect for times and rhythms that cannot be rushed. A second criterion, which is complementary to the one just outlined, is the need to indicate a path of progressive unity. Although it will require time and effort to be achieved, such a path is indispensable. As the aforementioned letter of Pope Benedict XVI reminded us, "The history of the Church teaches us, then, that authentic communion is not expressed without arduous efforts at reconciliation. Indeed, the purification of memory, the pardoning of wrong-doers, the forgetting of injustices suffered and the loving restoration to serenity of troubled hearts, all to be accomplished in the name of Jesus crucified and risen, can require moving beyond personal positions or viewpoints, born of painful or difficult experiences. These are urgent steps that must be taken if the bonds of communion between the faithful and the Pastors of the Church in China are to grow and be made visible" (*Ibid*.).

In particular, the Holy See hopes that, as the communion of all the Chinese Bishops with the Holy Father is now guaranteed, the unity of the flock, united in one faith and fraternal charity, may also gradually become a reality. While aware of the difficulties that still remain in this regard, this objective seems to be the crucial element for allowing the Church to flourish in the country and bear full witness to the Gospel, as well as permitting communities to enrich and support each other. Such unity, moreover, will also promote the harmony of Chinese society as a whole. On closer inspection, this objective does not constitute a novelty. The same invitation to unity and reconciliation was first addressed to the Chinese faithful by Saint John Paul II on the occasion of the Great Jubilee 2000: "My ardent desire is that you will respond to the interior promptings of the Holy Spirit by forgiving one another whatever needs to be forgiven, by drawing closer to one another, by accepting one another and by breaking down all barriers in order to overcome every pos-

sible cause of division. Do not forget the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: 'By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (Jn 13:35)" (*Message to Catholics in China*, 8 December 1999, 6). The desire and solicitude of Pope Francis, then, clearly follows the path traced by his predecessors.

It goes without saying that any discussion of the unity of the Catholic Church in China always includes the topic of the distinction between so-called "official" and "unofficial" communities. While respecting the particular sensitivities of the faithful and clergy, the Holy See is working nonetheless to ensure that this distinction, which does not belong to the nature of the Church, ceases to be a reason for division and confrontation. In this regard, it continues "to dialogue with the Chinese Authorities […] in order to find a formula that, while allowing for registration, would respect not only Chinese laws but also Catholic doctrine." (*Pastoral guidelines of the Holy See concerning the civil registration of clergy in China*, 28 June 2019). Connected to this issue is also the more general question of the relationship between Catholics and the Civil Authorities. It is significant that Pope Francis has repeatedly expressed that the Chinese faithful be "good Catholics and good citizens" and that the Church in the country be "fully Catholic and fully Chinese". The Holy See, for its part, makes the Pope's invitation its own and remains open to dialogue with Government Authorities in order to create conditions for the Catholic communities to live in unity and peaceful coexistence. Here, I would reiterate the importance that "also on the local level, relations between the leaders of ecclesial communities and the civil authorities become more productive through frank dialogue and impartial listening, so as to overcome antagonism on both sides… in order to ensure that pastoral activities take place in an orderly manner, in harmony with the legitimate expectations of the faithful and the decisions of competent authorities" (*Message to Chinese Catholics and the Universal Church*, 26 September 2018, 10).

Bishops: Genuine Leaders of the People of God

The cohesion and harmony of communities is due in large part to efforts made by their bishops. This is a constitutive trait of the Church, not only in China. The Church universally professes to be not only "one, holy and catholic", but also "apostolic", thus affirming the essential and central role that the bishops, as successors of the Apostles, exercise within the ecclesial structure. The bishop is, for the faithful entrusted to him, the principal guide of the local Church. Through the imposition of hands and communion with the Pope, the apostolic gift is passed on to the bishops. They are given the office of teaching in order to instruct the people of God about Christian faith and life, sanctifying them with the sacraments and governing their spiritual life and all that pertains to it (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 375).

From these brief considerations, it is clear how much the presence and good preparation of bishops can affect the future of the Church in China. That is why the Holy See's first concern is that all circumscriptions have their own pastor. Good progress has been made in this regard in recent years, particularly through the recent increase in the rate of episcopal appointments and ordinations. This is due to the commitment of local commu-

nities and dialogue between the Holy See and the Authorities. It must be acknowledged, however, that there is still work to be done, as quite a few circumscriptions remain vacant.

The commitment to identify new pastors of dioceses is accompanied by the ongoing effort to have good bishops, who will be exemplary and effective guides for their faithful. Of all the characteristics proper to episcopal candidates, those particularly relevant for the Church in China are a solid moral and spiritual life, strong capacity for dialogue both within and outside the Church, tireless fraternal charity towards the clergy and the faithful, and readiness always to mend relationships. When considering the life of Catholic communities in China, it is consoling to receive the many testimonies concerning the pastoral zeal and personal holiness of bishops who work unreservedly in an ecclesial context that is not always easy.

It is with this intention that the Provisional Agreement was signed by the Holy See with the Authorities of the People's Republic of China. This was accomplished through a spirit of dialogue. While being an instrument that can be perfected, as has been repeatedly acknowledged, it marks a step forward since for the first time there are now stable elements of cooperation between State Authorities and the Apostolic See that provide greater means for ensuring that the Catholic community has good shepherds who are in full ecclesial communion. As Pope Francis stated, "In this context, the Holy See intends fully to play its own part. Yet an important part also falls to you, the bishops, priests, consecrated men and women, and lay faithful: to join in seeking good candidates capable of taking up in the Church the demanding and important ministry of bishop. It is not a question of appointing functionaries to deal with religious issues, but of finding authentic shepherds according to the heart of Jesus, men committed to working generously in the service of God's people" (*Message to Chinese Catholics and the Universal Church*, 26 September 2018, 5). In this regard, it is evident that an Agreement is nothing more than an instrument and will not be able to solve all existing problems. Indeed, it would be ineffective and sterile if not accompanied by a profound commitment to renewal on both the personal and ecclesial level. In particular, growth in truth and charity is needed on the part of Chinese priests and faithful in order to overcome the divisions and vested interests that still persist concerning this delicate question.

The Formation of Clergy, Women Religious and Lay Faithful

The last of the three priorities that I mentioned at the beginning of my address concerns good theological, intellectual and human formation for clergy, seminarians, women religious and the lay faithful.

