



THE CARDINAL KUNG FOUNDATION

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Christmas, 1998

Dear Friends:

May the Peace, Joy and Love Of the Christ Child and His Holy Mother

Be yours this Christmas and each day of the New Year.

Upon the Map of China
Rests the Shrine and
Our Lady of She-Shan
Through Whom We Pray
"There may be one road
and one shepherd!"

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Mary Bernadette Chien, speaking at the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation Conference in 1990, related the following experience while serving her sentence in a Chinese communist jail in 1955. Her crime? She refused to leave the Roman Catholic Church to join the government established Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association. Her account is as follows:

"On that cold Christmas Eve I was wide awake, remembering the warm and friendly atmosphere of the midnight Mass, the bright lights and the Christmas carols. I missed my friends terribly because I had not seen them, nor heard their voices since we were transferred to this large prison. Although I knew I wasn't alone, I felt so alone. But God answers every prayer even the one not expressed.

Then at that moment I heard the melody of "Silent Night". Someone outside the prison wall was playing it on a Chinese flute. That lilting tune came floating softly through the cold night air and settled peacefully in my heart. It lingered on and on. It lightened my spirit and it confirmed God's love for me. That music whispered to me "Bernadette, you are not alone. We, the Church outside the walls, are with you" forever. I am grateful to that unknown flute player."

That was over forty years ago. But, there are still hundreds of Catholic clergy and faithful like Bernadette in the Chinese prisons. Would you remember them in the same spirit of the "Silent Night" with your prayers and donations? We hope that through your support, the suffering Roman Catholic Church in China will continue to feel that they are not alone and will enjoy the same peace, joy, and love in this Christmas as we enjoy in this free country.

May our Christmas prayers be joined with yours for those persecuted for Christ in that great country - China. *"Grant them joy in their communion with the Universal Church. Bless them so that the seed they plant during their years of suffering, patience and love will be richly harvested. Grant Mercy, O Lord, to those brothers and sisters who chose to be separated from you, may they return to the one fold and on Shepherd."*

Legislation Update

S 1868 International Religious Freedom Act, a much watered down version, passed the Senate 98-0, passed the Congress by a voice vote, and was signed by President Clinton on October 27, 1998. In an article on October 10, 1998, Eric Schmitt of The New York Times reported

"The Senate on Friday unanimously approved a compromise bill that would require the government to deal with countries that persecute citizens for religious beliefs by using measures ranging from the mildest private rebuke to tough economic sanctions.

The bill, the International Religious Freedom Act, would not force the president to impose automatic sanctions but would allow him to decide whether and how to act against violators. It would require the State Department to issue annual reports of each country's record on religious freedom, and would require the president to take

action based on those reviews. As a check on the administration, the bill would create a 10-member independent commission that would publish its own review of religious liberties country-by country..... The bill would create a new office within the State Department, headed by an official with ambassadorial rank, to monitor religious liberties.

Based on those reports and other information, the administration would determine whether a country violated citizens' religious rights and should be sanctioned. The toughest economic sanctions, including U.S. opposition to loans by international financial institutions, would be imposed only on countries that engaged in "systematic, on-going and egregious" violations like torture or imprisonment.

The President would be allowed to waive sanctions for "national interests" or if the administration deemed that the penalties might provoke a popular backlash against religious minorities. Relief aid would be exempt from sanctions. The independent commission mandated by the bill would publish its own review of religious liberties....."

Orphanage Update

In our last issue, we reported an orphanage for the handicapped and retarded operated by a Chinese elderly underground Roman Catholic gentleman in a remote village in China. Many families are so poor that they do not have the knowledge or the means to care for the handicapped children. Because of China's "One Family One Child Policy", a family will abandon a handicapped child hoping to have a second baby. The parents would abandon the babies on the doorstep of the orphanage, knowing that the orphanage would take good care of these unwanted children.

We have received information that the government is now aware of the existence of this orphanage run by the underground Church. The "gentleman" to whom I referred above is in fact an underground bishop. Since the government did not want to care for these 80 sick and handicapped children, the orphanage is temporarily left alone. However, the orphanage is not allowed to accept any more new babies; otherwise, it will be subject to a heavy fine of JMP 10,000 (US\$ 1,250) per baby. This is far beyond the means of the orphanage.

