

2014

# Catholic Seminarians Boycott Graduation from Beijing Seminary

Anthony E. Clark

Whitworth University, [aclark@whitworth.edu](mailto:aclark@whitworth.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.whitworth.edu/historyfaculty>

---

## Recommended Citation

Clark, Anthony E. , "Catholic Seminarians Boycott Graduation from Beijing Seminary" Whitworth University (2014). *History Faculty Scholarship*. Paper 31.

<http://digitalcommons.whitworth.edu/historyfaculty/31>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the History at Whitworth University. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Whitworth University.

## **Catholic Seminarians Boycott Graduation from Beijing Seminary**

By Anthony E. Clark, Ph.D.

19 July 2014

China's Catholic community reeled recently as news spread that Beijing's seminarians had boycotted their graduation ceremony, scheduled for late June. The decision was made after the seminarians discovered that the illegitimate – and excommunicated – rector of the seminary, Bishop Ma Yinglin, was scheduled to offer the graduation Mass. When the students voiced their objection to assisting at a Mass celebrated by a bishop who is not in communion with the Pope, the seminary officials suggested replacing Bishop Ma with Bishop John Fang Xingyao, who serves on the Seminary's board of directors. Bishop Fang, however, also serves as the chairman of China's Catholic Patriotic Association, and since he participated in the consecrations of other illicit bishops in China, the seminarians again refused participation. These tensions follow soon after Bishop Fang had announced in an interview with the *South China Morning Post* that at last China "hopes China-Vatican relations will be normalized soon."

Bishop Ma was made the rector of Beijing's seminary in 2010, but until now he has only issued diplomas at the seminarian's annual graduation ceremonies; the seminarians were reportedly very disappointed when they were informed that an excommunicated bishop would be celebrating their graduation liturgy. The boycott precipitated swift reactions from the authorities. Rumors began to spread that some courses for priests and religious sisters would be suspended beginning next academic year, and more severe, all of the seminarians were ordered home with no hope of returning to the seminary. Just as China, like most countries, struggles to attract vocations, Beijing's Catholic diocese will now face the possibility of several years with few, if any, ordinations.

The seminarians presented an open letter to the seminary's officials that represents well the sentiments of China's current generation of young Catholic faithful: "We do not want to go against the Pope, and this will mean no longer becoming priests. At least we will have a clean soul, in communion with the universal Church and united in love of Christ."

### **Image:**

Beijing Catholic Theological Seminary (天主教神學學院)