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ASIA/CHINA - Mourning in the Episcopate

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - On 28 October, His Exc. Mgr. Peter Liu Guandong, Bishop Emeritus of the Apostolic Prefecture of Yixian (Yihsien), in Hebei Province (Mainland China) returned to the Father's house, at the age of 94.

The Prelate was born on June 19, 1919 in Qingyuan County, in Hebei Province. In 1935 he entered the seminary and on June 29, 1945 he was ordained a priest. In 1955 he was imprisoned for the first time because of his opposition to the creation of the Chinese independent Church. In 1958 he was again arrested for his dissent against the Patriotic Association of Chinese Catholics.

After 23 years of imprisonment, he was released in 1981. As soon as he was released from prison, although he was explicitly asked not to take care of the Church, he devoted himself to the evangelization and renewal of the Church in China. On July 25, 1982, he was secretly consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of the Apostolic Prefecture in Yixian by His Exc. Mgr. Francis Xavier Zhou Shanfu , whom he succeeded in 1986, becoming the third Ordinary of the same Apostolic Prefecture .

From 1989 to 1992 he was subjected to re-education through labor. In July 1993, he suffered a heart attack and paralysis, he could no longer move and speak. Despite the precarious state of health, he was also held under house arrest, treated with affection by the faithful, by the nuns and his priests. He spent, therefore, the rest of his days on earth immobilized due to his age and the lingering illness.

According to the memory of those who met him, and mourn his loss, Bishop Peter Liu always lived in the midst of his people with great humility and with strong faith. In order to preserve the Catholic faith by the manipulations of the regime, he maintained a clear position, without any compromise. He was considered a man of God, a man of faith, a good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, and above all, an exemplary interpreter of communion with the Pope. Worthy successor of the Apostles, he was a man of deep spirituality: the people who lived beside him remember that several times during the day he was devoted to prayer and in particular to the recitation of the Rosary.

Some observers believe that with his death a historic era of the Church in China has ended, but the new generations today walk in the footsteps of their courageous witness of faith. (Agenzia Fides 13/11/2013)

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