

## *Cardinal Kung Pinmei Dies at 98*

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*Reported by Peter Barry, M.M.*

Cardinal Ignatius Kung Pinmei, Catholic bishop of Shanghai and apostolic administrator of the dioceses of Nanjing and Suzhou, died at 3:05 a.m. on Sunday, March 12, 2000 in Stamford, Connecticut, USA. He was 98 years of age. Cardinal Kung was a symbol to Catholics in China and around the world of resistance to regimes who attempt to change one's religious beliefs.



*Cardinal Kung receives a warm embrace from John Paul II, in Rome, in 1991, after receiving the Cardinal's hat. It had been given to him in pectore in 1979. 一九九一年龔樞機到羅馬謁晉教宗，接受樞機紅冠時，得到教宗熱烈擁抱祝賀。*

Cardinal Kung was born in Shanghai on August 2, 1901, and ordained a priest on May 28, 1930. He did both pastoral and education work in the Shanghai Diocese, at one time serving as principal of the high school attached to Zhendan University. It was at this school that Bishop Joseph Zen, present coadjutor bishop of Hong Kong, first made the acquaintance of the future cardinal.

On June 9, 1949, Rome named Father Kung as Bishop of Suzhou. Archbishop Antonio Riberi, apostolic delegate of the Vatican to China consecrated him, on October 7, 1949. On July 15, 1950, Rome transferred Bishop Kung from Suzhou to Shanghai. On November 16, 1951, Rome also gave the new bishop of Shanghai the added task of being the apostolic administrator over the dioceses of Suzhou and Nanjing.

The Chinese government considered Bishop Kung to be one of the leaders of a “counter-revolutionary clique” within the Chinese Catholic Church, and the Shanghai Diocese to be one of the strongholds against the “patriotic movement,” which was the government’s plan for the church to make it independent from the Pope. The Catholic Patriotic Association was eventually set up during the summer of 1957, and the first ordinations of self-elected bishops took place in 1958.

On the night of September 8, 1955, Bishop Kung, along with some 20 priests and 200 religious and lay Catholics was arrested. Bishop Kung’s trial was not held until March 16-17, 1960, but in the intervening five years, the bishop was the subject of continuous denunciations in the Chinese press. He was accused of leading a counter-revolutionary clique, of providing information to imperialist espionage agencies, of wanting to restore the Chiang Kai-shek regime and of being against the patriotic movement. He perceived the establishment of the movement with its emphasis on independence as cutting the Catholic Church of China off from the Pope.

Bishop Kung was accused of having connections throughout the country. The name of anyone who opposed the patriotic movement was immediately linked in the press to the name of Bishop Kung. For instance, when Bishop Deng Yiming was arrested in Guangzhou in February 1958, he was accused by the authorities of collaborating with “the Kung Pinmei counter-revolutionary clique” in Shanghai.

A press release, dated March 12, 2000, from the Cardinal Kung Foundation, founded in the United States in 1996 to advocate on behalf of the underground Catholic Church of China, records some examples of Bishop Kung's courage in the face of his accusers.

**John Paul II's Message upon learning of the death of Cardinal Kung**

DEEPLY SADDENED TO LEARN OF THE DEATH OF CARDINAL IGNATIUS KUNG PIN-MEI, I ASK YOU KINDLY TO CONVEY MY HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES TO THE KUNG FAMILY AND TO ALL PRESENT AT THE SOLEMN MASS OF CHRISTIAN BURIAL. I JOIN ALL OF YOU IN GIVING THANKS TO ALMIGHTY GOD FOR THE LATE CARDINAL'S PRIESTLY AND EPISCOPAL MINISTRY IN THE DIOCESE OF SHANGHAI, HIS HEROIC FIDELITY TO CHRIST AMID PERSECUTION AND IMPRISONMENT AND HIS OUTSTANDING WITNESS OF COMMUNION WITH THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND THE SUCCESSOR OF PETER. COMMENDING THE SOUL OF THIS NOBLE SON OF CHINA AND OF THE CHURCH TO THE INFINITE MERCY OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER I PRAY THAT HAVING SHARED SO DEEPLY IN CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS HE MAY NOW RECEIVE THE UNFADING CROWN OF GLORY WHICH THE CHIEF SHEPHERD RESERVES FOR THOSE WHO HAVE FOLLOWED HIM FAITHFULLY TO THE END. AT THE SAME TIME I RENEW MY FERVENT PRAYER FOR THE INTENTIONS OF THE CHURCH IN CHINA SO CLOSE TO THE LATE CARDINAL'S HEART. TO ALL I CORDIALLY IMPART MY APOSTOLIC BLESSING AS A PLEDGE OF CONSOLATION AND STRENGTH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

