

SUNDAY

# EXAMINER



Catholic News of the Week

SPECIAL ISSUE

HONG KONG, SEPTEMBER 28th, 2002



*The coffin of Cardinal John Baptist Wu lies in state in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. For two days thousands of mourners paid their respects to the late spiritual leader of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong. A Vigil Mass was held on Friday night and a Requiem Mass was held on Saturday. Both services were attended by representatives of the Hong Kong government and other religions. During the services candles and flowers were placed around and on top of the coffin by members of various Catholic organisations and institutes. The Requiem Mass was led by Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe (above). Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples who represented Pope John Paul II.*



*Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa pays respect to Cardinal Wu while Bishop Joseph Zen looks on.*



*Concelebrating the Requiem Mass with hundreds of priests from Hong Kong were Cardinal Peter Shirayanagi of Tokyo, Japan, Bishop Andrew Tsieng, of Hualien, Taiwan, Bishop Domingos Lamm of Macau and his Coadjutor, Bishop Jose Lai, Bishop Henri Brincard of Le Puy, France, Bishop John Chang Yik of Chuncheon, Korea, and Bishop John Baptist Choi also from Korea.*



# The 'RITES OF PASSAGE'

of His Eminence Cardinal

## JOHN BAPTIST WU CHENG-CHUNG

Bishop of Hong Kong

September 28, 2002

*"I waited, I waited for the Lord  
and He stooped down to me;  
and heard my cry for help.*

*He pulled me up from the seething chasm,*

*From the mud of the mire.*

*He set my feet on rock,*

*and made my footsteps firm.*

*How blessed are those*

*Who put their trust in the Lord" (Ps. 40, 1-2, 4).*

Your Eminence Cardinal Peter Seichi Shirayanagi of Tokyo, Your Excellencies Bishops Joseph Zen and John Tong of Hong Kong, Bishop Andrew Tsien of Hualien (Taiwan), Bishops Domingos Lam and Jose Lai of Macau, Bishop Henri Brincard of Le Puy (France), Bishop John Chang of Chuncheon (Korea), Authorities representing the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, And you dear Clergy, Religious and Faithful of the Church in Hong Kong:

We are all gathered today in this beautiful cathedral to express our affection to our good Pastor for the last time and to pay our final respects to a wise Leader, His Eminence Cardinal John Baptist Wu, on his departure from us all. No words can express our admiration for him and no grief can tell our sorrow for the great loss we all feel today. The Holy Father has appointed me to be His Representative and preside over this Requiem Mass for His Eminence, the Bishop of Hong Kong. Twenty-seven years of his ministry as head of one of the greatest and most lively Churches in Asia, make myself the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples in Rome, grieve sorrowfully along with you all.

For your consolation and my own, I convey to you the special Apostolic Blessing of our Holy Father John Paul II, along with his prayers for the Church in Hong Kong on the departure of its holy and worthy Pastor. In the letter sent to him recently, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Ordination to the Priesthood, the Holy Father recalled in admiration all the service he had rendered to God and his people in a life totally dedicated to his pastoral duties. He praised him for his admirable humility, for his unswerving loyalty to God and his Church, in silence and in prayer as in kindness and concern for his flock.

What the Pope wrote in this letter of July 6, is the best tribute to a man who, while being an outstanding person, was nonetheless a humble member of the Kingdom of Heaven in which all men with a childlike heart are called to enter. He was also in great love with his country, which he dearly cherished and for which he prayed fervently for its peace and well-being. As a son of this great nation of China in which he was born more than 77 years ago in the County of Ng-Wa, Province of Kwangtung, His Eminence Cardinal Wu was for the world the Christian model of how the children of God in Hong Kong and on the continent love and serve their nation and care for its great culture and glorious history. His Hakka origin was part of his nature and his cultural heritage was totally Chinese, both blending perfectly with his study and meditation of Catholic doctrine and the practice of Christian tradition. He was a Chinese perfectly at ease with his Christian faith in which none of the great moral tenets of his culture were lost. He was a great Christian and a great Chinese, a devout Cardinal of the Roman and Universal Catholic Church and a faithful son of the most ancient civilization on earth. In fact, as the Pope remarked: "Historically, in ways that are certainly different but not in opposition to one another, China and the Catholic Church are two of the most ancient <institutions> in existence and operating on the world scene..." (Message on the 4<sup>th</sup> centenary of the arrival in Beijing of Matteo Ricci: Rome, Gregorian University, 24 Oct. 2001)

