

His Eminence Ignatius Cardinal Kung Pinmei

Joseph Kung

You should have no illusion about your future. You have already been sentenced.

You must face imprisonment and death head on. This is your destiny.

God prepared this for you because he loved you. What are you afraid of?

If you are steadfast in your faith, even if you perish, you will have resurrection.

Bishop (later Cardinal) Ignatius Kung Pinmei

Homily to His Priests during Diocesan Clergy Retreat at the end of 1952

A Profile in Faith Affirmed by Three Popes and Others

His late Eminence Ignatius Cardinal Kung was the third cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church from China. He was created Cardinal *in Pectore* (in the heart) of the Blessed Pope John Paul II in 1979, without public announcement to the world or to Bishop Kung himself. This took place while Cardinal Kung was serving a life sentence for his refusal to sever his allegiance to the Pope, Vicar of Christ on earth, and for his Christian faith. Having lived secretly in the heart of the Holy Father for twelve years, Bishop Kung was finally publicly proclaimed a Cardinal at the 1991 consistory.

When a cardinal-elect kneels before the Pope to receive the red hat, the Holy Father intones: "It is red as a sign of the dignity of the office of a cardinal, signifying that you are ready to act with fortitude, even to the point of spilling your blood for the increase of the Christian faith..."

Cardinal Kung had already acted "with fortitude, even to the point of spilling (his) blood..." as the Pope urged every cardinal to do, and had already suffered "for the increase of the Christian faith" in his captivity by the Chinese government before the Pope publicly proclaimed him a Cardinal. When the late Pope John Paul II proclaimed Bishop Kung a Cardinal, he testified: "I felt that the

whole Church could not but honor a man who has given witness by word and deed, through long suffering and trials, to what constitutes the very essence of life in the Church: participation in the divine life through apostolic faith and evangelical love....”

Cardinal Kung was born on August 2, 1901 in Pudong, Shanghai, in a family who had been practicing the Catholic faith for at least five generations. He was ordained a priest on May 28, 1930, and was consecrated a bishop on October 7, 1949. Cardinal Kung was a prisoner for Christ for a period of approximately 33 years from September 8, 1955 to January 5, 1988, or from age of 54 to age of 87.

In 1957, two years after the imprisonment of Cardinal Kung, the late Archbishop Fulton Sheen wrote in *Mission* magazine: “The West has its Mindszenty, but the East has its Kung. God is glorified in His Saints.”

On the occasion of Bishop Kung’s 25th episcopal anniversary while the bishop was still serving his life sentence in jail, His Holiness Pope Paul VI wrote to him on October 7, 1974:

“...We wish to manifest an earnest pledge of our solicitude towards you, as well as to accomplish a duty of veneration and gratitude...In you, as dispenser and faithful minister of the divine mysteries...you endeavored and constantly sought to achieve and reach to that perfect peace which is the bond and noblest good of our human communities. However, difficult and arduous concerns became your lot; they were a burden of affliction which in no wise perverted your constancy in vocation, your safeguarding of the Catholic faith, or your love of your native land...It is fire that tests gold; tribulation that proves saints; trials endured for Christ’s sake bring virtue to a summit of perfection, where like the Apostles, innocent of all malice, it endures wrongdoing while forgiving the malefactors. What has been laid upon us as a penalty thus turns into honor splendidly serving the public good by example and merit; unshaken possession of peace of soul endures in him who suffers his pains for the glory of the Gospel and for the triumph of the Cross; imprisoned though he may be, his dwelling is already assured in heaven. It is with these thoughts in mind that

unceasingly we pray to our God of peace and all consolation that soon the dawn of peace may shine upon our beloved land of China, and that you may early be restored to the liberty fitting to your sacred position....”