Imagine the fate of these new abandoned babies during this winter. Please pray that the Infant Jesus will protect the orphanage and these poor abandoned babies so that they will survive the cruel winter and the harsh government regulations. The price of one toy could keep a child warm and fed for many days. Please remember these orphans this Christmas.

On behalf of these 80 orphans, we are deeply grateful for those who had generously responded to our appeal.



Three of the eighty handicapped orphans playing.

Training Chinese Seminarians. Maryknoll's Reply

We have reported on many occasions that there are about fifty Patriotic Association seminarians and priests studying in Roman Catholic seminaries across the United States. This program is organized by the Maryknoll fathers on behalf of the Patriotic Association. The Patriotic Association seminarians and priests are given full scholarships covering tuition, room and board from various dioceses. Since the dioceses are supported by the donations of their parishioners, you and I are actually supporting these Patriotic Association seminarians irrespective of how we feel about this communist government-founded Patriotic Association. Upon completion of their studies, the Patriotic Association seminarians will return (some have already returned) to China to be ordained, not by the underground Roman Catholic bishops, but by their Patriotic Association bishops and will serve in their dioceses which are not in communion with the Holy Father.

A number of persons have made inquiries to Maryknoll, questioning its reasons for sponsoring these Patriotic Association's seminarians. Many have received the following identical replies from Maryknoll:

".....Several years ago, Vatican officials encouraged us to get any seminarians out of China that we could and into United States Seminaries if at all possible. Their purpose was (and is) to get them a proper Roman Catholic education, and to expose them to the Universal Church. We were able to get about 40 of them out. ...We choose to follow the Holy Father's policy of reconciliationWe do not support one group over the other."

We wonder why the Maryknoll has chosen not to disclose above the names, occasions and dates of these "Vatican officials" when they "encouraged" the Maryknoll to sponsor "any seminarians" out of China to the United States; why the Maryknoll has chosen not to point out that all of the "40 of them out" belonged to the Patriotic Association. If the Maryknoll really "do(es) not support one group over the other", why has the Maryknoll chosen to bring only the Patriotic Association seminarians to the United States?

There are about 1000 underground seminarians in China. These dedicated young men have chosen to follow the footsteps of the Chinese martyrs, their underground bishops and His Holiness Pope John Paul II to serve the Church during the most difficult years. (Pope John Paul II was an underground seminarian.) Many underground bishops have appealed to you through the Cardinal Kung Foundation to support these seminarians. *It costs only U.S.\$600 to support a seminarian for one year in China.* Please encourage these seminarians through your sacrificial donations this Christmas.

Recent Arrest of The Underground Religious and Faithful

The following arrests were made by the Chinese Government on August 15, 1998, the Feast of Assumption:

- 1) Father WEI Jingkun, an underground Roman Catholic priest of the Diocese of Baoding in Hebei Province, was arrested while he was celebrating the Holy Mass in his home. Arrested with Father WEI were six other underground Roman Catholics who were either detained or fined. No further details.
- 2) Another underground Roman Catholic priest (name withheld for security reasons) escaped when the Chinese security personnel came to a pear orchard in Dong Lu village in time to stop a Holy Mass for about 1000 families. However, several organizers were arrested. Details unknown. Dong Lu village was the home of a Marian Shrine which was destroyed by 5000 soldiers in 1996.
- 3) At about 4 o'clock in the morning on their way to attend another underground Mass in Hebei Province, about 100 Roman Catholics were intercepted by the Chinese government security bureau and were ordered to turn back. Eleven of them, most are women, were arrested and detained for 15 days. Each person was fined for JMP 800 - 1000 (US\$ 100 - 125) which is equivalent to 3-4 months income for peasant villagers.
- 4) Sister ZHANG Yanzhi, an underground Catholic nun, was arrested and detained for 15 days for teaching catechism to children. XIE Suqian, the lady who opened her home for catechism class was arrested. Those children who received catechism instruction were punished by having to stand every day while attending their classes at school. We are not sure if this punishment is still ongoing.

Other Reports

On July 31, 1999, God willing, we will celebrate Cardinal Kung's 70th anniversary of priestly ordination, 50th anniversary of episcopal ordination, 20th anniversary as a Cardinal, and his 98th birthday. Detailed information will be announced later. Please pray for the Cardinal and the Church in China.

