

# Cardinal says China, Vatican must negotiate

HONG KONG – Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kium of Hong Kong has reiterated the need for negotiations to resolve the issue of Catholic bishops' ordinations in mainland China and to find a bilaterally acceptable way of normalizing relations.

Cardinal Zen said illegitimate episcopal ordinations have created new obstacles for the dialogue between China and the Vatican and the normalization of their relations, and he called for an approach acceptable to both sides.

However, Anthony Liu Bainian, vice president of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, Feb. 14 told UCA News, an Asian church news agency, that the church in China will continue to elect and ordain its own bishops as it has done in the past 50 years.

Currently, Liu said, China is examining applications for episcopal ordinations in the Guangzhou, Guizhou and Yichang dioceses.

After decades of harsh persecution of Catholics who maintained their ties to the Vatican and stringent efforts by the government to exclude Vatican influence over all areas of church life in the country, the communist government appeared to be relaxing its stance. In 2005 several Chinese bishops were ordained after approval by the Vatican and the patriotic association. However, in 2006 the patriotic association moved forward with the ordinations of three bishops without Vatican consent.

After a high-level meeting on China at the Vatican Jan. 19-20, the Vatican said it hoped to continue a “respectful and constructive dialogue with government authorities to overcome the misunderstandings of the past” and to normalize relations to ensure “the peaceful and fruitful life of faith in the church and to work together for the good of the Chinese people and for peace in the world.”

The Vatican also announced Pope Benedict XVI would write a letter to Chinese Catholics, and sources said the Vatican would establish a commission to monitor the situation of the church in China.