

Principal's Assembly
Message from the Chaplain - Father Philip Murphy SSC
6th October 2014
On the Church and the Student Protests – Occupy Central

The prayer which I began this assembly with is one which I have put up on our Facebook page every day last week. (www.facebook.com/stpcc) I will also use it at the beginning of our assemblies all this week.

The Church has been very involved in the events of last week – and is very concerned for the good future of Hong Kong.

I walked through the protest sites at Mongkok, Canton Road and Admiralty a few times last week, in the daytime and at night, and met some of you there. One thing I did notice at Admiralty was a corner where a number of different Church groups had an area for people to pray in.

A number of Churches have also been very involved in providing food and drinks to those who decided to take part in the protest.

But there are also Church people who are against what happened last week.

Because the Church is not a political party. It is the body of Christ, made up of many different people, of different races, of different backgrounds and of different political beliefs.

But all of them are united in Baptism – the entry into the Church, into the Body of Christ, through water and the spirit. And I will speak more about that at my assembly on Thursday. (Our theme this week is Baptism).

As you will know, there have been some very obvious supporters of the Occupy movement from the Church, Cardinal Zen and the Reverend Chui Yiu ming. There have been leading members of the Church who have spoken against it and others who have been quiet on the issue.

On Thursday evening I went to an Evening Prayer Service, which was also promoted on our Chaplaincy Facebook page, at St John's Cathedral. It was prayers for Concord and Communal Good Will in Hong Kong. People of all views gathered together to pray. They didn't gather to pray for their views to win the argument, but for peace and harmony and the love of God to win the day.

It is a good thing as a Christian or a person of any faith to be politically involved, to care for the future of society, to care for our world and community. It is also a good thing as a person of faith to respect other views and opinions. To debate and respect.

The Church has not been silent over this last week and in the months leading up to it. Individual members of the Church may have made their voices heard, but the Church as the body of Christ has prayed and continues to pray for all people.

Every week at St John's Cathedral, like Churches all over Hong Kong, we pray for the President of China, the Chief Executive of Hong Kong and all those who are appointed and elected to positions of responsibility. We may agree with them, we may disagree with them, but that doesn't stop us praying for them, because they, like all of us, need God's help in order to carry out their duties.

Throughout history the Church has always been closely associated with social justice and human rights. Sometimes it has got it very wrong. Sometimes it has got it very right. To mention a few situations, the abolishment of slavery in England, the work towards the rights of all peoples in South Africa and the end of apartheid and today being very vocal about the rights of Christians in Iraq who are being persecuted.

The Church in Hong Kong has a very real and strong interest in the future of Hong Kong and is quite rightly, along with other faiths, a part of the debate.

But the most important thing that the Church can do and is doing, is to pray for people on all sides, to speak up when there is injustice and to support the weak and the vulnerable.

The prayer to be used this week at Assembly (from St John's Cathedral).

Lord God, we ask for your blessing
on the people of the Hong Kong SAR:
at this time of divided opinions
strengthen those who work
for mutual understanding;
make our hearts open
to hear and embrace
those who hold different views from ourselves;
and may our leaders work together to seek the common good.
We pray in the name of one
who spread healing and reconciliation
among all people,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.