

‘Illicit’ bishop takes part in China ordination



The episcopal ordination of Hunan diocese

Bishop Methodius Qu Ailin was ordained today, the second prelate this year to be ordained with both the Vatican’s approval and recognized by the Chinese government.

The ceremony took place at the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception in Changsha city, with Bishop Joseph Liu Xinhong of Anhui – an illicitly ordained prelate – taking part.

Another illicitly ordained prelate, excommunicated Fr Paul Lei Shiyin, took part in last week’s ordination of Bishop Joseph Chen Gong’ao of Nanchong, in a move that some Chinese clergy say will become a “regular” practice in future Vatican-approved episcopal ordinations.

Bishop Joseph Li Shan, who himself has participated in two recent illicit ordinations and has yet to be pardoned by the Holy See, served as the main consecrator.

Other participating bishops included John Lu Peisen of Yanzhou, John Baptist Li Suguang of Nanchang, Paul Liang Jiansen of Jiangmen and John Baptist Tan Yanquan of Nanning – all Vatican-approved and government-recognized.

A source close to the Vatican warned that bishops and priests in China should be more attentive to the principles of Church doctrine and “not look for excuses to make a new Church doctrine according to the wishes of the Chinese Communist Party.”

The source added: “Bishops should not allow the government to interfere in Church matters.”

Beijing seems to have a new strategy to create more confusion and provoke disunity in the Church rather than fostering peace and harmony, the source said, adding that dialogue between the Holy See and Beijing would not be served well by repeatedly making such provocations.

Bishop Qu said today that he did not know Bishop Liu or his status with the Vatican.

About Bishop Joseph Li, he said: “I know he is a legitimate bishop, but not sure which episcopal ordinations he took part in before.”

Bishop Qu was ordained a priest of Hengyang diocese in 1995 upon graduating from Beijing diocesan seminary. He was appointed as vicar general of Hunan diocese in 1999.

The Vatican, which does not recognize Hunan diocese, regards Bishop Qu as the bishop of Changsha and apostolic administrator of all other ecclesiastical territories in the province.

In an election last December, then Father Qu got 54 out of 55 votes in favor of his candidature for bishop.

The new prelate said he would visit all his priests to “understand their situation and listen to their opinions before starting my work.”

Bishop Qu added that because of the size of Hunan province and the lack of leadership in the past, the 25 diocesan priests that serve the region are too few and too separated from each other.

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