



# courier

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## EDITORIAL: WE RECEIVE POSITIVE NEWS FROM CHINA ON RELIGIOUS BELIEF

*Jeroom Heyndrickx cicm*

*Even some non-Christians in atheistic Communist China believe in God*

Verbiest Courier has in recent issues reported bad, alarming news about the situation of the Church in China, and rightly so. Also this Courier offers our readers an objective view on the restrictions of a repressive policy imposed by authorities on Christians confessing their faith. But it would be a mistake to think that we receive only negative news from China on religious belief. This Courier will make clear that next to bad or less good news we also receive positive news from the Church in China and positive news from non-Christians in Chinese society about the importance of religious belief. The media generally ignore this. That's precisely the reason why we chose as the main theme of this Verbiest Courier: **POSITIVE NEWS FROM CHINA ON RELIGIOUS BELIEF.**

*The Holy See and Beijing prolonged their provisional agreement for two years*

Verbiest Courier has repeated several times in the past that we see the agreement between Rome and Beijing as historical and good for the Church in China. We repeat that now and are happy that the agreement is prolonged. The doubts we earlier expressed remain. We are disappointed that till now the agreement did not produce the fruits that we had hoped for to normalize the situation of the Church and unify its community in China. Doubts remain but also the hope for better results as well as our conviction that dialogue is the only way to assure a better future for the Church in China. This Verbiest Courier will demonstrate that we trust the strong, mature faith of Christians in China. They survived persecution during the Cultural Revolution. Also now they will remain united with the Holy See and persevere in this difficult dialogue until



it bears fruit. As proof of this, you will read in this issue how they continue to spread the gospel successfully while facing many problems. That testimony should make us reflect.

***Belief in God is a most authentic Chinese belief* says a university professor in atheistic Communist China**

One may not deny that in Chinese society in the course of the past forty years, after the Cultural Revolution, much freedom has allowed citizens to speak and write about faith and religion. In this Courier we show two examples.

He Guanghu is a professor at the *People's University* in Beijing, one of the most prominent universities in China. The essence of his article published in this Courier is:

*Belief in God is a most authentic Chinese belief*

*We cannot say: foreigners provided the Chinese with religious beliefs, because Chinese have no religious belief, that would be nonsense. The Chinese are not a separate kind of human beings; or a kind of beast-like creatures. The Chinese are civilized people, and civilization is related to religion. Religion is at the core, the heart, the soul, and the spirit of civilization.*

***For every new church that is built we may close a prison*  
said one rich Chinese capitalist who went to pray at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem**

Jacky Ma Yun is one of the most successful and richest capitalists in China. He is the founder and owner of the big Chinese company Alibaba. He convinced the Chinese to use internet and buy goods online and so he became a billionaire and world famous. Nobody in China has ever spoken more positively, stressing the importance of religion and faith as Jacky Ma who happens to be a good friend of King Philip of Belgium (cfr photo). In 2018 he travelled to Israel and went to pray at the Wailing Wall. In several interviews he spoke about the essence of Christian religion and culture. He said:

*Christianity preaches equality, forgiveness, love for everybody, love of neighbor as yourself, and even love of enemies. This is the ideological basis of the formation of social democracy and freedom. The foundation of universal democracy is this fundamental spirit of Christianity: Human beings are limited, guilty, and imperfect, with faults. Therefore, people create institutions with faults and imperfections as well.*

One famous statement of Jacky Ma is: *For every new church that is built we may close a prison*

One may agree or disagree with the way Jack Ma, in the article published in this Courier, praises the USA, but one cannot deny the fact that this news from Communist China is remarkable. We found it worthwhile to draw the attention of our readers in this Courier to the message of Professor He Guanghu and the testimony of Jacky Ma Yun.

***We also receive good news from inside the Christian communities in China***

On September 13, 2020, we received photos from Beijing of baptisms in the Beitang Cathedral by Bishop Li Shan of more than eighty adult catechumens (cfr photo report). They had participated in the catechumenate for more than a year: three hours every week and in the weekly liturgies. This culminated in their baptism, first communion and confirmation. We are happy and proud in the Chinese College in Leuven knowing that some of our former students are now serving as pastoral ministers and catechists in the cathedral parish in Beijing. From other dioceses we receive pictures showing Christians bringing packets with food and clothes to people in need living in remote mountain villages. As winter time is nearing these Christians search for people in need to offer help (cfr photo report). This gospel-inspired vitality of *Christians in Communist China* makes us reflect twice. Living in the *old Christian Europe* where faith is no longer considered evident at all, we wonder aloud: are these the real Christians, of the so called *persecuted Christian community in China*? In the media we only read negative news about them. There must be more going on than just that negative news! Perhaps we should adjust our opinion about them? No doubt we should!

***Christians in China deserve a better name than persecuted Christians***

This opinion expressed by Brent Fulton deserves our full attention<sup>1</sup>. The limitations which authorities impose on Christians as they live their faith in China can best be seen as repressive. But the community of Christians in China deserves to be looked at from a much broader point of view than simply politics. We outside China should not continue to see Chinese Christians only as *persecuted Christians*.

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<sup>1</sup> Speaking Out, *Christianity Today* October 9, 2020

When one looks at the whole Christian community of Catholics and Protestants then it becomes evident that more important dynamics are at work. One discovers a remarkable maturity and firmness of faith in Chinese Christians.

In the course of the past thirty years the largest concentration ever in history has grown in atheistic Communist China. And this happened in circumstances which are not favorable for any religion. The Christians who launched this movement deserve much more than to be considered with some sympathy as *innocent victims* or even to be admired as *tragic heroes*. And yet that's all we read outside China in the media which write only about the *persecuted Church in China*. Reporters hunt by preference almost exclusively for conflicts between the State and those who oppose it. Shocking even are the statements of some world-famous politicians who fake admiration for *persecuted Christians in China* but at the same time abuse their story to promote their own political goals. Unfortunately even some experts and observers of the Church do practically the same.

Christians in local church communities outside China who allow the vital faith of their ancestors to die out are challenged by Chinese Christians today to learn from them how one, from a true living faith in the Lord Jesus today can face up to authorities who disrespect faith. They also receive a lesson from the Church in China on how it is possible, even in a materialistic consumption society to remain faithful to one's religious belief and even be active in sharing that faith with others.

Another message you read in this Verbiest Courier:

### 2021 will for Verbiest Institute KULeuven be the Paul Splingaerd Year

- The 14<sup>th</sup> International Verbiest Conference takes place in August 2021 (physical or online)
- Special attention will go to Paul Splingaerd, lay assistant to Founder Theof. Verbist cicm
- Research on the History of CICM in China will receive priority in Verbiest Institute
- Fr. Charles Phukuta, Superior General of CICM will give the keynote address

Verbiest Institute at Leuven University, during the past 35 years, has already done a lot of research on the history of CICM in China. It published 18 books on it in English and 15 in Chinese. Besides 52 articles appeared in the series Leuven Chinese Studies. But we foresee that many more years of research will be needed to complete the research on the remarkable mission history of what 679 CICM missionaries realized in Inner Mongolia and in the whole North of China. Verbiest Institute intended to do this research when it was founded. We welcome researchers to join us. We see academic research and publication of this history in cooperation with scholars from China, Catholics and non-Catholics, as our contribution to the Local Church in China today.

That is the reason why Verbiest Institute decided to give priority to research on CICM. Fr. Phukuta, Superior General of CICM will come to Leuven to give the keynote address at the 14<sup>th</sup> Verbiest Conference during which he will stress the importance of this research. You will read more about this in the Courier. During the Conference we will focus our attention on Paul Splingaerd. Inside CICM the name of this lay assistant to our founder Theofiel Verbist on his trip to China in 1865 is well known. Also many friends know his name but few people know the exceptional contribution he made not only as a mandarin in service of the government of China, but mainly, together with his wife Catharina, as a committed lay minister in service of the Church in China. The year 2021 will for Verbiest Institute be a Paul Splingaerd Year. The merits of this important China missionary must be made known inside Scheut and also in China and internationally. For this purpose Verbiest Institute is now already preparing the translation of the book **THE BELGIAN MANDARIN** by Anne Megowan, grand-child of Paul Splingaerd. In 2021 we hope to publish her book in Dutch, French and Chinese.

Prof. Dr. Chen Xinyu, associate researcher of Verbiest Institute, has done much research on tombs of missionaries at the old Catholic Shala Cemetery in Beijing. She publishes in this issue of Courier **A FIRST** about her research to inform the family of Paul Splingaerd (members of the family live in all continents of the earth), the CICM fathers and all friends of Paul that she has discovered the undamaged tombstone of **Remi Splingaerd**, one of the twelve children of Paul who died in 1931. He was the grandfather of Anne Megowan, author of **THE BELGIAN MANDARIN** who will come from the USA to give a lecture on her book at our 14<sup>th</sup> International Verbiest Conference in 2021. You can see the rubbing of the tombstone with Prof. Chen's article in this issue.

Publishing also the positive news that reaches us from China gives us a more accurate view of the situation of the Church in China today and helps us to show more respect and appreciation for what Christians in China realize. They inspire us, Christians in the West, and challenge us to look at our own critical situation with new hope.



# THE HOLY SEE & CHINA RENEWED THEIR PROVISIONAL AGREEMENT FOR TWO YEARS

by Verbiest Courier Redaction Team

The Vatican published the news on October 21, 2020 confirming what the Church and the media had been expecting for over a month. Just as in September 2018, the text of the Agreement was not published but this time the Holy See published a 4 page document providing more background information and clarification of the intention and the view of the Holy See. Following are some quotations selected by the *Verbiest Courier Redaction Team* from an unofficial translation of the document.

- *The primary motivations that have guided the Holy See in this process, of dialogue with the Government leaders of China, are fundamentally of an ecclesiological and pastoral nature. The question regarding the appointment of bishops is of vital importance for the life of the Church both at the local as well as the universal levels.*
- *This fundamental teaching regarding the particular role of the Supreme Pontiff within the Episcopal College and the appointment of Bishops itself, inspired the negotiations and was a point of reference in the drafting of the text of the Agreement.*
- *As of today, for the first time after many decades, all of the Bishops in China are in communion with the Bishop of Rome and, thanks to the implementation of the agreement, there will be no more illegitimate ordinations.*
- *It should however be noted that all the open issues or situations that are still of concern for the Church have not been treated in the Agreement, but solely the issue of episcopal appointments, which is decisive and essential to guarantee the ordinary life of the Church in China, as in all other parts of the world.*
- *Cardinal Parolin stated that he is aware of the existence of various problems regarding the life of the Catholic Church in China, but also that it is impossible to control all the issues at one time.*
- *Regarding the results achieved so far, two Bishops have been appointed, while various other processes for new episcopal appointments are moving forward, some at the initial stage, others in more advanced stages.*
- *The application of the Agreement, with an effective and progressively more active participation of the Chinese Episcopate is, therefore, of great importance for the life of the Catholic Church in China and, as a consequence, for the universal Church.*
- *there are still many situations causing serious suffering. The Holy See is very much aware of them, is taking them into account and does not fail to draw them to the attention of the Chinese government so that religious freedom might be truly exercised.*



## JACK MAYUN, THE RICHEST MAN IN CHINA, TALKS OPENLY IN HIGH-PROFILE ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

With info gathered from Kuaibao 快报

Ma Yun, the founder of Alibaba Group, is one of the best known Chinese in the world. He has changed, for the better, the lives of Chinese people through the Internet! In 2018, Mr. Ma led his executives on a visit to Israel. He also prayed personally near the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem!

Mr. Ma said in several conversations how the essence of mainstream Christian culture lies in its view of equality and fraternity. Christianity preaches equality, forgiveness, love for all, love of neighbor as yourself, and even love of enemies. This is the ideological basis of the formation of social democracy and freedom.



The foundation of a universal democracy comes from the fundamental spirit of Christianity: Human beings are limited, guilty, and imperfect, with faults. Therefore, people create their institutions with faults and imperfections as well.

### *Christianity is a very important influence in the United States*

Looking at the history of the United States, it is not difficult to see that the ideas of Christianity have been extended to every aspect of American life. Even though America wasn't founded as a Christian nation, America was nevertheless largely populated by believers. Religious liberty allows Americans to worship freely. America was never meant to be theocratic or religiously homogenous, but Christianity has always been indelible to the social fabric<sup>2</sup>. The Mayflower Compact is the cornerstone of American democracy. In short, the American Declaration of Independence contains four clear references to God: *"In the name of God, Amen. Independence was predicated on the "laws of nature and nature's God" because men are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. The Continental Congress thought success depended on "the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions" to whom they relied on for "the protection of divine Providence" 3. If the word "God" had been deleted, the spirit of the Declaration of Independence would not have been understood. Christian culture provided a framework for people in the United States to understand the document. In *Vindicating the Founders*, Thomas G. West recalled that Governor Morris, ambassador to France, once said: *religion is the only solid base of morals and morals are the only possible support of free governments*. The Founders disagreed on much, but were nearly unanimous concerning biblical morality. They understood the relationship between state and society differently than progressive thinkers today: government cannot mold man. Righteous men must mold government which requires the inculcation of virtue through vibrant churches and the transmittal of values generationally via a social structure based on families. Washington's Farewell Address neatly summarized, For all the dispositions and habits, which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. 4*

Mr. Ma believes that the Bible teaches people to be friendly, to be good, and to be morally noble. He stated: Planting one more Church will lead to one prison less, one more Christian will lead to one criminal less. Christianity considers that God is God and a human being is human being. Human power can never surpass God's power. This attempts to limit the expansion of human selfishness. Key officials are encouraged to greet the common people with a smile and act with restraint in public. Great people are expected to check their own behavior and not do anything against the will of God.

Christian culture also promotes natural human rights, cherishes life and does not exclude economics and encourages people to gain wealth through self-struggle. Christianity does not see the pursuit of wealth and money as a sin, but rather links it with the glory of the Lord, to use it rightly and manage wealth in order to manifest the glory of God. Working hard and with dedication is a virtue and moral obligation.

Mr. Ma mentioned<sup>3</sup>: *"Happiness is found by oneself, today, the economy of China is developing rapidly, but our value and cultural system has been destroyed. The present new cultural movement destroyed the old culture, but the Chinese have not built a new culture. The Cultural Revolution messed up our value systems. I do not fully agree with the opinion of some scholars that China is not a legal society. It seems that we could solve problems with a set of laws, it does work. The example is the way the rule of law has developed in the United States. American society is rooted in some aspects of Christian culture that contributed to the legal system. The political system was established on this legal system, with election of leaders. The whole system is very complex. If today the American cultural system were to be destroyed and casually replaced with another value system, it would be like building buildings on the beach, with no foundation. Despite the seriousness of the current secularization of the United States, Christian culture remains the core and soul of American culture. Mr. Ma said that we need to rediscover our value system and let young people understand, and not blame, people for being rich, not blame people for having money, but to think about how they want to change themselves. Mr. Ma said: I firmly believe that we will find the value system in our country, this is the era of real take-off for China.*

King Philippe of Belgium had a meeting with the founder of Chinese Internet giant Alibaba on Wednesday at the World Economic Forum in Davos. This was not the first encounter between the Belgian monarch and the Chinese billionaire. King Philippe and Queen Mathilde are Davos regulars and last year, their agenda also included a meeting with Jack Ma. In April 2020, when Belgium received a large shipment of medical supplies via Liège Airport, Jack Ma Yun and his Alibaba Group, played a key role in the logistic support of this operation.



<sup>2</sup> Bill Flax, Was America Founded As A Christian Nation?

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

# BELIEVING IN GOD: A MOST AUTHENTIC CHINESE BELIEF

He Guanghu, Renmin University, Beijing



Hundreds of years before the birth of Confucius, there was already a religion in China, which people only seldom mention. This religion had, strangely enough, no name. How did this religion then become a religion without a name? It doesn't matter, the point is that everywhere in the world, humanity developed religions, making people religious beings.

What's the difference between human beings and animals? Is it enough that humans make tools? Is it enough that humans are rational? Aristotle stated that people have politics. Is it enough that humans are animals that engage in politics? No, that is not enough. Religious scholars say that the difference between man and animal is that people have religions. Therefore, the greatest difference between man and animal is that people are able to worship from down on earth the highest power in heaven. A religious instinct to believe is

present in human nature.

*Chinese are no exception.*

We cannot say: foreigners provided the Chinese with religious beliefs, because Chinese have no religious belief, that would be nonsense. The Chinese are not a separate kind of human beings; or kind of beast-like creatures. The Chinese are civilized people, and civilization is related to religion. Religion is at the core, the heart, the soul, and the spirit of civilization.

Is there a religion at the heart of Chinese civilization? And if yes, where do we look for evidence? Let us have a look at archeological evidence. The history of Chinese civilization consists of twelve Dynasties: the dynasty of Xia, Shang, Zhou, Qin, Han, of Jin, Sui, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing. There is no archaeological evidence of the Xia Dynasty to fully confirm its existence. But there is however evidence of the Shang Dynasty of which the most important evidence is the **Oracle bone script**: the oldest texts in Chinese, of which some words are very interesting for us. For example, there are three words in the Oracle bone script: "God, Order, Rain" ("Di Ming Yu" 帝命雨). What do these three words mean? Do they imply that the emperor orders the rain? No, 3000 years ago there were in fact no emperors in China. The first character, the word "Di" (帝), is a Chinese concept. For example: there were pharaohs in Egypt and there were kings in Mesopotamia and Babylon. The rulers of the Shang Dynasty were called Shang kings. So, what does Di mean? In this sense, Di means God, and God orders the rain. Even if there was an emperor (帝) on the earth at that time, he would have had no way to order the rain, and the emperor could not give the rain to people. Therefore, "Di Ming Yu" (帝命雨) means: God ordered the rain.



Another example: There is also a strange expression "Bin Yu Di" (宾于帝) recorded in the Oracle bone script of the Shang Dynasty, saying: where did the ancestors of the king of the Shang Dynasty go after their death? Where do people go after their death? The Oracle bone script answered: They became "the guests of God." "Bin" means guests, very important guests, "Yu" means the birth of the year (is this correct?), "Di" means God, therefore, "Bin Yu Di" (宾于帝) means the ancestors went to visit God after their death. This shows that there was a concept of God in Chinese, "Di" (帝) points to God.

There is evidence that the ancient Chinese people believed in God, and believed in Him as the creator of heaven and earth. Later man attributed other functions to God: not only the creator of heaven and earth, but God also rewarded good and punished evil. Believing in God is therefore not a reverence for foreign beliefs, not a betrayal of the ancestors, not a sign of not being a good Chinese, and not a dismissal of Chinese culture. Religion does not mean: taking something imported and put in in the heads of Chinese people, no! Believing in God is the oldest belief in China, it is the most native belief in China, a most idiomatic Chinese belief.

**The name of the oldest book in China** is similar to the basic meaning of the word **Bible: Book** (书). Later, because of its lofty status, it became **The Book of History**. In the sayings of Confucius six Classic books are mentioned: "Poetry", "Rites", "Music",

Changes , "Spring and Autumn Annals and "Book". Book is also known as the "**Shang Book**", it is the oldest book in China. This book speaks of God, and a long passage in this book proves that the Chinese believed in God.

Another book which everyone may be more familiar with, is the "Classic of Poetry . There were very few books at that time, so these writings were given an elevated status and were worshipped by many, including Confucius. It is the oldest poetry collection, hence the name "Poetry . In this book the Chinese belief in God is expressed and the name of God is often used in the three parts out of which the book consists: **Ode, Hymn and Eulogy**. The Eulogies are the sacrificial ceremonial hymns used when the emperors worshipped the God of heaven. The "Divine Music Administration", located in the Temple of Heaven in Beijing especially played music for the emperors to worship the God of heaven. This is a heritage of the tradition of Eulogies which sing God's praise in the Book of Poetry.



The oldest Chinese writings and books all prove that the Chinese believed in God, and that God is neither a foreign noun , nor an imported word. God is the God of the entire universe. How could **He** belong to a country? This statement in itself is strange and makes no sense. What country is God from? Which Western one? Eastern one? Southern one? Northern one? God manages everything, otherwise, he would not be called God.

Later in Chinese history, it seems as if God is not heard of. Only little evidence of Chinese belief in God is provided, although the ancient books seem to say less and less about God, but are not without some references to God. In the late Qing Dynasty, during the reign of Guangxu, the Temple of Heaven in Beijing was struck by lightning and burnt down. Queen Cixi, who governed the Qing Dynasty at that time, ordered the temple to be rebuilt, and hung a sign inside the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest , the most

beautiful and the important building in Beijing, saying: "Highest Deity the Heavenly God "( 皇天上帝) .The character for the word God is very visible on the sign. Queen Cixi and all the ministers around her knew that in ancient Chinese books they could find this reference! How could the Chinese hang a foreign name at the most important, solemn, highest place, right in the center?

The meaning of the character that was used to represent God slowly evolved. In the early years of the Zhou Dynasty the character got the meaning "The heavenly God" (天帝). God is above in the heaven . To represent God, one referred to Heaven and used the word Tian . Could this be a parallel with the Israelites, who, despite their deep belief, did not use God's name? There is no such evidence.

"Lao Tian" doesn't refer to the "blue sky". When a person does evil things, people will say "**Tian Da Lei Pi**"(天打雷劈) meaning God will punish the evildoer by striking with lightning and split him in two! How could "Lao tian , a blue sky, know who was bad or good? Will Lao Tian know who did bad things? How could "Lao Tian eliminate him? So in the four words " Tian Da Lei Pi" "Tian" refers to God, because only He can distinguish what are the good and bad things in the world.

Chinese also say "**Tian Sheng wo Cai** , meaning: "I am born with great talent", Confucius said "**Tian Sheng Wo De**", meaning "I am born with virtue", God (Tian) bestowed upon him virtue and talent. We cannot say that the air gave him virtue and talent. So when we speak about "Tian" in this sense, they refer to God in ancient China. China has always had such a religion and worships an object which has never changed, the object is called "God", but slowly became "the Heavenly God"(Tian Di 天帝) and so on. The name has changed a bit, but the meaning has not changed. There is a religion in China, but it was not invented by Confucius. Confucius students, post-Confucian generations, believed in this religion. They didn't create this religion, they just believed in it.

Confucians believed in "God" (Tian). If a person did not believe in God, this person would be **Wu Fa Wu Tian** (无法无天), and **Sang Jin Tian Liang** (丧尽天良): lawless, godless, and utterly devoid of conscience. These sentences contain the word "Tian" (God), so Confucian scholars possibly believed in "Tian" in ancient times, and therefore in religion. They did not invent religion, they just created a doctrine called "Confucianism" for the function of teaching, but they did not create religion.

Therefore, Confucianism is another name of Confucian, it is talking about its social function (indoctrination rather than religion): it is not religion, but philosophy, a set of philosophical principles about life, about society.



# UNFORTUNATELY OTHER NEWS FROM CHINA WORRIES US

by Verbiest Courier Redaction Team

## *We keep on receiving worrying news from China.*

If we want to give a truly objective view on the current situation of the Chinese Catholic Church, and the status of religion in China today, we may not ignore the negative news. What follows hereunder is a summary of several news articles that reached our redaction over the past few months. We continue to look at the situation in Hong Kong, and notice how the instalment of a new head of the China Bureau has indeed tightened movement for religions and academics. We also have a look at messages that have reached us from mainland China.

### *Appeal from the Religious Leaders of Hong Kong regarding the outbreak of the coronavirus*

In our Verbiest Courier of December 2019, we described how the Church of Hong Kong reacted to the ongoing protests of social unrest. Their messages of hope, reconciliation and encouragement for all people of Hong Kong clearly indicated their preoccupation with, and worries about, public life. The speedy spreading of coronavirus confirmed cases in July, disturbed the government, society and the general public. Again, the Catholic Church, together with the other 5 major religions of Hong Kong, stepped up and extended their blessing to people of Hong Kong to keep peace in mind. In an appeal to the public, they urged the citizens of Hong Kong to follow the advice of medical experts and to offer care, both physical and psychological, and concern to our family, relatives, and especially the vulnerable groups in society. (Appeal from the Colloquium of Six Religious Leaders of Hong Kong regarding the outbreak of novel coronavirus, issued on August 3, 2020, consulted via <http://www.examiner.org.hk/>)



*Cardinal John Tong of Hong Kong was one of the six authors of the appeal*

### *Arrest of Jimmy Lai*



While the message above shows concern and compassion from the religious side, the political situation in Hong Kong is far from peaceful. This summer we reported how the Chinese authorities in Beijing appointed Xia Baolong as new head of the China Office in Hong Kong. The Guardian (as reported in *Verbiest Courier*, June 2020, p.20) commented how this clearly was an indication of Beijing tightening its grip on Hong Kong. This soon became clear when Catholic philanthropist Jimmy Lai was arrested in Hong Kong on Aug. 10 under Beijing's new and much contested National Security Law (NSL) (Michael Sainsbury, *Catholic philanthropist Jimmy Lai arrested in Hong Kong*, UCA News, August 10, 2020). Lai, 72, donated millions of dollars to Catholic causes and made his fortune through fashion chain Giordano before parlaying his wealth into the media company Next Media and the city's leading anti-Beijing newspaper Apple Daily. Both have since long been two of

Beijing's key targets. About 200 police raided the office of Apple Daily and handcuffed Lai under the NSL provision of foreign collusion along with two of his sons and two executives of Next Media. He was also charged with fraud. The NSL means Lai could be sent to the mainland for incarceration and trial. "I'm prepared for prison. If it comes, I will have the opportunity to read books I haven't read. The only thing I can do is to be positive," he told news agency Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Observers said the arrest of Lai is a clear message from Beijing that no one is safe from the long reach of Chinese authorities. Lai, who also holds United Kingdom citizenship, is the second target picked up by the newly created Office For Safeguarding National Security in Hong Kong, set up to implement the NSL and answerable to Beijing. Four young student activists were arrested last month.





*Xia Baolong, China's new Hong Kong chief represents a sign Beijing wants to exert more control over the city (picture: The Guardian)*

### *Lai's arrest means Hong Kong church leaders are under threat*

Michael Sainsbury writes how the arrest of Lai is a signal that no one is safe. In *Lai's arrest means Hong Kong church leaders are under threat*, published via UCA News on August 10, he indicates how the national security law gives Beijing just legal cause to bring the Church and its outspoken leaders to heel. The answer in Beijing's mind is only ever more control, and for religion that means state-run religious organizations. Sainsbury believes that the Diocese of Hong Kong's days of independence are now very clearly numbered and the arrival of the CCPA, like Beijing's increased control of Hong Kong, is only a matter of time.

