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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”

June 2009

Dear Friends:

Compendium of Pope Benedict XVI on his China Letter published May 27, 2007

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* In Memoriam

With the approval of Pope Benedict XVI, the Holy See published an online compendium to help Catholics in China and elsewhere to better understand the pastoral implications of his May 27, 2007, Letter of the Holy Father to the Bishops, Priests, Consecrated Persons, and Lay Faithful of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China.

We have received a number of inquiries from the public, asking us to clarify this compendium. We would not dare to summarize a document so carefully, dogmatically, and canonically written, lest we misinterpret it and mislead you in its correct understanding. Rather, we recommend that you read it carefully in its original version together with its footnotes. It is posted on the Holy See's website: http://www.vatican.va/chinese/pdf/2Compendium_zh-t_en.pdf. However, we will describe below briefly a few of our observations which hopefully could help you.

The Compendium, issued on May 24, the Universal Day of Prayer for the Church in China (which Pope Benedict established at the conclusion of the 2007 Letter), is not an abridged version of the original Letter. It is shorter only by about three thousand words from the original's eleven thousand. Rather, it is an attempt to categorize the subject matter of the document, so that all the faithful can better understand his intent, through the utilization of a question and answer catechetical format.

There are twenty-three questions in the compendium, each of which is followed either by the appropriate excerpts from the Holy Father's 2007 Letter or, as is more often the case, a summary of the pope's words on the subject with the reference to the relevant number of the twenty subtitled sections and the exact paragraph number.

Thus, for example, **Question Two** of the Compendium asks: **What is the Purpose of the Letter?** Then, the **Answer** follows with references to those texts dealing with the subject and extracted from various of the twenty numbered subheadings, but reworded or quoted for purposes of consistency and coherence. Sections 1, 2, 7, 11, and 4 from the original Letter are referenced.

The advantage of this format is obvious as one reads through the Compendium. When specific questions are raised about the situation of the Catholic Church in China, the relationship of the Catholic Church with the undeclared schismatic Patriotic Association, and the relation of the Vatican with both, the answers are more readily accessible by a Q & A structure.

The original Letter of the Holy Father was very paternal in its pastoral approach to the situation Catholics in China have lived in since the Communist takeover in 1949 and leading up to the current situation. The Letter was divided into two parts: the first dealing with the theological aspects of the Church's universal mission, and the second dealing with guidelines for pastoral life of the Chinese faithful, the priests, religious, and the hierarchy.

On the delicate questions of unity and communion (*koinonia*), the Holy Father clearly insisted that there can be no communion without unity with the Apostolic See. There can be no "independent" Catholic Church. **Question Eight** asks: What are the Holy

Father's guidelines for the life of the Catholic Church in China? The answer quotes directly from the 2007 Letter:

“As you know, the profound unity which binds together the particular Churches found in China, and which likewise places them in intimate communion with all the other particular Churches throughout the world, has its roots not only in the same faith and in a common Baptism, but above all in the Eucharist and in the episcopate. Likewise, the unity of the episcopate, of which ‘the Roman Pontiff, as the Successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation,’ continues down the centuries through the apostolic succession and is the foundation of the identity of the Church in every age with the Church built by Christ on Peter and on the other Apostles.” (5,3)

The martyrs, and those presently suffering persecution, were not forgotten. **Question Seven** asks: What does the Holy Father say to the Catholics who suffered for the Faith in China? And answers in the exact words of Pope Benedict: “I wish, therefore, to convey to all of you the expression of my fraternal closeness. With intense joy I acknowledge your faithfulness to Christ the Lord and to the Church, a faithfulness that you have manifested ‘sometimes at the price of grave sufferings’ (2,1), since ‘it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake’” (*Phil 1:29*).

And, again, the Holy Father praises and encourages the suffering Church, and the persecuted bishops: “Many members of the Chinese episcopate who have guided the Church in recent decades have offered and continue to offer a shining testimony to their own communities and to the universal Church. Once again, let a heartfelt hymn of praise and thanksgiving be sung to the ‘chief Shepherd’ of the flock (1 *Pet 5:4*): in fact, it must not be forgotten that many Bishops have undergone persecution and have been impeded in the exercise of their ministry, and some of them have made the Church fruitful with the shedding of their blood.”

Of particular relevance to the main issue of a State sponsored Church usurping the rights of the One Church, the Roman Catholic Church, established by Jesus Christ, the Savior of Mankind, the Compendium has altogether only seven explanatory footnotes that will be of interest to all Catholics and all of our readers. I will mention only three of them because of limited space.

Footnote two, for instance, at the end of answer to **Question Eight**, deals with the possibility of “reconciliation” between “the official and unofficial Catholic communities.” This can only be achieved if the State appointed bishop has sought and obtained Rome’s approval.

Footnote four, midway through answer to **Question Eleven**, speaks about the Catholic Church’s relations with the Patriotic Association. The pope never refers to the CCPA as the Patriotic “Church,” nor does he refer to the loyal Catholic Church as “underground.” This footnote underscores the fact that the Statutes of the CCPA (article 3), which insist on “independence and autonomy, self-management, and democratic administration of the Church,” “cannot be reconciled with Catholic doctrine,” nor with “Jesus’s original plan for [His] Church.” The footnote ends with an exhortation to patience and charity.

Footnote five, however, at the end of answer to **Question Eleven**, addresses the pivotal matter of recognition of ecclesial communities by civil authorities. The footnote begins by highlighting that the “clandestine condition” of the loyal Roman Catholic Church is not the desired state under which the Church is meant to operate, but is clearly adopted only when the safety of the faithful and the very integrity of the Church would be compromised otherwise. Then the note goes on to say: “civil recognition may be accepted ‘on condition that this does not entail the denial of unrenounceable principles of faith and of ecclesiastical communion’ (7.8): ‘almost always,’ however, the people involved are obliged ‘to adopt attitudes, make gestures and undertake commitments that are contrary to the dictates of their conscience as Catholics’ (7.8) . . . the Holy See leaves the decision to the individual Bishop who, having consulted his presbyterate, etc.”

Finally, at the end of footnote five there is an important judgment that the Pope has made. This judgment will more likely be the standard *modus operandi* of the discerning Catholic obedient to Rome:

“even when [for civil recognition] the ‘objective’ conditions are met (for example, the legitimacy of the Bishop), the maturation and conscience of individual Catholics must always be respected.”

Cardinal Kung’s Tenth Anniversary Mass

Next year, March 12, 2010, is the tenth anniversary of Cardinal Kung going home to the Lord. We tentatively plan for a memorial Mass at 12:10 noon on March 13, 2010 Saturday, at St. John’s Church in Stamford, Connecticut. We hope that you will join us for this Mass. More details will be forthcoming on our website and in our newsletter.

Yours sincerely in Christ

Please Remember The Cardinal Kung Foundation In Your Will

Joseph Kung
President, Cardinal Kung Foundation

Thank You