Above all we remember him as a man in love with his Ministry to his people. A man of few words but of great concern and dedication, both much in evidence during his pastoral visits to the Parishes of his Diocese of Hong Kong. His joy was visible in these moments of encounter with his children and more than his words, at times in faltering and insecure Cantonese, it was his heart that spoke. His imposing figure also gave a feeling of reassurance and his smile conveyed a message of hope and encouragement, making everybody feel along with him, like children with their father in the common happiness of a great family. He was fond at times of referring to the Chinese doctrine of "Wu-Wei", which he explained as the way of doing things by refraining from doing them.... I was told how he would sit through long hours of meetings listening without speaking a word: but he was alert to every opinion, pondering every idea, welcoming every suggestion.... And things were done, initiatives were taken, projects were realized in full communion of minds and hearts. Is it not perhaps here that we find the secret of the great development of the Church in Hong Kong and of its success in all its endeavours, be they charitable, educational and of course religious and moral. Perhaps looking back, we realize now the great leadership Cardinal Wu provided to the Diocese in his unique style

of humble guidance. Indeed he was a great Leader, as a Christian Bishop is supposed to be, and a great Master: the way a Chinese Teacher instructs his disciples. For all that, the whole Church expresses its gratitude to him and prays the Lord to grant him the reward promised to a faithful servant.

The words of Psalm 40 that we have heard, are most apt in expressing the ideals and the life of this outstanding Bishop. But they also reveal to us another more real and profound aspect of his existence: "How blessed are those who put their trust in the Lord". That is the secret that made his life a great success in the eyes of God and of men! Cardinal Wu was first and foremost a man of prayer, of meditation, and of great "trust in the Lord". The serenity of his face, the amiable smile welcoming all people known and unknown, the tranquility of his demeanour in the face of all hardships made him the icon of the Good Shepherd, who in times of stress and sorrow spreads love and peace around him. He was a man with his "feet upon a rock", the "rock" which is "God" (Dt. 32.4) and the "rock of Peter" (Mt 16, 18), whom he was called to follow in his ministry. He knew that the Church built on this rock, by the promise of Christ, would never fail, no matter how strong the oppression and sorrowful the pain. He was indeed a man of God, and he had placed his trust in Him.... Admirable is the steadfastness of his faith and exemplary his fidelity to the "rock" of the Church, as confessor of its doctrine and provider of its grace.

Why then should we be grieving today as for an irreparable loss and a journey with no return of our dear Shepherd? We in fact know and believe what our Saviour Jesus Christ once proclaimed: "I am the Resurrection and the Life: Anyone who believes in me, even though that person dies, will live, and whoever lives and believes in me, will never die." (Jn. 11, 25). St. Paul reminds us: "Christ has in fact been raised from the dead, the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep.... Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will be brought to life in Christ...." (1Cor. 15, 20-23).

For this reason the Church calls the "Rites of the Dead" the "Rites of Passage", because for us Christians, death is the transition from this life to Life Eternal. St. John of the Cross, a great saint and mystic, wrote that "at the evening of our life we shall all be judged on love" (Avisos y Sentencias, 57). Our brother Bishop Wu has nothing to fear in his judgment, because he lived a life of love! We should rejoice with him; because we are convinced that before us here today, we have a saint worthy of heaven and a model of earthly life. He in fact lived his years in sorrow and pain, labour and sickness.... but above all he lived them all in LOVE! He is surely worthy now to hear the voice of the Father, like the Master of the household in the Gospel's parable, telling him: "Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have shown you are trustworthy in small things; and I will trust you with greater, come and join in your master's happiness" (Mt 25, 21).

And so be it.... To our comfort now, and to his glory and happiness for ever.

