

Martyrdom and Korean Catholic Heritage

September 20, 2025

At Our Lady Of Peace Church & Shrine

THE FEAST DAY OF KOREAN MARTYRS

**Thanks for joining the celebration of
the Feast Day of the Korean Martyrs
on September 20, 2025.**

**You can visit the exhibition website
and download the materials by
scanning the QR code below.**



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Korean Catholic History

The Joseon Dynasty begins

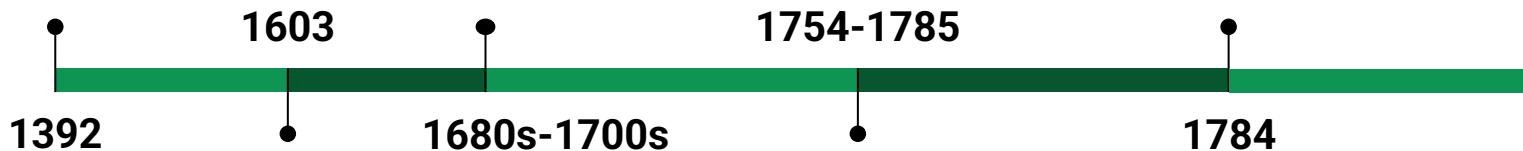
The Joseon Dynasty lasts for 500 years and is the first great enemy and persecutor of Korean Catholics.

Catholicism keeps spreading

Silhak and Catholic scholars share texts that spread Catholic teachings.

Yi Seung-hun is first baptized

Yi Seung-hun is baptized in Beijing by Chinese Jesuit missionary. He is the first Korean layperson and starts lay-led Korean church.

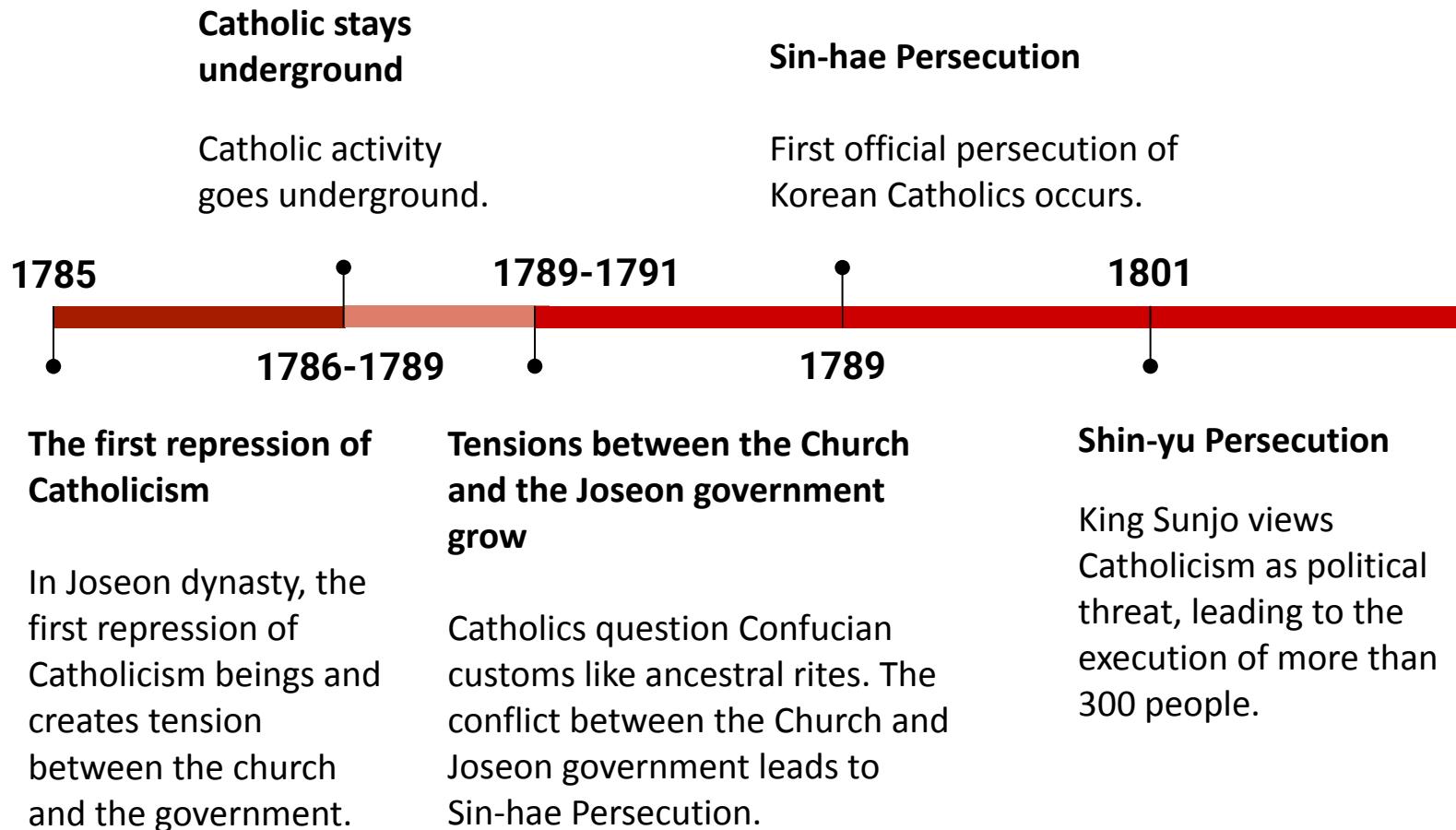


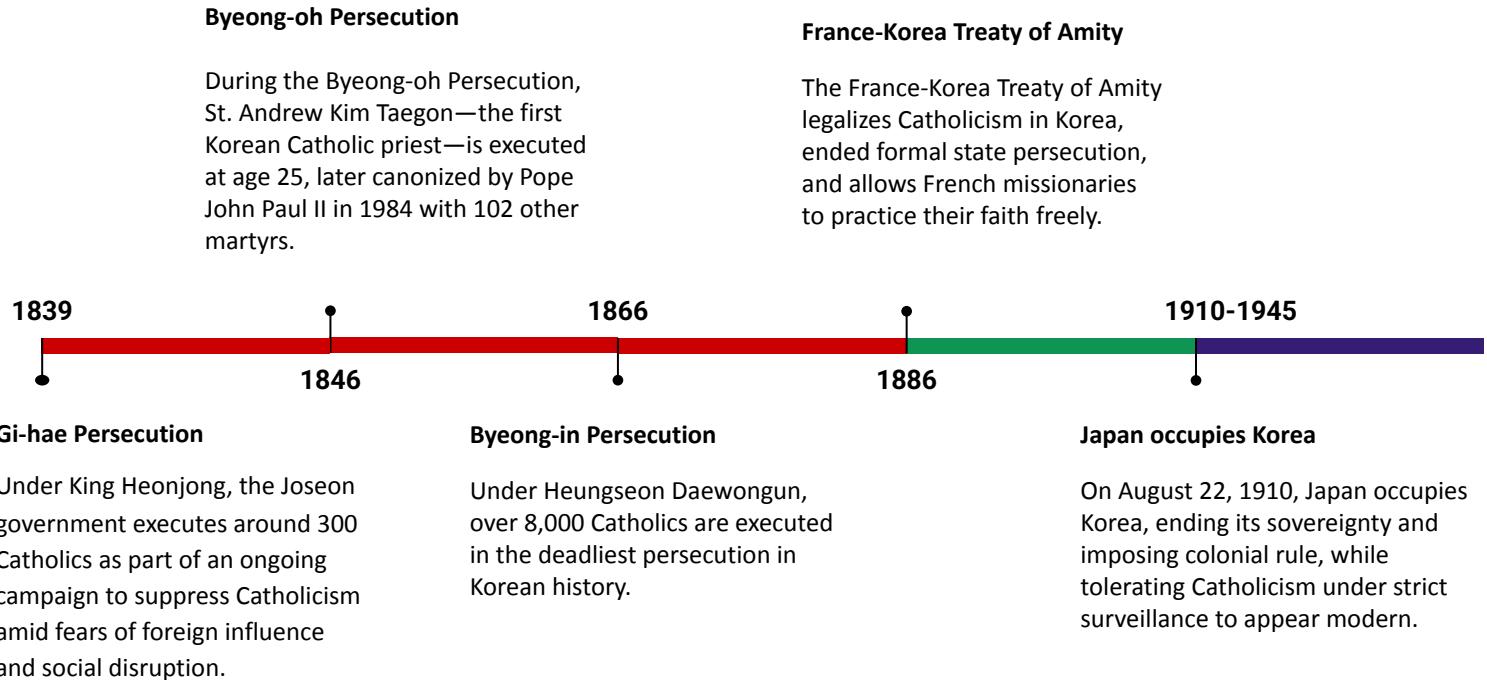
Catholicism is introduced

Catholicism is first introduced to Korean scholars through books, not by missionaries.

Yi Byeok forms the first Korean Catholic community

Yi Byeok gathers a group of intellectuals and scholars who nurture future Catholic leaders such as Yi Seung-hun.







Joseon Dynasty

The **Joseon Dynasty** was established in 1392 and lasted for a little over 500 years between **1392-1897**. The Joseon Dynasty was the last and longest ruling Korean dynasty. Joseon was a **Confucian state**, with Neo-Confucianism as the official ideology. **The Joseon Dynasty believed that Catholicism was a threat to their social order** and that it directly contradicted core Confucian values.

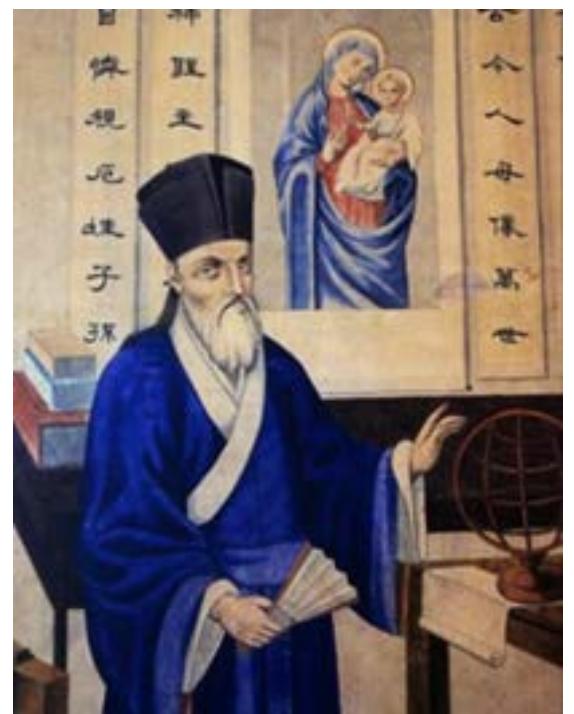
Catholicism Began with the Laypeople

Korean Catholicism began in a truly unique way: it was introduced by Korean scholars who discovered Catholic writings through books by Chinese missionaries not by foreign priests or missionaries



Matteo Ricci

Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) was a Jesuit missionary in Ming China. Matteo's book, *Tianzhu Shiyi*, "The True Meaning of the Lord in Heaven," was his most influential text that presented Christian theology in Chinese. His book inspired Korea's earliest Catholic intellectuals such as Yi Byeok.



1603 Catholicism was first introduced to Korea through Korean scholars, not by foreign missionaries. Yi Gwang-jeong, a Korean scholar, brought Catholic books and Westerns texts from Beijing to Korea.

1680s – 1700s Silhak was a practical learning movement in late Joseon that emphasized empirical study, reform, and practical solutions to social, economic, and political problems over rigid Confucian tradition. Silhak scholars began studying Western texts that contained Catholic theological ideas. Silhak and Catholic scholars often belonged to the same elite networks and family lineages. These scholars shared texts, hosted gatherings, and created intellectual circles that spread Catholic teachings, especially among the yangban (nobility) and educated commoners.

