

8 May, 2013



[Help AsiaNews](#) | [About us](#) | [P.I.M.E.](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Rss](#) | [Newsletter](#)

[YOUR DONATION](#)



[Home](#) | [China](#) | [Islam](#) | [India](#) | [Economy](#) | [Freedom of religion](#) | [Vatican](#)

[e-mail this to a friend](#)

[printable version](#)

Tweet 8



» 02/08/2012 13:17

CHINA-VATICAN

What is the true good of the Church in China

by Card. Joseph Zen Ze-kium

On the eve of an important meeting in Rome on "Jesus our contemporary," Card. Zen asks all Catholics to help the Church in China (and especially its legitimate bishops) to emerge from ambiguity, to follow Benedict XVI and "rid" themselves of those organisms that are enemies of the faith (see PA, Bureau of Religious Affairs, etc. ), and that control and stifle the faithful. The Chinese Church is on the verge of a schism caused by "bargaining" between the Catholic faith and political power. The subtitle of this article (wanted by the author) is: "In dialogue with the Community of Saint Egidio and Gianni Valente of 30Days".



Hong Kong (AsiaNews) – Firstly I wish to declare my complete respect for the great zeal of my friends of the Community of Saint Egidio and my good friend Gianni Valente of 30Days for the Church in China. I also wish to reiterate my gratitude for their long friendship towards me.

However, the fact that for some time now they have no longer sought to meet me, and that I find something quite disturbing in what they do and say in regard to our beloved Church in China, I believe the time has come to enter into a public conversation through the printed word, and in doing so, I draw inspiration from an article by Gianni Valente of "30Days" Issue 9 (2011): "Interview with John Baptist Li Su Guang, coadjutor bishop of Nanchang"

**My Questions**

After having carefully read pages 30-35 I can not reconcile Bishop Li's beautiful words in the interview with the facts that were recently, and

honestly, reported by Gianni Valente: That is, that on July 14th His Excellency attended the illicit Episcopal ordination of Huang Binzhuang of Shantou[1] .

My first question is: why should the Community of Saint Egidio invite people like Msgr. Li, who are seriously compromised from Churches' standpoint, to that international meeting [2]. Obviously, they were received with great cordiality, which is fine, and with honor, which is not.

I then ask why Gianni Valente of 30Days should interview such people, when it is known that they are not free to say what they think. How can Msgr. Li Suguang say that "the Church in China has not changed one iota from the apostolic tradition", when not long before he attended (forced or not) an act which seriously injures the unity of the Church despite recent clear reminders from the Holy See regarding the severity of such an act.

Editor's choices

ASIA - PIME  
[PIME mission, in the footsteps of Benedict XVI and Pope Francis](#)  
by Bernardo Cervellera



PIME Annual General Meeting will

discuss the mission ad gentes and "new evangelization"; missionary revival for the older Churches (Italy, USA, Latin America), and the communications media. But above all, the awakening of faith, according to the teaching of Benedict XVI and Pope Francis' call to "go out to the geographical and existential outskirts".

VATICAN  
[Pope against "slave labour", for solidarity, in the month of May](#)



today's general

audience, which falls on the feast day of Saint Joseph the Worker, also International Workers' Day, Francis calls on the world to take "decisive action" against human trafficking as well as work that denies dignity and represses man. He calls on people, especially young people, "to keep your hone alive"

[Al-Ghazali - Pensatore e maestro spirituale](#)

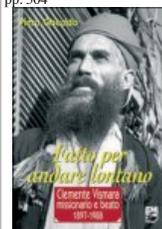
by Paolo Nicelli pp. 136



The

[Fatto per andare lontano. Clemente Vismara](#)

by Piero Gheddo pp. 504



[La Mangrovia Una donna, due anime](#)

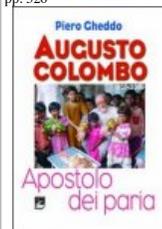
by Claire Ly pp. 160



In

[Augusto Colombo. Apostolo dei paria](#)

by Piero Gheddo pp. 320



[Matteo Ricci: missione e ragione. Una biografia intellettuale](#)

**Understanding the situation**

There is obviously a painful situation in China and we are all anxious to do something to aid our brothers and sisters. But the question is: What? Because we have a saying that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions," that is, harmful to those to whom we intend to do good.

