

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0711

Giovedì 18.11.2010

STATEMENT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE FR. FEDERICO LOMBARDI S.J. CONCERNING NEWS ABOUT AN EPISCOPAL ORDINATION IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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Question: *What is the position of the Holy See regarding the news according to which some bishops in Mainland China are forced to participate in a bishop ordination in Chengde, Hebei? Is the candidate approved by the Pope?*

Answer: The Holy See is disturbed by reports from Mainland China alleging that a number of bishops in communion with the Pope are being forced by government officials to attend an illicit episcopal ordination in Chengde, northeastern Hebei, said to be scheduled around November 20.

If these reports are true, then the Holy See would consider such actions as grave violations of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience.

It would also consider such an ordination as illicit and damaging to the constructive relations that have been developing in recent times between the People's Republic of China and the Holy See.

Moreover, the Holy See confirms that Fr Joseph Guo Jincai has not received the approval of the Holy Father to be ordained as a bishop of the Catholic Church. The Holy See, keen to develop positive relations with China, has contacted the Chinese authorities on this whole matter and has made its own position clear.

[01639-02.01] [Original text: English]

[B0711-XX.01]