Also Yip Ban-chi writes in *Power play likely to divide Catholic Church in Hong Kong* (UCA News, October 1, 2020) that the Beijing-controlled administration in Hong Kong is now busy extending an accreditation system prevalent in mainland China. As a result, many fear the administration will soon ask religious bodies, including the Catholic Church, to obtain state recognition. The Hong Kong Police Force recently amended the definition of journalists in the Police General Orders. It now recognizes as journalists only those who work with media outlets registered with the government's Information Services Department. Such an accreditation system is not new to the religiously minded in authoritarian China, the author continues. Clergy must obtain certification from the civil authorities to perform their duties and may

even be convicted if they illegally conduct religious activities. Now that Hong Kong is increasingly and quickly converging with mainland China, it will not be a miracle if the accreditation system is extended to Hong Kong's religious circles.

### *Fr. Liu Maochun kidnapped for 17 days to force him to join the 'independent Church'*

Returning to mainland China, we also receive disturbing news about religious leaders and faithful. Bernardo Cervellera reports in *Mindong, Fr. Liu Maochun kidnapped for 17 days to force him to join the 'independent Church'* (Asianews, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020) how Fr. Liu Maochun, 46, a priest of the diocese of Mindong (Fujian), had been in the hands of the Religious Affairs Bureau for 17 days. In the late afternoon of September 1st, Fr. Liu had gone to visit some sick people in the hospital. On leaving, around 6.30 pm, a group of people, sent by the Religious Affairs Bureau, arrested him and took him to an unknown location. According to information from Mindong, several priests - at least 20 - refuse to join the "independent Church". For this they are under constant pressure from the local government and have been deprived of the freedom to treat the faithful. These pressures have grown stronger in the run-up to a possible renewal of the Sino-Vatican agreement. Fr. Liu Maochun is not new to arrest. Over the past decade he has suffered imprisonment and attempts to brainwash him. The 46-year-old priest returned home on Sept. 17.



### *Funeral regulations aim to split Chinese Catholics*

Elizabeth Lam, reported on August 20, 2020 in UCA News (*Funeral regulations aim to split Chinese Catholics*) that the Diocese of Shanghai issued on July 27 a circular saying that Catholic priests who officiate funeral prayers at the city's Longhua Funeral Parlor should produce their identity cards to prove they are state-recognized priests. Members of the underground church, who do not submit themselves to the state administration, are not eligible to use the Shanghai funeral parlor because their priests cannot enter it. But if some among them insist on using the parlor, they will have to seek the help of a priest from the state-approved open church. For many who are unfamiliar with communist machinations, it is a simple issue of limited funeral options. They would say the underground Catholics can use other funeral parlors in the city or have funeral prayers at home. However, it is not easy for an underground priest to conduct funeral prayers in a Chinese home. Several regulations and restrictions prevent them from holding prayer rituals in the homes of Catholics openly and honestly.

The government forced the diocese to issue the notice with a clear aim to divide the city's Catholic communities that were coming closer to each other. Interactions between the groups have grown cordial over the years. They collaborated in the commemoration of Cardinal Ignatius Kung Pin-mei of Shanghai. They cooperated during the consecration of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin of Shanghai, after which he announced his withdrawal from the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.



*Cardinal Ignatius Kung Pin-mei meeting with Pope John Paul II in 1988*

What reportedly prompted the notice is an incident in which both groups collaborated. Catholics from both groups attended the memorial service of an underground priest at the funeral parlor. It showed the two church groups are communicating and can collaborate when needed. However, in an attempt to break this unity, the communist party first put Bishop Ma under house arrest and then put pressure on the open church bodies, creating divisions within the diocese. But such activities failed to weaken the diocese and instead helped it emerge as a model of unity for the Church in China.

*Churches are eradicated to ensure there are more Chinese Communist Party members than believers*

We end this overview with a report that was published on November 13<sup>th</sup>, in UCA News. In *Churches shut, demolished and ordered to be sold in China*, we learn how more than 70 Protestant churches and venues were shut and ordered to be rented out or sold in the cities of Lianyungang and Suqian in Jiangsu province of east-central China last year. Officials have also decided to demolish or repurpose the venues with an aim to prevent congregations from resuming gatherings. After the shutdown, authorities converted a Three-Self Church in Suqian city's Shuyang county into a memorial hall for China's revolutionary heroes. As part of the conversion, workers hired by the government removed its cross and a pillar with a signboard "God loves the world" on June 5. It was replaced by another signboard reading "Huaihai District's Military and Political Auditorium". The church will now be used to teach the young generation about China's revolutionary spirit, announced a village official. The official explained why three branches of the Three-Self Church have been demolished. People of faith outnumber Chinese Communist Party members, and the party is not winning people's hearts, the official explained. The government fears that this will bring instability. Churches are eradicated to ensure that there are more CCP members than believers.

## A SEDOS WEBINAR ON MISSION IN CHINA TODAY

*With info from GOOD TIDINGS Vol. XXXII, No. 1, January-August 2020 20*

*On Friday June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 SEDOS (Rome - Service of Documentation and Study on Global Mission) organized an on-line seminar (a webinar) on Mission in China Today. This session was originally scheduled to take place in Rome on March 6<sup>th</sup>, but had to be rescheduled due to the Corona crisis. Since the seminar took place online, many people were given the opportunity to listen to the lectures of several well-known experts in the field of mission in China.*

The session was opened by Archbishop Claudio Celli, Secretary of the Vatican State, and throughout the day, lectures were presented by Agostino Giovagnoli (Sant Egidio, Rome), Rev. Antonio Spadaro, SJ (La Civiltà Cattolica, Rome), Ms. Katharina Wenzel-Teuber (China Zentrum e. V., Sankt Augustin) and Fr. Jeroom Heyndrickx, CICM (Verbiest Institute KU Leuven, Leuven).



*Archbishop Claudio Celli*

Good Tidings, the newsletter of the ICM sisters, offers some insights in the lectures of Katharina Wenzel Teuber, and Fr. Jeroom Heyndrickx, which we would like to present hereunder.

Katharina Wenzel-Teuber concludes in her talk: *China's religious policy*, that China, with its multi-religious tradition, has a very uniform Soviet style management system for the five major religions. A big part of religious life in China is taking place in a grey area on the margins or outside their corset-like management system. However, in the last few years party and state have made great efforts to reduce and eliminate this grey area. In spite of the uniformity of the management system, we can see differences in the treatment of religions by the state; the demand to become Sinicized and to adapt more to Chinese traditions is not only, but mainly directed towards the religions that are perceived as having foreign roots. The scholar Richard Madsen said in 2015 that Church state relations in China are confusing, unstable mixture of Leninist-Stalinist policy and traditional imperial practice. In his opinion, Chinese state policy toward religion is [ ] in transition. One might say that the form of the policy is still Leninist-Stalinist but the spirit is imperial. And he predicted that, depending on which imperial model Xi Jinping's vision of church state relations is based on, Catholicism and other forms of Christianity may not fare as well as religions based on Buddhism and Daoism. We will have to see how things develop. Madsen said five years ago: In the meantime, the Catholic Church must be faithful to the Gospel and manifest love for all the Chinese people and respect for all authentic dimension of Chinese culture, full of faith that in the end for those who love God all things work together for good. This is still true today.

The session was closed by Fr. Jeroom Heyndrickx, who presented the lecture: *Mission to China today, after the Agreement Beijing-Rome*. Father Jeroom indicates how the Beijing-Rome Agreement leaves us with many questions, on which we look for answers. Beijing and Rome are in dialogue and signed an Agreement (22 September 2018) which we consider as positive and historical although limited in content and time. Limited, but the communiqué that promulgated the news on the agreement stated that both partners look hopefully to the future and to an ongoing institutional dialogue for the benefit of both sides. The recent unexpected brief encounter in Munich on February 14, 2020 of the two ministers of Foreign Affairs of the PRC and the Vatican could be seen as a signal that such an institutional dialogue is not to be excluded. For fifty years three immediate predecessors guided Pope Francis to the way of dialogue. What motivated them?

In 1970, at a time when Mao Zedong was trying to destroy the Catholic Church in China during the Cultural Revolution (1965-1975), Pope Paul VI went out of his way during a visit to Hong Kong to send friendly greeting to China and also in 1970 (well before the China visit of Nixon) during a speech at the FAO in Rome, he showed his sympathy for the entrance of the PRC as member of the United Nations.

Pope John Paul II was Polish. His relationship with Communism in Poland is well-known to everybody but as Pope in Rome, as early as 1982, he openly pleaded to set up all needed structures to enter into dialogue with the PRC.

Pope Benedict XVI wrote a historical letter to the Church in China in which he, on one side, made the limits of any dialogue with China quite clear but at the same time he also confirmed openly that dialogue, including dialogue with civil authorities, was necessary.

It was therefore predictable and entirely normal that Pope Francis would continue in the same line of a clear movement towards dialogue that his predecessors had followed during 50 years. Beijing and Rome still need time to be able to do what they both proclaim as their goal: to be intensely united and open to dialogue in mutual respect with all ideologies. The attitudes of Pope Francis to the faithful who disagree and to his partner in dialogue are: attention for gradual growth - pastoral of mercy - respect for one's discernment in conscience. Fr. Jeroom concludes how by promoting dialogue, Popes shared their respect for China, its people and culture. He also indicates how the dialogue meets problems. Dialogue partners need time to overcome them. Pope Francis' policy responds efficiently to the needs of the Church and of the PRC, Fr. Jeroom states, but also points how the new regulations in the PRC cause concern. There is need to intensify dialogue. Fr. Jeroom ends his talk by stressing how Programs of exchange and joint academic research should accompany the dialogue.



## A DAY OF JOY FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN MONGOLIA

*C. Nirmala Rani, icm, from: Good Tidings, Vol 32, nr. 1*

August 8, 2020 was a day of great joy for the Catholic Church of Mongolia as we witnessed the ordination of the new Bishop-elect Giorgio Marengo in Turin, Italy. His Eminence Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle, Prefect of the

Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, was the Principal Presider over the Episcopal Ordination; concelebrating were many bishops and priests of the locality. Among the few chosen invitees for his ordination was Sr. Lieve Stragier, ICM General Superior General, one of the pioneers of the ICM mission in Mongolia in 1995.

Bishop Giorgio Marengo, age 46, served as a Consolata Missionary priest in Mongolia for 17 years before his appointment by Pope Francis as the Apostolic Prefect of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on April 2, 2020. He is the successor of Most Rev. Wenceslao Padilla, CICM, the first Apostolic Prefect who died on September 25, 2018. The new bishop chose "Look to him and you will be radiant" from Psalm 34:5 as his Episcopal motto. The Apostolic Prefecture of Ulaanbaatar serves the entire country of Mongolia, with a population of 3 million and a small flock of 1,300 Catholics. An apostolic vicariate or apostolic prefecture is a local Church that has not yet been established as a diocese. Its administration is assigned to the apostolic vicar or apostolic who governs it in the name of the Pope.

Father Giorgio Marengo was born on 7 June 1974 in Cuneo, Italy. From 1993 to 1995 he studied philosophy at the Theological Faculty of Northern Italy and from 1995 to 1998 he did his theological studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome. On 24 June 2000, he took his religious vows as a member of the Consolata Missionaries, officially known by the Latin name, Institutum Missionum a Consolata (IMC). He was ordained as a priest on 26 May 2001. From 2000 to 2006, he continued further studies at Rome's Pontifical Urban University, from where he obtained a licentiate and a Doctorate in Missiology. Since his priestly ordination, he has carried out his pastoral ministry in Mongolia, in Arvaiheer, 432 kilometers away from the capital. In 2003, he was assigned to the Mission in Mongolia (the first I.M.C. missionary in Mongolia). In 2016 he was appointed as the regional counselor for Asia, superior for Mongolia and parish priest of the Parish of Mary Mother of Mercy in Arvaiheer.



*Bishop Marengo (bottom right) when he was priest in the ^parish of Arvaiheer, with his predecessor Bp. Wens Padilla cicm (center)*

A young fervent missionary of God is chosen as a Shepherd of God's flock which is one of God's mysterious and surprising ways. Something came true to my understanding of the message of Mother Foundress, Marie Louise De Meester: "We foresee, we plan, we hope, we fear. But it is God who directs our lives. Quite often, He does this beyond our imagination. Eventually though, we experience that His plan was the best and that ours meant nothing. I believe that God's chosen ones will do marvelous work in His vineyard."