The Chinese Catholic community is facing diverse and important challenges that it will have to respond to by harnessing its gifts and talents as well through renewed commitment to formation. In fact, the future of the Church in the country will depend precisely on the success of these efforts. For example, it is particularly urgent and essential to discover how to carry out a correct and effective inculturation of the Christian faith, so that Catholics in China can maintain the integrity of their beliefs while also expressing them in forms that respect the cultural sensitivity of the Chinese people. It is clear that this work can only

be done on the local level, based on a truly in-depth knowledge of Catholic theology and ecclesiology, as well as that of the local culture. Another challenge that will have to be met through both initial and ongoing formation is that of dialogue between the believing community and broader contemporary Chinese society, so that the Catholic Church can become more integrated and increasingly understood as a positive social element. Also relevant in this context is the issue of secularization. In an increasingly consumerist age, we are witnessing in China, as elsewhere, how a more comfortable life has led to the neglect of the spiritual life. As a result, many young people are turning away from a life of service to the Church, causing a real vocational crisis. While continuing to promote vocations and to form properly clergy and religious to have a missionary spirit, the Church in China is also called upon to implement a clear and effective formation programme for the laity, who represent an indispensable resource for the future. At the same time, there is also an urgent need to engage in the specific areas of ongoing formation that allow the efforts of evangelization to keep pace with the social transformations taking place in the country, particularly the phenomenon of internal migration and urbanization. The challenge here is not only to welcome Catholics moving from rural to urban settings, but also to adapt the work of evangelization to the new urban environment, which sometimes requires finding methods that go beyond the traditional parish model. Lastly, the formation of the clergy and laity should provide the skills necessary to care for human vulnerabilities that are steadily increasing within the believing community. In particular, I would highlight the needs of the young and elderly.

Much has been done in recent years to improve formation. In addition to regular seminary courses, some programmes, including in-depth classes for catechists and lay people have been available for over twenty years now. Recently, new possibilities have also multiplied. Numerous priests and religious have been able to follow training programmes abroad in order to deepen their theological and pastoral studies. These include, for example, Italy, the Philippines, the United States, Ireland, Germany, France and Taiwan. The Holy See, for its part, is directly responsible for some of these initiatives, especially through the work of the Dicastery for Evangelization, and strongly supports any exchange that may constitute an enrichment of formation and skills for the benefit of the Church in China. In this sense, we encourage all those involved to continue in this important task and, if possible, to develop further opportunities for exchange and formation.

Conclusion

Looking to the future of the Catholic Church in China, I would like to repeat once again some words of encouragement that have already been addressed on more than one occasion to the faithful in that country: "Beloved Catholic Church in China, you are a small flock present and active within the vastness of an immense People journeying through history. How stirring and encouraging these words of Jesus are for you: 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Lk 12:32)… therefore 'let your light so shine before all, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven' (*Mt* 5:16)" (Benedict XVI, *Letter to Chinese Catholics*, 27 May

2007, 5; Francis, *Message to Chinese Catholics and the Universal Church*, 26 September 2018).

These sentiments certainly confirm that the lived experience of Chinese Catholics – who appear as a small flock in a vast country – is sustained by divine providence as well as the fraternity and solicitude of the universal Church. With this hopeful certainty, let us accompany the journey of our brothers and sisters in faith, entrusting their future to the loving plan of the Father.

Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People's Republic of China – Update for the Year 2023

Katharina Wenzel-Teuber

Translated by David Streit SVD

In this year's statistical update, we are once again dealing with the discussion about "denomination-based" versus "deity-based" questioning methods when collecting data on the religious situation of the Chinese population. A report from the Pew Research Center is presented which analyzes the various methods used by the large scientific social surveys in China to measure religion and their results. In a study on the freely combined "mix-match" belief in Jesus Christ, two Chinese researchers also discuss the pros and cons of the two methods of questioning. Two sociologists have investigated whether a difference of religion between spouses affects marital satisfaction and whether there are differences between the sexes. There are new data from the 7th Chinese census of 2020 on the country's traditionally Muslim ethnic groups. For the Catholic Church in China, far more ordinations of priests were recorded in 2023 than in the pandemic-hit year of 2022. At the end of the statistical update, we present a Catholic app that uses an interactive map to find churches throughout China.

Pew Research Center: Measuring Religion in China

In August 2023, the Pew Research Center published a 160-page report on "Measuring Religion in China." The non-governmental institute based in Washington, D.C., conducts opinion research on many topics in the United States and around the world. However, since the Pew Research Center, like other foreign institutes, was not allowed to conduct its own opinion poll in China, it chose the approach of analyzing scientific surveys conducted in China itself.

In the "Methods" chapter, the Pew Research Center (here after "Pew") describes in detail the Chinese surveys evaluated and their procedures. An appendix lists the religion-related questionnaires in Chinese and English that the various Chinese surveys have used over the years. This apparatus makes the Pew report very interesting for anyone who wants to better understand religion-related demographic research in China.

The Pew team relies primarily on data from two large national surveys: the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 中国综合社会调查)[1] and the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS, 中国家庭追踪调查).[2] Both surveys regularly ask questions about religiosity.

The results of such surveys depend very much on the type of questioning chosen. This is explained several times in the Pew report. While some surveys ask about religion (*zongjiao* 宗教) ("What religion do you belong to?", "What religion do you believe in?"), others ask about the object of belief ("What do you believe in?").[3] In the Chinese context, the second form of questioning usually leads to a significantly higher percentage of respondents stating a religious belief than if they are asked directly about religion. This is because the term *zongjiao* 宗教 (religion) in China

> *commonly connotes formal membership in a religious organization or a public commitment to a religious belief system. When respondents choose the "no religious belief"* (wu zongjiao xinyang 无宗教信仰) *option in a survey, they might not have in mind a complete lack of religious or spiritual beliefs. For example, they may not associate belief in Buddha and/or a bodhisattva or folk deities with the word "religion"* (zongjiao). *In addition, some Chinese people may reject zongjiao affiliation because they only occasionally engage in zongjiao activities, or because they see that the state disapproves of zongjiao. As a result, the share of people who claim to have "no religion" is far larger than the share who reject any belief in gods or who never engage in spiritual activities.*[4]

For example, 90% of adults in the 2018 CGSS, which asked about religion, chose the option "I do not believe in any religion" (*bu xinyang zongjiao* 不信仰宗教). In contrast, in the 2018 CFPS, which asked about deities, only 61% of adults said they did not believe in Buddha/Bodhisattvas, Daoist gods and immortals, Jesus Christ, Tianzhu 天主 (Catholic term for God), or Allah [i.e., none of the "deities" of the five major religions]. Overall, Pew concludes:

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1 CGSS is a large-scale nationwide cross-sectional survey of Chinese households that has been in existence since 2003. It includes questions related to religion. Since 2010, it has been conducted by the National Survey Research Center at Renmin University of China and funded by Renmin University and the Chinese government. Pew used data from the 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2018 CGSS surveys. Around 12,000 people over the age of 18 were interviewed each time, in all administrative units at provincial level except Hainan, Tibet and Xinjiang (the survey was conducted in the whole of the People's Republic of China only in 2010). Pew also presented the data from the CGSS survey wave of 2021, which was restricted in scope due to COVID 19. Cf. Pew Research Center 2023, p. 114.

2 CFPS is a longitudinal survey conducted by Peking University's Institute of Social Science Survey – i.e., in principle, the same people are interviewed every two years. Each wave includes around 35,000 adults in over 13,000 households across the PRC, excluding Hainan, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Qinghai, Tibet and Xinjiang. The survey, funded by Peking University and the National Foundation for Natural Sciences, has also included a question module on religion since 2012. Pew used the religion-related data from the four CFPS survey waves of 2021, 2014, 2016 and 2018. Cf. Pew Research Center 2023, p. 115. – Pew also included some data from the China Labor-force Dynamics Survey, the World Values Survey, the Spiritual Life Study of Chinese Residents [also known as Chinese Spiritual Life Survey] and Chinese government sources.

