

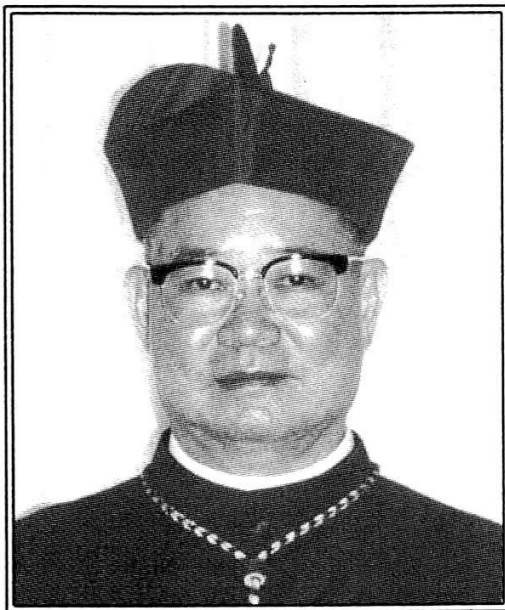
## *God is Love: A Pastoral Letter*

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By John Baptist Cardinal Wu

*In a thoughtful and compassionate letter, Hong Kong's Cardinal John Baptist Wu urged the Catholics of Hong Kong to open their hearts to their brothers and sisters on the Mainland. The letter was in response to the right of abode in Hong Kong of Mainland born children of Hong Kong citizens. The issue was hotly debated by the community and government. The government feared that the large influx of new population into the territory would be detrimental to the well being of Hong Kong residents and the economy. In an effort to resolve the debate, the Hong Kong government decided to approach the National People's Congress in Beijing for a reinterpretation of the Basic Law. This move sparked more controversy. The Court of Final Appeal had already ruled in favour of the right of abode. Many felt that requesting Beijing to make the decision violated the principle of One country, two systems and weaken Hong Kong's rule of law. [Ed]*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,



“You were called to freedom, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (Galatians 5:13-14)

The year 1999, the third and final year of preparation for the Great Jubilee, will be aimed at broadening the horizons of believers, so that they will see things in the perspective of Christ:

in the perspective of the “Father who is in heaven,” from whom the Lord was sent and to whom he has returned. The whole of the Christian life is like a great pilgrimage to the house of the Father, whose unconditional love for every human creature we discover anew each day. This pilgrimage takes place in the heart of each person, extends to the believing community and then reaches to the whole of humanity. It will therefore be necessary, especially during

this year, to emphasize the theological virtue of charity, recalling the significant and lapidary words of the First Letter of John: "God is love." Charity, in its twofold reality as love of God and love of neighbour, is the summing up of the moral life of the believer (cf. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, "The Coming Third Millennium, nos. 49-50).

These perspectives ought to provide us with a new way of looking at the question of the right of abode of children born in the Mainland to Hong Kong parents, and a new way of discussing the question and its consequences. In the long term, these children cannot, without permission, be reunited with their families in Hong Kong, and we should pay special attention to this.

In fact a large number of adult Hong Kong residents came from the Mainland to settle here in the 1950s and 1960s. Hong Kong at that time was not blessed with a strong economy or firm social structure. Nevertheless, when faced with a continuous flood of refugees, there was no hesitation, and doors were opened to welcome them. At the present time, the economic outlook is not so bright, yet compared with the rest of the world, Hong Kong is seen to be particularly blessed and is still the envy of many. Based on the belief that "blood is thicker than water," that "all within the four seas are one family," Chinese people have always shown kindness to others and taken delight in sharing. Faced then today with the question of children born to Hong Kong parents in the Motherland, how can we harden our hearts, look on with indifference and a lack of humanity, and use "interpretation" to deny them hope?

The Government of the S.A.R. (Special Administrative Region), in its concern for Hong Kong and its sense of responsibility, is to be respected. But when it seeks the long term prosperity of Hong Kong by requesting the Standing Committee of the N.P.C. (National People's Congress) for re-interpretation of the Basic Law in order to limit the right of abode of children born in the Mainland to Hong Kong parents, then it engenders a certain resistance on the part of Hong Kong residents to Mainland people with lamentable consequences.

Diligent and resourceful, benevolent and caring, the people of Hong Kong are well known both within and beyond China for their generosity, and open-handedness in helping wherever disaster strikes and causes human suffering, whether within Hong Kong itself, in China, or in other countries. Given sufficient time, and

provided with adequate information and proper arrangements, Hong Kong's zealous people, philanthropists, voluntary bodies and Church communities could deal with the present question of right of abode, and, united in hand and in heart, could respond to the limits of their ability to face the challenge and to meet the difficulties, could grasp the opportunity to develop a spirit of love and create a new miracle. Let it be seen that the people of Hong Kong are loving and its society is a caring one.

In accordance with the principles of "one country, two systems" and "a high degree of autonomy," the Central Government's solemn commitment to the Hong Kong S.A.R., and with reference to the provisions of the scope of self governance of the Hong Kong S.A.R., the N.P.C. gave Hong Kong courts the right to interpret its own laws. This right is the established basis of Hong Kong's system of law and of government. Hong Kong is home to more than six million people, an international city belonging to the community of nations, an important window for our Motherland. It is extremely important that the basis of law and government be maintained in all its integrity. The present question of the right of abode belongs within the competence of Hong Kong's autonomy. The S.A.R. itself should give its own interpretation, but it has not done this. Asking for a reinterpretation from the Standing Committee of the N.P.C. cannot help but damage the foundation of the autonomy of the S.A.R., shake the foundations of the Hong Kong family, raise doubts in people's minds about the Central Government's promise of "one country, two systems with a high degree of autonomy," undermine the confidence of the international community towards Hong Kong. Who can be sure how far-reaching the effects will be?

Dear brothers and sisters, facing this present situation do we feel helpless? That is understandable! Can nothing be done? Remember our faith. Pray more, open ourselves, believe firmly. God helps those who help themselves, because His "power working in us can do more than we can ask for or imagine. Glory be to Him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever, Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21).