

## *Seven Chinese Cardinals: Grace upon Grace*

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**A**mong the seven Chinese cardinals, three of them were members of religious orders: Cardinal Thomas TIEN Ken-hsin, SVD, Cardinal Paul SHAN Kuo-hsi, SJ, and Cardinal Joseph ZEN Ze-kiun, SDB; four of them were diocesan priests: Cardinal Paul YU Pin of Nanking Diocese, Cardinal Ignatius KUNG Pin-mei of Shanghai Diocese, Cardinal John Baptist WU Cheng-chung and John TONG Hon of Hong Kong Diocese.

### **Cardinal Tien: record holder**

Cardinal Thomas Tien was the first Chinese Cardinal, and he posted some unique records:

- the first Cardinal in Far East;
- the first and the only Chinese Cardinal who had voted in the conclave, not once but twice; the first time was October 1958, when Pope John XXIII was elected; the second time was June 1963, when Pope Paul VI was elected;
- he was a cardinal for the longest period of time, from 20 February 1946 to 24 July 1967, i.e. 21 years 5 months and 4 days.

In 1958, after the death of Pope Pius XII, all the Cardinals gathered in the Vatican for the conclave to elect the new Pope. Cardinal Tien survived a car accident earlier in Germany, and he had to use a wheelchair to enter the venue. Newly-elected Pope John XXIII went to greet Cardinal Tien in his wheelchair, because he was unable to move freely.

Cardinal Tien had supervised more dioceses than anyone else. He served as Apostolic Prefect of Yangku, Apostolic Vicar of Qingdao, Archbishop of Beijing and Apostolic Administrator of Taipei.

### **Cardinal Paul YU Pin, an unparalleled funeral**

Cardinal Yu Pin was the only cardinal who had held a public office. During the Second World War, Cardinal Yu, having been elected as the delegate to the National Assembly, frequently travelled between Europe and the United States to seek international support in the war of resistance against Japan. For a more detailed description, see Professor Chen Fang-Chung's article in this issue of *Tripod*.

Not long before being elevated to Cardinal in 1969, Cardinal Yu Pin was diagnosed with heart disease and diabetes. It could be said that his cardinalate was in illness.

In August of 1978, after the death of Pope Paul VI, members of the College of Cardinals gathered in Rome for the papal conclave. Although seriously ill, Cardinal Yu decided to go to Rome. His friends went to the airport to see him off, and he said to them, "I am old, but I am still able to leave for Rome to attend the funeral of Pope Paul VI. However, perhaps I may not come home alive." (*Kung Kao Po*, 25 August 1978, p.8)

Unfortunately, his prediction came true. On August 16, while staying in Rome, Cardinal Yu Pin died of a heart attack at the age of 77. His funeral was held in the Basilica of St Peter on August 18, with Cardinal Carlo Confalonieri, Dean of the College of Cardinals, presiding. Ninety-five cardinals attended the funeral. In the history of the Catholic Church, there were never so many cardinals in attendance in another cardinal's funeral. (*Kung Kao Po*, 1978-8-25)

### **Cardinal Kung Pin-mei: showed the utmost fortitude**

Cardinal Kung Pin-mei was the only Chinese cardinal who had ever been in prison. Although he spent six years in the episcopate in very unstable social circumstances, and thirty years in prison, he still lived to the ripe old age of 98. It was really a miracle in God's marvelous plan. Up to the present time, Cardinal Kung was the longest living Chinese cardinal.

Cardinal Kung was also the only Chinese cardinal whom the Holy Father appointed "*in pectore*". On June 30, 1979, Pope John Paul II nominated him "*in pectore*" as a Cardinal, but Cardinal Kung had to wait until June 29, 1991 before he could receive his

red hat at a consistory.

Although Cardinal Kung had been isolated from the outside world for more than thirty years, he had links with the other seven Chinese Cardinals.

In September 1935, Monsignor Tien Ken-hsin attended the National Congress of Catholic Action in Shanghai. The congress was a big event with one thousand persons participating. The young Father Kung Pin-mei, aged 34, was the parish priest of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church (Zhangjialo), one of the most prominent parishes in Shanghai. Most likely he met Monsignor Tien and Father Yu at the congress.