The Chinese government allowed the Cardinal to come to the United States in 1988 for medical reasons, yielding to the years of public appeal and pressure from many international organizations and governments, including the U.S. House of Representatives and Senators. However, the Chinese government later confiscated Bishop Kung’s passport, effectively exiling him. Cardinal Kung died in the United States on March 12, 2000, at the age of 98. At the time of his death, Cardinal Kung was the oldest in the Sacred College, having been ordained a priest for 70 years, a bishop for 50 years, and a cardinal for 20 years. On the occasion of celebrating this milestone in July 1999, nine months before Cardinal Kung’s death, the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, sent his greetings to Cardinal Kung: “...In your decades of fidelity to the Church, you have followed the example of Christ the Good Shepherd, and even in the face of great suffering, have not ceased to proclaim the truth of the Gospel by your words and example. For your faithful witness to Christ, the Church is deeply grateful....”

Cardinal Kung never retired and died as the first native-Chinese Bishop of Shanghai. In his letter of condolence, Pope John Paul II described Cardinal Kung as “this NOBLE son of China and of the Church.” The Holy Father also gave “thanks to Almighty God for the late Cardinal’s priestly and Episcopal ministry in the Diocese of Shanghai, his heroic fidelity to Christ amid persecution and imprisonment, and his outstanding witness of communion with the universal Church and the successor of Peter...he may now receive the unfading crown of glory which the Chief Shepherd reserves for those who have followed Him faithfully to the end....”

Leadership with Uncompromising Faith and Love

The story of Cardinal Kung is the story of a faithful shepherd and a son of our Mother Mary. Cardinal Kung was a man who refused to renounce God and his Church despite the consequences of a life sentence from the Chinese communist government. In the

months before his arrest in 1955, the then Bishop Kung stood by his clergy and faithful in China in spite of many offers of safe passage out of China. He was a man who inspired millions of his countrymen to follow his example of fidelity to the Roman Catholic faith and who preserved the Roman Catholic Church in a communist country for the past 62 years. He was a man who became a symbol for world leaders in all countries in their fight for religious freedom. No account of religious persecutions or of any human rights violations in China is complete without a few words about His Eminence Cardinal Kung.

Ignatius Kung had been the Bishop of Shanghai and Apostolic Administrator of two other dioceses — Soochow and Nanking — for only five years before he was arrested by the Chinese government. In just five short years, Bishop Kung became one of the most feared enemies of the Chinese Communists. He was a man who commanded both the attention and devotion of the country's then three million Roman Catholics, and he was held in the highest respect by his brother bishops. As bishop, the good shepherd, Ignatius Kung, inspired thousands of the faithful to offer their lives up to God.

In his homily during Cardinal Kung's funeral, His Eminence Paul Cardinal Shan, S.J. of Taiwan said: "After his Episcopal ordination, knowing that the Church would be facing persecutions soon, Bishop Kung promoted intensive efforts with all the clergy to preach the Word of God and to develop a strong spiritual life among his faithful. In the short five years when the bishop still had some degree of freedom, he made the Diocese of Shanghai a model diocese for the whole of China. Indeed, Bishop Kung became the spiritual leader of the whole of China...."

In a retreat for the clergy of the Shanghai Diocese in 1952, Bishop Kung gave his clergy an honest and realistic assessment of the Church at that time and he supported them with great love in their journey towards Calvary: "You should have no illusion about your future. You have already been sentenced. You must face imprisonment and death head on. This is your destiny. God prepared this for you because He loved you. What are you afraid of? If you are steadfast in your faith, even if you perish, you will have resurrection."

Total Reliance and Dedication to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Consecration as Bishop of Soochow — When China turned communist in 1949, the policy of the government towards the Church became increasingly hostile every day. Father Kung, upon receipt of the appointment as Bishop of Soochow from the Holy Father, became keenly aware of the consequence of the position of Catholic bishop. Soochow was a new diocese and a neighboring city to Shanghai. He sought divine guidance by making a thirty-day retreat, and then obediently accepted consecration as the Bishop of Soochow in spite of the rule of the communist regime. "...Not my will but yours be done," as Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:42), explained the late Archbishop Dominic Tang, S.J., the Bishop of Canton, a contemporary of Father Kung and also a Confessor of the Faith. Archbishop Tang further emphasized in his homily the courage involved in Father Kung's decision: "He (Father Kung) has set for us an example of obedience. Just as our Blessed Mother had replied to the Angel Gabriel: 'May it be done to me according to your word.' (Luke 1:38)" Father Kung requested to be consecrated as bishop on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. "Without the help of Our Lady of the Rosary," he said, "I will not have the strength to be a bishop at this time in China."