1754-1785 Yi Byeok was a leading intellectual figure in the formation of first Korean Catholic community. He reportedly experienced a spiritual conversion through study alone, before anyone in Korea was baptized. He gathered a group of friends and intellectuals to study Catholicism and formed the first Catholic community in Korea. He played a key role in introducing the faith to others like Yi Seung-hun.



Yi-Seung-hun

1784 **Yi Seung-hun was the first Korean Catholic convert, baptized in Beijing in 1784** by a Chinese Jesuit missionary. He took the Christian name “Peter.” He became the first Korean layperson baptized into the Catholic Church. **Yi Seung-hun helped spread Catholicism to Korea as a layman that began a lay-led Korean Church.** Yi performed baptisms and helped Catholicism spread from person to person, starting with a small group of intellectuals and relatives. He converted not just fellow scholars, but entire families.

1785 The first official repression of Catholicism began in Korea.

By 1785 the Joseon officials viewed Catholicism as a threat. Thomas Kim Beom-u hosted Catholic gatherings at his residence in Seoul's Myeongdong district, which led to increased surveillance of Catholic activities and growing tension between the Church and the state.

1786-1789 Catholic activity went underground.

Despite persecution risks, communities continued to gather for prayer, catechesis, and discussion of Catholic doctrine. **Catholicism spread quietly among scholars and some commoners despite growing suspicion.**

1789-1790 Catholics began to question Confucian tradition such as ancestral rites, leading to intensified conflict with the state.

Catholic rejection of ancestral rites became increasingly visible. Korean Catholics asked the Beijing bishop whether Confucian rites were acceptable. The bishop responded negatively in 1791 and this deepened the Church-state conflict and led to the 1791 Sinhae Persecution- the first to include executions.

1791 *Sin-hae Persecution* The Sin-hae

Persecution was the **first official execution of Korean Catholics** and a critical turning point in the history of the Korean Church. It marked the moment when Catholicism shifted from being a quietly tolerated intellectual movement to a criminalized and persecuted religion under Joseon law. **Two Catholics, Yun Ji-chung and Kwon Sang-yeon refused to perform ancestral rites due to their loyalty to God and not idolatry.** Yun and Kwon were **beheaded in Jeonju in November 1791.** This marked the first execution in Korean Catholics history and sent a signal throughout Korea that Catholicism was now a punishable crime.

1801 *Shin-yu Persecution* By 1801, Catholicism

had spread widely among scholars, officials, and even members of the royal family. King Sunjo viewed the faith as a political threat that undermined social order. Hundreds of believers were arrested, tortured, exiled, or executed as the government launched a nationwide crackdown. **The first foreign priest for the Korean diocese, Fr. Zhou Wen-mo, and other foreign priests were killed, and subsequent foreign clergy were banned, forcing Korean Catholics to practice in secret.** The persecution severely impacted the Korean Church. Whang Sa-Yeong lamented, “The Korean church, now, cannot survive any longer even without further persecutions.” **Despite being outlawed, Catholicism persisted and grew underground, and many martyrs of 1801 were later canonized by the Church.**

1839 *Gi-hae Persecution*

The Gi-hae Persecution, lasting from March to October 1839 (lunar calendar), was part of a series of campaigns by the Joseon government under King Heonjong to eradicate Catholicism, which it viewed as a threat to social order. Despite earlier persecutions, **Catholicism continued to grow underground**, particularly among peasants, scholars, and some officials. Political power struggles between the Pungyang Jo and Andong Kim families, along with local corruption, also fueled the crackdown. **70 victims of this persecution were included in 103 saints of Korea**, including:

1. St. Ignatius Kim Chejun (St. Andrew Kim Taegon's father)
2. St. Paul Chong Hasang (lay leader)
3. St. Agnes Kim Hyo-ju and St. Columba Kim Hyo-im
4. Three French missionaries:
 - a) St. Laurent-Joseph Imbert (Bishop)
 - b) St. Jacques-Honore Chastan
 - c) St. Pierre Philibert Maubant



St. Laurent-Joseph Imbert (Bishop)

1846 *Byeong-oh Persecution*

The Joseon government targeted Catholics for their perceived opposition to Confucian ideals, particularly ancestral rites. Thirteen months after his ordination, **St. Andrew Kim Taegon, the first Korean Catholic priest**, was captured and tortured in an attempt to make him renounce his faith. He was arrested at Deungsanjin, Sunwido, while contacting a Chinese ship to open a new nautical route for missionary work. Fr. Andrew Kim Taegon, along with Hyeon Seok-Mun, was executed, while Lim Chi-Baek and others were beaten to death. His last words were, ***"It is for Him that I die. My immortal life is on the point of beginning."*** He was beheaded on September 1846 at the age of 25. **His martyrdom became a major symbol of faith and resilience in Korean Catholic history, and he was later canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1984, along with 102 other Korean martyrs.**



St. Andrew Kim Taegon

1866 *Byeong-in Persecution*, the Deadliest Persecution

The persecution began in 1866 (the 8th year of King Gojong) and continued until 1873, when Heungseon Daewongun resigned from political power. Catholicism, viewed as a threat to the traditional Confucian hierarchy and social order, faced widespread suppression. This campaign became the deadliest and most brutal persecution of Catholics in Korean history:

- **8,000 Catholics** were executed, including both **native believers and foreign missionaries**.
- It marked the **bloodiest religious persecution** in Korean history.
- Among the martyrs were **Bishop Siméon-François Berneux** and other members of the **Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP)**



Bishop Siméon-François Berneux

1886 Catholicism Legalized after France-Korea Treaty of Amity

On June 4, 1886, France and Korea signed the Treaty of Amity, establishing diplomatic and commercial relations. **The treaty protected French missionaries, ended formal state persecution of Catholics, and allowed Catholicism to spread more freely in Korea.**

1910 Japan Occupied Korea

on August 22, 1910 through a treaty signed by a pro-Japanese official, officially incorporating Korea into the Japanese Empire. The occupation marked the formal end of Korea's sovereignty and its transformation into a Japanese colony. **Japan's colonial rule involved efforts to suppress Korean culture, language, and history, including forced name changes and the banning of the Korean language in schools.** Japan tolerated Catholicism as part of its effort to appear modern and civilized on the world stage. **Catholic Church operated under strict Japanese surveillance.**

1945 Korea Liberated after WWII.

After Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, Catholicism entered a new era of freedom and growth. **Catholic Church re-established openly in South Korea.** After years of forced Shinto workshop and cultural suppression by Japan, Catholics could now worship freely, use Korean language in liturgy and education, reopen and expand Catholic schools, churches, and seminaries.

Saenamteo Martyrs' Shrine



Saenamteo is located on the north bank of the Han River in Seoul, South Korea. Saenamteo is a place where the Joseon dynasty used to execute political offenses. It is most famous as the place of execution of Catholic martyrs during four anti-Catholic persecutions in the 19th century

occurring in 1801, 1839, 1846, and 1866. The victims included Korean, French, and Chinese priests and missionaries and laypeople.

Fr. Zhou Wen-mo (James) was the first martyr of Saenamteo in May 31, 1801 during **Shin-yu Persecution** in Korean history. In 1893 during **Gi-hae Persecution** Fr. Imbert, the second archbishop of the Joseon Diocese also died with Fr. Maubant and Fr. Chastan in Saenamteo. Increasing oppression on Catholicism such as **Byeong-oh** (1946) and **Byeong-in** (1866) persecutions, brought about a series of martyrs: the first Korean priest, Fr. Andrew Kim Taegon, Hyeon Seok-Mun (Charles), the fourth archbishop Fr. Berneux, Fr. Bretenieres, Fr. Beaulieu, Fr. Dorie, Fr. Petitnicolas, Fr. Pourthie, Jeon Ui-Bae (Mark), and U Se-Yeong (Alexio). The Korean Catholic Church designated Saenamteo as a martyrs' shrine in 1950.

Prayer to St. Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang, and Companions

O God, who have been pleased to increase
your adopted children in all the world,
and who made the blood of the Martyrs
Saint Andrew Kim Taegon and his companions
a most fruitful seed of Christians,
grant that we may be defended by their help
and profit always from their example.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

*"This is my last hour of life, listen to me attentively:
if I have held communication with foreigners,
it has been for my religion and for my God.
It is for Him that I die.
My immortal life is on the point of beginning.
Become Christians if you wish to be happy after death
because God has eternal chastisements in store
for those who have refused to know Him."*

- The last words of St. Andrew Kim Taegon

**103 Saint & 124 Blessed
Korean Martyrs**

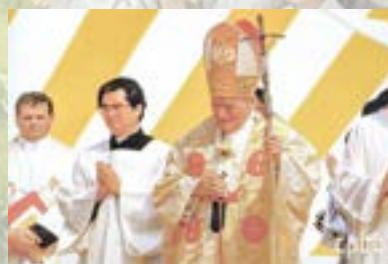
103 Korean Saint Martyrs

Catholicism entered Korea in 1603, introduced by Korean scholars who had encountered it in China. The faith spread quickly, but conflicted with Confucian traditions, especially ancestral rites. The Joseon government viewed Catholics as a threat to social order and loyalty to the state. As a result, waves of persecutions led to thousands of deaths.

79 martyrs during the Gi-Hae and Byeong-oh Persecutions were beatified to the blessed in 1925, and 24 martyrs from Byeong-in Persecution became blessed in 1968. Finally, the 103 martyrs were canonized to the sainthood in 1984.

The group of 103 canonized martyrs consists of **93 Korean lay people** and **10 French missionaries**. This includes **10 Clergies** - both Korean and French priests such as St. Andrew Kim Taegon; **laypeople (men and women)** – the largest group, demonstrating that the faith was truly a lay-led movement; and **children and young people** – including the youngest martyr, Peter Yu Tae-chol at age 13. Together, these 103 saints represent the **heart of Korea's Catholic identity**: a Church founded by laypeople, defended by families, strengthened by foreign missionaries, and made holy by the courage of the young and old alike.

On May 6th 1984, Pope John Paul II canonised 103 Korean martyrs during a ceremony at Yeouido Plaza in Seoul. It was a landmark moment - the first time Korean Catholics were elevated to sainthood and broke the tradition of holding canonizations in Rome, as the Pope visited Korea to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the Catholic Church in Korea.



124 Korean Blessed Martyrs

The 124 Korean Blessed Martyrs were beatified by Pope Francis on August 16, 2014, in Seoul, South Korea. The event was held at **Gwanghwamun Gate** in central Seoul. This location was chosen for its historical significance, as it was near where many of the martyrs were killed. An immense crowd of an estimated 800,000 to one million people, including both Catholics and non-Catholics, gathered for the open-air Mass. This was one of the largest beatification ceremonies in the history of the Catholic Church.

It was only the second time a Pope had beatified martyrs outside of Rome (the first also being in Korea, when Pope John Paul II canonized the 103 Korean Martyrs in 1984). Pope Francis's decision to travel to Korea for the ceremony underscored the importance of the Korean Church and its unique history.

The 124 Korean Blessed Martyrs are a group of Catholic martyrs who were persecuted and killed for their faith in Korea during the 18th and 19th centuries, focusing on later persecutions and additional recognized martyrs including more Korean catechists, young children, and faithful laypeople. The group consists of 123 laypeople and one Chinese priest, Father James Zhou Wenmo, who was the first missionary to secretly enter Korea. The large number of laypeople highlights the unique origins of the Korean Catholic Church. The cause for their beatification is named after **Paul Yun Ji-chung, who is considered the first martyr of the Korean Church**. He and his cousin were beheaded in 1791 for violating Confucian rituals by giving his mother a Catholic burial.



Bl. Paul Yun Ji-chung (복자 윤지충 바오로)



Blessed Paul Yun Ji-chung (1759-1791) was a Korean Catholic layman, considered one of **the first Korean martyrs**, who was beatified by Pope Francis in 2014.

