

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord

Bishop John B. Wu's words of welcome to the Shanghai Catholic Delegation at a reception-dinner held in the Hong Kong Country Club on July 15, 1985

Dear Bishop Jin Luxian, my brothers and sisters in Christ,

On the occasion of your arrival in Hong Kong, at this simple meal "to wash away the dust from your journey," allow me to welcome you with the words of the Psalmist: "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." (Psalm 133). And may I add to this the greeting of our brother Paul to the Christians at Corinth: "May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Cor. 13:13). Let this visit be for each of you an experience full of peace and happiness.

The ties that exist between the churches of Shanghai and Hong Kong are close and of long-standing duration: Francis Xu, Hong Kong's first Chinese Catholic bishop, was born and educated in Shanghai; the founder of Caritas, Hong Kong, Msgr. Charles H. Vath had worked as a businessman there for some fifteen years before entering the seminary to study for the priesthood; and the vice-chairman of our Catholic Board of Education, Dr. John Chen, is a graduate of your Aurora University. On a more personal note,



Bishop Jin and Wu: renewing old acquaintances.

your group leader Bishop Jin Luxian and I first met here in 1951 on his return journey to China after completing his studies abroad, and Father Shen Baozhi, the general-secretary of your group, and I, were schoolmates in the nineteen-fifties at what was then the China Regional Seminary in Aberdeen. In addition to these links, our diocese has been further blessed with many religious and many outstanding catholics who are natives of Shanghai and who have made a great contribution to the work of our church here. In March of this year, when at the invitation of the Religious Affairs Bureau, I went with other representatives of the Hong Kong diocese on our trip to China, we felt deeply honoured by the warmth of your reception while in Shanghai. There we met with many old friends and made new ones as well. I, then, am delighted to be given this opportunity on your visit to us here in Hong Kong to return that warm welcome, and to extend to you now the hand of friendship.

Because of its unique history and special geographic location, Hong Kong, which is sometimes referred to as "the Pearl of the Orient", serves as a bridge between East and West. The Hong Kong diocese has also been especially blessed, for while small in area, our catholics are large in number. It is, in fact, numerically the largest Chinese Catholic diocese in the world. Our many social, educational, and medical institutions, which are our responses to Hong Kong's community needs and expressions of our spirit as a servant church, are in a continual process of renewal, updating and modernization. Our Central Council of the Catholic Laity works in consort with our diocesan commissions and bureau to foster a spirit of evangelization and to nourish a gospel zeal in developing among our lay Catholics their roles as "salt of the earth" and "light to the world". Over the past 25 years, much has been accomplished, but much more is still left to be done. However, despite our successes, up to now Hong Kong has yet to produce a Catholic layman of the stature of Shanghai's Xu Guangqi, whose fidelity and loyal service to both his church and country has been a continual source of admiration and emulation for succeeding generations. The history of the Shanghai diocese has been rich and its influence on the Church in China profound. It was the host city for the first synod of the Chinese Catholic Church, which, in 1924, brought together bishops from all over China. It was here, at the synod's conclusion

that our country was formally dedicated to our Blessed Mother. The work of your famous observatory, the Shanghai Catholic Printing Press, the excellence of Aurora University are just some of your accomplishments that have become part of our nation's history. Now we hear that Shanghai's present industrial output is one sixth of that of the whole country, which clearly makes it the leading industrial city of China. As we look towards the future of the Church in our motherland together, it is my conviction that the Shanghai Catholic church will continue to carry on this proud heritage. I believe it will further enhance that tradition and add to its glory, and I look forward with great anticipation to its many future accomplishments.

In closing, let me now quote to you some words from the Second Vatican Council's document The Church in the Modern World, for I feel these words are profound in their implications for all of us, and merit our serious reflection.

By virtue of her mission to shed on the whole world the radiance of the Gospel message, and to unify under one Spirit all men of whatever nation, race or culture, the Church stands forth as a sign of that brotherhood which allows honest dialogue and gives it vigor. Such a mission requires in the first place that we foster within the Church herself mutual esteem, reverence and harmony, through the full recognition of lawful diversity.... For the bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything dividing them. Hence, let there be unity in what is necessary; freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case.