In 1951, Kung Pin-mei, the new Bishop of Shanghai, was also appointed as the Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Nanking. In fact, he exercised the episcopal ministry on behalf of Archbishop Yu Pin.

In March 1985, Cardinal John B. Wu, in his capacity as the bishop of Hong Kong, was invited to visit Beijing and Shanghai. During his stay in Shanghai, Cardinal Wu courageously asked to visit Cardinal Kung in prison. Although Cardinal Wu's request was refused due to the political atmosphere, because of his courage, Cardinal Kung became a focus of the media. Later, Cardinal Kung was set free by the government. Although the two cardinals had never met personally, they had empathy for one another.

In July 1958, Cardinal Kung was released from jail and stayed in the Bishop's House in Shanghai. Cardinal John Tong (then Father Tong) often visited him, and became one of his most frequently contacted "overseas" friends.

In 1988, Cardinal Kung left for the United States to have medical treatment, and he later settled there. Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-hsi carefully arranged a trip to the USA so that he could visit his predecessor in the cardinalate, Cardinal Kung, who endured great suffering for the Church in China with the utmost fortitude and a lofty spirit.

Being a native of Shanghai, Cardinal Joseph Zen had a deep relationship with Cardinal Kung. In 1943, Cardinal Zen was a young student at the Aurora University Affiliated High School of which Cardinal Kung was the principal. In my interview with Cardinal Zen, he told me that the then Principal Kung himself

taught Latin. This was not only to prepare the students to be altar boys, but to encourage them to consider a religious vocation. (Interview to Cardinal Joseph Zen, August 10, 2012). Just as Principal Kung had hoped, the young Joseph Zen entered the Salesian Novitiate one year later, to begin his long and devoted consecrated life. Thus we can see that the life of Cardinal Kung was closely related to the lives of the six other cardinals.

### **Introverted Cardinal John B. Wu**

Cardinal John B. Wu was born into a Catholic family in Wuhua, Guangdong in 1925. After being ordained a priest in Hong Kong in 1952, he went to Rome to study at the Pontifical Urbaniana University where he obtained a doctorate in Canon Law. Then he was invited to Taiwan, to serve as a parish priest in Miaoli County. In 1975, the then Father Wu was appointed as the Bishop of Hong Kong. He was consecrated bishop in Hong Kong on July 25, 1975. In 1986, Pope John Paul II created him a cardinal.

In his 27 years as bishop, Cardinal Wu had spent much effort in encouraging the Hong Kong Diocese to contribute to the Church in China. In 1980, Cardinal Wu, being aware that Mainland China was open to the outside world, established the Holy Spirit Study Centre, with the aims of promoting dialogue between Hong Kong and China, and of providing service to the Church in China according to their needs.

In May 1985, Cardinal Wu issued the Pastoral Exhortation "March into the Bright Decade", in which he especially asked the Catholics of Hong Kong to be concerned about the development of the Church in China, and to courageously take up the mission of being a "Bridge Church." At the time the Pastoral Exhortation was issued, the democratic movement was flourishing in Beijing. However, the student movement for democracy ended with military suppression. It came to be known as the "Tiananmen Incident". Cardinal Wu presided at the Mass in memory of those who lost their lives, and prayed for the homeland. In spite of the Tiananmen Incident, Cardinal Wu was still very concerned about the Church in China. In the 1990s, Cardinal Wu urged the Holy Spirit Seminary of Theology and Philosophy to assign professors to teach in China,

thus promoting the exchange of teaching experience between China and Hong Kong.

Facing the return of Hong Kong to China, Cardinal Wu showed his confidence. Although many communities in the Church prepared to evacuate Hong Kong, Cardinal Wu believed that there would be more opportunities for development after 1997. During the transition period, Cardinal Wu insisted on buying land in the satellite towns on which to build churches. He was very concerned about the pastoral needs of the population moving to these satellite towns. Reviewing the development of the Church in the years since the handover, Cardinal Wu was really a visionary.

