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TAIWAN: CARDINAL PAUL SHAN PUBLISHES AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Cardinal Paul Shan published his autobiography, "Living Love - The Story of Cardinal Paul Shan," on March 21, just days after celebrating the 54th year of his priestly ordination. He tells about his long battle with cancer and pastoral experiences. Proceeds of the booksale will help the construction of the pastoral complex, "Beatitudes Park," which the Cardinal is promoting. Cardinal Shan was archbishop of Kaohsiung, president of the Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference of Taiwan, and chair of the Episcopal Commission for Evangelization. He was former chairman of the FABC-Office of Social Communication, and at one time responsible for the Mandarin section of Radio Veritas Asia. (FIDES)

INDIA: 'A PRIEST'S OPINION CAN'T BE CONSIDERED OFFICIAL CHURCH TEACHING'

Archbishop Bernard Moras of Bangalore has published an article in SAR News on March 23 in defense of his priest, Fr. Joseph Menezes, who was questioned in the Justice Somashekara Inquiry Commission, tasked to look into the causes that led to the recent attacks on churches in India. The archbishop expressed concern about the excessive inquiries thrown by advocates of various Hindu organizations in the commission. The *Holy Bible* was quoted out of context. The volley of questions has also subtly generated answers from Fr. Joseph which are contrary to what the universal Catholic Church teaches. In the article, the archbishop said "the opinion of an individual, be it a priest, religious or layperson, cannot be construed as official Church teaching." He also clarified the misunderstanding that Catholics worship idols. The Christian's mandate to "proclaim" the faith should not be construed as "aggressive attempts to convert and Christianize the country." "The Church does not indulge in any coercion and/or allurements, and respects peoples of all faiths," the archbishop said. (SAR NEWS)

PHILIPPINES: CHURCH WORKERS URGE GUIDANCE ON YOUTH'S MOBILE PHONE USE

Church youth workers in northern Luzon are concerned about young people needing more guidance and formation as accessing pornography and sex-related materials has become easy through mobile phones. The coordinator of Laoag Diocesan Youth Commission, Rommel Sagucio, said the exchange of sex videos through mobile phones has been going on, even involving a civic youth leader in one case. Fr. Nolasco Pascua, director of the Catechetical Commission of Laoag Diocese, says the faith of young people needs to be strengthened so as to become their foundation of moral values. According to the online Philippines Mobile Market Overview and 2007-2010 Forecast report, 60 percent of the population, about 55 million Filipinos, have subscribed to mobile phone services. (UCANEWS)

CHINA: SINGING PRIEST DEDICATES SONG TO BISHOP UNDER HOUSE ARREST

Father Dominic Zan Yiqian, of Zhouzhi diocese in Shaani province, has released his first music VCD (video compact disc) which includes a song he composed to encourage Bishop Joseph Wu Qijing who has been under house arrest since November 2007. *Zhujiào, Nín hǎo* (Hello Bishop) is one of 12 Chinese Catholic songs in the VCD titled *Zànzhū Sòng'en* (Praise the Lord and Sing His Grace) released in late February. (SE)

VATICAN: HOLY SEE WEBSITE OPENS CHINESE SECTION

The official website of the Holy See in the Vatican, at www.vatican.va, was enhanced by the addition of a new section in Chinese. Chinese is the eighth language to be represented on the website, along with Italian, English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese and Latin. Church documents including Papal texts in both traditional and simplified Chinese characters are now available online. (FIDES)



SRI LANKA: CATHOLIC WRITER'S WORKSHOP

Some 25 budding writers from different parts of the country gathered at the Archbishop's House in Colombo on March 10 for a workshop on Christian writing. Members of the National Catholic Writers' Association (NCWA) served as facilitators of different sessions. Renowned writers Calistus Jayamanne, Hector Welgampola and others led the group to explore writing as a means of evangelization. The workshop was organized by the bishops' commission for social communication headed by Fr. Sriyananda Fernando, the Sri Lankan Church's national director for social communication. (UCANEWS)

MALAYSIA: GOV'T NOW ALLOWS USE OF 'ALLAH' IN CHRISTIAN BOOKS

The government has softened an earlier ban on the use of the word "Allah" by Christian publications to refer to God and is allowing them to use it as long as they specify the material is not for Muslims. The government had earlier argued that the use of Allah in Christian texts might confuse Muslims, who might think Allah refers to their God. The resulting dispute between the government and readers and publishers of the Catholic newspaper "The Herald" in Kuala Lumpur has become symbolic of increasing religious tensions in Malaysia, where 60 percent of the 27 million are Muslim Malays. A third of the population is ethnic Chinese and Indian, and many of them practise Christianity. (MB)

INDIA: FILM ON LIFE OF FR. FRANCIS CONVERTINI

The film-bio of Salesian Fr. Francis Convertini of Krishnagar was released at the Cathedral Hall, Krishnagar March 14. Bishop Joseph Suren Gomes of Krishnagar headed the showing of the film titled "Fr. Francis Convertini." He recalled the work of the priest in Krishnagar, especially with non-Christians, which made him a popular figure in the diocese. Convertini was born in southern Italy in 1898. He took part in World War I, and was imprisoned before joining the Salesians of Don Bosco. He came to India in December 1927 as a missionary, and was ordained priest in June 1935. He spent the rest of his life in Krishnagar until his death on February 11, 1976. (SAR NEWS)