3 For deliberations concerning "denomination-based" versus "deity-based" questioning methods, see below the study of Li – Wang 2023 on the "mix-match"-belief in Jesus Christ.

4 Pew Research Center 2023, p. 96.

> *While it is an exaggeration to say that 90% of China's population is secular, it also is an exaggeration to suggest that religious and/or spiritual practices are pervasive and frequent.*[5]

When evaluating survey results, one must also consider the wording used to ask about "belief"/"believe." The surveys use Chinese words with different connotations, which Pew describes as follows:

xinyang (信仰) = firm belief in or commitment to a theory, thought or philosophy. Commonly used to indicate formal commitment or serious conviction.
xin (信) = trust/have no doubts in or worship/venerate. Common usage includes "*xin jiao*," meaning to "believe in a religion."
xiangxin (相信) = trust/have no doubts in. Typically implies weaker commitment than *xin*. Does not connote worship or veneration.[6]

Religious Change in China since 2010

To examine changes in the religious orientation of the population, Pew used data from the CGSS, as CGSS consistently asked the same two questions in each of its seven waves of surveys: about "religious belief" (*zongjiao xinyang* 宗教信仰) and "frequency of participation in religious activities" (*canjia zongjiao huodong de pinfan chengdu* 参加宗教活动的频繁程度).[7] The results from different years can therefore be compared and allow developments to be observed. CFPS, on the other hand, experimented with different question forms and methods over the years.

As Table 1 shows, the CGSS 2018–2021 data provide "no clear confirmation of rising levels of religious identity in China, at least not as embodied by formal *zongjiao* (宗教) affiliation and worship attendance." They remained largely unchanged until 2018, with only a slight decline for Buddhism. For popular belief, the change over the years cannot be reliably measured because the question forms and methods have been constantly changed.[8]

Pew found a decline in participation in religious activities (*zongjiao huodong*) when evaluating the same CGSS survey waves. In 2012, 11% of adult respondents said they attended religious activities at least a few times a year. In 2018, only 6% said this. In 2021, just 3% of respondents said they participated in religious activities but this may have been due to the special situation during the pandemic. Even among adults who reported religious beliefs, the proportion of those who said they attended religious activities at least a few times a year fell from 53% in 2012 to 45% in 2018.[9]

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5 Pew Research Center 2023, pp. 95-96.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

7 *Ibid.*, Appendix B, pp. 136-147. – At CGSS, the following answers are possible to the question "What is your religious belief": I don't believe in a religion, Buddhism, Daoism, Folk religion (worship of Mazu, Guangong, etc.), Hui religion/Islam, Catholicism, (Protestant) Christianity, Orthodox Christianity, Other Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Other (please indicate …). The Pew report does not tell us anything about the results for Orthodox Christianity, Judaism or Hinduism.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Table 1: No Clear Evidence of Rising Religious Affiliation in China: Religious Belief (*zongjiao xinyang*) of Adults in China in % according to CGSS 2010–2021[10]

	Islam	Christianity*	Folk religions	Buddhism	No religion
2010	1	2	3	6	88
2012	1	2	3	6	86
2013	1	2	2	5	89
2015	1	2	2	5	90
2017	1	2	2	5	90
2018	2	2	3	4	90
2021 (COVID19-**)	1	1	<0,5	4	93

* Christianity here includes all Christian denominations; cf. Pew Research Center 2023, p. 61, note 55.

** Because the 2021 data were collected during the COVID 19 pandemic and in fewer provinces/religious cities/autonomous regions (19) than previous waves of the survey (28–31), they are not directly comparable with those of previous years.

Table created from diagram in Pew Research Center 2023, p. 24. Data from CGSS 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2021.

The Pew Research Center's report "Measuring Religion in China" also contains detailed chapters on the individual religions. Some data from these chapters are presented below in the sections on Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestant churches and the Catholic Church.

Study on Freely Combined "Mix-Match" Belief in Jesus Christ according to CFPS 2018

In last year's statistical update, we presented an evaluation of the religion-related data from CFPS 2018 which focused on the prevalence of traditional folk religion among the population. As a reminder, the religion module of CFPS 2018 asked deity-based questions. The first question in the CFPS 2018 religion module was: "Do you believe in Buddha or Bodhisattvas?" (*Nin shifou xiangxin fo huo pusa*? 您是否相信佛或菩萨?) Respondents had to answer "yes" or "no." In the same form, respondents were asked in separate questions if they believed in [Daoist] gods and immortals, in the true God Allah, in Tianzhu (Catholic name of God), in Jesus Christ, in ancestors, in ghosts, and in Fengshui (geomancy). It was found that with this type of questioning, only 25.2% of respondents stated no religious belief at all. 25.4% stated one belief, 20.5% stated two and 29% stated three or more religious beliefs. In its analysis of this data, the research team saw the proportion of folk religion followers at over 70% of the sample.[11]

Using the same religion-related data from CFPS 2018, the research duo Li Feng and Wang Qian (both from the East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai) analyzed in 2023 the group of those who stated in the survey that they believed in Jesus Christ. The researchers wanted to know the proportion of absolute monotheistic

10 In an email dated July 3, 2024, the Pew Research Center told the author: "According to the Chinese General Social Survey, conducted between 2010 and 2021, less than 0.5% of Chinese adults formally identify with Taoism." Presumably for this reason, Daoism does not appear in the diagram on which Table 1 is based.

11 Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, pp. 580-582; cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2023, pp. 18-24.

believers in Christ in the population and the proportion of those who, in a "mix-match" form, freely combine belief in Christ with belief in traditional Chinese objects of faith ("*hunda*" *shi Jidu xinyangzhe* "混搭" 式基督信仰者). They also wanted to know what this "mix-match" type of belief is made up of.[12]

According to Li and Wang, 5.99% of respondents in the 2018 CFPS said they believed in Jesus Christ and 4.61% said they believed in Tianzhu. Since "Catholics may also choose to believe in Jesus Christ," the proportion of (Protestant) Christians was therefore at least 1.38% and at most 5.99%. The proportion of believers in Christ who "fully conform to monotheistic standards" was 1.22% [i.e. these respondents stated that their only belief was in Jesus Christ].[13]

The next step was to examine how belief in Jesus Christ was combined with other forms of belief. In fact, overlaps with all other forms of belief occurred, in the following order: believers in Christ most frequently also believed in ancestors (6.62%), followed by Tianzhu (3.31%), Fengshui (1.79%), ghosts (1.52%), gods/immortals (0.69%), Buddha/Bodhisattva (0.14%) and Allah (0.14%).[14]

The researchers then examined the combinations of belief in Christ and belief in traditional Chinese "objects of faith." To avoid duplication, they left out "ghosts" on the grounds that Christianity involves "exorcism," so they remained with ancestors,[15] Buddha/Bodhisattva, Fengshui and gods/immortals. The resulting picture is shown in Table 2:

Table 2: "Mix-Match" Types of Belief in Jesus Christ and Traditional Chinese Objects of Faith

