

CHINA CATHOLIC CHURCH UPDATE

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Pope approves Compendium of his Letter to the Catholics of China

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VATICAN - CHINA

by Bernardo Cervellera

The publication two years on from the Letter on the World Day of Prayer for the Church in China. The Letter is furthering unity between the official and underground Church, but the Patriotic Association pounces on their divisions with controls and arrests.

Vatican City (AsiaNews) – Two years on from the publication of his Letter to the Catholics of China, Benedict XVI has approved a “Compendium” of the document that will be available as of Tomorrow on the Vatican website in Chinese and English. Tomorrow is also the World Day of Prayer for the Church in China, called for by the Pope in the concluding part of his Letter.

According to a statement released by the Holy See press office, the Compendium “reproduces, the basic elements” of the original Letter, but “following the catechetical literary genre of questions and answers”. The Compendium was forcefully called for by card. Zen, former Archbishop of Hong Kong, and great defender of religious freedom in China.

It “faithfully reproduces, both in structure and language, the content of the original Letter, quoting extended passages from it. With the addition of some footnotes and two short Appendices, the “Compendium” is presented as an authoritative tool facilitating a deeper understanding of His Holiness’ thought on some particularly delicate points”.

One of those “delicate points” is the way in which to confront the Patriotic Association – the organism that controls the official church – whose aims are defined by the pope as “irreconcilable with Catholic Doctrine”.

Many Catholics, both in China and abroad, believe that, in the aftermath of the Letter, a relationship of sorts with the PA is necessary as the “lesser of two evils” and have declared the era of the underground Church over, given its total refusal to collaborate with the PA.

Following the publication of the Letter some underground bishops have sought to have themselves recognised by the government, refusing to become members of the PA. But the government rejected their appeals and they remain illegal bishops and therefore punishable with prison.

The Pope’s Letter was not easily accessible in China: the PA banned its publication and websites that carried it were forced to remove it from their pages. Some priests who had distributed it were arrested. The full text of the Letter available on the Holy See’s new website in Chinese cannot be accessed from China.

Today’s statement however confirms that Benedict XVI’s document met with a “highly favourable reception given to it by the Chinese Catholics who had access to it.”.

One of the fruits of this Letter is greater collaboration between official and underground Catholics. Many underground bishops have begun to collaborate in pastoral initiatives with official bishops, but because of this, they met with persecution. Over the past few months bishops recognised by the government have been called to submit themselves to political sessions on the value that the Chinese Communist Party places on religious policies, that have lasted for weeks and even months. Underground bishops, for the large part, remain under constant house arrest. Moreover, three underground bishops have completely disappeared in police custody. They are: Msgr. James Su

Zhimin (diocese of Baoding, Hebei), 75, arrested and whereabouts unknown since 1996; Msgr. Cosma Shi Enxiang (diocese of Yixian, Hebei), 86, arrested and whereabouts unknown since April 13 2001; Msgr. Julius Jia Zhiguo, arrested once again on March 30th last as he prepared to work together with the official bishop of Shijiazhuang, Msgr. Jang Taoran.

For the contents of the Pope's Letter see AsiaNews dossier:
Pope writes to China's Catholics
<http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&dos=104&size=>

On the current situation of the Church see:
Persecution in China as Vatican meeting on China opens
<http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=14864&size=>

Xi'an Catholics urged to follow late bishop's example in Year for Priests

*UCA News - www.ucanews.com
May 22, 2009 | CH07269.1550*

XI'AN, China (UCAN) -- Three years after the death of Bishop Anthony Li Du'an, his successor has asked local Catholics to model their lives on the late prelate's.

Bishop Anthony Dang Mingyan of Xi'an said at a commemorative Mass on May 19 that Bishop Li had been the model of a respectful pastor. The best way to honor his memory would be to act on his wish to renew faith and foster evangelization, he suggested.

He cited these themes as being in line with the Year for Priests, which Pope Benedict XVI has set to begin on June 19, as well as the Pauline Year that will end on June 29.

Bishop Dang cited Bishop Li's 2004 "Letter to Young Priests," which reminded them to "attach importance to spiritual life, to be a person with principles and a person with ideals based on Gospel values."

