

## Shanghai Religious undergo re-education

Classes thought to be official response to Bishop Ma ordination



*Auxiliary Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin at his ordination*

All priests and nuns in Shanghai diocese have been forced to attend compulsory “study classes,” which observers believe were imposed by authorities in response to Auxiliary Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin’s controversial ordination in July.

The 45-year-old prelate quit the Catholic Patriotic Association at his ordination on July 7. Since then, he has been in “retreat” at the Sheshan Seminary with a “certain degree of freedom,” sources say.

Government-sanctioned Church authorities said his recognition seriously violated regulations in relation to episcopal ordinations.

As a result, according to sources, some 80 diocesan priests and 80 nuns of the Our Lady of Presentation Congregation were divided into three groups to take three-days of classes at the Shanghai Institute of Socialism lasting 12 hours each day. The first classes began on September 10 and the final ones concluded last week.

Church sources said university professors gave lectures aimed at strengthening their sense of duty toward the country, law and the independent Church principle.

The main subjects included state-religion relations, the Communist Party’s religious concepts, policies and regulations, the socialist core value system and economic development in China.

“I thought government officials would openly criticize the episcopal ordination during the class, but they didn’t. Anyhow it is understood that the so-called study classes were to counter the ordination,” a priest who requested anonymity told ucanews.com.

“The classes were very strict. No one was allowed to miss them. We had to take an exam on religious regulations and policies and write an account on what we learnt at the end,” he continued.

They were told that the results would be given to the diocese in the form of a reference for job postings in the future. “We don’t know if there will be any consequences and so far nothing has happened a week after the classes concluded,” the priest said yesterday.

All priests and nuns obeyed directives given by the diocese and thus the classes ran smoothly. Religious officials at city and district level where the priests and nuns work, sat in throughout the classes, he said.

Other Church sources believe the Shanghai government organized the study classes for a variety of reasons – brainwashing priests and nuns, venting officials’ anger, and being seen to be doing something to appease Beijing.

In late August, the diocese suspended new semesters which should have begun last month at its major and minor seminaries.

They believed the situation would remain static until the party’s national congress, which begins on November 8.

UCA News