



Christmas, 2015

Dear Friends:

May The Joy And Peace Of Christmas Always Be With You.

Remembering Father Pedro WEI He Ping

Father Pedro WEI HePing 蔚和平神父, a young underground Catholic priest in China, died approximately one month ago on November 6. He was forty-one years old. The Cardinal Kung Foundation has learned that tragically Father Wei's body was found floating in a river in the City of Taiyuan 太原 in Shanxi 山西 Province. The cause of death was not determined, but the government authority claimed that it was a case of suicide. Knowing Father Wei for almost two decades since his student days, this Foundation and many of his friends believe that it is out of his character to commit suicide. We appeal to the Chinese government to thoroughly investigate the cause of death of Father Wei and publish the findings quickly and truthfully.



Born on Christmas Eve, 1974 in a Catholic family in Shanxi Province, Father Wei entered seminary in 1993. He was later sent to Europe for advanced studies. He graduated with a Master's degree in Canon Law. He was clandestinely ordained a priest in China on August 24, 2004 by an underground bishop.

Father Wei, who spoke a couple of European languages, was a talented organizer who initiated many pastoral programs to increase vocations in the Underground Church. Grateful for his own opportunity for advanced education, he organized many events to share his experience and knowledge with those religious in China who did not have this opportunity. Since his return to China in 2007, he devoted himself to pastoral work, particularly in very poor and desolated areas. He gave many retreats and seminars at underground convents and seminaries. With a special focus on spiritual development of youth, he started "Pilgrimage on Foot" and personally led many youth groups on pilgrimage, walking hundreds of miles as a way of faith formation and character building. His zeal for vocations led him to establish an underground seminary, staffed by priests with advanced overseas qualifications.

In less than a decade, Fr. Wei made great contributions to the Church in China through his hard work and organization skills. He shared with us many of his future plans. He commanded the respect and cooperation of his contemporaries in other dioceses besides his own. Would such a zealous shepherd with strong faith and vision commit suicide? This truth must be told.

Father Wei fully realized the risk of his vigorous pastoral effort, but continued to carry out these pastoral programs due to his deep love for the Church. Could Father Wei's tireless pastoral activities be deemed, as (citing the U.S. Congressional Executive Commission on China report on July 23, 2015) "needing to be managed, controlled or crushed" by the Chinese authority? Please pray for Father Wei, his family and his diocese. He has lived his faith and vocation heroically. May his life, his work, and his death be an inspiration to the Roman Catholic Church not only in China, but worldwide. *Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine* (Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord).

Upon the Map of China
Rests the Shrine and
Our Lady of She-Shan
Through Whom We Pray
"There may be one fold
and one shepherd"

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* In Memoriam

A Christmas Experience

A Catholic lady in the Underground Church in China (name withheld for security reason) shared her experience on a Christmas in a labor camp.

“It was 1961, my sixth year in the labor camp. This was the year that everything seemed to have turned completely upside down in China. The Chinese Government had started an economic and social campaign called “Great Leap Forward”....Of course, no one was allowed to celebrate Christmas in a labor camp. If anyone sang a Christmas carol or even whispered ‘Merry Christmas’ to one another, we would surely be punished by the labor camp officials; because, they said that we were doing something against the law. We did not even dare to think about Christmas in fear of unknowingly speaking the word *Christmas* in our dream. This would be another chance for our cellmates to report our “crime” to gain small privileges for themselves. Without any freedom or material resources, under this terribly stressful situation, twelve of us Catholic inmates decided to give a gift to Baby Jesus on His Birthday by building a warm stable in our heart. This was the only thing that we could still control ourselves in the labor camp. I remembered telling myself that every drop of tear and every penance would be an extra straw to be placed in my heart-stable in order to make it warmer for the infant Jesus. Every tear is an offering to Jesus.”

Even in the most tragic and stressful situation, those Catholics in the labor camp were able to find joy due to their faith and deep love for Christ. They found a purpose for their sufferings and tears. Can we, even today, have a joyful Christmas with so much confusion in the world, so much suffering and poverty, and so much murder of innocent people (the terrorist attacks and millions of abortions)? In the face of all these, and of the rampant immorality and secularism we see all around us, can we offer prayers and sacrifices to the Infant of Bethlehem to ease His pain? Yes, pain! Jesus still suffers in His Mystical Body. We can be faithful and penitential just as those Catholic women in the labor camp. By doing so, we can also create a manger for the Holy Infant, starting in our own hearts. Like the shepherds with their little lambs, we surely could bring warmth and joy to the Holy Family, perhaps even a little giggle to the Baby.

Two Letters from Our Underground Friends

First letter – On attending Underground Mass

“For security reason, locations for offering Mass are necessarily kept a top secret passed on by the word of mouth, often with last minute changes to avoid government detection. Frequently, I would reach a supposedly Mass venue, but found only a deserted house or an old, empty factory. Apparently, I was not able to receive the last minute changes of Mass venue in time.