This model could be realized through special veneration to uphold one's faith while advancing laypeople's faithfulness to God, Bishop Dang said.

Bishop Li, who died on May 25, 2006, was jailed three times by Chinese authorities both before and after the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), when religions were systematically repressed. The prelate seldom mentioned these experiences, although those who suffered with him at that time recalled that he maintained a firm and steadfast faith in the face of torture and beatings, Bishop Dang said.

He recounted that Bishop Li restored many churches, convents and seminaries, and established social-service centers to serve social minorities during his episcopate (1987-2006). The late bishop also set up the first formation center for nuns on the mainland and sent Church personnel abroad for further study.

Some praised the late prelate as "model of faith and milestone of the times, and some even speculated that he was one of the cardinals in pectore named by Pope John Paul II," Bishop Dang remarked. In pectore, which literally means "in the breast," is a term used when a pope secretly names someone a cardinal without announcing this publicly.

Praise for Bishop Li was well deserved and arose from his genuine faith in God and loyalty to the

Church, Bishop Dang said.

The May 19 Mass concluded a series of commemorative activities held at the church in Gongyi, 40 kilometers east of Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province, where Bishop Li was buried beneath a side altar.

Among the concelebrants who joined Bishop Dang for the Mass were four bishops from neighboring dioceses.

Xi'an diocese organized the large-scale commemoration in line with the local custom of remembering the third anniversary of a person's death with special solemnity.

Other activities held May 14-19 included pastoral lectures conducted by dozens of nuns and priests, and the church set up information counters and display boards on Catholic faith for visitors. A procession that drew thousands of Catholics from various parishes brought Bishop Li's portrait and banners through several villages near Gongyi Church.

About 4,000 Catholics and 2,000 other people participated in those activities.

The late bishop served as parish priest at Gongyi from 1980 to 1987, when he became bishop. Born in 1927, Bishop Li was ordained a priest in 1951. He was one of the four mainland bishops the newly elected Pope Benedict XVI invited to the Synod of Bishops on Eucharist in 2005. The Chinese government did not allow them to attend, however.

Bishop Li died at the age of 79 after struggling with liver cancer for two years.

The official Vatican newspaper "L'Osservatore Romano" published an article on May 31, 2006, describing Bishop Li as "one of the best-known and most highly esteemed Chinese bishops both in China and abroad (and) a man who truly believed in dialogue."

MATTEO RICCI: A MODEL OF DIALOGUE AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS

VATICAN CITY, 18 MAY 2009 (VIS) - Benedict XVI has sent a Message to Bishop Claudio Giuliodori of Macerata-Tolentino-Recanati-Cingoli-Treia, Italy, for the initiatives planned by the diocese - among them a Jubilee Year - to commemorate the fourth centenary of the death of the Jesuit Fr. Matteo Ricci, who died in Beijing, China on 11 May 1610.

Matteo Ricci, who was born in Macerata on 6 October 1552, was, the Pope writes, "gifted with profound faith and extraordinary cultural and academic genius". He "dedicated long years of his life to weaving a profound dialogue between West and East, at the same time working incisively to root the Gospel in the culture of the great people of China. Even today, his example remains as a model of fruitful encounter between European and Chinese civilisation".

"In considering his intense academic and spiritual activity, we cannot but remain favourably impressed by the innovative and unusual skill with which he, with full respect, approached Chinese cultural and spiritual traditions. It was, in fact, this approach that characterised his mission, which aimed to seek possible harmony between the noble and millennial Chinese civilisation and the novelty of Christianity, which is for all societies a ferment of liberation and of true renewal from within, because the Gospel, universal message of salvation, is destined for all men and women whatever the cultural and religious context to which they belong.

"What made his apostolate original and, we could say, prophetic, was the profound sympathy he nourished for the Chinese, for their cultures and religious traditions", the Holy Father adds. Ricci was likewise "a model of dialogue and respect for the beliefs of others" and "made friendship the style of his apostolate during his twenty-eight years in China".