Combination types by accumulation	Participation in religious organization		In total
	Yes	No	
Jesus Christ + 0 traditional object of faith	99 (52.66%)	87 (16.20%)	186 (25.66%)
Jesus Christ + 1 traditional object of faith	35 (18.62%)	67 (12.48%)	102 (14.07%)
Jesus Christ + 2 traditional objects of faith	24 (12.77%)	80 (14.9%)	104 (14.34%)
Jesus Christ + 3 traditional objects of faith	14 (7.45%)	109 (20.30%)	123 (16.97%)
Jesus Christ + 4 traditional objects of faith	16 (8.51%)	194 (36.13%)	210 (28.97%)
In total	188	537	725

Source: Li – Wang 2023, p. 105, Table 6. [Data from CFPS 2018]

As can be seen from Table 2, 28.97% of those who believed in Christ also believed in four other traditional faith objects, namely ancestors, Buddha/Bodhisattvas, Fengshui and gods/immortals, and only 25.66% believed in Christ without believing in any traditional object of faith. The situation is somewhat different for believers in Christ who are also members of religious organizations (which Li and Wang say is characteristic of Christian-

12 Li – Wang 2023, p. 98.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 104, especially Table 5.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 105. – Probably Li and Wang were not aware of the fact that Rome has officially allowed Catholic Christians in China to practice ancestor veneration. The Jesuit China missionaries of the 17th century had allowed Chinese converts to venerate their ancestors. As a result of the Chinese Rites Controversy, this practice was forbidden for Chinese Catholics by the Pope in 1704. The ban was lifted in 1939. "Ancestors" are therefore no more clearly non-Christian than "ghosts." See also the report on a survey conducted in 2017 on the attitude of Chinese Christians to ancestor veneration in Wenzel-Teuber 2018, pp. 37-38.

ity as an organized religion) – of these, 52.66% believed in Christ and no traditional faith object.[16]

From this finding, Li Feng and Wang Qian derive two interesting questions:

1. One should think again about the criteria for defining "Christian," otherwise one will run into difficulties when interpreting the figures. Scholars work with concepts such as belief (*xinyang* 信仰), belonging or identification [with a religion], which is different from popular "believing in something" (*xin* 信) – according to Li and Wang. When we say that the number of Christians has increased, do we mean Christians as defined by Christian doctrine, or do we mean individuals for whom Christ is one of many deities in whom they "believe" (*xin*)? Is this a growth of Christianity or the result of a fusion of belief in Christ with a growing traditional belief, in other words, a growth of traditional Chinese belief?[17]

2. Li and Wang then raise the question of denomination-based measurement (*zongpai wenwei celiang* 宗派本位测量) versus deity-based measurement (*shenling benwei celiang* 神灵本位测量) of Chinese religiosity. Some researchers, such as Lu Yunfeng from Peking University, who designed the CFPS question modules with his team, believe that the deity-based method is more suitable for China, write Li and Wang. But Li and Wang think that their paper has shown that both methods are necessary and must complement each other. Specifically, they see a problem with the deity-based questioning in the fact that the deity terms used in the questions do not clearly represent certain categories of belief. For instance, the terms "Jesus Christ" and "Tianzhu" are only to a limited extent suitable for distinguishing between Protestants and Catholics, since all Christians believe in Jesus Christ. Likewise, someone who says they believe in "ghosts" is not necessarily a follower of traditional Chinese folk beliefs; they could (since Christianity involves "exorcism") also be a Christian.

Li and Wang conclude that, due to the different nature of the religions found in China, a mixed method of denomination-based and deity-based measurement should be used: the Abrahamic religions could be surveyed using a denomination-based approach, while a deity-based data collection method would probably be better for traditional Chinese religiosity.[18]

Marital Satisfaction among Religiously Diverse Couples

The national longitudinal study CFPS provides a wealth of data on a wide range of topics for the same panel of people and households over the years. This obviously inspires researchers to make creative connections. In 2023, sociologists Sheng He and Zhang Chunni (both from Peking University) evaluated data from the CFPS with regard to a possible connection between religious affiliation and the level of marital satisfaction of the spouses surveyed. In China, they write in the introduction, there have so far been hardly any studies on interfaith marriages, while international research on the topic has been going on

16 Li – Wang 2023, p. 105.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

since the 1980s. They ask themselves two questions: 1. Is marital satisfaction higher when both partners have the same religious belief? 2. Is there a difference between the sexes?[19]

For the data on religious belief, they use CFPS 2016. This survey asked about membership in a religious organization, religious affiliation ("What religion do you belong to?"), frequency of religious practice and importance of religion ("Is religion important to you?").[20] Based on the answers to these questions, they divided the individual respondents (whether husband or wife) into five latent classes using the latent class analysis method:

Class 1, labeled "people with no religious belief."

Class 2, labeled "people who offer incense and worship Buddha"; they have no clear religious affiliation and do not find religion important, but occasionally or frequently offer incense or worship Buddha.

Class 3, labeled "people who practice folk beliefs"; they differ from class 2 in that some of them believe in Buddhism, Daoism or folk religion and attach a certain importance to religion.

Class 4, labeled as "followers of traditional Chinese religions," i.e. Buddhism or Daoism.

Class 5, labeled as "followers of Western religions," i.e. Protestantism, Catholicism or Islam.

First, it is interesting to see which combinations of religious belief or non-belief – according to the data from CFPS 2016 – occur among married couples in the PRC and how frequently. The researchers found the following:

The most common couples were those in which both partners had no religious belief. They made up 70.29% of the sample.[21]

In 3.78% of the sample, both partners had a religious belief, and the same one.

In 25.92% of the sample, the partners differed in their religious beliefs. Of these 1,337 couples, the couples in which the man had a religious belief and the woman did not, made up 24.16% (6.26% of the total sample). The proportion of couples in which the woman had a religious belief and the man did not was 56.39% (14.62% of the total sample). In the latter case, the most common combinations were "man with no religious belief + woman a follower of traditional Chinese religions" and "man with no religious belief + woman who offers incense and worships Buddha"; these two combinations each accounted for 15% of interfaith marriages. In contrast, couples in which both partners are religious but believe in different religions only accounted for 19.45% of the religiously diverse marriages (5.04% of the total sample), with the most common combination being "person practicing folk beliefs + follower of traditional Chinese religions." There were also couples in which

19 Sheng – Zhang 2023, pp. 14-15.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

21 CFPS 2016 used a denomination-based question form, asking directly about religious affiliation; as a result, the proportion of those who said that they had no religious belief was quite high at 87.17% (see Lu – Wu – Zhang 2019, p. 170, Table 1). Therefore, it is not surprising that in the same wave the proportion of couples where both have no religious belief was also high. In contrast, at CFPS 2018 which used a deity-based type of questioning, only 25.2% of respondents stated no religious belief at all; cf. above the information on the study by Li Feng and Wang Qiang on the "mix-match" belief in Jesus Christ.

one partner was a follower of traditional Chinese religions and the other a follower of Western religions, but the proportion of these was very low.[22]

To measure marital satisfaction, the researchers used data from CFPS 2018, where this question was asked. Now what is the influence of the various combinations of religious belief or non-belief in married couples on the degree of marital satisfaction of these couples? The following only lists a few results, without going into the detailed method used by the researchers:

The degree of marital satisfaction of men was highest in couples where both have no religious belief (90.5%), followed by couples where both have the same religious belief (90%), and religiously diverse couples (88.9%). The marital satisfaction of women in the same three categories was 81.3%, 81.2% and 80.9%. [Women are therefore also generally much less satisfied with their marriage than men!]

