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Church distributes New Testaments for Olympic visitors

by UCA News

SHANGHAI, China -- In an effort to serve Christian visitors to the Beijing 2008 Olympics, the Catholic Church has distributed thousands of copies of the New Testament in English and Mandarin Chinese to hotels and churches in Beijing and other host cities.

Meanwhile, the Protestant Church has decided to print another 50,000 copies of its bilingual New Testament after having printed 50,000 earlier, according to a July 11 announcement on its website.

Anthony Liu Bainian, vice chairman of the Beijing-based Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), told UCA News the Church Affairs Commission of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC) has printed and distributed 30,000 copies of its black, hardcover Chinese-English edition.

The Protestant edition has the Beijing Olympics emblem on its cover, while the Catholic bible has the Beijing Olympics slogan, "One World One Dream," and the phrase "In Commemoration of the Beijing Olympic Games 2008" on its first page.

Also on the first page, the Church Affairs Commission thanks the United Bible Societies for publishing and funding this special edition. It also thanks Franciscan-run Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Hong Kong for permission to reprint its Chinese New Testament translation. The English text is from New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

Liu told UCA News on July 29 that the ecumenical United Bible Societies helped in various ways, such as supplying special paper for printing the pages.

He added that the CCPA and the BCCCC have issued a notice to all mainland dioceses urging them to hold Masses on the opening and the closing days of the Beijing Olympics, Aug. 8 and 24 respectively.

According to the CCPA official, 3,000,000 Catholics across the country have prayed for God's blessings on the games since April 30, the start of the 100-day countdown to the event.

A meeting to prepare local Churches for the games, chaired by Liu and attended by Catholic representatives from Beijing and co-host cities on the mainland, took place at the CCPA office in Beijing on July 15. Yuan Suo of the United Front Work Department, under the Communist Party of China, was also present.

Besides Beijing, the other cities on the mainland co-hosting events are Qingdao, Qinhuangdao, Shanghai, Shenyang and Tianjin. Hong Kong is co-hosting the equestrian events outside the mainland.

Catholic sources told UCA News that during the meeting, the issue of dealing with the press was highlighted. Church people were told that in such interactions, they are to promote the Olympic spirit, and to state the nation's religious policy and the Church's positive development since the 1980s.

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According to China's official People's Daily Online, the Olympic committee has announced that more than 26,000 reporters would be coming to China from around the world to cover the event.

The July meeting also discussed the issue of Tianjin's underground Catholics praying before the Marian grotto outside Xikai Cathedral. Tianjin is 110 kilometers southeast of Beijing.

Catholic sources said participants were told that Church workers have to maintain order in churches during the games and must seek assistance from the religious affairs or public security departments if necessary.

In Tianjin, which is co-hosting soccer matches, Catholics told UCA News the BCCCC has given them 2,000 copies of the bilingual New Testament to be displayed at designated Church venues and hotels for Olympic athletes and visitors.

Shanghai diocese, on the other hand, has printed 20,000 copies of its own bilingual New Testament to serve visitors. The city is also co-hosting soccer matches. This edition, printed by the diocesan-run Guangqi Research Center, uses text from the New Jerusalem Bible and a Chinese-language translation made by the Sheshan seminary.

Father Jean Tian Yuanxiang, chief editor of Guangqi, told UCA News recently that some hotels placed orders for the bilingual New Testament last year.

The government is also reaching out to Muslim visitors. An online program on China Radio International Online (<http://gb.cri.cn>) called Beijing Olympic-Muslim Guide uses articles, maps and photographs to give information on Olympic venues, the Beijing metro, mosques and Muslim restaurants in the capital. The site also gives details of Muslim prayer times.

Languages used include Arabic, Hausa, Indonesian, Malay, Persian, Pushtu and Turkish.

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