Appointed as Bishop of Shanghai — Bishop Kung was appointed to the offices of Bishop of Shanghai and Apostolic Administrator of Soochow and Nanking on July 15, 1950 — a post he held until his death. He was never retired by the Holy See in spite of his advanced age and his prolonged imprisonment. Archbishop Tang again commented, "Bishop Kung became the bishop of three of the most important cities in China at a most critical time in the history of the Catholic Church in China..."

First Consecration of the Diocese of Shanghai to the Immaculate Heart of Mary — In the midst of persecutions, Bishop Kung declared 1952 a Marian Year in Shanghai. On April 22, 1952, Bishop Kung wrote a pastoral letter declaring: "It is our intention to declare solemnly that the fourth Sunday of June will be the day on which we shall CONSECRATE OUR DIOCESE TO THE

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, so that in this solemn ceremony we might be giving of ourselves in deed, and not merely in name; we ask the priests of our diocese to join with us in recommending to you the consecration of your families and parishes to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.”

To reflect on the fact that this consecration occurred after only two years of Bishop Kung’s taking his office as the Bishop of Shanghai and that the persecution of the Catholic Church in China had already begun in earnest, it is a decisive testimony of the deep love and trust that Bishop Kung had to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Could this very intimate relationship and love between our Lady and Bishop Kung explain why and how Bishop Kung was able to sustain his nearly 33 years of incarceration, physical and mental isolation, and other brutalities and deprivations, and yet emerge strong in faith, clear minded about his position, and living to the age of 98?

The Second Consecration of the Diocese of Shanghai to the Immaculate Heart of Mary — Forty years later, in 1992, while living in the United States, Cardinal Kung consecrated once again the Dioceses of Shanghai, Soochow, and Nanking to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at the Shrine of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (commonly known as the Blue Army Shrine) in Washington, New Jersey. He was accompanied by the late Bishop Walter Curtis, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Bridgeport in Connecticut, and by other clergy. He also thanked the Blessed Mother for her protection during his ordeal in the communist jail for three decades. In the meantime, by his invitation, a number of underground bishops in China, on precisely the same day, consecrated their dioceses in unison to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Uninterrupted Recitation of the Rosary — During that year 1952, Bishop Kung announced that there was to be an uninterrupted 24-hour daily recitation of the Rosary in front of a statue of Our Lady of Fatima in Shanghai. This specially blessed statue would tour all the parishes of Shanghai. The holy statue finally arrived at Christ the King Church where a major arrest of the priests had just taken place only a month before. Bishop Kung visited that church and personally led the Rosary while hundreds of the armed police

looked on. At the end of the Rosary, leading the congregation, Bishop Kung prayed: “Holy Mother, we do not ask you for a miracle. We do not beg you to stop the persecutions. But we beg you to support us who are very weak.”

The Legion of Mary — In defiance of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, then called “Three Autonomies”, Bishop Kung personally encouraged and promoted the Legion of Mary, a religious organization of the laity dedicated to the veneration of our Blessed Mother Mary. As a result, many members of the Legion of Mary risked arrest to continue their work assisting the priests and parishes in the name of their God, of their Church, and of their bishop. Hundreds of Legion of Mary members, including many students, were arrested and sentenced to 10, 15, or 20 years or more of hard labor. Only God knows how many of them died for their faith.

Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Sheshan — In 1953, with all the clergy of the diocese, Bishop Kung made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Sheshan, on the outskirts of Shanghai. Led by Bishop Kung, all the clergy and all the seminarians solemnly pledged before the Holy Eucharist that they would not by their words or deeds compromise their faith. They would be absolutely loyal to their Holy Mother and to the Church. With very few exceptions, most clergy remained faithful to Rome. Most accepted long jail sentences, and many died in prison rather than join the government sponsored Patriotic Association.

