



THE CARDINAL KUNG FOUNDATION



The Cardinal Kung Foundation

Press Release – September 9, 2007

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The Death of An Underground Bishop in Yong Nian, Hebei, China

Stamford, Connecticut, U.S.A. — Bishop Han Dingxiang 韓鼎詳, the underground Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Yong Nian 永年 in Hebei Province 河北省, died at 11 pm (Beijing time) on September 9 yesterday at the end of his almost 8 years imprisonment by the Chinese authority. With the exception of few of his very close relatives who were suddenly summoned by the government authority to his bedside before his death, none of his priests and other faithful were aware of his grave illness or of any other cause leading to his death; nor were they aware of the fact that he was dying in a hospital. The bishop was immediately ordered by the government authority to be cremated at approximately 5 am next morning and his ashes were buried immediately in a public cemetery - all within 6 hours after his death. Consequently, with the exception of a few relatives, the body of Bishop Han was not viewed by the public or by any other faithful. There were no priests or other faithful present during his burial. He was 71 years old. His last words before he drifted into a coma were to ask his congregation to recite more rosaries.

Bishop Han was born on May 17, 1937, sent to a labor camp by Chinese authority 1960 - 1979, became a high-school teacher from 1979 to 1982, and operated a medical clinic between 1982 - 1986 while he was a seminarian. He was ordained a priest November 21, 1986, and then ordained a bishop December 19, 1989.

During his episcopacy, Bishop Han was arrested by the Chinese authority 11 times. His last arrest was on November 20, 1999 while he was conducting a religious retreat for some of his nuns. After approximately 4 years of detentions in various locations, he was moved to an apartment on the 4th floor of a police family unit where he stayed for another two years. On September 23, 2005, Bishop Han was secretly moved to an unknown location and disappeared ever since until his death. He spent approximately a total of 35 years of his life either in the labor camp, or in a prison, or in house arrest.

Joseph Kung, the President of the Cardinal Kung Foundation, said: "What was the Chinese government afraid of to cremate Bishop Han only 6 hours after his death and at such an early

hour at five o'clock in the morning? Why were the priests of his diocese not allowed to bless his remains and, together with his faithful, to pray for this heroic shepherd, and to view his body? This is not only inhuman, and atrocious, but also suspicious. I urge the Vatican to open an official inquest for the cause of the death of Bishop Han."