In order to discern what is objectively good and what is not in this situation, we must first agree on our understanding of the current situation.

I think we all agree in admitting, as the Holy Father points out in his 2007 Letter, that the situation of the Church in China is particularly unusual because not bishops, but bodies outside the Church - the Patriotic Association, Bureau for Religious Affairs - are leading our Church.

Nearly five years after the publication of the Letter, this reality does not seem to have changed at all. Why?

On the one hand, the Beijing Government has not changed one iota in its policy of religious oppression, it still wants absolute control of religion and, in the case of the Catholic Church, China wants to detach the Church from obedience to the Holy See.

For our part, unfortunately, some have not honestly welcomed the Letter of the Pope. On the contrary, some have dared to tamper with its presentation, its translation into Chinese, and its interpretation, skipping over the aspect on ecclesiology, which was stressed by Pope, and instead tendentiously interpreting it as an encouragement of the Holy Father for reconciliation as if it were an invitation to an indiscriminate "merging" of the two communities: the one that is increasingly subject to government and the other that went underground to avoid this subjection.

Far be it from me to pass any moral judgment on people in what I have said and am about to say, but obviously many mistakes have been made in recent years.

**A little recent history**

His Eminence Cardinal Josef Tomko, when made Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, already had vast experience in sharing the Holy Father's solicitude for the universal Church. This experience, coupled with his origins from a Communist country, meant he was capable of understanding the situation of the Church in China. Given the then policy of openness in Beijing, he received a great deal of information on the situation and advised that the appropriate course and measures to be approved of by the Holy Father.

In addition to his priority concern for the underground community, he was open to a great understanding of the older bishops of the official community, illegitimately ordained in really difficult situations and under severe pressure. In accepting the legitimacy of their petitions, he sought the consent of the legitimate underground bishop (if one existed in the same diocese) or the opinion of neighboring legitimate bishops. In dioceses where there was an underground bishop, these were confirmed as the Ordinary, while the official bishop was entitled as an Auxiliary. Of course, this canonical dependence was a reality in favorable situations, such as Wuhan, while elsewhere it remained a statement of law, although in reality the two were not able to consult in the exercise of their pastoral office.

Similar provisions were practiced when young candidates, officially elected in the community, believed it their duty to seek the approval of the Holy See before their episcopal ordination.

because "there is a light at the end of the tunnel." He also calls on families to recite the Rosary during the month of May.

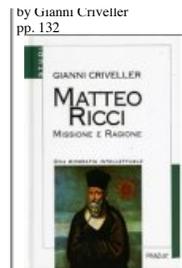
VATICAN - CHINA  
[Archbishop Savio Hon: I pray for Mgr Jin Luxian and I hope to go to his funeral](#)  
by Savio Hon\*

 secretary of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples talks about the bishop of Shanghai, who passed away today. Despite criticism and suspicion, Mgr Jin worked hard for the Church's mission. The time for purification and reconciliation has come. For the Vatican, Mgr Ma Daqin is the successor of the bishop of Shanghai. Even Pope Francis keeps relics of the Church's heroes in China.

Dossier  
[The Year of Faith and the martyrdom of Fr Fausto Tentorio](#)

  
[John Paul II is beatified](#)

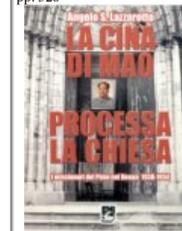
  
[\[Show all dossier\]](#)



by Gianni Criveller pp. 132  
[Matteo Ricci e Giulio Aleni, due vite incrociate](#)  
by Giulio Aleni / (a cura di) Gianni Criveller pp. 176



