

## ✠ The Catholic Church in Korea Today

A young and dynamic Catholic Church in Korea today is bringing many people to the Lord. Through various programs of formation, the laity are becoming mature and responsible members of the Church. The dynamic role taken by the laity makes the Church a leaven and a light for other Catholics and for non-believers as well. The Church is active in defending the dignity of human life by speaking out against abortion, research using human embryonic cells, and the death penalty. The Church also enthusiastically promotes Basic Ecclesial Communities and defends the family through various movements.

Having been in the forefront in promoting justice and peace and democratization over the years, the Catholic Church in Korea today continues to suggest new approaches to emerging social issues such as respect for migrants and ecology. The Church also takes the lead in promoting Christian unity and interreligious dialogue.

Living in a divided nation, the Church makes unceasing efforts for reconciliation and the unity of the Korean people and for peace and evangelization in North Korea. The Church is saddened that there is no religious freedom in North Korea and that the three existing dioceses in the North have not had any resident priests or religious since 1950. Korean Catholics show their concern for the people of the North in many ways, especially in the areas of humanitarian aid and medical service.

Remembering with gratitude that it received much help from other countries in the past, the Catholic Church in Korea today is sending priests, religious, and other missionaries to some sixty countries, especially to poor and unevangelized countries.

While remaining grateful for the graces God has showed upon it, the Catholic Church in Korea faces the external challenges of materialism, secularism, relativism, individualism, extreme competition, and the weakening of the family. Internally, an increase in non-practicing Catholics and a decrease in vocations cause great concern to the Church. As Catholics live according to Gospel values, they now look for other appropriate ways to evangelize the society. Our Church begs for the mercy of God and asks for the prayers and cooperation of all Catholics.

### 📖 Mission to Foreign Nations

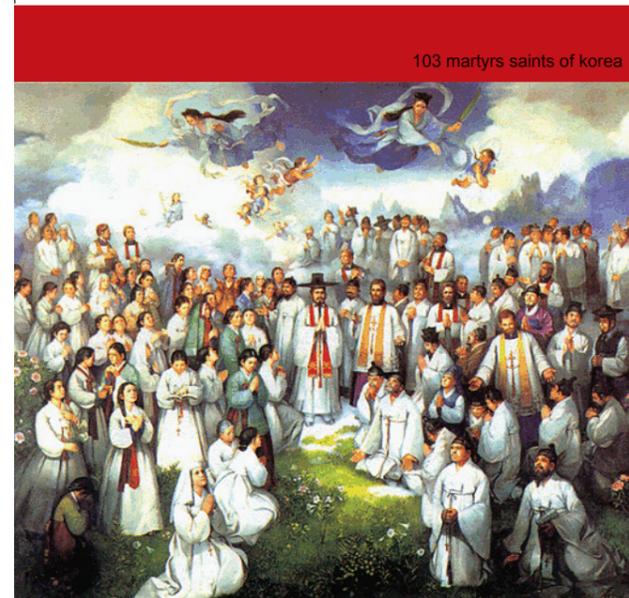
128 priests  
506 religious (men 46, women 460)

### 📖 Pastoral Care of Overseas Koreans and Others

163 communities, 162 Mission stations, 193 priests,  
137 religious in 61 countries

## ✠ Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea

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103 martyrs saints of Korea

# the Catholic Church in Korea

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## ✠ A Church Initiated by Lay People Within the Country

Very exceptionally, the Catholic Church in Korea was initiated without missionaries coming into the country from outside. The Catholic community in Korea came into being when Yi Seung-hun, one among a group of Korean scholars who on their own studied Catholic books and practiced the faith, went to Beijing, was baptized there in 1784. He then returned to Korea where he spread the Gospel message and baptized others.

Jesus' teaching on the equality of all before God created a great sensation in the Chosun Dynasty where all of society was highly stratified and where a person's status was all-important. Although the young community of Catholics had to suffer severe persecutions for almost a century, it grew and flourished thanks to the many martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the glory of God. During his visit to Seoul in 1984, Pope John Paul II elevated 103 of these martyrs of Korea to the altars as Saints.

Now in the third millennium, the Catholic Church in Korea strives to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, especially as it serves the poor and marginalized and works for social justice.

## ✠ Important Moments in the History of the Catholic Church in Korea

