News



Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, arrives for Pope Francis' mid-morning prayer with contemplative nuns at the Shrine of Our Lord of the Miracles in Lima, Peru, Jan. 21, 2018. (CNS/Paul Haring)

by Catholic News Service

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The Vatican's top diplomat told Chinese state-run media that Vatican-Beijing talks are focused on achieving concrete results for China's Catholics while avoiding differences between the two "systems."

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, granted an exclusive interview to Global Times, an international tabloid run by the ruling Chinese Communist Party, reported ucanews.com.

Global Times' special correspondent Francesco Sisci and staff reporter Zhang Yu initially focused questions on the provisional agreement between the Vatican and Beijing regarding bishop appointments, signed Sept. 22.

In the interview, Parolin said the agreement is a starting point between both parties.

"There is confidence that a new phase of greater cooperation can now be opened for the good of the Chinese Catholic community and the harmony of the whole society," Parolin said.

"The channels of communication are working well. There are elements which demonstrate an increased trust between the two sides," he said. "We are inaugurating a method which appears positive and which will still have to be developed over time, but which, for now, gives us hope that we can gradually arrive at concrete results."

The cardinal pointed out what was not being discussed with Chinese officials.

"China and the Holy See are not discussing theories about their respective systems, nor do they want to reopen questions which by now belong to history," he said. "Instead we are looking for practical solutions which concern the lives of real people who desire to practice their faith peacefully and offer a positive contribution to their own country."

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One of the Global Times questions was aimed at critics of the agreement.

"There is some opposition to the Vatican's dialogue with the Chinese government. What is your take on the opposition and what would you say to the opponents within the church?" the Global Times asked.

"Many questions still need to be addressed, and we are facing them with willingness and determination. I am well aware that no one has it completely worked out ... but I can also say that we are committed to finding enduring solutions, which are acceptable to, and respectful of, all concerned," the cardinal said.

"Obviously, criticisms which come from prejudiced positions and which seem to seek to preserve old geopolitical balances are another matter," he added.

During the interview, the cardinal said the Vatican can cooperate with the Chinese government on issues of global importance such as peace initiatives and environmental emergencies.

Pope Francis, he added, sees "China not only as a great country but also as a great culture, rich in history and wisdom."

The interview disappointed some Catholics in mainland China, who said Parolin was praising the Chinese Communist Party via one of the regime's own propaganda outlets.