

Pope seeks prayers that Chinese Catholics not live in fear

VATICAN CITY - Pope Benedict XVI called on the universal church to pray that Catholics in China never live in fear of spreading the Gospel message and remain loyal to the Holy See.

In a special prayer released by the Vatican May 16, the pope asked that, despite the hardships Catholics in China face, they “continue to believe, to hope, to love.”

Last June, Pope Benedict established May 24, the feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians, as the world day of prayer for the church in China. Mary is venerated under that title at the Marian shrine in Sheshan, outside Shanghai, China.

Titled Prayer to Our Lady of Sheshan, the prayer was released in eight different languages, including traditional and simplified Chinese.

Here is the text of the prayer in English:

Virgin Most Holy, mother of the Incarnate Word and our mother,
venerated in the shrine of Sheshan under the title “Help of Christians,”
the entire church in China looks to you with devout affection.

We come before you today to implore your protection.

Look upon the people of God and, with a mother’s care, guide them
along the paths of truth and love, so that they may always be
a leaven of harmonious coexistence among all citizens.

When you obediently said “Yes” in the house of Nazareth,
you allowed God’s eternal Son to take flesh in your virginal womb

and thus to begin in history the work of our redemption.

You willingly and generously cooperated in that work,

allowing the sword of pain to pierce your soul,

until the supreme hour of the cross, when you kept watch on Calvary,

standing beside your Son, who died that we might live.

From that moment, you became, in a new way,

the mother of all those who receive your son Jesus in faith

and choose to follow in his footsteps by taking up his cross.

Mother of hope, in the darkness of Holy Saturday you journeyed

with unflinching trust toward the dawn of Easter.

Grant that your children may discern at all times,

even those that are darkest, the signs of God's loving presence.

Our Lady of Sheshan, sustain all those in China,

who, amid their daily trials, continue to believe, to hope, to love.

May they never be afraid to speak of Jesus to the world,

and of the world to Jesus.

In the statue overlooking the shrine you lift your son on high,

offering him to the world with open arms in a gesture of love.

Help Catholics always to be credible witnesses to this love,

ever clinging to the rock of Peter on which the church is built.

Mother of China and all Asia, pray for us, now and forever. Amen.

The prayer can be found online in various languages at:
https://212.77.1.245/news_services/bulletin/news/22144.php?index=22144&po_dat%20e=16.05.2008.