

**Homily for the Cardinal Kung Foundation’s 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
*Delivered by Fr. James McCurry, OFM Conv.*

**Mass on the Altar of +Ignatius Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei**  
**Private Chapel in Kung Home – Stamford, Connecticut**  
**12<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

**[Readings of Mass]**

*First Reading – Rev. 21:1-5a*

*Responsorial – I Samuel 2:1,4-5,6-7,8abcd*

*Gospel – John 19:25-27*

Saint Augustine wrote sixteen hundred years ago, in Book 14, chapter 28, of his Catholic classic *The City of God*: **“Two loves have formed two cities – love of self, to the contempt of God, the earthly city; love of God, to the contempt of self, the heavenly city.”** In modern times, this “tale of two cities” has been replaying its script over the past 73 years in Communist China. Our late, saintly, and heroic prisoner-of-conscience Ignatius Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei stands through all those decades as the courageous protagonist for the one true “Heavenly City” in China – though hidden still as a mustard seed “underground” – the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church. Despite suffering, persecution, and misunderstanding, the “underground” Church in China has not only survived; it has been a seedbed of sanctity and an image of the heavenly Jerusalem. Cardinal Kung’s episcopal motto rings truer now than ever as the standard for this “Heavenly ‘underground’ Jerusalem” in China: *Ut Sint Unum Ovile et Unus Pastor* – **“That There May Be One Fold and One Shepherd”!**

Gracing the centre of Cardinal Kung’s Coat of Arms, above this motto, is the crowned and noble image of China’s Heavenly Empress – Our Lady of She Shan. With the map of China behind Herself, Our Lady of She Shan powerfully holds the sceptre of spiritual authority in her right hand, whilst in her left hand she presents Christ to China and to the People of God. The Christ Child in the image of She Shan holds an orb, the royal globe of the world. Mary’s sceptre and Jesus’s orb symbolize the “terrestrial city” which God’s supernatural authority even now is transforming into a “heavenly city,” through the staunch fidelity of China’s persecuted “underground” Church. Cardinal Kung never gave up hope that this dream for China’s “Heavenly Jerusalem” could become a reality. Nor can we ever give up hope. We gather today to celebrate that hope as we commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cardinal Kung Foundation.

Today’s first reading at Holy Mass is full of that supernatural hope for the “Heavenly Jerusalem” in China, a vision which sustained and animated Bishop (later Cardinal) Kung throughout his long imprisonment and subsequent years of exile. Composed during a time when the Church was being persecuted, the Book of Revelation (the last book of the Bible) offered the hidden “underground” of the early Church a vision of a new heaven and a new earth – not a materialist terrestrial city of Roman (or later Marxist) atheism, but a “holy city coming down out of heaven from God.” The Book of Revelation’s positivity gave confident assurance to the early Church that God would dwell with His People and never desert them, and that the new “world order” would not be a godless, secular politic, but a holy, divine, sacramental dwelling place where there would indeed be “one fold and one shepherd.”

Upon his release from decades of imprisonment, and before his forced exile from China, Cardinal Kung had ONE last wish – to visit the Sanctuary of Our Lady of She Shan, located on a small mountain in the outskirts of Shanghai. He wanted to say good-bye to Our Lady. At age 87, he suspected that he would never see his beloved She Shan again. In the early years of his life, long before his arrest and imprisonment, he visited She Shan at least twice a year, inasmuch as he had a great devotion to She Shan as “Our Lady Help of Christians.” His one last wish was fulfilled when his nephew Joseph Kung and a couple of his old priests, as well as a nurse whom Joe had brought from America, took the aged Cardinal to She Shan, in order to celebrate a private Mass with the doors closed.

Even though the Shrine of She Shan by then had come under the control of the communist Patriotic Church, the Cardinal would always regard it still as Holy Mary’s home. Mass was vitally important to Cardinal Kung, but he understood the difference between the Patriotic Independent church and the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, his Roman Catholic Mass at She Shan had to be private, reverently offered with the door closed, not admitting the public. News, nonetheless, spread like wildfire on the mountainside that Bishop Kung had come to She Shan, before departing to America. When his Mass was finished and the doors opened, Joseph Kung will never forget the scene: The whole mountain of She Shan was completely filled with people. The nurse from America, a very big strong lady, was actually fearful, thinking that the Cardinal could be swept rolling down the mountainside, with all the thousands of people in the crowd around him. His escorts needed to form a circle with their joined hands to protect the frail old Cardinal.

