

Pontifical Requiem Mass
Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Death of Ignatius Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei
Mary Star of the Sea Church
San Francisco, California
15 March 2025

Wis 3, 1-9
Ps 23, 1-3. 4. 5. 6
Rom 8, 31-35. 37-39
Jn 12, 23-28

Homily

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It is the source of deepest joy for me to preach at this Pontifical Requiem Mass in observance of the 25th Anniversary of the death of Cardinal Ignatius Kung Pin-Mei on March 12, 2000. Blessed to participate in the Pontifical Mass offered by His Grace, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, in this beautiful church in which the mortal remains of Cardinal Kung lay in state before his burial in Santa Clara, I am praying, in particular, for the faithful Catholics of China who continue to suffer persecution, as Cardinal Kung so intensely suffered, because of their fidelity to Our Lord Jesus Christ in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Cardinal Kung was an heroically good and faithful shepherd for them. Remembering him, we are inspired to pray for them. At the same time, I pray for the conversion of those who have separated themselves from the true Church by joining the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association established by the atheistic Communist Party of China.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to Agnes Y. H. Kung, President of The Cardinal Kung Foundation, for the invitation to preach at today's Pontifical Requiem Mass. I am deeply grateful to Archbishop Cordileone, Archbishop of San Francisco, and to Father Joseph Illo, Pastor of Mary Star of the Sea Church, for their heartfelt welcome.

I am honored to be the Episcopal Advisor of The Cardinal Kung Foundation. By my

presence today, I express deepest esteem and gratitude for the work of the Foundation, which is comprised of prayer, financial support, and fitting initiatives to promote the Roman Catholic Church in China, the underground Church continuously and gravely persecuted by an atheistic regime.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in His Farewell Discourse to the Apostles before entering upon His ignominious Passion and Death, spoke about the imminent oblation of His life as the way of glory, the way by which His death would win the incomparable fruit of eternal life for all who would come to life in Him in the Church. He used the analogy of the grain of wheat which buried in the ground seems to die but, in fact, produces abundant fruit. He declared: “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”¹

God the Son Incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary united our human nature to His divine nature not to accommodate divinity to humanity but to elevate humanity to divinity, according to its true nature announced in the divinely-inspired accounts of Creation. The first account teaches us: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”² Amidst all the richness and splendor of His creation, God chose man alone to share in His very Being. The Book of Genesis reports His words: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”³ The intimacy of the communion of God and man, intended by God from the first moment of the Creation, is also expressed in the second account of Creation: “... then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”⁴ By his very nature, man lives for communion with God, his immortal soul animated by the breath of God is destined, throughout the pilgrimage of life on earth, for eternal life with God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – in the Kingdom of Heaven.

When man rebelled against God, thinking himself to be God, instead of a child of God whose life has its only source and right order in God, in the perfection of the Divine Being, God the Father sent God the Son in human flesh to restore man’s communion with Him. Having accomplished His mission on the Cross, Christ rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand

¹ Jn 12, 25.

² Gen 1, 27.

³ Gen 1, 26.

⁴ Gen 2, 7.

of God the Father in His glorious Body from which He unceasingly and without measure pours forth His life, the sevenfold gift of the Holy Spirit, into our hearts, so that we may worship God “in spirit and truth,”⁵ living in Christ, participating in the Goodness, Truth, and Beauty of God, each day of our lives.

Saint Paul, addressing the suffering inherent in life on earth – “tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword”⁶ – confidently declares:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.⁷

In the face of the many trials and temptations which would lead us away from Christ, from our eternal salvation, we, cooperating with the grace of Christ in our immortal souls, declare with Christ:

Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? “Father, save me from this hour?” No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.⁸

Living in Christ, we come to understand the truth of Divine Wisdom which teaches us that “the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them”⁹ and that “those who trust in [God] will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his elect, and he watches over his holy ones.”¹⁰

Celebrating twenty-five years since the death of the heroically faithful shepherd of God’s flock, Cardinal Ignatius Kung, we praise and glorify God for the grace of Christ at work in his soul over his long life, so much of it spent in suffering with Christ “for the sake of His Body, that is,

⁵ Jn 4, 23-24.

⁶ Rom 8, 35.

⁷ Rom 8, 37-39.

⁸ Jn 12, 27-28.

⁹ Wis 3, 1.

¹⁰ Wis 3, 9.

the Church.”¹¹ In the face of relentlessly cruel persecution, Cardinal Kung proclaimed Christ alive in His Mystical Body, the Church, especially in Christ’s Vicar on Earth, the Successor of Saint Peter, the Roman Pontiff. I recall the words of Cardinal Kung in his sermon for Catholics in China, preached in the Church of the Queen of the Angels and Queen of the Martyrs at Rome on June 30, 1991, two days after he had received the Cardinal’s red hat from Pope Saint John Paul II who, *in pectore*, had elevated him to the Sacred College of Cardinals in the Consistory of June 30, 1979:

During the past 40 years, the Church in China has suffered severe persecution. We have been able to stand in the front line of the Church. This is our glory. We should be glad and rejoice. As the Shanghai Catholic youths said, “We are greatly honored to have been born and lived at this important time, able to bear witness to Christ.” Christ sees that we are worthy of this honor and wants us to participate more closely in His work of redemption. As Saint Paul said and as our Holy Father repeated today during the Angelus message, “We should fill up in ourselves what is lacking in the Passion of Christ”. What a great glory it is for us that we can co-operate with Christ in carrying out His work of redeeming the world.¹²

Our hearts are filled with deepest joy today to contemplate the truth of the Gospel resplendent in the life of Cardinal Ignatius Kung Pin-Mei.

Celebrating the life and death of Cardinal Kung, true confessor of the faith in our time, let us pray for the grace to imitate him by embracing whatever suffering may come our way in fulfilling our vocation to be His “fellow workers in the truth.”¹³ May our suffering for the sake of Christ’s Mystical Body be indeed our glory. May Cardinal Kung intercede for us that we may be one with him in His faithful and enduring love of Christ in His holy Church.

Let us also pray for the faithful of the underground Church in China, that they may continue to be faithful to Christ Who is with us in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. In a

¹¹ Col 1, 24.

¹² “Appendix 16 – Cardinal Kung’s sermon for Catholics in China, offered in the Church of the Queen of the Angels and Queen of the Martyrs, Rome, Italy, June 30, 1991,” in Stephen M. DiGiovanni, *Ignatius: The Life of Ignatius Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei* (CreateSpace, a DBA of On-Demand Publishing LLC, 2013), p. 208.

¹³ 3 Jn 8.

particular way, let us pray that they not fall prey to the deceit of Satan who would convince us that we can remain faithful to Christ while also cooperating with those who reject Him and persecute His faithful disciples.

Lastly, let us pray for the conversion of those who have abandoned Christ in the Church for the earthly comfort afforded by worldly powers, that they may repent of their grievous sin and return to Christ Who alone is our salvation. Let us also pray that the millions in China who do not yet know Christ may receive the gift of faith and Baptism.

Let us now lift upon our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of SheShan, Queen of China, to the glorious-pierced Heart of Jesus. Jesus opens His Heart for us in the Eucharistic Sacrifice by which He makes sacramentally present for us His Sacrifice on Calvary. Let us pray that we and our brothers and sisters in the great nation of China may find our only glory in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, in pouring out our lives in love of Him Who never ceases to pour out His life for us and our eternal salvation. Long live Christ the King! Long live Our Lady of SheShan! Long live the Vicar of Christ on earth!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE