

In Memoriam: Bishop Michael Yeung Ming-Cheung

Holy Spirit Study Centre Staff

Our beloved Bishop Michael Yeung Ming-Cheung passed away on 3 January, 2019.

Bishop Yeung was born in Shanghai in 1945 and moved to Hong Kong at the age of four. In 1972 he entered the Holy Spirit Seminary and in 1978 he graduated from the Pontifical Urban University with a degree in theology and philosophy.

He was ordained priest at the diocesan Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on 10 June 1978. From 1980 to 1982 he studied Communications and earned an M.A. degree at Syracuse University in the United States. In 1990 he completed a Master's in Education (Ed.M.) programme at Harvard University. On 30 August, 2014, he was consecrated one of the Auxiliary Bishops of Hong Kong as titular Bishop of Mons in Numidia. He was appointed Co-adjutor Bishop of Hong Kong in November 2016 and became the eighth Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong on August 1, 2017. His motto was "Arise, let us go forth from here" (*"Surgite Eamus Hinc"*).

Cardinal Tong wrote in his article "In remembrance of Bishop Michael Yeung" (13 January, 2019, *Sunday Examiner*, p. 2):

The sudden departure of Bishop Yeung was lamentable. Many have commended him on his ministry, including his contributions in education, health care, social services, and the preservation of family values. These were inevitably his main ministries. But fewer people noticed his contributions outside Hong Kong.

He was a member of Pontifical Council Cor Unum and he was actively engaged in the development of Caritas International and other Church services, and cared for brothers and sisters outside Hong Kong. He actively led

local Church activities such as the Jubilee of Mercy, the Year of the Family and the Year of Youth, promoted by Pope Francis.

Bishop Yeung also showed concern for the brothers and sisters in mainland China, as shown in his homily at the last Midnight Mass at Christmas.

Bishop Yeung continued to care about the Catholic Church in China throughout his forty years as priest and bishop. When the late Cardinal John Baptist Wu visited the Catholic communities in Beijing and Shanghai in March 1985, young Father Yeung, as the then-director of the diocesan Social Communications Office was part of the delegation. He filed frequent news stories from mainland China to *Kung Kao Po*, the diocesan Chinese weekly. The reporting added depth to the faithful's understanding of the visit.

From 1992 to 1996, Bishop Yeung worked as a researcher at the Holy Spirit Study Centre. At the same time, he taught Chinese Church history at the Holy Spirit Seminary College.

Bishop Yeung served as the Chief Executive of Caritas from August 2003 until 31 December 2014. During his term of office at Caritas Hong Kong, he never forgot to help the Church in China to develop their social services. In August 2014 after his episcopal consecration he joined the Holy Spirit Study Centre as a member of the Board of Governors along with two other auxiliary bishops, Joseph Ha Chi-Shing, O.F.M., and Stephen Lee Bun-Sang.

At the 2 August, 2017 press conference right after he became the diocesan bishop, journalists repeatedly asked him about Sino-Vatican relations. He said even though the diocese of Hong Kong played no role in the negotiations, the Church in Hong Kong would be happy to play the role of a Bridge-Church. Indeed he thought bridge-building was more important than fence-building. If China and the Vatican could continue to dialogue, he would be happy to lend support. He recognised that there was room for improvement in Sino-Vatican relations. He declared: "I follow Cardinal Tong's positive and optimistic approach."

Bishop Yeung always stressed that the Hong Kong Diocese should contribute to contacts with the Church in China, helping in the formation of church personnel and providing different kinds of

aid according to their needs. Regarding the issue of bishops' appointments in China, he stated that "bishops can only be appointed by the Pope." It is otherwise unacceptable.

On 3 October, 2018, three months before his death, he gave an interview to Reuters and expressed his support for the Sino-Vatican provisional agreement which had been signed on 22 September. He thought that after many years of negotiations, it was important for both sides to reach a consensus in order to move forward. But at the same time he did not think that the agreement would prevent further persecution of the Church. The tearing down of crosses, and the prohibition of young people from entering the church, etc., would most likely continue. These matters would take time to resolve.

Cardinal Tong also said in the above-mentioned article: "I worked with Bishop Yeung for 40 years. I am even more grateful to Pope Francis for appointing him as my successor. Bishop Yeung, in the face of different duties, always maintained a joyous and peaceful mood, as St. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18, 'See that no one returns evil for evil; rather, always seek what is good [both] for each other and for all. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.'"

Bishop Yeung suffered from illness for many years. But he worked hard to accomplish all his tasks. He was kind and thoughtful to the Holy Spirit Study Centre. We trust that in heaven he would continue in a special way to walk with all those who love and care for the Church in China.