## PAUL SPLINGAERD THE LAYMAN WHO WENT TO CHINA WITH CICM FOUNDER VERBIST

*Jerome Heyndrickx cicm<sup>5</sup>*

**He Served as Mandarin in the Chinese Government, and he and his wife initiated a Christian community in Suzhou (Gansu)**

Bishop Carlo van Melckebeke cicm wrote the biography of Bishop Hubert Otto cicm (1876 - 1938). Otto was Apostolic Prefect in Gansu when Paul Spilingaerd, a layman who came with Founder Verbist to China worked for the Chinese Government in Suzhou, inside his diocese. What a coincidence! Bishop Otto, Bishop Carlo and Paul Spilingaerd were all three Brussels-born all three working in Inner Mongolia. Paul and Otto two CICM pioneers in China loved to recall souvenirs from the olden times, their first years in Scheut, the beautiful walks in the city of Brussels, the heroic and dramatic times when Scheut started in Mongolia. Carlo himself arrived much later, in 1923. He learned from Otto and from other older CICM's the remarkable life history of Spilingaerd. No wonder, in Bishop Carlo's



<sup>5</sup> This article is edited based entirely on the texts of Carlo van Melckebeke cicm in *Zegenende Handen* pg 167-68 and in *Notre Bon Monseigneur Otto* pg 169-173).

biography of Otto we find a remarkable description in the words of Bishop Otto himself revealing his deep appreciation of the person of Paul Splingaerd who continued all through his life to cooperate with the Scheut missionaries. Carlo writes about the beginning of Christianity in Suzhou, the region where Otto became bishop and where Paul Splingaerd happened to be appointed by the Chinese Government as director of the official tax-bureau in Suzhou. This offered, entirely unexpectedly, an opportunity for cooperation with his CIM friends and their work. He lived as a *CICM Associate Member avant la lettre*, active in government service and remaining active as a catechist in evangelization.

Otto writes in his diary: *The Christian community of Suzhou, in the extreme Western part of Gansu Vicariate was born mainly thanks to the dedication of Paul Splingaerd. Paul lived there during 15 years and showed himself to be extremely generous for the poor. Bishop Carlo comments: written by a qualified authority such as Bishop Otto adds to the importance of this praise. He further quotes Bp Otto's report stating that, thanks to Paul's influence since 1907 two missionaries could settle permanently in that region: one European priest in the city of Suzhou and a Chinese priest at a distance of 37 li (17 km) outside the city. The non-Christian population in the whole region were very friendly to us.*

Bp Carlo: *Paul Splingaerd came to Inner Mongolia in 1865 at age 25 together with (CICM founder) Fr. Theofiel Verbist. Paul soon learned to express himself well in about a dozen languages: Flemish (=Dutch) his own language, French, English, German, Chinese, Mongolian, Russian. Assisting the CICM (Scheut) missionaries did not occupy all his time. This is how he became busy, simultaneously and successively, as guide, translator, companion of the famous explorers von Richthofen and Five with whom he lived through some palpitating experiences. One time Baron von Richthofen dramatically embraced Splingaerd crying after Paul had saved his life by threatening a gang of robbers with his handgun and forcing them to flee only by shooting several missing shots. Another time Paul Splingaerd saved the Belgian expedition of colonel Five which was threatened by the Boxers and guided them to safety all through the Gobi desert till Ourga (in Outer Mongolia).*



*At a given time Paul engaged in a business of his own. He affiliated with the famous firm Jardine-Matheson in Shanghai. He travelled all over Mongolia to buy stocks of animal skin, wool and leather and did good business. That's when his good CICM friend Remi Verlinden told him one: Paul, you have been successful in your business. It is time for you to get married. You may be right, Father, Paul answered. But one must find a second person to enter into such an adventure and courting is not allowed in this country. You will have to help me solve that problem. And that was done. Paul married Catharina Zhao, a girl of the Catholic boarding school of Ershisanhao, near Xiwanzi. He had twelve children with Catharina and, according to Carlo's report, he adopted four or five more so as to have a good crowd Paul said, These children grew up fast. Paul had kept good relations with the CICM missionaries, especially with John-Baptist Steenackers, CICM procurator in Shanghai where there were also some well-known Catholic schools. One morning the twelve Splingaerd children together with their mother arrived by boat in Shanghai. Steenackers had received advance notice, advance yes, but vague. Nevertheless, a bit of uncertainty awaited the family at Shanghai port. When he counted the number of the caravan stepping off the boat, he discovered that his wildest provisions had been largely exceeded.*

*Splingaerd accumulated several functions as medical doctor, custom inspector, catechist, road guide for explorers and businessman. But Paul had a big heart. Perhaps he had been a bit too generous (helping people in need) causing thereby some serious losses. He thought it wise to stop his business enterprise. It is said that his wife Catharina advised him to do so. Friends introduced him to the Chinese Prime Minister Li Hong-zhang who soon appreciated the talents of Paul. He appointed him as Mandarin and sent him to Suzhou (Gansu) in the capacity of Chinese Custom Controller Tax Bureau Director, where he supervised the commercial activities of the Russians.*

*His occupation at the Tax Bureau left him sufficient free time to practice medicine. Bishop Otto wrote in his diary, with some humor. China is par excellence a land of freedom! No diploma is required to practice as a medical doctor. Every sick person is supposed to care enough for his own life so as to search for the least homicidal doctor. Bishop Carlo adds: Paul Splingaerd had plenty of opportunities to baptize dying babies and even bring families to Christian faith. His wife, Catharina Zhao, was herein his most faithful partner. She was a fervent and dedicated Christian and brought many people to Christian faith.*

After returning to Belgium for a short time Paul Splingaerd was back in China after the Boxer Persecution (1900). Even though his health situation was not good, he refused to take the rest which his body badly needed. He put himself entirely at the service of the needs of the Catholic mission. Paul generously used all his influence and talents to assist the missionaries to apply for compensation for the damage that had been caused by the Boxers, to ward off attacking robbers and to liberate Christian women from the hands of Moslems. Bishop van Melckebeke notes: *That achievement is once again worthy of the man who accomplished it with incomparable expertise. Introduced by the Belgian ambassador of that time in Beijing he was even appointed general of a*

brigade in the Chinese army. During several months he traveled all through Inner Mongolian territory as judge and peace-maker. Paul was before anything else a man pursuing his duty till he was entirely exhausted.

Bishop Otto always kept a warm friendship and genuine admiration for him. He ends his note on Paul in his diary as follows: *Paul spoke Chinese just as the Chinese. If one would write his biography it would be as remarkable as the one of Marco Polo. Even in the most hopeless situation Paul would always find a way out. He never lost his cool. I have known him many years and I deem it important to declare here formally that I have the deepest admiration for this fellow-countryman of mine.*

Paul Spingaerd died piously in Xi-an-fu on September 26 1906. He and his wife were buried at the Zhalan Catholic Cemetery of Beijing. We have pictures of their tombs but since the cemetery disappeared (1954) and the Communist Party's Cadre Formation Institute was built on the spot, their tombstones have not (yet) been discovered.



All confreres in Scheut (CICM) know Paul's name but know little or nothing about what this extraordinary person achieved. We hardly appreciated him. Joe Spae CICM in 1986 and now Anne Megowan, a descendant of Paul have done research on Paul. Anne travelled to China to follow her great-grand-father's footsteps and published a book *The Belgian Mandarin*. In March 2021 Paul will be remembered in Brussels at an Exhibit to commemorate the anniversary of the Beijing-Hankou Railway in China, a Belgian project to which Paul made a significant contribution. In August 2021 Verbiest Institute KULeuven will organize its 14<sup>th</sup> International Conference. CICM Superior General Charles Phukuta will deliver the keynote address during which he will announce that Verbiest Institute will from now on give priority in its history research to the *History of CICM* in China. It will do so in cooperation with the *History Commission at the CICM Generalate in Rome*. Paul Spingaerd's biographer is invited to speak on Paul and his work while Peter Baekelmans cicm will introduce Raf Verbois cicm, expert on Buddhism in China. Forty other international scholars, from China and the West, Catholics and non-Catholics, are invited to give lectures on the history of the Catholic Church in China at that 14<sup>th</sup> Verbiest Conference. At least eight of these speakers will present papers related to the *History of CICM* in China. Among them: Patrick Taveirne cicm, Peter Baekelmans cicm, Jeroom Heyndrickx cicm, Zheng Yongjun (Doctorandus Verbiest Institute), Anne Megowan (Paul's biographer), Chen Xinyu (Professor at the CCParty School, Beijing), Alex Chen (Verbiest Institute scholar), Matthew Gong (Verbiest Institute scholar).

Verbiest Institute KULeuven is now translating *The Belgian Mandarin* by Anne Megowan into French, Dutch and also Chinese. It will be published in China, in Taiwan and be available in Leuven in 2021.



## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO REMI SPLINGAERD'S TOMBSTONE IN THE BEIJING CHALA CEMETERY

*Chen Xinyu, Verbiest Institute KU Leuven associate researcher*

From June 12-27, 2018, the Communist Party school of Beijing again sorted out a batch of old Catholic tombstones. These tombstones belong to a wide variety of cultural relics, from the early Qing Dynasty to the period of the Republic of China, and contain the stones of a lot of important historical Catholic missionaries in China, such as Emmanuel de Sequeira (郑玛诺, 1635-1673)<sup>6</sup>, Philippe Grimaldi (闵明我, 1638-1712), Franz Thilisch (阳广文, 1670-1716), Domingos Pinheiro (陈善策, 1688-1748), and António Gomes

<sup>6</sup> Gao Zhiyu and Edward J. Malatesta, S.J., 1932-1998, chief editor. 《虽逝犹存：栅栏 北京最古老的天主教墓地》(Despite Passed yet Still Exists, Chala-Beijing's oldest Catholic Cemetery), 澳门特别行政区政府文化局(Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macao Special Administrative Region Government), Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History, University of San Francisco, 2001, 52 p.

(马德昭, 1706-1751). Historical records show that the tombstones of the famous diplomat Paul Splingaerd (林辅臣, 1842-1906), his wife, and his sons Remi Splingaerd (1879-1931) and Jean-Baptiste Splingaerd (林子香, 1889-1948) were also located at this cemetery. Only Remi's tombstone was discovered, of the other tombs there is still no trace.

*The history of the Chala Cemetery and the Splingaerd s family tomb*

The Chala Cemetery became the first missionary cemetery in Beijing. Bestowed by Emperor Wanli as the site of the tomb of Matteo Ricci in 1610<sup>7</sup> it became known as the Chala Cemetery. Following Matteo Ricci, more than a hundred missionaries were buried there, including Johann Adam Schall von Bell, Ferdinand Verbiest, Nicolò Longobardo, Gabriel de Magalhães, Ludovico Buglio, August von Hallerstein, Johann Siebert and Giuseppe Castiglione. All of them became symbols of Sino-Western cultural exchange. To some extent, they are "the unshakable foundation of Catholicism in China" (*le fondement inébranlable de l'église catholique en Chine*)<sup>8</sup>.

However, since the Boxer Rebellion Movement, the Chala Cemetery has fallen into the fate of "displacement". The Boxer Movement caused unprecedented damage to the Chala Cemetery. The entire Cemetery was "burned down, excavated, trees cut down and tombstones broken, and returned to soil"<sup>9</sup>. At the request of various Western countries and with the indemnity of ten thousand taels of silver The Chala Cemetery was rebuilt and the "All Saints Church"<sup>10</sup> was built, inlaid with more than 80 tombstones and monuments of the missionaries, whose remains got scattered during the Boxer period. The names of 6,000<sup>11</sup> members of the Beijing Diocese who died in the Boxer Rebellion period are engraved on the six-foot-tall black marble monument in the church<sup>12</sup>. Later, members of other religious congregations and foreign Catholics were buried in the Chala Cemetery. In 1935 people remarked how "the scenery of the foreign Catholic tombstones was magnificent"<sup>13</sup>. In the near future, the Wan'an Cemetery will be built in Peking, where the burial method of this cemetery can be taken as reference<sup>14</sup>. The Chala Cemetery is a typical, quite impressive, group cemetery in the suburbs of Beijing.



<sup>7</sup> In the Yuan Dynasty, the Nestorians left the Nestorian Stele as the evidence of Nestorianism coming to China, but when Giovanni da Montecorvino (1246-1328) built the churches the tombstones had already been annihilated.

<sup>8</sup> Henri Bernard-Maitre, *Aux origines du cimetière de Chala : le don princier de la Chine au P. Ricci*, *Hautes Études, Tientsin, 1934, p.1.*

<sup>9</sup> Edited by Lin Hua (林华), Yu Sanle (余三乐), Zhong Zhiyong (钟志勇) and Gao Zhiyu (高智瑜): 《历史遗迹-利玛窦及明清西方传教士墓地》 (*Historical Relics-The Tombs of Matteo Ricci and Western Missionaries in Ming and Qing Dynasties*), 北京: 中国人民出版社 (Beijing: China People's Publishing House), 1994, p.17.

<sup>10</sup> Also known as the "Martyrs Church", construction on it was almost completed in 1902 but it was not completed until 1903. Because of its location in Maweigou, this church is also called "Maweigou Church". The main entrance to the church is the stone gate which was given to Johann Adam Schall von Bell by emperor Kangxi. In the doorpost is carved two characters in Manchu and Chinese "钦赐" (imperial blessing) so it is also called "Stone gate Church".

<sup>11</sup> " Roughly 5,800 faithful were killed in the Boxer Movement from provinces, counties, towns to families, " On the morning of January 4, 2018, when the author visited Song Zhixin, a former staff member of the foundation of the Department of the Senior Activity Center of the Beijing Communist Party School mentioned that there were still scattered stone tablets and some red wooden boxes with bones at the time. However, they were all thrown away when they prepared to build a new dining room.

