

## *Faithful Daughter of the Church*

---

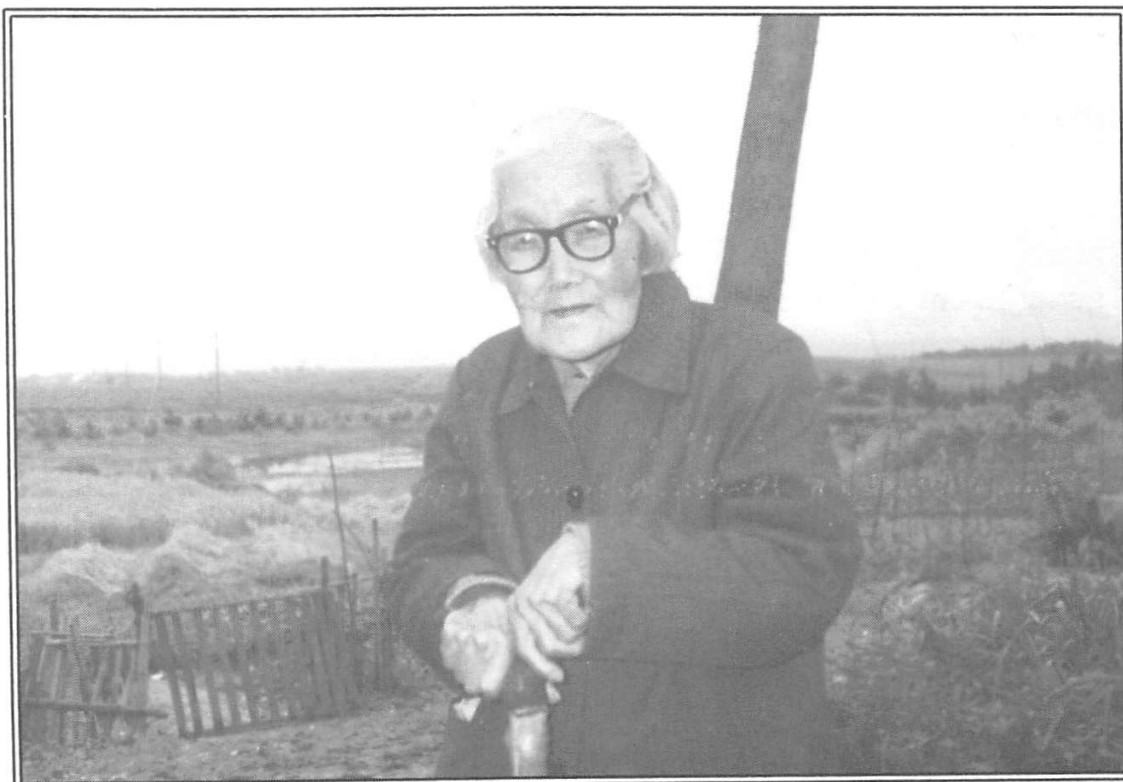
*By Tripod Staff*

"I wish to remain where I have spent so many years of my life, in the solitude of my 'Carmel on the Farm'. This farm has now become my home and here alone, I will live out the remaining days of my life." These are the words of Sister Theresa Zhou, (Zhou Shu-Ying), a Carmelite of Shanghai, when, in 1987, she was told that she was now free to leave the Baimaoling Labor Camp in Anhui Province. She had been sent there for "thought re-education" on January 7, 1970.

Sister Theresa died on January 27, 1999, at the age of 90.

Born on October 27, 1909, in an old Catholic family, Theresa entered the Carmel of St. Joseph in Xujiahui, Shanghai, in July 1933. She pronounced her first vows on April 18, 1935, and her perpetual vows following the midnight Mass on Christmas in 1940. At this time she took the name, Sister Therese Elie of the Infant Jesus.

On September 19, 1958, she was arrested, and spent from 1958 to 1970 in prison with other Carmelite Sisters. On January 7, 1970, she and a number of other Sisters were sent to Baimaoling



Labor Camp in Anhui Province for “thought re-education”. From this time on, Sister Therese always referred to the camp as ‘Carmel on the Farm’.

In 1987, the government told her that she was free to join other Sisters now living together in a convent in Xujiahui. By this time, she was the only one left of the original group of Carmelites sent to the Baimaoling Labor Camp. When given the option to leave, Sister Therese chose to remain where she had spent so many years of her life.

Always smiling and happy, Sister Therese prayed night and day on her solitary farm, living her life as she had done originally in her Carmelite convent. When Sister Helen Wong, a Carmelite from the United States, visited her in the early 90s, Sister Therese said she was the first outside Carmelite she had seen since her incarceration in 1958.

In 1998, she wrote to Sister Helen, “During this past year, I have felt my energy diminishing daily. But this is normal with old folks so please do not worry. I only pray that our Blessed Mother of Mount Carmel would help me to remain faithful to God’s love and to joyfully complete my final journey. I have no other needs. I only ask that you pray for me, pray for me...I have never left Carmel,” she said, “because I have always carried Carmel in my heart.” She asked that, following her death, her story be related to the superiors of the Carmelite Order.

In February 1999, a friend, who often came to care for Sister realized the serious state of her health, and convinced her to go to a hospital in Shanghai, where Sister died of cancer.

The Carmelites came to China in 1858 and for 100 years, many young women joined the Carmelite Order. In 1958, the government closed all convents and sent all the nuns to prison. The Carmelite monastery in Shanghai was situated east of the Zhaojiabin canal in Xujiahui near Shanghai. In recent years, the monastery has been used by the Shanghai Film Making Company.

The words of another great Carmelite, Teresa of Avila, well apply to this other Carmelite, Theresa of China, “I wish to live and die as a daughter of the Church.”