He and his companion James Kwon Sang-yeon were executed in 1791 for refusing to participate in traditional Confucian ancestral rites for Yun's mother, which was considered a violation of the Joseon dynasty's laws against Catholicism. **Paul Yun Ji-chung's**

execution, along with that of 123 martyrs, marks a significant early period of persecution for the Catholic Church in Korea.

The discovery and confirmation of the remains of Paul Yun Ji-chung highlighted the authenticity of their martyrdom and the deep roots of the Catholic faith in Korea. Pope Francis praised Paul Yun Ji-chung for his call to, "**put Christ first**," and "**for the victory of God's love**," in his life and death.

St. Anna Pak Agi (성녀 박아기 안나)



St. Anna Park Agi (1783 - 1839), born in Gangcheon near Han River, was raised in a Catholic household and deeply devoted to God, even though she struggled to memorize prayers. She once said, ***I may not know God as much as I want, but I can try to love Him with all my heart.***

At eighteen, she married fellow Catholic Francis Tae Mun-haeong, and they had five children. Though not poor, Anna lived simply, teaching her family the faith and meditating often on Christ's Passion.

During the 1839 Gihae Persecution, Anna was arrested with her husband and eldest son. **Anna remained firm.** ***"Why, for a few days more of life, would you risk eternal death?"*** she told them. Despite brutal torture and pressure from guards and friends, she refused to deny Christ, ***"I have decided to preserve my faith and die for it."*** After three months of beatings and imprisonment, May 24, 1839, at age 57, Anna was beheaded at Seosomun with eight other believers. Her courage, faith, and love for Christ made her not just a mother of five, but a mother of saints. She was canonized in 1984 by Pope John Paul II among the 103 Korean Martyrs.

St. Paul Chong Hasang (성 정하상 바오로)



Saint Paul Chong Hasang (1795–1839) was a foundational lay leader of the early Korean Catholic Church during a time of intense persecution. Born into a noble and devout family, his father Jeong Yak-jong was martyred in the 1801 Sinyu Persecution.

After witnessing the deaths of his father and brother, Chong grew up in a hidden Christian village and committed his life to rebuilding the

persecuted Church. In the absence of clergy, he traveled to Beijing nine times between 1816 and 1826, risking his life to seek help from the Catholic Church. **In 1825, he boldly petitioned Pope Gregory XVI to ordain native Korean priests.** Deeply moved, the Pope called the request “a miracle of the Lord in the East,” and soon after, **the Diocese of Joseon was established.**

During the training for the priesthood under Bishop Imbert, he was arrested during the 1839 Gihae Persecution. On September 22, 1839, Chong was executed at age 45, along with his mother and sister. Though never ordained, Chong’s work paved the way for Korea’s native clergy, including Saint Andrew Kim Taegon. Canonized in 1984, he is honored as a martyr, scholar, and spiritual father of the Korean Church.

St. Andrew Kim Taegon (성 김대건 안드레아)



St. Andrew Kim Taegon (1821–1846) is the first native Korean Catholic priest and the patron saint of Korea. He was born on August 21, 1821, in Solmoe, Chungcheong Province, into a Catholic family during a time of severe persecution. His father, Ignatius Chejun Kim, was later martyred for the faith in 1839.

He traveled to Macau to study for the priesthood, as seminaries were not allowed in Korea. **He was ordained a priest in Shanghai in 1845 by French bishop Jean-Joseph Ferréol.** After ordination, he returned to Korea to secretly minister to the growing but persecuted Catholic community, teaching, administering sacraments, and strengthening the faithful.

In 1846, at age 25, he was captured near Seoul while trying to arrange for missionaries to enter Korea. After months of torture, he was executed by beheading on September 16, 1846, at Saenamteo, on the banks of the Han River near Seoul.

He was canonized in 1984 by Pope John Paul II along with 102 other Korean martyrs. His feast day is celebrated on September 20 (together with the Korean Martyrs) and also on September 16 in Korea. He is remembered for his courage, missionary zeal, and dedication to bringing the Catholic faith to Korea despite life-threatening persecution.

Saint Sisters Agnes Kim Hyoju (성녀 김효주 아녜스) & Columba Kim Hyoim (성녀 김효임 골룸바)



Born into a wealthy but anti-Christian household on Bamseom Island, Hyoim (1814-1839) and Hyoju (1816-1839), the sisters faced a father who violently rejected the faith. After his death, their mother and all six children converted to Catholicism. **From baptism, the sisters, Columba, Agnes, and Clara, vowed virginity and chose a life of prayer, fasting, and service to the poor, rejecting wealth and marriage.**

In 1839, during the Gihae Persecution, the family was betrayed. **Agnes was arrested first, and Columba, witnessing her rough treatment, bravely stepped forward to join her.** At the Seoul Police Bureau, they boldly defended their faith, refusing to betray fellow Catholics or renounce God. Subjected to brutal tortures including beatings, burning skewers, and sexual humiliation, **they endured all in silence and prayer.** The sisters refused to betray anyone, including their brother Antonio. **Agnes was beheaded on September 3, 1839 at age 23 and Columba followed on September 26 at age 25.** Their unwavering faith and defense of both virginity and martyrdom became a powerful witness for the Korean Church. They were canonized in 1984 by Pope John Paul II among the 103 Korean martyrs.

St. Peter Yu Tae-chol (성 유대철 베드로)



Saint Peter Yu Tae-chol (1826-1839) was the son of Saint Augustine Yu Jin-gil, a prominent lay Catholic who helped bring foreign priests to Joseon. Though his father was devout, Peter faced opposition at home from his mother and sister who mocked his faith. Yet he

remained respectful and faithful.

During the 1839 Gihae Persecution, 14-year-old Peter, inspired by the martyrs, voluntarily turned himself in. Imprisoned and tortured through fourteen brutal interrogations, he endured over 600 lashes and 45 beatings without wavering. **When threatened with fire, he opened his mouth in defiance, stunning his captors.** Fellow prisoners marveled at his strength and humility. Fearing public reaction, authorities executed him in secret on October 31, 1839. **He was only 13.** Peter's martyrdom was a profound witness to his love for Christ. He was beatified in 1925 and canonized in 1984 by Pope John Paul II.

Foreign Martyrs in Korea

Blessed James Zhou Wenmo (복자 주문모 야고보)

The First Missionary Priest & Martyr in Korea



Blessed James Zhou Wenmo (1752 - 1801) is the first missionary priest to enter Korea during the Joseon Dynasty, which had a strict closed-door policy at the time. Born in Suzhou, China in 1752, he lost his parents early in life and were raised by his grandmother. He became a priest as one of the first graduates at Beijing Archdiocese seminary. At that time, Bishop Gouvea in Beijing was planning to send a clergy to Joseon. He chose Fr. Zhou, who had a strong faith and looked similar to Joseon people.

After leaving Beijing in February 1794, Fr. Zhou waited at Yodong area until the Amnok River froze enough to cross across. On the appointed date, he went to a town located on the border between China and Joseon to meet secret envoys sent from Joseon and entered Joseon on the night of December 24. Since then, Fr. Zhou stayed at the house of a faithful Christian so that he could learn Hangul, the Korean alphabets. On Easter Sunday of 1795, he celebrated the first mass on Korean soil. After his entry was revealed, he escaped to female President Colombia Kang Wan-sook's house and continued to pray in many areas in secrecy. Despite having to remain in hiding, Fr. Zhou oversaw significant growth in the Catholic community, which reportedly grew to about 10,000 members by 1800 after six years.

After the death of the relatively tolerant King Jeongjo in 1800, a new period of intense persecution known as the Shin-yu Persecution began in 1801. Facing threats to his followers, Fr. Zhou turned himself in to the authorities in hopes of ending the persecution. He was beheaded on May 31, 1801, at Saenamteo in Seoul, becoming the first priest to be martyred in Korea. His sacrifice and the thousands of other martyrs during the persecution solidified the foundations of the Korean Catholic Church. Fr. Zhou was beatified along with 123 Korean martyrs by Pope Francis in 2014.

The Foreign Martyrs from Paris Foreign Missions Society

The foreign martyrs in Korea were primarily **missionaries from the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP)** who came to Korea in the late 18th and 19th centuries to serve the growing Catholic community. Because Korea had very few priests at the time, these missionaries risked arrest, torture, and execution to administer sacraments, teach catechism, and support the faithful.

They provided **sacraments, guidance, and education** when Korea had almost no native priests. They also helped **train catechists**, who then led local communities in the absence of clergy. Their martyrdom inspired the Korean faithful and strengthened the lay-led Church, which later produced native priests like **St. Andrew Kim Taegon**.



1864 departures of MEP missionaries. The four on the left would become martyrs in Korea.

10 French Missionary Martyrs in Korea canonized in 1984 as part of 103 Saint Martyrs

Name	Birth Date	Death Date
St. Laurent Imbert	1796	1839 Gi-hae Persecution
St. Jacques-Honoré Chastan	1803	
St. Pierre-Philibert Maubant	1803	
St. Antoine Daveluy	1793	1866 Byeong-in Persecution
St. Siméon-François Berneux	1814	
St. Pierre Henri Dorie	1839	
St. Pierre Aumaître	1830	
St. Louis Beaulieu	1840	
St. Just de Bretenières	1838	
St. Martin-Luc Huin	1830	

St. Laurent-Marie-Joseph Imbert



Saint Laurent Imbert (1796-1839) was born in southern France and raised in a devout Christian family. Resourceful from a young age, he funded his education by making rosaries and later joined the Paris Foreign Missions Society. **Ordained in 1819, he set sail for Asia the following year.** In 1821, he briefly stopped in Singapore, when he wrote the first Catholic report on the fledgling mission – laying the foundation for the Church

there. Imbert ministered in Vietnam and then China for over a decade, enduring hardship and founding a seminary in Sichuan.

In 1837, he was secretly consecrated as a bishop and entered Korea during a wave of persecution. There, he ministered in hiding - preaching, hearing confessions, and forming future priests. Captured in 1839, Bishop Imbert wrote a letter urging two fellow priests to surrender with him: "***The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.***" Imprisoned, tortured, and beheaded on September 21, 1839, at Saenamteo. Bishop Imbert was canonized in 1984 as one of the 103 Korean Martyrs.

St. Pierre-Philibert Maubant



Saint Pierre Maubant (1803-1839) was born in Normandy and ordained in 1829. He joined the Paris Foreign Missions Society and, after a brief mission in China, was **sent to Korea in 1839**.

As the **first French priest to enter Korea**, he ministered in secret and helped **baptize more than 2,000 catechumens in a single year**. He also selected Andrew Kim Taegon and others as candidates for the **priesthood**. His tireless and courageous work soon drew

attention, and he was arrested and executed by beheading on September 21, 1839 during Gihae Persecution in Seoul.

St. Jacques-Honoré Chastan



Saint Jacques-Honoré Chastan (1803-1839), was born in 1803 in the French Alps, the same year as Saint Pierre Maubant, and was ordained in 1826. He entered the missions in 1827 and, after serving in Thailand and Malaysia, reached **Korea in 1836 following a grueling journey.**

He ministered with humility and love for the faithful. “***We are going to a too great celebration to allow sadness,***” he wrote before his arrest, expressing his joy in martyrdom. When persecution escalated, Bishop Imbert surrendered himself to protect the laity and called on Maubant and Chastan to do the same. Trusting in God, they obeyed. The three were tortured and beheaded on September 21, 1839, in Seoul. They were 36 years old. Canonized in 1984 as one of the 103 Korean Martyrs, they are remembered for their fearless love and priestly sacrifice.

