

VATICAN-CHINA UPDATE

June 2020

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1. Pope: Ascension, announce, baptize, teach. Message to the Catholic faithful of China

24th May 2020

AsiaNews - www.asianews.it

VATICAN

Pope: Ascension, announce, baptize, teach. Message to the Catholic faithful of China

On the solemnity of the Ascension, Pope Francis explains that on this day Jesus "invests [the disciples] with mission among all peoples". "This message of salvation implies first of all the duty of witness". On the feast of Our Lady of Sheshan, united spiritually to Chinese Catholics, pastors and faithful, "so that they may be strong in faith and firm in fraternal union, joyful witnesses and promoters of charity and hope". Today is also the World Social Communications Day.

Vatican City (AsiaNews) - The mystery of Jesus' Ascension into heaven - in which he "asks the disciples to act and announce, entrusting them with the mandate to continue his work" - and a message to the Chinese Catholics on the feast of Our Lady of Sheshan, characterized the moment of Regina Caeli, presided over by Pope Francis from the Library of the apostolic palace.

Explaining the solemnity of the Ascension, which is celebrated on the seventh Easter Sunday in Italy and in other countries - in the Vatican it is celebrated on the previous Thursday - the pontiff stressed that before going up to heaven, "the last meeting of the risen Lord takes place

with his disciples", in which He "invests them the mission among all peoples".

“The contents of the mission entrusted to the Apostles - he said - are these: to announce, baptize, teach to walk on the path traced by the Master, that is, the Gospel. This message of salvation implies first of all the duty of witness, to which we, disciples of today, are also called to account for our faith. Faced with such a demanding task, and thinking of our weaknesses, we feel inadequate, as the Apostles themselves certainly felt. But we must not be discouraged, remembering the words that Jesus addressed to them before ascending to Heaven: "I am with you every day until the end of the world" (v. 20). This promise ensures the constant and consoling presence of Jesus among us ... With the promise to stay with us until the end of time, Jesus inaugurates the style of his presence in the world as the Risen One: a presence that is revealed in the Word, in the Sacraments, in the constant and interior action of the Holy Spirit. The feast of Ascension tells us that Jesus, although he ascended to Heaven to dwell gloriously on the right hand of the Father, is still and always among us: from here we derive our strength, our perseverance and our joy ".

After the Marian prayer, Francis invited everyone to "unite ourselves spiritually to all of the Catholic faithful in China who today celebrate, with particular devotion, the Feast of Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, Patroness of China who is venerated in the Sheshan sanctuary in Shanghai. Let us entrust the pastors and faith of the Catholic Church in that great nation to the guidance and protection of our Heavenly Mother, so they may be strong in the faith and firm in fraternal union, joyous witness and promoters of hope and charity."

Then addressing the Catholic faithful directly he said: "My dear Catholic brothers and sisters in China, I would like to assure you that the Universal Church, of which you are an integral part, shares in your hopes and supports you in your trials. She accompanies you in prayer for a new effusion of the Holy Spirit, you that the light and beauty of the Gospel, God's power for the salvation of those who would believe, may shine in you. While once again expressing my profound and sincere affection for you all, I impart upon you a special Apostolic Blessing. And may Our Lady always keep you ".

The pontiff then recalled that today the World Day of Social Communications, dedicated this year to the theme of narration, is also celebrated: "May this event encourage us to tell and share constructive stories, which help us understand that we are all part of a story bigger than ourselves and we can look to the future with hope, if we really take care of each other as brothers and sisters".

After a greeting to the Salesians, "sons of Don Bosco", for the feast of Mary Help of Christians, Francis thanked all those who celebrated the "Laudato si' week", dedicated to his encyclical and inaugurated a whole year studying it and how to take care of the "common home" and the poor.

After a few minutes he went to his study window to greet the meagre crowd that had appeared on St. Peter's square. Because of the pandemic emergency, in fact, numerous "gatherings" are still not recommended.

2. Pope Francis announces year of reflection on “Laudato Si’” and prays for Catholics in China

24th May 2020

America Magazine

Pope Francis announces year of reflection on “Laudato Si’” and prays for Catholics in China

By: Gerard O’Connell

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/05/24/pope-francis-announces-year-reflection-laudato-si-and-prays-catholics-china>

During his Sunday afternoon address, Pope Francis made a surprise announcement of a year-long “special reflection” on his encyclical “*Laudato Si’*.” The year of reflection starts today, on the fifth anniversary of the publication of the encyclical in which, Pope Francis said, “I sought to draw attention to the cry of the earth and of the poor.”

Pope Francis also sent special greetings to Catholics in China on this Sunday, May 24, as they celebrate the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians and “venerate [her] with particular devotion at the sanctuary of Sheshan” on the outskirts of Shanghai.

This year of reflection on “*Laudato Si’*” will be held “thanks to an initiative” of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Francis stated. He also introduced a prayer for the year of reflection, saying, “It would be beautiful to say this prayer.” The full text of the prayer is included at the bottom of this article. Pope Francis concluded: “I invite all persons of good will to adhere to this, to take care of our common home and of our most fragile brothers and sisters.”

