



January 24 - 31, 2016 | Cebu, Philippines

Testimony of His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Zen, SDB, DD

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I'm very happy for being given the role of giving testimony, of witnessing, but who most deserved to be called witnesses?

The witness of the truth that Christ is our Hope of Glory.

I think they are the witnesses by excellence, the Martyrs.

So I'm here to narrate to this honorable assembly how our martyrs in China, in recent history gave splendid witness to Jesus, by offering their own life they proclaimed that they believed in him as their redeemer the one who died on the cross who renews his supreme sacrifice in the Eucharist, who has given the fullness of his spirit and so introduced us into an abundant life, a life of love and of glory.

I was born in Shanghai, in the year 1948, I was a boy of 16 and entered the Salesian novitiate which was situated in Hong Kong. From Shanghai to Hong Kong it was three days journey by sea. We expected to go back to Shanghai after four years, but something happened the following year in 1949 which upset all our expectations. The communist party took power in China, from that moment, slowly but inevitably, a curtain not of iron but of bamboo separated that part of the world from the rest and our church in China became a silent church. Fortunately the silence was not immediately complete, so today I'm able to tell you something of that glorious history.

As in all similar situations, the 80's regime took us their priority to control the education so they introduced the teachers and students into our schools. They organized debate sessions where students are supposed to criticize their teachers, the priest, the missionaries. One day in 1951, they thought that the brainwashing campaign was successful enough and the people were ready to follow the line of the party. So they summoned all the Catholic schools from the city to a meeting, they called all principals and one representative for each school. The meeting was supposed to denounce the foreign missionaries and even the *Papal Nuncio* in China as imperialist and so to demand their excursion, so towards the end of the meeting when the assembly was asked to raise their hands in approval of the governor's plan, a young priest who camouflaged as the representative of one of our Salesian school stood and calmly said, "No legate is allowed; it is not allowed to declare ourselves against the pope, against the successor of St. Peter, against who represent Jesus in our church." The whole assembly was shocked, but also waken up, so that lonely voiced caused the shock. He and his company disappeared that day and died in detention. On 8th of September 1955, the feast of the nativity of our Lady, the big persecution exploded in Shanghai, that night they arrested almost 1000 persons,



January 24 - 31, 2016 | Cebu, Philippines

starting from the Bishop Ignatius Kung, few days later, they brought him to the public trial, where everybody including two faithful, but also faith faithful, are all supposed to accuse him of all sorts of crime at the end, the bishop was pushed before the microphone. To confess his sins, Bishop Kung with hands bound behind himself shouted to the microphone, "Long Live Christ the King". Some timid voice but then soon the whole choir responded "Long Live Christ the King, Long Live our Bishop." It was certainly the courage coming from the Holy Spirit, but it took also a preparation longer than those nine days before the Pentecost as in the case of the apostles. Actually, immediately after the 1st October 1949, in all the churches of the city every morning there was a crowd and the celebrant of the Eucharist that was time before the Liturgical Reform and they spent a few minutes to preach, to give a systematic catechesis, but with particular emphasis on the church as one holy and catholic apostolic founded with the apostles with Saint Peter as head of the group. Among the people who crowded the churches, many were young students, not a few members of the legion of Mary.

One day the government issued an order, all the members of the legion of Mary should present themselves to the police, to declare themselves to be members of a reactionary organization and this organization manipulated by impetuous missionaries. They must promise to join the mass of their patriotic classmates and they have to implore the forgiveness of the authorities. Everybody knew the consequences if they refuse to comply. Imagine how terrified are these parents of these boys and girls, some pleaded with their children saying "Please don't release the authorities, please have pity on us. Just say a lie, they don't deserve the truth anyway but the young people with their tears asked their elderly, "but how can we betray Jesus, He deserves our loyalty." By hindrance they went into prison. These teenagers and some fortunate ones among them could come out later when they were 40, they offer to Jesus the best years of their life. Today somebody said that all these belonged to history so they say let us look to the future. Is it so? Bishop Jacob Su of Baoding disappeared 20 years ago in the hands of the public security. Sometime ago another Bishop, elderly bishop, the relatives received a communication from the police, saying that he died, but he next day they said no it was a false news. Still today we don't know whether he is alive or dead. The young Bishop Thaddeus Ma of Shanghai, is at house arrest since he was ordained more than three years ago during the recent negotiation between Beijing and the Vatican. These subjects of the pride of these bishops was qualified as sensitive so let out of the agenda.

Two months ago a priest of 40 years of age who made his studies abroad brilliantly, and back to China worked with much zeal in evangelizing, information of the clergy, and he went also to help the poor in the mountains in isolated region, southwest of China, he was found dead. The police said they found the body in the river, he must have killed himself. The relatives and friends came to the place nobody could believe that this priest would have killed himself. They demand more explanation from the police, and they said



January 24 - 31, 2016 | Cebu, Philippines

okay we will go through an investigation. After two months, they still confirm the same verdict but refuse to give details. Now you must know that its common knowledge in Hong Kong now, that on mainland, there are people who killed themselves, but there are also those who are being suicidal. It is true that nowadays the authorities prefer to make renegades rather than martyrs, and besides the threats and punishments, they use allurements, money and social position. They have money and no money was able to make a traitor of Judas.

Dear brothers and sisters, it is surely very much in accordance with what we have heard in the message, the mission to proclaim and then the weakness, the suffering. It is surely very necessary today to pray for the persecuted in the Middle East, in African countries as we did last night. Don't forget those in China, they are still in deep waters in burning fire, a terrible reality. We believe in the communion of the mystical body, our prayers especially our adoration of the Eucharist Lord, we give hope to our brothers and sisters. And after the cross there is resurrection, after the tribulations there will be glory and joy eternal.