<sup>12</sup> J.M.Planchet, C.M. *Guide du touriste aux Monuments religieux de Peking*, Imprimerie des Lazaristes du Petang, 1923, p.153 (书中没有具体页码)

<sup>13</sup> 呆生 (Daisheng): 《国史研究专号: 沟通中西文化的几位先锋: 滕公栅栏教堂简史 (附照片)》 (National History Research Special Issue: Several Pioneers in Communicating Chinese and Western Cultures: A Brief History of Teng Gong Zhalan Church Tomb (with photos), 《北辰画刊》 (Beichen Photo Magazine), year 1935, issue 2, p.1.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

There is a connection between the Splingaerd's family tomb and the history of Chala Cemetery. Remi's father, Paul Splingaerd, died on September 26, 1906 and was buried in the Chala Cemetery. Remi's mother, Catherine Li, died on September 20, 1918. In 1931, Remi Splingaerd was also buried in the Chala Cemetery. Whether his wife was buried together with him is unknown. Later, Remi's brother Jean Baptiste Splingaerd (1889-1948) and his wife Philomene Zhang were also buried in the Chala Cemetery.

The Boxer rebellion period	The entire Chala Cemetery was destroyed for the first time.
All Saint church period (1903-1973)	<p>In 1903, in the Qing Dynasty, the outer walls of the All Saints church were inlaid with most of the tomb steles.</p> <p>In 1954, 837 remains were relocated to the Catholic Cemetery in the township of Xibeiwang (the joint tomb of Paul Splingaerd with his wife, and the joint tomb of Jean Baptiste Splingaerd with his wife could have been moved or destroyed(?)).</p> <p>In 1966 the grave stèles of Matteo Ricci, Ferdinand Verbiest and Johann Adam Schall von Bell were buried at their original location</p>
Scattered period (1973-1986)	<p>In 1979 the stones of Ricci, Verbiest and Adam Schall von Bell were erected in the original place.</p> <p>Other grave steles were scattered and stacked in the campus (including Remi's grave stele)</p>
Stele Forest Period (1986-present)	<p>Ricci, Verbiest and Adam Schall von Bell were buried in the West graveyard of the Chala Cemetery. Sixty missionaries grave steles with "dī gòu xu w stele (meaning washing away the blemish, and wiping out the humiliation and disgrace ) were erected in the East graveyard of the Chala Cemetery</p> <p>Other remains of the grave steles were scattered and stacked at the south side of the cemetery (including Remi's tombstone)</p>

After the foundation of the People's Republic of China, Chala Cemetery was handed over to the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Masses could still be held in the church and the cemetery was left undisturbed. In 1954, the municipal authorities of Beijing acquired 16 acres of land in Xibeiwang, Haidian District to depose clergy tombstones on one part, and another part destined for other tombstones. The tombstones of important missionaries such as Matteo Ricci however were kept on the original site. According to the instructions of Premier Zhou Enlai, the tombstones of Matteo Ricci, Verbiest and Adam Schall von Bell were kept in the original place, and the tombstones of Nicholas Longobardi, Tomás Pereira, Polycapus de Sousa and others, were moved to the backyard of the church. 77 tombstones were preserved on the outer fence of the All Saints church. The tombs of missionaries and Catholics inside the churchyard (including burial mound graves and single graves)<sup>15</sup>, dating



*Monument at the Xibeiwang Cemetery*

<sup>15</sup> During the Boxer Rebellion period, except for the missionary tombstones and remains are inlaid on the church, the rest remains were buried in the grave at the northern end of the cemetery, commonly known as the "burial mound graves". An altar was built on the tomb with a dome of hexagonal pavilion. It was commonly called "the hall of the martyrs' remains", it is also known as the "Martyrs Pavilion".





Tombstones destroyed during the Cultural Revolution

from the early Qing Dynasty to the period of the Republic, were moved to the new Cemetery in Xibeiwang, in total more than 837 tombs<sup>16</sup>. The removal of tombs took about two years. Now Xibeiwang Cemetery has become a Catholic Cemetery, but there is no trace of the moved graves. On October 19, 2016, the Catholic Beijing Diocese erected a monument behind the newly renovated Catholic tombstones with the words "Tombs of Missionaries and Catholics". The move may have caused the Splingaerd's family tomb to be destroyed and annihilated. Remi's tomb was the only one to be kept.

After All Saints Church was demolished during the Cultural Revolution<sup>17</sup>, the tombstones of Matteo Ricci, Ferdinand Verbiest and Johann Adam Schall von Bell, were independently formed into one yard. In 1983, the Church was rebuilt, on the west side of the Communist Party School. Inside the school were still some scattered tombstones<sup>18</sup>. Many grave steles were stacked in the corner of the dining room, including Remi's tombstone. In addition, there were still other scattered tombstones in the campus, such as; sarcophagus, five offering stones, stone lion and pedestals, etc.

In 1988 the Italian government planned to hold an academic conference and exhibition on Giuseppe Castiglione, the famous Italian painter-missionary, to celebrate the 300<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of his birth. In 1986, the Italian government set out to find Castiglione's tombstone in Beijing with the help of the People's Government of Foreign Affairs Office of Beijing. At this occasion a courtyard was built on the east side of the small yard of Ricci, Verbiest and Schall's tombs, to install sixty cleaned tombstones and the "dí gòu xū wùstèlè", dating from 1903 and back then installed by the Qing government. (meaning: washing away the blemish, and wiping out the humiliation and disgrace). Other remains of tombstones and building components remained piled up in the northeast corner of the back of the Communist Party school auditorium. Since 1986, Remi's tombstone had been stored there. Luckily his tomb, and the others have not been disturbed by environmental factors: ultraviolet rays, acid rain and dust particles in the air. Therefore, Remi's tombstone is preserved in relatively good condition.

#### *Remi Splingaerd: a small biography*

Remi's full name was: Remi François Xavier Splingaerd (also known as "Lin Yana" in Chinese) and the second son of the Belgian Paul Splingaerd (1842-1906, "林辅臣"), who lived in China for many years and held several important diplomatic functions. Remi was the first commercial agent and senior executive of Tangshan Kaiping Mining (the predecessor of Kailuan Coal Mine), of which Herbert Clark Hoover (1874-1964), who later became president of the USA, was appointed as Chief Engineer. Later on, Remi was employed by Hebei Lincheng Mining and Henan Mining. After his retirement he lived in Beijing (then called Peiping) for five years.

<sup>16</sup> Gao Zhiyu and Edward J. Malatesta, S.J., 1932-1998, chief editor. 《虽逝犹存：栅栏——北京最古老的天主教墓地》， Instituto Cultural de Macau and Ricci Institute for Chinese-Western Cultural History, University of San Francisco, 2001, 93 p.

<sup>17</sup> Regarding the timing of the demolition of Maweigou Church (马尾沟教堂), according to relevant records, "Maweigou Church was completely demolished by the Fourth Guest House of the Municipal Revolutionary Committee with the approval of the then deputy director of the Municipal Revolutionary Committee Wan Li (万里) during the 1974 Cultural Revolution. It is no longer exists." Beijing Municipal Party School Office of the Communist Party of China: 《关于对利玛窦等明清时期外国传教士墓地进行维修和加强开发、管理的设想》 (Assumptions on the Maintenance and Strengthening of Development and Management of the Tombs of Foreign Missionaries in Ming and Qing Dynasties such as Matteo Ricci) (Preliminary Draft), December 23, 1992, p. 4. "In 1974, the original Maweigou Church (马尾沟教堂) was demolished, and the tombstones embedded in the church wall were scattered in the courtyard." The State Administration of Cultural Heritage of China, the Department of Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, the Chinese Cultural Heritage Research Institute, and the Italian Central Institute of Restoration: 《利玛窦和外国传教士墓地保护修复方案》 (Protection and Restoration Plan for the Tombs of Matteo Ricci and Foreign Missionaries), 2010, p. 10. "In 1977, the Maweigou Church (马尾沟教堂) was demolished to build a dormitory, and the tombstones of 77 priests embedded in the outer wall of the church were scattered." The State Administration of Cultural Heritage of China, the Department of Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, the Chinese Cultural Heritage Research Institute, and the Central Restoration of Italy Research Institute: 《利玛窦和外国传教士墓地保护修复方案》 (Protection and Restoration Plan for the Tombs of Matteo Ricci and Foreign Missionaries), 2010, p. 7. It is conceivable that the demolition of the church was not done overnight, and it might have had lasted for two to three years.

<sup>18</sup> The Beijing Municipal Party School of the Communist Party (北京市委党校) of China made an application to Zhang Dazhong (张大中) and the Beijing Municipal Party Committee (北京市委) on the use of land for building a new canteen of the Municipal Party School (no original text) Archive Name: Beijing Archives File Number (北京市档案馆档号): 118-002-00048-00001



The original tomb of Paul Splingaerd on the Chala cemetery

Remi had a quiet and kind personality, and had many close friends. He died on Sunday, March 2, 1931, at the age of 52. The following day his funeral was held at St. Michael's Church in Beijing<sup>19</sup>. Remi's father Paul Splingaerd accompanied Théophile Verbist (1823-1868), Aloïs van Segvelt (1826-1968), François Vranckx (1930-1911), and Ferdinand Hamer (1840-1900) on a journey from Brussels to China on which they embarked on August 25, 1865. In 1868, Paul was working as a policeman in the German legation in Beijing. Later, he met the geologist Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905), when the latter came to China. In 1882, according to the "Treaty of Saint Petersburg" Russian businessmen were allowed to do commercial transactions in Suzhou (Jiayuguan), so the Qing government began to establish a customs office in Suzhou. Li Hongzhang, then Minister of the Northern Oceans recommended Paul Splingaerd to be the first tax officer of the Suzhou Customs, where he worked from 1882 to 1896. During that period, he was not only responsible for collecting taxes, but also for legal matters, public affairs, education, and health. He was a tremendously popular man. Paul Splingaerd and his eldest son Alphonse-Bernard Splingaerd (1943)<sup>20</sup> actively participated in the purchase of machinery and the founding of the industrial project to modernize Gansu. They made a great "Contribution to the creation of modern Gansu industry"<sup>21</sup>. In addition, Paul Splingaerd was also in charge of railway and bridge construction in China, including the construction of the Lanzhou Yellow River Bridge (now Zhongshan Bridge). He initiated the exploration of the Yumen oil

field. The achievements and contributions he made to Chinese society were remarkable, and he was known as a true China-expert. Unfortunately, on his way back to Gansu from Belgium, he died of illness in Shanxi. His tomb was later relocated to the Beijing Chala Cemetery.

Remi's wife was Anna Zhang, the daughter of Zhang Zihou, lived on Changjia Lane, Lanzhou. The Zhang family was a big family with a huge tobacco plantation, and was known in 1882, as a benevolent family with a big fortune. When Catholicism was introduced to Gansu, the Zhang family converted to Catholicism and established the first Catholic church in their courtyard in Lanzhou. Remi had two brothers: Lin Ade (林阿德) and Jean-Baptiste Splingaerd (林子香), and eight sisters, four of whom were nuns.



Family portrait of the Splingaerds

*The inscription of Remi's tombstone in French*

ICI REPOSE  
 Remi Splingaerd  
 Fils Bien-aimé  
 DU GÉNÉRAL ET DE MADAME  
 PAUL SPLINGAERD  
 NÉ A KWEIHWACHENG.  
 LE 15 FÉVRIER 1879  
 DÉCÉDÉ A PÉPING

<sup>19</sup> *Funeral of Renny Splingaerd held at Chala Cemetery*, North China Star, March 5, 1931. <http://www.goens-pourbaix.be/multima-pourbaix/Mandarijn/Documents/Chala-freres/FUNERAL%20OF%20RENNY%20SPLINGAERD.htm>

<sup>20</sup> He is buried in the Tianjin International Cemetery of race ground.

<sup>21</sup> 《清末比利时人林辅臣后裔省档案馆寻根觅档》(The Provincial Archives of the Descendants of the Belgian Paul Splingaerd in the Late Qing Dynasty Seeking for the Roots), 《档案》(Archive), Dec. 2015, p. 4.

LE 2 MARS 1931  
 MUNI DES SACREMENTS DE L EGLISE  
 A MON ÉPOUX  
 A NOTRE PÈRE REGRETTÉ  
 SON ÉPOUSE ANNA  
 SES ENFANTS:  
 ELISABETH AUGUSTINE MARGUERITE SUZANNE MARIE ROSE JOSEPH CLAIRE ET LUCIE  
 R. I. P.

Today, the inscription on Remi's tombstone in French has been preserved, but the Chinese has been lost. The French inscription describes not only a brief summary of Remi's life, but also the date, the year and the place of his birth and his death. In addition, it also mentions the names of Paul Splingaerd, Remi's wife and their children, and acknowledged typical family feelings. (*Here rests Remi Splingaerd, the beloved son of General and Madame Paul Splingaerd, he was born in Guihua Cheng 归化城 on February 15, 1879 and died on March 2, 1931 Beijing with the last sacrament. To our father from his wife Anna. Their children: Elizabeth, Augustine, Margaret, Susanna, Mary, Rose, Joseph, Claire and Lucy.*) The reorganization and discovery of Remi's remains is a physical contribution to the Splingaerd family's resting in the Chala Cemetery, and completes, to a certain extent, research analysis into Remi's individual case and the entire Splingaerd family.

