

Cardinal Ignatius Kung Pin-Mei:
An Example Of Loyalty To the God

Feng Liu

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Abstract

Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei is the third Cardinal in China. As a bishop, he kept his faith to the God even under the persecution of the government. His activities in his later years promoted the toleration and the freedom of belief in China.

1 Introduction

Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei is a significant person for Chinese Catholic. As a bishop in China, he guided his followers to insist on their belief to the Vatican Church. Even been sent into jails lost freedom, he didn't disclaim his belief. He showed what a real Catholic should do and set an example of faithfulness.

2 Early Catholic Positions

Kung Pin-Mei was born in a Catholic family in Shanghai on August 2, 1901. He went to the theological college when he was 19 years old.

Kung was ordained priest on May 29, 1930 and did lots of work on education. He worked as several Catholic primary schools and middle schools. On August 9, 1949, Kung was ordained bishop of the diocese of Suzhou. On July 15, 1950, Kung became the Apostolic Administrator of Shanghai, Suzhou, and Nanjing¹

3 Persecution

3.1 Origin

After October 1, 1949, the government of People's Republic of China was founded. The new government didn't establish diplomatic relations with other countries except some Communism countries such as the former Soviet Union.

After then, the Chinese ecclesiastic was unable to contact the Vatican. The

¹Shanghai, Suzhou, Nanjing are cities of China.

new government didn't allowed Chinese Catholic to follow the words of somebody in another country. So the government founded Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association to manager the Catholic in China Mainland.

Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association follows the order of Chinese Communism Party. It held some movements for letting the Chinese Catholics to follow the lead of Chinese government, not the Vatican Pope. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association has "Three Autonomies". "Manager autonomy", means the religion affairs of Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association is isolated from the foreign religion association. "Maintenance autonomy", means the financial affairs of Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association is isolated from the foreign governments and religion association and Chinese government will allocate funds to Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. "Promulgate autonomy", means the creeds are explained and promulgated totally by Chinese church and government.

3.2 Kung's Attitude

The "Three Autonomies" actually showed the attitude of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association that the association wouldn't follow the Holy Father and the Vatican Church. Members in the Roman Catholic Church in China were required to join the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei didn't renounce his God and his Church. He refused to join Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. He told his followers to uphold their faith to the God and the Holy Father.

Cardinal Kung's work was highly effective. Under his leadership, most of his followers refused to sign the registration. Also, the behavior of Kung surely made the government very unpleasant. According to The Cardinal Kung Foundation [1]:

In just five short years, Bishop Kung would become one of the most feared enemies of the Chinese Communists – a man who would command the attention and devotion of the country's three million Catholics and who would inspire thousands to offer their lives up to God. In defiance of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, Bishop Kung, who led the diocese of three large cities in China, invigorated the Legion of Mary. The government declared the Legion of Mary an illegal society that was engaged in espionage under the cloak of religion. It demanded that all members either register in the Public Security Bureau and acknowledge that the Legion was counter-revolutionary, or risk imprisonment. (Cardinal Kung Foundation, 1996)

3.3 Result

Since Cardinal Kung refused to follow the words of Chinese government to renounce his faith to the God and the Vatican Church, and Kung had influenced a lot of Chinese Catholics, government arrested him. On September 8, 1955, Cardinal Kung and about another 30 bishops and more than 300 followers were arrested in Shanghai and sent into the jail.

During his years in jails, Kung was asked to cooperate with the government and stop following the Vatican Church. Government told Kung that he would be released from the jail if he work with the government. Furthermore, Kung didn't even need to say any words. The government would be satisfy if Kung just give them a nod.

Cardinal Kung insisted his faith to the God and Holy Father. He refused any conditions from the government. He said that he wouldn't even be a Catholic if he denounced the Holy Father (Cardinal Kung Foundation, 1996)[1].

Kung was released on probation in July, 1985. Then he was house arrested by Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Kung didn't get much freedom than before. He wasn't allowed to get in touch with other Catholic person except members from Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.

In 1985, Cardinal Sin of Philippines came to contact Kung. The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association held a banquet for Cardinal Sin. There were more than 20 communists sitting around Kung. So Kung couldn't talk to Cardinal Sin. According an article from The Cardinal Kung Foundation(1996)[1], Cardinal Sin suggested everyone to sing a song. Kung sang a song in Latin, named "*Tu es Petrus et super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam mean. (You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church)*" to show his faith of Gods and Vatican Church to Cardinal Sin. Then Cardinal Sin bring Kung's message to the world.