Catechists, Preaching and Evangelization: The Critical Links

Knowing that he and his priests would soon be arrested, Bishop Kung vigorously trained hundreds of catechists to carry on the duty of evangelization in his diocese and to pass on the Roman Catholic faith to future generations. Bishop Kung also ordered a team of six renowned preachers of the diocese to continuously visit all the parishes to offer sermons, and to conduct retreats and Bible discussions. He knew that only with a deep understanding of the Catholic doctrine and with the love of the gospel would Catholics be able to survive the pressure of the communists and their

government-established church. The Legion of Mary and many other youth groups hand copied and distributed the sermons to the faithful far and wide to form an invisible defense against the attacks from the communist government, and from some priests who had yielded to the temptations of power, material allurements, and freedom from persecution.

Sacrifice and Martyrdom — A Strong Catholic Resistance in the Midst of Communist Rule

A leader of any organization sets the tone and spirit of the organization. In the case of a diocese, the spirit and strength comes from the bishop leading the diocese. Bishop Kung's personal holiness, devotion to the Blessed Mother and his uncompromising obedience to the Vicar of Christ set the example for his diocese. It was through the sacrifice, martyrdom, and faithful service of those catechists, priests, students and other brave faithful that, through the protection of our Holy Mother Mary, the faith of the Roman Catholic Church in China survived the past 63 years. As a result of their perseverance, a vibrant underground Roman Catholic Church lives on in China today. Under the unswerving and visible leadership of Bishop Kung, the diocese of Shanghai became a model diocese in China within five short years, and it gained the respect and admiration of other bishops in China. Archbishop Tang said: "...He (Bishop Kung) had the whole diocese completely united under him. Bishop Kung's name soon spread throughout China. All the dioceses in China modeled themselves on the Shanghai diocese...."

Bishop Kung's place in the hearts of his parishioners was very well summed up by the Shanghai youth groups in the 1953 New Year's youth rally, when they declared: "*Bishop Kung, in darkness, you light up our path. You guide us on our treacherous journey. You sustain our faith and the traditions of the Church. You are the foundation rock of our Church in Shanghai.*"

An excellent book, *Church Militant, Bishop Kung and Catholic Resistance in Communist Shanghai*, written by Father Paul P. Mariani, S.J., was published in 2011 by the Harvard University Press. The author's extensive research contains very significant

insights and an in-depth record of the courage of the militant Catholics in Shanghai as, under the leadership of Bishop Kung, they resisted the Communist Party's violent attacks.

The Government Settled Its Score — Bishop Kung's Arrest

Shortly before Bishop Kung was arrested, his mother went to warn him of the possibility of it. Comforting his weeping mother, the bishop told her, "Do not cry. You should be very proud when your son is a prisoner for Christ." His mother died while the bishop was in jail, but her death was never disclosed to him by the Chinese government. Although the bishop suspected that his mother must have died during his long imprisonment, he did not receive this news until he was released in 1988.

Shanghai is a cosmopolitan center in China. As the Bishop of Shanghai, he had many friends in the multinational companies and foreign embassies. After the communist takeover, when these corporations were planning the evacuation of their employees, they offered Bishop Kung a safe passage out of China. The bishop declined their generous offers. In addition, there were foreign embassies that offered Bishop Kung a safe asylum. The bishop thanked them and said, "I am a shepherd. I must remain with my sheep."

On September 8, 1955, the press around the world reported the shocking news of the overnight arrest of Bishop Kung Pinmei along with more than two hundred priests and lay Church leaders in Shanghai.

Long Live Christ the King

Months after his arrest, confident that Bishop Kung had been weakened in their hands, the communists took Bishop Kung to a mob "struggle session". Thousands were ordered to attend and to hear the bishop's public confession of his "crimes".

With his hands tied behind his back, wearing a Chinese pajama suit, the five-foot tall bishop was pushed forward to the microphone to confess. To the astonishment of the security police, they heard a righteous loud cry of "*Long live Christ the King, Long live the Pope*" from the bishop. The crowd responded immediately, "Long

live Christ the King, Long live Bishop Kung.” Bishop Kung was quickly dragged away to a waiting police car and disappeared from the world until he was brought to trial in 1960.