Venerable Emil Joseph Kapaun

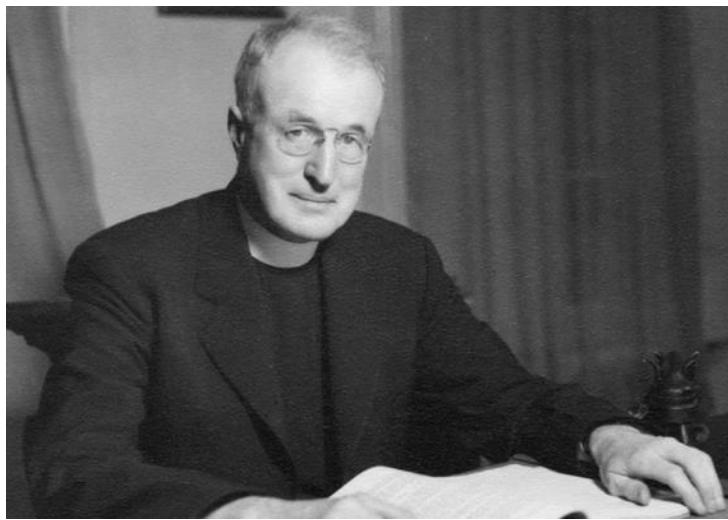


Venerable Emil Kapaun (1916-1951) was born in Pilsen, Kansas, United States and ordained a priest in 1940. **He was a Catholic priest martyr and a United States Army chaplain during World War II and the Korean War. He became known for his selflessness, courage, and deep commitment to caring for the physical and spiritual well-being of his troops.** Kapaun was a chaplain in the Burma Theater of World War II, then served again as a chaplain with the U.S. Army in Korea, providing spiritual and emotional support to American soldiers. He often celebrated Mass on the battlefield and led secret prayer services to strengthen morale.

During the Korean War, he was captured and **died in a prisoner-of-war camp on**

May 23, 1951. Fr. Emil Joseph Kapaun became a national hero for his extraordinary bravery and compassion as a U.S. Army chaplain during the Korean War. In 2013, he posthumously received the **Medal of Honor** for his actions in Korea. In 1993, Pope John Paul II declared him a **Servant of God**, the first stage on the path to canonization, and in 2025, Pope Francis declared him **Venerable**, the next stage on the path to canonization.

Bishop Patrick James Byrne



Bishop Patrick Byrne (1888-1950) was born in Washington D.C., United States. Ordained as a priest in 1915, he joined the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America (Maryknoll).

He was assigned for missions in Korea and Japan, serving as

Prefect Apostolic of Pyongyang from 1927 to 1929, **Perfect Apostolic of Kyoto** (Japan) from 1937 to 1940, **Apostolic Visitor to Korea** from 1947 to 1949, and the first **Apostolic Delegate to Korea** from 1949 to 1950. **He was ordained bishop in 1949 at the age of 60** at the dawn of the Cold War, when Korea was dividing between the communist North, backed by China and the Soviet Union, and the South supported by the United States.

In July 1950, after the capture of Seoul by North Korean forces, **Bishop Byrne was arrested and put on trial. Though threatened with death, he refused to denounce the United States, the United Nations, or the Vatican. During a four-month forced march, he endured hard weather, starvation, and illness.** As pneumonia set in and he realized death was near, he remained steadfast in faith and died in custody in Korea. He declared:

“After the privilege of my priesthood, I regard this privilege of having suffered for Christ with all of you as the greatest of my life.”

Early Church Martyrs

Martyrdom of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ

St. Peter



Crucified upside down in Rome under Nero.

St. Andrew



Crucified on an X-shaped cross in Patras, Greece.

St. James the Greater



Beheaded in Jerusalem (Acts 12:2).

St. John



Exiled to Patmos, died naturally in Ephesus (tradition: survived boiling oil).

St. Philip



Martyred in Hierapolis (crucifixion or stoning).

St. Bartholomew



Flayed alive and beheaded in Armenia.

St. Matthew



Martyred in Ethiopia (stabbed or burned).

St. Thomas



Speared to death while praying in India.

St. James the Less



Beaten, stoned, and clubbed in Jerusalem.

St. Jude



Martyred in Persia (killed with axe/club).

St. Simon the Zealot



Martyred in Persia (sawn in half or crucified, traditions vary).

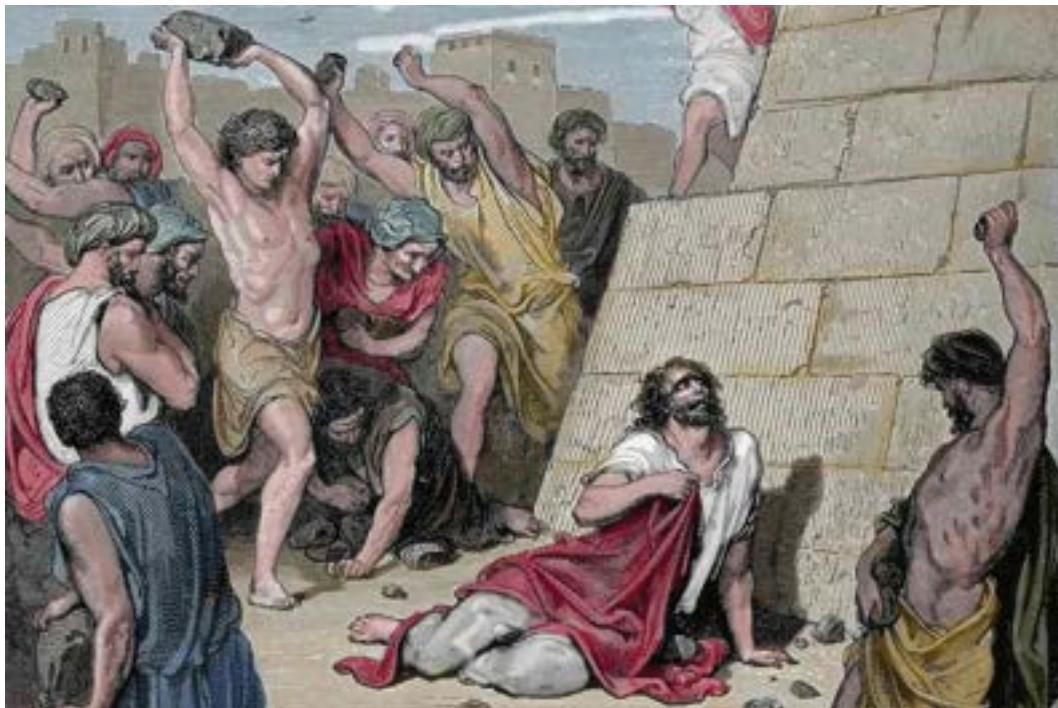
St. Matthias



Stoned and beheaded (Jerusalem/Ethiopia).

St. Stephen

First Martyr of the Church



St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was chosen as one of the first deacons of the Church. Known for his wisdom and faith, he boldly proclaimed Christ before the Sanhedrin. Accused of blasphemy, he delivered a powerful speech recounting Israel's history and pointing to Jesus as the Messiah. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he saw a vision of Christ standing at the right hand of God. Enraged, the crowd dragged him outside the city and stoned him. As he was dying, **Stephen prayed for his persecutors:** 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' His death marked the beginning of widespread persecution of Christians.

The Timeline of the Persecution under the Roman Empire

Nero (54-68 AD)

Great Fire of Rome, 64 AD. Methods: burned alive, crucifixion, torn by dogs, human torches. Victims: hundreds (tradition: Peter and Paul martyred).

Domitian (81-96 AD)

Methods: executions, exile (John to Patmos). Victims: unknown, many elites accused of 'atheism'.

Trajan (98-117 AD)

Policy: Christians executed if accused and refusing sacrifice. Victims: many local martyrs, incl. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 107 AD).

Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD)

Methods: beheadings, torture, beasts. Victims: Martyrs of Lyon (177 AD), Justin Martyr.

Septimius Severus (193-211 AD)

Methods: beheadings, torture. Victims: Perpetua and Felicity (203 AD).

Decius (249 - 251 AD)

Methods: forced sacrifice, imprisonment, torture, execution. Victims: thousands; Pope Fabian (250 AD).

Valerian (253 - 260 AD)

Methods: executions, property seizure, exile. Victims: Pope Sixtus II, deacon St. Lawrence, Cyprian of Carthage.

Diocletian (284 - 305 AD)

Great Persecution (303–311 AD). Methods: burning Scriptures, imprisonment, torture, execution. Victims: tens of thousands; worst persecution in Roman history.

Martyrs under the Roman Empire

St. Peter



Crucified upside down in Rome under Emperor Nero (c. 64–67 AD).

St. Paul



Beheaded in Rome under Nero (c. 64–67 AD).

St. Ignatius of Antioch



Martyred in Rome, thrown to beasts under Emperor Trajan (107 AD).

St. Polycarp of Smyrna



Burned and stabbed under Marcus Aurelius (155 AD).

St. Perpetua & Felicity



Executed in Carthage under Septimius Severus (203 AD).

St. Lawrence of Rome



Burned on a gridiron under Emperor Valerian (258 AD).

St. Cyprian of Carthage



Beheaded under Emperor Valerian (258 AD).

St. Agnes of Rome



Virgin martyr, killed during Diocletian's persecution (c. 304 AD).

St. Sebastian



Shot with arrows under Diocletian (c. 288 AD).

St. Catherine of Alexandria



Tortured and beheaded in the Great Persecution (c. 305 AD).

“The Blood of Martyrs is

the Seed of the Church.”

- Tertullian

Martyrs from the World Around Us

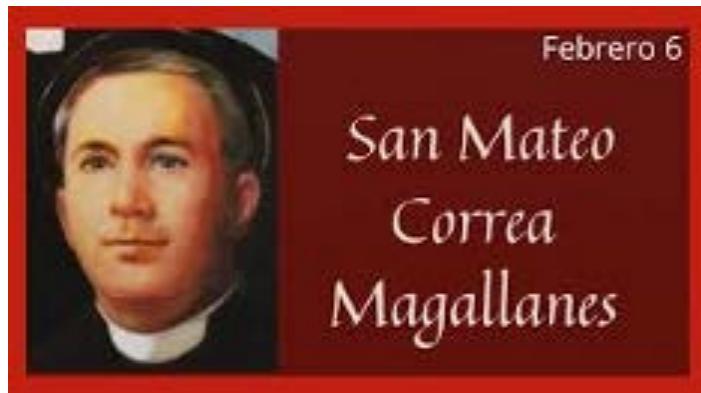
Mexican Martyrs

St. José Sánchez del Río (1913–1928)



St. José Sánchez del Río was a 14-year-old boy who joined the Cristero movement during the persecution of the Catholic Church in Mexico. Captured by government forces, he refused to renounce his faith. He was tortured and executed, crying out '¡Viva Cristo Rey!' ('Long live Christ the King!'). Canonized by Pope Francis in 2016, he is a patron of youth and a symbol of courage.

St. Cristóbal Magallanes (1869–1927) & St. Mateo Correa Magallanes (1866–1927)



St. Cristóbal Magallanes was a parish priest and leader who organized seminaries and supported the faith during the Mexican persecution. He was arrested without trial and executed in 1927.

St. Mateo Correa Magallanes was a priest devoted to caring for the poor and prisoners. He was martyred after refusing to break the seal of confession, protecting the sacred trust of his flock. Both men were canonized in 2000 by Pope John Paul II among the 25 Mexican Martyrs.