The Jesuit remained faithful to this style of evangelisation to the end of his life, "using a scientific methodology and a pastoral strategy based, on the one hand, on respect for the wholesome customs of the place, which Chinese neophytes did not have to abandon when they embraced the Christian faith and, on the other, on his awareness that the Revelation could enhance and complete" those customs. As the Fathers of the Church did in the time of the encounter between the Gospel and Greco-Roman culture, the author of the "Treatise on Friendship" undertook his "farsighted work of inculturation of Christianity in China by seeking constant understanding with the wise men of that country".

"Following his example, may our own communities, which accommodate people from different cultures and religions, grow in a spirit of acceptance and of reciprocal respect", the Holy Father concludes.

MESS/CENTENARY MATTEO RICCI/GIULIODORI

VIS 090518 (450)

MACAU Church forum discusses Father Matteo Ricci's work in China

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

May 14, 2009 | MA07208.1549

MACAU (UCAN) -- The Macau Ricci Institute has marked the anniversary of the death of famous Jesuit priest Father Matteo Ricci, a Sinologist who promoted Christianity in China while introducing the country's culture to the West.

Next year will be the 400th anniversary of the death of the priest who lived the final 27 years of his life in China.

The Jesuit-run Macau Ricci Institute held a forum on May 11, the day Father Ricci died in Beijing in 1610.

The forum looked at the priest's remarkable career in the country from the time he arrived in Macau, covering his travels through China to Beijing.

Father Gianni Criveller of the Pontifical Foreign Missions Institute (PIME) spoke on "Matteo Ricci's Ascent to Beijing (1583-1610)."

Father Ricci, known as Li Madou to the Chinese, was a prolific writer, a Sinologist, linguist and an accomplished scientist.

Father Ricci, an Italian, began to learn the Chinese language on arrival in Macau, then a Portuguese colony and the gateway for foreigners entering China. After mastering the language, the priest set off for Beijing, arriving there in 1601.

Father Criveller, an Italian, told UCA News that he presented some lesser known aspects and misconceptions surrounding Father Ricci's journey to Beijing. The priest made four lengthy stops between Macau and Beijing, at Zhaoqing and Shaoguan (then called Shaozhou) in Guangdong, Nanchang in Jiangxi and Nanjing in Jiangsu.

Father Criveller said the talk was a follow-up on his earlier forum speech last October, when he focused on Father Ricci's life before coming to China. The two speeches will be published in a booklet in English and Chinese next year to commemorate the Jesuit's 400th death anniversary.

Many people viewed Father Ricci's life in China as a success.

"In fact, he had many setbacks and difficulties," such as his discouragement upon seeing his companions die on the trip to Beijing, said Father Criveller.

Father Ricci was detained by officials when a crucifix was found among his gifts to the Chinese emperor. They believed it was a totem of black magic to have a figure nailed on a cross while the public depiction of a naked body was also unacceptable to the Chinese at the time.

Father Ricci is often remembered as a man of science, but he was much more than that, Father Criveller said.

Some of the Jesuit's techniques for introducing Christianity to China were controversial at the time. He preached the message that God was one and the same with the Chinese deity, the "Lord of Heaven".

However, Father Criveller said Father Ricci had "talked and written about Christ ... on certain occasions when people were ready to learn about Christ."

The May 11 evening forum, chaired by Jesuit Father Artur Wardega, director of the Macau Ricci Institute, was followed by a concert and a cocktail party for the participants to exchange views.

Father Criveller, based in Hong Kong, has been living in Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and mainland China for 18 years. The PIME scholar researches, teaches and writes on the reception of Christianity in China.

CHINA Church battles suicides among quake victims

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

May 11, 2009 | CH07180.1549

SHIJIAZHUANG, China (UCAN) -- On the first anniversary of the deadly Sichuan earthquake, Church workers are focusing on the psychological needs of tens of thousands of survivors at risk of suicide.

The Church-run Jinde Charities in Shijiazhuang, northern China, which sent the first group of medically trained nuns to the disaster area four days after the 8.0-magnitude quake struck on May 12, 2008, is dedicated to counseling survivors and helping them to rebuild their homes.

