



Catholic Pilgrimage in Seoul

The Significance of the Seoul Pilgrimage Routes

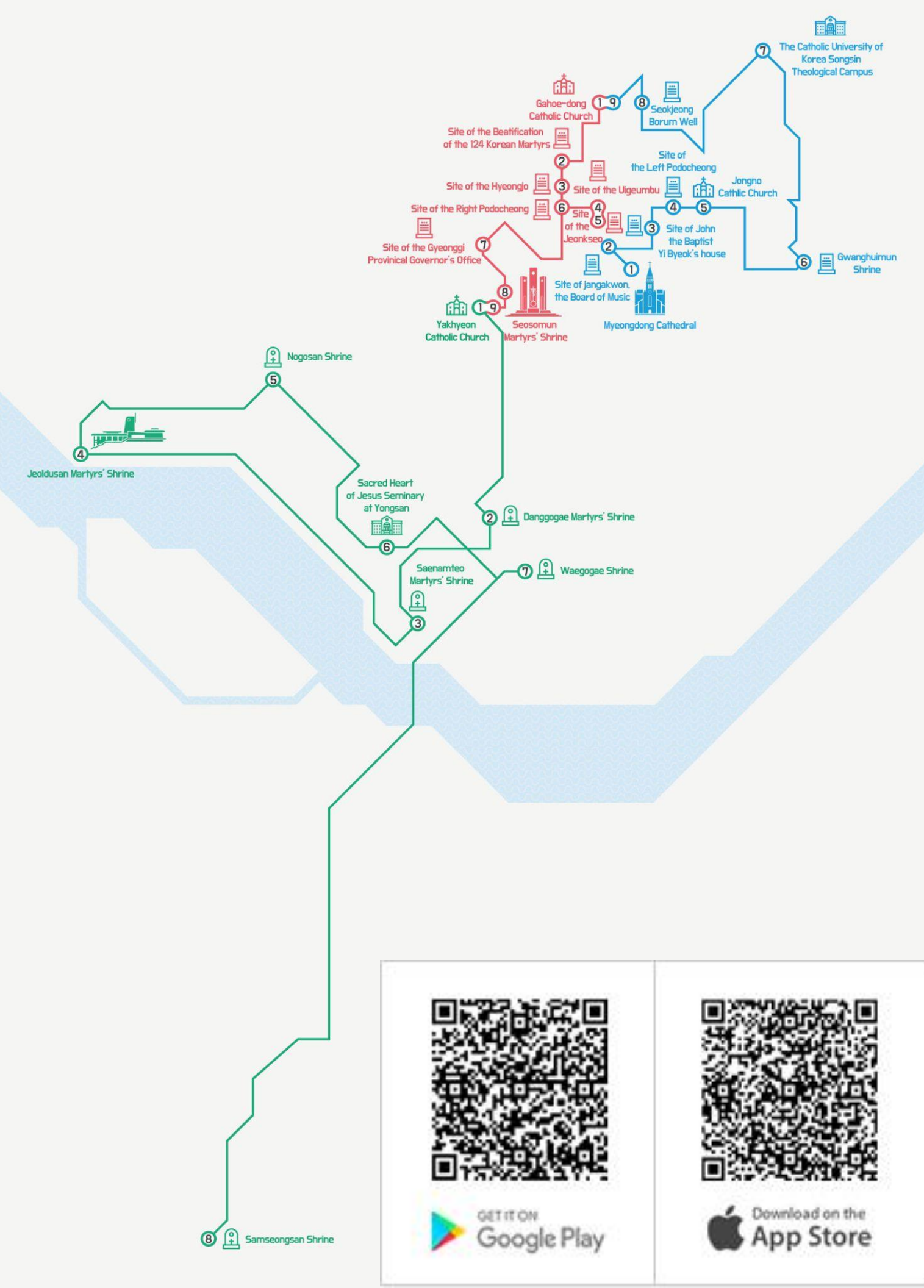


The Seoul Pilgrimage Route

Spanning 44.1 km (27.4 miles) and linking 24 historic sites, the Seoul Pilgrimage Route was named the first International Pilgrimage Site in Asia by the Vatican on September 14, 2018.

The route traces the remarkable beginnings and development of the faith in Korea, from its spontaneous acceptance by a group of scholars to the more than a century of persecutions and martyrdom suffered by the early believers.





First Course: The Good News Road

How was the **beginning of Korean Catholic Church**? The first course begins at the site of Thomas Kim Beom-woo, the protomartyr of Korea and the site of John Lee Byeok, the venue of the first Catholic baptism.

- Total length : 8.7 km
- Duration : 3 hours 40 minutes

Second Course: The Eternal Life Road

The route is intact with the **history of Catholic persecution** in Korea and is called the “eternal life road” as it is the route on the ways of martyrdom and of getting eternal lives.

- Total length : 5.9 km
- Duration : 2 hours 30 minutes

Third Course: The Unity Road

The route connects the **main martyrs’ shrines** in Seoul and is called the “unity road” for hoping that every pilgrim follows the examples of the martyrs and realizes their faith.

