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Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-hsi

Chinese cardinal who considered cancer “A blessing”, dies in Taiwan

When asked if he was afraid of dying, the revered Chinese Cardinal Paul Shan always responded, “No! Dying is falling into the loving arms of God”

Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-hsi, the oldest of the three Chinese members of the College of Cardinals, died in a hospital in Taipei, Taiwan, on August 22, after a six-year struggle with cancer.

On hearing of his death, Chinese Catholics worldwide prayed for him at masses in Taiwan, across mainland China, as well as in Hong, Macau and many other places, while Taiwan’s President Ma Ying Jiu and other civil and religious leaders payed high

tribute to this greatly revered holy man.

“Like Blessed John Paul II he was an example of how to live and how to prepare to meet the Lord”; a religious sister who had worked closely with him told me. She recalled how when people asked him if he was afraid to die, he always responded: “No! Dying is falling into the loving arms of God.” He had battled against lung cancer since 2006. When in the spring of this year he was informed that

the cancer had spread to his brain, he moved from Kaohsiung to Taipei for further treatment, including cyber-knife surgery. It was the final stage in his long “farewell to life”, a journey conducted with deep faith and trust in God that has made him famous and greatly revered throughout Taiwan, mainland China and the Chinese speaking world.

He considered the cancer a “blessing” that had opened many doors and enabled him to explain the Catholic faith to non-Christians in Taiwan, where 97% of the population is non-Christian. “Many people are surprised that I am not afraid of death, and facing death I am still so calm. So they want to listen to me”, he told me.

Invitations kept arriving, and he decided to give priority to three categories: intellectuals like university scholars and doctors, condemned criminals in prison, and religious groups - including Buddhist, Taoists, Protestant and Catholics. “I have explained our Catholic faith to non-Christians much more in these years than I did in 60 years as a Jesuit”, he said.

When on 5 February 2007, for example, 100 lung-cancer specialists asked him, “what means besides medicine do you use?”, he replied, “One that you haven’t paid attention to - my faith!” He told them;

“My faith, Christianity, is very simple. Just one word, love, because God is love and the nature of God is immense love.”

He explained that he was “not afraid of death, because I know that after death I will enjoy the eternal life of God, which is a life of immense love.”

Cardinal Shan was born in Puyang, in north-eastern Henan province on 3 December 1923. He joined the Jesuits in Beijing in 1946 and took his first vows there in September 1948, but was sent out of mainland China to study for the priesthood just before the Communists came to power in 1949. Following his priestly ordination in the Philippines, he was sent to study at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. Afterwards he was sent to work first in Vietnam and then in Taiwan where he spent the rest of his life, serving as bishop first in Hualien and then Kaohsiung. John Paul II made him a cardinal in 1998 – the fifth Chinese cardinal in the history of the Church. That same year Shan was “General Relator” at the Synod for Asia, and in 2007 Pope Benedict appointed him a member

of the papal Commission for the Church in China, whose situation was always close to his heart.

Since the early 1980s, Beijing has warmly welcomed cardinals from Italy, Belgium, France, Scotland, USA, the Philippines and Vietnam, but it has showed no such readiness to allow the only two living Chinese cardinals who were born in the mainland - Paul Shan Kuo-hsi and Hong Kong’s Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, to visit the land of their birth .

Beijing only once allowed Shan to return to the mainland – in 1979. He dearly wanted to return there one last time before he died, and meet again his younger sister and other family members but the Chinese authorities refused to grant him a visa in 2011 because he would not accept their condition that he should go to Beijing too. He knew that if he went there his visit could be manipulated for political reasons by having him meet people in leadership positions in the government established bodies that control the life of the Catholic Church in China.

Ever a man of principle, this great soul was not willing to make such a compromise to obtain a visa. Months later, while visiting the closest point between Taiwan and mainland China, he looked across the straits and raising his hand, waved and said, “Goodbye my sister, we will meet in heaven!”

In an interview with me in Rome, March 2007, he expressed optimism about the future of the Church in the mainland because, he said, “We are in the hands of God, and from history we know that no dictatorial regime will last forever!”



Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo - hsi

*This article was written by Gerard O’Connell , Rome Vatican Insider
www.vaticaninsider.com
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Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin

Full text of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin of Shanghai's Vote of thanks

Most Respectful His Excellency Bishop Jin, All the brothers and sisters:

Greetings to all of you.