My brothers and sisters, it is my deepest hope that we will be bound together through Jesus and the Holy Spirit by the bonds of sincerity, and be molded into a lasting unity. Thus together we shall be able to bring the spirit of the Gospel for the glory of God, our Father, to all mankind. May I wish each of you health in mind and body, and every success in your visit here. Let us pray for one another in the Lord, and continue to commit ourselves in service to our church and our nation.

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Bishop Jin Luxian's response at the reception-dinner.

Your Excellency, Bishop Wu, brothers and sisters in Christ,

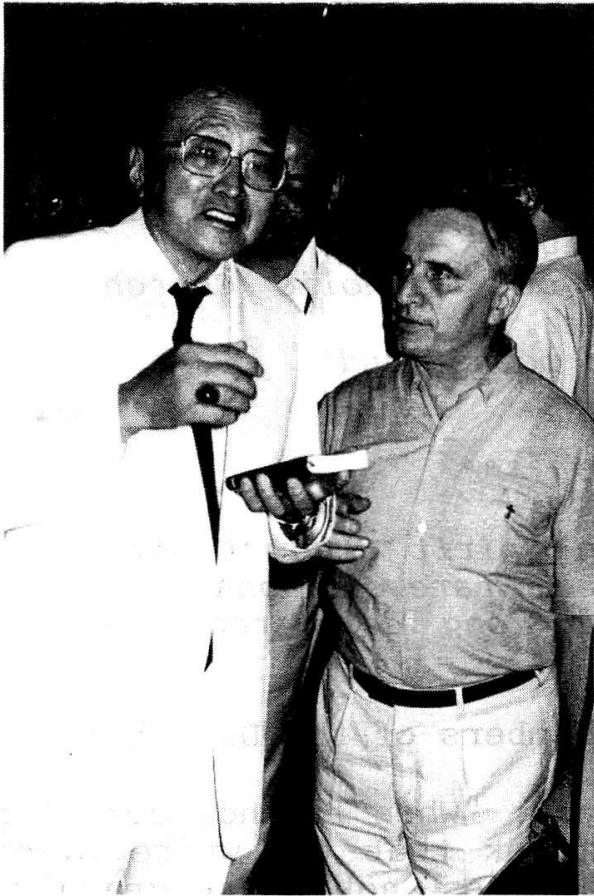
We clergy and Catholics of Shanghai have come to Hong Kong this time at the invitation of the Holy Spirit Study Centre through Fr. John Tong, its Director. As soon as we stepped on Hong Kong soil we received a warm welcome and found ourselves immersed in Christian love. Coming to be with us in person as you have this evening, and preparing this wonderful banquet for us, as well as your warm words of welcome, Bishop, have already brought our visit to an immediate high point. On behalf of our group, and in my own name, I render heartfelt thanks to you, Bishop Wu.

In the last twenty years Hong Kong diocese has made great progress and church institutions have undergone great development. This is the result of the communal effort of the whole body of Hong Kong clergy and Catholics. As brothers and sisters in the Lord, we rejoice with you and offer you our heartfelt congratulations. One of the reasons that the Hong Kong church has been able to achieve these results is that it has been under the leadership of Chinese bishops. Only if our Chinese Church becomes more inculturated, or sinicized, will the Mystical Body of Christ grow more rapidly.

In the history of each country and nation, there are always some important turning points. The people who live during these pivotal times bear a heavier responsibility. Some farsighted people travel before the course of history and point to other people of their generation the direction they should take. Some people make a contribution, but others do not.

During the 1980's Hong Kong faces a new situation. Under your leadership, Bishop Wu, the Hong Kong Catholic Church has made a statement regarding 1997. We admire what your statement says.

In the last few years, due to further progress in the implementation of the religious policy and our own hard work, the situation of our Shanghai diocese keeps getting



HSSC's Fr. Lazzarotto and Bishop Jin compare notes.

better. Twenty churches have already been re-opened. Catholics gladly attend church and carry out their normal religious activities. To consider just Sheshan for example, in May of this year, our priests heard 20,000 confessions and the faithful received over 30,000 communions. In 1982, a seminary drawing students from six provinces and Shanghai was opened at Sheshan. Over 90 seminarians now attend it. Since the number of young people applying to the seminary is increasing each year, and our present facilities are inadequate to accept them, we have decided to build a new seminary. On May 12 of this year we broke ground for it. Some priests from Hong Kong participated in the cornerstone laying ceremony.

