

New Bishop Named to Lead Liaoning Diocese

Bishop Pius JIN Peixian of Liaoning in northeastern China has retired, passing his episcopal responsibility to Coadjutor Bishop Paul PEI Junmin on June 29, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul.

Bishop JIN expressed his satisfaction and confidence in successor's performance as coadjutor, noting that Bishop PEI has been diligent in safeguarding the Church's autonomy. The 84-year-old prelate said he is old and less mobile than 39-year-old Bishop PEI, who can travel to visit different parishes. He added that the younger bishop has presided at all confirmation rites in the diocese since being ordained coadjutor bishop on May 7, 2006. Bishop JIN revealed that he received Pope Benedict XVI's approval before notifying the local government's RAB, as well as the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China, and the CCPA about his retirement. The State Administration for Religious Affairs approved his retirement in late April.

According to Bishop JIN, about 1,200 Catholics packed the cathedral in Shenyang for the installation Mass, while several hundred more joined the liturgy from the Church courtyard. Shenyang, Liaoning's provincial capital, lies 640 kilometers northeast of Beijing. Father QIU, secretary of the diocesan CCPA and the Church Affairs Committee, was among 70 concelebrating priests at the June 29 installation Mass. Bishop Damas ZHANG Hanmin of Jilin, whose diocese neighbors Liaoning, and Father YUE Fusheng, administrator of nearby Heilongjiang diocese, also concelebrated along with Rev. QIU Wenting. Among the guests were government officials from local and neighboring provinces, and representatives from the Beijing-based CCPA.

In his address at the end of the Mass, Bishop PEI recalled Bishop JIN's contribution through nearly 20 years of episcopal ministry, including formation for priests and other Church workers, reclaiming Church properties and developing the Church. Bishop PEI promised that as Bishop JIN's successor, he would further improve priestly formation, develop the role of sisters and laypeople, establish effective diocesan commissions and enhance exchanges with other Church groups.

At a lunch after the Mass, Bishop JIN expressed thanks for God's care, and for the trust and obedience that his priests, religious and laypeople have put in him. He also thanked Bishop PEI for taking up the role of bishop, which is "a glory, holy but full of hardships and challenges to mission." On June 30, Bishop PEI presided at a diocesan priests meeting, during which he listened to his priests' suggestions and opinions on pastoral work, Church property, health insurance and other issues. Bishop Paul PEI Jun Min was born into a Catholic family in 1969. He entered Shenyang Seminary at age 16 and was ordained a priest seven years later. In 1993, he became one of the first diocesan priests **sent abroad for further studies. He obtained master's degrees in both Theology and Biblical Studies at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, USA. Since returning to Liaoning he served as Vice Rector and Dean of Studies at Shenyang major Seminary until he was ordained coadjutor bishop in 1996.**

Retired Bishop JIN was born on March 16, 1924. His priestly ordination in Shanghai in 1951 came shortly after the People's Republic of China was established. Initially, he taught in a high school in Beijing and then worked as an accounting clerk in a factory 1952-1955 before returning to preach in Fushun parish. In 1957, he was "denounced" as a "rightist" at a government orchestrated meeting of Catholic in the 3 NE provinces. Sentenced as a "counter-revolutionary" to 10 years of "reform through labor." Released in 1968, he was sent to a work farm, until he returned to Fushun parish in 1980. bishop JIN was ordained Bishop of Liaoning in May, 1989.

Liaoning Diocese, which covers all of Liaoning Province, now has more than 70 priests and more than 150 sisters serving 100,000 Catholics in five deaneries. Several of the young priests and sisters from two diocesan religious orders of sisters have done graduate studies in the USA, specially the Maryknoll Society Education/Formation Project.

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