We urge you to read the following two articles written by the underground priests. One is to remember His Excellency Bishop An Shuxin, the Auxiliary Bishop of Baoding in Hebei, who has been in jail for the last 2 years and 10 months, and the other is about the underground missionary.

The Board of the Foundation joins me to thank you for your prayers and generosity during the past year. We wish you and your family a blessed Christmas. Cardinal Kung will offer a Holy Mass for all the friends of the Church in China.

Yours Sincerely in Christ

Joseph Kung
President

The Power of Justice will Prevail. The Might of Truth will live forever.

Remembering His Excellency, Bishop Francis AN Shuxin

By

An Anonymous Underground Roman Catholic Priest in China

Editor's Note: For security reasons, we withhold the name of the author of this article. The original text was in Chinese. It was translated by the Cardinal Kung Foundation.

On the last Sunday of October in 1995, a French TV station broadcasted a documentary about the underground Roman Catholic Church in China. This was the effort of two French reporters who took great risks to visit the underground Roman Catholic diocese of Baoding in Hebei from April 27 to May 1, 1995. This diocese has been the target of intense persecution by the Chinese government ever since the communists took over China almost fifty years ago. To retaliate for local religious speaking to the foreign reporters and for the French television station bringing to the world audience the true story of the suffering underground Roman Catholic Church, the Chinese government started another major attack on the diocese of Baoding. Those bishops, priests, nuns, seminarians and laity who were interviewed by the French reporters were either arrested, sentenced to jail, or under arrest warrant. His Excellency Bishop Francis AN Shuxin, the auxiliary Bishop of Baoding, who was the primary figure of the interview, was arrested by the Security Bureau in February, 1996. He has been detained ever since without a trial. No one knows exactly where he is.

I recall clearly the last question posed to Bishop AN. "You have accepted our interview today. Do you feel that this interview could cause a great danger for you?" the reporter asked. The bishop smiled faintly and answered "It does not matter, because, what I have said is all true." He courageously told the reporters many facts that many other people dared not utter. He was prepared to consecrate himself for the truth, just as Jesus prayed for the Church "I consecrate myself for their sakes now, that they may be consecrated in truth" (John 17:19). The bishop has now been silenced, because he had spoken the truth. He was forced to leave his flock to be exiled to a forgotten corner of the world, unknown even to his family.

We do not know how Bishop AN spent the past three years, a brief yet seemingly never-ending time. At the pleading of his blind and sick mother who was already 90 years old, Bishop An, "accompanied" by several security personnel in a pitch dark night, visited his mother for less than an hour in the presence of several security personnel. Next year, again at the strong request of his family, the visit repeated for another hour. Two visits amounted to less than two hours. This is the only news we have for our beloved bishop during the last three years.



An evening before the 1998 Chinese New Year, Bishop An came home to visit his 90 year old blind and sick mother.

Bishop An was appointed by the Holy See in 1993 at the same time when Bishop SU Chimin was appointed. Bishop Su is the Bishop of Baoding and Bishop AN is his auxiliary bishop. Bishop SU is also incarcerated without any news. Both bishops were consecrated on May 2, 1993. Ever since his consecration, Bishop AN had been repeatedly arrested and sent to the labor camp. Referring to his frequent arrest, the Bishop said "This has become my daily routine". He is humble, kind, and easy to approach. He lives a simple, sincere and compassionate life. He is very loyal to the Church and to his faithful following. Although he is a man of few words, many people are drawn to him for they see Christ and the gospel in his manner of living.

Bishop AN is regarded by his flock as a "saint". Before he was consecrated as a bishop, his flock was his universe. At the center of his deep compassion are the elderly, the sick, the crippled, the poor, the lame and the weak. One will have difficulty finding even one household in his village that the then Father An had not visited. One would also have difficulty finding a single person in his village who had not heard the voice of this "good shepherd". He visited the aged and the shut-ins, heard their confessions, and distributed Holy Communion to them. He lived in poverty, and distributed all the gifts he received to the poor and to children.

After he was consecrated, Bishop AN embraced the whole diocese with his selfless love. Regardless of his busy administration schedule, he never failed to visit the many elderly and sick priests within the radius of several hundred miles. He also loved the young priests and seminarians, looking on them as the hope of the future Church. He frequently visited the seminarians, teaching them how to have a closer communication with God. The seminarians loved his visits, often made their confession to him, and truly took him as their spiritual father.