Heavenly Father, thank you for your blessing. You have given me countless grace, and today you have chosen me, a very humble man, a weak one.

I thank God for His grace. Today, thank you Bishop Jin, under such hot weather (34 degree Celsius), came to ordain me. I also thank the other two co-consecrators Bishop Xu and Bishop Shen. Bishop Jin, I wholeheartedly accept your laying of hands and your blessings.

Thank you for all bishops and priests, as well as all the seminarians, sisters and the faithful in the church, especially those traveled here from afar. Your presence has given me confidence and strength. During this time, you have incessantly prayed for our diocese and for me, a humble and small one with shallow knowledge. My parents and the elderly in the family have nurtured me since childhood with our Church tradition and faith. Since I entered the seminary, I have been following the traditional Church education that our ancestors and predecessors observed. I will work hard and dedicate my whole life to follow the example of Jesus and to become a Good Shepherd.

May I also thank those priests, sisters, seminarians and laypeople who have not been in this Eucharist, because of limitation of seats or of other reasons. God does not see the appearance but understands one's heart, and justice is revealed there.

Man proposes, but it is God who will make things happen. I would like to let you know: I love you! Please pray for each other! (Long applause.)

The motto of my coat-of-arms came from two famous quotations. The first one is what Bishop Jin always taught us during our seminary days. It is a quote borrowed from Saint Ignatius - "*For the Greater Glory of God*" (*Ad majorem Dei gloriam*). In this present moment, in this place, we have to choose a way that will serve God with greater glory.

The second quotation I selected is "*We are one*". I hope everyone, in our heart, will respond to Jesus Christ's teachings to the Apostles:

"May all be one!"

I will spend my whole life to strive for unity.

In the light of the teaching of Our Mother Church, as I now serve as a bishop, I should focus on the pastoral work and evangelization. It is inconvenient for me to take on certain responsibilities. Therefore, from this day of consecration, I will no longer be convenient to be a member of the Patriotic Association. (Warm applause resounded through the church, over and over again; many participants were moved to tears!)

May we be one. For the Greater Glory of God!

AsiaNews
www.asianews.it
9 July 2012



Photo: UCANEWS

Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin

Shanghai has a new courageous Bishop

Shanghai's new bishop showed great courage by announcing that he will not hold any position in the Patriotic Association

Shanghai has a new bishop - Thaddeus Ma Daqin. He was ordained with the approval of Pope Benedict XVI and the Government of the People's Republic of China on July 7.

Showing courage and leadership, Bishop Ma told the congregation of more than 1200 people present at the ceremony—including government officials – that he would no longer hold any position in the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA). At the time of his ordination he was vice-chairman of Shanghai CCPA and a member of the national CCPA's standing committee.

The CCPA was created by the Beijing Government in the late 1950s to control the Catholic Church in the mainland, but Benedict XVI stated clearly in

his 2007 letter to Catholics in China that this association is “incompatible” with Catholic doctrine.

“After today's ordination, I will devote every effort to Episcopal ministry. It is inconvenient for me to serve the CCPA post anymore,” Bishop Ma told the congregation.

The more than 1000 Catholics present in the Cathedral broke into long and thunderous applause at his announcement, UCA News reported. It was the first time in recent memory – and perhaps ever - that a bishop of the ‘open’ Church community had made such an audacious statement at his ordination.

The 96-year old Jesuit Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, who heads the ‘open’ Church community

in this megalopolis of 23 million people and is in communion with the Pope, was the main celebrant at this solemn event in St Ignatius Cathedral, at which five other bishops – four of them recognized by the Holy See - participated.

Bishop Jin was the first to lay hands on the man who is destined to succeed him. He was assisted by Bishop Joseph Xu Honggen (Suzhou) and Joseph Shen Bin (Haimen), who also laid hands on Ma.

There were three other bishops present at the ceremony - Joseph Cai Bingrui (Xiamen), John Baptist Li Suguang (Nanchang), and the illicitly ordained Vincent Zhan Silu (Mindong), but significantly they did not lay hands on Ma, UCA News reported. This seems to have

been the result of a compromise reached earlier, because before the event many Catholics were concerned that Bishop Zhan would have laid hands on the new pastor. By doing so he avoided creating problems and embarrassment for the Catholic community.

