

FORMAL ADDRESSES BY BISHOP JOHN B. WU

IN GUANGZHOU AND EASTERN GUANGDONG

translated by Peter Barry

I. Bishop Wu's address at a banquet arranged by Mr. Chen Dong, Director of the Bureau of Religious Affairs of Guangdong Province, January 21, 1986

Through the gracious invitation of Mr. Chen Dong, Director of the Bureau of Religious Affairs for Guangdong Province, I have been given this wonderful opportunity to visit Guangzhou and eastern Guangdong. I, and the six delegates accompanying me, feel honoured and most grateful. I recall with joy the many happy experiences and impressions of my trip last March to Beijing and Shanghai at the invitation of the Bureau's National Director. Unfortunately, at that time I was unable to include Guangzhou in my itinerary, but today my wish has been fulfilled.

My present visit does not represent a beginning so much as a strengthening of those relationships which began as far back as 1980 when the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, through its social service organization Caritas, entered into cooperative exchanges with many districts of your province in the areas of medicine, care of the handicapped, adult education and other social services. My present visit is a gesture of encouragement to all our fellow countrymen to strengthen those ties and seek to develop them further.

We Catholics believe in maintaining a unity in faith with the universal Church under the leadership of the Holy Father. We believe that freedom of religious belief and activity is a God-given human right, one that has been endorsed by the United Nations and guaranteed by the Constitution of the Peoples Republic of China. We also believe that every Christian should be a patriotic citizen, and one who follows Christ's example of offering himself in service to his fellow man. The Christian is bound by obli-

gations to share his spiritual and material goods with others for the benefit of all. It is my sincere hope, then, that such trips as this may help to increase our knowledge and clarify our understanding of both the implementation of our nation's religious policy and the progress being made towards modernization in Guangdong Province.

Relations between Guangzhou and Hong Kong are naturally very close, for we share a similar background. As the Catholic Bishop of Hong Kong and a member of the episcopal college of the universal Church, I am happy to tell you that it is the hope of the Church in Hong Kong that such visits as this one take place with even greater frequency in the future, so that true dialogue and mutual understanding can continue to grow and develop. We hope that fostering such contacts may lead to closer harmony and a stronger unity between us, as well as between our Motherland and the outside world, her Church and the universal Church. Let us strive then for a closer communion, so that working hand-in-hand we might build a better world, one based on justice and love. Let us act together as brothers and sisters to create one family under heaven.



*Bishop Wu joins Bishop Ye
for prayer in Guangzhou Cathedral*

II. The address given at a banquet hosted by Bishop Wu in Guangzhou, January 22, 1986

At the beginning of this New Year, it is quite meaningful for me to be visiting the "City of the Five Rams". I'm sure you all recall that the ancient way of writing the Chinese character for "ram" is synonymous today with the character for "auspicious". And while my stay with you in Guangzhou is of short duration, I hope it will indeed be an "auspicious" occasion, offering much promise for our future.

Today I recall my first trip to Guangzhou in 1946 when I was a wide-eyed youth just graduated from high school and on my way to Hong Kong for future studies. Coming back after forty years, being able to visit once again your famous Shishi Cathedral, to meet with your leaders, and to observe how the open policy towards religion has been implemented in your province has not only revived memories but also has given me a fine opportunity to dialogue with leaders, citizens and friends.

In the twenty years since the close of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church has continued to stress the importance of an open dialogue, not only with the various Christian Churches but also with people of other religious Faiths and with those espousing no religious belief as well. Dialogue is a positive act, based on mutual respect, that engages people in a common search for better mutual understanding. This was the burden of my message at the meeting of the world synod of bishops held in Rome last month; it was also the subject of Pope John Paul II's New Year's Day Peace Address.

Dialogue is a path that leads to communion. Communion is a word with its own special meaning. It is used by theologians to describe that goal towards which all Catholics must strive: union with God, with men, and with the world. As religious people, we ought to work even harder to effect a unity among Christians, and a unity between local Churches and the universal Church. This should be our highest ideal, the object of our prayers, the sacred mission we must all strive to accomplish.

In closing, let me say that we look upon your kind

invitation to us as something very precious, and we are delighted to be with you. May I now call upon our delegates to join me in offering a toast to you, our friends. May the New Year bring progress, health and peace to you all.

III. Bishop Wu's address at a banquet given by the mayor of Wuhua, January 23, 1986

Coming home brings to mind two ancient sayings: "Tonight the moon is full," and "The moon shines brightest in one's native village." For this wanderer, who left home as a youth so many years ago, it is no longer necessary to "look to the moon and think thoughts of one's home", for today I AM home, and while the years have caused my tongue to mislay the familiar accent of my village and the hairs of my head to turn to grey, my heart's desires are fulfilled in being with you, my fellow villagers and relatives, once again. First, I wish to convey to the many government people, whose devoted efforts and careful planning have made it possible for me to be here with you, my heartfelt thanks and deepest respects.

"To wander like a floating cloud." The poet describes a spirit that is free and easy, and yet, how can the wanderer forget his home? Each time I read the beautiful verses of the Bible, which to me as a Christian are most dear, especially the book of psalms and the lists of the names of ancestors honoured and passed down by the children of Israel, I think of my own country and my native place. Today, to be received back by you as an honoured guest, this is something that dreams are made of.

I recall the lines of poetry:

A youth once grown leaves his homeland.
Should he fail in his studies and never return,
No matter where his bones are laid to rest,
His name will be honoured in his native home.

When I was young, the sentiments expressed in this poem were for me a source of courage. Not that I have failed, but that the acquisition of wealth and reputation are of little importance to me in evaluating a life.



Bishop Wu talks to Mayor Deng of Wuhua City

I have believed in Jesus Christ since I was a child. He, too, was born in a small village, the town of Bethlehem which is in the country of Israel. Jesus, however, was concerned about and took responsibility for the whole world. He suffered and died that others might be saved, and after he rose again from the dead, he sent his disciples into that world to preach the good news of love and service to others. His gospel helps us to transcend the limits of our individual lives, so that we might join together with all peoples and walk as one family on our pilgrimage towards eternal life.

In 1946, upon graduating from high school in Meixian, I went to Hong Kong to study philosophy and theology. In 1952, I was ordained a priest. After further studies in Rome and traveling extensively in Europe and America, I went to Taiwan where I worked for twenty years for the Church

there. Ten years ago, I was appointed Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong. That has been my history since last we were together. In all my wandering, my only desire has been to follow Christ, to serve my fellow man for the benefit of society. And while I am keenly aware of the insufficiency of my strength, I am still impelled by these ideals.

I see Hong Kong as a bridge between east and west, an important centre of exchange between China and the rest of the world. In recent years our Motherland has opened herself more widely to accept and learn from the world outside. The results have indeed been most gratifying. And while living in Hong Kong, I still feel a deep desire to do the best I can, according to my limited ability, to make a contribution to the welfare of our country and to the material and spiritual prosperity of our people.

Modern science and technology have advanced and quickened the avenues of communication so as to make of the world a very small place. We are now all members of a global village. Let us work together to achieve the high ideal of unity and peace among all its members.

IV. Bishop Wu's words at a banquet given by Government officials in Meixian City, January 25, 1986

Coming back to my hometown after being away for forty years, I find it difficult to express my feelings, except to say how grateful I am to you for your warm welcome, for the time you have taken from your busy schedules to make me feel so much at home. When I graduated from St. Joseph's High School in 1946, Meixian was still known as Jiaying. Then as now, it was famous as a cultural centre. Since graduation, I have traveled not only to Hong Kong but on to Europe and America to complete my studies before going to work for the Church in Taiwan. For the past ten years, I have been serving in Hong Kong as Bishop of the Hong Kong Diocese.

We are most grateful to the provincial Bureau of Religious Affairs for extending us an invitation to visit Guangzhou and eastern Guangdong. We have come to observe at first hand the progress being made in the programme of modernization and to get a better understanding of the con-

ditions surrounding the implementation of the government religious policy. We have toured a number of towns along the way, visited the newly opened churches there, and spent some time with the Catholics in each place. As religious people, we have been delighted by the evidence of so much progress and as fellow countrymen living in Hong Kong, we have been made proud.

When I was at school here in Meixian, the administration of the Meixian diocese, which covered nine counties then, was in the hands of American missionaries, both priests and sisters. Bishop Francis X. Ford was the Bishop at the time. After World War II, the Bishop undertook the construction of many buildings here in Meixian itself, including a student hostel, an activities centre, a rectory, a convent, and a large church. Most of the buildings lay along the river near the Meijiang Bridge. While times have changed and we cannot compare today with the past, Meixian still remains the most important city in east Guangdong, continuing to live up to its name as the home of famous people. Under your constructive leadership, I am sure this reputation will continue, and that your efforts to implement our country's religious policy, will become a model for all of east Guangdong. This would enhance even further our country's reputation abroad and bring much joy to our many compatriots now living overseas.

It is not by chance that Meixian has a reputation for being a cultural centre. Meixian emphasizes education and the number of schools here are above the national average. The graduates of these schools have spread throughout the country and throughout the world, and have made great contributions to our country and our people. It gives me pleasure to inform you that the Catholic Diocese in Hong Kong shares with you this same ideal to respond to the needs of society by placing great emphasis on education. Our diocese administers over 300 schools at present, and the 330,000 students attending these schools represent over one quarter of the total student population of Hong Kong. We try to offer to these students a balanced education whose purpose is the development of the whole person. Moral education is stressed and all religious beliefs are respected. The Catholic schools of Hong Kong are supported by the government and have a high reputation among its citi-

zens. Much has been accomplished in Hong Kong by Catholic education, which has a history of well over a century there. We extend to you, educators of Meixian, an invitation to come and visit our schools in Hong Kong. We welcome your suggestions and hope to be able to exchange experiences with you, especially with regard to quality education and the development of the total person. Thus may we be able to work together for the benefit of our next generation of citizens.

V. Bishop Wu's words at a banquet he hosted in Shantou, January 29, 1986



Our bishop presenting gift to Bishop Cai of Shantou City

Shantou forms an important communications link between the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. Located at the mouth of the Han River, Shantou is also the gateway to east Guangdong. The second largest city in Guangdong Province and the home of many overseas Chinese, Shantou is both famous and respected. Several well-known people from Shantou who now reside in Hong Kong (including some Catholics) have made great contributions to both Hong Kong society and the motherland, and are greatly admired. As I and my delegation visit Shantou we first of all desire to express our sincere gratitude to the many officials who made such hospitable arrangements for us.

In March of last year the Hong Kong Catholic Church, at the invitation of the National Bureau of Religious Af-

fairs, organized a delegation to visit Beijing and Shanghai. Again this year a delegation is visiting east Guangdong at the invitation of Guangdong Province's Religious Affairs Bureau. We have come to observe the progress of the motherland's modernization drive and conditions surrounding the implementation of the religious policy. As the Catholic Bishop of Hong Kong I feel greatly honored and at the same time burdened with a great responsibility.

According to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, in 1997 China will regain sovereignty over Hong Kong and will establish a special administrative region. The rights and freedoms now existing in Hong Kong's social system, manner of life and religious belief will be spelled out in the basic law and will not change for 50 years. At the same time, religious organizations and believers will be able to maintain relations with religious organizations and believers abroad.

It is apparent that due to circumstances of time and place the Hong Kong Catholic diocese ought to play a bridge role between the local church and the universal church. It can assume the mission of building up communications and help to bring about communion and unity in faith under the leadership of the Holy Father in Rome. Regarding personnel and resources, our local church seeks autonomy, provided there is mutual cooperation and sharing with the worldwide Catholic Church.

The motherland is gradually becoming more open; communications between Shantou and Hong Kong will accordingly become more close and frequent. I hope that this visit will strengthen mutual understanding and lead to further contact. If Catholics from both within and outside China can experience harmonious communion, then the motherland will gain deeper friendships and greater trust in the international community.

This year is the International Year of Peace. And ten days from now we celebrate the Spring Festival. All things are renewed at the beginning of the new year. Let me wish health and happiness to each one here, continued economic progress to the motherland, and peace to the whole world. *(Photos in this article courtesy of SCM Post)*