

**Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org
ASIA/CHINA**

**Summer pastoral activities underway in
various Catholic communities**

Beijing (Agenzia Fides) - As is the case every year, the various Catholic communities on mainland China are now carrying out their Summer pastoral activities for Catholic and non-Catholic youth, offering Christian, human, and academic formation.

According to information sent to Agenzia Fides, the priests, religious, and seminarians are the protagonists, as always, of these activities, however the laity is also very active not only in the area of logistics and organizing the food, etc., but also in direct pastoral labor.

Among the initiatives, we report that in the parish of Yu She, in the Diocese of Jin Zhong, Province of Shan Xi, over 200 young people, the majority non-Christians, participated in the parish's first Summer Camp, organized by the Pastor, along with 5 lay university students, July 1-9. The youth participated in a brief course on catechism and saw various films on the faith and reality of the Catholic Church, learned sacred music, heard the faith testimonies of other Catholic youth, played sports, and even did schoolwork, with the assistance of the university students and priests present. According to their parents, "our children learned above all the meaning of solidarity, discipline, respect, and reciprocal love."

From July 5-12, 44 young people in the parish of Zhi Jiang of the Province of Hu Nan participated in the Summer Camp organized by local priests and religious. The Sacred Scripture was the central theme. In addition to the knowledge of the liturgy and the sacraments, the Catholic youth also grew in their love for the faith and the Church, as well as for the Bible. The parish of Cheng An, in the Diocese of Han Dan has taken special interest in catering to the needs of the university students and middle and high school age youth. The religious of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, Counselor and the laity are available throughout the time of vacations and the church is always open to them. The parish has also organized catechesis and prayer encounters, with new people. The parish pastor offered the youth books on religious topics and a cross, wishing them a fervent beginning of their "spiritual" summer that will aid in their integral development.

75 youth from the parish of Yi Cheng of Wu An, Province of He Bei, participated in the opening of the "Summer Catechism 2009," which will last the entire Summer. The youth will study the faith, science, do 'homework,' and of course, have some wholesome good fun with the help of the lay catechists. "Jesus is the Aim of Our Life; Looking at the World with Jesus' Gaze" is the theme of reflection for the youth. The parish pastor even gave them special homework for the Summer: memorize the catechism flyers (4) and carefully read chapters 13-28 of the Acts of the Apostles.

The parish of De Zhou, with the help of the three seminarians sent from the diocese, organized a Summer Catechism Camp for the children of the parish and the neighborhood. As they were mostly small children, they prepared brief lessons adapted to their level, on the sacraments, the liturgy, and the history of the Bible, with a small exam at the end of the Summer. (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 15/7/2009)

AsiaNews - www.asianews.it

07/14/2009 11:05

CHINA - VATICAN

Cardinal Zen: The Church in China two years after the Pope's Letter

by Card. Joseph Zen

Misinterpretations of the Letter have led to confusion and distress in the underground community. The official bishops must have more courage in their faithfulness to the pope, refusing structures that are contrary to the Catholic faith. The Chinese government continues its usual policy: total control of the Church.

Hong Kong (AsiaNews) - Two years after the Letter of Benedict XVI to Chinese Catholics, Cardinal Joseph Zen dares to assess the impact of the papal message, illustrating the difficulties and hindrances the underground community face, rejected by the government in Beijing; the timidity of the official community "caged" by the religious policy of the regime; the Chinese authorities continuing repression.

The cardinal, now bishop emeritus of Hong Kong, highlights the importance of the Compendium published May 23 last (see The Pope approves a compendium of his letter to Catholics in China), where certain aspects of the Letter are specified. This will help to correct the misinterpretation of certain points in the Letter, which dismissed the past experience of the Christian underground as superseded. This false interpretation - also helped by some bad translations and Vatican explanations, by now outdated - has created turmoil, pain and confusion in the underground communities. Card. Zen stresses the importance of the Pope's Letter's condemnation of the Patriotic Association - not in line with the dogma of the Catholic faith - and asks the official bishops for greater courage in following the papal guidelines, rejecting the interference of politics in the life of Church and claiming full freedom of religion.

According to the cardinal, a tireless champion for religious freedom, the China of today needs the Church, its universal experience, its welcoming of all peoples, to address the globalization taking place in China and the

world. For the bishop emeritus of Hong Kong, being Catholic allows one to be truly patriotic and anyone who opposes their faith to serve the homeland (as the propaganda of the Chinese Communist Party invokes) is prey to "sophistry."

The message of the card. Zen, entitled "Two years ago we received a letter from the Pope" is dated June 29, and has been published in recent days on the website of the Diocese of Hong Kong

Dear Brother and Sisters in the great family of our Catholic Church in China, On this Feast of St Peter and Paul, we celebrate also the second anniversary of the Letter of Pope Benedict to the Church in China.

In these days, from the Holy See you have received a compendium of the Letter of the Pope which helps you to understand more easily the essentials of the Pope's teachings and also to dispel a wrong interpretation of a particular point of the Letter. Allow me to underline few things in it.

1. Question 7 of the Compendium

First of all, to my brothers in the underground community, I like to point out the Compendium's Question Number 7 which brought into evidence many quotations from the Letter where the Holy Father shows his appreciation for and encouragement to all those who have suffered and are still suffering for the Catholic faith.

Often we hear complaints from our brothers in the underground community that they feel abandoned, neglected, even considered a nuisance. We understand this impression and these feelings of theirs. But the rich quotations, from the Letter of the Pope, contained in Number 7 of the compendium should reassure them that the Holy Father is with them. From the bottom of my heart I wish to encourage my brothers in the clandestine community to persevere in their fidelity without compromise.

2. Footnotes 2 and 5 of the Compendium

I like also to bring to your particular attention the Footnotes Number 2 and Number 5 of the Compendium.

The Footnote Number 2 makes an important distinction between "a spiritual reconciliation of hearts and a structural merger into one system". The Pope encourages the former which should be pursued with the almost commitment and urgency, while the realization of the latter may be beyond our unilateral good will.

Footnote Number 5 says clearly that the Pope "neither excludes the possibility of accepting or seeking Government recognition, nor encourages doing so". Every body would like to act in the open freely, but unfortunately very often, "indeed almost always", it is impossible to do so since conditions are imposed on us which are not compatible with our Catholic conscience. (For the phrase "indeed almost always" in the Chinese

translation, please see the revised Chinese text which appeared on the Vatican website since the October 24th, 2008, when this phrase was re-inserted because it was missing from the first official Chinese edition of the Letter).

It is true that the Holy Father leaves the final decision to the single bishops on whether to accept / request the recognition by the Government. But the Holy Father also said that this decision is a very difficult one to make, because, most of the times, the conditions imposed by the Government render a positive decision impossible.

It is no secret that this delicate point of the Letter of the Pope, shortly after its publication, had received a tendentious interpretation that went beyond what the Holy Father had said. The interpretation stated that, according to the Holy Father, there was no longer any reason to remain in the situation of clandestinity and that the Holy Father wanted that all underground communities request the recognition of the Government. This interpretation also favoured an indiscriminate participation in Eucharistic concelebrations.

The error of such a view consists in that it chooses to overlook the long steps that it is necessary to make and thinks that one can reach immediately the goal. We may call it a sin of impatient optimism. People are easily tempted by optimism, so this erroneous interpretation has had an enormously wide diffusion in China and has been believed by many, as if this were the true will of the Holy Father.

However, since such an interpretation not only does not represent the mind of the Holy Father, but also goes against the cruel reality of the facts described by the Holy Father in his Letter, in the last two years this interpretation has had disastrous consequences all over the Church in China.

The fundamental reality is that the Government has kept its policy substantially unchanged, a policy that aims at enslaving the whole Church. That is why we have to witness such a painful spectacle: bishops and priests who, thinking they are obeying the Holy Father, make enormous efforts to come to terms with the Government; many of these, faced by the unacceptable conditions imposed by the Government, draw back, but in the process the clergy is no longer as united as before; others, thinking that to draw back would be to disobey the will of the Holy Father, have tried to remain in that situation of compromise, while striving hard to keep their peace of conscience, a contradictory state that makes deeply suffer not only the bishops directly involved, but also their priests who are no longer able to understand their bishop.

The Government, on its part, has presented itself as an enthusiastic executor of the will of the Pope, declaring itself the promoter of unity, evidently a unity under the total control of the Government inside the iron-tight structure of an independent Church.

Let us thank the Lord that finally in the Footnotes 2 and 5 of the Compendium the Holy See has given its own authoritative interpretation on this point. We hope that the Compendium may be able to resolve the painful

contradiction in so many faithful hearts and to make it possible for the clandestine community to rebuild its faithful unity in suffering.