"The most important and urgent task for the Church in China is to train priests". This is the vision of Bishop An. In spite of the meager financial resource of the diocese, the Bishop would cut other expenses in order to put full support behind seminarian training. He once said: "The faith of my flock will not suffer if I do not have churches for another ten years, but the church will become desolated if I do not have priests." One foreign missionary who had met with him remarked with conviction that Bishop An was a "Holy Shepherd".

Although Bishop AN is mild and kind, he is relentless in matter of faith and truth. He has an ardent love for truth and justice. On the wall of the unfinished junior seminary, which he had established, was his motto: "The power of justice will prevail. The might of truth will live forever." This is the objective of his struggle and his conviction in his final victory. The government officials are afraid to negotiate with him. According to the words of officials: "The bishop will not compromise." In many dealings with the government, he made absolutely sure that the rights of the Church would not be jeopardized. As Pope John Paul II once described his experience with the communists, "When negotiating with the communists, I always made sure to get some rights for the Church." After Bishop AN was set free in 1986 after three years of imprisonment, the government officials threatened him: "You are not allowed to go about as you please, to control you is our responsibility." Bishop AN answered forthrightly: "But you must know that to preach and to save souls are my responsibilities."

"I know my sheep and my sheep know me". (John 10:14) When Bishop An was in captivity, Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, S.J., the self-appointed Patriotic Association Bishop of Shanghai, was invited by the government official to visit the hometown of Bishop AN. The officials attempted to pressure the faithful to honor Bishop Jin as their "shepherd", but the faithful was resolute, and declared: "He (Bishop Jin) is not our bishop". It is true that "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me... No one shall snatch them out of my hand." (John 10: 27-28) Last year, two more Patriotic Association priests were assigned to the hometown of Bishop An, and were introduced to the faithful as "the two priests who have met the Pope". The faithful told them: "Unless Bishop AN wrote in his own hands that you are the priests sent by him, we will never accept you as our priests." Once again, the faithful of Bishop AN attested to what Jesus said: "The one who enters through the gate is shepherd of the sheep... They will not follow a stranger." (John 10: 2, 5)

To this date, Bishop AN has lost his freedom for almost three years. Where is my bishop? The Church, his family and his flock know nothing about his whereabouts. In June this year when President Clinton handed a list of Chinese prisoners of conscience to President Jiang Zemin, Bishop AN's name was included in this honor roll. However, his punishment for speaking the truth still has not been repealed.

I am very grateful to the goodwill of many people for seeking the freedom of Bishop AN. The Catholic Church is not merely a human institution, and its success is not measured by the world's standard. One day, we will see Our Lord's words come true as we have seen many times in the past: "unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit." (John 12:24)

We pray with confidence that the Kingdom of God will reign in China soon. Queen of China, Lady of Dong Lu, pray for us.

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation." MK 16:15

By An Underground Roman Catholic Priest in China

Editor's note: Guided by the Holy Spirit, in spite of the most intense persecution for almost half a century, the underground Roman Catholic Church in China is not only indomitable, but also blossoming. This account brings you into the daily lives of an underground missionary. For security reasons, we withhold his name and all other identities. The original text was in Chinese. It was translated by The Cardinal Kung Foundation.

Mission

Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus told his disciples: "...Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name 'of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!" (Mt 28: 18-20) The disciples accepted the mission from Jesus, and did a splendid job. They kept passing the mission onto their successors "until the end of the world." Later, religious were called missionaries. However, missionaries should not be limited to the priests and religious sisters. We know from the Bible that from the time of disciples, the laity had already joined the missionary work. "Those in the community who had been dispersed by the persecution that arose because of Stephen went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, making the message known to none but Jews... and a great number of them believed and were converted to the Lord." (Acts 11.19-21) However, not until the Vatican II has the missionary work of the laity been so emphasized, especially in areas where there is no shortage of priests and nuns.

I am an underground Roman Catholic priest in China and have been ordained for more than ten years. I am fully aware of the issue of the lay missionary. As there were many priests and religious nuns in my diocese, almost all the missionary work was undertaken by these religious. Most of the laity believed that missionary responsibilities belonged to the religious, because that was their vocation. The laity, therefore, only attended Mass and joined some church sponsored activities. However, the priests, myself included, were so busy all day hearing confessions and offering Holy Masses that they had very little time left to evangelize the non-Catholics. This is especially true on Sundays and important feast days. Therefore, although the churches were packed at the Masses, there were not enough new converts.

