

Turin Shroud included in Catholic Chinese Bible – Father Gabriele Allegra

Father Allegra was born on 26 December 1907 to an Italian family in Sicily as an eldest son. His parents had 3 sons and 3 daughters.

He was ordained in February 1930 by the Vatican and first came to China in 1931 to study Chinese in Hunan (south-central part of China), which was in pursuit of his aspiration to translate the Bible into Chinese.

He re-entered China in 1941, after 2 years of medical care back in Italy and he persisted on the translation work during these periods.

He moved to Hong Kong in 1948 (which was a British colony at that time), shortly before the change of the regime, and continued with his work on the translation.

The first completed version of the translated Catholic Chinese Bible was printed in 1968 in Hong Kong and greater China. **The image of the Shroud was included on the first page.**

Father Allegra passed away on 26 January 1976 in Hong Kong and was buried in Happy Valley until 1986, when his remains were moved back to Italy.

His contribution and role model as a Servant of God for Catholics was first confirmed by the Vatican in 2002.

Report from a local Catholic Diocese father:

After a delay of 10 years, the beatification cause of Venerable Gabriele Maria Allegra (1907-1976) is scheduled for completion in September 2012. He is the first person from the Hong Kong diocese and the Franciscan province of Taiwan-Hong Kong to be so blessed.

The Italian friar was best known for producing the first full translation of the Catholic Bible in Chinese, which has led to him being known as the “St. Jerome of China.”

The beatification ceremony took place on 29 September 2012 at the Cathedral of Acireale, in his home town of Catania in Sicily.

Father Joseph Ha, who heads the Order of Friars Minor in Hong Kong, said the news was “a surprise to many of us.”

When asked if Sicily has been chosen as the venue for the ceremony in order to avoid provoking the Beijing government, he said it was “a good guess, very reasonable.”

Cecilia Chui of the Hong Kong Catholic Biblical Association described the beatification as an honor to Chinese Catholics worldwide. “We feel gratified and proud,” she said.

“It is very meaningful that the Holy See beatifies Venerable Allegra in chorus with the Second Vatican Council’s 50th anniversary this year.”

Venerable Allegra and his colleagues published the Chinese Bible in 1968, three years after Vatican II promulgated *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), which stated that “easy access to sacred scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful.”

The *Studium Biblicum* version, considered to be the most faithful to the original manuscript, is still the main Chinese version used today. “Its publication had a far-reaching significance for the promotion of biblical ministry in Chinese-speaking Catholic communities around the world,” said Chui, who also serves as liaison secretary for the Biblical Servicing Center of the United Chinese Catholic Biblical Association.

The beatification was originally set for October 2002, after the Holy See had certified a miracle attributed to Venerable Allegra’s intercession. However, the ceremony was then postponed indefinitely.

Since then, the Hong Kong diocese and the Order of Friars Minor made numerous requests to the Vatican to resume the process, without success. Fr. Ha said he did not know why the Holy See has now decided to go ahead.

“The Vatican postponed the beatification in 2002 so as not to further provoke negative response from the Chinese government after the canonization of the Chinese martyrs in 2000,” he said.

Arriving China in 1931, Venerable Allegra made the translation of the Bible from the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek into Chinese his life’s work. He also set about producing an accompanying commentary and introduction.

He instituted the *Studium Biblicum* in Beijing in 1945 to pursue these tasks. It relocated to Hong Kong three years later because of political turmoil.

Between 1961 and 1963, he went to Singapore to head a social center established by the Vatican, which aimed to write and distribute anti-communist literature in Asia.