Still, as UCA News reported, most of the 86 priests of Shanghai's "open" Church community avoided being present at the celebration with the illicit bishop. Indeed, only 30 priests concelebrated the mass and of these 12 were from the diocese. Bishop Ma referred to this in his speech when he said.

"Because of special reasons, many diocesan priests and nuns did not come here. I love you so much. You are my strength". These, like his earlier words, were well received by the priests, sources say.

Before the ceremony in the Cathedral, some 30 diocesan priests gathered at the chapel of Bishop's House adjacent to the cathedral to witness the reading of his appointment by the Pope and his profession of faith, UCA News reported.

He is now a bishop of the Catholic Church in Shanghai which is composed of two communities - one "open" and recognized by the Government, the other 'underground' and not recognized. All together it has more than 100 priests and 150,000 Catholics.

With this ordination Shanghai now has four Catholic bishops - Aloysius Jin Luxian, Thaddeus Ma Daqin, Joseph Xing Wenzhi and Joseph Fan Zhongliang. All

are in communion with the Holy See. Bishop Fan 94, however, is head of the 'underground' Church community and so not recognized by the Government; he has been ill for some time and has lived under surveillance for many years.

The Holy See considers Fan as the ordinary of the diocese and Jin as the coadjutor. Aware of this complex situation, Ma in his speech said he was "ordained as an auxiliary" bishop, even though the government and 'open' Church community consider he was ordained coadjutor. In actual fact, many in Rome recognize that Ma will succeed Jin.



*This article was written by Gerard O'Connell, Rome Vatican Insider
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The Xujiahui Cathedral in Shanghai

Will China disqualify Shanghai's new Bishop?

The authorities that control the Catholic Church in China allege that the election and the ordination of the courageous Bishop Ma Daqin could have broken their rules. Does this mean they want to disqualify him?



Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin

The Chinese authorities that control the life of the Catholic Church in mainland China have opened an investigation into the ordination of the courageous new bishop of Shanghai, Thaddeus Ma Daqin, in what appears to be an attempt to disqualify him from functioning as a bishop in the country.

In a statement published on their website, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and the Bishops Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC), charged that the ordination of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin at Saint Ignatius Cathedral, Shanghai, on July 7, has “allegedly seriously violated the BCCCC’s regulations with regard to bishops’ election and ordination”. The news was reported by UCA News on July 11.

This is quite an extraordinary move, however, given that these same authorities were directly involved in the organization and arrangement of Ma’s election as candidate to be bishop and the actual ordination ceremony. Moreover, the head of the state-sanctioned ‘open’ Church community in Shanghai is Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, who is an honorary vice president of these bodies. The fact that they have decided to hold an investigation, however, reflects how seriously these authorities consider Bishop Ma’s announcement at the ordination ceremony in which he distanced himself from the CCPA.

“After today’s ordination, I will devote every effort to Episcopal ministry. It is inconvenient for me to serve the CCPA post anymore”, he said then.

By resigning from the positions he held on the local and national bodies at that time, and by stating that as a bishop he would no longer hold any other post in the CCPA, the government officials feared he had set an example that other bishops could follow in coming years. That was more than they could tolerate.

The CCPA and the BCCC are entities established by the Chinese Government to control the Catholic Church in the mainland, but they are not recognized by the Holy See. Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2007 Letter to Catholics in China, said the CCPA is “incompatible” with Catholic Doctrine.

“The five bishops” who participated in the ordination of Bishop Ma “have been summoned to Beijing to give an account of it” a Church source in Shanghai, who wished to remain anonymous, told UCA News.

Liu Bainain, the honorary vice-president of the CCPA was quoted by Hong Kong’s Ming Pao newspaper as saying that he is awaiting the results of the investigation of Bishop Ma.

As a further sign of how concerned the Chinese authorities are officials of the Communist Party of China’s United Work Front department which oversees religious affairs in the country were expected to meet with representatives of the CCPA and BCCCC on July 11, UCA News reported that same day.

All this makes it abundantly clear that Bishop Ma has crossed a red line that the Beijing government officials and state religious authorities consider totally unacceptable. In their view, he has taken a step too far. They consider him as a serious challenge to their whole system of control of the Catholic Church. It is something they cannot allow.