INDONESIA: JUDICIAL REVIEW OF PORNOGRAPHY LAW

More than 1,000 lay Catholics, priests and seminarians in Catholic-majority East Nusa Tenggara have issued a statement on March 14 urging public support for a judicial review of a controversial anti-pornography law approved last October. "Many citizens worry how much of a negative impact the law might bring about," the statement said. It is argued that the law's definition of "pornography" is not clear. It is also perceived to target cultural heritage. Traditional works of artists, particularly Minahasa artists, who explicitly show artistic nude design, may be classified as "pornographic." The law was already used by West Java Governor Ahmad Heryawan as a legal basis to forbid Jaipong dancers from wearing "sexy" costumes and dancing "provocative(ly)." (CNUA)

CAMBODIA: CENTER FOR COMMUNICATION

The Center for Social Communications of the Church in Cambodia has bared plans to enhance its programs to give the Christian message a better presence in society. Under the direction of Colombian Missioner Fr. Omer Giraldo, the center has established a newspaper titled "The Messenger," produced weekly radio shows, a website and film documentaries. In March, the Apostolic Vicar of Phnom Penh, Bishop Emile Destombes has announced the turnover of the center's leadership to Mr. Ly Sovanna and Ms. Keo Kagna, as director and vice-director respectively. They will be accompanied by Fr. Paul Roeung Chat Chy of the Foreign Missionaries of Thailand. Bishop Destombes said the center will be guided by the needs for formation, collaboration and dialogue in the years to come. (FIDES)

PHILIPPINES: WEBSITE AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The online magazine "Newsbreak" has launched a new version on March 5 to tackle human trafficking in the country. The website at <www.humantraffickinginasia.net> was upgraded from its 2007 version, inviting activists, law enforcers, trafficking victims and others to combat the crime. An online forum helps migrants and potential migrants determine if they have been or are being trafficked. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has called for stronger government response and punishment for people taking advantage of others' poverty, and the buying and selling of human organs. (UCANEWS)

INDIA: VATICAN APPLAUDS "SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE"

L'Osservatore Romano has commended the granting of an Oscar award to "Slumdog Millionaire" for best motion picture of 2008. The film is "interesting and exemplary, artistic and productive," wrote journalist Luca Pellegrini in the Vatican's daily newspaper. The plot embodies "feelings and truth with which everyone can easily identify," Pellegrini said. The multi-award winning film tells the story of a Mumbai teenager who participates in a TV game show that could make him a millionaire. The director, Danny Boyle, was a student of a Salesian school in Bolton, England. (CNUA)

VIETNAM: HANOI MEDIA AGAINST CATHOLICS OF THAI HA

Catholics of Thai Ha in Hanoi, who were charged in December 2008 of "damaging state property" and "disorderly conduct" for participating in prayer vigils calling for "justice" and the restitution of land confiscated from the Church, have requested the newspaper *Ha Noi Moi* and *Vietnam Television 1* to correct erroneous reports against them. The two media outlets reported that "all of those charged admitted their guilt," whereas in court, the defendants and witnesses said they were not guilty. In reply, *Ha Noi Moi* on February 27 refused to correct what it had published. The following day, the online edition of the newspaper published an article accusing the plaintiffs of refusing to "wake up to reality." A week later, on March 5, Vietnam Television 1 rejected the request. (ASIA NEWS)

VATICAN: MEDIA FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

This year's annual meeting of the "Joint Committee for Dialogue" between the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and the Cairo-based Permanent Committee of al-Azhar for Dialogue among Monotheistic Religions was held in Rome on February 24-25. The theme of the meeting, "The Promotion of a Pedagogy and Culture of Peace with Particular Reference to the Role of Religions," was presented from the Catholic side by Prof. Bernard Sabella of Bethlehem University, and Sheikh Ali Shahata from the Islamic side. The eight-point agreement issued at the end of the meeting includes a provision on the media's "major role and responsibility in the promotion of positive and respectful relations among the faithful of various religions." The Joint Committee for Dialogue was instituted in 1998. (VIS)

**KOREA: CAMPAIGN FOR LIFE THRU FILM**

The Justice and Peace Commission of the Korean Bishops' Conference and the Commission for Life of Seoul Archdiocese have recently decided to produce short films that promote life. The planned videos will focus on the unborn, abortion and embryos, and hope to explain the Church's related teachings. The videos will be used for a nation-wide campaign in parishes, on television and the Internet. The launching is foreseen for October 10, 2009, to mark the "International Day for the Abolition of the Death Penalty." As part of the Korean Church's thrust to promote a culture of life, the International Life Academy was opened in 2008. (FIDES)

INDIA: LENTEN DRAMA ENCOURAGES CATHOLICS

Some 5,000 people witnessed a drama about Saint Paul's conversion on March 8 in Mangalore as part of St. Anne Parish's Lenten program. Bishop Aloysius Paul D'Souza of Mangalore opened the show. He described it as a "call for inner conversion and strengthening of faith." He said the drama would help Christians in Karnataka state to "strengthen their faith and face persecutions." It would also encourage them to become "more ardent" in missionary work. Karnataka witnessed a number of violent attacks against Christians after the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party came to power in May 2008. (UCANEWS)