Father Paul Han Qingping, Jinde's deputy director, said that Jinde is providing counseling and other

services at several makeshift schools and shelters.

Two local government officials in Beichuan have killed themselves, one last October and another in April, according to media reports. No one knows exactly why, but the two men, aged 33 and 40, were grieving over the deaths of their sons in the quake and also burdened by the heavy responsibility of reconstruction.

A Catholic nun who helped in relief work in the quake-hit areas said that some survivors had hanged themselves at home or from trees, or jumped from cliffs or buildings.

Chinese psychologists estimate that three to five percent of the victims are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, about 360,000-600,000 people. Of these, about 10 percent would have suicidal tendencies.

The psychologists say the quake's first anniversary might trigger more suicides from people who have lost family members than during celebrations of Chinese festivals that remind them of their families.

Catholic nuns and workers have responded by giving regular counseling to victims. They say the victims need love and care to overcome the terrifying experience of the quake.

Father Han said quake-related suicides "make us more conscious of the significance and urgency of our work."

"Even if our intervention helps only one person, it would be a success," said Father Han, who visited Sichuan several times after the quake struck.

Jinde workers often work with the local government and other non-religious agencies in doing relief work. They also cooperate with the Institute of Psychology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in holding psychological counseling courses for local officials and teachers in order to help quake victims and students.

Father Han said that Jinde workers do not explicitly express their religious identity while helping out in relief work, but when "we get in touch with and accompany the psychologically wounded victims, our faith would be shown naturally."

As of March 31, Jinde had given 23.3 million yuan (US\$3.4 million) for earthquake relief work. This is 93.5 percent of the financial donations it received from within and outside China, including from the Holy See and member organizations of the Caritas network.

CHINA Macau diocese offers training for Guangxi priests

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

May 7, 2009 | CH07159.1548

MACAU (UCAN) -- The bishop in the southern Chinese region of Guangxi has welcomed an offer by the head of the Macau Catholic Church to train priests from the former's diocese.

Bishop John Baptist Tan Yanquan of Nanning, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, said his diocese lacks the resources that Macau diocese enjoys, and can learn much from it.

He said he is glad and grateful that Bishop Jose Lai Hung-seng of Macau "invited our priests to receive weeklong training sessions" in Macau. "But we have to seek approval from the local

government," he added.

Bishop Lai, 63, made the invitation when he led a six-person delegation that included two priests, a nun and three laypersons to Guangxi from April 20-24.

The Macau and Guangxi Churches have had ties in the past. During the 1940s and 1950s, Guangxi's Beihai diocese sent seminarians to Macau's St. Joseph's Seminary to receive priestly formation.

Bishop Lai, a member of the Vatican's China Commission, told UCA News that he was impressed by the Guangxi Church's focus on evangelization. He said it is important to "update" the knowledge of priests, nuns and lay catechists through ongoing formation, and he was happy to provide that.

Guangxi diocese has an active social service program and its Charity Association in recent years has organized laypeople to visit and help the elderly, sick and needy.

Bishop Lai also expressed hope that the two Churches could cooperate more on social services in future, and that his visit would pave the way for lay Catholics from his diocese to cooperate formally with the Guangxi Church.

Cyril Law, a member of the delegation, said the visit had opened up official contacts and exchanges between the two dioceses, although Macau laypeople have been giving support to the Guangxi Church for some time, largely through sponsoring building projects.

Law is a lecturer of the Church-run Macau Inter-University Institute, which has provided formation for mainland priests from Hebei years ago.

Describing his recent trip, he said: "We made brief visits to churches in the cities but were unable to go to the countryside where the local Church carries out its main pastoral work. Nor were we able to visit the Catholics among the ethnic minorities in the short trip."

The delegation visited the newly inaugurated Our Lady of China Cathedral in Nanning, and churches in Beihai, Guilin and Liuzhou cities.

Officials from Guangxi's United Front Work Department and Religious Affairs Bureau as well as two Macau government representatives accompanied the delegation.

In 2003, the government-approved Church in China merged the four dioceses in Guangxi -- Beihai, Guilin, Nanning and Wuzhou diocese -- into one diocese, Guangxi diocese. It has 107 priests and nuns, 70,000 Catholics and 101 churches and meeting venues.

