

China ordains first Catholic bishop in three years

Attendance was restricted by police and hundreds had to observe the ceremony on TV sets



Father Joseph Zhang Yinlin, 44, was ordained as coadjutor bishop of Anyang diocese in Henan province Aug. 4.

The ceremony at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Anyang city was presided over by 90-year-old Bishop Thomas Zhang Huaixin of Anyang. Concelebrants included Bishops Joseph Shen Bin of Haimen, Joseph Yang Yongqiang of Zhoucun and Wang Renlei of Xuzhou, all Vatican-approved and government recognized. Bishops not recognized by the Vatican were not present at the ordination.

According to the official website of the Henan Catholic Church, the ordination Mass was concelebrated by 75 priests, and attended by about 1,400 people, including 120 nuns.

According to a Church source, the authorities limited participants to 25 people from each of the diocese's 17 parishes.

Another source who attended the Mass told ucanews.com that those who did not have identity cards could not get into the venue. "The security check is strict as in the airport. We were being checked twice," the source said, adding that despite the rain, the government had "hundreds of police and firemen to maintain order."

A priest who concelebrated told ucanews.com that nearly 500 people were turned away from the Mass by authorities and had to observe the ceremony on TV sets on display in parish classrooms.

Born in Henan province in 1971, Bishop Joseph Zhang Yinlin studied at the National Seminary in Beijing from 1992-1996.

After being ordained to the priesthood in 1996, Father Zhang served as vicar general, assisting Bishop Thomas Zhang Huaixin. He was elected as coadjutor bishop on April 29 and was approved for ordination by the Vatican.

Following the ordination, the Anyang diocese now has two bishops, 30 priests, 120 nuns and about 40,000 members.

A local priest told ucanews.com that the ordination is a good start for the Church in Henan and also for the Church in China.

“This is a new beginning for Anyang Diocese,” the priest said.

Today’s ordination was the first ceremony in three years and the first since the Vatican and China restarted its dialogue in June 2014.

Another Vatican-approved candidate for bishop, Father Cosmos Ji Chengyi of Zhumadian in the same province of Henan, also attended the ordination. The date for his ordination has not been announced.

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