Obviously, on the level of reconciliation and communion of hearts between the two Church communities, there is much to be attempted and to be done as soon as possible, overcoming every negative feeling caused by historical situations not willed by us, but imposed on us from the outside.

3. Self-examination

In His letter the Pope has presented in unambiguous terms the apostolic nature of the Church, which is always to be led by the bishops, the successors of the Apostles, in communion with the Pope, the successor of Peter, the head of the Apostles. The Holy Father, in all his fatherly kindness, has put his finger on the abnormal present situation of our Church in China, controlled and led by bodies other than the Hierarchy established by Jesus Christ.

The enormous challenge now before us is to bring our Church back to normality, to be a truly catholic Church.

Two years have passed, since the Pope has written his Letter to us. Are we closer to the ideal of Christian fidelity portrayed in the Letter? If yes, let us thank God. If not, let us reflect seriously on why we have wasted such a precious gift from heaven. What we must meditate seriously upon is how much we have taken upon ourselves our small or big part of obligation in achieving this wonderful and arduous goal. How have we spent these two years? How many times have we asked ourselves: What should I do to make the Pope's dream become a reality?

On the Day of Prayer for the Church in China this year, the Holy Father, while visiting the Montecassino Abbey, exhorted us "to renew our communion of faith in Christ and of fidelity to the successor of Peter". He also expressed his hope that "the unity of all Christians, the catholicity and universality of the Church always will be deeper and more visible". Those brothers and sisters in the clandestine community, do they still believe that it is worthwhile to suffer for the faith and that the sufferings would bring victory even though at the moment everything seems to be a failure? Those brothers and sisters in the open community, do they believe that their effort to come out of the canonically abnormal situation is important and that coherence with their status of being in communion with the Holy Father requires them to be courageous?

We all live in a particular moment of history. This gives us particular duties. Our very special duty today in the Church in China is to show to the Chinese people the true nature of the Catholic Church, the home of all peoples and nations. Its unity and universality fit so well into the globalizing desire of humankind. The Church is a community that welcomes all peoples without distinction and for that reason must not be dominated by any particular civil power.

The Church, who cares for our wellbeing on earth, brings us also towards an eternal goal: our homecoming to heavenly Father's embrace. The rich inheritance which belongs to us has been gained through the suffering and

death of our Saviour and has been entrusted to the Apostles, so that it may be faithfully transmitted through the ages. It is our greatest fortune to be called into this great family and it is now our noble duty to live out our faith with coherence, handing it down intact to future generations.

There are people who would like to establish an opposition between our fidelity to the Church and our patriotic duty to our Country. You know that this is a sophism. We all know that, precisely by being loyal to our Church, we are being truly patriotic, because the building up of a truly Catholic Church in China is our specific contribution to the greatness of our Motherland.

We must pray that the leaders of our Nation come to understand that a free Catholic Church is no threat to our country. On the contrary, if we are allowed to live happily our faith, we can contribute more to the welfare and all-round progress of our people.

Dear brother and sisters, look higher up, unto "the mountains from which my help comes" (Ps 120[121]). On this journey of faith, we have been promised both tribulations and consolations. Our companions and models are the Saints and especially the glorious Martyrs.

Mary, Help of Christians, our heavenly mother and the Star of Hope, to whom the Pope has entrusted our Church, will lead us to peaceful victory.

Cardinal Joseph Zen 29 June

200_____

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

CHINA Catholics among those affected by Xinjiang riots

July 8, 2009 | CH07549.1557

HONG KONG (UCAN) -- Catholics in northwestern China were among those affected in the recent rioting in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and are praying for peace.

John, a cathedral parishioner in Urumqi, the Xinjiang capital, reported the church was not damaged, but he noted that a few laypeople were affected in the violence.

Catholics are praying for peace and for the victims, he said.

The layman also said very few Catholics came to church after the regional government imposed a curfew on July 7 and strictly monitored vehicle movement.

Catholics in the Muslim-dominated Xinjiang region number about 5,000 and are mainly Han Chinese. Bishop Paul Xie Tingzhe of Urumqi heads the community.

Many Catholics in Urumqi came from Gansu and Shaanxi provinces in northwestern China or parts of northeastern China and moved here to do business, John said.

