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RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

1. Please provide any information on the registered and unregistered Catholic Church in Shenyang City, Liaoning.

RESPONSE

1. Please provide any information on the registered and unregistered Catholic Church in Shenyang City, Liaoning.

Recent information on the registered and underground Catholic Church in Shenyang is contained in questions one and two respectively of March 2008 *RRT Research Response CHN33047* (RRT Research & Information 2008, *RRT Research Response CHN33047*, 12 March – Attachment 1). Information on Catholics and Christians in Shenyang is also provided in June 2008 *RRT Research Response CHN33443* (RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response CHN33443*, 5 June – Attachment 8).

A map showing the relative locations of the Shenhe and Tiexi districts in Shenyang is provided in Attachment 2. The location of the “Xin Tai Zi Tang” district of Shenyang City could not be found in the sources consulted (‘Google Maps: China, Liaoning, Shenyang’ (undated), Google Maps website http://maps.google.com.au/maps?f=q&hl=en&geocode=&q=China,+Liaoning,+Shenyang&sl=-25.335448,135.745076&sspn=33.858116,54.755859&ie=UTF8&lr=lang_en&ll=41.831712,123.42247&spn=0.220509,0.42778&z=11&pw=2 – Accessed 14 November 2008 – Attachment 2).

The *Guide to the Catholic Church in China* (2008 edition) divides Shenyang into the following nine districts: Heping, Shenhe, Dadong, Huanggu, Tiexi, Sujiatun, Dongling, Xinchengzi, and Yuhong. The *Guide* gives some information on the Cathedral:

Address: 40 Nanlejiao Road, Shenhequ [Shenhe], Shenyang.

Bishop: Jin Peixian

Coadjutor: Pei Junmin

Parish Priest: Wang Junxing (Charbonnier, Fr. J. 2008, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, China Catholic Communication, Singapore, pp. 118-121 – Attachment 3).

The *Guide* also contains brief information on a Catholic Seminary on “Fentian Street, Shenyang” and the “Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary” on “Renao Rd. Shenhequ” (Charbonnier, Fr. J. 2008, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, China Catholic Communication, Singapore, pp. 122 – Attachment 3).

The Bishop Jin Peixian died on 4 November 2008. News articles on the death give some information on the Catholic Church in Shenyang, including on relations between the official Church in China and the Vatican and the numbers of priests, religious and faithful in the diocese:

He had retired last June leaving the see to his young successor, Paul Pei Junmin. Monsignor Jin was ordained in 1989 with the Holy See’s permission. He spent 10 years in jail and 12 on a farm.

Mgr Pius Jin Peixian, archbishop of the diocese of Shenyang (Liaoning), died this morning at 3.50 am. He was 85-year-old. The bishop had retired on 29 June, leaving the diocese in the hands of his coadjutor Paul Pei Junmin, who was ordained in 2006 with Vatican approval. Monsignor Jin was bishop since 1989; he too had received Vatican approval.

Born in 1924, Archbishop Jin was ordained in 1951 after Mao’s takeover. He was jailed for ten years in 1958 for “counter-revolutionary crimes”. When he was released during the Cultural Revolution he was sent to a farm for ‘reform-through-labour’. Only in 1980 was he allowed to go back to his pastoral work.

Although a member of the official Church, Mgr Jin Peixian was always in deep communion with the Holy See. He was among the first bishops to send seminarians and priests abroad for further studies to compensate for the vacuum created by China’s isolation and the years of the Cultural Revolution.

This gave him an opportunity to strengthen the ties between the Chinese Church and the Universal Church. His skills as a mediator helped him in rebuilding the fabric of the Church in north-eastern China and establish good relations with government authorities.

For many years he served as the vice president of the official Bishops’ Conference of the Catholic Church, an entity not recognised by the Vatican. The Vatican established the archdiocese of Shenyang in 1946. The government joined to Fushun, Jinzhou and Yingkou, creating the single diocese of Liaoning for the whole province.

The current diocese has 80 priests, 180 women religious and about 110,000 faithful (‘Mgr Jin Peixian of Shenyang dies’ 2008, *AsiaNews* website, 4 November <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=13665&geo=5&theme=8&size=A> – Accessed 14 November 2008 – Attachment 4).