As the Covid-19 pandemic is demonstrating the interconnectedness of everything in the world, this year of reflection highlights Pope Francis’ focus on the intimate link between the protection of nature and of human life, which are central themes in “*Laudato Si’*.” The encyclical was first published on May 24, 2015, on the eve of the U.N. World Conference on Climate Change.

Today is a major feast for Catholics in China, and Francis, following the practice of his predecessor Benedict XVI, has sent greetings to Catholics in mainland China on the occasion of this feast ever since becoming pope.

“Let us unite ourselves spiritually to the Catholic faithful in China,” Francis said, in his telecast address from the papal library of the Vatican’s Apostolic Palace, after reciting the Regina Coeli Laetare prayer at midday.

“Let us entrust to the guidance and to the protection of our Heavenly Mother the pastors and

the faithful of the Catholic church in that great land, so that they may be strong in faith and firm in fraternal union, and be joyful witnesses and promoters of charity and hope,” Francis said as he invited Catholics throughout the world to join in this prayer for Catholics in China.

He then addressed the roughly 12 million Chinese Catholics with some personal words. *“Most dear brother and sister Catholics in China, I wish to assure you that the universal church, of which you are an integral part, shares your hopes and sustains you in the trials of life. It accompanies you with prayer for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that the light and the beauty of the Gospel may shine forth in you, together with the power of God for the salvation of whoever believes.”*

His reference to the “trials” of Catholics in the mainland is particularly significant, signaling his awareness that even after the signing of a provisional agreement between the Chinese government in Beijing and the Holy See on the appointment of bishops, on Sept. 22, 2018, the situation has not improved much for the Catholic community in that land, and least of all for the roughly five million to six million members of the “underground” community of believers. He concluded his message of encouragement to Chinese Catholics with a special apostolic blessing, assuring them of his “great love and sincere affection” and ending with “May Our Lady protect you always!”

Then turning again to the virtual audience following his live address through streaming on Vatican Media, Pope Francis referred to the pandemic and the turbulence it has caused in the world. On this feast day, he said “let us entrust to the intercession of Our Lady all the disciples of the Lord and all persons of good will who, in this difficult time, in every part of the world work with passion and commitment for peace, for dialogue among nations, for the service of the poor, for the care of creation and for the victory of humanity over every illness of the body, of the heart and of the soul.”

The pope also extended a special feast day greeting to the members of the Salesian Order whose founder St. Don Bosco had a special devotion to Mary Help of Christians and helped spread that devotion worldwide. “I extend an affectionate and cordial greeting to all Salesian men and women, and I recall with gratitude the spiritual formation that I received from the sons of Don Bosco,” Francis stated.

Pope Francis concluded by recalling that today the church also celebrates the 54th World Communications Day, a celebration initiated at the request of the Second Vatican Council. His message for this year focused on the theme of storytelling, and he said, “May this event encourage us to tell and share constructive stories that help us to understand that we are all part of a story that is larger than ourselves, and can look forward to the future with hope if we truly care for one another as brothers and sisters.”

Prayer for the year of reflection on “Laudato Si”

(English translation courtesy of Vatican News)

Loving God,
Creator of Heaven, Earth, and all therein contained.
Open our minds and touch our hearts,

so that we can be part of Creation, your gift.

Be present to those in need in these difficult times,
especially the poorest and most vulnerable.
Help us to show creative solidarity
as we confront the consequences of the global pandemic.
Make us courageous in embracing
the changes required to seek the common good.
Now more than ever, may we all feel interconnected and interdependent.

Enable us to succeed in listening and responding
to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor.
May their current sufferings become the birth-pangs
of a more fraternal and sustainable world.

We pray through Christ our Lord,
under the loving gaze of Mary Help of Christians,

Amen.

** Gerard O'Connell is America's Vatican correspondent.
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3. Pope Francis appeals for Day of Prayer for Church in China

24th May 2020

Vatican Newswww.vaticannews.va**Pope Francis appeals for Day of Prayer for Church in China**
Pope Francis prays for the Catholic faithful in China, as they celebrate the feast of the Patroness of China at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sheshan in Shanghai. By: Devin Watkins & Paolo Ondarza
As the Church marks the Day of Prayer for the Church in China, Pope Francis assured Chinese Catholics of the nearness of the universal Church. His remarks came after the prayer of the Regina Coeli on Sunday. "Dearest Catholic brothers and sisters in China, I wish to assure you that the universal Church, of which you are an integral part, shares your hopes and supports you in your trials. She accompanies you with prayer for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that the light and beauty of the Gospel might shine in you as the power of God for the salvation of those who believe." Catholics in China celebrate the feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians and Patroness of China on Sunday. The Virgin Mary is venerated under this title at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Sheshan in Shanghai. Pope Francis prayed that the Chinese faithful "might be strong in faith and steadfast in fraternal union, joyful witnesses, promoters of charity and hope, and good citizens."**Day of Prayer of Church in China**