## RESEARCH ON THE HISTORY OF CICM (SCHEUT) IN CHINA IS NOW TOP PRIORITY OF THE VERBIEST INSTITUTE (VI) RESEARCH PROGRAM

*Jerome Heyndrickx cicm*

### *A report on the research already done and what is planned*

*VI KUL opted to focus on History Research in Response to the Needs of the Church in China*

During its historical China Meeting in Rome in May 1983, CICM approved the project of setting up Verbiest Foundation at KULeuven (VI). I was appointed director. At first, we hesitated on whether our Verbiest Institute KULeuven would engage in research on philosophy or on Chinese Church history. A clear suggestion of Bishop Guo Zhengji, Bishop of Bameng (Inner Mongolia) made us decide in favor of the latter.

In 1982, I made a first visit to the old Scheut Missions in Inner Mongolia in order to explore what, if anything at all, Verbiest Foundation could contribute to the Catholic Church in post-Mao China. I met with old Bishop Guo an honest man with a clear mind who dared to speak the truth. The first Chinese bishop who in a general meeting openly called on the bishops to stand united with the pope. I asked him *What do you think our VI KULeuven can do for the Church in China?* He reflected a while and said: *Frankly speaking, very little, but at least the Verbiest Institute KULeuven can help us to write our own history. We ourselves are unable to do it for lack of archives. All our documents and books were burned or stolen. Today, dozens of books, hundreds of articles on our history are published by official institutes in our country. These are not academic, full of slander and lies about the history of Christianity in China. They destroy the good reputation which we had built up for our Church. We know and admit that mistakes were made in the past. But we do not recognize ourselves in that slanderous and calumnious propaganda literature.* He quoted examples of authors and their publications saying: *The truth is that our Church did pioneering work and contributed significantly in building up our country*



*Fr. Jerome Heyndrickx meeting Bp. Guo (2002)*

*in the social, educational, public health, cultural and scientific fields. You abroad have archives. You should engage your university in historic academic research. Let historic documents speak! Seek truth from facts!"*

I never forget that conversation. What the bishop said confirmed 100% what Chinese scholars had told me also. The clear statement of Bishop Guo made us decide: VI would promote research, not on philosophy but on history of the Church in China. The decision was made in response to the advice of the Church in China. Very missionary! For me, trained in the field of pastoral theology and catechesis it was the first discovery of the importance of research on Church history. At my age (50), I decided not to even try to become a historian but remain in the field of practical theology and become a promoter of research on Church history. That's what I have done ever since. And right then and there I also discovered that our CICM historians had been doing this all along: Joseph Rutten, Valère Rondelez, Jos Van Hecken, Daniël Verhelst, Hyacinth Daniëls, Anatole Vangheluwe, Nestor Pycke and Patrick Taveirne. To encourage other



*Participants to the first International Verbiest Conference in 1986*

congregations to do the same looked like a very missionary project. Verbiest Institute KULeuven continues that tradition today. In 2019 the Research Group of VI decided to make from now on research on *History of Scheut (CICM) in China* as its priority. Also that decision was made in response to requests coming today even more than before from church leaders and faithful in China asking us to help them in writing their history. This is an academic project but it is also an aspect of a Pastoral Ministry. Each local church must know the roots of its faith, honor them and learn from it for the future. It's part of evangelization.

*Research on CICM History in China was in focus long before it became the first priority*

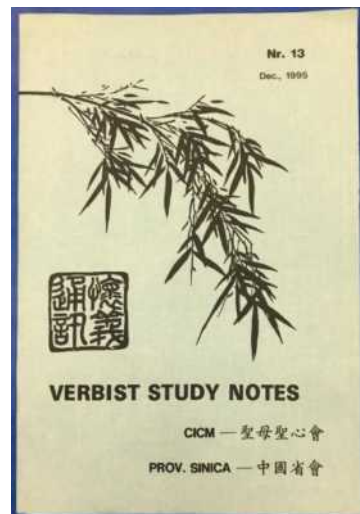
1/ In 1990 VI published documents towards writing the history of CICM in N. China

Leiden), a lot of preparatory research was done. VI researchers engaged in research on the History of Xiwanzi Diocese and collected documents and studies on it, MA dissertations that were written on the history of CICM in N. China by scholars at Leuven University and Liege University. That was done in cooperation with CICM archivist Albert Raskin who was assisted by VI researchers Stephan Aguirre y Otegui and Sara Lievens. Their research resulted in a bulky archive and documentation and in some papers published in Leuven Chinese Studies (LCS) Nr 1. On the basis of these documents and in order to promote more future academic research VF now prepares to make available Documents towards writing the history of CICM in N. China, for example,

- o Collected documents towards writing the History of CICM in Xiwanzi
- o Collected documents towards writing the history of CICM among the Mongols

2/ Verbist Study Notes – a channel for confreres in the field to exchange reports among them

As of the early 1980's Paul Serruys cicm, then working in Taipei, encouraged confreres to follow the example of the old CICM missionaries in Inner Mongolia (Ordos region) where they published (mimeographed) and shared their reports on their personal research in an internal CICM publication called "Ordosica". That's how Sinica Province encouraged confreres to participate in research on mission history and share reports. Confreres, even though untrained scholars started to share reports on their own activities and share research by older confreres on CICM evangelization in China, in Taiwan and Hong Kong in Verbist Study Notes (VSN). This was a CICM internal publication (17 issues in total) published in Taipei between 1982 and 2004. (Unfortunately the publication was discontinued after Sino-Mongol Province decided to transfer Verbiest Foundation). The issues were sent out to all confreres of CICM Sinica Province, to all CICM Provincial Superiors and to all CICM formation houses in all provinces as well as to the ICM sisters (VF still has the list; though we wonder if and where the issues are still kept). In those 17 issues of VSN we find today much interesting and important information for the research on CICM history among the Mongols and Chinese in N. China and also in Taiwan and Hong Kong. A remarkable effort made by Sinica Province. We find it worthwhile to present here an overview of the general content of these issues.



## 1. General description of the content of Verbist Study Notes (VSN)

a. **Articles by the following CICM confreres & ICM sisters appeared in VSN:** Antoine Mostaert -- Henri Serruys -- Paul Serruys -- Jos Van Hecken -- Willem Grootaers -- Frans Peeters -- Alice De Stobbeleir ICM -- Patrick Taveirne -- Jeroom Heyndrickx -- Leo van den Berg -- Willy Hertecant -- Albert Brys -- Michel Decraene -- Frans Deroo -- Wens Padilla -- Rex Salvilla -- Monching Coronel -- Patrick Masschelein -- Gaby Tshimanga -- Pierrot Kasemuana.

b. **Articles by the following non-CICM guest authors in Verbiest Study Notes**  
 Ku Weiyong -- Monica Liu Hepei -- Claire Chang Shuch'ing -- Nicolaes Standaert SJ -- Marcel Van Nieuwenborgh -- Roger Dillemans rector KULeuven -- Wang Qingyu (China) -- Robert Easton -- Prof. Dr. Van Windekens KULeuven -- Albert Chan SJ San Fr. University -- Prof. Yi Shitong (China) -- Dr. John Ho (Taichung) -- Staf Vloeberghs -- Françoise Aubin

2. **Special featured articles in VSN were a.o.**

a. Reports by Clair Chang Shu Ch'ing on a Novel-Study by the Te Yuan Group in service of pre-evangelization in Taiwan. (*Te Yuan* was a CICM-founded Study Group of the Taiwan Pastoral Center (TPC) directed by Maria Chao).

b. Report on a Temple Study, inspired by Willem Grootaers' CICM research model used in Datong (China) and applied to the CICM Wan Hua District Taipei in 1985. Fr. Jacques Kuepers SVD missiologist directed the study. The report includes a list of the 112 Buddhist and Taoist temples which were visited in Wan Hua district. The study was done by Monching Coronel and ICM sisters together with lay faithful of the Te Yuan Study Group, 23 pages. CICM wished to understand better its field of evangelization.

c. Report by A. Brys cism & by Michel Decraene cism (30 pages) on the China visit by CICM General Superior Michel Decraene in 1990, accompanied by Dries Van Coillie cism, Albert Van Lierde cism, Albert Brys cism, Jeroom Heyndrickx cism and Luo Youmei.

3. **Following VSN special issues were totally dedicated to one particular topic**

a. Report on the situation in 1993 of former CICM dioceses in N. China -- by Jeroom Heyndrickx cism -- VSN Nr 12 -- 79 pages

b. Report on Visits to China & Mongolia -- by Jeroom Heyndrickx cism & Staf Vloeberghs with comment on photos from old China by Leo van den Berg cism -- VSN Nr 13 -- 1995 -- 110 pages

c. CICM HK District History Chronology -- by Willy Hertecant cism & Rex Salvilla cism -- Introduced by Patrick Masschelein cism Provincial, 2000, 75 pgs

d. Golden Descendants along the River Bend & the Great Wall, by Patrick Taveirne cism -- VSN Nr 14, 107 pgs, 2001, 78 pages

e. The Catholic Church in Taiwan 1626-1965 -- by Jos Van Hecken CICM, translated by Frans Deroo CICM -- VSN Nr 16, 108 pgs -- 2004.

f. Two special issues on CICM and the Mongols -- VSN nr 15, 141 pgs (2003) & VSN Nr 17, 107 pgs (2004) with articles by A. Mostaert, J. Van Hecken, Fr. Aubin, J. Heyndrickx, P. Taveirne, G. Tshimanga, Pierrot Kasemuana.



*China visit by CICM General Superior Michel Decraene in 1990. Encounter with Bp. Aloysius Jin in Sheshan*

3 Papers on CICM History in China published in LEUVEN-CHINESE-STUDIES (LCS)

52 academic papers on CICM history were published in the collected papers of each of the -- so far 13, Verbiest International Conferences. Among them we select the following 21 examples:

1. **Stephan Aguirre y Otegui** -- History of the Diocese of Xiwanzi under the CICM Fathers (1865-1950), LCS Nr 1, pg 273-284, 1994
2. **Patrick Taveirne cism**, The Belgian Scheut Mission in South-Western Mongolia (1870-1922), LCS Nr 1, pg 350-351--1994
3. **Leo van den Berg cism**, A Prosopographical Study on the CICM Congregation in China, LCS Nr 1, pg 281-283, 1994



*Patrick Taveirne cism and Prof. Igor De Rachewiltz during the 1993 International Verbiest Conference on Antoon Mostaert cism*

4. **Dries Vanysacker**, Body and Soul. Professional Health Care in the Catholic Missions in China between 1920 and 1940, LCS Nr VIII
5. **Françoise Aubin** – Quelques échos des prêtres chinois dans les missions de Scheut, LCS Nr VIII, p 161-184
6. **R. Renson cism**, Virgins in Central Mongolia, LCX Nr XIV pg 325 – 342
7. **Patrick Taveirne cism**, The Religious Case of Fengzhen District Reclamation and Missionary Activities in Caqar during Late Qing Dynasty, LCS Nr XIV, pg 343 –368
8. **Koen De Ridder**, CICM Missionary Education in Gansu Province During the Late Qing and Early Republic, LCS Nr XVII, pg 107–144
9. **Dirk Van Overmeire**, In the Footsteps of von Richthofen? Raphael Verbrugge, cism ( °1872, † 1957), LCS Nr XVII, pg 619-642
10. **Wim Holderbeke cism and Patrick Taveirne cism**, Scheut Missionaries (CICM) and Catechetics in Northern China and Inner Mongolia (1882–1950) : Preliminary – LCS Nr XVIII – pg 129 – 150
11. **Jeroom Heyndrickx cism** – Catechesis on Heaven 天堂要理: A Chinese catechetical painting prepared by Raymond De Jaegher SAM and Br. Liu Yuejue CSJB introducing the Christian message to Chinese farmers, LCS Nr XVIII, pg 233–254
12. **Liu Qinghua**, The Beitang Collection in Ningxia and the Lazarist Mission Press in the west Hunan, 1949 to 1950, LCS Nr XXIX, pg 419–442
13. **Patrick Taveirne cism**, The Earth Does Not Belong to Us; We belong to the Earth: The missionary Case of Fengzhen Sub-Prefecture Revisited, LCS Nr XXIX, pg 459–475
14. **Nestor Pycke cism**, François Vranckx, cism Second Superior General (1869-1886), an Excellent Organizer, LCS Nr XXIX, pg 475–494
15. **Ku Weiyong**, Some Observations on CICM in China, 1865-1955: Life of 679 Scheutists, LCS Nr XXIX, pg 523–548
16. **Willy F. Vande Walle**, Willem A. Grootaers, Linguist and Ethnographer, LCS Nr XXIX, pg 549 –594
17. **Jeroom Heyndrickx cism**, Mission Among the Mongols, 1400 years of Evangelization Among the Mongols by Nestorians, Franciscans, Jesuits, Lazarists, Scheut Fathers, LCS Nr XXXVI, pg 71-112
18. **Jeroom Heyndrickx cism**, Evangelization by the Scheut Fathers among the Mongols in East Mongolia, LCS Nr XXXVI, pg 113-134
19. **Igor de Rachewiltz**, H. Serruys' and N. Poppe' s Scholarly Exchange on the Translation of The Twelve Deeds of Buddha (Arban qoyar tokiyangqyui üiles), LCS Nr XXXVI, pg 247-270
20. **Patrick Taveirne cism**, Msqr Jerome Van Aertselaer cism, 1845-1921. From an African Seminary to a Chinese College in Leuven, LCS Nr XXXIX, pg 287-308
21. **Alexandre Chen Tsung-ming**, The Scheutists' Contributions to Archeological Research of Emile Licent and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in Northern China, LCS Nr XXXIX, pg 365-382

