

EDITORIAL

Since the last publication of *Tripod*, Hong Kong has lost its soft-spoken, humble shepherd. John Baptist Cardinal Wu. Cardinal Wu who died on September 23, 2002, had been Hong Kong's Catholic shepherd for 27 years. He was also the inspiration and founder of the Holy Spirit Study Centre.

The September 23, 2002 write-up in the *Sunday Examiner*, Hong Kong's diocesan weekly, described the Cardinal as "a deeply spiritual man who guided the Hong Kong Church through some very turbulent times." He was, according to those who knew him well, a man who "throughout his time in office deliberately kept a low profile and avoided the limelight that often accompanies the princes of the Church."

Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Pope's representative at the funeral Mass, spoke of Cardinal Wu as "a Chinese perfectly at ease with his Christian faith in which none of the great moral tenets of his culture were lost."

In his homily at the Vigil Mass, Bishop John Tong, Auxiliary Bishop of Hong Kong and director of the Holy Spirit Study Centre, described how the Cardinal "set out quietly to develop the Hong Kong diocese so that today it has become the largest Chinese Catholic diocese in the world." He went on to praise the bishop's achievements not only in the field of religion but in education and social services. "Through difficult times, our Cardinal kept our diocese sailing on an even keel, maintaining good relations with the leaders of other religions as well as with the government."

Bishop Joseph Zen, Coadjutor Bishop of Hong Kong, now Bishop of Hong Kong, in his homily at the funeral liturgy, compared the life of the Cardinal to the joyful mysteries of the rosary. But as Bishop Zen also remarked, the Cardinal led much of his later life walking through the sorrowful mysteries. When Bishop Wu received the red hat of a cardinal, the Holy Father said, "The red color of a cardinal's robes means blood." Bishop Zen took up this theme in his homily, "Before disease destroyed his blood" he

said, "his heart bled overwhelmingly. Misunderstanding, rejection and criticism were deeply felt but generously forgiven. He was ready for suffering when, like his patron, St. John the Baptist, he raised his voice to defend the defenseless from discrimination by those in power." Thousands mourned his passing.

The man Rome has chosen to "fill the shoes" of Hong Kong's quiet shepherd is Bishop Joseph Zen. Unlike Cardinal Wu who was of humble origins and a member of China's Hakka minority nationality, Bishop Zen originates from Shanghai, China's most progressive and cosmopolitan city. He is a member of the Salesians, the Catholic Church's largest male religious congregation. The media have been relentless in pointing out the differences in style between these two men of God. Bishop Zen is straightforward and candid. Given the nature of the media, these qualities breed confrontation, which is usually more newsworthy than quiet dialogue! The media often seek out the bishop to publish his views on any subject that may deem polemical. They have found a treasure trove in Article 23 of the Basic law, the law on subversion about to be enacted in Hong Kong.

While the Cardinal seldom spoke out, Bishop Zen is outspoken in the cause of justice and passionate for the welfare of the downtrodden and forgotten members of society, especially children. Although he has spoken of toning down his style, Bishop Zen has also promised to be true to himself and to his flock by imitating the Cardinal who spoke the truth in love.

Many feel that Hong Kong is presently going through its most difficult moment since the handover of sovereignty to the Motherland in 1997. The bishop has expressed his frustration at being unable to be heard in a fruitful dialogue. "If we can use dialogue to help solve some problems then there is no need for confrontation." The bishop feels it is important for people to be informed on the political and social developments that have great bearing on their lives, and it is the duty of the leadership to provide this information.

No one can fault the bishop on courage or zeal, and he is one of the few voices in Hong Kong sufficiently bold-spirited to speak out not only to insure that religious freedom remains intact, but that everyone may continue to enjoy all the freedoms so long taken for granted by the people in this territory (Cf. Interview p. 11).