



The Holy See

Declaration

**Letter of the Holy Father Benedict XVI
to the Bishops, priests, consecrated men and women,
and lay faithful of the Catholic Church
in the People's Republic of China**

By means of his Letter, which is made public today, Pope Benedict XVI wishes to express his love for the Catholic community in China and his closeness to it.

From the text of the Papal document two basic attitudes are clear: on the one hand, deep spiritual affection for all Catholics in China and cordial esteem for the Chinese people, and, on the other, an earnest appeal to the perennial principles of the Catholic tradition and the Second Vatican Council in the ecclesiological sphere. It is, therefore, a pressing invitation to charity, unity and truth.

The Letter is directed to the Church in China and deals with eminently religious questions, responding to precise queries which have been addressed for some time to the Holy See by Chinese Bishops and priests. It is not, therefore, a political document, nor, much less, an indictment of the government authorities, although it does not ignore the well-known difficulties which the Church in China must daily tackle.

The Holy Father recalls the "original plan" which Christ had for his Church and which he entrusted to the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops. In this light, he takes into consideration various problems of the Church in China which emerged during the past fifty years. From this "plan" he also draws inspiration and formulates guidelines to tackle and resolve, in a spirit of communion and truth, the said problems.

In the Letter, Benedict XVI declares himself fully available and open to a serene and constructive dialogue with the civic authorities in order to find a solution to the various problems concerning the Catholic community, and to reach the desired normalization of relations between the Holy See and the Government of the People's Republic of China, in the certainty that Catholics, by freely professing their faith and by giving generous witness of life, contribute also, as good citizens, to

the good of the Chinese people.

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