

## ***Cardinal Zen on Papal Letter to Chinese Catholics***

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***Cardinal Joseph Zen***

*Just a few hours after the letter of Pope Benedict XVI to Catholics in mainland China was released by the Vatican, Cardinal Joseph Zen Zi-kiun of Hong Kong issued a statement to the media about the letter.*

**The full text of Cardinal Zen's comment on the papal letter follows:**

**T**he long awaited letter from the Holy Father has finally seen the light of day. His Holiness Pope Benedict has addressed a letter to the Bishops, priests, religious and faithful in China as he had promised to do last January.

Indeed, it is a historical “first” that the Pope has written a letter to the Catholic community in a particular region. The motive is, as is obvious, that community has experienced so much tribulation in the last decades, that the Holy Father wants to show special concern for those his children and give them some guidelines in this seemingly crucial moment, so that they might free themselves from their unfortunate predicament.

After a cursory vision of the rather long letter, I would like to share with the media my one impression and two hopes.

The impression. I admire the precious balance achieved by the Holy Father between his passion for the truth and his love for his children. Only an outstanding theologian and a tender father could satisfy at the same time the demands of the truth and the

kindness towards people. Blessed be God for having given us such a leader!

One hope. The doctrine painstakingly explained by Benedict XVI, is nothing but the most traditional and universally accepted Catholic principles, belonging to the religious field, with no secret political agenda, even less with an intention of attacking anybody. My hope is that the leaders of our Country would read the Pope's letter from this perspective and understand the true unchangeable nature of the Catholic Church.

A second hope. The voice of our Bishops and priests in China is often prevented from reaching our leaders; now that the letter of the Pope is in the hands of our leaders, our Bishops and priests can thus refer to it directly as a common starting point for dialogue.

The Pope insists that Bishops are the leaders of the Church and they are not to be separated from the Roman Pontiff. My hope is that our Bishops and priests stand united with the Holy Father. Let our Church in China be truly the Catholic Church recognized and respected by the rest of the World, and let it bring honour and glory to our Country on the stage of the Universal Church.

HONG KONG (UCAN, June 30, 2007)