CHINA Pilgrims pour into Sheshan shrine despite advice

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

May 6, 2009 | CH07156.1548

HONG KONG (UCAN) -- Thousands of pilgrims recently made their way to the Marian shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai, although Beijing-based Church authorities had advised them not to do so.

More than 3,000 Catholics from Shanghai and neighboring Anhui, Fujian, Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces marked the beginning of the Marian month of May in Sheshan on May 1.

Many attended a Mass celebrated by Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian of Shanghai, 92, and about 20 priests at the minor basilica that day. The number of pilgrims increased sharply from the 1,000 who made the trip last year.

The shrine took center stage in June 2007 when Pope Benedict XVI specially mentioned it in a letter to Chinese Catholics, that also set May 24 as a day of prayer for the Church in China.

In 2007, more than 11,000 pilgrims traveled there on April 30-May 1, and the Pope's mention of the site sparked expectations that it could be swamped by Catholics.

Last year, the government-sanctioned Church authorities in China advised Catholics against making the pilgrimage, but denied their decision was related to the Pope's message.

In a similar notice this year, issued on April 14, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China, repeated their call for Catholics to hold local services instead.

They said that Catholics from other provinces who wish to make pilgrimages to the shrine should comply with arrangements stipulated by their own diocese and their province's Catholic Patriotic Association and Church Affairs Commission.

They should also only visit pilgrimage sites after obtaining approval from the dioceses that these sites come under.

Anthony Liu Bainian, a CCPA vice-chairman, told UCA News the notice "does not prohibit" cross-province pilgrimages but aimed to remind pilgrims to contact pilgrimage sites ahead of travel for better arrangements and security.

Last year, Chinese authorities announced traffic restrictions in and around the Sheshan area, a strategy they have repeated this year.

This year, the Shanghai city government announced special traffic control between April 30 and May 31, saying it will modify the extent of the restrictions depending on the volume of traffic.

Some dioceses have changed their pilgrimage plans.

Tianjin diocese cancelled a pilgrimage at the last minute, Catholic sources said on May 4.

The diocese had posted a notice in early April, inviting 40-45 pilgrims to join a trip to the Sheshan Marian shrine and other pilgrimage sites in Shanghai between May 22 and 27, they said.

Jiangxi diocese in eastern China told parishioners not to go on their pilgrimage, following the notice from Beijing, sources said.

Liu also said Church authorities issued the notice to suggest prayers on various topics. Such a notice may become routine for the month of May from now on, he added.

In their recent notice, Beijing Church authorities asked for prayers for victims of earthquakes and other natural disasters, as well as for rescue and relief workers.

It also asked Chinese Catholics to pray for a firm faith and spirit of hard work in the face of the global economic crisis.

Noting that the special Year for Priests would be launched in the universal Church later this year, the Church authorities urged Catholics to pray for more religious vocations in China, and for priests and nuns to live their lives bearing witness to their faith.

They also asked Catholics to pray for evangelization efforts to continue.

CHINA Clergy formation problems draw attention

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

May 4, 2009 | CH07124.1548

HONG KONG (UCAN) -- Several mainland Chinese Catholic priests and seminarians have highlighted concerns about clergy formation that echo those raised at a recent plenary meeting of the Vatican's Commission on China.

One seminarian, Zhang, says his institution has too few teachers based there full-time and focuses too much on academic study at the expense of spiritual and moral development.

"The courses are pretty good, but the seminary does not have teachers there on a regular basis," he said recently in an interview.

His seminary often invites teachers from either within China or overseas to give intensive two-week courses on subjects that under normal circumstances should take a whole semester.

"It is hard for us to digest all the material in such a short space of time," he said.

"As there is no full-time spiritual director on campus, we have to ask our lecturers to give us spiritual guidance, which has been wanting," he added.

Zhang's concerns are part of broader formation problems facing mainland seminaries that the Commission on China focused on during its March 30-April 1 meeting at the Vatican.

Afterward, the Vatican said the commission would seek to "promote a more adequate human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral formation" of the clergy and consecrated persons in union with the bishops of China.