Although Bishop Ma’s statement took them by surprise, they retaliated rapidly. Within hours of the ordination ceremony unidentified men took the new bishop away to an unknown destination. The following day, July 8, reports said he had arrived at the seminary in Sheshan on the outskirts

of Shanghai, but there is as yet no independent confirmation of this. Questions are also being raised as to the authenticity of a message the bishop is alleged to have sent from the seminary to the priests and nuns of the diocese of Shanghai on Sunday.

One thing is certain. Bishop Ma is no longer a free man. He has lost his freedom of movement and freedom of speech, and he has lost his religious freedom. It is not known if he is under house arrest, or if he is actually detained. It is not known when he will regain these fundamental freedoms.

A close friend of Bishop Ma’s told the BBC in Shanghai that Ma has been forced to undertake “a period of reflection” that might last for months. “He has chosen belief over freedom”, the friend said.

Catholics throughout China are concerned and praying for Bishop Ma’s release, and a protest was held outside the Beijing Government’s Liaison Office in Hong Kong by the diocese’s Justice and Peace Commission demanding that too.

“We protest here because we feel very angry about Bishop Ma being detained and also surrounded by public security officers” Patrick Poon, a member of the Justice and Peace Commission, told the Hong Kong media.

“We call for the Chinese government to release him immediately and also to respect his willingness not to join the Catholic Patriotic Association anymore”, he added.

The emeritus Bishop of Hong Kong, Cardinal Joseph Zen joined the protestors. He had taught Ma in the seminary in Sheshan before becoming bishop of Hong Kong, and now called on the Beijing Government to release his former pupil, who was ordained auxiliary bishop of Shanghai, with the Pope’s approval

This article was written by Gerard O’Connell, Rome Vatican Insider

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Five major challenges facing the Church

'Faith is not just a beautiful adornment added to our lives; it encompasses our entire lives. Truth is not a set of ideas or theories, but personal realities for which one can live and die.' This article presents a detailed analysis of the challenges facing the church in today's society. It was originally posted on the Sina blog of Xing Ping-huang, and later re-posted on the Gospel Times website.

Throughout the nearly two thousand years since its establishment, the church has faced a vast array of countless challenges. But in the wake of such trials, the church's proclamation of the gospel is shown to be all the more reliable and true. Humanity has recently entered the post-modern era, and the church thus faces new challenges. It is necessary for workers within the church to give thought and attention to these challenges as well as how they should be dealt with. In his sermon, a preacher summarized five challenges facing the church today. I believe that his assessment demonstrates great foresight and taps into the pulse of this age / captures the tenor of the time. I would like to share some of my understanding and analysis.

The first challenge: ***declaring truth to be relative.***

One of the earmarks of the post-modern age is the sabotage of absolute truth and the deconstruction of all things, the belief that nothing is absolute save relativity itself / save the fact that all things are relative. It is not difficult to see the logical contradiction inherent in such

deconstructionism. Humanity needs absolute truth. Because of this need, they declare truth to be relative and overturn its sovereignty in order to establish their own. They find the claims of Christianity unacceptable – including statements such as 'salvation is found in no one else' and Jesus' own words that 'I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.' They conclude that Christianity is an expression of self-proclaimed bigotry and dismiss the religion entirely. This is, to no surprise, a product of post-modernism.

What post-modernists can and do accept, however, is the belief that all religions are one, that 'all roads lead to Rome,' that every religion contains and represents truth. In laymen's terms, they do not talk about who's the good guy and who's the bad guy, or who's right and who's wrong. They believe that there is no 'better' or 'best'. After all, everything is good and right to begin with. So long as one exercises sincerity in one's belief, everyone will reach the 'other side' – be it eternal life, heaven, the Celestial City, or Nirvana – for they're all one and the same. The dilution and

blurring of absolute truth has created a major challenge for the church's proclamation of truth.

The second challenge: ***the personalization of morals.***

Error in the area of truth will always show up in the area of morality. In the post-modern era, many reject a universal system of values with the claim that there is no standard view of morality – that is, you have your morals, and I have mine. Every individual needs only to rely on his or her own conscience. You have your conscience, and I have mine. You have your moral standards, and I have mine. You have your moral baseline, and I have mine. Do not impose upon me your moral requirements, and I will not impose mine upon you. This, they believe, is mutual respect and personal freedom.