Statistically, the researchers saw no relevant difference in the degree of marital satisfaction between couples where both have no religion and couples where both believe in the same religion; they therefore grouped these two types of couples together as "couples with the same belief" for further analysis.

Men were less satisfied with their marriage in marriages where people had different religions than in "couples with the same belief." However, differences in religion had no influence on the level of marital satisfaction of women.

Men were significantly less satisfied with their marriage in the following two combinations: a) "man follower of Western religions + woman with no religious belief" and b) "man with no religious belief + woman who offers incense and worships Buddha." The researchers suspect the following reasons for this: In combination a), 80% of the cases are Christian men; here – according to Sheng and Zhang – both the Christian understanding of marriage and the Christian understanding of gender that wives should submit themselves to their husbands could play a role. In combination b), it could be that the man thinks that the woman neglects household and family because of religious activities. Overall, the researchers say, gender roles are likely to be an important factor in why religious differences in marriage tend to reduce men's level of marital satisfaction.[23]

Buddhism

There is still no official data on the number of Buddhists and Daoists in Mainland China. The White Paper on freedom of religious belief (State Council 2018) states that:

> *China has numerous Buddhist and Taoist believers, but it is difficult to accurately estimate their numbers as there are no set registration procedures which ordinary believers must follow as part of their religion.* [...] *China also has many folk beliefs which are closely linked to local cultures, traditions and customs, in which a large number of people participate.*

22 Sheng – Zhang 2023, p. 19.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

Depending on the type of questioning (denomination-based or deity-based) and the questioning method used, scientific surveys of the Chinese population come to very different results:

The Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS) used a denomination-based form of questioning: What is "your religious belief"?

4% of the population over 18 years of age state Buddhism as their religious belief (CGSS 2018).[24]

China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) 2018 used a deity-based form of questioning: "Do you believe in Buddha or Bodhisattvas?" In an article published in 2023, Lu Yunfeng and Sheng He of Peking University calculated the following percentages based on the data from CFPS 2018 (using also data from CFPS 2016 about the frequency of religious practice):

32.4% of respondents aged 16 and over believe in Buddha or Bodhisattvas, i.e. answered the above question in CFPS 2018 with "yes" (= group 1).
15.6% are Buddhist believers in the broad sense (group 1 minus those who stated more than one institutionalized religion), that is 218 million people (= group 2).
8.6% are Buddhist believers in the narrow sense (group 2 minus those who stated in CFPS 2016 that they never offer incense or worship Buddha, i.e. they do not practice), that is 121 million people.[25]

For comparison, the figures from the Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (CSLS), which was carried out in 2007 and still offers a certain orientation:

185 million self-identify as Buddhists, i.e. 18% of the population above the age of 16.
17.3 million have taken the triple refuge (in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), i.e. have formalized their adherence to Buddhism through ritual.[26]

In institutionalized Buddhism there are also:

34,089 registered Buddhist sites for religious activities according to NRAA database 2024,[27] of which:
- 28,527 Han Chinese Buddhism
- 3,857 Tibetan Buddhism
- 1,705 Theravada Buddhism

24 According to Pew Research Center 2023, p. 24.

25 Lu – Sheng 2023, pp. 35-36.

26 Numbers cited here according to CSLS 2010 and Wenzel-Teuber 2012, pp. 30-36.

27 National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA) database "Basic Data on Sites for Religious Activities" at www.sara.gov.cn/resource/common/zjjcxxcxxt/zjhdcsjbxx.html, retrieved July 2, 2024. These figures from the NBRA database have only fallen by one site for Han Chinese Buddhist religious activities compared to the last retrieval of March 20, 2023 (2023: 28,528 sites). The results of a detailed search conducted on March 17, 2016 which also takes into consideration the distribution according to province can be found in Wenzel-Teuber 2016, p. 27, Table 1.

222,000 Buddhist religious personnel (monks and nuns) recognized and registered with the authorities according to the NBRA 2017 (as also State Council 2018), of which:

72,000	Han-Chinese Buddhism
148,000	Tibetan Buddhism
2,000	Theravada Buddhism

41 Buddhist academies (State Council 2018)

Daoism

As already stated above for Buddhism, there are no official figures on the number of Daoists in Mainland China, and the survey results vary greatly.

The Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), using a denomination-based form of questioning, came to the following result in its survey waves between 2010 and 2021:

less than 0.5% of the adult population formally identify with Daoism.[28]

China Family Panel Studies (CFPS) 2018, using a deity-based form of questioning, provides the following indication regarding the number of followers of Daoism:

19.6% of the population aged 16 and over believe in Daoist gods and immortals.
0.4% believe exclusively in Daoist gods and immortals, i.e. they did not name any other beliefs.[29]

For comparison, the figures from the Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (CSLS) conducted in 2007:

12 million of the adult population clearly identify with Daoism [corresponding to 1,17% of the population above 16 years].[30]
173 million have exercised some Daoist practices or taken part in such, but these are difficult to distinguish from popular belief.[31]

In institutionalized Daoism there are also:

8,349 registered Daoist sites for religious activities according to NRAA database 2024,[32] of which

4,011	Quanzhen tradition
4,338	Zhengyi tradition

28 Information from the Pew Research Center in an email to the author dated July 3, 2024: "According to the Chinese General Social Survey, conducted between 2010 and 2021, less than 0.5% of Chinese adults formally identify with Taoism." The author would like to thank the Pew Research Center.

29 According to Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, p. 583, Table 1; cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2023, p. 22, Table 1.

30 The percentage 1.17% was calculated by the author of this statistical update by analogy with the data given by CSLS for Buddhists (185 million equals 18% of the population over 16 years).

31 Numbers cited according to CSLS 2010 and Wenzel-Teuber 2012, pp. 30-36.

32 National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA) database "Basic Data on Sites for Religious Activities" at www.sara.gov.cn/resource/common/zjjcxxcxxt/zjhdcsjbxx.html, retrieved July 2, 2024. The number of registered Daoist sites listed in the NRAA database has remained unchanged since 2018.

ca. 40,000	Daoist religious personnel (State Council 2018)
10	Daoist academies (State Council 2018)

Islam

New data on Islam is available from the 7th census of the People's Republic of China conducted in 2020. In the People's Republic of China, ten ethnic groups are considered Muslim. In statistics by Chinese authorities and scholars, their population is generally equated with that of Muslims in China. According to the 2020 census, these ten ethnic groups together account for almost 18 million (17.87 million) adults, making up 1.61% of the total adult population of the People's Republic of China.[33] They are distributed as follows:

Table 3: Muslim Adults by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number of adults	Share of the adult population of all Muslim ethnicities (%)	Share of the total adult population (%)
Hui	8,291,749	46	0.75
Uighur	7,717,361	43	0.69
Kazakh	1,094,518	6	0.10
Dongxiang	466,976	3	0.04
Kirghiz	140,601	1	0.01
Salar	101,781	1	0.01
Tajik	35,771	<0,5	<0.01
Bao'an	14,703	<0,5	<0.01
Uzbek	8,766	<0,5	<0.01
Tatar	2,646	<0,5	<0.01
All Muslim ethnic groups	17,874,872	100	1.61

Data: 2020 census. Table adapted from Pew Research Center 2023, p. 81.