“On one occasion, I arrived in the house and found that both the front and the inner door were carefully guarded. Mass had already started. Three rooms in the basement were crowded with mostly young people and children. Once the Mass ended, everyone hurried out of the house, so much so that I had no chance to meet the priest.

“Once in the street, I realized a car was approaching with security officers. They blocked the door even before all Mass participants could exit. We were worried, so we hanged around pretending to buy fruit and water. After 45 minutes, my sister finally went inside and found the security men talking and warning the priest not to have any more gatherings for the Mass in the future - at home or at any private property. Luckily, they did not take the priest away this time. They only dispersed us.

“Many underground Catholics had to secretly travel four to five hours to attend a Mass and then make the same long journey home, thus spending a whole day in order to receive the sacrament. This is the religious life of underground faithful at most metropolitan areas. We are very touched by their loyalty and deep faith.”

Second Letter – “Silent Night” at Christmas (A priest related this story to the Foundation.)

“I met an underground Catholic who raised chicken for a living in a countryside in the north of China. She was the only Catholic I knew of in that area. She had to travel six hours by public transport in order to attend Mass in the nearest city. How she spent her 2014 Christmas night was unlike any of our experiences. It was past 1AM when the midnight Mass was over. It was too late for her to get public transport to return home – her only resource. Trapped in the dark with no accommodation, she sat on the ground alone in a bitterly cold December night waiting for the first bus in the morning. She told the priest: ‘The air was cold but my heart was warm,’ The priest said to me: ‘While she was relating her story, her demeanor was unlike that of a person recalling a harsh memory. I felt rather emotional and was deeply touched by her love and devotion for Jesus.’ ”

China News

Cross Toppled – Amid the removal of more than 1,500 church crosses in Zhejiang province 浙江省 alone since March 2013, Christians were rightfully alarmed when they heard that approximately 150 Government officials attended a meeting in Zhejiang’s Yiwu city 義烏市 on October 17, 2015 to discuss “illegal constructions”, the very reason that the government used to topple the crosses and to destroy churches. In Fujian province 福建省, government officials threatened to demolish another

underground church in Mindong 閩東 Diocese on October 21. Later, nothing happened; because, they said that they would send a priest from the Patriotic Association to take over the church.

In fact, representing the Cardinal Kung Foundation (CKF), I had reported the church destructions to the United States Congress through two hearings sponsored by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) way back in 2002 and 2006 and through various press releases since 1999. We reported in one of the hearings that “Since 1999, twenty-seven churches were destroyed in the archdiocese of Fuzhou in the Fujian province”. The cross removal and church destruction campaign never abated. As time went on, it became worse.

“The cross is a symbol of faith” Cardinal Zen, Archbishop emeritus of Hong Kong, said in his homily in August, 2015, noting “The authorities removing the crosses are insulting our faith [and] violating our rights that are guaranteed by the constitution.....I come to believe it is a state policy, which is very terrible and is a serious regression of the religious policy.”

Religious Freedom – In July 2014, published on October 21, 2015 by U. S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the U. S. State Department designated nine nations as CPCs. CPCs are those governments that “engage in or tolerate systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom.” China is one of those CPCs.

Sinicization – Chinese Catholics had been told repeatedly by the government to insist on “sinicization”. Authorities told Catholics to “walk the path of an independent church with a firm will”. An article from an official Chinese newspaper on religious issues implied that Xi Jinping, the President of China, is “seeking to minimize foreign influence on Chinese institutions, saying that all religions should be managed by religious organizations from within China.”

In the joint press conference by President Obama and President Xi in September 2015, President Xi justified the lack of freedom of religion in his country by saying: “We must recognize that countries have different historical processes and realities, and we need to respect people of all countries in the right to choose their own development path independently.”

Ongoing Persecution of Catholic Church – There are “bishops who have been imprisoned for decades because of their fidelity to the Pope. Some of them have disappeared in police custody and others may be dead. The government even refused to hand over their bodies or ashes to their relatives; because, the government cares so little about them, as is the case of **Bishop Shi Enxiang 師恩祥主教**....” says Asianews.it. Nineteen years ago on October 8, 1997, **Bishop Su Zhimin 蘇志民主教**, Bishop of Baoding 保定, Hebei 河北, was arrested and jailed. We have no news on him. **Bishop Ma Daqin 馬達欽主教** has been forcibly held in isolation in SheShan 佘山 Seminary. He is not allowed to wear the insignia of bishops. He has been stripped of the title of Bishop by the Chinese authorities. There are other religious who had mysteriously disappeared. Their whereabouts and wellbeing are unknown. Most recently, **Father Pedro Wei** died mysteriously. His body was found floating in a river. (See the lead article on the first page of this letter.)