Rioting started on July 5 after a peaceful demonstration by Uighur, members of the Turkic-speaking, mostly Muslim group native to Xinjiang, protesting the deaths of Uighur workers killed in a brawl in southern China last month. The situation spiraled out of control as mainly Uighur groups beat people and set fire to vehicles and shops belonging to Han Chinese.

According to the official Xinhua News Agency, the violence left 156 people dead and more than 1,000 injured, the largest number of casualties in any single incident of its kind in six decades.

Police arrested 1,434 people in connection with killing, beating, smashing, looting and burning during the riots, Xinhua reported on July 7.

Min, a Catholic layman from Hebei province who runs a wire and cable business in Urumqi, was attacked while driving his car through a protest area on his way to church on the morning of July 5.

He told Catholic-run Hebei Faith Press that a mob threw bricks and stones at his car, breaking the front windshield and other windows, and damaging the back seats. He was able to drive away, avoiding injury, Min told the Church-run newspaper based in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province.

The paper also reported that Xiao Han, a 22-year-old Catholic, was eating noodles at a restaurant on July 5 when about 20 people surrounded him and shouted slogans.

The air-ticketing clerk was quoted as saying he managed to escape from the danger and chaos but felt frightened even a couple of days later. Some mainland Church sources outside Xinjiang told UCA News the same day that government officials have warned Catholics to be vigilant in guarding church premises even amid stepped-up public security measures.

Agencia Fides - www.fides.org

ASIA/CHINA

The Chinese Catholic world opens the Year of the Priesthood in communion with the Holy Father and with the universal Church

Roma (Agenzia Fides) - Various initiatives and solemn celebrations for the opening of the Year of the Priesthood and the closing of the Year of St Paul in communion with the Holy Father and with the universal Church involved Catholics all over China, according to reports sent to Fides.

According to Hong Kong diocesan bulletin Kong Ko Bao, the diocese opened the Year of the Priesthood on 28 June announcing the opening of a Year for Priestly Vocations celebrated on 1 July. Thousands of faithful took part in the celebrations and so closed the Year of St Paul: Bishop Tong offered incense to a statue of St Paul and lit a lamp on front of a statue of St Jean Marie Vianney. In his homily he urged priests to pray always, to care for altar boys and intensify efforts for formation, to form parish groups for the promotion of vocations and promote ongoing formation for priests as he expressed in his Letter for the Year of Priestly Vocations.

The Chinese section of Radio Veritas Asia, based in Taipei, inaugurated a new programme for the Year of the Priesthood "One minute to speak of the exemplary priest ", increasing news items on celebrations for the Year of the Priesthood.

In mainland China among numerous celebrations, we mention a solemn mass presided by Bishop Zhang Han Min, of the diocese of Ji Lin, at Good Shepherd parish on 19 June. Together with the many priests and faithful present he prayed that the Holy Spirit might guide the priests of China and the priests of the whole world to make them ever more aware of the responsibility of their mission and to live a life of prayer and profound spirituality in order to be worthy of the Priest par excellence Jesus Christ. The diocese of Fu Zhou opened the Year of the Priesthood and closed the Year of St Paul at the Marian shrine of Rosary Village, after the 4th Pauline Seminar on 30 June. The diocese of Tian Shui, province of Gan Su, opened the Year of the Priesthood and closed the Year of St Paul, on 19 June. The priest responsible for the diocese, Rev Zhao Jian Zhang, said in his homily: "The priest is a mediator, a bridge between God and man...he must identify himself with Christ and help others to recognise the face of Christ. I ask you to pray for all priests that they may be men of prayer and continual sanctification. This is also a year to strengthen ties between priests and the people. A good priest must be a good shepherd, Our example of life should enable us to foster many vocations". He also asked those present to pray especially for all deceased priests. (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 06/07/2009 - righe 42, parole 458)

Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org
ASIA/CHINA

Representatives of all female religious institutes in the country meet and take part in a solemn Eucharistic Procession with thousands of faithful

Tai Yuan (Agenzia Fides) - Some 78 women religious from 23 Chinese provinces representing almost every female religious congregation in mainland China, took part in a solemn Eucharistic Procession with thousands of lay faithful. The meeting was held recently at the parish of Yang Jia Pu, diocese of Tai Yuan and, according to information sent to Fides, dressed in their respective religious habits the sisters drew the attention of people watching the procession, filling the faithful and the priests with pride.

At the meeting the religious reflected on the meaning of life in the Catholic dimension, the importance of the family and of family prayer to consolidate and hand on the faith.