[La Cina di Mao processa la Chiesa](#)  
by Lazzarotto Angelo S. pp. 528



[Il Rovescio delle medaglie](#)  
by Bernardo Cervellera pp. 240



[Piero Gheddo: Il vescovo partigiano - Mons. Aristide Pirovano](#)  
by Piero Gheddo pp. 454



In 2000, Cardinal Tomko, having turned 75, retired. At the same time, within the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, a complete change of personnel took place. The lack of experience and expertise caused a vacuum in both thought and action. The approach that first begun under Cardinal Tomko continued, but in complete inertia, devoid of the accuracy with which it had started out. Many members of the underground community complained that illegally ordained bishops were being legitimized and new candidates granted approval too easily, while new bishops were not being appointed to the underground community as older pastors died.

The successor of the successor to Cardinal Tomko [Card. Ivan Dias - ed] had the experience of having worked with the Cardinal Casaroli. Unfortunately this, which could have been his strong point, instead turned out to be a limitation, since he believed that the Ostpolitik of the famous Cardinal had worked miracles in communist countries of Eastern Europe, while it is

known that at least Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Wyszyński were not of the same opinion, and many of the clergy of those countries severely criticized this policy. Cardinal Casaroli held that they must seek if not a "modus vivendi", at least a "modus non moriendi", but in reality the faith of those Churches was dying away.

Geographic areas



Now we come to the reality in China. In the conviction that resistance to the excessive power of an absolutist government is futile, a strategy of compromise has been adopted, if not indefinitely then at least to a considerable extent. And what can we see now? We can see that the

- [Middle East](#) underground community that once flourished so well, now runs the risk of
- [East Asia](#) dying of frustration and discouragement, because it seems to be neglected
- [South Asia](#) and considered inconvenient by the Holy See. The official community seems
- [Central Asia](#) alive and well with its open churches full of people and its bishops, many
- [South East Asia](#) with double approval i.e. of the Government and the Holy See, but what is
- [Asia](#) the true reality? A double victory?
- [North Asia](#)
- [South West Asia](#) When Gianni Valente wanted to make it appear that all was well because
- [Asia](#) many episcopal ordinations had the dual approval, I questioned whether the Holy See had ceded more ground in negotiations than its Chinese counterpart.

 **MEDIAZIONI  
ARBITRATI**  
Risoluzione alternativa  
delle controversie.

### **Recent events**

After much (I would say excessive) acquiescence by the Holy See, the Chinese government has shown no willingness to respect the essential nature of the Catholic Church, as it is peacefully accepted all over the civilized world. In fact, in the first case where the approval of the Church was slow to be granted, the Government proceeded unilaterally to a new illegitimate ordination in Chengde (November 2010), followed by two more, one in Leshan (June 2011) and one Shantou (July 2011). The Chinese government has thus shown that it has no intention of changing its religious policies.

Faced with such acts of defiance, which have betrayed its sincere desire for dialogue, the Holy See's only option is to return to its clear stance. The Holy See can not, therefore, be accused of closure.

### **Change of direction**

Reflecting on the recent past, it was found that an overly accommodating policy had not obtained the desired reciprocation from the Government and that meanwhile an erroneous compassion had weakened the church from within. Even the Holy Father has sounded the alarm about the possible infiltration of opportunist elements within high ranking positions in the Church[3].

Procrastination was no longer an option. The recent shift in position in the

last two illegitimate ordinations, was obvious to all.

I understand how those who believed in a win-win situation in the previous situation of compromise now think that the Church is mistaken for its firm and clear stance which they judge to be one of closure.

For those who, especially through the Internet from inside China, have their pulse on how the community of faithful reads such events, the firm and clear stance was both wise and necessary to regain the trust of many who felt lost in front of bishops who, while in communion with the Holy See, performed acts against the unity of the Church without any serious consequences on the part of the Holy See. In fact, in the past, the excommunication contemplated in the Code of Canon Law has often been spoken of but rarely enforced in practice.

Obviously the present situation is quite different from that of a few decades ago. Comparing the present bishops of the official Church with, for example, the revered figure of the late Bishop Duan Li betrays a complete ignorance of the facts.