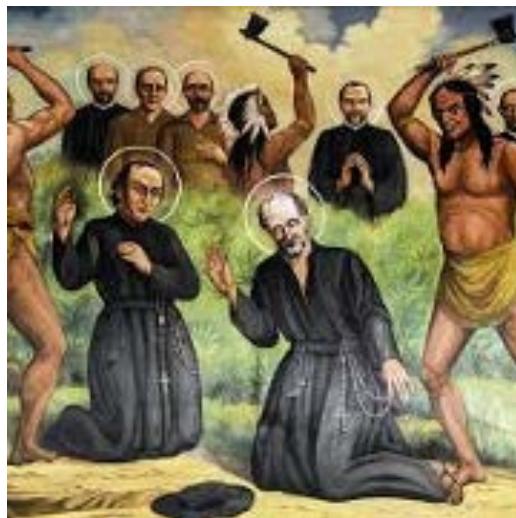
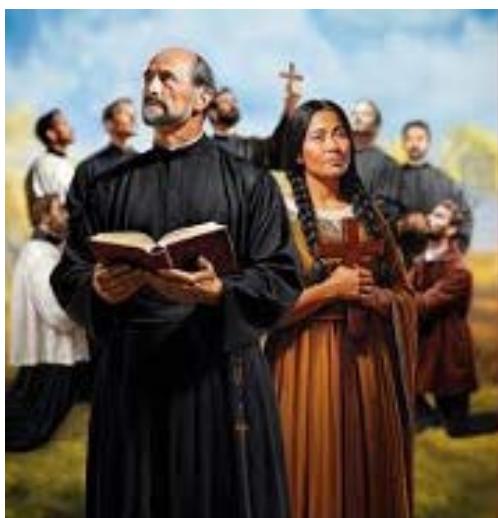
St. Miguel Agustín Pro (1891–1927)



Viva Cristo Rey!

St. Miguel Agustín Pro was a Jesuit priest who carried out a secret ministry during the persecution of the Church in Mexico. He celebrated Mass in homes, heard confessions, and helped the poor while in constant danger. Falsely accused of involvement in a political plot, he was executed by firing squad in 1927. With arms outstretched in the form of a cross, his last words were “Viva Cristo Rey!” His martyrdom was captured in photographs that spread worldwide as testimony of his faith.

North American Martyrs

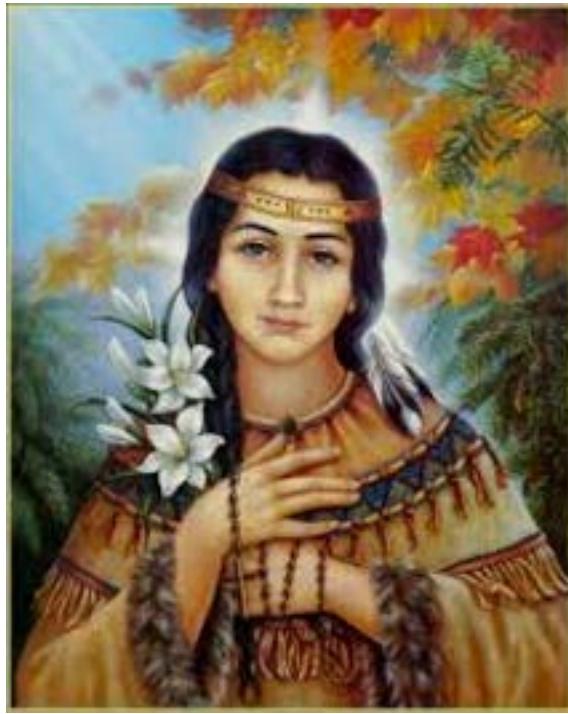


The North American Martyrs were eight Jesuit missionaries from France who served among the Indigenous peoples of North America during the 17th century. They were killed between 1642 and 1649 in present-day Canada and upstate New York. Their courage, faith, and sacrifice are honored in the Catholic Church, where they were canonized as saints in 1930.

- St. Isaac Jogues (1607–1646): Missionary to the Huron and Iroquois, tortured and martyred in New York.
- St. Jean de Brébeuf (1593–1649): Known for his strength and writings about the Huron language; martyred in Canada.
- St. Gabriel Lalemant (1610–1649): Companion of Brébeuf, martyred in Canada.
- St. Antoine Daniel (1601–1648): Killed while defending his flock during an Iroquois raid.
- St. Charles Garnier (1606–1649): Died while serving Huron converts.
- St. Noël Chabanel (1613–1649): Teacher of Huron children, killed by a disaffected convert.
- St. René Goupil (1608–1642): Lay brother and physician, first to be martyred.
- St. Jean de Lalande (d. 1646): Young layman assisting Isaac Jogues, killed with him.



St. Isaac Jogues



St. Kateri Tekakwitha

The North American Martyrs' sacrifice bore fruit in the spread of Christianity across North America, remembered in shrines such as Midland, Ontario, and Auriesville, New York. They stand as examples of faith, courage, and love of Christ.

Ten years after the martyrdom of St Isaac Jogues, a Mohawk girl named Kateri Tekakwitha was born to a Mohawk chief and a Christian Algonquin mother in New York. Orphaned and left partially blind by smallpox, she began religious instruction and was baptized a Catholic on Easter Sunday 1676. Known as the "Lily of the Mohawks," she died on April 17, 1680, at age twenty-four.

Chinese Martyrs



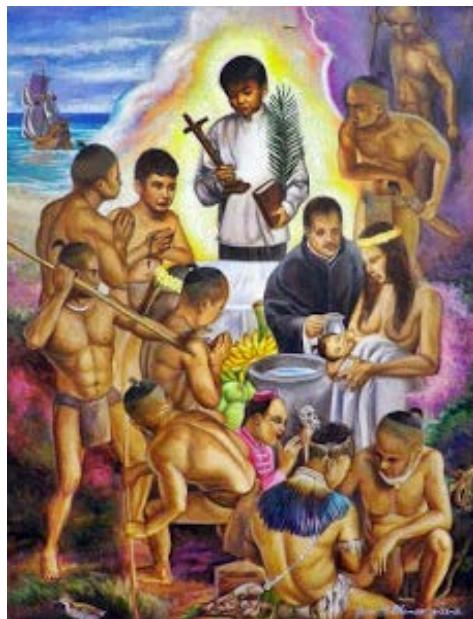
The Chinese Martyrs gave their lives in witness to the Catholic faith during waves of persecution. Notably, **St. Augustine Zhao Rong and companions** were martyred in the 19th and early 20th centuries. They stand as powerful examples of courage and steadfastness in the face of hostility.

Vietnamese Martyrs



The Vietnamese Martyrs, including [St. Andrew Dũng-Lạc and companions](#), suffered persecution in the 18th and 19th centuries. Their witness reveals the strength of faith and the spread of the Gospel in Vietnam despite severe opposition.

Philippine Martyrs



The Philippine Martyrs include missionaries and local faithful who offered their lives for Christ in the Philippines. They are remembered for their evangelizing zeal and commitment to the Catholic Church in times of trial.

St Lorenzo Ruiz and **St. Pedro Calungsod** are among the many who have given their lives for the sake of Jesus and the church.

Catholic Pilgrimage in Seoul

The Significance of the Seoul Pilgrimage Routes

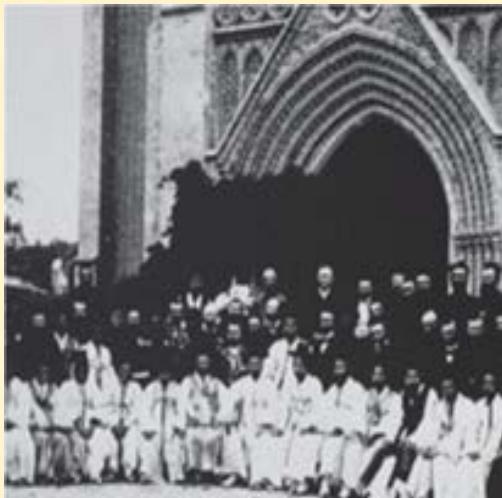


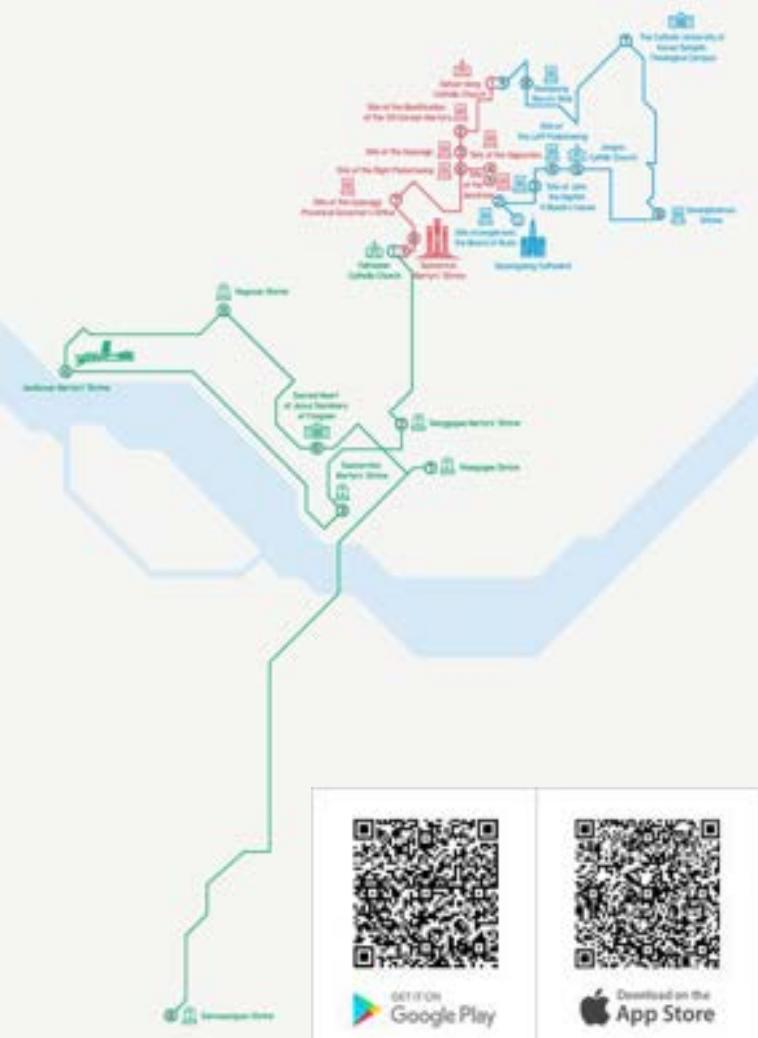
International Pilgrimage Sites
**Officially Recognized
by the Vatican
Seoul Pilgrimage Route**