“You Can Cut Off My Head, but You Can Never Take Away My Duties” — The Chief Prosecutor of the Chinese Communist Government Got the Message

The night before Bishop Kung was brought to trial in 1960, the Chief Prosecutor of the communist government once again offered Bishop Kung the option of severing his allegiance to the Holy Father and, as a free man, to take a leadership position in the new three-autonomies movement (the Patriotic Association), or to remain in prison. Bishop Kung’s answer was: “I am a Roman Catholic Bishop. If I denounce the Holy Father, not only would I not be a bishop, I would not even be a Catholic. You can cut off my head, but you can never take away my duties.” Bishop Kung decisively stated his position based on the fundamental dogma of the Catholic Church. Bishop Kung was ready to live up to his pledge of loyalty to the supreme authority of the Vicar of Christ when he accepted the position of bishop. The history of the Catholic Church is filled with the examples of countless martyrs, who were willing to live by the law of Jesus Christ. St. Thomas More, without hesitation, affirmed his position placing God above everything — the king and his life — when he said: “I am the King’s good servant, but I am God’s servant first.”

Life Imprisonment and Eventual Release

Imprisonment — Due to Bishop Kung’s uncompromising loyalty to God and to His Vicar on earth, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. He vanished behind bars for thirty years.

Bishop Kung did not have the usual “prisoners’ rights” such as family visits, letters, and parcels. He never received the packages containing warm clothing that I sent to him through the Red Cross. During those thirty years, he spent many long periods in solitary confinement. Numerous requests to visit Bishop Kung in prison by international religious and human rights organizations and senior foreign government officials were rejected. He was not permitted to

receive any visitors, including his mother. Other prisoners were allowed to receive letters and money to buy basic necessities, but not Bishop Kung.

Isolation — The government was careful to isolate Bishop Kung from all Catholic prisoners in order to limit his influence while serving his sentence. He never heard of Vatican Council II while in jail. In an effort to weaken his resolve and his intellect, his human contact was severely restricted. For one long period, he was the only prisoner on the whole floor, with a guard patrolling outside of his cell. He had no chair and no bed in his cell. He squatted, sat and slept on the concrete floor without bedding. Once, there was an inspection from a senior prison officer in preparation for some celebrity visit. In order to show the visitor that the bishop was indeed treated reasonably by the government, he was given a filthy old bed board. The Cardinal said later that that was one of the worst things that happened to him. That piece of bed board was infested with hundreds of bed bugs, so many that the bishop was unable to get rid of all of them.

Release — I worked incessantly for over thirty years to obtain Bishop Kung's release, as I am the only member of his family that was living in the free world at that time. I was grateful to have the help of many international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, the Red Cross, and the United States Government. In 1985, Bishop Kung was released from jail to serve another term of ten years of parole (house arrest). There he was under the custody of the Patriotic Association. In an article reporting Bishop Kung's release from jail, the *New York Times* suggested that the authorities, not the bishop, might have relented." After 2½ years of house arrest, he was officially released. However, he was never exonerated of the charge of being a counter-revolutionary. At the age of 87 and without medical care for more than 30 years, Bishop Kung had become very frail. In 1988, I went to China twice, and finally obtained permission from both the Chinese government and the Vatican to escort the Cardinal to the United States of America in order to receive proper medical care.

A Song of Faith — Tu Es Petrus

When Bishop Kung was housed in the Patriotic Association Bishop's residence during his parole, he was closely supervised by the government. He could be visited only by his family and guests approved by the Patriotic Association. One of the approved visitors was His Late Eminence Cardinal Jaime Sin, Archbishop of Manila, Philippines, during his friendship visit to China. This was the first time that Bishop Kung had met a visiting bishop from the universal Church since his imprisonment in 1955. The venue was a formal banquet hosted by the Patriotic Association in order to show the world how well Bishop Kung was being treated. Cardinal Sin and Bishop Kung were seated on opposite ends of the long banquet table, separated by more than twenty communist officials, Patriotic Association members and bishops. Cardinal Sin and Bishop Kung had no chance to exchange words privately. During the dinner, Cardinal Sin suggested that each person should sing a song to celebrate this "friendship visit". When the time came for Bishop Kung to perform, Cardinal Sin invited Bishop Kung to sing a song. In the presence of his captors and informants, Bishop Kung looked directly at Cardinal Sin and sang "*Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam mean*" (You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church), a song of faith proclaiming the supreme authority of the Pope. Bishop Kung courageously conveyed to Cardinal Sin that in all his years of captivity he remained faithful to God, to his Church and to the Pope, God's Vicar on Earth.

