

Visit China

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Let us praise our Father in Heaven, who, in answer to your prayers and your support, granted my companions and me a peaceful and pleasant journey in China.

We went to China on the invitation of the Bureau of Religious Affairs of the State Council. Through the arrangements made by the Bureau, in Beijing we met chief officials of the Religious Affairs Bureau, of the United Front Work Department and of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office. In Shanghai, we met the chief officials of the Shanghai Religious Affairs Bureau and of the Shanghai Municipal Government. In both Beijing and Shanghai, we also met the leaders of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Associations.

During our encounters, we had extensive and sincere exchange of views about the Church's future contribution to the integral development of Hong Kong society and our role in serving as a bridge to other parts of the world. We also discussed promoting close communion with the universal Church, ways of

developing international friendships for our country and the enhancement of China's prestige in the world community.

With regard to the formulation of the Basic Law of Hong Kong, we suggested the establishment of a consultative machinery to gather representative views, in a comprehensive and in-depth manner, from various circles and groups, so that such views may serve as a basis for the formulation of the Basic Law. The Director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Offices warmly welcomed the suggestion and considered it worthy of consideration.

We visited the tombs of Matteo Ricci and Paul Xu Guangqi to show our deep respect for our venerable precursors in faith. We also made pilgrimages to the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Beijing and the Basilica at Sheshan, to show our profound filial love for our Heavenly Mother. Our contacts with the leaders of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association provided us with an opportunity to share information on the latest important developments in the Church, to exchange views on the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church, to promote mutual understanding and to express our desire for greater solidarity and

cooperation in our common tasks of serving society, participating in our national development and working for the welfare of mankind.

It was very gratifying to observe the accelerating development of our country, the new open-door policy and the endeavours to promote exchanges with the rest of the world. Although our trip was short, we were able to make many contacts and we benefited immensely from these contacts. We had cherished an intense hope of being able to visit Bishop Ignatius Gong immensely from these contacts. We had cherished an intense hope of being able to visit Bishop Ignatius Gong Pinmei to show our brotherly regard for him. In Shanghai, therefore, we made repeated requests for arrangements to be made for such a visit and we gave our reasons for this request. The Shanghai Religious Affairs Bureau was sympathetic and tried its best to assist. It is most regrettable, however, that arrangement to visit Bishop Gong could not be made as we had hoped. We can only hope that one day soon, our wish may be fulfilled.

When our Lord Jesus died, His disciples dispersed and gave up hope. But the risen Christ and His gift of the Holy Spirit rallied them and strengthened them to take up the mission of spreading the Gospel. Today, in this Holy

Week of the Passion and Resurrection, may we, through the Paschal mystery, find in the risen Christ the true significance of suffering and frustration, so that, full of hope and with a strong faith, we may rise up to meet all future challenges and do our utmost to fulfil our sacred mission.

“The God of all grace, who called you his everlasting glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish those who suffered a little while. Dominion be his through the ages! Amen.” (1 Pet. 5:10-11)

+ John Baptist Wu
The Bishop of Hong Kong
Palm Sunday 1985