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Bishop Stefano's STORY

MARTYR

Bishop Stefano Li Side

Pray for us

On 8 June 2019 in the People's Republic of China, Bishop Stefano Li Side passed away, at the age of 92, while still under house arrest.

Bishop Li Side was ordained to the priesthood in 1955 and served clandestinely as the Bishop of the diocese of Tianjin from 1982 to his death. He never wavered in his fidelity to the Holy See. **It was this fidelity that led to multiple arrests and 17 years in forced labour camps.** Eventually he was exiled to a remote mountain village under house arrest in 1992.

A priest of the diocese of Tianjin commented on the death of his late bishop, whom he visited many times in his exile in the mountains saying, "Bishop Stefano Li Side is the ripe fruit of the Spirit: his death on the eve of Pentecost is no coincidence. The intention of the authorities was to take the bishop to a distant and inaccessible place so that no one could come to visit him there," said the priest, "but the opposite happened: since the bishop lived there, the number of the faithful who visited him increased day by day. **His heart was completely filled with love for the Blessed Mother and with a burning zeal for the mission of the Church** and for the revival of vocations to the priesthood and religious life."

The funeral of Bishop Li Side was eventually held in November of 2019, five months after he died. This was due to the hesitation of the authorities to allow any recognition of him. The funeral was eventually held amid close monitoring of the funeral parlour, the cemetery and the visitation room. Security forces worked overtime in an attempt to stifle any show of respect to the late prelate enjoyed from his community. His funeral was conducted without a Mass. He was denied his titles as bishop. Underground Catholics and nuns were not allowed to attend any of the services. All this was done to clearly show that the bishop was not recognised by the government and so did not have any right to a solemn funeral.

Bishop Li Side's life was lived as one long martyrdom. The authorities tried continually to suppress him but he lived faithfully through it all. His life has become a means of renewal and evangelisation for his people and all of us who share in baptism.

MAKE A DONATION

All through his priesthood Bishop Stefano's evangelisation efforts were stifled by the authorities of the People's Republic of China. Therefore, in honour of Bishop Stefano we are asking you to make a donation that will support Catholic evangelisation projects through mass media – radio, television, newspapers and online.