In the life of the Catholic Church in mainland China, religious Sisters play a fundamental and indispensable role in pastoral care, evangelisation, charitable and social work. They befriend and console abandoned children, disabled persons, old people left alone, people with AIDS or leprosy. They are called "the guardian angels of hospital wards ", always present for every emergency, earthquakes for example. During the terrible earthquake in Si Chuan on 12 May 2008, the earthquake victims soon turned to the sisters, Xiu Nv, for every kind of help with confidence and affection, and often with gratitude: "Have a little rest Xiu Nv... we need you Xiu Nv". Although they never speak explicitly of the Gospel or try to forcefully evangelise anyone, their presence and service is the most convincing witness. Without clamour or slogans the sisters, 'precious signs of the loving presence of God' soon draw people to become followers of Christ ". According to the most recent statistics, November 2006, in China there are about 5.000 professed women religious and about 600 novices. (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 03/07/2009 - righe 27, parole 296)

Agenzia Fides - www.fides.org
ASIA/CHINA

Han Dan diocese closes Year of St Paul and calls Catholics to live the Year of the Priesthood with intensity

Han Dan (Agenzia Fides) – The closing of the Year of St Paul in the diocese of Han Dan was at the same time a call to take an active part in the Year of the Priesthood, following the indications of the Holy Father Benedict XVI, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the "dies natalis" of St Jean Marie Vianney. More than a thousand faithful, a hundred women religious and seventy novices of different congregations of women religious, as well as students from the diocesan seminary, took part in a solemn Mass to close the Year of St Paul and open the Year of the Priesthood, on 19 June in the cathedral. The Mass was presided by Bishop Yang Xiang Tai and concelebrated by about fifty priests.

At the end of the Mass, diocesan chancellor Rev Xi Jian Ke and several parish priests assessed celebrations for the Year of St Paul. According to the chancellor, who reported that more than 6,000 catechumens were baptised during the year, "the closing is simply a new beginning for greater missionary commitment in the spirit of St Paul".

During the solemn Mass on 19 June, 3 new diocesan deacons were ordained, there was the reading of the Bishop's Pastoral Letter on the year of the Priesthood and the decree regarding indulgences. The priest who gave the homily said: "we have focused on 4 themes in this solemn celebration: the closing of the Year of St Paul and the opening of the Year of the Priesthood, the month of the Sacred Heart and the ordination of 3 deacons. We pray for priests all over the world. But since the laity also have a priestly vocation they too must listen to the indications of the Holy Father. Together let us pray that priests may be sanctified and remain faithful to their ministry like Paul".

Han Dan includes 19 civil districts and is situated in the south of He Bei province. It has a population of about

8.3 million and a Catholic community of 130,000. The first evangelisation of the diocese dates back to Jesuit Fr. Matteo Ricci in the 16th century. Today the diocese has 100 churches and chapels, 58 priests, 40 seminarians, e 200 women religious belonging to two diocesan congregations. The diocese runs dispensaries, medical centres and social care centres. (NZ) (Agenzia Fides 26/06/2009 - righe 29, parole 364)

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

CHINA Sichuan seminary turns 25, wants to produce better preachers

July 8, 2009 | CH07547.1557

CHENGDU, China (UCAN) -- Sichuan Catholic Seminary in southwestern China has marked its 25th anniversary with a determination to enhance preaching skills and spiritual life among its seminarians.

Bishop Paul He Zeqing of Wanzhou (Wanxian), a board member and an alumnus of the seminary (1989-93), suggested a series of lectures on homiletics and more practice giving homilies.

He told a board meeting on June 22 that Catholic priests and seminarians sometimes lack preaching skills and are not as poised as many Protestant pastors.

The bishop also said he attaches great importance to all-round formation of seminarians' personality.

Another board member, Coadjutor Bishop Paul Xiao Zejiang of Guizhou (Guiyang), advised the seminary to nurture religious sentiment and spirituality among seminarians, and to invite more guest lecturers who have studied abroad.

The three-hour meeting, which preceded a two-day anniversary celebration, reviewed the seminary's performance in 2008. Activities during the year included exchanges with other Catholic seminaries and a Protestant seminary. More exchanges are planned with Buddhist and Daoist (Taoist) academies in Sichuan province, Father Joseph Chen Gong'ao, the rector, told UCA News on July 6.

To mark the Year of Priests declared by Pope Benedict XVI, which began on June 19, the seminary will run a summer camp for its teacher-priests to gather, exercise and promote fraternity.

