

Creator Alone
(27)

ADVENT PREFACE

If you were at the government stadium last Friday afternoon, or watching the Pope's Mass on Television, you will no doubt have ~~captured~~ some small incident as being particularly moving, in a ceremony and occasion which was itself very moving & impressive: something to remember, from a day that will stand out in your memory as perhaps the greatest event you've seen or taken part in in HK. It's difficult to put into words the feeling and atmosphere of the joyful enthusiasm with which His Holiness was greeted & welcomed; it was his personality, his kindness & warmth, that was especially attractive and made a deep impression on those who saw & met him, not least people who are not Catholics or even Christians. In the excitement & enthusiasm of Pope Paul's visit & immediately afterwards, perhaps not much attention was paid to the smoothness of all the careful planning, organization and preparation for the short few hours the Holy Father was here with us. It meant that there was no note of crisis or confusion to mar his & our experience, and disappoint people who had looked forward eagerly and arranged either to be present to see him or join in spirit with his prayer and evident happiness to be here. Even the bad weather let up enough not to spoil the occasion. Now, in retrospect, there is much to be thankful for; so let's not forget a prayer of gratitude to God for the experience we've been able to share, for the success and safety of Pope Paul's visit here, for the grace, happiness and inspiration his coming among us has undoubtedly produced, and a prayer of gratitude with him for his fortunate escape from violent death. But what now? What effect will the Pope's visit have produced in HK? He didn't come as a tourist, or even as a diplomat or politician (despite all the newspaper hallabaloos on this here), but as a humble pilgrim to pray with & be with the people of

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God and all the citizens of this place. The short address he gave during the Mass has been fine-combed for its political implications, and a story put around that it was changed at the last minute — but what matter even if it was? What about what he did say — his message of love, & justice & peace, what he said about the mission of the Church & the link with ~~ed~~ men that our faith in Christ gives us? There may not have been anything startlingly new in what he said, for headline-writers to get their teeth into: but if his visit is to have any lasting effect, we shd. all of us take inspiration from the simple, basic Christian message he gave us here, in our own city. He spoke of the commitment to Christ of our Baptism & Confirmation; and prayed that we would live up to this, in living our faith. This has been said before; but let us pray now, that having listened with our own ears to the pastor addressing us in particular, and in person, we may all be moved & encouraged to greater effort in doing sth. about it. Let us pray that the whole church in HK will go about its constant task of conversion & renewal with deeper faith & enthusiasm; that each of us be changed by prayer & repentance to live more closely with Christ in the pilgrimage of life which the pilgrim Pope reminded us of. Last Friday was a once-for-all event & experience in HK, a 9-day wonder. It wd. be a pity if that's all it was going to be in retrospect, a brief interlude without any noticeable or permanent effect on the lives & hearts of those of us who were happy & delighted to welcome His Holiness here. If I can do so, I shd. like to get hold of the recording of the Pope's message, to give you (and myself) an opportunity to hear and reflect on it again during this time of prayer at midday. Meanwhile, as a background to your prayer today, here's an Italian hymn of prayer

TAPE (Rad. Vat)

Oratio et Particip.

for the Pope. MUSIC - PRAYERS

What I was saying just now about prayer and conversion is of course relevant also for the season of Advent we keep during those weeks before Christmas - a time of preparation and looking forward. Our Lady figures rather prominently in this season too, for she after all was herself the immediate preparation for Christ's coming among us, being born as a new. And tomorrow is one of Mary's important feast-days, the feast of her Immaculate Conception. It's not a very old festival in the universal calendar, tho' it ~~was~~ celebrated in some of the eastern churches over a 1000 yrs ago, and in 12th century England. It shd. be with Mary that we pray & prepare during Advent, just as it will be with her that we shall rejoice at Christmas.

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 NP 11 p 2-3re.