Since 1996, Cardinal Wu started suffering from the “multiple myeloma”, a kind of bone marrow disease. But he never complained about his pain to others. Instead, he called for the organization of a Diocesan Synod in 2000. The Synod set clear directives for the future development of the Church. During the synod, Cardinal Wu, as the chairman, never missed a session. He always sat straight upright and listened carefully to all the speakers in spite of his terrific pain. His example still moves people even now, ten years after his death.

### **The pragmatic, humble and wise Cardinal Shan Kuo-hsi**

On January 18, 1998, Pope John Paul II announced the elevation of Bishop Paul Shan of Kaohsiung to Cardinal. Cardinal Shan Kuo-hsi was born in Puyang, Henan province on December 2, 1923. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1946, and was ordained a priest on March 18, 1955 in Baguio, the Philippines. When Cardinal was young, he was responsible for the formation of youth. He had translated the book “*Dedication and Leadership*”, which is a good companion for many Catholic youth leaders, including me, during their growing years.

During the summer vacation of 1976, the young Father Shan sacrificed his leisure time to do two months of pastoral work in the mountainous region of East Taiwan. Later, at the invitation of Father Mark Fang of the Theology Faculty of Fu Jen Catholic University, he wrote some reflections on his experience. Although he had spent only two months in the mountainous region, Cardinal

Shan, by virtue of his sharp observational abilities and his enthusiasm for service, wrote a 16-page report, which featured a description of the indigenous peoples, evangelization, the inculturation of the liturgy, and the social development of that region. In 1980, Father Shan was appointed Bishop of Hualien, and the report very likely became the blueprint for his pastoral ministry.

During his episcopacy in Hualien, both the diocese and vocations flourished. The area enclosed by Hualien Diocese included Hualien and Taitung, with a total population of about 600,000, of whom about 56,000 were Catholic. During his episcopacy, Cardinal Shan spared no effort to promote vocations.

A plenary assembly of the Bishops' Conference in Taiwan was held in April 1987. Although his seniority was low among the bishops, Cardinal Shan was unanimously elected the President of the Bishops' Conference. Although the media in Taiwan was surprised at the result, the clergy believed that God had put the right person in the right place at the right time.

In 1991, the Holy Father appointed Cardinal Shan as the Bishop of Kaohsiung. During his episcopacy, he won the love and respect of both the clergy and laity in the diocese. The Catholics liked to call him "Archbishop Shan". From this we can see that Cardinal Shan was much identified with the diocese. Soon after Bishop Shan took charge of the Kaohsiung Diocese, he recommended to the Vatican that his Vicar General young Father Lin Chinan be appointed as the Auxiliary Bishop. His decision became a much told story.

On January 5, 2006, Pope Benedict announced the retirement of Cardinal Shan. However, in the same year, Cardinal Shan was confirmed to have lung cancer. But fortunately it had not spread. After one year of recuperation, Cardinal Shan travelled around Taiwan to give talks on death and the meaning of life. He shared his life, faith and values with different communities within the Church and in society.

In February 2008, Cardinal Shan came to Hong Kong to attend a seminar held by the Holy Spirit Study Centre. He told me that the cancer was a gift from the Lord. It gave him the opportunity to courageously share his faith with other people. The number of presentations to non-Catholics in one year's time was more than the

total in decades of his priesthood. In 2009, the Taiwan government presented Cardinal Shan with the 5th Presidential Peace Award, for his contribution to peace and ethnic harmony.

### **Cardinal Joseph Zen: A brilliant mind**

On February 22, 2006, the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, Pope Benedict XVI announced the elevation of Bishop Joseph Zen of Hong Kong to Cardinal, the sixth Chinese Cardinal in history, and the second cardinal in Hong Kong after the death of Cardinal John Wu. He was also the eighth Salesian Cardinal at that time.

Cardinal Joseph Zen was born in Shanghai on January 13, 1932, and was ordained a priest on February 11, 1961 in Turin, Italy. He obtained a Doctorate in Philosophy at the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome in 1964. He taught philosophy at the Salesian Seminary from 1964 to 1970; and he served as the Provincial Superior of the Salesians from 1978 to 1983. He then served as the Dean of Philosophy in the Holy Spirit Seminary College of Theology and Philosophy from 1984 to 1991. He was consecrated as Coadjutor Bishop of Hong Kong in December 1996, and became Bishop of Hong Kong on September 23, 2002.

