



## ASIA/CHINA-Bishop Peter Li Hongye, who died during the Easter Vigil, is remembered for his fortitude with which he lived his vocation and endured long periods of suffering

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Luoyang (Agenzia Fides) - On 23 April, during the Easter Vigil, while he was blessing the water before administering baptism, the Archbishop Peter Li Hongye, Bishop of the Diocese of Luoyang (Loyang) in the province of Henan (China) died. The Prelate was 91 years old. He was born Jan. 6, 1920 in a Catholic family since three generations in the village of Xicunxian in the province of Henan. At 12 he entered the minor seminary and completed his studies in the major seminary in Kaifeng, he was ordained April 22, 1944. He was repeatedly arrested and jailed, already as a priest, as from 1955. In 1956 he was judged as being "obstinate" and sentenced to prison in the remote province of Qinghai, where he remained for 28 years. Released in 1984, he was the only priest in the diocese of Luoyang. On September 10, 1987 he was ordained Bishop of Luoyang. On June 25, 1994 he was arrested again and then again in 2001 while preaching a spiritual retreat to the nuns of the diocese.

The faithful remember him for his strength to live faithfully his vocation and suffering during the periods spent in prison or under house arrest or under close surveillance. He was esteemed by all for his fearless life, smart intellect, deep faith, prudence and firmness, the devotion to the Holy Father. He was a man of great culture, known for his thorough knowledge of Latin.

In his tireless work he often visited Catholic communities, which gathered almost always in one of the faithful's houses, because the churches of the past had been requisitioned by the Government and put to other uses. These visits cost him great effort, because sometimes public transport was not available: at times, he had to walk many hours to reach the faithful.

Since 2004, he suffered from heart problems and spent several periods in hospital and was always sick. A man of strong character, he was a prominent figure in the Church in China for his many years of martyrdom for the testimony of faith. The general political situation, the extreme poverty of so many Catholic communities and the lack of church personnel made Bishop Li's work heroic.

The city of Luoyang, today major industrial center, famous for being one of the four ancient capitals of China, is visited by many foreign tourists. The Apostolic Prefecture of Luoyang, was born on May 14, 1929 with a separated territory from the Apostolic Vicariate of Zhengzhou, it then became the Apostolic Vicariate on January 28, 1935 and became a diocese on April 11, 1946. The ecclesiastical district now has about 10,000 faithful, thirty priests and 50 nuns. The funeral of Bishop Peter Li Hongye were held last April 29 in his native village, halfway between Zhengzhou and Luoyang. (Agenzia Fides 05/05/2011)

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