



Jaime Cardinal Sin's Visit to China

<October 27 - November 6, 1984>

Philippine Catholic Primate, Jaime Cardinal Sin, completed an 11-day visit to China on November 6, 1984. Cardinal Sin had been invited by the Chinese Peoples Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. He arrived in Beijing on October 27 with an entourage of eleven people, including six priests.

Upon arrival at the Beijing airport, Cardinal Sin announced that the purpose of his visit was "to learn and to admire." He disclaimed speculation that he had a special mission to help heal the rift between the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Vatican, according to local reporters.

However, Cardinal Sin did visit and meet with Bishop Michael Fu Tieshan of Beijing in that city's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. The two prelates knelt in the church and prayed the Lord's Prayer together in Latin. They then held a 40-minute private conversation. The subject of reconciliation between the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Vatican reportedly did not come up.

At the Cathedral many of the faithful knelt to kiss the Cardinal's ring or held their babies aloft to receive the Cardinal's blessing.

While in China, Cardinal Sin also met with many Chinese government officials, including members of the staff of the Bureau of Religious Affairs, which is the government organization supervising all of China's religions.

His trip also took on the nature of a personal pilgrimage. He visited Xiamen in Fujian Province, the birthplace of his father. The Cardinal's father had emigrated to the Philippines in the early part of this century, and there met and married the Cardinal's Filipina mother. While in Xiamen, Cardinal Sin met a sister-in-law, his nieces and nephews whom he had never seen before.

Besides historical sites like the Great Wall, Cardinal Sin also visited places of Catholic interest, such as the national seminary in Beijing and the tomb of Matteo Ricci, the famous Jesuit missionary of the late Ming dynasty.

In addition to Beijing and Xiamen, Cardinal Sin also spent a few days in Shanghai. Since Shanghai and Manila are sister-cities, Shanghai Mayor Wang Daohan invited the Cardinal and his group to a formal banquet. From Shanghai they returned to Hong Kong.

While in China, Cardinal Sin was called upon to deliver formal addresses to various kinds of audiences. Here we give the full text of the Cardinal's speech to government officials and members of the Friendship Association upon his arrival in Beijing.

Thanks to the invitation and cordiality of the Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, my life-long cherished dream to return to the land and of my father has been fulfilled today. As you know, my father was born in Fujian Province. He joined in his youth the Hua Qiao of Nanyang and settled in the Philippines. I am the child of his marriage with a Filipina from the South. As a dutiful and happy son, I say to all of you ... Thank you.

I have come to learn

One of my compatriots, named Mariano Ponce, who lived in Yokohama with Dr. Sun Yat-Sen has written in his biography, "I have heard many times Sun Yat-Sen tell groups of Asian students: 'Let us get to know one another, and we will love each other more.'" During this visit to your wonderful country, I intend to follow literally this advice of

Dr. Sun Yat-Sen. Understanding and acceptance of our mutual differences can resolve many conflicts and pave the way for enduring and constructing relationships for the benefit of all.

I have come to admire

Everybody can see, just by looking at my face, that there is Chinese blood in my veins. Also I hope that everybody can see everything that is in my heart; that affection I feel for the Chinese People, a hard working people that has obtained admirable achievements through patient and persevering capacity for work and personal as well as collective self-discipline; traits from which we have much to learn - my sincere admiration for all the positive efforts your Government is making towards, "socialist modernization on the basis of national stability, unity, democracy and the rule of law." Chairman Deng Xiaoping has stated during the magnificent parade held here on October 1st and which I watched on television in Manila: "We stand firmly for the maintenance of world peace, for the relaxation of international tension and for the reduction of armaments... China will remain open to the outside world..." Indeed a great leader not only of China but a world leader. We find ourselves in perfect agreement with these wishes.

Objectives of My trip

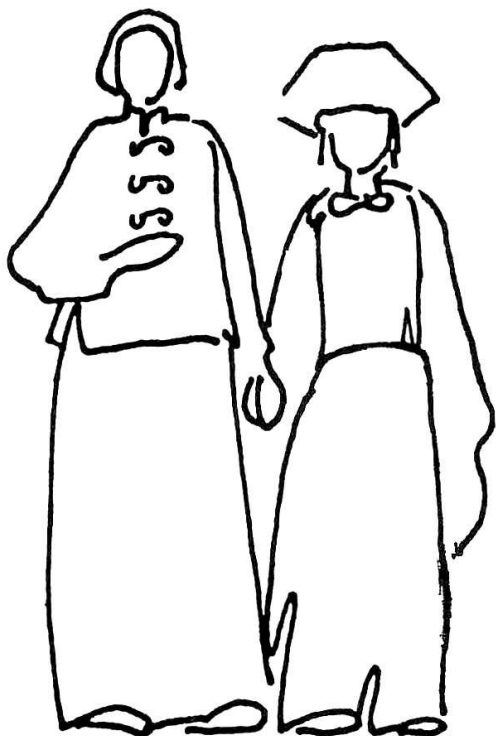
You have a right to know what are my desires and expectations as I come to you.

a) Beginning of a dialogue between culture and Church, Church and Government. Specifically, I would want this visit to be, on my part, the beginning of a dialogue. Like Matteo Ricci, a man China respects and admires, I would love to help in establishing between the Church and Chinese culture a bridge which still appears solid and safe, despite the misunderstandings and difficulties which have taken place in the past. I am convinced that the Church can direct itself without fear toward this route with its gaze turned to the future.