Among the seven Chinese Cardinals, Cardinal Zen is the one who most likes to banter with others. In 1994, in a lunch meeting with the young priests from China, Cardinal Zen (then Father Joseph Zen) was one of the guests. I took this opportunity to talk with some young priests about the relationship between ministry, authority and obedience. I said, "When being the Provincial Superior, Father Zen was an austere superior. However, after being relieved from his office, he immediately turned to be an obedient Salesian, even more obedient than a novice." On hearing this, Fr Zen was not displeased, but added, "Yes, when I was teaching in Shanghai last year, I received a notice from the Superior, telling me to come back to Hong Kong. So I followed his instruction and immediately changed my flight schedule to come back to Hong Kong. I have been working in Hong Kong now for one year." From this we can see that Cardinal Zen is a candid and lovable person. But he said frankly, "It is a pity that the novices are not very obedient nowadays."

In February 2006, after having received the red hat, Cardinal Zen returned to Hong Kong and invited the workers of Catholic media to dinner, to express his appreciation for their work in Hong Kong and Rome. I asked Cardinal Zen, "Did Pope Benedict XVI elevate you to be a Cardinal because it is the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the Salesians in China and he chose a Chinese Salesian to be Cardinal, instead of your achievements?" On hearing the question, Cardinal Zen laughed and said, "It could be very possible. When the Pope announced the new Cardinals, he read out the name 'Monsignor Joseph Zen Ze-kium' with difficulties. He did not immediately read out the title 'Bishop of Hong Kong', but 'Salisiano' (Salesian). I think he took seriously my position as a Salesian." This shows that Cardinal Zen is a big-hearted man, with much wisdom.

Cardinal Zen is quick-witted and eloquent. His character attracts the attention of the media. As he is also very outspoken, the media from both the East and the West respectfully call him the "Conscience of Hong Kong".

### **Cardinal Tong, the junior on the list**

Cardinal Tong is the youngest one of the seven, both in terms of age and seniority in pastoral experience. But he is the one who has stayed for the longest time in a single seminary. Since he entered the South China Regional Seminary (later, the Holy Spirit Seminary) in 1957, except for a few years of study in Rome, he has continuously lived in this seminary, for 42 years now.

The one who influenced Cardinal Tong the most is undoubtedly his senior school-mate (in the South China Regional Seminary and at the Pontifical Urbaniana University) Cardinal Wu. During his episcopacy Cardinal Wu appointed Fr. John Tong first as Dean of Theology at the Holy Spirit Seminary College, then Director of the Extra-mural Studies program, then Director of the Holy Spirit Study Centre, then Vicar General of the Hong Kong Diocese and eventually recommended him to the Holy See as Auxiliary Bishop. Along the way Cardinal Wu's trust in Bishop Tong was ever-increasing. The low-profile style and prudence of Cardinal Tong is quite a clear reflection of the style of Cardinal Wu



himself. Cardinal Tong respected Cardinal Wu very much, far more than a member of the staff to his superior, but to level of a son to his father. Moreover, the special endurance of Cardinal Tong, and his tolerance of outside criticism and misunderstanding, is very much like an inheritance from Cardinal Wu.

In his younger years, Cardinal Tong was a regular contributor to many theological journals. His thesis "A Search into the Dogma of Purgatory" is an example of this. In the 1970s and 1980s, he was active in Chinese theological research, especially paying attention to the translation of the term "demythologize". If he were not promoted so smoothly, he might have concentrated his efforts on theological studies. Even now he might be a very strong force on a Chinese theological working team.

## **Conclusion**

Each of the seven Chinese cardinals had their own characteristics, which comprised brilliant chapters in the history of the Church of China. It is to be regretted that all of them could not conveniently travel in China due to political circumstances. However, it is wonderful that their voices reached far and wide, and their influence has been felt much beyond the limits of territory and time. A verse from the Gospel of John describes their presence: "grace upon grace."