



THE CARDINAL KUNG FOUNDATION



Bishop Kung - a Model for All the Clergy

a Homily by

His Excellency Most Reverend Archbishop Dominic Tang, S.J.

Archbishop of Canton, China

**On the Occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of the Ordination to Priesthood and the 40th
Anniversary as a Bishop of**

Bishop Ignatius Pin-Mei Kung, Bishop of Shanghai, China

June 2, 1990. Stamford, Connecticut, U.S.A.



(Note: Archbishop Dominic Tang, S.J. was the Archbishop of Canton, China. Archbishop Tang and Bishop Kung met in Shanghai while both were priests teaching in the Jesuit High School. About a year after Bishop Kung was appointed bishop of Soochow, Archbishop Dominic Tang was also appointed bishop of Canton on February 13, 1951. Both bishops accepted the episcopate while the Communist persecution on the Roman Catholic Church was going on. Bishop Kung was arrested on September 8, 1955. Later, Archbishop Tang was arrested on February 5, 1958. He was imprisoned for 22 years without ever being sentenced. Archbishop Tang spent some years in solitary confinement. He was released on June 9, 1980 due to the archbishop's advanced cancer. This celebration of Bishop Kung's 60th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood and 40th anniversary as bishop brought two good friends, Archbishop Tang and Bishop Kung, together in Stamford, Connecticut after 40 years of separation.)



My dear Bishop Kung: My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Today, we gather here in this church, to thank God for giving China an outstanding shepherd and a great priest, Bishop Kung. This is Bishop's 60th Anniversary as a priest, and 40 years as a bishop. He is truly an inspiration for everyone and a model for all priests.

My friendship with Bishop Kung did not begin today. It dated back some fifty years ago when I met him as Father Ignatius in Shanghai. You can therefore say that we are old friends. We are also followers of the same ideal. Bishop Kung served God by being obedient to God's will, and by being faithful to his duties as a priest. He is also very devoted to the young people.

Sixty years is indeed a very long time for anyone. And when we look at the life of Bishop Kung, we note that half of these sixty years was spent alone and behind bars.

When I was in Shanghai, Bishop Kung was the principal of a Jesuit high school, where he devoted himself to education.

Then, there were alarming changes in China. Atheism spread like fire. Many priests in northern China were arrested. Most of the foreign bishops, priests and religious sisters were expelled from China. You can imagine the atmosphere in China at that time. Looking through our human eyes, the future of the Church in China was helpless and horrifying. It was under such circumstances that in October 1949, Father Ignatius Kung accepted the episcopacy of the new diocese of Soochow and became its first chief shepherd.

We are all members of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, united under Christ. By Bishop Kung's sacrifice, the entire Church has benefited. He has also set for us an example of obedience, just as our Blessed Mother had replied to Angel Gabriel,

"I am the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me as you say."

Bishop Kung accepted God's plan and the Holy Father's request without reservation.

Ten months later, in August 1950, Pope Pius XII appointed Bishop Kung as the bishop of Shanghai. He is the first Chinese bishop in the diocese of Shanghai. He also served as administrator of the Soochow and Nanking dioceses. Shanghai is the largest city in China. At that time, it had a population of 8 million. Soochow is the famous Venice of the East, and Nanking is the old capital of China. Bishop Kung, therefore, became the bishop of 3 of the most important cities in China at a most critical time in the history of the Catholic Church in China.

By this time, in 1950, the Communist government was already in complete control of China. Did not Bishop Kung realize that the persecution of the Church was imminent?

Bishop Kung imitated the spirit of Jesus when Jesus prayed in Gethsemane before his passion,

"Let it be as you would have it, not as I."

Bishop Kung completely disregarded his own personal safety. He became the spiritual leader of the largest diocese of China and started his journey towards Calvary.

In a short five years, the Shanghai diocese flourished and became full of life under his good leadership. He was firm and caring. He gave all that he had for the salvation of souls and for the greater glory of God. He had the whole diocese completely united under him. Bishop Kung's name soon spread throughout China. All the dioceses were modeled after the work of the Shanghai diocese. He was particularly loved and admired by all young people, students from the university and high school.

It was therefore apparent to the enemy of the Church that something must be done about this Bishop Kung. On the night of September 8, 1955, Bishop Kung, twenty-three priests and more than 300 Catholics were arrested. The next day, thousands of people wept when they read the front page headline in *The People's Daily*:

"Counterrevolutionary Ignatius Kung was arrested!"

One day of misery is painfully long. Bishop Kung spent thirty years in jail, one day at a time, for eleven thousand days. He was completely cut off from the world, had no spiritual support such as Holy Mass or spiritual books, and had very little material support.

How many people in the Catholic Church in China also spent 20 to 30 years in the same way? And, as I am speaking to you now, how many of our brothers and sisters in Christ are still without freedom in China, suffering persecution for their faith?

As recently as last November, the bishops in China who are loyal to our Holy Father set up the bishops' conference of Mainland China. Bishop Fan, whose name is familiar to a lot of you, was elected president. As a result of this open declaration of loyalty to His Holiness, the government arrested the bishops and priests who had taken part.

Therefore, the diamond jubilee we celebrate today is not just another diamond jubilee. Bishop Kung has inspired thousands of Chinese Catholics, and millions around the world, during the last 40 years. In Bishop Kung, we can witness the mystery of God's plan and the power of God's grace in China.

Please, let us all pray for Bishop Kung, for his continued health, so that he can give greater glory to God.

I beg you to remember the Catholic Church in China in your prayers, so that China will once again submit itself to Blessed Mother, Queen of China. God bless all of you.