#### 4. VI published 13 monographs – English & Chinese -- on CICM History in China

VF Research published the following 13 monographs in *Leuven Chinese Studies (LCS)* the academic series of *Verbiest Institute KULeuven* and in *光启 怀仁丛书*, on CICM History in China

1. **Klaus Sagaster (ed.)**, Antoine Mostaert (1881-1971). C.I.C.M. Missionary and Scholar. Volume I: Papers & Id. (ed.), Antoine Mostaert (1881-1971), C.I.C.M. Missionary and Scholar. Volume II: Reprints, LCS Nrs IV & V, 279 pgs & 623 pgs–1999
2. **Ku Weiyong ed**, Mission beyond the Great Wall, 500 pg, 2002, Introduction to CICM in China History.
3. **Lorry Swerts & Koen De Ridder**, Mon Van Genechten, (1903-1974). Flemish Missionary and Chinese Painter. Inculturation of Christian Art in China, LCS Nr XI, 188 pgs, 2002
4. **Patrick Taveirne CICM**, Han-Mongol Encounters and Missionary Endeavors: A History of Scheut in Ordos (Hetao), 1874-1911, LCS Nr XV, 684 pages, ill, 2004
5. **Ann Heylen**, Chronique du Toumet-Ortos. Looking through the lens of Joseph Van Oost, Missionary in Inner Mongolia, 1915-1921, LCS XVI, 409 pgs, 2004
6. **Ku Weiyong ed**, 古偉瀛編, Jeroom Heyndrickx, the Eternal China Pilgrim, 《韓德力, 永遠的中華朝聖者》, Huairen Congshu, Nr 5, 391 pgs, 2007, Selected papers on the Church in China Today by J. Heyndrickx cism
7. **Dirk Van Overmeire ed**, The Elenchus of CICM in China, 1865-1955, 《在華聖母聖心會士名錄 1865-1955》, Huaren Congshu Nr 6, 707 pgs, 2008
8. **Nestor Pycke**, Théophile Verbiest' s Adventure, Institut Verbiest Leuven, 172 pgs, 2009
9. **Nestor Pycke**, L' aventure de Theophile Verbiest, Verbiest Institute Leuven, 182 pgs, 2009



*Collection of publications by the Verbiest Institute*

10. **Nestor Pycke**, *Het avontuur van Theofiel Verbist*, Verbiest Instituut Leuven, 190 blz, 2009
11. *汉蒙相遇*, (Han-Mongol Encounters) by P. Taveirne, Taipei, 2010
12. **Zhuangzhi Mo Zhou**, (Life of Th. Verbist cism), By N.Pycke, Taipei, 2015
13. **Henri Serruys cism**, *Collected Symposium Papers - LCS Nr XXXVI - 2017*

*The present planning of VI Research Program in VI KULeuven*

In 2012 CICM celebrated 150 years since its foundation. The attention of VI KULeuven was drawn to the fact that in our research, while making good use of the extensive documentation and research on *CICM History in China* done by Joseph Van Hecken CICM, we failed in fact to honor sufficiently the essential contribution Van Hecken made to CICM history study by producing more than 20 volumes of mimeographed documentation on the topic. Friends in China requested access to this documentation which, unfortunately, is mostly in Dutch. A call was addressed to several volunteers who agreed to start translating volumes of Joseph Van Hecken from Dutch into English as a first step on the way to further develop the research project on CICM in China History.



*Opening of the 1993 International Verbiest Conference on A. Mostaert cism. On the picture, a.o., prof. Walther Heissig and cism provincial Henri Millair*

Following is a description of the research that goes on at present in the Research Program of the Verbiest Institute KULeuven with *Scheut (CICM) in China* as priority:

1. During the 14<sup>th</sup> International Verbiest Conference (Aug. 2021):
  - a. At least 7 of the planned 40 papers presented will be on *Scheut (CICM) in China*.
  - b. Fr. Charles Phukuta cism Superior General will attend the opening session and give the key-note address.
  - c. Two figures from *Scheut History in China* will put into focus during the opening:
    - i. Paul Splingaerd who accompanied CICM Founder Verbist to China, Anne Megowan (USA), descendant of Splingaerd and author of the book on Splingaerd is invited as speaker &
    - ii. Raphael Verbois, CICM expert on Buddhism, will be introduced by Peter Baekelmans cism, Executive Director of SEDOS (Rome).
2. In preparation for the 14<sup>th</sup> Conference VI KULeuven is translating the book, Paul Splingaerd, the Belgian Mandarin, by Anne Megowan into Dutch, French and Chinese to make it available at the 14<sup>th</sup> conference (and at an exhibit on the Beijing-Hankou Railway planned in Brussels in March 2021).
3. Translation of Jos Van Hecken Documentation  
We honor the research of Jos Van Hecken cism by translating much of his documentation and making his research accessible to scholars in E and W.
4. Documents towards writing the *History of CICM (Scheut) in China*  
As mentioned above VI intends to make available Documents towards writing the *History of CICM (Scheut) in China*, for example.: the History of Xiwanzi Diocese, the History of CICM among the Mongols.
5. History of Verbiest Foundation-Leuven  
Verbiest Foundation-Leuven will soon exist 40 years. While many of the initiators are still around VI KULeuven decided to start writing the History of Verbiest Foundation: its creation by CICM at the 1983 China Meeting in Rome, its transfer by CICM Sino-Mongol Province to the present VF Board-Leuven.
6. Cooperation with the CICM GG and its Commission on CICM History  
VI KULeuven is in contact with the Commission in CICM History and offers its cooperation to whatever the Commission is planning. Content is being worked out.



*Work at hand in the Research and Publications room (R&P) in the Chinese College, Leuven.*

7. Ongoing research projects:
  - a. Publication of the English translation of *La Mission Chez les Mongols* by J. Van Hecken CICM
  - b. Publish 2<sup>nd</sup> edition and first edition in simplified characters of *Saiwai Chuanjiaoshi* 塞外传教史, Edited by Ku Weiyin in *Huairan Congshu*, Taipei
  - c. *J. Van Aertselaar cicm*, by P. Taveirne cicm & Nestor Pycke cicm  
Proposal of R&P group: to combine the book of Nestor Pycke with additional research of P. Taveirne cicm published in several lectures.
  - d. *J. Rutten cicm: (planned) by P. Taveirne cicm*



*Participants to the 2018 International Verbiest Conference*

## IN MEMORIAM

### AUDREY G. DONNITHORNE, A GREAT LADY OF CHINA

*(based on Audrey G. Donnithorne, a great lady of China,  
by Michel Chambon, UCANews, June 12, 2020)*



Professor Audrey Donnithorne quietly passed away in Hong Kong on June 9. Born in Sichuan in 1922 to evangelical Anglican Missionary parents. Although she was born in China, she spent much of her childhood in England to acquire a British education typical of the late imperial period. In April 1940, she traveled through France a few days before the Nazi invasion to spend three years with her parents in wartime China. It is during this stay that she converted to Catholicism. Back in London and having served at the Directorate of Military Intelligence of the War Office where her knowledge of China was already valued, she studied economics at Oxford University and met Margaret Roberts, later Thatcher.

After graduation, Audrey worked as a research assistant at University College London. In 1969, she moved to Canberra where she was soon appointed as head of the Contemporary China Center at the Australian National University. Audrey was one of the first Westerners to reconnect with the Church on the ground and circulate across provinces. In 1985, at the age of 63, she retired and moved to Hong Kong where she started a new informal career as an ecclesial agent. She mobilized her numerous skills and connections to humbly but actively support the rebirth of the Church in China. Audrey regularly visited Christian communities in Sichuan, Guizhou and Yunnan. She played an essential role in gathering and circulating information, connecting people and institutions, and gathering funding. As a professional economist, she always remained pragmatic and attentive to the material autonomy of the Church.

Among the many projects she supported, Audrey set up an organization sending language professors to Chinese universities. In addition to favoring intercultural exchange and professional training, this platform also allowed Western missionaries to find teaching jobs in mainland China and reconnect with the young population. Well aware of her critical contribution, the Holy See and the Study Mission awarded her the Pro Ecclesia et Pro Pontifice medal in 1993. In 1995, she became an honorary member of the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP). Nonetheless, in 1997, Audrey was expelled from mainland China. As she protested and asked for explanations, Chinese officials replied that she knew why. She answered that among her many sins she could not tell which ones they were referring to. Obviously, and as all her friends know well, she never lost her British sense of humor. She remained well connected with authorities in China, Hong Kong and abroad. Thus, she continued to nourish an intense correspondence with a wide range of scholars, Protestant and Catholic clergy members, and political leaders. She arranged the publication of countless books and ecclesial materials as well as study abroad programs for many Chinese priests and nuns.



## SISTER ZHANG FANG, AN ALUMNA OF THE VERBIEST FOUNDATION



*Funeral crown offered by Verbiest Foundation*

On November 8, 2020, Sister Zhang Fang, who was member of the Congregation of Saint Joseph, Beijing Diocese, rested in the Lord due to a heart attack at the age of 48. Sr. Zhang Fang was born in the Jining Diocese of Inner Mongolia. This Diocese belonged originally to the mission of the Congregation of Immaculate Sacred Heart of Mary (CICM - Scheut). Sr. Zhang

Fang joined the Congregation of St. Joseph in Beijing at the end of 1992. From 2000 to 2004, she studied at the Nursing Department of Medicine Ministry in the Beijing University. From 2003 to 2006 she worked in Jingmian Hospital in Beijing, where she joined the battle against the SARS virus. She

made her final vows in 2007, and worked in the Beijing National Seminary from 2007 to 2009. Supported by the Verbiest Foundation, she studied the Social Doctrine of the Church in Belgium from 2009 to 2010. After her graduation in Belgium, she served in the East Church of Wangfujing in the Beijing Diocese till 2012. From 2012 to 2018, she worked in the Foreign Affairs Office of the Beijing Diocese in 2019, and became a member of Councilor of the Congregation of Saint Joseph.

On November 12, 2020, Bishop Li Shan of the Beijing Diocese presided at the funeral mass for Sr. Zhang Fang at the Xishiku Cathedral (North Church). More than 50 priests, from Beijing Diocese and Jining Diocese, the hometown of Sr. Zhang Fang, concelebrated. All sisters of the congregation of Saint Joseph in Beijing, Sr. Zhang Fang's relatives, friends, benefactors, and Catholics attended the funeral rites. The body of Sister Zhang Fang was cremated in Babaoshan and was buried in the Catholic Cemetery of Jiugongshan in Beijing.

## FATHER ANDRÉ HAN TING-GUANG: WHEN A HISTORIAN MEETS LIVING HISTORY

*Ku Wei-Ying*

I first met Father Han during an international conference on the history of the Catholic Church in China, organized by the Verbiest Institute of Catholic University Leuven, Belgium. In 1990, Fr. Heyndrickx, founder of the Verbiest Institute, invited scholars from all religious congregations who had established missions in China in the past, to present research papers on the history of their



*Father André Han in Leuven with Chinese students, in 1991*

congregations in China. I met Fr. André Han during the opening ceremony of the conference; he seemed to me, a man with small stature, yet full of energy. After having a talk with him, I learnt that he was the chaplain taking care of the Chinese students in Leuven.

Over the years, a great number of outstanding students coming from mainland China and Taiwan, have been trained and educated in Belgium, in particular at the university of Leuven. Leuven was also the place where Father Vincent Lebbe, the founder of the Congregation of Saint John the Baptist, once stayed and worked. When Father Lebbe was forced to leave China, he made his way back to Belgium and Leuven. He took care of the Chinese students and was instrumental in the creation of the Society of Auxiliaries of the Missions (Samists) and was the inspiration for the foundation of the International Women's Auxiliaries " to assist the missions in China. This tradition of taking care of the Chinese students has been sustained until now, which was of great help for the overseas Chinese students. Since the 1960s and 1970s, priests who were in charge of the ministry for overseas Chinese students included Fr. Matthew Kia Yan-wen, who later became the bishop of Taipei Archdiocese. Fr. Xie Fan continued the ministry, and was followed by Fr. André Han.



*Father André Han, with scholarships students of Verbiest Foundation, meeting Queen Fabiola of Belgium in 1997 in the Chinese College*

Fr. André Han was born in Taiyuan, Shanxi in 1928, and he studied in the seminary of Dongergou. When the Communist Party came to power in China, he went abroad for studies. He was ordained in Spain in 1954. During that period quite a number of seminarians left China, assisted by Archbishop Yu Pin, to continue their religious lives in Spain. Fr. André Han completed his seminary studies against such a background, and followed by two years of advanced studies in Theology at the University of Leuven. Later, he went to Rome and Munich for further studies. We can imagine how familiar he was with European languages, I heard that he could even give sermons in German!

From 1964 to 1978, Fr. André Han served as the chaplain priest for the International Catholic Student Association of Leuven University in Belgium. With time and the emergence of institutes like the Verbiest Institute, the ministry for Chinese students in Belgium was gradually taken over by others. Leaving his post of student chaplain, Fr. André Han

transferred to being a parish priest in the Archdiocese of Malines-Brussels.

