

## 'Underground' Hebei Bishop Detained By Security Officers On Last Day Of Olympics

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Underground Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding was taken away from his residence by public security officers and government officials on the closing day of the Beijing Olympics.

Bishop Julius Jia Zhiguo of Zhengding in Hebei province, China (Photo taken in mid-2005)

A Catholic source told UCA News that the 73-year-old bishop was resting in his room in the Christ the King Cathedral compound and talking with some Catholics there when the officers took him away at 11:20 a.m. Zhengding diocese is in Hebei province, which mostly surrounds Beijing.

The incident, the source said, occurred after the prelate celebrated Sunday Mass on Aug. 24 at the cathedral in Wuqiu, a village near Shijiazhuang, the provincial capital, 270 kilometers southwest of Beijing.

The officers, from the Shijiazhuang area, told the Catholics at the scene that the authorities have arranged "a summer tour for the bishop" and that "he will not be back soon," the source added.

Some of the hundreds of Catholics who attended the bishop's Mass that morning were still in the cathedral and saw security officers lead Bishop Jia away.

A press release from the United States-based Cardinal Kung Foundation dated Aug. 24 said "six government officials in two automobiles arrested Bishop Jia" at the cathedral at about 10:45 a.m.

As of Aug. 25, the prelate, who is in ill health, has been under house arrest in Shijiazhuang, the source told UCA News.

Local Catholics do not know the reasons for removing their bishop, the source said, but surmise that it could be linked to the upcoming Paralympic Games in Beijing, which run Sept. 6-17. Bishop Jia runs an orphanage that also cares for disabled children, the source noted.

Earlier, on Aug. 15, Bishop Jia had presided in Wuqiu at the Mass celebrating the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Mother. More than 1,000 Catholics attended even though public security officers had warned Catholics in the diocese to stay away from the feast-day Mass at the cathedral.

**Underground Catholics reject affiliation with government-approved administrative structures for the Church.**

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