Contact between Jin Peixian and the underground community of priests in Liaoning is commented on by Anthony Lam Sui-ki, a senior researcher at Hong Kong diocese's Holy Spirit Study Centre, in an article on the *Union of Catholic Asian News* website covering the bishop's recent death:

Anthony Lam Sui-ki, a Hong Kong-based Church-in-China observer, said on Nov. 4 that Bishop Jin -- archbishop of Shenyang, according to the Vatican -- maintained a successful balance between his "loyalty to the pope and compliance with national identity."

Lam, senior researcher at Hong Kong diocese's Holy Spirit Study Centre, explained to UCA News that Bishop Jin strengthened his priests' sense of the universal Church. He pointed out that the retired bishop and his successor, Bishop Paul Pei Junmin, received papal approval before their respective episcopal ordinations in 1989 and 2006.

...He also played a successful role in making Catholicism part of the local culture of Shenyang, Lam said, noting that the bishop promoted the Gothic-style century-old Sacred Heart Cathedral as a city landmark.

However, Lam also said one limitation Bishop Jin faced was that he had not made enough contacts with the "underground" priests in the former dioceses in Liaoning, causing duplication in pastoral work in some areas ('Retired Bishop Pius Jin Peixian of Liaoning Dies At Age 84' 2008, *Union of Catholic Asian News* website, 4 November <http://www.ucanews.com/2008/11/04/retired-bishop-pius-jin-peixian-of-liaoning-dies-at-age-84#> – Accessed 14 November 2008 – Attachment 5).

The Vatican-approved ordination of Pei Junmin in June 2006 was also reported on by *AsiaNews* in the following terms:

Tomorrow at 9am, in the Cathedral of Shenyang (Liaoning, north-east China), there will be another episcopal ordination: Fr Paul Pei Junmin will be consecrated as coadjutor bishop of Shenyang by the ordinary bishop, Mgr Jin Peixian. The very important fact is that this new ordination takes place with the approval of the Holy See. "Fr Pei Junmin received the approval of the Holy Father," a Vatican source told *AsiaNews*. "And he is an excellent candidate from all points of view." Fr Pei Junmin met Benedict XVI on 3 August 2005. Together with another 22 Chinese priests on a trip to Europe, he managed to attend an audience with the pontiff, who greeted him with "particular affection". Interviewed by *AsiaNews* on that occasion, Fr Paul had said: "The meeting with the pope was a surprise! None of us would ever have imagined it; we did not even know we would come to Rome. But it was a marvelous thing: the Church of Rome is the mother Church of all churches, including the Chinese one. We wanted to show that the Church in China is united to the Holy See."

The ordination of Fr Pei comes a few days after the illicit ordinations in Kunming and Wuhu that took place without the pope's permission. They have been branded by a Vatican statement as "a grave violation of religious freedom" and a "serious wound to the unity of the Church", incurring "severe canonical sanctions".

A Chinese priest told *AsiaNews*: "The episcopal appointment of Fr Pei confirms the strong unity between the official Chinese church and the Holy See and reveals more than ever the violence of the Patriotic Association (PA) in seeking to divide the Church and to create obstacles for China-Vatican dialogue."

The Vatican statement issued on 4 May cited "strong pressures and threats" to which the ordaining bishops and ordination candidates in Kunming and Wuhu were submitted to.

Among those threatened was the bishop of Shenyang, Mgr Peixian, who tomorrow will preside over the valid ordination in the capital of Liaoning. According to local sources of *AsiaNews*, Mgr Peixian remained firm and steadfast, refusing to participate in ordinations that were not approved by the Holy See.

Meanwhile, since the Vatican statement condemning the illicit ordinations was issued, *AsiaNews* has been receiving continuous messages from Chinese priests and bishops, stating their approval for the Vatican stand. Anthony Liu Bainian, the PA deputy chairman, remains the only person defending the decision to go ahead with the ordinations of Kunming and Wuhu. There has been no official reaction from the government so far.

Fr Pei Junmin, 37 years, entered the seminary when he was 16. He was ordained in 1992 and worked for a year in the parish of the cathedral. Then he was sent by his bishop to Philadelphia in the US to study Sacred Scripture. He was among the first group of Chinese priests sent abroad for studies. So far, he has taught Sacred Scripture and he was dean of studies and vice-rector at the major seminary in Shenyang that has 70 vocations. The diocese of Shenyang has 100,000 faithful.