In the early 1990s, Fr. Jeroom Heyndrickx invited him to help take care the ministry for students and scholars from Taiwan and mainland China who were studying in Belgium. Among many other students with whom he ministered was the previous vice president of Control Department of Taiwan, Mr. Paelabang Danapan, a students at Leuven University with a scholarship of the Verbiest Institute.

Fr. André Han was agile and quick in response, had a great sense of humor, and spoke Mandarin with a little Shanxi accent. He blended in and mingled with people very easily, and always had a pleasant smile on his face. I used to go to Belgium once every three years in the past, and would pay him a visit, together with the local Taiwanese couple Jean Chou and his wife, Peng Mei-ling, who worked at the Verbiest Institute. We regularly attended his Sunday's Mass in Mandarin.

Fr. André Han once told me that one of the most meaningful moments in his life was accompanying Cardinal Yu-Pin during the last period of his stay in Rome. In 1978, Pope Paul VI passed away. John Paul I was chosen as his successor. Cardinal Yu Bin came to Rome from Taipei to participate in the election of the new Pope. (At that time, there was a rumor that Cardinal Yu Pin might have a chance of becoming Pope). A few days after John Paul I took office, he suddenly died. Cardinal Yu hurried back to Rome from Taipei to participate in the papal election. Cardinal Yu Pin took that opportunity to visit cardinals from all over the world to carry out national and religious diplomatic work. At that time, Fr. André was driving Cardinal Yu-Pin up and down the streets in Rome, making photocopies, organizing, and sorting out various letters and documents for the Cardinal. Fr. André Han at that time knew Rome like the back of his hand! It is a pity that Cardinal Yu died of a sudden heart attack, which left his ambitions unfulfilled. What a pity.

Two years ago, I was invited to attend a conference in Leuven, and I once again paid a visit to Jean Chou in Brussels. As usual, Jean and his wife Mei-ling took me to see Fr. André. This time, his body and health were declining and weak, we therefore took him to Jean's house. We bought him his favorite Belgian ice cream on the way back home, and we had a very good time together. Beyond my expectation, that was my last meeting with Fr. André.

# PHOTO REPORT

*Visit of Vincent Hermans and friends from the Netherlands*



We started our previous Verbiest Koerier with the remarkable story of Vincent Hermans, who, despite his own illness, took to the streets with a small fairground organ in order to encourage people of residential care centers with an optimism without limitations.

At the beginning of April we were able to welcome Vincent again in Leuven. Together with a delegation of the Dutch Lazarists, we discussed our future plans, but above all it was a day full of warm, unforgettable moments. We offered Vincent and his wife Marja a painting of Chinese character "Ai" (Love), and a "hata", a long white scarf traditionally given to their guests in Mongolia to honor and welcome them.



Vincent's own words: "Courage is a Must! (Moed Moet!)" have been given a central place in the dining room of our Chinese College. The images speak for themselves....



*Visit of Dirk Smet in Leuven*

On October 2nd, Msgr. Dirk Smet, rector of the Belgian College in Rome and board member of the Verbiest Institute KU Leuven, visited the Chinese College. Colleagues updated him about our activities and introduced him to, among other things, the Scheut Memorial Library.

*Visit to Tremelo*

Staff and friends of the Chinese College visiting the birthplace of Father Damien in Tremelo



*Summer sessions in CCL*

Prof. Dr. Maria Lin of the Academia Sinica (Taipei) gave a session on Chinese philosophy this summer to our students who graduated from the Canon Triest Institute. Together with classes by our own students a valuable study program was composed during this corona summer.

*Graduation ceremony for our scholarship students*

The Scholarship students of the Verbiest Foundation who graduated from Fu Jen University in Taiwan and the Canon Triest Institute, Moerzeke, Belgium.





Four of our scholarship students (Fr. Dong Yidi, Sr. Xia Wenhui, Sr. Liu Peipei and Sr. Han Changqin) graduated this year from the University of Fu Jan (Taipei). The colleagues of the Verbiest Institute in Taipei and VF Director Francisco Carin participated in the graduation ceremony that was held on June 20, 2020. After the ceremony, VI colleagues took the opportunity to meet with all scholarship students.



### Activities in Taipei



The annual meeting of the Verbiest Association Taipei was held on July 2, 2020 in the Taipei office. Fr. Carin gave an introduction on the activities of 2020 and Prof. Ku Wei-ying gave an introduction on the course - "*The Footprints of the church history in Taipei Diocese and the cultural history of the domestic religions*".

Mr. Joseph Lim (V.I. KU Leuven) presented the Chinese translation of Prof. Fossion's book - "*Catechesis within the Field of Communication*". Fr. Jeroom Heyndrickx also addressed the meeting via Skype.





From September to December, VI Taipei organized a formation course on The Footprints of the church history in Taipei Diocese and the cultural history of the domestic religions . Two lectures were organized in the Verbiest Institute in Taipei, combined with six visits to different parishes in Taipei.

*Baptisms in the North Cathedral*



On September 13, 2020, 86 faithful of the Beijing diocese were baptized by Bishop Lishan, Father Li Xiaozhuo and Father Li Jianmin. Due to the pandemic, the baptism could not be celebrated in the church as usual, but continued on the grounds outside the church. Mr. Li Fei, the initiator of the RCIA program in Beijing, was very moved and said: "The 51st RCIA process began last year at Easter.



The original plan was to celebrate the sacrament of baptism on April 11, 2020, Easter Sunday. Due to the pandemic, it was postponed until today, September 13th. The preparation took a year and a half. It was the longest and most challenging RCIA process in years."

The RCIA team made sure that the faith initiation could still take place digitally. An online platform was created to hold discussions, write about experiences, gather for prayer every morning and discuss a chapter of the Bible in the evening. So far the catechumens have read the book of Genesis, the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke. The catechumens have learned to listen to the voice of God every day.

Mrs. Meng Aiping, sponsor of the RCIA sessions, said in an interview: "The 51st RCIA process was the most



difficult one we have ever gone through. Because of the pandemic, the catechumens could not be baptized at the usual time. Moreover, they did not have normal lessons, face-to-face contact and communication".

The RCIA team appreciates the enthusiasm of the catechumens in their search for faith!

### *Priestly ordinations in Beijing*

In September of this year, eight priests were ordained in the diocese of Beijing. Msgr. Giuseppe Li Shan, Bishop of Beijing, presided over the ceremony that took place in the North Cathedral of Beijing.



Alumni of Verbiest Foundation visit handicapped and people in need in mountain areas in China. As winter time is nearing these Christians search for people in need to offer help

## 14<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL VERBIEST CONFERENCE 2021

The 14<sup>th</sup> International Verbiest Conference will take place from August 24 - 27, 2021. For the 14<sup>th</sup> time, we will gather international scholars to exchange ideas and discuss research in progress. In August 2018 the Verbiest Institute KU Leuven organized its 13<sup>th</sup> International Verbiest Conference, combining the three-yearly Verbiest Symposia on the history of the Catholic Church in China, and the forums which had been held separately in recent years in one big conference. Online with our research priority, focused on the History of CICM in China.

This priority is reflected in the opening session which is planned for August 24<sup>th</sup>. Given the global health pandemic, the organizing committee is still discussing how to organize such a big international event safely. A combination of online lectures, and physical conference will most likely be the best solution. The program for the opening is:



*Paul Splingaerd, the 'Belgian Mandarin' (picture via [www.splingaerd.net](http://www.splingaerd.net))*

was active as missionary in Jehol (East Mongolia). He was offered 54 paintings by a monk at the imperial monastery of Wangzimiao. The paintings were donated to the Ethnographic Museum (now in the collection of the museum MAS in Antwerp, Belgium). In 2014 the Rubin museum in New York dedicated an exhibition to these impressive works of art. KADOC Leuven also holds a remarkable collection of 60 wood prints, collected by R. Verbois.

After the lectures, there will be an exhibit where we present historic pictures on Paul Splingaerd, and hope to present some of the Buddhist paintings collected by Verbois.

\* Fr. Charles Phukuta, Superior General of CICM will give the keynote during which he will stress the importance of our research on the History of CICM in China.

\* 2021 will be for Verbiest Institute a Paul Splingaerd Year . We are already preparing the translation of the book *The Belgian Mandarin* , by Anne Megowan, in French, Chinese and Dutch. Mrs. Megowan, who is a descendant of Paul Splingaerd, will present her research on her forefather during the opening session.

\* Fr. Peter Baekelmans, cicm will introduce us to Fr. Raphael Verbois, cicm, a missionary in Jehol and an expert in Buddhism.

Fr. Verbois was born in Rekem (Belgium) on October 23, 1885. From 1910 to 1939, he



*Fr. Raphael Verbois cicm (1885 – 1979)*



### A REFLECTION: ZHONGSHAN PARK IN BEIJING .

*Qin Chen*

I used to avoid visiting Beijing s downtown at all costs.

The traffic is always brutal, thanks to the never-ending flow of visitors yearning to see the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, the Mausoleum of Mao Zedong and all of the other historical sites the city s heartland has to offer.



But my aversion dissipated after I discovered Zhongshan Park.

Located next to the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square, the unobtrusive park often gets overlooked as just some exterior section of the two famous sites. Visitors would walk right past it, not knowing that it exists, not knowing that they have missed some old souls.

The park is full of cypress trees that are hundreds of years old. The trees younger than 200 years old don't even get identified.

For trees over 200 years old, they get a green tag, while those over 300 years old get a red tag. All the tags carry basic stats: approximate age, type, scientific name and a QR code to scan if you want to get a digital version of that tree's information.

Before it became a public park in the 20th century, this land of old trees was first a Buddhist temple in the Liao Dynasty (916 to 1125). In 1421, as the new Ming dynasty set up its capital in Beijing, the temple was remade into an Altar of Earth, a place for emperors to pray for good harvests and a stable society.

Nowadays, for Beijing locals, the park is a famous marriage market. Every Thursday and Sunday afternoon, hundreds of middle-aged Chinese parents come to the eastern corner of the park to talk to other parents, hoping to find a partner for their single offspring.

This meet-and-greet usually happens without the presence of the sons and daughters. The parents display printed pamphlets that carry basic stats about their adult children: age, gender, education level, income, dating or marriage history. Interested parents would connect on messaging apps to set up future dates.

In a way, Zhongshan park reminds me of the juxtaposed reality of modern China.

Neighboring the political center of the imperial past (the Forbidden City), and the symbol of the ruling Communist Party (Tiananmen Square), the park has seen countless rulers come and go, and enough transitions of power to last a lifetime.

Now Zhongshan Park is content to be a quiet, peaceful place for ordinary Chinese to find marriage partners and to move on with their lives.



# What is the Verbiest Foundation? What is she doing?

- CICM (Congregation of Missionaries of Scheut) was founded in 1862 by Theofiel Verbist (Antwerp). Between 1865 and 1955 679 missionaries worked in North China: in Inner Mongolia, in Jehol, Datong, Ningxia, Xinjiang, Qinghai. They evangelized, they built schools, hospitals and developed agriculture. Some Scheut missionaries became famous around the world through their research on the Chinese and Mongolian language and culture. Having been banished from China, after 1949 by Mao Zedong, they opened missions in Taiwan, Hong Kong, in Singapore and later in Republic of Mongolia.
- When China opened again to establish collaboration with the West, Scheut created with the Catholic University of Louvain, in 1982, the Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation, bearing the name of the famous Jesuit missionary eighteenth-century Belgian astronomer, teacher of Emperor Kangxi. His Eminence, Cardinal J. De Kesel (Mechelen) chairs the Foundation. Board members represent different congregations of missionaries: Scheut, the brothers of Charity, and the Claretians.
- The Verbiest Foundation wants to develop a new relationship with the Church of China. Similar to the age old collaboration of missionaries of our countries with China, she wants to stimulate a contemporary collaboration between the Church Belgium and China. This should be based on equality and mutual appreciation.
- The Foundation sponsors the activities of the Institute Verbiest KULeuven (Naamsestraat 63, bus 4018, 3000 Leuven), those of the Chinese College in Leuven (Kard Mercierplein 3) and those of the Institute Verbiest in Taipei. Through these institutes, the Foundation wants to develop research on the history of the Church in China as well as developing there pastoral collaboration with the Church.
- To help the Church in China most effectively, It is better to invest in the training of ministers of the Church. For this purpose, the Foundation offers scholarships for the formation of priests, of nuns and lay people. Note that a formation, insured in China, is preferred. The foundation also aimed at higher institutes in China. Likewise, there are priests, nuns and lay people who are invited to receive special training abroad. After their studies, it is advisable that they return to China to serve their own Church. Colleagues from the Foundation are in touch with bishops and religious communities in China. They make sure that the support is used good and correctly.
- In addition, the Foundation also responds positively to requests for help for (small) development projects in the dioceses of North-West China: Gansu, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, etc.
- Financial support can be sent to: the Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation, Vlamingenstraat 1, 3000 Leuven - Current account: 735-0183437-95 (KBC Bank NV, Mgr Ladeuzeplein 19, 3000 Leuven, Belgium (BIC: KRED-BEBB, IBAN: BE76 7350 1834 3795) If you wish, you can always take up contact with our secretariat via [verbiest.inst@kuleuven.be](mailto:verbiest.inst@kuleuven.be)

courier  
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