Father John Wang Daoyu, a 41-year-old Hebei priest who has taught dogmatic theology and liturgy at the seminary since 2007, says it has good facilities but needs to improve its "software." In his view, teaching of the Bible and canon law could be improved, and the library needs more books.

The seminary has invited teachers from elsewhere in the country to raise its teaching quality, he pointed out.

The silver jubilee event June 22-23 drew 400 Church and government leaders

from across the country. It was the biggest event of the Catholic Church in Sichuan since the devastating earthquake that rocked southwestern China on May 12, 2008.

They attended a Mass and a ceremony at newly constructed St. Joseph's Square on the seminary campus. Bishop He presided at the Mass, which Bishop Xiao, Bishop Joseph Li Shan of Beijing and round 100 priests concelebrated.

During the May 2008 earthquake, the seminary suffered slight damage but has been repaired, Father Chen said. The quake killed 70,000 people and damaged numerous properties in Sichuan and neighboring provinces.

The seminary, located in Pi county, about 20 kilometers northwest of Chengdu, recruits seminarians every two years from dioceses in Guizhou, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, as well as Chongqing municipality.

The teaching staff of seven priests and about 20 part-time teachers instruct 25 philosophy students and 28 theology students.

The seminary has an eventful history, Father Chen acknowledged. Before the founding of People's Republic of China, Annunciation Seminary in Pengzhou county, built by Paris Foreign Missions priests in 1908, was the cradle of priestly vocations in southwestern China.

That seminary was forced to close down during political turmoil in 1950s. After the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), Church activities gradually revived and a regional seminary was reopened in 1984 in the compound of Chengdu diocese's Immaculate Conception Cathedral.

Five years later, the seminary dismissed all seminarians due to what was termed a "lack of discipline." Classes resumed in 1991, but the seminary was closed again in April 1994, when a majority of the seminarians protested against government interference. The government had appointing a provincial religious affairs official as deputy rector, replacing Bishop Joseph Xu Zhixuan of Wanzhou.

In 1996, the seminary was moved to a small campus in Pi county that had only one classroom and a small dormitory. It moved in 2005 to the present 2.4-hectare campus in the same county.

Since 1989, the seminary has trained 224 seminarians.

A pastoral center in the seminary compound hosts formation courses and retreats for lay catechists, priests and nuns.

UCA News - www.ucanews.com

CHINA Charity groups prepare to aid flood victims

July 13, 2009 | CH07567.1558

NANNING, China (UCAN) -- Church-run charity groups are ready to launch relief efforts in flood-hit southern and central China where 75 people have

been killed and 13 are reported missing.

Heavy rain since late June has inundated the area. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, nearly 40 million people in Chongqing, Hubei, Guangxi, Guizhou, Jiangxi and seven other provinces have been affected by the floods.

In Guangxi province, the local Church is closely monitoring the situation and is preparing to give a helping hand.

Bishop John Baptist Tan Yanquan of Nanning diocese told UCA News recently the Church has not received reports of damage to Church buildings or casualties among Catholics. According to the Chinese government, the province has recorded a total property damage of 200 million yuan (US\$29.3 million), he said.

The prelate added that the Church will "closely watch" the developments in the aftermath of the natural disaster that has affected 25 cities and counties, and is "ready to give help alongside the government's relief campaign."

About 938,000 people have been evacuated and more than 100,000 buildings have been damaged or collapsed in the affected areas.

The Guangxi Catholic Loving Heart Foundation, of which Bishop Tan is the president, has sent Church workers to each parish to investigate losses among Catholics and draw up relief plans.

The foundation was formed several years ago but only formally registered with the local government in April 2009. Its mission is to bring aid to the needy and visit the elderly and sick.

Father Paul Han Qingping, deputy director of the Catholic-run Jinde Charities, said the organization is working with priests in Guangxi and Hunan provinces, and appealed to Catholics in and outside China to provide relief.

According to a recent Jinde report, Father John Li Hongwei of Changsha, Hunan, is now contacting Catholic villagers in the disaster areas for an update on the situation.

The priest said some areas in Hunan have suffered severe flooding. Two weeks of heavy rain have flooded farmlands and damaged houses. The situation in some remote mountainous areas is more critical as transportation and telecommunication services have been disrupted.

Hunan, a hilly agricultural region, suffers from torrential rain and flooding every summer.
