

# **PASTORAL GUIDELINES FOR THE 1997 TRANSITION**

With a view to helping the faithful to carry out the mission of the Catholic Church more effectively in the run-up to 1997, Cardinal John. B. Wu, after consultation with the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests, has mandated that the following Pastoral Guidelines be announced:

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

In less than three years, China will resume its sovereignty over Hong Kong. In order to ensure a smooth transition, a number of important issues have yet to be jointly resolved by China, Britain and the Hong Kong Government. For this to be achieved, we ourselves, just like the general public, find a sincere dialogue between these parties indispensable, a dialogue that is based on mutual respect and understanding. Such a dialogue will also serve to dispel the uncertainties and apprehensions of Hong Kong citizens about the future.

As Christians who constitute a part of the local community, we firmly believe in God as the Lord of history. In this last stage of the transition period leading

to 1997, we pledge to deepen our sense of mission, our sense of being the church, our sense of belonging to Hong Kong, as well as our solidarity with the larger Chinese family. We are prepared to make every effort to enable our Motherland to become a land blessed by the Lord, “a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Cardinal John B. Wu has already highlighted the foregoing mission of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong in this transition period in his Pastoral Exhortation “March into the Bright Decade” (Pentecost Sunday, 1989). There he says emphatically: “At such a historic moment, we must live out the spirit of Vatican Council II and reach out to the world; conscious of our responsibility in faith, to imitate Christ our Lord in taking up this historic mission humbly and determinedly; doing 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 ... “

The following Section offers some concrete pastoral guidelines.

## **B. PASTORAL GUIDELINES**

(1) The faithful are to look at the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty from the perspective of Christian faith and in their exchange of views on related matters are to do their utmost to preserve among themselves the spirit of unity and fraternal communion.

(2) As Chinese -

The faithful are to keep themselves well-informed about their Motherland through study and contacts. They are to cultivate an appreciation of Chinese culture and their love for their countrymen.

They are to show an even greater solicitude for the wellbeing of their country in their prayers and in their daily lives.

(3) As Hong Kong citizens -

The faithful are to deepen their civic sense, being well aware that “being good Christians also means being good citizens.” They are encouraged to take an active part in social affairs, in voting and standing for elections. With a critical mind and guided by the revealed truths of Scripture and the social teachings of the church, they are to take an

interest in current affairs, to scrutinize them from the Christian standpoint, and to take the appropriate course of action.

They are urged to join civic organizations in their local environment, to reflect their own views, and to cooperate with other organizations and individuals with the same goal and aim in making Hong Kong a society where democracy and the rule of law along with justice and peace will prevail.

They are to acquaint themselves with the Basic Law of Hong Kong, in particular those provisions regarding the freedoms of religious belief, religious organizations, and religious activities. In this way they will be well-disposed to give support to the implementation of the Basic Law and thus contribute towards the stability and prosperity of the future Special Administrative Region. Further, they are to continue to enhance the integral development of their fellow citizens, a development that takes due account of a person's spiritual, material and social needs and values.

(4) As Christians -

The faithful are to make it their first duty to grow day by day in the Christian faith and to pass it on to others. They are to consider the Christian upbringing of their children as one of the main priorities of family life, just as Catholic families in China have played a vital role in the same area.

They are to bear in mind that the church founded by Christ is one, holy, catholic and apostolic, and that accordingly they are to promote the fraternal communion between the Catholic Church in China and the Catholic Church in Hong Kong at various levels through prayers and more organized mutual visits, dialogues and cultural exchanges of Mainland and Hong Kong Catholics.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

May God our Father send us His Spirit to enlighten our minds, to inflame our hearts and to strengthen our wills so that we may read the signs of the times, discern God's will and join hands with the people of Hong Kong in sharing the destiny of our Motherland. Thus, with our home in Hong Kong while keeping a close link with China and bearing a global outlook, we shall avail ourselves of all the necessary means and continue to walk

steadfastly towards the future to fulfill our historic mission.

**Given at the Chancery Office, 10 March 1995.**