



Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160

WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

December 6, 2010

His Excellency Zhang Yesui
Ambassador of the People's Republic of China
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
3505 International Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I want to convey our deep disappointment over the illicit ordination of Father Guo Jincai as bishop of Chengde on November 20. In the recent past, ordinations of new bishops in China have been done with the agreement of both the Vatican and Chinese authorities. In the case of Father Guo, the Vatican had repeatedly expressed its opposition to his proposed ordination. Nonetheless, the Chinese authorities decided to proceed unilaterally in arranging his ordination. In the words of the Holy See, this has caused a "painful wound upon ecclesial communion and a grave violation of Catholic discipline." In addition, several bishops approved by the Vatican were reportedly coerced or pressured into participating in the ordination. If true, the Holy See expressed concern that this would "constitute a grave violation of freedom of religion and conscience."

Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2007 letter to the Church in China, expressed the Holy See's willingness to engage in "respectful and constructive dialogue" with the People's Republic of China, hoping that "such a dialogue would make it possible for us to work together for the good of the Chinese people and for peace in the world." Actions such as those taken in this illicit ordination are offensive to the Catholic Church in China and the universal Church and are counterproductive to fostering such dialogue.

Ironically, last week, Xinhua news agency reported that Hui Liangyu, vice premier in charge of China's religion-related affairs, said the Chinese government attaches great importance to respecting and protecting religious freedom. I ask that you convey our concerns to officials in the State Administration for Religious Affairs and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and ask that they uphold the right to freedom of religion as one of the basic human rights for all people in China.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace