

CARDINAL SIN REVISITS CHINA

Jaime Cardinal Sin, archbishop of Manila, made his second visit to China in mid-November, 1987. Invited by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, Cardinal Sin led a group of seven persons to visit the cities of Beijing, Xi'an, Shanghai, and Xiamen. Cardinal Sin said that he was on a private pilgrimage and that he desired to be a force for strengthening the friendship between the Chinese and Filipino peoples. He also expressed the desire to meet high government officials in order to help improve the dialogue between the universal Catholic Church and the People's Republic of China. At the same time, he sought the opportunity of making contact with various levels of Catholic believers.

In Beijing Cardinal Sin met Mr. Zhao Ziyang, the newly elected secretary-general of the Chinese Communist Party. Cardinal Sin explained to Mr. Zhao that although the Church is one in doctrine, each local church enjoys a great amount of autonomy. The Church always respects each nation's sovereignty, the Cardinal said. According to another member of Cardinal Sin's group, Mr. Zhao was optimistic about future developments in the relationship between the universal Church and China.

Cardinal Sin also met Mr. Ren Wuzhi, director of the Religious Affairs Bureau, and the leaders of the Catholic Patriotic Association. With these leaders the Cardinal discussed the question of papal primacy. He also visited the Nantang cathedral in Beijing and held an hour's discussion with Bishop Fu Tieshan.

Cardinal Sin requested permission to visit Bishop Joseph Fan Xueyan of Baoding diocese, Hebei Province, who has been in prison since 1984. He also expressed the desire to visit some Catholic villages in other parts of Hebei Province. However, all these requests were denied.

In Shanghai Cardinal Sin called on Bishops Zhang Jiashu, Gong Pinmei, Jin Luxian and Li Side. The Cardinal was able to have a private conversation with Bishop Gong, released from jail only in 1985 after 30 years of imprisonment. Cardinal Sin also offered Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady at Sheshan, a famous pilgrimage place located 40 kilometers from Shanghai.

The last stop on the trip was Xiamen, Fujian Province, his father's birthplace. He met Bishop Huang Ziyu at the Xiamen cathedral and held a frank discussion with him.

Comparing his two trips, Cardinal Sin had this comment: "My first visit three years ago was very rough; it was like plowing a field which is very stony. However now the field is very fertile!"

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