

The Pope Accepts Bishop Bianchi's Resignation of the See of Hong Kong

Bishop Francis Hsu Appointed Apostolic Administrator

It was announced from the Vatican on Thursday, December 19, that the Pope had accepted Bishop Bianchi's resignation of the See of Hong Kong and had appointed Bishop Francis Hsu, Auxiliary Bishop of Hong Kong for the past fourteen months, as Administrator Apostolic with full jurisdiction.

The announcement did not come as a surprise. Early in 1967 Bishop Bianchi made no secret of the fact that he had asked the Pope for permission to resign. The burden, he said, was becoming too heavy for him: though he was several years short of the recommended retiring age for bishops, his health had not been good for several years and an ever extending mission diocese like Hong Kong demands more of its bishops than settled dioceses demand from their bishops. In the outbreak of disturbances in May, 1967, preferring to stay with his flock in the midst of trouble, he withdrew his request for permission to resign. It had become clear

that these disturbances were at an end, Bishop Bianchi renewed his request, and in May, 1968, the Pope received him in private audience and promised permission.

BISHOP BIANCHI

Bishop Bianchi was born at Cortino, Italy, on March 31, 1899. Having been ordained priest on September 23, 1922, he came almost at once to work in the vicariate apostolic (as it then was) of Hong Kong. He worked in the part of the diocese lying within the boundaries of China till 1949, when he was summoned to Hong Kong to become Coadjutor to the aging Bishop Valtorta. He was consecrated bishop on October 9 of that year.

At the time of his consecration, it was expected that he would stay in Hong Kong as Bishop Valtorta's right hand, but the rapid advance of the Communist armies made it clear that the people of Hoi Fung, for whom he had worked for so long, would soon be in sore straits. Wishing, as he was to wish in May 1967, to be with those who were suffering, he returned unhesitatingly to China, and when Bishop Valtorta died on September 3, 1951, his successor, Bishop Bianchi, was under house arrest and unable to take up the duties of residential Bishop.

On October 17, 1952, he was expelled without warning and arrived at the border dressed in coolie clothes. The

news of his arrival flashed through Hong Kong and a vast throng was waiting to greet him at Kowloon railway station.

That was the most dramatic day in the history of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong.

When Bishop Bianchi took up the administration of the diocese in 1952, the Catholic population was estimated at about 48,000 and the number of students in Catholic schools at about 24,000. The most recent estimate of the Catholic population is over 235,000 and there are over 190,000 students in Catholic schools. Similar growth has occurred in every sector of Catholic life. Without fuss and making no dramatic gestures, Bishop Bianchi fostered this growth by wise direction and by generous encouragement of every well considered plan.

BISHOP HSU

Bishop Francis Hsu, who has now taken over the administration of the diocese, has had an unusually varied career. He was born in Shanghai in 1920 and was educated at St. John's University, Shanghai, and at Merton College, Oxford, where he obtained a degree of B. Litt in English Language and Literature. He then became Professor of English, first in Chungking later at Nanking, maintaining, however, an even greater interest in the Chinese language and in Chinese literature.

He came to Hong Kong about 20 years ago and worked on the staff of the Commissioner General for East Asia.

In his mid-thirties he decided to become a priest and did his ecclesiastical studies at the Beda College, Rome. After ordination in 1959, he was appointed editor of *Kung Kao Po*. In 1961 he was appointed Director of the Catholic Centre. This demanding post linked him with every aspect of diocesan life, made him known to great numbers, and enabled him to help Bishop Bianchi in many of his tasks.

He was consecrated bishop by Bishop Bianchi on October 7, 1967, and since then has been busily engaged in the pastoral and administrative work of the diocese, in addition to undertaking almost daily the tasks of public speaking, prize-giving and so on that bear down upon a bishop.

The announcement of the change of administration evoked from the Catholic community two sentiments: deep gratitude to Bishop Bianchi for all he has done and full confidence that in Bishop Hsu he has a worthy successor.

AN ENDURING TRADITION

It would be unbecoming to reproduce or even to list in this diocesan paper any of the tributes paid to our bishops by members of the diocese.

There was, however, one tribute at least which may be mentioned with all propriety and with acknowledged satisfaction.

On Friday, December 20, the day on which Hong Kong became acquainted with the changes had been made, the Rt. Rev. Gilbert Baker, Anglican Bishop of Hong Kong, was the principal speaker on Speech Day in one of his schools. Breaking away from his prepared text, he paid eloquent tribute to Bishop Bianchi.

This is recorded here, not as something unexampled but as a noble continuation of a noble tradition, going back at least to the days of Bishop Valtorta and Bishop Hall, and as a clear sign that that tradition endures and will endure.