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



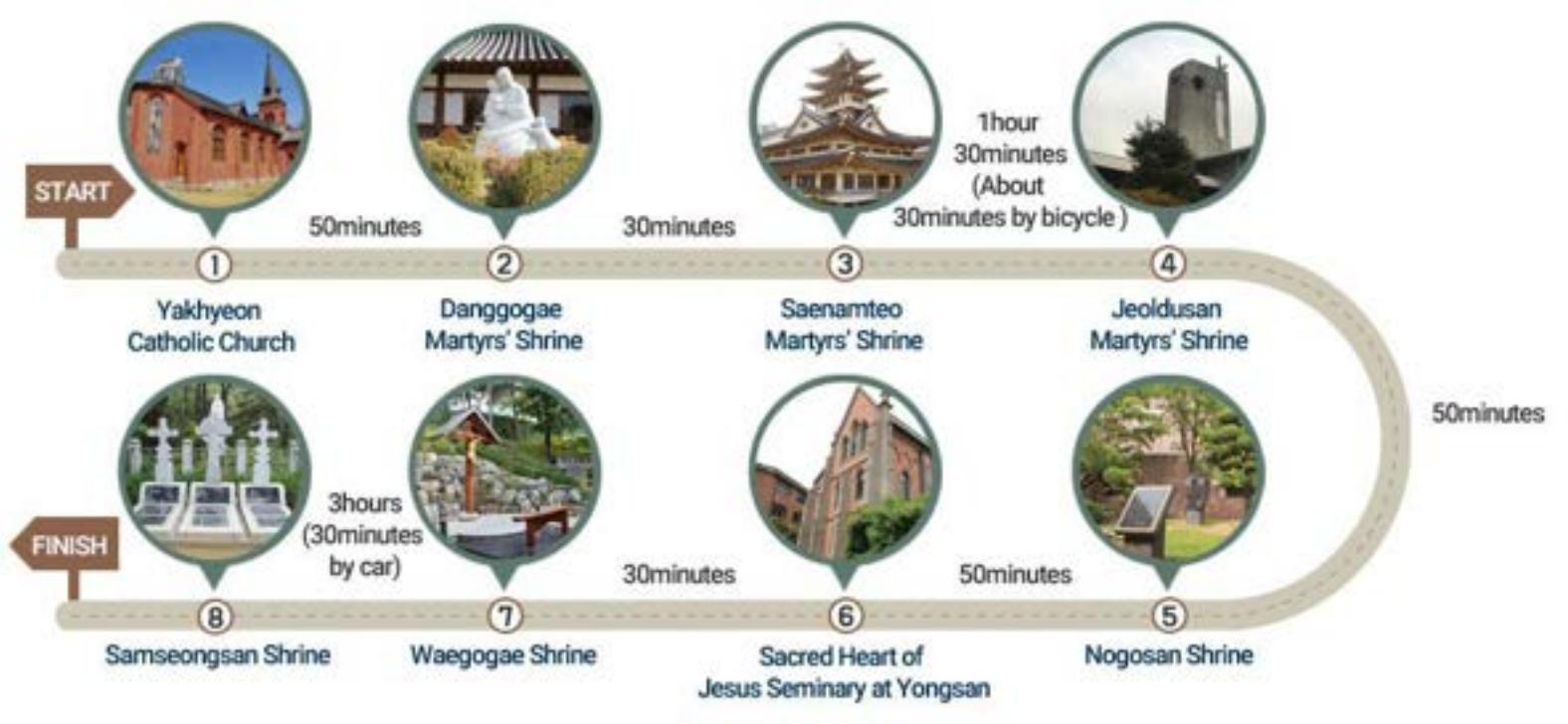
During the Joseon Dynasty, Catholicism was regarded as an evil practice for prioritizing the word of God over the commands of the king, and a series of Catholic persecutions ensued. **The Eternal Life Road**, which retains the traces of the history of these persecutions, includes the historically significant **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

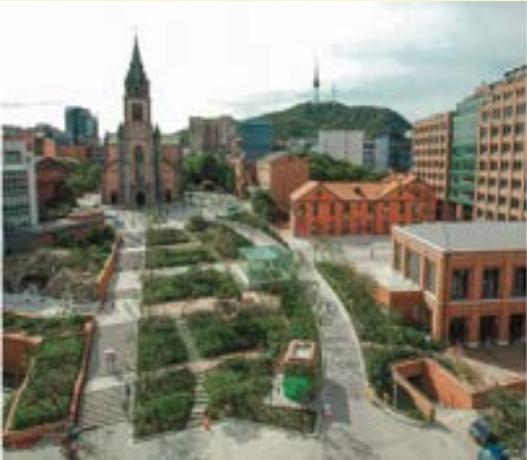


This route connecting some of the most iconic martyrs' shrines in Seoul has been named the **Unity Road** to encourage believers to follow the example set by the martyrs and uphold the will of God.

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**.

Catholic Pilgrimage Outside Seoul

Mirinae Holy Ground (Anseong)



Mirinae (“Milky Way”) **Holy Ground** is the burial site of St. **Andrew Kim Taegon** (1821–1846), the first native priest of Korea and martyr of the faith. During the persecutions, Catholics would light lanterns along the path to Mirinae, making it glow like the Milky Way. Today, it is a pilgrimage center with a large cathedral, rosary paths, and peaceful gardens for reflection.

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” — 2 Timothy 4:7

Solmoe Holy Ground (Dangjin)



Solmoe is the birthplace of St. Andrew Kim Taegon, Korea's first Catholic priest. It is home to a shrine, cathedral, and memorial sites dedicated to his legacy. Surrounded by peaceful forests and hills, Solmoe is a symbol of faith passed down through generations, honoring the courage of early Catholics in Korea.

“Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”
— Revelation 2:10

Chon Jin Am (Gwangju, Gyeonggi-do)



Chon Jin Am is considered the **birthplace of Korean Catholicism**, where lay leaders first gathered to study and share the faith. It now features a Way of the Cross (Stations of the Cross) and prayer gardens. Pilgrims come here to honor the devotion and sacrifice of early believers who risked their lives to follow Christ.

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” — Matthew 18:20

Haemi Martyrdom Holy Ground (Seosan)



The Haemi Martyrdom Holy Ground is the site where nearly 1,000 Catholics were buried alive during the persecutions of the 19th century. It stands today as a powerful witness to the endurance of faith and the ultimate sacrifice of countless unnamed martyrs. A memorial tower and prayer spaces invite pilgrims to remember and reflect.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” — Matthew 5:10

Gongseri Catholic Church (Asan)



Built in 1897, Gongseri Catholic Church is one of the oldest Catholic churches in Chungcheongnam-do. Known for its beautiful blend of Korean and Western architectural styles, it also serves as a memorial site for 32 martyrs who gave their lives for their faith. It remains an active parish and a place of pilgrimage.

*“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and it dies,
it bears much fruit.” — John 12:24*

Naepo Martyrs' Shrine (Hongseong, Chungcheongnamdo)



The Naepo Martyrs' Shrine commemorates Catholics who were executed during the 19th-century persecutions in the Naepo region. It stands as a solemn reminder of the price of faith, with a church, memorial hall, and prayer spaces dedicated to those who gave their lives for Christ. The shrine continues to inspire pilgrims with the witness of steadfast devotion and sacrifice.

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." — Matthew 10:28

Baeti Shrine (Yesan, Chungcheongnam-do)



Baeti Shrine marks the place where St. Andrew Kim Taegon, Korea's first priest, studied Latin and theology in preparation for the priesthood before leaving for Macau. This hidden valley became a refuge for believers during the persecutions and today is home to a beautiful shrine and seminary memorial. Pilgrims visit to honor his dedication and the perseverance of the faithful. This was also the pastoral center of Fr. Thomas Yangup Choe where he ministered to Catholic believers from 1853 to 1856.

"And I will appoint for you shepherds after my own heart, who will shepherd you wisely and prudently." — Jeremiah 3: 15

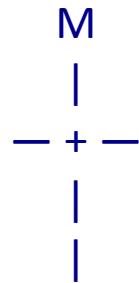
Closing Prayer for Pilgrims

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of faith passed down through the blood of martyrs and the devotion of Your saints.

As we honor these holy sites of Korea, may their witness strengthen our resolve to live faithfully each day. Grant us courage, perseverance, and a deeper love for Your Son, Jesus Christ. May our journey bear fruit in holiness and inspire others to follow You.

Amen.

*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” —
Matthew 5:8*



“Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.”

Modern Korean Catholic Church

Characteristics of the Modern Korean Catholic Church



**Significant
Growth**



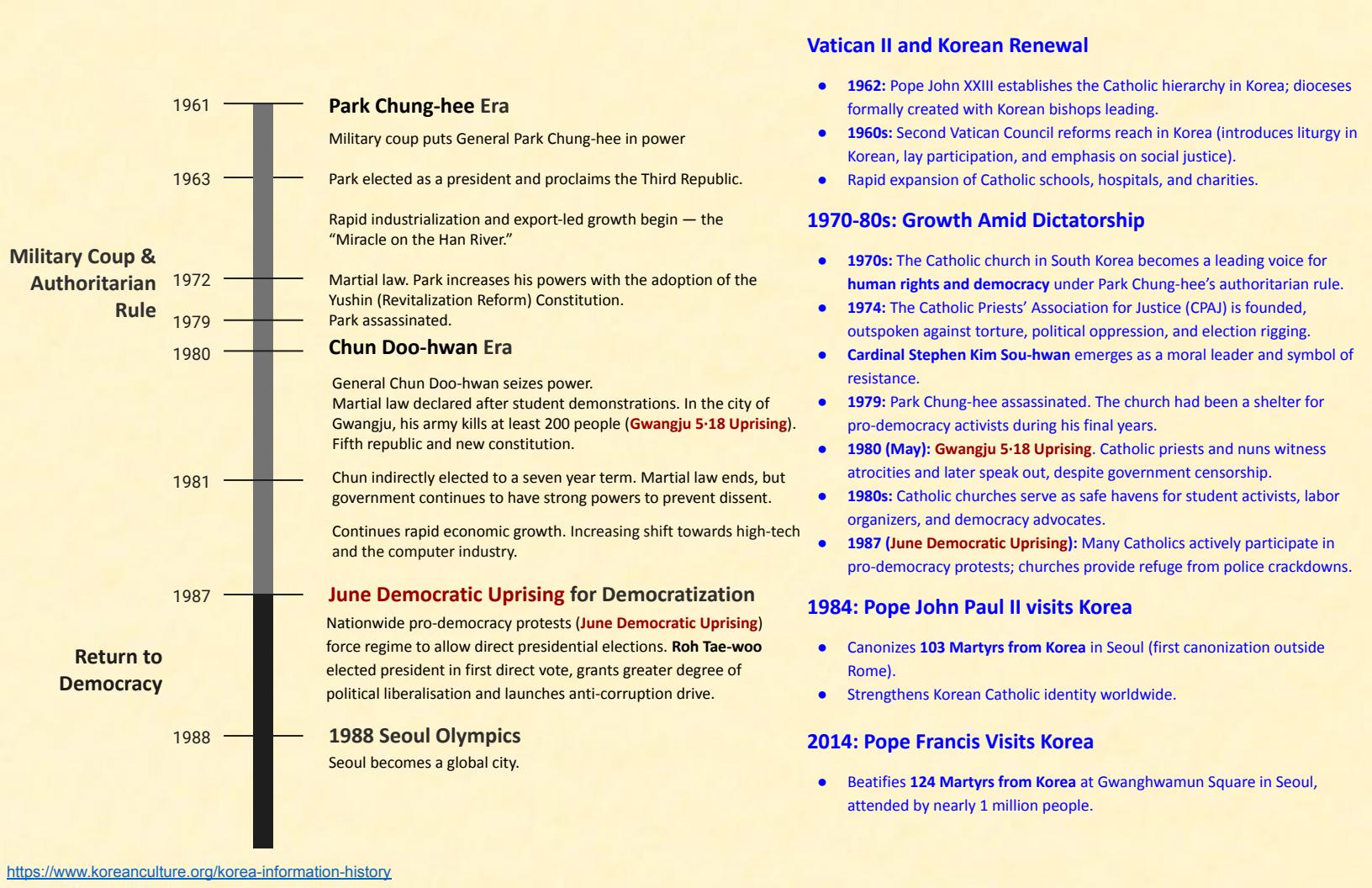
**Deep Commitment
to Social Justice**



**A Growing Role in
Global Missions**

South Korea - Political & Catholic Timeline (1945 - Present)

U.S. Military Administration	1945	Liberation and Division	Liberation on August 15, the feast day of the Assumption of our Lady
	1948	Establishment of Separate Governments	Freedom of religion guaranteed by constitution in South Korea
Authoritarian Rule	1950	Korean War	Korean war disrupts parishes but also strengthens faith as U.S. and UN chaplains provide support.
	1953	Post-war Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Massive growth in Catholic institutions in South Korea with U.S. aid and missionary presence.Korean clergy increase in numbers, though many bishops are still foreign missionaries.Church emphasizes education, social work, and aid to war refugees.
	1960	Democratic Movement April 19 Revolution and Rhee's Resignation	Students, including many Catholics, participate in democracy protests such as April 19 Revolution



Korea Maps

Catholic Dioceses Map



Korea Peninsula Map
after Korean war





Flourishing South Korean Catholic Church

According to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea, the modern Korean Catholic Church is marked by **significant numerical and institutional growth.**



58,000+ baptisms recorded in 2024, marking a **13.7% increase** from the previous year, driven largely by adult converts and family baptisms



The total number of Catholics in Korea reached **nearly 6 million**, about **11.4% of the national population** as of 2024 and a **12,000% increase in 50 years**



Clergy total: 5,751
(5,578 Korean priests, 131 foreign clergy, 40 bishops, 2 cardinals)

Key Factors that Strengthened Catholicism in Korea



Education, Healthcare and Charity Initiatives

Catholic missionaries and Korean clergy built schools, universities, seminaries, hospitals, and orphanages that provided modern education and medical care while serving the poor. These efforts made the church a trusted institution for both spiritual and practical needs, raising its social standing and influence.

