

## Letter to the Universal Church

Dear and Reverend Brother Bishop in the Lord,

Greetings to you from the Church which is in Hong Kong. All Grace and Peace to you from God Almighty through Jesus Christ.

In 1986 the Holy Father designated that the mission intention of the Apostleship of Prayer for July that year, should be “the Catholic Church in Hong Kong.” At that time, I took the opportunity to write in a spirit of communion and solidarity to my brother Bishops all over the world. I must tell you that no words can express my appreciation and gratitude to you and to your faithful for your prayers and support.

China has been the focus of world news in recent months. The news has been both tragic and frightening and has caused such anguish and distress to millions of Chinese people, that I feel I must write to you once more in the same spirit of communion and solidarity.

From mid-April to early June this year, students in Beijing and other cities in China held peaceful rallies in support of democratic reforms to win respect for human

rights and freedom. Tragically, this peaceful movement was crushed by military force. A reign of terror has followed. The protesters and their supporters, including many intellectuals, have been arrested. Many of them have been summarily executed. These events have shaken, not just China, but the entire world. Hong Kong has felt particularly deeply the sufferings of its Chinese brothers and sisters.

Early in 1984 the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed whereby China would resume sovereignty over Hong Kong and the territory would be made a Special Administrative Region with a high degree of autonomy in 1997. The agreement ensured that there would be no change for fifty years and that the Region would be allowed to continue as before with its own legal system and lifestyle. This is the concept of “one country, two systems.” In Hong Kong today, because of China's recent political tragedy, many people ask: Will this concept work? And can the Communist Party be trusted?

But even before the suppression of the pro-democracy protests in Beijing, Hong Kong people had grave anxieties about the future and had begun the painful process of emigration to foreign countries. Recent events in China have further weakened confidence in the

territory. The exodus of people who fear for their future has accelerated in the past weeks. The loss of people through immigration is serious, not just economically, but to the community as a whole, and family life in particular.

The British Government has a constitutional as well as a moral obligation to provide effective safeguards for the population of Hong Kong. Since 1962 the United Kingdom Parliament has passed several Acts which have limited the rights of Hong Kong citizens to live in Britain. To many Hong Kong residents these Acts have rendered their British citizenship almost meaningless. As an insurance policy against a political disaster, community leaders are now demanding that the British Government restore the safeguards that the right to enter Britain would confer on Hong Kong British citizens. A right to enter the United Kingdom would, in no small measure, help restore people's confidence in Hong Kong.

Over the past fifteen years Asia has been inundated with hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees. We, in Hong Kong, in spite of already overcrowded conditions, have been caring for many of these Vietnamese brothers and sisters over the years. The influx of these unfortunate people has vastly increased in

recent years. And now, each new month sees them arrive in their thousands, more than 9,000 in June this year. At present over 48,000 must live in temporary camps and flimsy shelters. They do not want to stay in Hong Kong; their hope is to find a permanent home in another country. However, Governments are reluctant to do more than talk of repatriating them. The pressures on this region have been enormous. Hong Kong is almost at the end of its tether and desperate to find a solution for this crisis. Since this is essentially an international problem, it is an international responsibility to solve it in a spirit of humanity and fraternity.

All these are the agonies and anxieties that strike deep in the heart of the People of Hong Kong. These too, are the anxieties of the Church which is in Hong Kong, for “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ...” (Gaudium et Spes No. 1)

Bearing in mind the anxieties and hopes of our Church in Hong Kong, and after a year long consultation, I issued a Pastoral Exhortation on Pentecost Sunday this year, which outlined the pastoral commitment of the

Church in Hong Kong for the next ten years: "At such a historic moment, we must ... do our utmost to equip ourselves and to join hands wholeheartedly with those brothers and sisters, both within and outside the Church, who have the same goal and aim to build the Kingdom of God; so that the year 2000 AD may become a turning point of history, a moment filled with the grace of the Lord..."

With these thoughts in mind, I commend the people of China and of Hong Kong to you and to your faithful for your prayers. May God, who heeds our incessant intercessions, grant eternal rest to those who have died in the recent massacre, restore justice and peace, democracy and order to our country, strengthen and comfort us in this period of agony and anxiety. I also ask you the following favours:

I beg that you urge your Government and other international bodies to appeal to the Chinese Government to put an end to all persecution and ensure that those who have already been arrested are given fair trials.

I ask that you request your Government and other international bodies to do everything they can to offer the Vietnamese refugees permanent homes as soon as

possible, and help them rebuild their lives in a new country.

Finally, I appeal to you to urge your Government and other international bodies to use their influence with the British Government to ensure that the people of Hong Kong enjoy all those safeguards from the United Kingdom which are their right; and so help to maintain the prosperity and stability of the region.

Let us rely on our confidence in the Lord of History, for we firmly believe that what He has prepared for us must be an even better future. With this same confidence, I join with you, my brother Bishop, to exclaim with great hope this salvific expression: Maranatha!

**+ John Baptist Cardinal Wu**  
**The Bishop of Hong Kong**  
**Feast of St. Benedict**  
**11 July 1989**