Some have tried to intimate that the author is someone who cheerfully applauds the handing out of excommunications. But the facts recorded in history may prove that I was among the first, twenty years ago, to plead the cause of those of the official community. I even said before the august Synodal Assembly for Asia, that there was only one Church in China. But now I'm not so sure.

We certainly know that our brothers are oppressed by government threats and inducements, but faced with the fundamental problem of the unity of the Catholic Church it is our duty to encourage them to courage, as the Holy Father has done on many occasions. It would be a false compassion to claim that their failures are justifiable.

Now, inviting bishops who have compromised themselves in acts which are objectively destructive to the unity of the Church to meetings aboard seems very inconvenient, because in such cases they will in all likelihood only receive acts kind of encouragement that are later also abused as an endorsement for their actions by the rest of the Church. Moreover, interviewing them is the equivalent of giving open space to people who are not free to speak the truth and can only speak of matters that promote the cause of the Government. It is cruel towards the interviewee and unjust in relation to the readers, who will have a distorted concept of the reality.

The fact is that we are on the verge of a schism, with these repeated statements of wanting to make an independent Church and continue to ordain bishops without papal mandate.

Not all kind acts are truly charitable, especially is they do not help to remain faithful to the true nature of the Church. Moreover, these meetings have painful effect on members of the underground community, who can not but feel lost seeing members of the universal Church honor these brothers who are seriously compromised.

### ***Conclusion***

Responding to the question formulated in the title of this article, I think I can say that the true good of the Church in China can only be found in its returning to its true nature as given by its founder, Jesus Christ, and as set forth in the Pope's Letter to the Church in China, which is to be One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic.

The true good of the Church in China is not in comforting the oppressed who

remain in their ambiguous situations, but in encouraging them to get out of them.

The true good of the Church in China is not in continuing to bargain with organisms that are not only foreign, but clearly hostile to the Church, but in mobilizing bishops and faithful to rid the Church of them.

Am I speaking of the impossible? Everything is possible for those who want to remain faithful to God's designs, He who gives strength to the humble and courage to the weak.

[1] See: AsiaNews.it, 14/07/2011 [Eight bishops in communion with the pope forced to take part in illegitimate ordination in Shantou](#) (publisher's note).

[2] Card. Zen refers to the meeting "Religions and Culture in Dialogue", hold by the Community of Sant'Egidio since september 11 to september 13 2011 (publisher's note).

[3] See: AsiaNews.it, 18/05/2011 [Pope: pray for the Church in China, for those oppressed and those tempted by opportunism](#).

[e-mail this to a friend](#) 

[printable version](#) 

Tweet 8  
0



See also

02/18/2010 VATICAN - CHINA

[Cardinal Zen: My hopes for the Church in China in this Year of the](#)

[Tiger](#)

by Card. Joseph Zen Zekiun, sdb

05/23/2011 VATICAN - CHINA

[Sheshan: Beijing's war and the Pope's "battle"](#)

by Bernardo Cervellera

07/13/2011 HONG KONG - CHINA - VATICAN

[Urgent appeals by Card. Zen and Bishop Tong against illicit Shantou ordination](#)

by Eugenia Zhang

07/26/2011 CHINA-VATICAN

[Cardinal Zen: the absurdity of an atheist government that wants to lead the Catholic Church](#)

by Card. Joseph Zen Zekiun, sdb

07/01/2007 HONG KONG – CHINA – VATICAN

[Cardinal Zen: "Pope's letter to the Chinese Church represents love for truth and his children"](#)

2003 © All rights reserved - Autogestione contenuti di AsiaNews C.F. e P.Iva: 00889190153 - [GLACOM®](#)

Copyright © 2003 AsiaNews C.F. 00889190153 All rights reserved. Content on this site is made available for personal, non-commercial use only. You may not reproduce, republish, sell or otherwise distribute the content or any modified or altered versions of it without the express written permission of the editor. Photos on AsiaNews.it are largely taken from the internet and thus considered to be in the public domain. Anyone contrary to their publication need only contact the editorial office which will immediately proceed to remove the photos.