**His Eminence Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe**

*Prefect of the*

**Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples**

<b>Cardinal John B. Wu Memorial Fund</b>	
1. Purpose	To serve as supplementary safety net for those not eligible for CSSA and other sources of fundings.
2. Beneficiaries	a) Chronically ill b) Crisis Cases c) Tide-over for Under-employment d) Bartered Spouse e) New Arrival f) Single Parent g) Kind of Assistance
3. Daily Maintenance	Educational Expenses
	Purchase of Essential Household Items
	After School Care Service Fees / Tuition Activities
	Residential Fees / Rental
	Others (need to specify)
For matters concerning the captioned, please contact Ms. Angie Lai, Coordinator of Caritas Family Service, at 2643 4633 or Ms. Katy Yan, Supervisor of Caritas Caine Road Family Service, at 2523 0060. Social Work Services, Caritas - Hong Kong	

## Vigil Mass Homily for

### John Baptist Cardinal Wu

Friday, September 27, 2002

Bishop John Tong

## Requiem Mass Homily for

### John Baptist Cardinal Wu

Saturday, September 28, 2002

Bishop Joseph Zen

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we are gathered here tonight to celebrate the entrance into eternal life of our dearly beloved John Baptist Cardinal Wu. As our cardinal followed Jesus into His suffering and death, so now he shares in the power of Jesus' resurrection, as we just heard in the first reading (Phil 3:7-8, 10-12). About our cardinal I do not want to repeat what is already so familiar to you. Instead, I would like to talk about three pictures that were particularly meaningful to him. Two hung in his office and the third hung directly in front of him in the conference room. These pictures reflected the three virtues that guided so much of his life: faith, hope and love. You may have some of these pictures in your hands at the moment.

In the first picture we see a man rowing a boat. The background is both bright and dark. Strangely enough, the man is rowing from the bright side towards the darkness. According to our cardinal, this picture is a reflection of the feelings he experienced when he was asked to leave the familiar Miaoli, in Taiwan, to become the bishop of Hong Kong. He had no ambition of his own. He knew that being bishop of Hong Kong would be a challenging and demanding task. Yet he proved his great faith by accepting this assignment with nothing other than his trust in God, disregarding any human cost. Like the apostle Peter, our cardinal obeyed the Lord's command, "to launch out into the deep" (Lk 5:4). He also followed Jesus' teaching in today's Gospel (Lk 9:1-6), by taking nothing with him to come to Hong Kong, except faith and obedience. He set out quietly to develop the Hong Kong diocese so that today it has become the largest Chinese Catholic diocese in the world. We can all be proud of the Cardinal's leadership, and his 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. Like Peter, his faith and obedience have been rewarded with more than 2000 adult converts each year.

The second picture was presented to him by a student artist. Shortly after he assumed his new post in Hong Kong, he received a letter from a young artist. This artist wanted to further his studies by going abroad, but he did not have enough money. The cardinal gave the young man the money and the young man offered this picture to the bishop in gratitude. In this picture Jesus appears on Hong Kong Island with his arms outstretched towards the Kowloon Peninsula and Mainland China. One day when Mother Teresa came to visit the cardinal, he explained the origin of this gift. Mother Teresa upon gazing at the picture said, "But Bishop, Jesus seems very sad." Then both of them said, "Let's make him smile." And our cardinal set about to do just that. The bishop expressed his concern for China and the Church in China in creative pastoral and social ways. He established the Holy Spirit Study Centre to render pastoral services to the Church in China. He encouraged the professors at the Holy Spirit Seminary College and other priests with expertise to teach in the Church in China and improve the formation of China's seminarians and young Sisters. He also encouraged Caritas – China Desk to address some of China's social needs. He himself made three trips to China where he visited seminaries and convents. During his visits to China he gave each seminarian and young Sister a small cross exhorting them to carry whatever cross the Lord might send them. Cardinal Wu was a man of hope and he always harboured the hope that his beloved country would not only work for four but rather for five modernizations: the fifth being Christianization. Hope was also the reason that before 1997, confronted with the crisis of the changeover of sovereignty, he stood firm. When many people were leaving Hong Kong, he revealed the depths of his hope in the future by buying more land and building more churches. Of course, he wanted the Church to be at the service of the whole world. Implementing Jesus' command to proclaim the Kingdom of God in Hong Kong and China was our cardinal's special effort to make Jesus smile.

The third picture was also a gift. It is a very traditional and familiar picture of Jesus holding a shepherd's staff and gently touching a lamb beside him. It is, of course, a symbol of the bishop's love for his flock.

