

Pope Paul, Bishop Walsh in Dramatic Meeting

By JAMES C. O'NEILL

Castelgandolfo, Italy — (NC) — American Missionary Bishop James E. Walsh, freed from a Chinese Communist prison after 12 years, last week embraced a pope whom he had never seen before. It was a dramatic en-

counter, charged with emotion, that left both men on the verge of tears.

The 79-year-old bishop and Pope Paul VI came face to face for the first time as the bishop's relatives and friends looked on with misty eyes.

Paying tribute to the frail, white-haired missionary, Pope Paul noted that "over 50 years ago you left your homeland with the first group of Maryknoll missionaries to go and serve the beloved Chinese people."

Speaking in English, the Pope continued: "Today you have returned from your mission — more painful than you perhaps expected."

Then with special warmth, Pope Paul declared: "It is the Pope who receives you back and who thanks you in the name of Christ for all you have done and suffered."

Bishop Walsh, still suffering from his imprisonment and the weight of years, was brought by wheelchair to the antechambers of the Pope's summer home here. But the Pope did not wait, as usual, for the bishop to be brought to his study.

Instead, he entered the larger audience room where the bishop, two of his sisters, a niece and some friends were waiting. The bishop immediately stood and the two exchanged a warm and almost tearful greeting.

Later, when the bishop was preparing to leave the Pope's presence, a Vatican Monsignor began helping him by taking him under his arm to escort him to the wheelchair. Pope



Pope, Bishop Walsh meet. (RNS)

Paul immediately did likewise.

The two embraced again and the Pope was heard to say spontaneously: "I assure you that I will pray for you and I want you to pray for me."

When the missionary last went to China, Pope Pius XII was still reigning. At the time he was imprisoned in 1958, Pope John XXIII had only been elected less than a year.

After meeting, the two churchmen walked to the Pope's private study. The only person accompanying them was Mary-

knoll Superior General Father John McCormack.

At the end of the meeting, the bishop's relatives and friends were escorted into the room and listened to the Pope deliver his talk of praise of Bishop Walsh in English.

Present were the bishop's sisters, Miss Mary Walsh and Mrs. Julia Werner, both of Cumberland, Md., and a niece, Sister Betsy Walsh of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, who arrived the same day from England.

Bp. Walsh Sees Church - Peking Rapport Possible

Rome — (NC) — The possibility for some kind of accommodation between the Church and Red China was seen by Maryknoll Bishop James E. Walsh, recently released after 12 years in a Chinese prison for alleged espionage.

"I shouldn't wonder if it did occur in the future, and not too far distant either," the 79-year-old American bishop said.

Sitting in a wheelchair and wearing a blue dressing gown over pajamas, the bishop answered pre-submitted questions at a press conference in Salvatore Mundi Hospital here.

He told the newsmen that, although he had "little sympathy" for Red China's regime, he sees some promise for the future of present day China.

Even in jail, he said, he was able to note "certain indications of a very good spirit" within the Red Chinese government.

It has "introduced certain changes into the life of the people of China which I think are very helpful and very good," he said.

"I'm glad to be able to say this, although I have very little sympathy, of course, with a regime which restricts liberty to such an extent," he added.

Three changes in Chinese life that augur well for the future, Bishop Walsh explained, are new provisions for the equality of women, equality of races and a complete ban on all forms of immorality and indecency.

Bishop Walsh said that he was treated with "kindness and consideration" in jail. I had "excellent quarters, food and good medical care," he said.

But an old friend of his, Father Francois X. Legrand, a Belgian priest who had spent four years in a Chinese prison, said: "He is talking in terms of Chinese standards, not ours."

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