

Highlights of China visit



Cardinal Wu and his delegation in Beijing. On Cardinal Wu's right in the picture are Mr. Zhao Puchu, Vice Chairperson of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and Mr. Zhang Shengzuo, Director of the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council of the Chinese Government.



Cardinal Wu visiting with the Sisters at the Beijing Convent.



The seven members of the Hong Kong delegation from left to right in the picture: Father Lawrence Yiu, Rector of Holy Spirit Seminary; Sister Goretti Lau, Dean of the Theology Division at Holy Spirit Seminary; Father John Tong, Vicar General of the Hong Kong Diocese and Director of the Holy Spirit Study Centre; Cardinal John B. Wu, Bishop of Hong Kong; Father John B. Tsang, Episcopal Vicar for Social Services and Pastor of the Cathedral; Mr. Lo Kong-kai, Assistant to the Episcopal Delegate for Education; and Ms. Angela Lo, Vice-President of the Hong Kong Central Council of Catholic Laity.

Cardinal Wu returns to Hong Kong after historic trip to China

HONG KONG (SE): Cardinal John B. Wu returned to Hong Kong on Thursday, Nov. 17, after leading a seven-member delegation to China at the invitation of Mr. Zhang Shengzuo, Director of the Religious Affairs Bureau under the State Council of the Chinese Government.

During the weeklong trip the delegation visited Beijing, Wuhan and Xi'an, and met, with leaders of the Religious Affairs Bureau, the United Front Department and the National and Provincial Political Consultative Conferences. They also visited seminaries and convents.

The delegation said that the atmosphere was friendly and open in their meetings with the officials of the various Government Departments and they felt that their dialogue has enhanced mutual understanding.

During their contacts with Beijing officials, the members of the delegation not only reflected

the wishes and anxieties of Catholics in Hong Kong about religious freedom after 1997, but also expressed the concerns and worries of ordinary citizens.

Beijing officials in turn reaffirmed that the Chinese Government will abide by the stipulations of the Basic Law regarding religious freedom and will implement that law accordingly. They made it clear that they, too, wished to see a smooth transition for Hong Kong in the run-up to 1997, as well as the maintenance of its stability and prosperity. In particular, the officials of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office reiterated that they will certainly implement the "One Country, Two Systems" policy.

Cardinal Wu and his delegation especially brought up the question of the commitment of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong to the development of pastoral ministry, missionary activity, education and social service

after 1997. The leaders of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office stressed that the church can continue its services in these areas in the future.

In their visits to seminaries and convents, the delegation reported that both the Chinese Government and local church leaders indicated that they are giving special attention to them. Local church leaders care very much about the formation of the next generation of priests and sisters, and are making every effort to improve the quality of teaching staff in seminaries and convents. The delegation noted that the Catholic Church of Hong Kong will continue to show concern and give support in this important area of religious formation and education.

In personal meetings with seminarians and sisters, Cardinal Wu encouraged them to imitate Christ in his spirit of self-sacrifice and service of others.

Reflections on the China visit

HONG KONG (SE): May Chow and Chan Tai-wing of the Catholic Video Magazine were allowed to accompany Cardinal Wu's delegation to China. Ms. Chow recalls bits and pieces that impressed her.

On the way up to Beijing, the delegation spoke of some of their hopes. "There have been many changes. In line with the country's open policy, there are more contacts now both within and outside the Mainland... we hope to do better and better," said Fr. John Tong, Vicar-General.

"In less than one thousand days, the sovereignty of Hong Kong will revert to China. We hope to reflect Hong Kong people's views on certain issues and some of their worries like the brain drain problem, the future realization of religious freedom, exchanges between the two churches, social stability and the Sino-Vatican relationship," said Fr. John Tsang.

Later, after these issues were discussed with Chinese officials, the delegation once again reflected on what had transpired.

"What we said about the Sino-Vatican relationship was not an official discussion. The official exchange must be between the Foreign Affairs bureaus of China and the Vatican," said Fr. Tong.

"But if the diplomatic tie is re-established, it will help both the official church and the underground church to achieve unity. Confrontations and conflicts hinder the overall good of society," said Fr. Tsang.

Bishop appointments in China remain obstacle to Sino-Vatican ties

HONG KONG (UCAN): Differences over bishop appointments in China remain an obstacle to normalization of Sino-Vatican relations, says the spokesperson for Cardinal John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung's delegation visiting China Nov. 10-17.

Father John Baptist Tsang Hing-mun told UCA News Nov. 13 in a phone interview that the delegation found the differences still there when they discussed Sino-Vatican relations with Chinese officials.

Officials of the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) under the State Council in Beijing insisted the sovereignty of China should be respected and bishop appointments are an internal affair of the Catholic Church in China.

They said bishop appointments should not be meddled with by the Vatican, recalled Father Tsang, a Hong Kong diocesan priest.

The government-approved open Catholic Church in China has been ordaining bishops without papal approval since 1958, using the principles of independence, autonomy and self-administration of the church.

Invited by RAB director Zhang Shengzuo, Cardinal Wu's seven-member delegation was on a visit to Beijing, Wuhan and Xi'an Nov. 10-17.

The Hong Kong delegation had explained to their hosts in

China that the papal appointment of bishops is deeply linked with Catholic faith and observed by the universal church, the delegation spokesperson said.

Cardinal Wu has expressed to the Chinese his hope that differences that might hinder the process of normalization of Sino-Vatican relations would be removed, Father Tsang said.

After meeting with RAB officials, Cardinal Wu told Beijing-based reporters that as both sides had not reached any consensus on this matter, it would be better for experts from China and the Vatican to look into the problem.

RAB deputy director Liu Shuxiang, who escorted the delegation to all places visited, reportedly noted that the pope had three dreams, two being to kiss the soil of Jerusalem and embrace the Eastern Orthodox Church's patriarchs.

Liu said the pope's last dream, to visit China, could come true if the Vatican severs ties with Taiwan and stops interfering in China church internal affairs, Ta Kung Pao, a pro-Beijing Hong Kong Chinese daily reported Nov. 12.

Liu's comment echoed the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that reiterated these two conditions Nov. 10, the day the delegation began their eight-day visit to Beijing, Wuhan and Xi'an.