Pope Francis’s Desire to Visit China – On the eve of the Pope’s trip to Korea in September, 2014, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican’s Secretary of State, said: “the Church in China is lively and active...” On his trip back from Korea, the Pope indicated his desire to visit China and that he would go there “even tomorrow morning.” On his way back from the United States one year later, the Pope again said: “I would love to go to China.....” **However**, for the normalization of relations between the Vatican and China, AFP (Agence France-Presse) reported last year on December 12 that Pope Francis insisted “that [China visit] could only happen if China’s Catholics are accorded the right to exercise their religion freely, and when the Vatican is allowed to appoint bishops in the world’s most populous country.....he would visit China as soon as the Church was allowed to do its job there.”

Sino Vatican Negotiation – Against the above background, the first meeting between the Vatican and China was held in Rome in June 2014. The second one just completed in Beijing from October 11 to 15 this year. No information on what was discussed during these two meetings was available. This leaves the public to wonder about the topics discussed and whether any specific agreements have been reached.

According to various news reports, both sides have agreed to leave the more thorny questions off the agenda: imprisonment of Bishop Su Zhimin of Boading, house arrest of Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin, the status of bishops that the Vatican has announced as being excommunicated, and perhaps other important faith-related issues.

It appears that by excluding the above prickly issues from the agenda (if what reported in the news media is true), one could almost interpret that the Vatican has regarded the aforementioned issues as inconveniences and hindrance to the Vatican-China relations, instead of treating them as implicit requirements and responsibilities of the Catholic Church and of all Catholic.

The Chinese government established the Patriotic Association in 1957; because, it wanted an independent church under the control of the Chinese government and totally free of foreign influence. As recent as in May 2015, President Xi said that China must “adhere to the principle of independence to run religious groups.” The policy and position of the Chinese Government has been very consistent and clear. It insisted on an independent Catholic Church -- not a Catholic Church

pledging its fidelity to the Holy See. This independent Catholic Church under the control of the Patriotic Association is “incompatible” with Catholic doctrine as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI described in his letter to the Catholic Church in China in 2007.

Responding to the Chief prosecutor of China who offered him immediate freedom and the leadership of the independent Patriotic Church shortly after his arrest in September 1955, Bishop (later Cardinal) Kung said, “I am a Roman Catholic. If I leave the Holy Father, not only would I not be a bishop, I would not even be a Catholic. You may cut off my head, but you may not take away my duties.”

Now that the situation of those underground bishops who currently are imprisoned due to defending their communion with the Pope appeared to have been put on the back burner by the Holy See’s negotiation delegation, did Cardinal Kung and thousands of other bishops and clergy including Bishop Su Zhimin of Boading and Bishop Ma of Shanghai overemphasized the importance of fidelity and communion with the Supreme Pontiff, to the extent of giving up their lives, or accepting decades of imprisonment in order to keep their communion with the Pope?

In the view of Cardinal Zen, the Archbishop emeritus of Hong Kong, “the talks are a waste of time. The [Chinese] party will never give nearly enough to make a deal palatable to the Vatican.” On the other hand, Cardinal Tong, the Archbishop of Hong Kong, is of the opinion that “keeping dialogue open means that a better deal with China could develop.”

Please pray that the Holy Spirit will guide the Vatican Secretary of State and the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in conducting the negotiations with the Chinese government.

September 8, 1955 – Shanghai Catholics in China and abroad commemorated one of the darkest days of the Catholic Church in China: the 60th anniversary of a massive crackdown on September 8, 1955, the feast of the Nativity of Mary, on the diocese that saw Bishop (later Cardinal) Kung Pingmei thrown in jail for thirty years. He was originally given a life-sentence.

In Rome, Cardinal Zen and a small group of Catholics from Shanghai commemorated the event with a Mass on September 8. Cardinal Zen said: “I hoped more heroic stories of how the Shanghai Catholics defended their faith could be published for more people to know.” An underground priest stated that “the theme of the commemoration was designed to be a blessing rather than an occasion of sadness and enmity.”

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An Epilogue

As we pray comfortably in our church during the Christmas, please remember the persecuted Church in China and other persecuted Christians around the world. Please remember the Foundation in your Christmas charitable giving so that we may continue the education of the underground priests, nuns and pastoral programs in China as we detailed in our August 2015 newsletter. All donations, large or small, will be acknowledged for tax deduction purposes to the full extent allowable by the U. S. law. The Foundation could not have continued its many programs without your financial and spiritual help through the years. We thank you all very specially for your material and spiritual support for all these years.

May our Advent be filled with the joyful spirit of penance as we anticipate the coming of our Savior. May I ask you to offer your prayers and penance so that the Underground Church in China as well as Christians worldwide will also have a safe and blessed Christmas. Please also say one Hail Mary daily for opening of the cause of canonization for Cardinal Kung.

Thank you.

In the Immaculate Heart of Mary



Joseph Kung
President
Cardinal Kung Foundation

Please Remember The Cardinal Kung Foundation In Your Will

Thank You