

Cardinal Wu: A witness to 20 years of change

HONG KONG (UCAN): The episcopate of Cardinal John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung as bishop of Hong Kong has witnessed dramatic changes in the political landscape, and enhanced the diocese's role as a bridge church.

The 20th anniversary of his episcopal ordination was marked by a Mass on July 25, Feast of Saint James, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception here. Visiting Auxiliary Bishop Bosco Lin Chi-nan of Kaohsiung, Taiwan, was among the concelebrants. Several hundreds of priests, nuns and laypeople attended.

In his bilingual homily in Cantonese and English, Cardinal Wu, 70, reminisced over the past two decades, thanking the Lord and asked the Catholics to pray for his ministry, the diocese and religious vocations.

He recalled on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25, 20 years ago, he received the notification of his episcopal appointment.

Coincidentally, on the same feastday 10 years ago, he was invited by the Religious Affairs Bureau under Chi-

na's State Council to visit Beijing and Shanghai, his first official visit to mainland China.

He always reflects on the Annunciation and is inspired by the faith commitment of the Blessed Mother, the cardinal said.

Cardinal Wu was ordained bishop in 1975 at the same cathedral and has headed the diocese since then. In 1988, he was installed a cardinal, strengthening the diocese's role to bridge the church in China and the universal church. Over the years, he led the diocese to discuss the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration on the future of Hong Kong beyond 1997 as well as the draft of the Basic Law.

Moving along with Hong Kong's democratisation of the three-tier political system, Cardinal Wu issued guidelines on political elections for Catholics and parishes to follow and pastoral letters encouraging Catholics to vote.

Under his leadership, the diocese underwent a series of structural changes. A system of deaneries was created, and laity formation was em-

phasised. The appointment of an auxiliary bishop, expected since June 1993, is pending.

In May 1989 Cardinal Wu issued the pastoral exhortation *March Into the Bright Decade*, mapping directions for the diocese in the 1990s.

A month later, Beijing authorities cracked down on the pro-democracy movement in China. A number of Catholic families were among tens of thousands of Hong Kong emigrants who lacked confidence in the future of Hong Kong, many recounting the religious persecution in China over the last 40 years.

In a June 1995 report on the 1989 exhortation, Cardinal Wu committed his diocese to fulfilling its mission as a bridge church to "proclaim the Gospel of the Lord, spread the Kingdom of God," the theme of the document.

Cardinal Wu, born in Wuhua county, Guangdong province, China, was ordained a priest in Hong Kong in 1952. He was serving in the church in Taiwan before he was appointed the bishop of Hong Kong.

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