89% of all members of Muslim ethnic groups are Hui or Uighurs.

While Table 3 shows that the Hui are the larger of the two groups, when children are included the Uighurs are the largest of the traditionally Muslim ethnic groups (11.8 million), followed by the Hui (11.4 million), according to the 2020 census.[34]

The geographical distribution varies greatly. While – according to the 2020 census – 98.7% of the Uighurs live in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, the Chinese-speaking Hui are much more scattered across the country for historical reasons. A large proportion of them likewise live in the northwest of the PRC: 22.2% of the Hui live in Ningxia, 11.8% in Gansu, 9.7% in Xinjiang and 8.3% in Qinghai. But 8.3% of them also live in Henan, 6.5% in Yunnan, 5.0% in Hebei, 4.9% in Shandong, 2.6% in Anhui and 2.4% in Beijing. The other provinces each accommodate less than 2% of the total Chinese Hui population.[35]

33 According to the 6th census of 2010, these ten ethnic groups accounted for 23 million people, about 1.74% of the entire population. Probably this figure did include minors.

34 Pew Research Center 2023, p. 83, note 80.

35 Data from the 2020 census according to Pew Research Center 2023, p. 160 (Appendix D).



Map: d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=27749&lang=de

People's Republic of China: Provinces, Direct-Controlled Municipalities and Autonomous Regions – List of Abbreviations

AH Anhui, BJ Beijing, CQ Chongqing, FJ Fujian, GD Guangdong, GS Gansu, GX Guangxi, GZ Guizhou, Hain Hainan, HB Hubei, Heb Hebei, Hen Henan, HL Heilongjiang, HN Hunan, JL Jilin, JS Jiangsu, JX Jiangxi, LN Liaoning, NM Inner Mongolia, NX Ningxia, QH Qinghai, SC Sichuan, SD Shandong, SH Shanghai, SN Shaanxi, SX Shanxi, TJ Tianjin, XJ Xinjiang, XZ Tibet, YN Yunnan, ZJ Zhejiang.

In its report presented above, the Pew Research Center points out the problems that arise from equating ethnic and religious affiliation:

- Not all members of the ten ethnic groups considered Muslim are devout Muslims. According to data from the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), surveys in 2017 and 2018, 7% of Hui adults do not identify as Muslim. According to data from CGSS 2010 and 2012, 6% of Uighur adults do not identify as Muslim (there is not enough recent survey data on the Uighurs or Xinjiang).
- About one in 1,500 Han adults say that their religious belief is Islam (according to data from CGSS 2017 and 2018).

To account for these facts when determining the number of adult Muslims in China, Pew estimates that 90% of the ten Muslim ethnic groups identify as Muslim and that about 700,000 Han Chinese identify with Islam, resulting in a total estimate of 17 million adult Muslims – nearly 1 million less than the number of adult Muslims in Table 3.[36]

36 Pew Research Center 2023, pp. 83-84.

Pew says that studies of Muslims in China are difficult because the heavily Islamic Xinjiang and Ningxia autonomous regions are excluded from many national surveys. This is especially true for Xinjiang, which was only included in the CGSS and only in 2010 and 2012. So while there is virtually no recent survey data for Uighur Muslims, the Hui respondents to the CGSS are so geographically concentrated that the survey results may be skewed. In addition, according to Pew, it could be that the Muslims surveyed are reluctant to give their answers because of the Chinese government's policy towards Islam. According to Pew, Muslim researchers have also come under pressure in some cases.[37]

According to the White Paper (State Council 2018), Islam in the People's Republic of China has

35,000	sites for religious activities [mosques]
57,000	religious personnel
10	institutes for religious education [Qur'an institutes]

Protestant Churches

The official figures for Protestantism in China are still those from the work report of the official Protestant governing bodies, Chinese Christian Council and Three-Self Movement, at the 10th National Assembly of Chinese Protestantism in November 2018 (Gao Feng 2018) and from the White Paper on Freedom of Religious Belief (State Council 2018):

38 million	believers (Gao Feng 2018 and State Council 2018)
60,000	churches (Gao Feng 2018 and State Council 2018)
14,000	professional clerics (male and female pastors, teachers, presbyters) as well as 22,000 male and female preachers (Gao Feng 2018)
57,000	religious personnel (State Council 2018)[38]
22	theological seminaries (Gao Feng 2018)

The number 38 million is presumably based on a study by researchers Lu Yunfeng, Wu Yue and Zhang Chunni (Peking University). In an analysis of religion-related data from the 2012, 2014 and 2016 surveys of the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), they concluded that there were around 40 million Protestants in China in 2016.[39]

The number of Chinese Protestants is significantly lower according to the analysis of the data from the 2018 China General Social Survey (CGSS) in the Pew Research Center's 2023 report: Pew identified 18 million adult Protestant believers (2% of the adult population). Between 2010 and 2018, the Pew team at CGSS could not find any increase in this proportion.[40]

37 Pew Research Center 2023, pp. 91-92.

38 Why the entry for the number of religious personnel / clerics and preachers is so much higher in the State Council's White Paper than in the work report of the Protestant bodies is not clear.

39 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019. Cf. discussion of their detailed study in Wenzel-Teuber 2020, pp. 21-30, here esp. p. 27.

40 Pew Research Center 2023, p. 77. See also Table 1 above.

The Pew team noticed movements that indicated significant migration to and emigration from Christianity in a cross-temporal analysis of data from the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), which in principle survey the same people every two years. Of the adults who identified with Christianity in the 2016 CFPS (3%), about a third had not claimed Christianity as their religion when they were first surveyed in 2012, which – at least according to Pew's interpretation – suggests that around 1% of Chinese adults converted to Christianity in the two years between the surveys. "Among adults who identified with Christianity (2%) in the 2012 CFPS, about a quarter no longer did when asked again about their religion in the 2016 survey. And roughly one-in-five of the adults who self-identified as Christian in 2012 claimed no belief in either Jesus Christ or Tianzhu when reinterviewed in 2018. In other words, while many Chinese people convert to Christianity, some Chinese Christians apparently also leave the faith."[41]

Pew believes that the large Chinese surveys are scientifically sound, even though they are often state funded. However, Pew explains that some Christians may be reluctant to reveal their Christian identity, for example, because they belong to unregistered Christian communities or are party members. In addition, the accuracy of the estimate could be affected if, for example, certain regions in the province of Hebei with a high concentration of Catholics or the city of Wenzhou with its high number of Protestants are not included in the sample.[42]

Catholic Church

It has become more difficult to provide reliable statistical data on the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China. The following figures are based on data from the Holy Spirit Study Centre of the Diocese of Hong Kong and its periodical *Tripod*. Account is also taken of the information provided by the official Catholic governing bodies, according to their Work Report presented at the 10th National Assembly of Representatives of the Chinese Catholic Church in 2022, and the White Paper on freedom of religious belief (State Council 2018). Another important source is the website of the Shijiazhuang (Heb)-based Catholic newspaper *Xinde* 信德 (*Faith*), www.xinde.org (hereinafter referred to as *xdo*).

