News



by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Hong Kong — April 5, 2019
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

A Chinese bishop, asked to step aside by the Vatican last year, said he does not think he can concelebrate the Holy Thursday chrism Mass unless he agrees to China's policy on the Catholic Church.

Bishop Guo Xijin, the former bishop of Mindong, told ucanews.com that it is currently uncertain if he could join the chrism Mass because the government refuses to acknowledge him.

"The government officials said in clarity that they do not recognize me as a bishop," Guo told ucanews.com.

The bishop said he has been told that recognition would only come upon his applying to join the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China and its church affairs committee at the provincial level.

"This needs to be done after declaring my acceptance of the policy of 'an independent, autonomous and self-run church,'" he said. "They said: 'You are not sincere enough and, therefore, we cannot recognize your identity.'"

The bishop, 59, said he is not considering doing what the officials are pressuring him to do.

Guo was the Vatican-approved bishop of the underground church in Mindong Diocese in southeastern China. Following the Sept. 22 signing of the Sino-Vatican provisional agreement, he was asked to step aside by Vatican officials for state-approved Bishop Zhan Silu, who was pardoned by Pope Francis.

Zhan told ucanews.com that a concelebration of the chrism Mass depends on Guo, but added that the government makes decisions.

"When Bishop Guo smooths out his relations with the government, there will be no problem," he said.

A diocesan bishop usually celebrates the chrism Mass on Holy Thursday. The bishop will bless and consecrate oils for sacramental use with the concelebrating priests.

As a remembrance of Jesus' institution of the sacraments of holy orders, all bishops and priests present renew their priestly vows. It's also a sign of communion and solidarity among the clergy.

After a Rome symposium on religious freedom April 3, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, urged patience as with the September agreement, which he said was signed to bring about "normalization for the Catholic community."

"I know that people want things immediately," he told journalists. "History was not built in one day; history is a long process. And I think we have to put ourselves in this perspective."

Advertisement