But does not the very word 'conscience' (Chinese: 'Heaven Goodness') indicate that it is sourced not in the individual but is rather a kind of 'knowledge' ('science') associated with Heaven and sourced in God? God created every nation of mankind to cover all the face of the earth

(Acts 17:26), and he has called every nation and people on the earth to walk according to the conscience he gave them. Thus there are convictions regarding values and morals which are universally shared. The personalization of morals overlooks one's innate knowledge of morality, serving only to bring self-respect and self-love but failing to consider others. It encourages individuals to seek whatever their hearts should fancy. As the Scripture says, 'Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.'

**The third challenge:
*the privatization of belief.***

There is privacy in belief. In China, the constitution guarantees the right of every individual to have freedom of religion. You can believe whatever you want, whenever you want, and no one can interfere. Belief deals with the arena of subjective thought and is by nature free and unfettered. But the so-called 'privatization of belief' says that your belief must stay put in your heart; it must not show up in the home, workplace, neighborhood, or internet, etc. It says that you must not use your beliefs to express your mind, much less use your religious standards to cast moral judgment on social phenomena. Contradicting religious freedom and inhibiting the free expression thereof, this kind of 'privatization' is, in actuality, a violation of the constitution.

**The fourth challenge:
*the consumption of religion.***

One of the patent characteristics of post-modernity is a consumer culture. Everything is consumed and consumable, whether it is sacred or secular. (Of course,

the first thing post-modernism does is to do away with the sacred by undercutting it and bringing it down to earth.) 'I consume, therefore I am.' The value of all things, people included, is validated only when consumed. The Christian religion is no exception. Church attendees seek to use all that the church offers in order to satisfy their own wants and needs. Everything is liable to be taken advantage of, whether it's the preacher, the choir, the deacons, or even God himself. It is akin to being a church consumer: if the church doesn't satisfy one's appetite or meet one's goal, the consumer utters complaint, casts blame, and finds a new place to 'go shopping.' Such a person has no intention to serve and no sense of commitment. This is one of the formidable challenges facing the church.

**The fifth challenge:
*the secularization of life.***

The Bible speaks to this post-modern age full of material and personal desire: 'Men will be lovers of pleasure, not lovers of God' (2 Tim 3:4). One must not underestimate the influence of the secular zeitgeist on the church. Many in the church feel that the Bible's teaching is impractical and inapplicable, and that the way of the Lord and the way of the world are poles apart. They feel not that the Lord's way is simply hard, but impossible! Without the heart to serve and the resolve to follow in the way of the cross, how can one escape being secularized? Many go so far as to cut corners in church matters and do business according to secular principles. They don't talk about 'consecrating' (setting apart) things to God, much less 'entrusting' themselves to God