General Data

Believers

ca. 10 million — total number of Catholics, including both the official and unofficial (Underground) parts of the Church, estimated in *Tripod* 2023, p. 161.

41 Pew Research Center 2023, p. 78. This refers to Christians of all denominations. – However, it should be noted that CFPS asked the questions about religion differently in the various waves of the survey – partly denomination-based, partly deity-based.

42 *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64, 130.

6 million	number of Catholics according to State data (State Council 2018; CASS 2024[43]).
less than 0.5%	of the adult population (Pew Research Center 2023).

Dioceses

147 dioceses according to the Catholic hierarchy (*Tripod* 2023, p. 161).

98 dioceses according to the figures of the official Church and the Chinese authorities (Work Report at the 10th National Assembly of Catholics 2022; CASS 2024[44]).

Bishops (as of the end of 2023)[45]

93 of whom

- 67 bishops in the official Church
- 26 bishops in the Underground

Priests

ca. 4,000 in total (*Tripod* 2023, p. 161) in the official and unofficial parts of the Church.

Major Seminaries

7 major seminaries (for priest candidates). The following philosophical-theological seminaries in the official Church are currently training candidates for the priesthood: the National Seminary in Beijing and the Seminary of the Diocese of Beijing, as well as the regional seminaries in Shijiazhuang, Xi'an, Jilin, Chengdu and Shanghai (Sheshan).

Sisters

ca. 5,000 in total (*Tripod* 2023, p. 161) in the official and unofficial parts of the Church.

Churches

4,202 churches and

2,238 ecclesial sites for activities (Work Report at the 10th National Assembly of Catholics 2022)

43 CASS 2024: These are figures on the Catholic Church in China provided by Zheng Xiaoyun, Director of the Institute of World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), in her presentation at the conference "100 anni dal Concilium Sinense: tra storia e presente" on May 21, 2024 at the Urbaniana in Rome; quoted here from Cernuzio 2024.

44 As in note 43.

45 These figures also include the emerited bishops. The three bishops officially consecrated in January 2024 within the framework of the Sino-Vatican Provisional Agreement are not yet included. At the end of 2022, 95 bishops had been counted, 69 of them in the official Church and 26 in the underground Church, see *Tripod* 2023, p. 161 (same figures in Wenzel-Teuber 2023, p. 36).

Baptisms

The total number of baptisms in Catholic communities of Mainland China in 2023 was not reported. Examples of baptisms in individual communities are shown in Table 4. The last baptism statistics published by *Xinde* give the number of 48,365 baptisms for 2018.[46] By contrast, the Work Report presented at the 10th National Assembly of Catholics in August 2022 spoke of only "nearly 110,000" baptisms in China between 2016 and 2022.[47]

Table 4: Examples of Baptisms in Catholic Parishes in Mainland China in 2023

Province / Municipality	Diocese	Location	Date	Number of baptized
GD	Zhanjiang	Leicheng Parish	April 16	36
NM	?	Dongsheng Church, Ordos	April 8	6
	?	Taipusi Banner	April 8	11
SD	Jinan	Cathedral	April 8	18
SH	Shanghai	Cathedral	July 2	34
		Cathedral	Aug. 27	36
		Datianlu Parish	Oct. 1	6
		Cathedral	Nov. 26	83
ZJ	Ningbo	Hushan Parish	Feb. 4	9
	Wenzhou	Ximen Church, Wenzhou	Dec. 23	23

Sources (2023): *xdo* Feb. 7; April 10, 11, 14, 21; July 4; Aug. 29; Oct. 7; Nov. 27; Dec. 26.

Graduates of Theological Seminaries

According to statistics from the Faith Institute, 37 candidates for the priesthood graduated in 2023 from 5 Catholic philosophical-theological seminaries in mainland China, namely:

13 from the National Seminary in Beijing, 12 from the Hebei Seminary in Shijiazhuang, 7 from the Jilin Seminary, 3 from the Shaanxi Seminary in Xi'an, 2 from the Sichuan Seminary in Chengdu.

In addition to these 37 candidates for the priesthood who completed their theological studies [formally at bachelor's level], 10 people obtained a master's degree in 2023 at the National Seminary [recognized within the Church], 30 Sisters graduated; 13 Sisters and 4 Catholic lay people graduated at the Shijiazhuang Seminary; 5 Sisters graduated at the Xi'an Seminary, and 3 Sisters at Jilin Seminary. At all seminaries, Sisters and lay people are now increasingly being systematically trained in theology and philosophy. At the Shenyang Philosophical and Theological Seminary, which has not been training candidates for the priesthood for some time, 41 lay people completed a two-year catechist course.[48]

An interesting observation in this context is made by the psychologist Father Fabio Favata PIME, who has a doctorate on priesthood training in Chinese seminaries. While dioceses around the world are increasingly relying on individualized priesthood training in small communities, in China for contingent reasons the opposite is happening, with a few overcrowded seminaries, said Favata in an interview with *AsiaNews*. In one case, around

46 Cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2019, pp. 24-26.

47 Work Report at the 10th National Assembly of Catholics 2022.

48 *xdo* June 30, 2023.

Table 5: Priestly Ordinations in the Catholic Church in Mainland China in 2023

Province / Municipality	Diocese	Number of Ordained	Date of Ordination	Ordaining Bishop*	Names of Those Ordained
BJ	Beijing	1	April 25	Li Shan	Guo Chen 郭晨
CQ	Chongqing	1	July 25	He Zeqing, Wanzhou	Xu Wei 余维
	Wanzhou	1	April 25	He Zeqing	Feng Longgang 冯龙刚
FJ	Fuzhou	1	Oct. 28	Cai Bingrui, Xiamen	Guo Shihui 郭仕惠
GD	Shantou	1	Feb. 2	Huang Bingzhang	Chen Jiaying 陈嘉颖
GS	Lanzhou	1	Aug. 6	Han Zhihai	Zhang Guolu 张国路
Hain	Hainan	1	May 3	Gan Junqiu, Guangzhou	Hou Pengfei 侯鹏飞
Heb	Handan	5	Feb. 2	Sun Jigen	Liu Shaohe 刘少贺, Xing Shengxiang 邢圣祥, Zhang Hongyu 张红雨, Zhang Shengzhao 张圣召, Zheng Meng 郑萌
Heb	Tangshan	1	Oct. 4	Fang Jianping	Shen Zhiyi 沈志义
JL	Jilin	3	April 25	Pei Junmin, Shenyang	Wang Zhizhong 王志忠, Zhang Xuedong 张学栋, Zhao Fengdong 赵凤东
JS	Nanjing	2	May 2	Lu Xinping	An Haipeng 安海鹏, Cao Dingding 曹丁丁
	Suzhou	2	Aug. 9	Xu Honggen	Li Shaotian 李少田, Liu Xianyou 刘现友
JX	Jiangxi	2	Oct. 31	Li Suguang	Wen Zhenyao 温振遥, Yan Mingze 鄢铭泽
NM	Hohhot	1	Nov. 30	Meng Qinglu	Li Xianguang 李显光
NX	Ningxia	2	Oct. 15	Li Jing	Chen Wenbin 陈文斌, Hong Shuhe 洪树和
SC	Yibin	1	June 18	Luo Xuegang	Chen Xiaozhi 陈晓执
SD	Jinan	1	Nov. 30	Zhang Xianwang	Yang Xilong 杨西龙
	Linyi	2	May 3	Fang Xingyao	Li Hongbao 李洪宝, Wang Yanliang 王彦良
SH	Shanghai	3	June 10	Shen Bin	Li Qian 李谦,·Zhang Ke 张珂, Zhang Yupan 张玉盼
SN	Sanyuan	1	April 25	Han Yingjin	Wang Heng 王恒
SX	Jinzhong (Yuci)	5	May 3	Meng Ningyou, Taiyuan	Qiu Yanbao 仇燕宝, Wang Lihui 王力挥, Wu Youtang 武友堂, Yan He'en 闫贺恩, Zhang Huyao 张虎耀
SX	Taiyuan	4	May 13	Meng Ningyou	Jin He 金贺, Liu Peiwei 刘培卫, Meng Xiaohu 孟小虎, Zhang Peng 张鹏
	Taiyuan	3	Dec. 21	Meng Ningyou	Li Peng 李鹏, Wang Wenqiang 王文强, Wang Zhihong 王志宏
TJ	Tianjin	1	Oct. 28.	Li Shan, Beijing	Wu Shuang 吴爽
ZJ	Ningbo	1	Aug. 4	Jin Yangke	Liu Yanle 刘燕乐
	Wenzhou	1	Feb. 2	Jin Yangke, Ningbo	Wang Yang 汪洋
		48			

