

**Keeping the Faith:**

## **Cardinal Zen Condemns “Erroneous Interpretation” of Pope’s Letter to China**

**Exhorts True Catholics in China to  
Resist Compromise**

*by James Bannister*

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**F**reedom of religion is “guaranteed” in the constitution of the People’s Republic of China. Yes, Chinese are free to worship any God they please in any way they please ... so long as the Communist government approves.

Let it be remembered that China is a totalitarian, Communist-ruled state. And the official religion of Communism is atheism. Good Communists believe in the Party, not in God. And let it be remembered too that good Catholics cannot be good Communists. The two creeds are antithetical. Man cannot serve two masters. It is still a sin for a Catholic to belong to the Communist Party or any secret society such as the Freemasons.

Thus Chinese Catholics were impaled on the horns of a dilemma when the Communists usurped power in 1949. The new government also needed to figure out a way to co-opt all the troublesome people—especially the Catholic clergy—who owed allegiance to Rome rather than Beijing.

Their solution was to set up a schismatic, puppet “church”, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA), and put heavy pressure on Chinese bishops, priests and laypeople to join. Many did, but many did not. Those who stayed in the “underground Church” were rewarded for their steadfastness with ostracism, persecution, imprisonment, torture and even death. Don’t let any-

one tell you that there are no Catholic martyrs in the 21st Century. Several bishops and priests, and uncounted lay-people have died in Chinese Communist prisons.

Meanwhile, the Vatican, under the aegis of Secretary of State Cardinal Angelo Sodano and his successor, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, has pursued a policy of “Ostpolitik”—“making nice” with the Communists and their lapdog bishops and priests in hopes of “normalizing” relations between two institutions which are diametrically opposed.

Part of this delusional attempt to reconcile with the Chinese Communists was a letter written (or at least signed) by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007. In this much misunderstood document, the Pope appeared to encourage members of the underground Church to attend CCPA “masses” and recognize the leadership of Beijing-appointed bishops and priests. To say that this letter caused confusion and distress in the underground community is a gross understatement.

Not long before the Pope’s letter appeared, the

Archbishop of Hong Kong, Joseph Zen, was elevated to the rank of Cardinal and given a special mission to “bridge the gap” between the Holy See and Beijing, between the *real* Roman Catholic Church in China and the CCPA.

Imagine the consternation in the Vatican Secretariat of State when Cardinal Zen, rather than toeing the party line, turned out to be a tireless champion for religious freedom! Cardinal Zen has always preached that one can be Catholic and patriotic at the same time. But, he says, anyone who goes against their Catholic faith to “serve the homeland” (as Chinese Communist propaganda insists) is guilty of sophistry. On June 29th, Cardinal Zen published yet another letter critical of the Vatican’s attempts at rapprochement with Beijing, and Beijing’s attempts to bring the Chinese Church under its complete control and suppress all who dissent.

He exhorts Chinese Catholic leaders—especially those of the “official” church recognized by the government—to be more courageous in resisting compromise, and especially in rejecting the


claims to authority made by the CCPA.

Cardinal Zen's letter concludes thus:

We must pray that the leaders of our Nation come to understand that a free Catholic Church is no threat to our country. On the contrary, if we are allowed to live happily our faith, we can contribute more to the welfare and all-round progress of our people....

On this journey of faith, we have been promised both

tribulations and consolations. Our companions and models are the Saints and especially the glorious Martyrs.

Mary, Help of Christians, our Heavenly Mother and the Star of Hope, to whom the Pope has entrusted our Church, will lead us to peaceful victory." Amen. 

You can read the full text of the prelate's letter in "Cardinal Zen: The Church in China two years after the Pope's Letter". <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=15774&size=A>

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*... St. Thérèse*

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