

# CHINA: Mgr Peter Shao Zhumin back in Wenzhou but under control

*The prelate and Fr Jiang Sunian were taken away to prevent them from attending the funeral of Mgr Zhu Weifang. The Vatican has confirmed Mgr Shao as bishop of Wenzhou. The faithful have been urged to stay calm.*

AsiaNews.it (11.10.2016) – <http://bit.ly/2dZB0uJ> – Sources told AsiaNews that police took Mgr Peter Shao Zhumin (right, 1st photo) back to Wenzhou last Saturday (8 October) at 4.30 pm. His secretary (and diocese chancellor), Fr Paul Jiang Sunian (left, 1st photo), was with him. The Holy See recognises Mgr Bishop Shao; the government does not.

Police had taken the two clergymen, members of the diocese's underground community, on a trip, to Qinghai in the bishop's case, to Yunnan in his secretary's case.

Their "involuntary" holiday, more like an abduction, began on 23 August and was designed to keep the prelate away from the funeral of the city's bishop, Mgr Vincent Zhu Weifang, who passed away on 7 September.

From a canonical point of view, Mgr Shao, as ordained coadjutor bishop (with right of succession), is expected to replace the late Mgr Zhu with a mandate from the Holy See.

In a statement on 21 September, the Holy See Press Office, noted that "In accordance with canon law, Bishop Peter Shao Zhumin, coadjutor of the same diocese, succeeds the deceased prelate."

At present however, the bishop cannot perform his pastoral functions and is subject to police control.

In the diocese, both official and underground Catholics hold Mgr Shao in high esteem. The latter has had to endure imprisonment for his faith.

After a period of strong divisions between the official and underground communities, the two have seen acts of rapprochement and reconciliation even though, as one Catholic in Wenzhou noted, "the local government does everything to keep us divided".

In view of the situation, local Catholics have been urged to stay calm, to further their reconciliation and avoid giving the authorities any opportunity to retaliate or use violence.

Many believers fear that the government, regardless of Vatican canonical directives, will appoint another bishop, splitting again the Church in Wenzhou.