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Cardinal Shan of Taiwan dies at 88; pope praises his service to church

by Cindy Wooden by Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY -- Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-hsi, the retired bishop of Kaohsiung, Taiwan, died Wednesday at the age of 88, the Vatican newspaper reported.

He had been diagnosed with lung cancer in 2006, about eight months after retiring.

In a telegram offering his condolences to the people of Taiwan and to the cardinal's Jesuit confreres, Pope Benedict XVI praised Shan's "dedicated service" to the church and commended "his priestly soul to the infinite mercy of God our loving father."

A native of Puyang on the Chinese mainland, he joined the Jesuits in Beijing in 1946, then left the mainland to study for the priesthood. He was ordained a priest in the Philippines in 1955.

After working at a school and at a Jesuit novitiate in the Philippines, he was sent to Taiwan as novice master, a position he held from 1963 to 1970.

Pope John Paul II appointed him bishop of Hualien in 1979, transferred him to Kaohsiung in 1991 and made him a cardinal in 1998.

He was actively involved in the interreligious dialogue commissions of both the Taiwan bishops and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. He also served as a member of the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and advised the Vatican on its China policy.

Education, building a strong laity and presenting Christ to the Asian people were key focuses of his

ministry.

Shan served as the papally appointed recording secretary for the special Synod of Bishops for Asia in 1998.

He said the Catholic faith will not be intelligible or attractive to the peoples of Asia if it continues to be a carbon copy of the Catholic church in the West. The church's mission of love and service must begin with "a genuine regard and respect for all the peoples of Asia, their religions and cultures."

The cardinal also said the Catholic church's belief that the Spirit of God is at work in the world must translate into recognition of the "truth and grace" present in other religions while it witnesses to "the fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ."

Shan participated in the funeral for Pope John Paul in April 2005 but did not vote in the conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI because he was past the age of 80, when cardinals no longer have the right to vote for a new pope.

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The cardinal's death left the College of Cardinals with 207 members, 119 of whom are under the age of 80. The number of cardinal-electors was set to drop to 118 on Friday, the 80th birthday of English Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor of Westminster.

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