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Votive Mass of Our Lady Help of Christians
Pontifical Mass according to the *Usus Antiquior* of the Roman Rite
For the intention of the Church in China
Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist
Stamford, Connecticut
25 July 2023

Sir 24, 14-16
Lk 11, 27-28



Sermon

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

Our Lord has given us His Mother, like the Divine Wisdom praised in the *Book of Sirach*, to minister “before Him”¹ by drawing us to Him, in order that we, like His Virgin Mother, may know, love, and serve Him with all our heart. Under the maternal care of the Mother of God, following her example and imploring her intercession, we discover ever anew that our true “inheritance” is the Lord and that our lasting “abode is in the full assembly of the saints.”²

Each time that we enter a church or chapel with faith, we understand more and more the meaning of Our Lord’s words in the Gospel. When a woman, in the midst of the crowd listening to His teaching, cried out in praise of His mother, of “the womb that bore [Him],”³ Our Lord pointed to the true source of His Mother’s beatitude, namely, her perfect obedience to the Law of God, through which she was prepared to be His mother. He declared: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.”⁴ When we turn to the Mother of God in prayer, she invites us to imitate her obedience, so that Our Lord may purify our hearts of the wrong affections which

¹ Sir 24, 14-15.

² Sir 24, 16.

³ Lk 22, 27.

⁴ Lk 11, 28.

lead us into sin and death, and may inflame our hearts with the love of His Law, which leads us into virtue and everlasting life.

We live in most troubled times, throughout the world and even within the Church. The pervasive confusion and error about the most fundamental truths, about the law which God has written upon every human heart,⁵ tempt us to discouragement and even to abandon hope. But Our Lady draws us to herself, in order that she, in turn, may lead us to our only source of hope, her Divine Son, above all, to His Real Presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.



We cannot fight and win the fierce spiritual battles of our time by means of our own cleverness and strength. Christ, our Eucharistic Lord, however, is with us. He alone can conquer sin in us, and, on the Last Day, He will restore us and all Creation to God the Father in eternal glory. Here, as in every church or chapel, Our Lady teaches us, through knowledge and love of the Holy Eucharist, to give our hearts, one with her Immaculate Heart, to the Heart of Jesus. Here, the Virgin Mary, teaches us to offer, with her, our devoted love to God the Father, Who has first “loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins” and, in His Son, has loved us “to the end.”⁶

Our Lady teaches us awe and gratitude before the Most Blessed Sacrament. She reminds us that, in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, we witness directly the mystery of the immeasurable and unceasing love of Our Lord Jesus Christ for all men, without boundary. It is the mystery which Our Lord expressed with His words, as He was dying upon the Cross for the salvation of the world: “I thirst.”⁷ She leads us to the confessional, the seat of God’s forgiveness of our sins, so that we may be rightly disposed to receive Our Lord in Holy Communion.

With these thoughts in mind, we, guided and protected by Our Lady of She-shan, Mother of China, Help of Christians, have come today to this magnificent House of God to pray for the Church in China which continues to suffer relentless persecution at the hands of a government which, for decades, has rebelled against God and His Incarnate Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and has cruelly persecuted His children, the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. In these very

⁵ Cf. Rom 2, 13-16.

⁶ 1 Jn 4, 10; Jn 13, 1.

⁷ Jn 19, 28.

days, we have witnessed the utter disdain of the communist government of China for the Catholic Church in its unilateral appointment of the Bishop of Shanghai, the see once under the care of the saintly Bishop Cardinal Ignatius Kung, without any respect for the office of the Successor of Saint Peter. The manner of the appointment is a glaring example of the continuing persecution of the faithful Catholics in China who are loyal to the See of Peter and, therefore, reject the control of the Church by a government which openly and brazenly rejects any form of religion.

In a particular way, today, we express our solidarity with the faithful Catholics in China who, because of the government's relentless persecution, are the Underground Church. We gratefully recall the heroic witness of Cardinal Ignatius Kung, and the tireless work of his nephew, the late Joseph Kung whom Our Lord called to Himself on this past February 14th, and of the Cardinal Kung Foundation which Joseph founded in 1992 to come to the help of the persecuted Roman Catholic Church in China and to champion the cause for Cardinal Kung's canonization. We pray for Joseph's wife Agnes who faithfully carries forward the work of the Cardinal Kung Foundation and for all those who work with her in the essential mission of the Foundation.

In a particular way, we gratefully acknowledge the fundamental work of Monsignor Stephen DiGiovanni, former Pastor of the Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist, in promoting the Cause for the Beatification and Canonization of Cardinal Kung by writing the story of his heroic sanctity in the book, *Ignatius: The Life of Ignatius Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei*, which is now published in Italian translation and will soon be published in Chinese translation. Let us continue to pray that the heroic sanctity of Cardinal Kung will be recognized for the edification of the universal Church and, in particular, of the Church in China.

Monsignor DiGiovanni's excellent work reminds us that, even as the memory of the heroic priestly and episcopal witness of Cardinal Kung remains always treasured by Our Lord, so also the Church must treasure the memory of Cardinal Kung's witness, making it known to all the faithful, so that it may be a source of inspiration and strength to them in facing challenges and even persecution in their faithful love of Christ and of His Church. The witness of Cardinal Kung is more than compelling today when so many faithful Catholics in China are daily subjected to persecution and death because of their fidelity to Christ and to His Vicar on earth, the Roman Pontiff. In a particular way, we think of his brother Bishop and Cardinal, Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kun, an indefatigable shepherd today for Catholics in China who, remaining true to Christ and to His Church, suffer persecution at the hands of an atheistic communist government.

The life and death of Cardinal Kung inspire and strengthen us to remain firm against the attempt today, as has happened in the past, to deny Christ the King as the only true Head and Shepherd of the Church and to make the Church a national entity, putting it, in some way, under the governance of the nation or of a national body, even of a national group of Bishops. The Church is governed by Christ alone Who is her Bridegroom, her Head and Shepherd, according to the constitution which He divinely gave to her during His public ministry and through His saving Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension, entrusting her into the pastoral care of the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops, under their head, Saint Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and his successor, the Roman Pontiff.

The Church is patriotic, according to the divine law written upon every heart, because she teaches her members to worship God alone and to put divine worship into practice by obedience to the moral law, including the precept to honor one's parents and one's homeland. The Church is patriotic, but there is no such thing as a patriotic Church in the sense that the Church becomes an entity of the state and subjects herself to governance by the state. When the then Bishop Kung was brought before a mob in Shanghai, some months after his arrest on September 8, 1955, to make a public confession of his so-called crimes, he simply proclaimed: "Long live Christ."⁸

Our Lady of She-shan, the Virgin Mother of God, draws us away from the forces of evil in the world and draws us to the one source of our joy and peace, now and in eternity: Our Lord seated in glory at the right hand of the Father and dwelling with us in the Church which is truly His Mystical Body. Let us now place our hearts, one with her Immaculate Heart, into the glorious-pierced Heart of Jesus. One in heart with the Mother of God, may we ever call to mind that our true "inheritance" is the Lord and remain steadfast along the way which leads to our lasting home with Him "in the full assembly of the saints."⁹

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

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE

⁸ Stephen M. DiGiovanni, *Ignatius: The Life of Ignatius Cardinal Kung Pin-Mei* (On-Demand Publishing, 2013), p. 65.

⁹ Sir 24, 16.