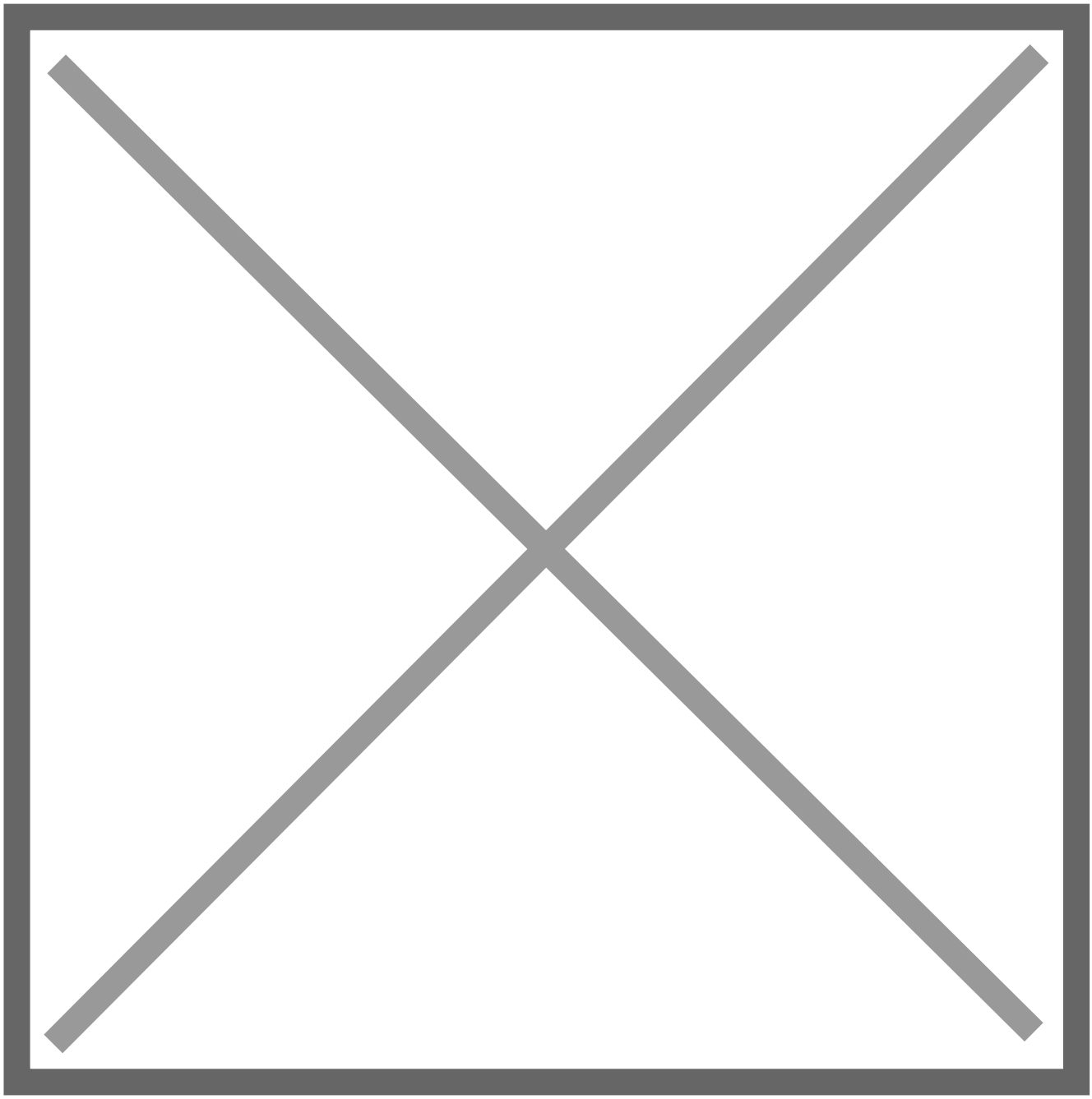
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by Catholic News Service

