



A Call to Fidelity to the Church

By Bishop Ignatius Kung Pin Mei

September 8, 1988, Queen of Clergy Chapel, Stamford, Connecticut, USA



"Praise and thank God for giving us the grace of such fidelity and courage."

Reported by *Fairfield County Catholic*, Bridgeport, Connecticut

(This is the first public Mass celebrated by Bishop Kung since arriving in the United States on May 4, 1988. Bishop Kung of Shanghai, who spent 32 years in a China prison for remaining faithful to the Holy Father, is residing in Queen of the Clergy Residence in Stamford. On September 8, 1988, Feast of the Birthday of Mary. Bishop Kung celebrated Mass and gave the following moving homily to a congregation of Chinese Catholics, many of whom themselves had been imprisoned for their faith.)



Forever shall I praise our Lord for His mercy.
Our Lady of She Shan, patron saint of the Diocese of Shanghai, pray for us.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Today, on our Lady's birthday feast, we are offering this Mass as a happy prayer of thanksgiving to God on the one hand, and a prayer of earnest petition for His continual grace on the other.

Thirty-three years ago today, 30 priests, a large number of brothers and nuns and hundreds of lay Catholics were rounded up and jailed in the Diocese of Shanghai. This was but the beginning of the Chinese "Church of Silence." Since that date, we Catholics have been subjected to every type of persecution. During those long and harrowing years, a large number of religious of both sexes and lay Catholics fortified by their deep faith have been carrying their cross courageously. Some

of them were imprisoned; some were sent to hard labor camps; some were separated from their loved ones, forced to leave their families and homeland; some were expelled from school or lost their jobs; and some paid the ultimate price, sacrificing their precious lives. Why did they endure such suffering? They were not fools, but very reasonable people. They bore and are still bearing this suffering patiently, sustained by God's grace, and by the unquenchable flame of their ardent faith in His commandments.

Oh, my fellow Catholics! Preserve that bright flame of faith forever! Forever preserve your honorable privilege as God's adopted children. Never betray your Church. Rather, protect and defend her with all your might. You, my brothers and sisters in Christ who are present at this Mass, have given proof that you have kept your faith and fidelity to the Church. Let us praise and thank God for giving us the grace of such fidelity and courage.

In addition, we also want to thank God for the privilege of witnessing the heroic example of so many religious of both sexes and lay Catholics who, having endured long years of imprisonment, hard labor, and various other forms of slow persecution, willingly surrendered their lives to glorify God. Indeed, they may be compared to the many martyrs who gave their lives for the faith in the early days of the Church. Truly, "the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians." Today, in heaven, wearing crowns of victory and glory, they are praying for the early evangelization of the Chinese race.

Next, we should offer special prayers for the perseverance of those religious and lay Catholics who are at this moment living in poverty and isolation despite all they have suffered over the past 30 years. May God soothe their worry and agony and help them realize the honor and blessing bestowed on them for accompanying Christ to their Calvary as heroic witnesses to the faith. We, on our part, can never forget them; nor will the Church. May they continue to sustain their firm faith in Christ, and persevere in loving God and neighbors. It was our Lord Himself who taught us: "Blessed are those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, the kingdom of heaven is theirs."

Finally, we must pray for those who have gone astray, and for all those who failed when confronted with a painful challenge. We must pray especially for those who separated from the Church and have established an independent, self-assertive and self-reliant church. But worst of all, we must deplore the ordination of bishops without papal sanction or permission. We sincerely hope that they will refrain from taking any further action to separate themselves from the true Church; we pray rather that they may receive the grace to return to the true fold, and profess obedience to the one true shepherd - Pope John Paul II. , Successor of Peter, Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth.

Let us pray ardently to our patron saint, Our Lady of She Shan, our protectress, to obtain for us the grace to carry on with our apostolate with reinforced strength, because our mission is still far from being accomplished.

May God's providence for the universal salvation of mankind be realized, and may the glory and exultation of the Gospel be realized through the strength and breadth of China. And, with God's blessing, may we continue marching toward the goal with God: unifying His children unto their eternal home, Amen.