

We Have a Bishop We Give Thanks to God

TO the public at large, the announcement that the Pope had nominated Father John Baptist Wu to be Bishop of the Diocese of Hong Kong was merely an intimation that a prominent post had been filled. To the diocese, and to all its members, it was much more than that.

'A diocese,' Vatican Council II reminded us, is that portion of God's people which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the cooperation of the presbytery. Adhering thus to its pastor and gathered together by him in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist, this portion constitutes a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.' The bishop is our own special centre of cohesion in the Body of Christ. The life of the Spirit should stir within us at the sound of the words 'We have a Bishop'.

Few will be surprised or disappointed to learn that our new Bishop has not been chosen from among the priests of the diocese. Casual browsing through the *Annuario Pontificio* (the 'directory' of the whole Church) suggests that such an appointment is the exception rather than the rule—a reflection of the universal nature of the Church and a denial of localism. Widespread consultation, in particular consultation through a questionnaire issued to the public, showed that an earlier statement that the Bishop would be chosen from Hong Kong was not a matter of concern to the majority.

When he comes as Bishop, he will come to serve us as our shepherd. That service will make on him terrifying demands for holiness, wisdom and hard work: read the Council document on Bishops if you doubt this. It goes without saying that we shall owe him loyal cooperation. We have another debt, one more easily forgotten. Our Bishop will come to give us a service based on love. He has therefore a right to expect from us the ready friendliness that is the natural expression of love. Authority can isolate: many people, when dealing with those in authority, restrict themselves to formal politeness, lest a more personal approach should give too much away. This may be a wise way of dealing with some wielders of authority. It is no way of dealing with one whose authority is founded on love.

Our new Bishop has spent eight years of his adult life in Hong Kong. He is fully at home in the two main languages of the diocese, Cantonese and Hakka, and in Mandarin; that is welcome news. He also speaks fluent English: that too is important. Even in his schooldays he showed exceptional practical compassion for war-time refugees. That is exceedingly good news. Yet beyond all gifts and all particular appropriateness for his post, we welcome him as Bishop. For, 'In the bishops for whom the priests are assistants, our Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme High Priest, is present in the midst of those who believe.' (Decree on The Church No. 21)

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