AsiaNews sent Fr Pei a message of congratulations for his ministry: “Dear Fr Pei, we want to express our happiness and joy about your consecration as bishop of the Catholic Church, Our ties to the Rock of Peter are a guarantee of strength and edification. From Italy and the world, we are praying for you. We are honoured to have met you in Rome. We work ever more closely for the mission of the church in China and for unity with the universal Church.” (‘Bishop approved by pope to be ordained tomorrow in Shenyang’ 2006, *AsiaNews* website, 6 June <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=6096&dos=71&size=A> – Accessed 14 November 2008 – Attachment 6).

Relations between the official and underground Church in Shenyang around 2006 are commented on by Alexander M. Schweitzer, General Secretary of the Catholic Biblical Federation. Schweitzer accepted an invitation to the ordination of Pei Junmin in 2006 and refers to the vibrant underground Church in the diocese:

In May, 2006 I was invited to take part in the ordination of Paul Pei Junmin as Bishop Coadjutor of the Archdiocese of Shenyang/Liaoning in northeastern China. The Catholic Biblical Federation has long been in good contact with Pei Junmin. Pei took part, for example, in the 6th Plenary Assembly of the CBF in 2002 in Lebanon, and in 2005 in the 4th Asian-Oceanian Biblical Congress in the Philippines (organized by CBF and FABC). I had accepted this invitation, among things, because a participation of non-Chinese representatives from the Catholic Church would amount to positive support of the new bishop over and against the Chinese State authorities and would also be helpful in view of the still **vibrant underground Church in the diocese**. The acceptance of the new bishop as the bishop recognized by Rome of all the Catholics of the diocese is a central presupposition for further reconciliation of the two groups. An additional motive here was the strategic aspect of the strengthening of CBF-contacts in mainland China, which at this time can only be realized through good bilateral relations.

Since 1996 Bishop Pei has been active as professor of exegesis and biblical theology at the regional seminary in Shenyang and as its vice-rector and student dean. Whenever he found time he was also engaged in the pastoral realm, and in the holidays between semesters he regularly gave introductory courses to the Bible in the parishes and religious congregations. He was deeply committed to a high quality biblical training of seminarians. He has been steadily promoting plans for the establishment of a standing biblical pastoral course for collaborators in biblical pastoral ministry (primarily for lay persons and religious sisters). As a motto for his Episcopal shield Pei Junmin chose the words from Luke 5:5: “In verbo autem

tuotuo” (“at your word”). Bishop Pei feels strengthened and inspired through his contacts with the CBF; he is one of the important resource persons for the work of the CBF in China (Schweitzer, A.M. 2006, *Annual Review 2006*, Catholic Biblical Federation website <http://www.c-b-f.org/documents/Review2006.pdf> – Accessed 14 November 2008 – Attachment 7).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

International News & Politics

AsiaNews website <http://www.asianews.it/>

Topic Specific Links

Union of Catholic Asian News website <http://www.ucanews.com/>

Catholic Biblical Federation website <http://www.c-b-f.org/>

Search Engines

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. RRT Research & Information 2008, *RRT Research Response CHN33047*, 12 March.
2. ‘Google Maps: China, Liaoning, Shenyang’ (undated), Google Maps website http://maps.google.com.au/maps?f=q&hl=en&geocode=&q=China,+Liaoning,+Shenyang&sll=-25.335448,135.745076&sspn=33.858116,54.755859&ie=UTF8&lr=lang_en&ll=41.831712,123.42247&spn=0.220509,0.42778&z=11&pw=2 – Accessed 14 November 2008.
3. Charbonnier, Fr. J. 2008, *Guide to the Catholic Church in China*, China Catholic Communication, Singapore, pp. 117 -125.
4. ‘Mgr Jin Peixian of Shenyang dies’ 2008, AsiaNews website, 4 November <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=13665&geo=5&theme=8&size=A> – Accessed 14 November 2008.
5. ‘Retired Bishop Pius Jin Peixian of Liaoning Dies at Age 84’ 2008, *Union of Catholic Asian News* website, 4 November <http://www.ucanews.com/2008/11/04/retired-bishop-pius-jin-peixian-of-liaoning-dies-at-age-84#> – Accessed 14 November 2008.

6. 'Bishop approved by pope to be ordained tomorrow in Shenyang' 2006, *AsiaNews* website, 6 June <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=6096&dos=71&size=A> – Accessed 14 November 2008.
7. Schweitzer, A.M. 2006, *Annual Review 2006*, Catholic Biblical Federation website <http://www.c-b-f.org/documents/Review2006.pdf> – Accessed 14 November 2008.
8. RRT Research & Information 2008, *Research Response CHN33443*, 5 June.