

Letter to Hong Kong, *a radio broadcast* on 12 October, 2019¹

John Cardinal Tong

Dear Friends of Hong Kong,

The unrest in Hong Kong that started with the anti-extradition bill has lingered for months. Such conflicts have shown little sign of easing. Instead, tensions continue to mount. As part of the public, I am deeply saddened by the conditions in the city right now.

As a religious leader, and not a politician myself, by no means can I offer any resolutions here to solve the predicament of today. However, I firmly believe that God is the Lord of human history, albeit many things happening now seem not to be possibly explained with common rationality, and people have no way to cope with it. Again, I have trust in God that He is accompanying us to get through these difficult moments.

In these days, a great many Catholic faithful have posed to me the question “Besides prayer, what else can we do?”. Prayer is not meant to change others, but rather, as I believe, can convert our hearts, enabling we ourselves to face the predicament and to find hope. Perhaps not many listeners of this program are religious believers. One may inevitably lose direction or be confused at this troubled time. May I suggest you take a deep breath, recalling one of your own past downcast moments, and contemplate how you got through the challenge and restored hope. Or, in the midst of much overwhelmingly negative information, which may be disturbing one’s own inner peace. I would also suggest that you talk to some

¹ This is the transcript in English of a radio broadcast in Cantonese presented by Cardinal Tong for “Letter to Hong Kong,” a weekly radio programme on Radio Television Hong Kong.

well-trusted friends who understand you. This is a way of finding consolation for ourselves which can guide us to move forward.

When one sees that one's legitimate demands are not met, we may feel frustrated. Yet, please do not feel despair, which keeps a person from looking into the future and exhausts our lives. We have to be cautious of anger and indignation, as it easily generates hatred. With hatred, the human capability to discern right and wrong will be lost, and one's goodness of heart will diminish. Violence will be aroused.

I firmly believe that violence breeds violence. Brutality definitely cannot resolve the current problems, but will incite more risks and threats of harm, and cause deeper wounds. Memories go back to the World Wars of the last century, and the genocides that happened in the Baltic Wars, causing immense destruction and the loss of countless lives, and all in all, a catastrophe to humanity. These are devilish consequences brought about by hatred and abhorrence. The prominent Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela who struggled to abolish the apartheid policy, adhered to the use of peaceful means to fight against tyranny and gained worldwide applause.

We have a saying that all people in the four seas are brothers and sisters. This concurs with the values of the Christian faith. As all peoples come from the same root, we are all human and have the same characteristics. I have affection for things, and you also have it; I have the right to live, and you have it as well. The dignity of the human person is valuable in me, and in you too. Each person has individual and unique experiences, creating different ideas and expressions. Henceforth, we ought to act out of our conscience and respect one another. This is one of the key elements of the success of Hong Kong over the past years.

To restore harmony, a true and sincere response to public opinion is a good policy. The primary task of today is to rebuild trust between the government and the people, so that the cherished harmony in society can manifest itself again.

Many youngsters appear to be anxious and worried due to the current social situation. I am heart-stricken with their anxiety. The social issues have made them perplexed and disillusioned. How can we help them come out of their predicament? All sectors of society,

including the government authorities, are shouldered with the responsibility to help them. I want to plead with the local government to really listen to the voice of the people in Hong Kong. The law-enforcers must abide by the law, and must execute the law according to their consciences. In this way, the trust and reverence between the authorities and the local people can then be rebuilt.

May peace be with you all.

+ John Cardinal Tong
12 October, 2019