Like Jesus the cardinal was an affectionate person. He showed his love for his mother in a very traditional Chinese way. When I accompanied him to see his mother after some 40 years, his first gesture was not an embrace. Instead he knelt down before her and offered her a cup of tea. Later he put the picture of his mother, in his office, in his living quarters and even next to his bed. For her part, his mother always kept his photo under her pillow. He loved his relatives. In his last illness, he at first refused to see them. He wanted to spare them the pain of seeing him suffer. He loved all in the diocese. He always tried to remember people's names and affectionately kept the gifts that people gave him and the stories that went with those gifts. He was a hard worker who never took a vacation. In his love for God, he, like Jesus, loved his own until the end. Finally, in his last will, he offered all his belongings to the diocese that he loved so much. This Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is intimately linked with the life of our beloved bishop. Fifty years ago, our bishop was ordained a priest in this church. 27 years ago, he was ordained a bishop. It was here that he carried out so many of his sacred duties and functions. It is here today that we gather to say good-bye to our beloved bishop and spiritual Father.

Dear Cardinal Wu, you have left us to go to your eternal home. We hope and pray that you will remember your flock that you served so long and so well. We will never forget you. With you and for you we give thanks to God. We promise to remain your faithful followers to proclaim the Gospel and to spread the Kingdom of God. Rest in peace, dear Cardinal Wu.



During one of my visits to Cardinal Wu in the Hospital a few days before he left us, seeing him rather tired I did not want to disturb him. So sitting there, watching him, I said the rosary silently. Shortly afterwards he said to me: "Bishop Zen, tell me something to help me in this difficult moment".

The rosary gave me some inspiration and I spoke into his ear: "Dear Cardinal Wu, the beginning of your life was just like the first and second joyful mysteries of the Rosary. Thank the Lord for having given you such a wonderful life. You were born in a village, grew up in the warmth of a family, the Missionaries helped you to pursue your studies and realize your priestly vocation. Our Lady was a humble servant of God, but He worked marvelous things through her and likewise He has made of you, a country boy, his priest, bishop and a cardinal of the Church. May His name be glorified!"

I find that the rosary prayer symbolizes very fittingly the life of our beloved Cardinal Wu: one "Hail Mary" after another, one day after another, seems so monotonous, nothing special, but in the eyes of God, each day is a splendid rose.

When I saw Cardinal Wu suffering from difficulty in breathing I suggested to him, "Cardinal Wu, offer your every breath to the Lord, let every breath in and breath out be a prayer: "Lord, I love you, I thank you".

The third joyful mystery contemplates the Son of God taking human flesh and being born a little baby for us. He said once, "unless you become like little children you cannot enter the Kingdom of God". Under the bulky figure of Cardinal Wu you could find the heart of a child, simple, straightforward, "no guile is in him". His dignified bearing fit every solemn occasion, but his greatest pleasure evidently was in meeting ordinary people, young and old. During parish feast days or particular celebrations, when he could mix with the faithful, he was really at ease, indeed in his element. He didn't talk much on many occasions, but when he was with people he was familiar with, his natural reactions were so charming.

I visited him one morning with Bishop Tong when the Cardinal was having breakfast. He had no appetite and had to force himself to eat. I said: "For the poor sick even breakfast is a big operation". He replied: "A fierce battle!"

Towards the end of his days to get some relief he had to groan a little when breathing. The sister who used to assist him rather often said: "You groan so loud!" His immediate reaction was, "Do you think I like it?", like a little brother and sister talking to each other!

The fourth joyful mystery contemplates our Lady offering the child Jesus to the Lord in the temple and in the fifth mystery Jesus, at 12 year of age, reminded our Lady that He belonged more to his heavenly Father than to her. Cardinal Wu's mother had the same open heart as Our Lady. While encouraging her son to serve so many people, she satisfied herself with just a short encounter with her son after so many years of separation. That fleeting meeting left a lasting memory (and some lovely photos) which accompanied Cardinal Wu for the rest of his life. But his family was the diocese and we were his brothers, sisters and mothers. For us, the personnel who work in the Diocesan Curia, his presence gave a sense of security, as I said in the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his Episcopal Ordination: "Only with him this our diocese achieves the image of a family".

These last years, for health reasons, he had to cut short many occasions to meet the people and had also to avoid dinners. This was a big sacrifice for the loved life. The theme of his last pastoral letter was just that: "Love life, the gift of God".