* The diocese is only mentioned here if the ordaining bishop was not the competent local ordinary of the diocese concerned, but was invited from another diocese to perform the ordination.

Sources (2023): *xdo* Feb. 2 (three reports); April 25 (five reports); May 2, 3, 4 (two reports) and 15; June 12; July 3, 25; Aug. 4, 8; Sept. 11; Oct. 6.,17.; Nov. 1 (three reports); Dec. 1 (two reports).

a hundred seminarians are in the same place, he said. The number of teachers is small and they change often. "The result is that they are unable to follow young candidates for the priesthood as they would like to." In Favata's opinion, more psychologists are needed in the seminaries to promote the human and emotional development of the seminarians.[49]

Priestly Ordinations

After a record low of only 15 priestly ordinations in 2022 identified by the author, significantly more priests were ordained in 2023: As far as the author learned from reliable sources, at least 65 deacons were ordained in the official part of the Catholic Church in China in 2023. Public reports of priestly ordinations in Chinese Catholic media could only be found for 48 of them; these 48 ordained priests are listed in Table 5. The comparatively high number of priestly ordinations in 2023 may be due to the fact that some ordinations that could not take place in 2022 due to the COVID 19 restrictions that were still in place at the time were made up for in 2023. The number is certainly incomplete; there are likely to have been more priestly ordinations in the Underground. Overall, however, the number of vocations has been declining sharply for years. In previous years, the following numbers of newly ordained priests were counted: 2022 – 15 new priests; 2021 – 40 new priests; 2020 – 39; 2019 – 48; 2018 – 75; 2017 – 97; 2016 – 61; 2015 – 59; 2014 – 78; 2013 – 66; 2012 – 78.

Sisters: Entries and Vows

The vows of nuns are reported far less regularly than the ordinations of priests. The novitiate entries and vows listed in Table 6 are therefore to be understood as examples only. As with the next generation of priests, the number of vocations among women has also been declining sharply for years.

Table 6: Examples of Entries into the Postulancy and Novitiate and Vows of Women Religious in mainland China in 2023

Province	Diocese	Congregation	Date	Entrances	Vows
BJ	Beijing	Sisters of St. Joseph	March 20		1 first, 2 perpetual
			Aug. 14	4 postulants	
FJ	Fuzhou	Sacred Heart Sisters	June 13		8 perpetual
GD	Guangzhou	Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of Mary	Dec. 8	2 novices	1 temporal, 2 perpetual
	Shantou	Sister of the Queen of All Hearts	Dec. 28		1 first, 4 perpetual
NM	Hohhot	Sisters of Mercy of the Sacred Heart of Mary	May 31		2 perpetual
SH	Shanghai	Sisters of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple	Nov. 9		4 perpetual

Sources (2023): *xdo* March 20; June 5.,15; Aug. 22; Nov. 10; Dec. 8., 31.

Episcopal Ordinations

As in 2022, no episcopal ordinations took place in 2023.

49 Bernardelli 2023.

Transfer of Bishops

Bishop Joseph Shen Bin of Haimen was installed as Bishop of Shanghai on April 4, 2023, with an appointment by the state authorities / the Chinese Bishops' Conference (of which Bishop Shen is the chairman) without papal approval. A later papal appointment as Bishop of Shanghai took place on July 15, 2023.

Public Installation of Bishops Ordained without Government Permission in 2023

No public installations of Underground bishops took place in 2023.

Bishops Deceased in Mainland China in 2023

Bishop Huo Cheng 霍成, John (February 1, 1926 – January 2, 2023), 1954 priestly ordination, 1991 episcopal ordination, Diocese of Fenyang (SX), 96 years old.

Bishop Lin Jiashan 林嘉善, Peter (September 2, 1934 – April 14, 2023), 1981 priestly ordination, 1997 episcopal ordination, Diocese of Fuzhou (FJ), 88 years old.

Service Times of Cathedral Churches in Provincial Capitals

An interesting table was published on July 25, 2023 on the *Xinde* website at www.xinde.org/show/53985. It contains in Chinese language the names and addresses of episcopal churches in the capitals of provinces and autonomous regions and in municipalities of the People's Republic of China. The times of Sunday and weekday Masses are given for each church (unfortunately, in some cases there are deviations from the information on the *Wanyou zhenyuan* app, see below). For example, you can learn that there are four holy Masses every Sunday in the Urumqi Cathedral. Lhasa is the only capital at the provincial level that does not have a Catholic church.



"Church Quick-Search" on the interactive web-based map of the *Wanyou zhenyuan* app – here is a screenshot of the map section of the Beijing region. Each of the red markers in the shape of an upside-down drop indicates a church. When you click on the marker, the name and address of the church are displayed – as you can see in the upper part of the screenshot. If you click again, a window opens with further information.

Church Quick-Search Via an Interactive Map on the *Wanyou zhenyuan* App

The Catholic app and website *Wanyou zhenyuan* 万有真原, which is affiliated with Beijing Cathedral, offers an interactive map on which Catholic churches throughout China are shown with red markers. Tencent Maps serves as the basis. If you click on the marker, you get further information in Chinese, at least the name and address of the church, sometimes also times for services, catechumenate courses, telephone numbers, historical information, photos, etc. When used within China, there is (presumably) the function of displaying the nearest church and navigation to it when you share your location. The map is under construction, and information is not yet available for all locations. Address: www.wanyouzhenyuan.cn/index.php?m=church&tm=2&ref=menu

We conclude this year's statistical update with these tips, which may also be useful for future visits to China by readers interested in religion.

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