After he left China, Cardinal Sin immediately transmitted Cardinal Kung's message to the Holy Father and announced to the world: this man of God never faltered in his love for his Church or his people despite unimaginable suffering, isolation, and pain.

A Reminder

Usually, a clergyman, including a bishop or a cardinal, retires once he reaches the age of 75 or soon after. It was, therefore, taken for granted by many people, the news media, and Church officials that Cardinal Kung had been retired because of his advanced age. However, in the situation of Cardinal Kung, regardless of his age,

regardless of his three decades of imprisonment, he was never retired by the Holy See. He remained the only Roman Catholic Bishop of Shanghai until he died in March 2000, at the age of 98. In the year 2000 edition of *Annuario Pontificio* (an official annual directory of the world's bishops) issued by the Vatican, Cardinal Kung was listed, among other titles, as *Vescovo di Shanghai* (Bishop of Shanghai).

A Refugee Bishop in the United States

The late Bishop Walter Curtis, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Bridgeport, Connecticut, invited Bishop Kung to stay with the retired clergy of the Bridgeport Diocese upon his arrival in the United States in 1988. The diocesan retirement home for the clergy, of course, had the standard basic facilities including central heating, a hot shower, and wall-to-wall carpeting, all of which totally overwhelmed the Cardinal after thirty years in a communist prison. He remarked, "heaven must also be something like this." The Cardinal was also once asked by a reporter how he could look so well after spending thirty years in jail. He paused a short moment and answered: "No Cholesterol!" He remained a guest of the Bridgeport Diocese — later headed by Bishop Edward Egan — for nine years from February 1988 until December 1997.

1991 Consistory — Standing Ovation

Cardinal Kung never ceased praying for those who had renounced their allegiance to the Pope by joining the communist-established Patriotic Association. Prior to his trip to Rome to attend the Consistory in 1991, Bishop Kung addressed China through the airwaves of *Voice of America*, inviting the Patriotic bishops to return to the unity of the Church.

The ninety-year-old Cardinal Kung traveled to Rome to attend the Consistory on June 29, 1991. When his name was announced, the frail prelate gently stood up from his chair, and, assisted by two priests, walked up the steps toward the Papal throne. The Supreme Pontiff, Pope John Paul II, visibly moved, gestured towards Bishop Kung not to kneel. But, Cardinal Kung quickly knelt at the foot of Pontiff to whom he had pledged obedience with his whole life. The

Holy Father presented him with the red hat, helped Cardinal Kung up, and then stood smiling, patiently watching Cardinal Kung, as he slowly made his way to greet his brother cardinals. The whole Audience Hall of nine thousand guests simultaneously burst into an unprecedented seven-minute standing ovation, clapping their hands with great joy.

A Voice from China and Confiscation of His Chinese Passport

During the next twelve years, Cardinal Kung was a willing ambassador of the underground Church in China. He offered public Masses in many U.S. parishes, religious communities and seminaries, at Catholic conferences, and even on TV. He gave interviews and delivered homilies, hoping to bring the attention of the free world to the continued persecution of the Roman Catholic Church in China. He maintained constant communication with the underground Church in China. He remained an inspiration for the over ten million underground Roman Catholics in China and the hated enemy of the Chinese communist government.

In November 1997, when China's Chairman Jiang Zemin visited the United States, Cardinal Kung appealed to him to allow religious freedom in China and to release Catholics held in China's jails and labor camps.

He wrote: "I respectfully appeal to you, Mr. Chairman, to defend the rights of Chinese citizens to true religious freedom, and to permit Roman Catholics not only to enjoy true religious freedom, but to maintain their religious communion with the Pope in order to preserve the fullness of their faith. May China, under your able leadership, be internationally known as a country which has true religious freedom." The response was decisive. Four months later in March 1998, the Chinese government confiscated the passport of the ninety-seven year old cardinal, officially exiling him. Why was the Chinese communist government so fearful of an aged cardinal that it had to confiscate his passport to prevent his return to China?