According to the "Passover Principle" the best way to enhance life is to give it away for the Kingdom of God. If the whole life of Cardinal Wu reflected the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary, his becoming a Bishop led him on a new way of the cross. ("People will bring you to where you don't want to go").

At least three times the Lord asked him, "John, do you love me?" and he always answered: "Lord, you know, I love you". "The Lord tests those he loves" and made Cardinal Wu the "suffering servant", "the silent lamb" as in the prophecies of Isaiah.

The Lord is our Shepherd, but before that he is the Lamb who precisely as the Immaculate Lamb has become our Shepherd. Cardinal Wu nourished his flock through his sufferings. His passion united him with so many good shepherds on the mainland in deservng the crown of martyrdom. The Holy Father when he raised him to the dignity of a cardinal told him: "The red colour of a cardinal's robes means blood!"

Before disease destroyed his blood, his heart bled overwhelmingly. Misunderstanding, rejection and criticism were deeply felt but generously forgiven. He was ready for suffering when, like his patron, Saint John the Baptist, he raised his voice to defend the defenceless from discrimination by those in power.

Saint Paul asks, "Death, where is your victory?" Death is not a beautiful thing, it is the fruit of the sin of mankind. Even Jesus said in a loud voice on the Cross: "Father, why have you forsaken me?" but at the end he peacefully gave his soul into the hands of his Father. We witnessed with reverence, compassion and admiration how, once again, like Saint Peter, our beloved Cardinal was graciously led to where he did not want to go.

Dear Cardinal Wu, may you rest in peace. Saint Paul says, "their labours will not be in vain.". The glorious mysteries have begun for you. I refuse to say goodbye! I went you to stay with us, to be at my side! We are still your flock, be our Shepherd and guide us still!



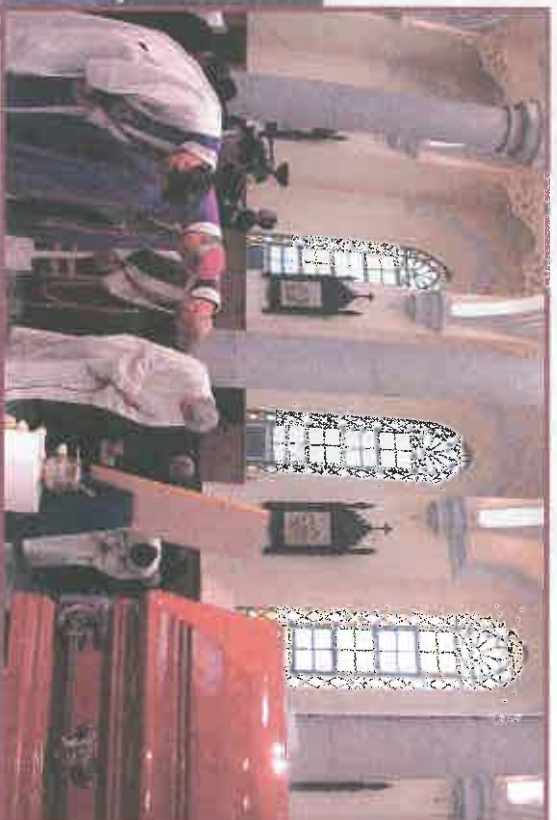
*Bishop Joseph Zen and Bishop John Tong greet the coffin of Cardinal Wu as it arrives at the cathedral on Friday.*



*Thousands of faithful unable to enter the packed Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception for the Friday night vigil crowd the parking lot to watch the proceedings on a big screen television.*



*The faithful place candles near the coffin during the Vigil Mass.*



*Bishop Joseph Zen and Bishop John Tong bow before the coffin of Cardinal Wu.*



*Archbishop Nikolas of the Orthodox Metropolis of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, Bishop Peter Kwong Kwong-ki and representatives of the Hong Kong Christian denominations. Also attending Saturday's Requiem Mass were delegates from Hong Kong's Six Major Religions, including Buddhists.*



*Among the congregation at the Requiem Mass on September 28 were prominent businessman Li Ka-shing, Legislative Councillor Martin Lee and the Chief Secretary Donald Tsang (above).*



*Hong Kong Chief Secretary Donald Tsang and former chief secretary Anson Chan pray during the Vigil Mass.*