A few months after his arrest, Bishop Kung was taken out for a struggle session at the Shanghai Dog Racing stadium. When pushed forward to the microphone to admit his faults, the bishop shouted: "Long live Christ the King; long live the Pope!" Voices in the crowd are reported to have shouted back: "Long live Christ the King; long live Bishop Kung!" Then on the eve of his trial in 1960, the chief prosecutor is reported to have made one final attempt to persuade Bishop Kung to join the Patriotic Association. His answer was: "I am a Roman Catholic bishop. If I denounce the Holy Father, not only would I not be a bishop, I would not be a Catholic. You can cut off my head, but you can never force me to shirk my responsibilities."

At his trial on March 16-17, 1960, Bishop Kung was sentenced to life imprisonment, and 13 other members of the Chinese Catholic Church received sentences ranging from five years to life. From that day until mid-1985 there was no news of Bishop Kung. In 1985, Bishop Kung was released from prison, and went to live at the Xujiahui Cathedral, along with three bishops of the open church: Zhang Jiashu (head bishop), Jin Luxian and Li Side (auxiliaries). He could receive visitors in the company of others, but they usually found him quite reticent to speak about his years in custody, or about the present state of the Church in China.

Bishop Kung was allowed to travel to the United States in 1988, for medical reasons. At the invitation of Bishop Walter Curtis of the Bridgeport, Connecticut Diocese, Bishop Kung took up residence in Stamford, Connecticut. Pope John Paul II had made him a Cardinal in pectore in 1979, while he was still in prison, but this appointment was made public only on June 28, 1991.

While Cardinal Kung himself was a staunch defender of the doctrine of the primacy of the Pope, and of the need for local churches to maintain their links to the Pope, his pastoral sense for the present situation of the Catholic Church in China seemed more conciliatory and understanding. This can be gauged from a response he gave to Bishop Joseph Zen, the present coadjutor bishop of Hong Kong. In 1989, Zen, at the time Father Zen, had been asked to teach in the seminaries of the open church in China. He asked the Cardinal what he thought about this. Zen became the first seminary professor from outside China to teach in the open church seminaries. Many people had discouraged Bishop Zen from cooperating with the "open church." "Bishop Kung not only did not oppose my going to teach in the mainland seminaries," Bishop Zen wrote in the March 19, 2000 issue of the *Kung Kao Po*, "he even encouraged me to do so, and gave me his blessing." Bishop Kung also sent his best regards to all the professors at the Sheshan Seminary, where Bishop Zen went to teach. Bishop Zen added that Bishop Kung's message had brought everyone great comfort.

In his March 13, 2000 telegram of condolence, Pope John Paul II described Cardinal Kung as "a noble son of China and of the church, who was an outstanding witness of communion with the universal church and the successor of Peter." However, on March 14 a spokesperson for China's foreign ministry told UCANews that Kung Pinmei "did many things outside China that were harmful to

the Chinese people and to the China Church.” The spokesperson, however, failed to specify anything.

Catholic leaders from Rome, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and a large number of the faithful gathered in the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Stamford, Connecticut, on March 18, 2000, for Cardinal Kung’s Mass of the Resurrection. Pope John Paul II had sent Cardinal Francis Stafford as his personal representative.

Cardinal Kung’s remains will be buried in the Jesuit cemetery in Santa Clara, California next to the grave of his dear friend, Archbishop Deng Yiming of Guangzhou who died in 1995.

A memorial Mass in honor of Cardinal Kung was held at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Caine Road, Hong Kong, at 6 P.M. March 15, 2000. Cardinal John Baptist Wu was the main celebrant, and auxiliary Bishops Joseph Zen and John Tong assisted, along with about 50 concelebrating priests. Several hundred religious and laity were also in attendance.

Cardinal Kung will always be remembered for the courage he showed in maintaining the principles of his Catholic faith in the face of immense pressure. He is an example for us all. May he rest in peace!