We can have faith that the obstacles can be removed and that an appropriate way and adequate structures will be

found to resume dialogue and keep it constantly open. In this way all the Chinese faithful will feel at ease both in the national community and in the Church as well. We are sure that this will also be to the advantage of the entire Chinese nation, which the Church deeply esteems and loves.

b) To offer my services for the good of China. Due perhaps to the mixture of my Chinese ancestry and roots, the Filipino trait and practice of hospitality and the universal love tenets of my Catholic Faith it is my deep conviction to consider that "within the four seas all men are brothers", to make friends everywhere and with all. Without merit of mine allow me to tell you that I find myself with friends - low and mighty - in Asia, the Americas, in Europe, in the Church, in the civic sphere. Nothing would give me greater satisfaction than that you consider me another bridge of friendship. Aren't the FOUR SEAS but ONE HOME?



In this spirit, I have requested to meet my blood relatives and make personal contact with them. I would love to meet my brothers in my religion and faith. Finally I would be very grateful if I might be allowed to personally greet and converse in friendship with various leaders of your Government.

In summary, therefore

As a Filipino - a citizen of a third world country (your centuries-long friendly neighbor), as a Filipino of Chinese ancestry with a blood relationship of the Chinese people, as the Archbishop of Manila and a Cardinal of the Catholic Church, I am your grateful friend.

I offer my humble services to you. Please, tell me what I can do for you to repay this great gift of your invitation to me and my associates.

I thank you all.

Space does not permit us to print in full all of the Cardinal's formal addresses. What follows is a random sampling of quotations from his original texts that show his sincere concern for warm, friendly relationships between the people of China and the Philippines.

In his address to members of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Cardinal Sin dwelt on the virtues of traditional Chinese humanism, and pointed out the common ground it has with Christian humanism. Bringing the topic up to the present day, the Cardinal said:

It is my humble opinion that the efforts your leaders are making to provide for all the basic needs of your compatriots through the Four Modernizations, their determination to become a power committed to peace and harmony among all nations, their rejection of all abuses associated with the so-called Cultural Revolution - are measures that do not only reflect the socialist ideology but which emanate from the sacred imperatives of Chinese humanism. In such a firm commitment to the good of all humanity, China finds company with those who practice Christian humanism with its stress on love, peace and unity.

To a civic audience, Cardinal Sin stressed the contributions made by Chinese immigrants over the centuries to Philippine national development.

Suffice it for me to mention only a few examples taken from our early history. From the Chinese, the Filipinos learned more efficient procedures for extracting sugar. Chinese agriculturists taught us more efficient farming methods. New techniques in mining, metallurgy and weaponry were taught us by Chinese experts. Through their activities in the retail trade field, Chinese merchants were able to extend needed financial credit to our citizens. Our language has been enriched by many words derived from Chinese.

The Cardinal also mentioned that, as a way of returning the favor, many of the one million Hua Qiao (people of Chinese nationality) living

in the Philippines would like to become involved in China's modernization program.

In an address to students of religion and theology, the Cardinal spoke of the relationship between local churches and the universal church.

But every local church, since it cannot fully realize the total mystery of the Body of Christ, is necessarily limited. It must reach out to all the other local churches where the Christ-life is present through faith and baptism. In this way, the communion of churches is achieved and constantly extended and renewed especially in the Eucharist.

The firmest expression of this communion of local churches is in the collegiality of the episcopacy throughout the catholic unitas. The Bishop, whose ministry is that of unity in the church, represents his own local church within the communion of bishops of all the other local churches who are una cum et sub Petri successore.

This Petrine ministry is above all a service of unity and love. It is not there to suppress the proper charisms and expressions of the local church, but rather to foster her life and development in the fullness of Christian existence. It is a Petrine ministry to help resolve crisis and conflicts in believing communities and to renew and strengthen their faith.

The local church cannot be separated from the collegial structure and from the ministry of unity among all the churches of the catholic community. The inner principles of her life - one Word, one Faith, one Baptism, one Lord, one Bread, one Destiny in the Father, Son and Spirit -- all these require total communion among the local churches.

Finally, Cardinal Sin summed up his impressions of his China trip at a press conference held in Hong Kong on November 6, the day before his return to the Philippines.

I return from my trip to the People's Republic of China full of admiration for the amazing progress that the country has achieved in the political and economic fields.

I go back to the Philippines with many happy memories of the friendliness and warmth, the graciousness and hospitality of the Chinese people.

I have many wonderful impressions of my eleven-day visit, but the most memorable of these is the feeling of hope that I sensed in everyone I talked to, the hope for a brighter tomorrow as the Chinese people join the other people of the world in their common aspirations for peace and unity.

My special thanks go to the officers and members of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries who invited me to visit China and who made it possible for my party and me to make new friends and open new avenues of communication.

It was the Association which enabled me to be reunited with my close relatives in Xiamen and Shanghai. Thanks to its unremitting efforts, I met a sister-in-law I had never seen, and I saw nephews and nieces with whom I got together for the first time.

I had rewarding conversations with national and local officials, all of whom welcomed me warmly and cordially. And I was fortunate to be able to meet bishops, priests and officials of the Patriotic Association, to pray with them in their churches and to exchange views with them on the communion of churches.

My one regret was that my wish to visit my fellow Christians in the small villages could not be granted at this time.

My biggest joy was that I made many new friends, friends who constantly reiterated their desire that I come again. Through them, new windows could be opened and new beginnings could be instituted.

Upon his return to Manila on November 7, 1984, Cardinal Sin expressed his determination to work for the strengthening of bridges, not only between the Chinese and the Filipino peoples, but also between Chinese Catholics and Catholics in the rest of the world.