Political Involvement

Catholic clergy and lay leaders courageously opposed authoritarian regimes and human rights abuses and supported democracy movements. This commitment aligned the church with the Korean people's struggles, giving Catholicism a reputation as a defender of justice and freedom.

Sense of Community

Catholic parishes became more than worship spaces. They served as social hubs, offering support networks for converts and marginalized groups. The church fostered a strong lay movement, with small faith groups, youth associations, and volunteer organizations. This sense of belonging gave members both spiritual nourishment and social solidarity, helping Catholicism take root in Korean culture.

Vatican II Influence

The reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) encouraged active lay participation, use of the Korean language in worship, and openness to local traditions. These changes empowered Korean Catholics to link faith with social justice, democracy, and cultural identity.



Persecuted North Korean Catholic Church

During the Korean War, **communist troops persecuted** missionaries, foreign religious, and Korean Christians, pursuing them to the south. In North Korea, all monasteries and churches were destroyed. Monks and priests who could not flee to the south were sentenced to death.

Today, the Church in North Korea has **neither clergy nor religious services**. However, according to official data, there are approximately 4,000 North Korean Catholics belonging to the **Korean Catholic Association, controlled by the communist regime**. This association, which is **not recognized by the Vatican**, has only **one church in the country, in Changchun**, which is considered window dressing by the regime.



Bishop Francis Hong Yong-ho

Francis Hong Yong-ho (1906-2013), appointed the **first Bishop of Pyongyang** in 1944, worked to rebuild the Church after Japanese rule but was arrested by North Korean authorities in 1949, accused as an “enemy of the people.” He disappeared without trial or trace, becoming a symbol of courage and faith. **In 2014, the Vatican recognized him as a Servant of God**, the first step toward sainthood.

He represents the **“Hidden Martyrs of the North”** - priests, religious, and lay leaders who suffered persecution in North Korea from 1945 through the Korean War. Churches were destroyed, and the Catholic hierarchy was silenced. Among them was **Msgr. Patrick Chang**, Apostolic Administrator of Hamhung (disappeared in 1950), **Fr. Peter Ryang** (vanished during the purges), and **countless unnamed catechists and lay leaders** who endured imprisonment or death rather than renounce their faith.



Cardinal Stephen Kim Sou-hwan

The Moral Leader of the Nation



The youngest cardinal in the world in 1969, **Stephen Kim Sou-hwan** (1922-2009) used his influence not for power, but for protection. During Korea's pro-democracy protests, he opened Myeongdong Cathedral to students fleeing police brutality. "***Step over me first if you must take them.***" - Cardinal Kim. His courage became a spiritual refuge. He led not just the Church, but the nation with love, clarity, and moral strength. He remains a symbol of mercy and truth.



Advocate of Democracy



Bishop Daniel Ji Hak-sun

(the middle)



Msgr. Pius Cho Chul-hyun

(the second from the left)

Bishop Daniel Ji Hak-sun (1921- 1993) was a bishop of the diocese of Wonju and stood boldly against the Park Chung-hee regime. He was associated with Kim Chi-ha, a poet and social activist, and was arrested in 1974 over allegations of providing financial support to opponents of Park's government and sentenced to death. He was sympathetic to the April Revolution and was a leader of the urban poor and supported nonviolent resistance to the regime. ***"The Church cannot be neutral when the people suffer."*** - Bishop Ji. In the shadows of oppression, he became a voice for human dignity and hope, igniting the conscience of a nation.

Msgr. Pius Cho Chul-hyun (1938-2016) was a distinguished Catholic priest enduring efforts toward democracy and social justice. During the Gwangju Uprising, he volunteered as a Citizens' Settlement Committee member after witnessing citizens being shot. He was subsequently arrested by the military regime and imprisoned alongside future president Kim Dae-jung. He became the first to publicly testify about helicopter gunfire used by the martial law forces during the uprising, beginning in a 1989 documentary and later at the national parliamentary hearings for truth-seeking. He declared, ***"The Church must be the voice of the voiceless."***



Global Missionaries of the Korean Catholic Church

From Recipient to Sender

1,000 Korean Missionaries in 64 Countries

Korea has emerged as a vibrant source of Catholic missionary outreach. Nearly 1,000 Korean missionaries are working across 64 countries - more than a quarter of them priests, and the majority composed of religious sisters. From the rural provinces of Zambia to the cities of Vietnam and the highlands of Peru, Korean Catholicism is expanding its reach with quiet persistence. Vietnam leads the list with 129 Korean missionaries, followed by the Philippines, Zambia, Japan, Indonesia, and China - countries where Korean missionaries often serve in difficult pastoral or educational settings.



Motivations for Mission:

The motivation for this global mission is deeply rooted in the **history of Korean Catholicism**. The church's origins, which **began with lay people spreading the faith without a foreign clergy**, have instilled a strong sense of **personal responsibility for evangelization**. This historical context fosters a culture of active discipleship and mission.



Global Reputation:

Korean missionaries are recognized for their **discipline, strong community spirit, and willingness to serve in difficult places**.



Fr. John Lee Tae-seok

Don Bosco (St. John Bosco) of Tonj



Father John Lee Tae-seok (1962–2010) was a Korean Catholic priest, doctor, and Salesian missionary who dedicated his life to serving the poor in Tonj, South Sudan. Combining medicine, education, and music, he cared for leprosy patients, taught children, and brought dignity and hope to war orphans. Known as the “Don Bosco (St. John Bosco) of Tonj,” his legacy of compassion continues to inspire people worldwide even after his death from cancer at age 48.

The Crisis of the Current Catholic Church and the Crisis of Life in Korea

Loss of Direction After Democratization

Failure in Pro-Life Advocacy

Path of National Extinction

Urgent call to Enact Laws Protecting Life

August 17, 2025 | Benedict Kwangho Lee

Having seen Democratic Party lawmakers introduce “unlimited abortion” bills twice, and with a new government now moving to legalize abortion pills, I have come to realize that this is not a problem that can be solved simply by blaming the ruling party or the administration.

The deeper problem is that not a single lawmaker in our country has the will to draft and propose laws that protect life.

In the United States, Catholic churches systematically conduct pro-life education and advocacy. They apply strong pressure on politicians and even train them to craft pro-life legislation. In Korea, however, religious groups rarely do this. At most, they issue declarations and statements, but actual, effective education and organized movements are virtually absent.

This reveals the limitations of Korean Catholicism. It is true that in the 1970s and 1980s, the Church made significant contributions to democratization. But after institutional democracy was achieved in the 1990s, the Church seems to have lost its sense of mission. It has, in a biblical sense, lost its saltiness.

Driven by the inertia of its 1970s–80s democratization activism, the Catholic Church continues to support the Democratic Party and the progressive camp. Yet since the 2000s, these groups have pushed abortion legalization and LGBT and sexual-identity movements—and many Catholics, including some clergy and religious, have stood with them and supported these actions almost without question.

The Church may support the Democratic Party insofar as it pursues social justice. But when that same party advances anti-life policies—such as repealing abortion laws or pushing “unlimited abortion”—the Church must draw a clear line and issue strong warnings. Instead, it often appears more like a follower, or even a subordinate unit, of the party. This is deeply frustrating.

History shows us what true leadership looks like. On December 12, 1979, Cardinal Kim Sou-hwan openly confronted General Chun Doo-hwan, remarking that the situation felt like a Western movie in which the first to shoot wins. Even Chun, an all-powerful dictator, feared the Cardinal. During the industrialization era, Cardinal Kim admonished President Park Chung-hee: “When resources enter a factory, they come out as products. But when human beings go in, they come out as scrap.”

Today, however, the Church no longer fulfills—or perhaps refuses to fulfill—this leadership role.

Since the 2000s, the most marginalized and persecuted group in society has been the unborn. Yet the Church has largely failed to recognize this. Had it defended life as vigorously as it once resisted dictatorship, Korea would not face this tragic state of affairs.

Because the Church has failed to be salt and light, society has decayed. People wander in darkness, unaware that they are joyfully walking down the path of national extinction. It is a truly bleak reality.

In 2025, the Church must bear this social burden and address the nation’s highest leaders: **“For over fifty years, nation-led and nation-neglected mass abortions have brought Korea to the brink of national extinction. It is imperative to enact laws and policies to protect life, as is done in other developed nations. The responsibilities of both the nation and men regarding pregnancy must be legally established.”**

www.youtube.com/@prolifecorpus



41st World Youth Day (WYD) 2027

Seoul, Korea

“Take courage! I have overcome the world.” (Jn 16:33)

Invitation from the Holy Father

IN ASIA: IN SOUTH KOREA: IN SEOUL

August 6, 2023

As youth from around the world joined the Pope in Lisbon, Portugal, the Holy Father announced the next World Youth Day.

"The next World Youth Day will take place in Asia... in Seoul, South Korea!"



"Thus, from the western border of Europe it will move to the Far East. This is a marvellous sign of the Church's universality and of the dream of unity to which you bear witness!"

See you in Seoul in 2027!



Logo



Cross
Korean dynamism



God's will



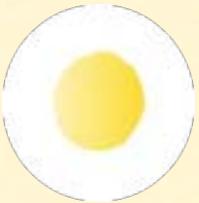
on Earth



Exuberant young person



"Seoul" in Hangeul



Holy Spirit
Glory of Christ's victory

Youth from Seoul and around the world united in the Holy Spirit

Theme

**“Take courage!
I have overcome the world.”**
(John 16:33)

Rejoicing in hope (38th WYD theme) and never growing weary (39th WYD theme), become a witness to the Christ you have encountered (40th WYD theme) and gather your courage (41st WYD theme) to embark on the pilgrimage to Seoul!

Pope Francis chose John 16:33 as the theme for World Youth Day Seoul 2027. This verse, spoken by Jesus to his disciples at the Last Supper, reminds us of the irrevocable truth that despite the challenges of the world, Christ has already conquered fear, sin, and death. **It is a call to hope and courage rooted in faith in the resurrection—not a passive optimism, but a bold confidence grounded in the living presence of Christ.**

Young people across the globe today are confronted with a wide range of challenges, including conflicts, economic hardship, and an uncertain future. Thankfully, at WYD Seoul 2027, they can receive the joy of becoming the “**salt of the earth and the light of the world.**” Through their encounters with one another they will experience unconditional love, thereby gaining the strength to be sent back out into the world as “**pilgrims of hope**” and “**courageous missionaries,**” boldly putting into practice the joy of the Gospel they have discovered.

WYD Seoul 2027 in August 3 - 8



Gathering and Registration (until Tuesday)

Pilgrims gather in the host city for World Youth Day.



Opening Mass (Tuesday)

World Youth Day officially begins with the Opening Mass, celebrated by the Ordinary of the host diocese, marking the start of the international gathering.



Catechesis Triduum (Wednesday, Thursday, Friday)

Pilgrims participate in catechetical sessions led by bishops, deepening their understanding of the faith.



Youth Festival (Tuesday to Friday)

Various events for young people are held around the host diocese.



Reconciliation Center and Vocations Fair (Tuesday to Friday)

Pilgrims are invited to reconcile with the Lord through Confession and hear His call by learning about diverse vocations.



Papal Welcome Ceremony (Thursday)

Young people gather with excitement to welcome the Holy Father on Thursday afternoon.



Way of the Cross (Friday)

The Pope and the pilgrims come together to meditate on the Way of the Cross prepared for them by young people.



Vigil (Saturday)

On Saturday, all the pilgrims move to the venue for the Closing Mass. With the Holy Father, they pray and adore the Eucharist before settling in to spend the night there.