4 Being Elevated As Cardinal

In June, 1979, the Pope John Paul II elevated Kung Pin-Mei to Cardinal in pectore. That meant only a few people known that Bishop Kung was elevated to Cardinal by the Pope. Even Kung himself didn't know this decision. Since Kung was in prison in 1979, if the government known this fact, the situation of

Kung would be unfavorable.

Actually, when answering the questions of journalists on June 16, 1991, the addresser from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the elevation of Kung as Cardinal by the Pope was interference to internal affairs. On the next day, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association published an announcement to criticize the Vatican's announcement of elevating Kung Pin-Mei as Cardinal.

On May 29, 1991, John Paul II announced the elevation to the world. John Paul II presented Cardinal Kung with the red hat at the Consistory in the Vatican on June 28, 1991.

5 Kung's Activities In Later Years

After leaving China, Kung Pin-Mei founded a foundation named by his name. The purpose of the foundation, as being said on its website[4], "is to promote the Roman Catholic Church in China, now under persecution, through increased prayers, financial support and other appropriate project."

The Cardinal Kung Foundation had done a lot work to show the fact that the Roman Catholic Church in China is under persecuted by government to the world. Most of the information about Chinese Catholics were oppressed by government is promulgated from this foundation. The foundation also calls on the toleration in China.

The government didn't stop persecuting Cardinal Kung after he left China. In June, 1998, Cardinal Kung, when was 96 years old, sent his passport of Chi-

nese to China Consulate in New York for deferring the passport. The Consulate canceled his passport.

Cardinal Kung was dead on March 12, 2000 from carcinoma ventriculi in Stamford, Connecticut, US. He was dead at the age of 98.

It seemed Cardinal Kung had lost his confidence to China government. It was said by Priest Rayman V. Dunn in San Francisco that Cardinal Kung asked in his dying words to bring and bury his reliquiae back to his home town, Shanghai, when the Chinese Communist Party no longer hold the power of China.

6 Evaluations By Others

6.1 Positive Evaluations

Undoubtedly, Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei's achievement was heroic and duteous. People in Catholic, except Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association, showed their respects to him.

The Pope John Paul II(2000) has these words in his letter when Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei dead in March, 2000[3]:

THE DIOCESE OF SHANGHAI, HIS HEROIC FIDELITY TO CHRIST AMID PERSECUTION AND IMPRISONMENT AND HIS OUTSTANDING WITNESS OF COMMUNION WITH THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AND THE SUCCESSOR OF PETER. COMMENDING THE SOUL OF THIS NOBLE SON OF CHINA AND OF THE CHURCH TO THE INFINITE MERCY OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER I PRAY THAT HAVING SHARED SO DEEPLY IN CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS HE MAY NOW RECEIVE THE UNFADING CROWN OF GLORY WHICH THE CHIEF SHEPHERD RESERVES FOR THOSE WHO HAVE FOLLOWED HIM FAITHFULLY TO THE END. AT THE SAME TIME I RENEW MY FERVENT PRAYER FOR THE INTENTIONS OF THE CHURCH IN

CHINA SO CLOSE TO THE LATE CARDINAL'S HEART. (John Paul II, 2000)

As quoted from Cardinal Kung Foundation Press[5],

In his Mission magazine in 1957, Bishop Fulton Sheen wrote: "The West has its Mindszenty, but the East has its Kung. God is glorified in His saints." (Cardinal Kung Foundation, 2000)

On The New York Times published on May 12, 2002, Townsend said[6],

"His(Kung's) story is one of tremendous heroism and courage in the face of terrible oppression," said Dr. Joseph McAleer, spokesman for the diocese of Bridgeport. (Townsend, 2002)

6.2 Negative Evaluations

Most of the negative evaluation to Cardinal Kung was made by Chinese government. These are the translated words from a government report[2]

Some other counter-revolutionary members, are doing various activities to destroy the result of revolution, covered by the religious affairs. As everyone knows, being uncovered on September 9, 1955, the counter-revolutionary group headed by Kung Pin-Mei, is the secret agent group trained by imperialism, hiding in the Catholic church. (Dong, 1956)

Here is the translated idea of the judgment of Kung Pin-Mei by Shanghai Middle Court. The counter-revolutionary group, heading by the defendant Kung Pin-Mei, covered by religion, gang up with the imperialism, and betray the country. It is an important tool of imperialism for overturning the dominion of China government. It has done serious crime of treason.

7 Conclusion

By the experiences and histories, Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei showed an example of keeping faith with the God. He made a great choice between free life and

his faith. Under his guide, members in the Roman Catholic Church in China insisted struggling not only their legality in China, but also for the freedom of belief for Chinese. He had been the most important figure for Chinese Catholics.

References

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