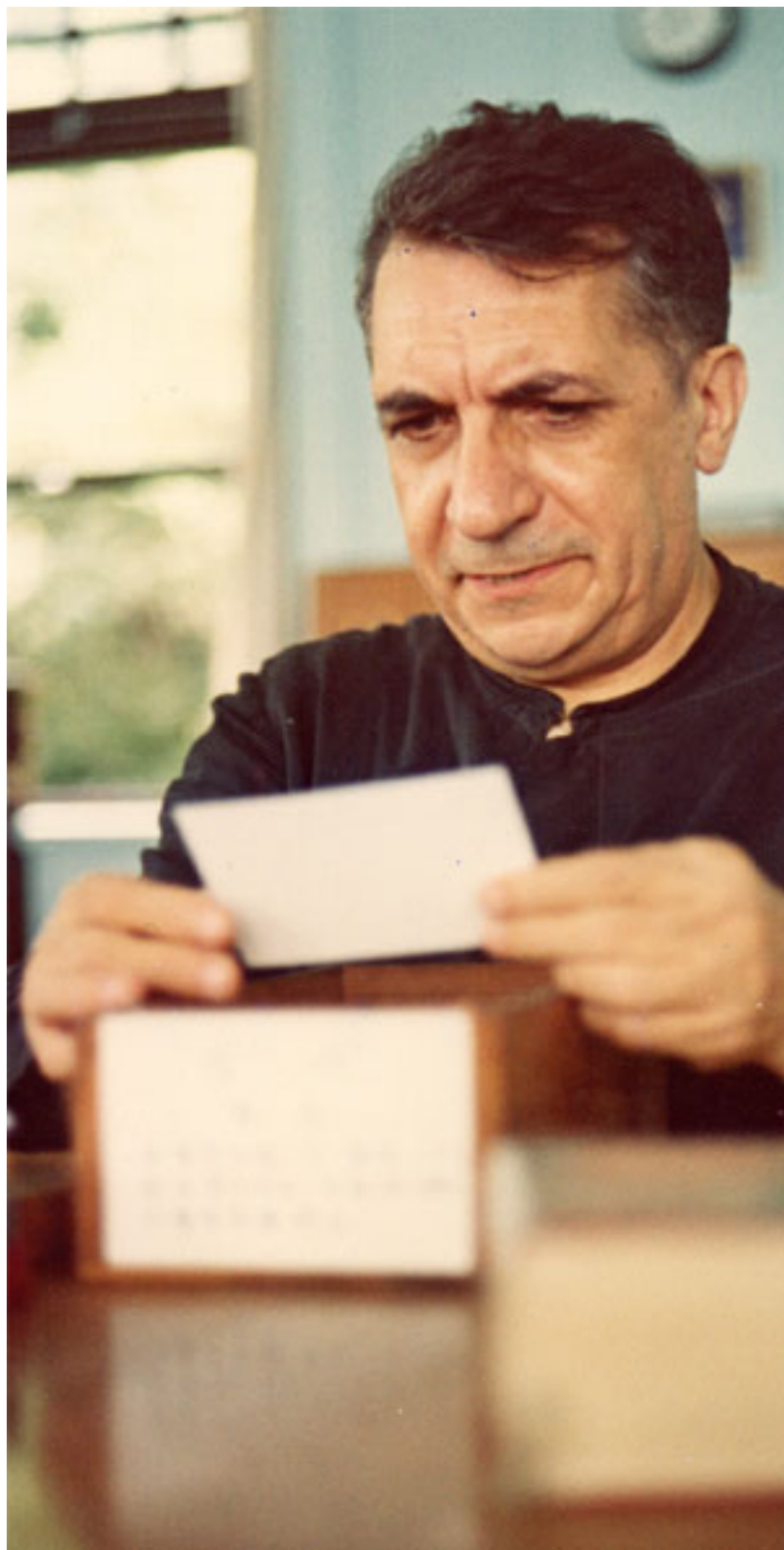
in faith. Too many Christians come to church merely to assuage their consciences for things said and done outside of church. They listen to the Biblical message preached from the pulpit, but lack both the heart and power to apply the truth to their lives. Their faith has no substance; it exists only in their heads, not their hearts. In society, churchgoers live according to its secular ways and set the sacred on the backburner. They are thus assimilated into society. Where is the witness of light and salt to be seen?

What is belief? It's not fodder for leisurely small talk. It's not about pretty dressing and flowery adornment. And it's certainly not a good-looking vase to be shown off. Faith, rather, requires one's life to seek and embrace and witness. What is truth? It is not a set of ideas or theories just to chat or think about. Truth, rather, is a personal reality for which one can live and die. What is the church? **It is not a lamp under a basket, but a light on a stand, a city on a hilltop** (Matt 5:14-15). **It is not society that leads the church; it is the church that teaches society** (Matt 28:20). At various times and amid various challenges, the church must adhere to the truth originally received from her Lord. She must preach it without compromise and uphold it with firm resolve. Responding to challenges and solidifying the faith, the church will move forward through the wind and waves, and the truth will be purified as through a refiner's fire.

Chinese Church Voices
www.chinesechurchvoices.com
9 August 2012

Italian priest who translated the Bible into Chinese will be beatified

The Italian Franciscan priest, Gabriele Maria Allegra, will be beatified in his homeland, Sicily, in September



Gabriele Maria Allegra

The Italian Franciscan priest, Father Gabriele Maria Allegra, who translated the entire Bible into Chinese for the first time, will be beatified in the Cathedral in Acireale, Sicily, on September 29.

The beatification of the man known as “the Saint Jerome of China” will take place ten years after Pope John Paul II first recognized a miracle through his intercession in 2002.

The ceremony should have taken place on October 2002, but the Holy See decided to postpone it because at that time relations were particularly tense with China following the canonization of the Chinese martyrs in the year 2000.

Moreover, the Vatican was also concerned about further possible negative reactions from the Chinese authorities who had criticized the Franciscan for some allegedly anti-Communist writings.

On 15 August, however, the Holy See announced, through the Sicilian Province of the Franciscans, that the authorization had been given for his beatification to take place, but in Sicily, the land of his birth, not in Hong Kong.

This decision appears to have been taken out of a desire not to ruffle Chinese sensibilities.

Father Joseph Ha, who heads the Order of Friars Minor in Hong Kong, told the UCA News that the announcement came as “a surprise to many of us.” When asked if Italy has been chosen as the venue for the ceremony in order to avoid provoking the

Beijing government, he said it was “a good guess, very reasonable.”

In actual fact, Father Allegra will be the first person from the Hong Kong diocese and from the Franciscan province of Taiwan-Hong Kong to be so honored by the Church, UCA News, which first broke the news, reported.

Born “Giovanni Stefano Allegra” in San Giovanni la Punta, in the province of Catania, Sicily, in 1907, the future blessed friar entered the Franciscan minor seminary in Acireale in 1918, and the order’s novitiate in Bronte in 1923. Three years later he was sent to Rome to study at the Franciscan’s International College.

In 1928, Allegra felt inspired to devote his entire life to the translation of the Bible into Chinese. That inspiration came while he was attending the 600th anniversary celebrations for another Franciscan, Giovanni di Monte Corvino, the man who first attempted to translate the bible into Chinese.

Allegra spent most of the next 40 years of his life on that arduous task. Thus, after being ordained priest in 1930, he set sail for China. He arrived in Hunan, southern China, in July 1931 and there started studying Chinese and with the help of professors prepared a first draft translation around 1937. Due to fatigue, he had to return to Italy for 3 years, but there continued his biblical studies.

He tried to return to Hunan in 1940 but could not do so due to the Sino-Japanese war and so had to go to Beijing. On that journey he lost his original draft translation and had to start all over again once he arrived in the Chinese capital. There, in 1945, he established the Franciscan Biblical Study Centre (Studium Biblicum Franciscanum), but when the Communists came to power in 1949 he and his team had to move to Hong Kong, where he lived for most of the rest of his life.

On Christmas Day, 1968, Father Allegra, he achieved his life’s ambition when the first

one-volume Bible was published in Chinese. Known as the “Studium Biblicum” version, that is still the main Chinese text today and is considered to be the most faithful to the original manuscript.

Then in 1975, the Chinese biblical dictionary was published. While most of his life had been devoted to biblical scholarship and this all important translation, Allegra nevertheless found time also to help the poor, the sick, victims of war and lepers.

This great Franciscan died in Hong Kong the following year, 1976. It came as no surprise, however, when eight years later, in 1984, the local bishop (later cardinal), John Baptist Wu, opened the cause for his beatification. John Paul II declared Father Allegra “Venerable” in 1994, and next month he will become “Blessed”.

This article was written by Gerard O’Connell, Rome

Vatican Insider

www.vaticaninsider.com

Photo: asianews.it

30 August 2012



Gabriele Maria Allegra

Vatican 'displeased' by bishop's treatment

Says a 'fundamental divergence' exists over distinction between religious, political spheres

The chief Vatican spokesman today expressed displeasure over the uncertain fate of newly ordained Auxiliary Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin and said the situation has cast a cloud over what for the Holy See was a cause for celebration.

Father Federico Lombardi, head of the Vatican Press Office, told reporters during a briefing that the Holy See has had no direct contact with Bishop Ma, who was taken away by an unidentified group of people shortly after his ordination by papal mandate on July 7.

Bishop Ma is believed to be staying at the Sheshan Seminary in Shanghai, though this has not been independently confirmed.

"The situation is now not positive and it is a pity after an ordination that for us has been a source of joy and satisfaction," he said.

Bishop Ma said during his ordination that he would give up his position as vice chair of the local government-sanctioned Catholic Patriotic Association as well as his standing membership in the

national body, both unrecognized by Rome as official Catholic organizations.

Fr Lombardi emphasized a fundamental divergence between Beijing and Rome on the distinction between religious and political spheres.

"For the Church it is very clear that Church autonomy must be respected for what pertains to Church governance. The Church is autonomous and doesn't want to interfere in political matters," he said.

"I think that the Holy See's position on the ordinations is very clear, from the points of view of both Church doctrine and correct procedure," he said.

Fr Lombardi added that "it is difficult to explain these to people who think within a different framework and think they have a say" in religious matters.

*This article was written by Alessandro Speciale,
Vatican City*

www.ucanews.com

July 12, 2012



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