Father John, a mainland formator, shares Zhang's concern over the quality of teaching and management in seminaries, which he describes as the "cradle of Church vocations." He does not teach at Zhang's seminary.

Priest-teachers are too young, because many of the more experienced priests have left due to personal reasons or were recalled by their dioceses to take up other duties, he explained.

The lecturer also expressed concern about priests' personal development after their seminary training, saying some fall into lazy or materialistic habits. Without ongoing formation, and often working alone in a parish, priests' enthusiasm suffers, he has observed.

Father John welcomed the Vatican's concerns over religious formation but said better practices would require improved coordination among minor and major seminaries, as well as with the parishes and

each diocese.

With the universal Church's Year for Priests set to start on June 19, he suggested that dioceses bring priests together to deepen their understanding about themselves and their vocation. "Recognizing a priest's own identity is crucial," he said.

Problems are compounded by the complex reality of the China Church.

The government-sanctioned "open" Church community in China runs 11 major seminaries nationwide. The "underground" community, which rejects government-approved administrative structures for the Church, also has a few seminaries, some of which have sent their students to seminaries in the open Church for training.

Father Peter from the underground community in Hebei province agrees priesthood formation is a key issue for the Church in China. He blames inadequacy in this area for confusion and complexity within the China Church.

"Our role is to train many priests who can adapt to the country's social conditions, are loyal to the Church and have a sense of mission and responsibility," he said. "Then we can face all difficulties and eventually achieve reconciliation."

Bishop John Tong Hon of Hong Kong, an expert on issues facing the Church in China and a member of the Vatican commission, told UCA News he would encourage mainland priests to learn from the experience of more developed Churches.

Those who have not received sufficient training ahead of priestly ordination should keep on learning through self-study, by learning from others' experience or by reading Church news on the Internet, he advised.

"Knowledge can only be accumulated over a long period of time," the 69-year-old bishop said, adding that only priests who enhance their theology and spirituality can better guide their parishioners.

Continuous formation for nuns, who can bear witness by providing high-quality services for the disabled, orphans and elderly, is also essential, according to the prelate.

CHINA Catholics observe 1st anniversary of quake

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

May 12, 2009 | CH07190.1549

CHENGDU, China (UCAN) -- The Catholic Church in Sichuan province and elsewhere in China have been holding religious services to commemorate the first anniversary of a devastating earthquake that ravaged the region last year.

Coadjutor Bishop Peter Fang Jianping of Tangshan, Hebei province, joined Chengdu Catholics to pray for the dead as well as survivors at the Mianzhu Church, said Father Simon Li Zhigang, diocesan administrator of Chengdu diocese.

The May 12 prayers started at 2.28pm, the time the devastating quake struck last year. Mianzhu was

one of the worst-hit areas.

Bishop Fang told UCA News he had come “to show support and solidarity with Catholics in southern Sichuan province as Tangshan, in northern China, also suffered a deadly earthquake in 1976.”

The death toll from the Tangshan quake was 242,000. Bishop Fang said he wanted to mourn the dead and express his sympathy for victims, who are going through the trauma that people in Tangshan had experienced.

The 2008 quake claimed 86,633 lives in Sichuan and neighboring provinces. Another 8,600 died in Beichuan county town in Mianzhu city in Chengdu diocese.

On May 1, 11 Chengdu Catholics from Anxian Church, near Beichuan, carried a two-meter concrete cross and walked one kilometer to a hill near Beichuan where it was erected.

Anxian’s parish priest Father Jiang Tianxiang told UCA News that his parishioners spent two weeks making the cross, on which they carved an inscription reading: “God loves you all, our deceased brothers and sisters.”

On May 8, Father Jiang and two priests held a Mass beneath the cross for 200 Catholics from various parishes of the diocese. They all walked to the ruined town and placed flowers there, he said.

The Chengdu Catholic Youth Group is holding a Taize prayer gathering in the evening of May 12.

In Chengdu’s neighboring diocese of Nanchong, a commemoration service was held in Xishan monastery on May 10 to pray for the wellbeing of quake survivors, said Sister Teresa Wang Yan.