New Mission

During the winter of 1995, I was assigned to a tiny parish consisting of only 25 souls. Among them was a young man of 35 years of age. Having seen how other Christian churches preached in public and their rapid growth, he discussed with me how to proceed with the missionary work. We both had mixed feeling, because this little parish was quite complacent. Since 1980, with the exception of the newborns of the parishioners, there were hardly any new converts.

I encouraged this young man to study the Bible and the catechism to better prepare himself to preach. He doubted if anyone would want to listen to him as everyone was busy trying to make ends meet. "Who would take time to listen to me preaching? Moreover, the Church is being persecuted. There is great risk in joining the Roman Catholic Church. I am not qualified to preach the gospel because of my humble education" He rebuffed me. I told him that our worst problem was the lack of courage. No one wanted to take the risk of evangelization. Of course, as the Lord said: "part of what he sowed landed on a footpath, where birds came and ate it up. Part of it fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil...part of the seed fell among thorns.....part of it, finally, landed on good soil and yielded grain a hundred - or sixty- or thirty fold...." (Mt 13: 3-9) I assured the young man that we must not rely on our own ability, but on the power of the Holy Spirit. Faith is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Conversion will be accomplished by the power of the Spirit, and not due to our knowledge of advanced theology or philosophy; because, "...Jews demand 'signs' and Greeks look for 'wisdom', but we preach Christ crucified..." (1 Cor 1:22-23)"

Thanks be to God. This young man finally became active. Every night after dinner, he went first to the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Then, he went to his friend's house to preach. From then on, many who were interested in receiving instruction started coming to me and listened to my preaching. I felt the joy of preaching and was filled with missionary zeal. On one occasion, I was so moved when a 7 year old boy told me: "Father, please wait. I am gathering up people for you." Before long, more than ten children came, the oldest was only thirteen. I told them many Bible stories. Two little sisters later convinced their mother to join the group and to listen to my preaching. At times, there were as many as thirty people with about half of them adults. I even had to enlist the help of two nuns. On the eve of Easter in 1996, I baptized ten people, including the two sisters and their mother. The seeds of preaching bore much fruits. That was the day when I baptized the most people at one time since my ordination. These new converts gave me more confidence. The new converts were very eager to share their new faith with others. Their faith and the Church became the center of conversation after their dinners. Before long Catholicism had entered into every family of this tiny village.

The Great Northwestern Plain in China

Having had this missionary experience, I was determined to do more missionary work in my native land. However, at that time in April, 1996, the Chinese government was staging a major attack on the underground Roman Catholic Church. The fear of persecution enveloped my diocese. The government destroyed many churches. Its security police arrested many priests and laity. In order to avoid the arrest, I escaped to the northwestern part of China and spent 1 1/2 years in this wilderness. The Holy Spirit never deserted me. This period of escape turned out to be the richest harvest since my ordination.

The people lived sparsely in the countryside of this great northwestern plain. There were no continuous villages like those in the central region in China. Most of the Catholics were evicted here by the government of the central provinces. Very few of them had the opportunity to meet with a priest.

I first arrived in a town consisting of some 45,000 people. There were only about 200 Catholics and there was no church. From time to time, a priest from another region would visit and administer sacraments. He would have his lodging and food provided in the home of the faithful. Although the laity were very poor, they were very generous to the clergy and the Church. I spent about three days there hearing confessions and offering the Holy Masses to the faithful.

Several Catholics wanted to make a retreat. Another priest and I secured a place about 180 miles from the town. Most participants did not understand what the retreat meant. But, once they heard that there would be religious services, they scrambled to get there. We only had five rooms, but accommodated more than 40 people. Most of us just slept on the floor. The topics of my talks were prayers, sacrifice, and evangelization by the laity. This was an ideal place for a retreat. The next "neighbor" was at least 2 miles away separated by a small hill. We prayed and praised God in the wilderness. In the dusk, every one went to a different hill-like tomb to pray. In the valley, there was Adoration of the Blessed Eucharist for us to converse privately with the Lord.

After this retreat, the missionary fever went wild among my congregation, each seizing any opportunity to preach. On the Assumption and Christmas, we had more than 20 baptisms on each of these two holy days in 1996.