- Total length : 29.5 km
- Duration : 8 hours

Seoul Pilgrimage Route 1st Course

The Good News Road



How did the **Catholic Church start in Korea**? Those who walk the Good News Road can begin to find an answer to this fascinating question. Named the **Good News Road**, this pilgrimage reminds those who walk its path of the significance of the **community of laypersons** who voluntarily accepted the Word of the Gospel, an act without precedent in the history of the Church.

This route begins with a visit to the sites of the homes of **Thomas Kim Beom-u** (Korea's first evangelist) and **John the Baptist Yi Byeok's house** (the site of the first baptisms in Korea). The journey continues to **Seokjeong Boreum Well** whose waters **Fr. James Zhou Wen-mo**, the first priest and missionary to evangelize in Korea, blessed for the celebration of the sacrament of baptism. The pilgrim is invited to spend time in **Gahoe-dong Catholic Church** in Gye-dong. The church is built in the area where Fr. Zhou ministered and provides an opportunity to quietly meditate on both the life and martyrdom of Fr. Zhou and the early believers to whom he ministered.

Seoul Pilgrimage Route 2nd Course

The Eternal Life Road



During the Joseon Dynasty, Catholicism was regarded as an evil practice for prioritizing the word of God over the commands of the king, and a series of Catholic persecutions ensued. **The Eternal Life Road**, which retains the traces of the history of these persecutions, includes the historically significant **Seosomun Martyrs' Site** where the largest number of Catholic believers were executed by beheading. Also found along the road are the **Site of Hyeongjo**, the **Site of the Right Podocheong**, and the **Site of the Gyeonggi Provincial Governor's Office**.

Martyrdom is the ultimate testimony to one's faith, and many Catholic believers, in seeking the noble truth, sacrificed their lives, steadfast in their hope and belief in the 'eternal life' offered by Jesus Christ. Although the forefathers of faith died as martyrs, they were also on a journey to attaining everlasting life and thus this route has been named the **Eternal Life Road**.

The sites are no longer in their former appearance, yet they will encourage pilgrims to reflect on both **the persecution of Catholicism**, which occurred on this very soil, as well as **the universal values sought by the martyrs**. Pilgrims, as they follow in the footsteps of those who put their faith above their own lives, are naturally challenged to ponder what is of most value in their lives.

Seoul Pilgrimage Route 3rd Course

The Unity Road



This route connecting some of the most iconic martyrs' shrines in Seoul has been named the **Unity Road** to encourage believers to follow the example set by the martyrs and uphold the will of God.

It takes pilgrims to **Danggogae Martyrs' Shrine**, which produced the third largest number of martyred saints in Korea, and **Saenamteo Martyrs' Shrine**, where Father James Zhou Wen-mo, the first foreign missionary to Korea, and St Andrew Kim Tae-gon, the first-ever Korean priest, died as martyrs. Past the latter site, the Hangang River flows, and along the riverside there is **Jeoldusan Martyrs' Shrine** which receives endless streams of pilgrims from across the country and the world. The place was named, Jeoldusan, meaning a 'place where Catholic believers were beheaded,' and enshrined in the crypt of the chapel are the remains of 27 martyred saints and one unnamed martyr.

The pilgrimage continues past **Waegogae Shrine** where 10 martyrs remained buried for decades, and concludes at **Samseongsan Shrine**. The pilgrim is invited to meditate on their own faith and what it means to follow in the footsteps of the martyrs and imitate their faith.

3 Most Significant Seoul Pilgrimage Sites



Myeongdong Cathedral

Myeongdong Cathedral is the "**Mother Church**," the spiritual and physical heart of the Catholic Church in Korea. While it was not a site of persecution itself, it holds immense historical and symbolic value. It was the first brick church in Korea, and its construction in the late 19th century symbolized the growing acceptance and establishment of Catholicism in the country. In the 20th century, the cathedral became a focal point for South Korea's pro-democracy movement in the 1970s and 1980s, serving as a sanctuary for student activists and a site of protest against military dictatorships. It has also become the final resting place for the relics of many Korean martyrs.



Jeoldusan Martyrs' Shrine

Jeoldusan, which literally means "Beheading Mountain," is a sacred place of martyrdom. It is a powerful reminder of the extreme violence of the **Byeong-in Persecution of 1866**. This was one of the largest and most intense persecutions of Catholics in Korean history. Thousands of Catholics were executed here, often by decapitation, and their bodies were thrown into the Han River. The shrine, which includes a museum and a church, was built to commemorate the 100th anniversary of this persecution and to honor the spirit of the martyrs.



Saenamteo Martyrs' Shrine

Located by the Han River, this shrine stands on the site where many Catholics - priests and laypeople including **Blessed James Zhou Wenmo in 1801, St. Paul Chong Hasang in 1839, St. Andrew Kim Taegon in 1846 and companions** - were executed across multiple persecutions in 1801, 1839, 1846, and 1866. Inside the parish is a martyrs' shrine which houses relics of nine Korean martyrs. Remarkably, this is also **where 103 martyrs were canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1984**.