



NEWS REPORT

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Brave Shanghai auxiliary takes "period of rest" in seminary

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SHANGHAI - Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin, ordained auxiliary bishop of Shanghai on July 7, with the approval of the Pope, was taken away by a group of religious officials in the evening, but nobody knew where they took him to. Some Catholics specially went to his first mass yesterday morning, but found that the bishop was missing. According to local sources, the bishop is now in "resting" in the Sheshan seminary since yesterday.

Media in Hong Kong reported July 9 that Bishop Ma went missing after he declared to resign from the Patriotic Association during the ordination Mass.

Bishop Ma, 44, was recognized by the Holy See as auxiliary bishop of Shanghai, but for the Chinese government he is only a coadjutor of the diocese. A native of Shanghai, the prelate was ordained to the priesthood in 1994 and completed his studies at the Sheshan seminary.

Unlike the illicit ordination of Harbin, held on July 6, neither the government nor the media linked to the Patriotic Association (PA) promoted the ceremony. The news was carried in a few lines on some local websites.

Sources present at the liturgy describe the heroism of Msgr. Ma, who resigned as a member of the Patriotic Association and during his ordination, avoided the imposition of hands, communion and wine, from Msgr. Zhan Silu, bishop of Mindong (Fujian) not recognized by the Holy See.

On the morning of July 7, at 8 am (local time), the priests of the diocese of Shanghai, met in the chapel of the Bishop's Palace, opposite the Cathedral of St. Ignatius, Xujiahui, for the solemn Mass celebrated by Msgr. Jin Luxian, bishop of Shanghai. The ceremony began with the reading of the papal bull and the act of faith professed by Msgr. Ma. Later 40 priests, many of whom came from other dioceses, entered the church to attend the ordination Mass. Bishop Jin officiated the ceremony, and Bishop Xu Honggen of Suzhou (Jiangsu) and Bishop Shen Bin of Haimen (Jiangsu) co-consecrated. Concelebrating were Bishop Cai Bingrui of Xiamen (Fujian), Bishop Li Suguang of Nanchang (Jiangxi) and Bishop Zhan Silu of Mindong (Fujian).

The presence of illicitly ordained Bishop Zhan has upset many priests, nuns and faithful in Shanghai diocese, who refused to attend or concelebrate. After the laying on of hands by Bishop Jin and the other two co-consecrating bishops, Msgr. Ma avoided being laid hands by Bishop Zhan and embraced the other three prelates.

Upon receiving communion, he has asked for prayers. The Eucharist was given to the concelebrants and faithful after mass. Before the end of the ceremony, Msgr. Ma gave an acceptance speech. He expressed gratitude to the Lord, Bishop Jin and all the bishops and participants. He addressed thanks to the priests and to all those who were absent from the ordination. The bishop also appealed for unity, citing his chosen coat of arms, and invited all to follow and observe the tradition of the Catholic Church that feeds his faith. Finally, he said he wanted to concentrate on his work as an assistant to Msgr. Jin, and as such it was no longer convenient for him to maintain his position within the Patriotic Association. As a result from the day of his ordination he would no longer continue to be a member of the PA.

A long applause greeted the bishop's words. Catholics from all over China have expressed positive comments on his courage and rejoiced in seeing a new sign of hope for the Chinese Church.

"Meanwhile, local sources told AsiaNews that Fr. Zhao Hongchun, who disappeared shortly before the illicit ordination of Harbin, was taken to a place 300 km away from the seat of the diocese. Fr. Zhang Xicheng, who also disappeared during the ordination, has instead been taken to another area 250 km from the city. Both reappeared in the afternoon of July 6, shortly after the

end of the celebration. The sources say that several Catholics from the official and underground community attended the Sunday mass together.

Full text of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin of Shanghai's Vote of thanks:

Most Respectful His Excellency Bishop Jin, All the brothers and sisters:

Greetings to all of you.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your blessing. You have given me countless grace, and today you have chosen me, a very humble man, a weak one.

I thank God for His grace. Today, thank you Bishop Jin, under such hot weather (34 degree Celsius), came to ordain me. I also thank the other two co-consecrators Bishop Xu and Bishop Shen. Bishop Jin, I wholeheartedly accept your laying of hands and your blessings.

Thank you for all bishops and priests, as well as all the seminarians, sisters and the faithful in the church, especially those traveled here from afar. Your presence has given me confidence and strength. During this time, you have incessantly prayed for our diocese and for me, a humble and small one with shallow knowledge. My parents and the elderly in the family have nurtured me since childhood with our Church tradition and faith. Since I entered the seminary, I have been following the traditional Church education that our ancestors and predecessors observed. I will work hard and dedicate my whole life to follow the example of Jesus and to become a Good Shepherd.

May I also thank those priests, sisters, seminarians and laypeople who have not been in this Eucharist, because of limitation of seats or of other reasons. God does not see the appearance but understand one's heart, and justice is revealed there. Man proposes, but it is God who will make things happen. I would like to let you know: I love you! Please pray for each other! (Long applause.)

The motto of my coat-of-arms came from two famous quotations. The first one is what Bishop Jin always taught us during our seminary days. It is a quote borrowed from Saint Ignatius - "For the Greater Glory of God" (Ad majorem Dei gloriam). In this present moment, in this place, we have to choose a way that will serve God with greater glory.

The second quotation I selected is "We are one". I hope everyone, in our heart, will respond to Jesus Christ's teachings to the Apostles: "May all be one!" I will spend my whole life to strive for unity.

In the light of the teaching of Our Mother Church, as I now serve as a bishop, I should focus on the pastoral work and evangelization. It is inconvenient for me to take on certain responsibilities. Therefore, from this day of consecration, I will no longer be convenient to be a member of the Patriotic Association. (Warm applause resounded through the church, over and over again; many participants were moved to tears!)

May we be one. For the Greater Glory of God!