Nanchong Catholics invited a calligrapher, He Wenjun, to write a huge Chinese character bo, meaning “unlimited love.” He used a large Chinese paint brush to write the word on a white cloth measuring 9.28 by 5.12 meters.

The nun said the figures were symbolic. Nine stands for longevity, 28 represents the year 2008 and 5.12 the date of the quake. The writing of the character is to “depict the great love of Jesus through Chinese culture,” she said.

Organizers plan later to carve the word on a stone wall in the monastery to remind Catholics to continue showing concern and love to the victims, as well as to tell the wider world that the Catholic Church is an institution of love, the nun said.

A charity concert is also scheduled to be held at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral in Guangzhou diocese on May 12. It is co-hosted by the local diocese and several other secular organizations.

The Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra will perform Verdi’s “Requiem” in the first such concert in 50 years to be held at the granite cathedral, commonly known as Stone House.

Two ticketing staff of the Guangdong Xinghai Concert Hall who sold concert tickets at the cathedral entrance on May 10 said the minimum price of each ticket was 500 yuan (US\$73) with proceeds going to quake victims.

Meanwhile, many other dioceses including Shanghai diocese also held commemorative events on May 10 and 12.

SINGAPORE Orthodox church finds home in Catholic center

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

May 11, 2009 | SG07160.1549

SINGAPORE (UCAN) -- Ties between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches are much closer these days in Singapore, after the Holy Resurrection Orthodox Christian Church started conducting its services in a room at the Catholic Archdiocesan Education Centre (CAEC).

The church was evicted from its previous home in River Valley Road in March last year following a tenancy dispute. After attempts to find a permanent home proved unsuccessful, it made an appeal to Catholic Archbishop Nicholas Chia of Singapore.

In March, the archbishop offered the church a room in the Catholic building, which houses major Church offices such as the Singapore Pastoral Institute, the Catholic News and Family Life Society.

The Orthodox church moved into CAEC in March, having signed a year's lease with the archdiocese.

"We are absolutely comfortable being in a Catholic center," said Orthodox parish priest, Father Daniel Toyne, a bearded Englishman in his 40s. "We have a good relationship with the staff here. They are very helpful and have even put up signs directing people to our church without us asking."

He added that curious Catholics have come into the room to look at the religious icons "and ask questions to learn more about the Orthodox Church."

One wall in the room is covered with framed icons of Orthodox saints, Mary and scenes from the bible, with several icons also containing saints' relics. Facing the icons is an altar. During services, the priest chants as incense fills the room, crowded with parishioners.

When asked why the Catholic Church allowed the Orthodox church to use its premises, Father William Goh, rector of the St. Francis Xavier Major Seminary, said this was "not a new policy" as the archdiocese had allowed other Christian groups to use its premises in the past.

The priest, responding on behalf of Archbishop Chia, noted that Catholics and Orthodox Christians also "share in one baptism," and "believe in the same Lord" as well as the Eucharist.

"The Catholic Church seeks to foster and promote unity among Christians for without which the mission of the Church to become the sacrament of unity and love for humanity would be compromised," he said.

Father Toyne himself is no stranger to the Catholic Church, having previously visited the Catholic parish of St. Mary of the Angels, where he led vespers and gave an introduction to the Orthodox Church.

Andrew Kong, who works at the CAEC, said he is glad the Catholic Church has allowed the Orthodox church to use the center. "We are much closer to the Orthodox Church compared to the Protestants, as the Orthodox Church is after all, a sister Church of the Catholic Church."

The Orthodox Church was created when the Eastern and Western Churches split in what is often called the Great Schism in 1054, over issues such as liturgy and the clergy. Today, differences still remain. The Orthodox Church still rejects the Pope as head of the Church, and married men can choose to be ordained.

The Holy Resurrection Orthodox Christian Church obtained legal status in October 2000, and Father Toyne was ordained parish priest in January 2001.

The church belongs to the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, and is under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Today, about 40 regulars attend its weekly Divine Liturgy service and up to 200 people come during special occasions such as Christmas and Easter.