Going Home

When the Diocese of Bridgeport was no longer able to accommodate Cardinal Kung, he moved in to live with my family

on December 15, 1997. It was a blessing to have the Cardinal with us. He continued his efforts for the underground Church from his small study and chapel for another 2½ years.

At the age of 98, in January 2000, Cardinal Kung was diagnosed with stomach cancer. As his doctor could not speak Chinese or French, the responsibility of informing the Cardinal of his health condition fell on his confessor, Msgr. John Horgan. Standing by the Cardinal's bedside and in the presence of the Cardinal's family members, Msgr. Horgan informed the dying shepherd of his terminal cancer. Cardinal Kung listened intently. Then, without uttering a word, he took his crucifix, kissed it, and raised the same crucifix to bless us. We were moved to tears, and together with His Eminence, we all sang the *Salve Regina*.

During the following two months whenever he was in pain, the Cardinal would call out: *Blessed Mother, help me; Jesus, help me and St. Joseph, help me*. He repeated this short litany thousands of times. Most of the time, he would simply clutch his rosary. The Cardinal said that he offered his sufferings for His Holiness and for China.

God gave Cardinal Kung a great send off. Hearing the news of his terminal cancer, almost eighty friends from New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Connecticut organized a five-hour prayer vigil, which included a Holy Mass in Cardinal Kung's residence and his small chapel on Saturday March 11, 2000. Many of the guests were former Shanghai Catholics, former teachers and students of Aurora High School and Gonzaga High School where the Cardinal had once been principal. Cardinal Kung received Holy Communion from his confessor, Msgr. Horgan. Although very weak, he was lucid and experienced great comfort when he was able to gaze at the large statue of Our Lady of Fatima that had been moved to the end of his bed. Seven hours after the guests had left, the Cardinal gradually drifted into unconsciousness. God received the Cardinal among His blessed loved ones at 3:45 a.m. on March 12, 2000.

After the Cardinal died, Pope John Paul II sent condolences, and called the Cardinal "this noble son of China and of the Church."

In his homily during Cardinal Kung's funeral, Cardinal Shan, S.J. of Taiwan described Cardinal Kung as: "Our beloved Cardinal, the loyal servant of God, the brave soldier of Christ, the protector of the Church, the good shepherd of his flock, has finally accomplished his mission. Using St. Paul's words, Cardinal Kung could certainly say: 'I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. From now on a merited crown awaits me...' (2 Tm 4:7-8)"

Even after his death, Cardinal Kung was still so disliked by the Chinese government that it issued an official statement: "Kung Pinmei was a criminal of China, found guilty by the Chinese court. Kung committed a serious crime of dividing the country and dividing the Church. History will judge him for his crime."

Responding to this insulting remark, Cardinal Shan Kuo-hsi of Taiwan rebutted it during Cardinal Kung's funeral Mass: "I believe that history will indeed judge. However, in my opinion, history will judge that Cardinal Kung was not a criminal. The criminals will be those who sentenced Cardinal Kung to life imprisonment. The criminals will be those who have been persecuting millions of Chinese religious believers."

The Cause for the Beatification/Canonization of Cardinal Kung

Cardinal Kung remains a world-renowned and an iconic symbol of the Catholic faith for China. Cardinal Kung personifies Catholic China.

Many people join my family and me in praying earnestly that the cause for the beatification of Cardinal Kung may be introduced in Rome. Yes, Cardinal Kung's suffering is over, and I am convinced that he now enjoys eternal bliss. His canonization cannot enhance the glory he already enjoys in heaven. But, his canonization, or just the opening of his cause, will certainly be a very strong spiritual stimulus for the universal Church, especially for the Church in China, at a time when relativism and a compromising of the faith and its moral principles are in vogue.

We hope the Vatican will, one day in the near future, approve that Cardinal Kung had lived a life of heroic virtue, and award him with the title of "venerable."