As we try to re-imagine that scene of Cardinal Kung offering his final Mass at China’s great Marian Shrine of She Shan, we are mindful of today’s Gospel, where St. John depicts the eternal archetype of Holy Mass – Jesus’s supreme sacrifice at the Altar of Mount Calvary – with his Mother Mary standing on that mountainside of Golgotha at the foot of the Cross.

It needs to be stated unequivocally that, for Cardinal Kung as a priest of God, the Mass was THE most important reality on earth. Never once, during his 30+ years in prison was Bishop Kung ever able to offer Mass. Even when Joseph and Agnes Kung would send him parcels through the Red Cross, containing bread and wine disguised as medication, those parcels were returned to sender, with the indication “*not deliverable – name unknown*” [ironically the name of the highest profile prisoner in China!] So, what did this holy priest of God, Bishop Kung, do all those years without being able to offer Holy Mass and consecrate the Eucharist? He invoked the intercession of Our Lady, who had stood at the foot of the Cross, entrusting himself to Herself the way that St. John did on Calvary. What did Our Lady do? She helped Bishop Kung daily to unite himself spiritually with all of the Holy Masses being offered worldwide by every faithful Roman Catholic priest. To reinforce this daily practice of spiritual union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Bishop Kung did something beautifully unique.

During his decades of imprisonment, he kept a small notebook in which he handwrote from memory the sacred Latin words of Mass. Miraculously, that small Mass Book of Bishop Kung was smuggled out of his prison when he was sent to a military hospital before his release, and was not body-searched. That very same Mass Book, delicate and holy, is still venerably preserved, and we have placed it upon this very Altar – the Cardinal’s Altar – where I am offering Holy Mass today.

As I wear Cardinal Kung's priestly vestments and invoke his memory, I am looking across this room to the door of his bedroom, where twenty-two years ago I had the privilege of administering the Last Rites of the Roman Catholic Church (Extreme Unction in Latin) to the dying Cardinal Kung. As he raised his arm, his strength waning, the Cardinal imparted his priestly blessing upon me. He then loaned me one of his purificator linens from Mass to take to the Holy Land, where I was embarking on a pilgrimage with the Dominican Sisters of Mary Mother of the Eucharist. By the time I returned to America and returned the purificator to the Kung family, the Cardinal had died. That white purificator will forever betoken to me the purity of Cardinal Kung's priesthood – and now the heavenly liturgy where, as a “priest forever according to the Order of Melchisedech,” Ignatius Kung Pin-Mei continues praying eternally for China and the Church.

Cardinal Kung kept close to him here in Stamford, Connecticut the cherished first-class relic of St. Maximilian Kolbe – another priest-prisoner-of-conscience – which I had given to the Cardinal at one of his anniversary celebrations. St. Maximilian Kolbe once said that, when while we are still on earth, we only have one free hand to do God's work because with the other hand we must hold on for dear life, but when we get to heaven we shall have both hands free to keep interceding for intentions on earth. I like to think that the continuing existence and fruitfulness of the Cardinal Kung Foundation is a direct result of the Cardinal's heavenly intercession with “both hands free.”

A few times, in the past thirty years, other churchmen who were prisoners of totalitarian and atheist regimes approached Joseph Kung, to ask his advice about starting their own Foundations. None, however, seemed able to get anything off the ground. Only the Cardinal Kung Foundation perdured, and now enters its fourth decade. Praise God! We would be wholly remiss today, if we did not honestly acknowledge before our good God the laborious dedication of Joseph and Agnes Kung and their whole family and all of their friends and associates – many of whom are gathered here today – and some of whom have already joined Cardinal Kung in eternity. They have been God's consecrated instruments. The Cardinal Kung Foundation continues miraculously as a lifeline of love and support for the faithful “underground” Roman Catholic People of God in China. The Roman Catholic Priesthood and the Holy Mass – whose exemplar amidst trial and tribulation was Cardinal Kung – continue to be the sacramental “still point” in the moving world of today. May they ever remain the graced imperative of the Cardinal Kung Foundation.

We must never get discouraged. We must keep the torch of Cardinal Kung burning bright, as we keep passing that torch to new generations of faithful Roman Catholics in China. Confident that the “heavenly city” will one day burst free from the “underground,” we must also be grateful for the lessons of faith, hope, and charity that the experience of the “underground” has indelibly impressed. Accordingly, let us be mindful of what the English poet T.S. Eliot wrote in his “Four Quartets”: *“We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time.”*