

## *China Church and News Update*

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### *Bishop of Suzhou dies*

Bishop Matthias Ma Longlin of Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, died of a cerebrovascular embolism on June 9, 1999, at the age of 81. About 1000 people attended the funeral Mass on June 14.

Born in 1918 in Shanghai, Ma completed his studies at the Shanghai Seminary in 1945. Bishop Ignatius Gong (Kung) Pinmei of Shanghai ordained him a priest in 1951. During the Cultural Revolution, Bishop Ma worked as a farmer in his native place. He was elected bishop of Suzhou in 1981, and ordained by Bishop Zong Huaide of Jinan and Zhoucun, who died in 1997.

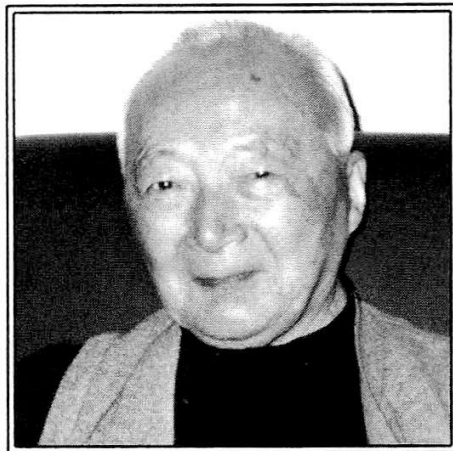


Bishop Ma was eulogized at his funeral for his commitment to revive the diocese, restore previously confiscated churches and for developing and encouraging male and female vocations in the dioceses.

Since Bishop Ma died suddenly, the diocese will meet soon to discuss the future arrangements of the diocesan affairs (UCAN, June 24, 1999).

### *Cardinal Kung's Triple Anniversary*

More than 400 priests, religious and laity from all over the world gathered in Stamford, Connecticut, in the United States, to be with Cardinal Kung on July 31, the feast of St. Ignatius. Cardinal Kung, who was 98 years old on August 2, was celebrating his 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a priest, his 50<sup>th</sup> as a bishop, and his 20<sup>th</sup> as a cardinal.



Cardinal Kung was imprisoned for his faith in 1955 and spent 30 years in solitary confinement. He was released on parole in 1985. He was allowed to go to the United States in 1987 for "medical treatment."

The Holy Father, John Paul II greeted the Cardinal for his anniversaries, praising him for his faithful witness to the gospel (UCAN, Aug 3, 1999).

### ***Cardinal Wu supports mainlanders' fight for right of abode***

Cardinal John Baptist Wu in a Pastoral letter, and other Catholic leaders have defended the right of abode of Mainland Chinese children born to Hong Kong parents despite the government's bid to limit their number. (For the complete text of the Cardinal's pastoral letter, see, pp. 33-35, in this issue of *Tripod*.)

### ***The underground church***

Arrests and even torture of priests and lay people in Mainland China have been reported on several occasions during the last several months. Most arrests are reported to have taken place in Hebei Province.

As reported by UCAN from information obtained by the Kung Foundation, Father Yan Weiping, 33, administrator of Yixin Diocese, was found dead on May 13 on a street in Beijing. According to reports, his death occurred shortly after he had been arrested by government security officials while offering Mass. The exact circumstances of his death cannot be determined since no autopsy was performed. Others have maintained that Father Yan died from a sudden heart attack. He was buried in his native village of Qujiazhuang, near Zhangjiakou City, in Hebei.

In another reported incident, a seminarian, Wang Qing, of Baoding Diocese was arrested, tortured and "hung for three days by his hands with his toes barely touching the ground." He was later released. Wang is a native of Qinghai province in northwestern China.

On May 23, four Catholics, Zhou Quanxin, Zhou Zhenmin, Zhou Zhenpeng and Zhou Zhenquan, were arrested by government agents in Baoding, and sent to labor camp for "re-education." They were charged with assisting an underground priest to escape arrest while saying Mass in a private home.

A fourth case is that of Father Zhi Yukui who died of natural causes, but whose family was forbidden to carry out any religious funeral rites. (UCAN, July 7, 1999)

Up to this moment there has been no news of the whereabouts of missing Bishop James Su Zhemin and his auxiliary Bishop Francis An Shuxin, arrested on October 8, 1997. (See *Tripod*, No.110, March-April, 1999, pp. 47-48).

According to Catholic sources, Bishop Julius Zhiguo of Zhengding, Hebei Province, not affiliated with the open church, has been warned not to contact people outside of the Mainland (UCAN July 26, 1999).

Another source reported that Bishop Xie Shiguang of Mindong and some underground priests in Fujian Province have been under house arrest since mid-July (UCAN, July 26, 1999).

### ***Pope cannot come to Hong Kong***

According to China's foreign ministry in Beijing, it would not be appropriate for the Pope to visit Hong Kong. China's ministry spokesperson also added that "the Vatican is clear on this point."

Hong Kong was cited as one of the possible places in Asia for Pope John Paul II to present his apostolic exhortation on the 1998 Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops of Asia. Cited as the main reasons for the Pope's ban on coming to Hong Kong are the usual ones: There are no diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Beijing, and the Vatican's relations with Taiwan. (UCAN, July 7, 1999).

### ***Bishop Lam receives the last medal under Portuguese rule***

Bishop Domingos Lam Ka-tseung received the medal of courage for "elevating the dignity and prestige of the Catholic Church in Asia." Bishop Lam received the medal from Macau governor Vasco Rocha at a ceremony marking Portugal Day, June 10. The ceremony took place at the Macau Cultural Centre where the handover to China will take place on December 20, 1999.

### ***Beijing cracks down on Falun Gong***

On July 22, Beijing announced a ban on Falun Gong, a mix of Buddhism, Taoism, meditation and qigong, that has been growing rapidly since 1992. Beijing accused the founder, Li Hongzhi, who lives in the United States, of deceiving the masses with superstition and other dangerous activities. The Chinese government has now outlawed all Falun Gong activities and publications, which it sees as a serious threat to social stability (UCAN, July 26, 1999). (Cf. editorial in this issue of *Tripod*).

### ***Women religious meet for exchange***

Leaders of women religious from about half of the nearly 50 congregations on Mainland China gathered in Beijing in June for their first experience to exchange ideas on convent management and formation.

Twenty-six superiors and representatives from various congregations in seventeen provinces and municipalities met for four days at the headquarters of the Bishops' Conference of the Catholic Church in China and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association from June 18-21 (UCAN, June 28, 1999).