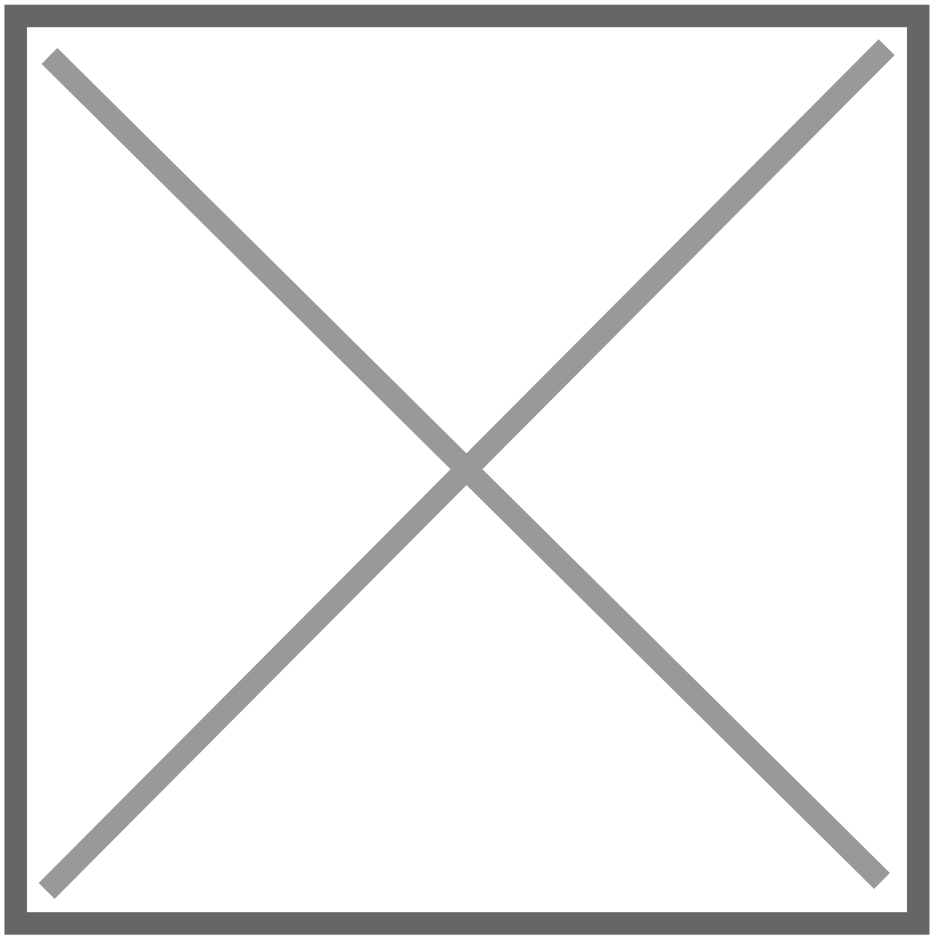
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Jesuit Fr. Stephen Chow, provincial of the Jesuits' Chinese province, was named bishop of Hong Kong by Pope Francis May 17, 2021. The 61-year-old bishop-designate was born in Hong Kong. He is pictured in a 2016 photo. (CNS photo/Don Doll, S.J., courtesy General Curia of the Society of Jesus)

Pope Francis has named Jesuit Fr. Stephen Chow Sau-yan, a native of Hong Kong and provincial of the Jesuits' Chinese province, to be the new bishop of Hong Kong.

The appointment of the 61-year-old Jesuit, who also serves as supervisor of the Jesuits' Wah Yan colleges in Hong Kong, was announced by the Vatican May 17.

In an article published in November in Hong Kong's Ming Pao Weekly magazine, Chow said one of his roles at the colleges is to be "a bridge" between members of the school community — both staff and students — who have divergent views on how much autonomy Hong Kong should have from the central Chinese government.

"Do you know how a bridge works?" Chow asked the magazine. "A bridge must be stepped over by people, so that it can bring people to the other side."

"Being a bridge, in a sense, entails bearing the burden. My words may not cater to both sides, but at least, it brings people from the two sides to come together in the middle. Otherwise, there is no future for society," he said, according to the English translation of the article, which was published on the Chinese province's website.

"In Wah Yan, everybody can speak what they want, any topic, as long as it is not propaganda but a discussion from different perspectives supported by convincing facts," he said.

Welcoming Bishop-designate Chow's appointment, Jesuit Fr. Arturo Sosa, superior general of the order, said, "I am happy that Father Stephen can continue to serve, and I wish him every blessing in this new ministry. The Jesuits are proud of our links with the Chinese people, which go back to the great missionary Matteo Ricci who had such a respect for Chinese culture."

At a book presentation at the Jesuit headquarters May 11, Sosa described the Chinese province as "very complex because it includes mainland China and also the island of Taiwan and Hong Kong and Macao."

"All together there are about 160 Jesuits in the catalogue and others who are not in the catalogue, who are basically in mainland China," Sosa said. While the 160 are distributed throughout the province, "the majority — especially the majority of the young — are in mainland China."

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Chow will take over from Cardinal John Tong Hon, former bishop of Hong Kong, who had been serving as apostolic administrator of the diocese since the death in January 2019 of Bishop Michael Yeung Ming-cheung.

Born Aug. 7, 1959, Chow attended the Wah Yan College in Hong Kong before enrolling at the University of Minnesota, where he earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and philosophy and a master's degree in educational psychology. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1984 and attended the novitiate in Dublin.

From September 1988 to August 1990, he taught at the Wah Yan College in Kowloon before beginning his theology studies at Holy Spirit Seminary College in Hong Kong. He was ordained to the priesthood in July 1994 at Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Hong Kong by the late Cardinal John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung.

In 1995, he completed his master's degree in organizational development at Loyola University in Chicago and again returned to Kowloon to teach at Wah Yan College; he also served as director of vocations for the Jesuits in Hong Kong.

He returned to the United States in 2000, and in 2006 completed his doctorate in human psychology and development at Harvard University.

Chow has been supervisor of both the Wah Yan colleges since 2006 and head of the Chinese province since 2017.