We have also begun the activities of Guangqi Press again, and in the not too distant future, we will publish a church magazine and religious books.

On July 3, in accordance with the criminal code of the PRC and in a generous spirit of humanitarianism, the Shanghai courts released on parole Bishop Gong Pinmei. Bishop Gong publicly thanked the government for its leniency and expressed determination to observe the laws of the church and of the country. He also declared that he would devote his remaining years to the accomplishment of the nation's modernization program. He has won the praise of Shanghai's clergy and Catholics alike.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Church everywhere in China is developing on a firm basis.

In the light of this happy situation, I propose a toast:

*to the health of each one here,
to friendship between the Catholics of Shanghai
and Hong Kong,
to friendly exchanges based on the principles
of mutual respect and equality,
to the further growth of our Catholic Church
in both Hong Kong and Shanghai,
and to the prosperity of our motherland!*

*On July 23, 1985, the Holy Spirit Study Centre
invited the delegation to a farewell banquet,
on that occasion, Fr. John Tong delivered the
following address.*

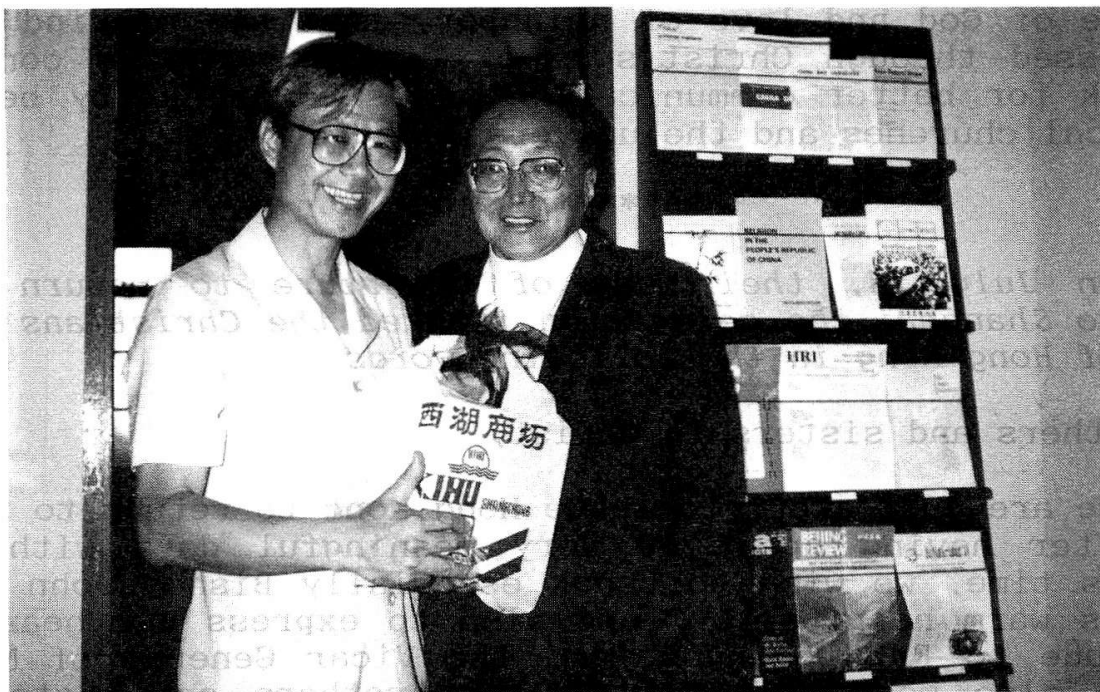
Your Excellency, Bishop Jin, and Members of the Delegation:

The first line of Lun Yu reads: "When friends come from afar shouldn't we be happy?" I think that the writer's emphasis on the word "afar" designates not a geographical place, but rather a richness of life. Because friends from "afar" have different lives and different experiences, they can enlarge our own lives and make them richer. So it is that your visit has contributed to our happiness. As Bishop Wu said some days ago, your presence has caused us to experience once again what the Psalmist sings of: "How good, how delightful it is for all to live together like brothers." (Ps. 133)

You are the first Chinese Catholic delegation to go abroad since 1949. Thus, you have made an historical breakthrough. Moreover, Bishop Jin Luxian, your group leader, is the most famous Catholic theologian in China today: Sheshan seminary, of which Bishop Jin is the rector, has over 90 seminarians, and is, at present, the largest and most well organized Catholic seminary in China. (And I might add that the Sheshan Basilica connected to the seminary was the first church to be designated a basilica in the Far East.) Mr. Lu Weidu, your deputy group leader, is the son of the former national Catholic leader, Lu Bohong. We

may say the son's fame now rivals that of his father. Your other deputy group leader, Dr. Wang Zhengyi, is the first Catholic ever to be appointed to the high position of President of the Shanghai 2nd Medical University. Your group is not lacking in renowned leaders, both in society and in the church, and all are deserving of our respect.

As an organization of the Hong Kong diocese, Holy Spirit Study Centre, since its inception in 1980, has not only gathered documentation on China and the Church in China, but it also publishes TRIPOD, which seeks to promote concern, understanding and faith reflection regarding the Church in China. It also makes an effort to play a bridge role in advancing, through Christian contacts, the cause of unity between the mainland church, the Hong Kong church, and especially the church universal. Among the many contacts our



Fr. Tong accepts the delegation's gifts on behalf of the HSSC.

Centre has had with the Chinese churches during the past 12 months, those with the church in Shanghai have been the most frequent. During our visit to the seminaries in China in July, our trip with the five Asian bishops last September, accompanying Fr. Laurence Murphy, Director of International Education of the Association of American Catholic Colleges

and Universities in January, and participating in the historical visit of Hong Kong's Bishop John B. Wu in March, on each trip we passed through Shanghai and experienced your gracious and warm hospitality. You made us feel right at home. Now it is our turn to play host to you in Hong Kong on this your initial visit to Christian churches outside of China. We are really happy and honored to have you with us.

On behalf of the Holy Spirit Study Centre, allow me to express our hopes for the future. I pray that the Christian friendship between the churches of Shanghai and Hong Kong will continue to develop. I hope this visit will increase understanding and lead to further exchanges not only of a personal nature but also in the fields of theology and pastoral experience between our two churches. Let us be sources of encouragement for one another in our service to society, in furthering the cause of the Gospel message of love of God and love of neighbor, that all mankind might be blessed through Christ's name. Finally, let us continue to work for better communication and stronger unity between our local churches and the universal church.

On July 24, their day of departure to return to Shanghai, the delegation thanked the Christians of Hong Kong in the following words.

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are just about to leave Hong Kong to return to Shanghai after having spent 10 very meaningful days with you. At this time, we wish to thank especially Bishop John B. Wu for his warm hospitality, and also to express our heartfelt gratitude to Fr. Domingos Lam, the Vicar General of Macao. We are also most grateful to our brothers and sisters of the Holy Spirit Study Centre for meticulously planning our very full schedule as well as for serving as our companions throughout our trip.

Both in Hong Kong and Macao, we came together in prayer and at Mass. Our tours and visits left on us a deep impression of your diocesan pastoral works and your spirit of service to society. Indeed, there are many areas from which we can learn from you.

Throughout our trip, we have had many opportunities to enter into conversation and dialogue with you, and have met and talked with many friends from the news media. We feel deeply your sincere concern for the Catholic Church in China. We also feel that through our encounters and exchanges, we may all be able to see the merciful God personally guiding and teaching each local church according to the concrete situation existing in each place. Thanks be to the Lord for his graces.



Delegates Fr. Shen Baozhi and Mr. Tang Guozhi gathering literature on youth work.

We go back bearing with us your warm and brotherly friendship. With this good beginning, sharing the same faith and the same truth, we hopefully shall have many more exchanges. We warmly welcome all of you to come and visit Shanghai regularly.

During this visit, we feel we have attained our goals of enhancing friendship, deepening understanding, and seeking the glory of God together.

On our return to Shanghai, we shall share our experiences of the Hong Kong and Macao local churches with our Christians of the Shanghai diocese. We also bring with us your Christian brotherly greetings to Bishop Zhang Jiashu, Assistant Bishop Li Side, Bishop Gong Pinmei, who is presently resting and recuperating, and all our other priests and laity.

In conclusion, let us borrow the words of John, the Apostle: "My friend, you have done faithful work in looking after these brothers, even though they were complete strangers to you. They are proof to the whole Church of your charity."

Let us remain, then, in the love of the Lord, in mutual prayer and support.

Thank you once again.