Winter is usually a slack season for the farmers, but is the golden opportunity for missionary. After a great deal of missionary effort during the winter of 1996 and the beginning of 1997, God blessed us with great success. On the Easter of 1997, 500 Catholics came to attend the Easter service crowding in a "church" (someone's house) of only 650 square feet. On the Easter vigil, people came four hours earlier in order to get a seat. Many Catholics had to stand outside the church. That night, more than 60 people were baptized. The new converts were filled with the Holy Spirit and were eager to share their faith and blessing with their neighbors. On May 18, the Pentecost, more than fifty people were baptized, on August 15, the feast of the Assumption, more than thirty people entered the Church.

Another Small town

About 200 miles away was another town of 20,000 people with about 100 Catholics. Since May 1996, I went there many times to preach. Besides hearing confessions and offering Holy Masses, I organized a bible study group and shared with

this group my missionary experiences. These Catholics were very religious. During one Mass, we had more than ten couples exchanging the vows of marriage. Some of them were young and were newlyweds. Others were elderly and married a long time ago without religious ceremonies. They were making up the religious wedding vows that they could not have made long time ago. This blessed scene moved everyone to happy tears. The effort of the lay missionary has borne much fruit. On the first Sunday of June in 1996, 36 people were baptized. On March 30, 1997 the Easter Sunday, more than twenty people were baptized.

The laity not only spread the word of God by mouth, but also by action to bear witness to Christ. About 100 miles from the above town was a lonely woman. Although she was not a Catholic, the laity organized groups to keep an eye on her, bringing to her the necessities. They sometimes even took the journey on foot. The examples of this Christian charity moved many villagers that more than twenty people in that isolated place were received into the Church. "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted, in prison and you came to visit me ..." (Mt 25: 35)

There was a housewife about 50 years old in this same town. She had been baptized for almost 10 years. Although she was an illiterate, her missionary fever was second to none. The Holy Spirit was working with her. Anyone who was in need, a neighbor, a friend, a relative, or even a complete stranger, she would extend a helping hand to them, and at the same time took the opportunity to introduce the bible. She never missed a chance to attend Mass, listened attentively to the gospel and the sermon, and received Holy Communion. Her kindness was respected by many. She converted her two daughters and their husbands. In addition, more than 10 people were baptized because of her influence and preaching. By the world's standard, she was an ignorant housewife, yet she was respected by many educated people. How could one explain that? "I planted the seed and Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. This means that neither he who plants nor he who waters is of any special account, only God, who gives the growth." (1 Cor 3: 6-7)

The Greatest Achievement

I was reassigned to my diocese in November, 1997. I was not emotionally prepared to experience those many farewell tears from my congregation. I thought of leaving them quietly, but the news leaked out. Knowing that I was leaving, the faithful would not leave me alone for three days, until they accompanied me to the train station for Beijing.

The missionary work had just started there in that remote small village. Would my departure influence the work? It was proved that my worries were unfounded. I received news from a telephone call in January 1998 that another priest had arrived to take my place in that small village. More than 100 people were baptized on Christmas day in 1997 after I had left. Since May, 1996, more than 400 people were baptized. Because of the rapid increase of the converts, the activities of the Church greatly increased. The missionary work of the laity played a major role.

I received a letter from my friends in this village. I cried out with joy and sang praises to the Lord for His mercy and love to the underground Church. "...Ninety percent of the families now have bibles in their homes. They are most anxious to be the first ones to spread the Good News of the Lord. When we attended Masses, we listened intensely the words of the Gospel and the sermon. Although we have very little education to understand fully the mysteries of our Lord, we humbly pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to increase our faith, hope and charity each day in spite of our unworthiness." Who would have thought that the author of this letter was a new convert in a remote poor village in China?

On this great northwestern plain, there were no big and beautiful churches; there were no religious orders. Priests and the faithful supported each other like fish and water. All Holy Sacraments were carried out quietly in the homes of the faithful. There, we followed Christ's teaching by its letter: "Provide yourself with neither gold nor silver nor copper in your belts; no traveling bag, no change of shirt, no sandals, no walking staff. The workman, after all, is worth his keep. Look for a worthy person in every town or village you come to and stay with him until you leave." (Mt 10:9-11) The poor laity there deeply loved the Church. I hope that all the missionaries would remember firmly the command of our Lord when He ordered his disciples to evangelize: "Go and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name 'of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you..." (Mt 28:19-20)

May God be Praised Forever, Amen.