

## *The Holy Father's Message for May 24, 2011 to Pray for the Church in China*

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*Pope Benedict XVI*

**D**uring the Easter season, the liturgy sings to Christ risen from the dead, conqueror of death and sin, living and present in the life of the Church and in the affairs of the world. The Good news of God's Love made manifest in Christ, the Lamb that was slain, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, is constantly spreading until it reaches the ends of the earth, and at the same time it encounters rejection and obstacles in every part of the world. Now, as then, the Cross leads to the Resurrection.

Tuesday, 24 May, is dedicated to the liturgical memorial of Our Lady, Help of Christians, who is venerated with great devotion at the Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai: the whole Church joins in prayer with the Church in China. There, as elsewhere, Christ is living out his passion. While the number of those who accept him as their Lord is increasing, there are others who reject Christ, who ignore him or persecute him: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4). The Church in China, especially at this time, needs the prayers of the universal Church. In the first place, therefore, I invite all Chinese Catholics to continue and to deepen their own prayers, especially to Mary, the powerful Virgin. At the same time all Catholics throughout the world have a duty to pray for the Church in China: those members of the faithful have a right to our prayers, they need our prayers.

We know from the *Acts of the Apostles* that when Peter was in prison, everyone prayed fervently, and as a result, an angel came to free him. Let us do likewise: let us all pray together intensely for

this Church, trusting that by our prayers we can do something very real for her.

Chinese Catholics, as they have said many times, want unity with the universal Church, with the Supreme Pastor, with the Successor of Peter. By our prayers we can obtain for the Church in China that it remain one, holy and Catholic, faithful and steadfast in doctrine and in ecclesial discipline. She deserves all our affection.

We know that among our brother Bishops there are some who suffer and find themselves under pressure in the exercise of their episcopal ministry. To them, to the priests and to all the Catholics who encounter difficulties in the free profession of faith, we express our closeness. By our prayers we can help them to find the path to keep their faith alive, to keep their hope strong, to keep their love for all people ardent, and to maintain in its integrity the ecclesiology that we have received from the Lord and the Apostles, which has been faithfully transmitted to us right down to the present day. By our prayers we can obtain that their wish to remain in the one universal Church will prove stronger than the temptation to follow a path independent of Peter. Prayer can obtain, for them and for us, the joy and the strength to proclaim and to bear witness, with complete candour and without impediment, Jesus Christ crucified and risen, the New Man, the conqueror of sin and death.

With all of you I ask Mary to intercede that all of them may be ever more closely conformed to Christ and may give themselves ever more generously to their brethren. I ask Mary to enlighten those who are in doubt, to call back the straying, to console the afflicted, to strengthen those who are ensnared by the allure of opportunism. Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, Our Lady of Sheshan, pray for us!