

Two New Pope-Saints' Concern for China

Tripod Staff

Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II were proclaimed Saints on April 27, 2014. Pope Francis officiated the ceremony held in St. Peter's Square in Rome. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI was also present. Some media, including some in Hong Kong, called this a "Four-Popes Day." (cf. SCMP, A9, 2014-4-28)

Pope Saint John XXIII, born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, was born on November 25, 1881 in Bergamo, Italy. He was elected Pontiff on October 28, 1958. He passed away on June 3, 1963. Pope John Paul II beatified him on September 3, 2000.

Pope Saint John Paul II, born Karol Josef Wojtyła, was born on May 18, 1920 in Wadowice, Poland. He was elected Pontiff on October 16, 1978. He passed away on April 2, 2005. Pope Benedict XVI beatified him on May 1, 2011.

Saint John XXIII (Pontiff 1958–1963) 聖若望二十三世

- 15 December 1958: in an Address to the College of Cardinals, he mentioned the Church in China, speaking about a possible "schism."



“In a special way, we desire to address you, Venerable Brothers, concerning the very vast and noble nation of Asia, whose civilization even in ancient times was already far advanced. For a long time, as you know, Catholics throughout the whole of China have been living under the most difficult circumstances.... It is our wish, furthermore, that our voice, our admonitions and invitations, should reach also those who have shown themselves to be weak, wavering and frightened—to be explicit, those who have taken over the places and the sees of sacred pastors by

unlawful means and this unfortunately paved the way for a deplorable schism. This word ‘schism’ as we utter it, seems almost to burn our lips and to wound our heart... we cannot but beseech Almighty God that in His mercy He may avert such a calamity as is now threatening the Catholic community in China.”

- 12 January, 1959: Invitation to all Catholics to pray for all those who suffer and are persecuted for their Christian faith, “especially for the Catholics in China.”

“We are daily grieved in a special manner at the thought of the condition—so difficult and grave—of the Chinese clergy and faithful, who are exposed not only to painful and prolonged hardship, but directly to the very grave danger of a disastrous schism. We wish there were no need to use this painful word. However, we have been forced to do so by the sad reality...”

- 29 June 1961: Letter to Taiwan Hierarchy: on the Catholic Church on mainland China.

“We are afflicted with even deeper and more acute sorrow over the fate of those Catholic communities from which sad reports come to us...”

- 26 November 1962: During the first session of Vatican II, Pope John XXIII received a document from 59 bishops (related to China) who admired the heroic behavior of Chinese Catholics and recommended avoiding any condemnation. The Pope promised not to use again the term “schism.”

Saint John Paul II (Pontiff 1978–2005) 聖若望保祿二世

* 19 August 1979: Sunday midday message at Castelgandolfo: “We do not cease however to nourish the hope to be able to establish once again that direct contact with Chinese Catholics which spiritually was never interrupted...”

* 18 February 1981: from Manila, the Pope sent a message to China, and to all Catholics in China underlining their positive role and faithfulness as “True Christians and Authentic Chinese.”



* 16 June 1981: The Pope made Bishop Dominic Tang Archbishop.

* 6 January 1982: An Apostolic Letter to all Bishops of the world asking for prayers for the Church in China: “Concern for the Church in China, which has always been so deeply felt by my recent predecessors Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul I, has become the particular and constant anxiety of my pontificate, as I have shown more than once and in various ways. This anxiety springs from the very nature of the catholicity of the Church...”

* 6 November 1983: Letter to Chinese Leader Deng Xiaoping: “I am of the opinion that the pursuit of the common good of humanity encourages something that is also the object of my own lively desire: a direct contact between the Holy See and the authorities of the Chinese people.”

* 28 February 1984: The Pope reminded Taiwan Bishops of their task of being a “Bridge Church” (repeated during the *ad limina* visits of Taiwan and Hong Kong bishops).

* 4 June 1984: The Holy See requested all foreign Bishops of former Episcopal Sees in China to submit their resignations.

* 29 May 1991: Bishop Ignatius Gong Pinmei (龔品梅, 1901-2000) was made Cardinal.

* 14 January 1995: Message to Chinese Catholics from Manila: “Dear brothers and sisters of the Church in China, I am well aware of the difficulties amid which you are called to bear witness to your faith in Christ... Unity is not the result of human policies or hidden and mysterious intentions. Instead, unity springs from conversion of the heart, and from sincere acceptance of the unchanging principles laid down by Christ for His Church...”

* 3 December 1996: Message to the Church in China: invitation to be united to Christ and to Peter's Successor.

* April-May 1998: Unsuccessful invitation to two Chinese bishops to take part in the Synod of Bishops on the Church in Asia.

* 1 October 2000: Canonization of 120 martyrs in China drew negative reaction from Beijing.

* 24 October 2001: Message for the celebration of the 400th anniversary of Fr. Mattco Ricci in China with the request for forgiveness of past mistakes: "I feel great sadness for these errors and limits of the past, and I regret that in many people these failings may have given the impression of a lack of respect and esteem for the Chinese people on the part of the Catholic Church, making them feel that the Church was motivated by feelings of hostility towards China. For all this I ask forgiveness and understanding of those who may have felt hurt in some way by such actions on the part of Christians."

* 2 April 2005: At the death of Pope John Paul II, the spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry expressed official condolences, but the PRC did not send any representative to his funeral.

Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II, pray for the Church in China!

The Catholic Church in China, according to *Sunday Examiner*, marked the double-header canonization of Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II in a low-key manner. (*Sunday Examiner*, P.1, 2014-5-11)

The response of Catholics in the mainland was in sharp contrast to that of Chinese people who were in Rome on that day, who expressed their love for the two late popes in an enthusiastic manner and were explicit about their excitement. (ibid.)