In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI wrote a “Letter to Chinese Catholics” and proclaimed a Day of Prayer for the Church in China, which is celebrated every year on 24 May. For the occasion, Pope Benedict wrote a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, asking her to guide the people of God “along the paths of truth and love” so that there might be “in every circumstance a ferment of harmonious coexistence among all.” He prayed that Catholics around the world might support “the commitment of those in China who, among their daily labours, continue to believe, hope, and love, so that they might never fear to speak of Jesus to the world and of the world to Jesus.” Finally, Pope Benedict implored the Mother of God to “help Catholics to be always credible witnesses of love, remaining united to the Rock of Peter, upon which the Church is built.” **Care for Chinese Catholics**

Pope Francis has demonstrated particular care for the faithful in China since the beginning of his pontificate. Each year, on the Day of Prayer, the Pope has never failed to express his closeness and affection to all Chinese Catholics. A key moment in diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the People’s Republic of China took place on 22 September 2018, with the signing of the Provisional Agreement. Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin described the accord as “both a point of arrival on a long road and above all a starting point” for “a new phase of greater collaboration for the good of the Chinese Catholic community and for the harmony of the whole of society.” “We must walk together,” said Cardinal Parolin in an interview with the Global Times, “because only in this way can we heal the wounds and misunderstandings of the past, to show the world that even from distant positions fruitful agreements can be reached.” **Holy See and Chinese government**

Pope Francis wrote about the Provisional Agreement in his Message to Chinese Catholics and the Universal Church on 26 September 2018. He called it “the fruit of the extensive and complex institutional dialogue between the Holy See and authorities of the Chinese government, which was inaugurated by Saint John Paul II and continued by Pope Benedict XVI.” “It is not a matter of appointing officials for the management of religious matters, but of having authentic Pastors according to the heart of Jesus, committed to work generously in the service of the people of God.” Many initiatives have characterized the relationship between the Holy See and China over the last two years. The Chinese government allowed two Catholic Bishops, Joseph Guo Jincui and John Baptist Yang Xiaoting, to participate in the Synod on Young People which took place in the Vatican in 2018. The government also approved the Episcopal Consecration with Papal Mandate in August 2019 of Anthony Yao Shun and Stephen Xu Hongwei, respectively the Bishop of Jining/Wulanchabu, in Inner Mongolia, and the Coadjutor Bishop of Hanzhong, in the north-western province of Shaanxi. **Expressions of solidarity**

Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, there have been mutual expressions of solidarity between the Holy See and China with donations of personal protective equipment aimed at fighting the virus. Many Chinese Catholics have also participated through social media in the celebration of Pope Francis’s daily Masses in the Casa Santa Marta. The journey of dialogue and mutual understanding has helped “build a common future of greater harmony”, as desired by the Holy Father. The journey also includes culture and beauty, represented by an exhibition entitled “Beauty Unites Us: Chinese Art from the Vatican Museums”. The highly symbolic exhibition was organized in Beijing by the Vatican Museums, and took place from 28 May until 14 July 2019 at the Palace Museum of the

Forbidden City.

4. The 410th Anniversary of Matteo Ricci's Death

14th April 2020

Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific

E-News

THE 410TH ANNIVERSARY OF MATTEO RICCI'S DEATH

The Beijing Center - May 11, 2020

<http://thebeijingcenter.org/>

Four hundred and ten years ago on May 11, 1610, the world lost a leading facilitator in the development of intercultural communication, and in turn, solidified his reputation and legacy as the founder of cultural exchange between China and the West. Italian Jesuit missionary, Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), broke the ideological barriers between China and the West through equality and friendship.

Ricci's contribution is well-known to those who have experienced intercultural communication and have seen the transformation of Chinese and Western relations over the years. Particularly prominent within the Jesuit community, Ricci spent 28 years in China, becoming the first scholar to holistically study Chinese culture. In doing so, he compiled numerous Western natural science books in collaboration with Chinese scholars such as Xu Guanqi, Li Zhizao, and Yang Yanjun. These books covered advanced knowledge of Western science and culture, that gradually contributed to the enrichment of Chinese culture. One of his works in particular, *Four Books*, has become regarded in the West as the basis for understanding China.

As he left his mark on the world, Ricci's influence also became engrained in The Beijing Center's foundation and core values. His teachings and guidance have shaped the direction and prosperity of the international education and exchanges TBC works towards providing. In a continuing effort to honor and remember Ricci, TBC highlights his legacy by providing students with a tour of Ricci's tomb in Beijing during their studies, so they can learn about his history in China. This experience serves as a reminder of the union of cultures and how far intercultural exchange has come.

**** About The Beijing Center***

Established in 1998 by Ron Anton, S.J., The Beijing Center (TBC) is a not-for-profit center of higher education and research in mainland China committed to fostering mutual understanding between China and the rest of the world through cultural exchange, education, and research.

TBC serves as a hub for the international Jesuit higher education network in mainland China. What makes us unique is our place in a long and storied tradition, starting with Matteo Ricci, of Jesuit learning engaging with Chinese culture. This tradition teaches us that true cultural engagement starts with friendship.

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