

Pope blesses church in Hong Kong

To my Venerable Brother Cardinal John Baptist Wu Cheng-chung, Bishop of Hong Kong

The return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty on 1 July next is an event of historic consequence for the Chinese people, but also an important and significant moment for the diocesan community entrusted to your pastoral care. It is an event therefore to be lived in a spirit of faith, in an attitude of prayer and of trust in Divine Providence which mysteriously guides the course of human history.

In the 156 years of its existence – first as an Apostolic Prefecture, then as an Apostolic Vicariate and finally as a Diocese – the church in Hong Kong has grown in dignity and gained ever increasing respect in society through its generous service of the people. The proclamation of the good news of God the Father's love, manifested in Jesus Christ and solidarity with man and with his history have been, and continue to be, the mainstay of the Catholic presence in Hong Kong. That presence is effective in many fields, and aims at fostering religious, moral,

cultural and social values by means of an extensive network of diocesan bodies, religious communities, educational institutions and charitable and welfare centres which enjoy universal esteem.

In this wonderful work, the Catholic of Hong Kong have been guided by that Gospel spirit which the Apostle Peter expressed in the words which he addressed to the crippled man near the gate of the temple: “I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (acts 3:6). In fact, in the fulfillment of her mission in the world the church is “inspired by no earthly ambition, [and she] seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward under the lead of the befriending Spirit the work of Christ himself, who came into the world to bear witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgement, to serve and not to be served.”

This service of evangelization and practical solidarity must not cease and indeed it will surely increase now that the diocese of Hong Kong is called to be in the midst of the Chinese nation the “city set on a hill” and a “lamp on a stand” (cf. Mt 5:14-15). In the new historical circumstances, the Catholic community’s mission will be to accompany all on the path towards further gains in

social advancement, peace and solidarity.

I am close in prayer to Your Eminence, to the Bishops your collaborators, the clergy, religious and the entire diocesan community, as well as to all people of goodwill, My thoughts also go to the Catholics of mainland China who at this time are united in a particular way with their brothers and sisters in the faith living in Hong Kong. Upon all of you I invoke the abundant gift of the Holy Spirit and the protection of Mary, Help of Christians.

With this good wish I send my affectionate greeting to you, Venerable Brother and ask you to convey the assurance of my closeness in spirit and in prayer to those who on 1 July will join you in the Solemn Eucharistic concelebration in the cathedral and to all those who are living this historic event. To each member of your dear Catholic community, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 24 June 1997
Solemnity of Saint John the Baptist

John Paul II