Closing Mass (Sunday)

As Sunday morning breaks, the pilgrims unite in the celebration of Mass with the Pope.

At the conclusion of the liturgy, he announces the location of the next World Youth Day.



Meeting with the Volunteers (Sunday)

Finally, after the Closing Mass, the Holy Father meets with the World Youth Day volunteers to express his gratitude and offer them words of encouragement.

The Pilgrim Cross Where is the WYD Cross?



40 Years of Traveling - Responding to Saint John Paul II's call for them to carry the Cross "**throughout the world as a symbol of Christ's love for humanity,**" young people have accompanied the WYD Cross on its pilgrimage around the world for over 40 years.

On November 24, 2024, the Solemnity of Christ the King, **the World Youth Day Cross and the icon of Mary Salus Populi Romani were handed over to the young Koreans** on their way to Seoul, the site of the next World Youth Day to be held in 2027.

**The WYD Cross is currently in
Diocese of Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand
in September 19 - 20, 2025**

Prayer for the preparation of WYD Seoul 2027

Prayer for the Youth

- Loving Father of all young people,
help those whom you created in your image
come to know the love that led you to give your only Son.
- Give them the grace of meeting Jesus Christ
so that they may love all they meet in their lives.
- Gather the young people you so love into your Church,
led by the Holy Spirit,
so they can experience your mercy.
- Help us be with them in their struggles and pain,
welcome them into the Church,
and accompany them in the work of spreading the gospel.
- Just as you saved the world
through the cross and resurrection of your Son,
use WYD Seoul 2027 to rekindle the flames of their faith,
renew your Church and the world,
and spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. Amen.
- + Holy Mary, patron of the Catholic Church in Korea,
- pray for our young people.
- + All the martyrs and saints of Korea,
- pray for us.

Approved by
Peter Archbishop Chung
January 23, 2024

Traditional Korean Culture



Korean Culture

A Fusion of Tradition and Modernity

Korean culture beautifully intertwines its rich historical traditions, deeply rooted in Confucianism and ancient customs, with a dynamic embrace of modern innovation and global trends. This unique blend creates a vibrant society where centuries-old practices coexist harmoniously with cutting-edge technology and pop culture phenomena like Hallyu.

Religion & Spirituality in Korea

Shamanism - Indigenous Beliefs

무속신앙

- Korea's earliest spiritual tradition based in animism and nature worship

Confucianism - Social and Ethical Framework

유교

- Focus:** Respect for elders and hierarchy (structured family and political systems), and education
- Legacy:** Continues to influence Korean values and social etiquette

4th Century

14th Century during Joseon Dynasty

Late 18th Century

Buddhism - Spiritual Foundation

불교

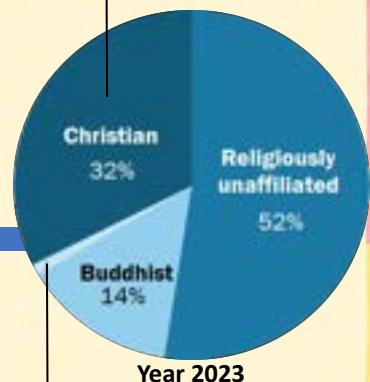
- Impact:** Became Korea's state religion for centuries shaping spiritual foundation, art and architecture (temples)

Christianity - Modern Growth

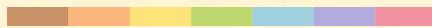
기독교

- Catholicism** arrived in the late 18th century, and **Protestantism** spread in the late 19th century.
- Impact:** Rapidly grew during the 20th century, especially after the Korean War

Christian: 32%
= Protestants: 20%
+ Catholics: 11%



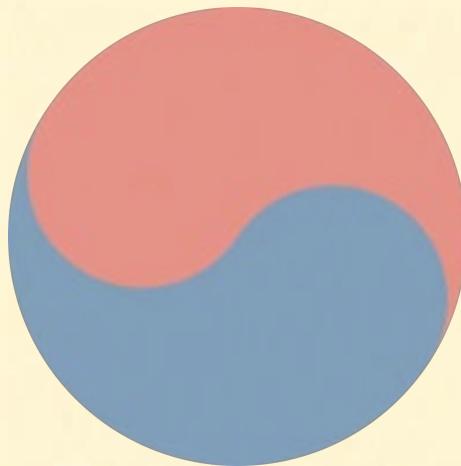
Core Values in Korea



01

Respect for Elders and Hierarchy

Rooted in Confucianism, age and status shape social behavior. Deference to seniors is shown through language (honorifics), body language (bows), and decisions.



03

Education and Hard Work

Due to Korea's post-war transformation and Confucian emphasis on learning, academic success and diligence are tied to one's identity and future prospects.

04

Social Reciprocity (Jeong)

Jeong is a deep emotional bond formed through mutual care over time. Social interactions are built on empathy, loyalty, and giving without expecting immediate returns.

02

Collectivism and Harmony

Korean villages historically relied on cooperation for farming and defense. Influenced by Buddhism and Confucianism, the group often comes before the individual. Cooperation, social conformity, and maintaining peace are vital for social cohesion.

05

National Pride and Resilience (Han)

Koreans embrace '*Han*' - a deep collective emotion from historical hardships, centuries of invasions and the Korean War. This fuels patriotism, unity, and an enduring drive to overcome adversity.

Hanbok 한복 & Korean Holidays

Hanbok 한복 is Korea's traditional clothing worn on holidays, weddings, and important occasions.



Seollal 설날 (Lunar New Year)

: Celebrated on the first day of the lunar calendar usually in late January or February



Ancestral Rite
차례



New Year's Bow
세례



Rice Cake Soup
떡국



Playing Yutnori
윷놀이

Chuseok 추석 (Harvest Festival, Full Moon Festival, or Mid-Autumn Festival)

: Celebrated on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month usually in September or early October



Ancestral Rite
차례



Visiting Ancestors' Graves
성묘

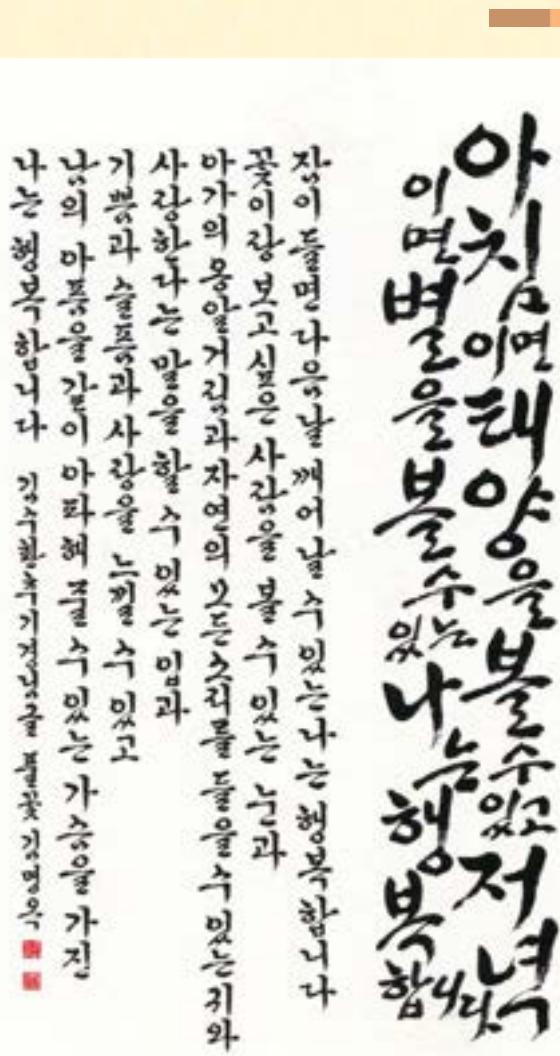


Songpyeon
송편



Wishing Upon the Full Moon
소원월기

Traditional Korean Visual Arts and Architecture



Seoye (Calligraphy) 서예

Artistic brush writing in Hanji

Hanji (Korean Paper) 한지

공예

Used in lanterns, fans, and calligraphy

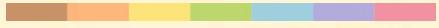
Hanok 한옥

Traditional Korean houses with curved roofs and ondol (heated floors)

Ceramics 두자기 공예

Celadon, white porcelain, and Buncheong ware

Traditional Korean Performing Arts and Sports



Janggu Dance 장구춤

A dance performed while playing the janggu, Korea's hourglass drum

Buchae (Fan) Dance 부채춤

A dance with large, vibrant fans

Samulnori 사물놀이

Percussion Quartet

Taekwondo 태권도

Korean martial arts

Modern Korean Culture

K-POP
K-DRAMA
K-BEAUTY K-FASHION
HALLYU
KOREAN CULTURE

TECHNOLOGY & URBAN LIFE

E-SPORTS

K-FOOD

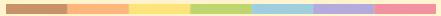
Global Impact of Modern Korean Culture

Modern Korean culture is a vibrant mix of deep-rooted tradition and rapid technological innovation. A central force is **Hallyu**, or the **Korean Wave**, which describes the global surge in popularity of Korean pop culture. Hallyu encompasses a wide range of cultural exports, including **K-pop**, **K-dramas**, **films**, **fashion**, **food**, and **beauty**, making Korea a significant cultural powerhouse and a global trendsetter.

seventeen



K-Pop, K-Dramas and Films



K-pop, K-dramas and films have become mainstream in the U.S. over the last decade, with groups like **BTS** and **BLACKPINK** topping charts and shows like **Squid Game** breaking streaming records. K-films such as **Parasite** and **The King of Kings** have also achieved historic box office and awards success, solidifying **Hallyu's** mainstream influence in America.



K-Technology & Urban Life

Korea is one of the world's most technologically advanced nations, renowned for its **ultra-fast internet**, **high smartphone penetration**, and **cutting-edge electronics industry** led by companies like **Samsung** and **LG**. Its cities, especially **Seoul**, are models of **smart urban living** with efficient **public transit**, widespread use of **digital payment methods**, and extensive **integration of technology** in daily life from smart homes to AI-powered services. This blend of innovation and urban convenience has made Korea a global leader in modern city living.



Ultra-fast Internet



High Smartphone Penetration



Smart Urban Living



Technology Integration

K-Food



Bibimbap 비빔밥

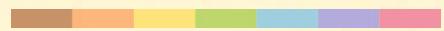
A Korean dish of steamed rice topped with assorted vegetables, meat, a fried egg, and spicy gochujang, all mixed together before eating.

Kimchi 김치

A traditional Korean fermented dish made from napa cabbage or radish, seasoned with chili, garlic, and ginger. It is Korea's most iconic food, valued for its spicy and tangy flavor and health benefits.



What's your favorite Korean food?



Bibimbap **Kimchi**
Galbi **Samgyeopsal**

Bulgogi **Samgyetang**

Tofu Soup **Kimbap**

Tteokbokki **Soju**

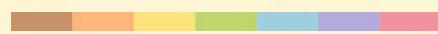
Jjajangmyeon

Ramen **Seaweed**

Korean Fried Chicken



Challenges in Korea Society



Super-Aged Society & Extremely Low Birth Rate



Korea has the world's lowest fertility rate as 0.75 in 2024, which is causing a rapid population decline and an aging society. By 2045, it is projected to have the world's oldest population, with a significant portion of the population over 65. The shrinking working-age population will put a huge strain on the economy, and the pension and healthcare systems, as there will be fewer workers to support a growing number of retirees. The high cost of living, including housing and private education, along with a poor work-life balance and traditional gender norms, are all major factors contributing to the low birth rate.

Economic Inequality



Despite Korea's advanced economy, wealth distribution remains highly uneven. Many seniors struggle with poverty because of inadequate retirement savings and limited social protections, forcing them into low-paying or insecure work. Younger generations also face challenges such as high housing prices, heavy debt, and unstable job markets. This widening gap across age groups contributes to intergenerational tension and a sense of social unfairness.

Mental Health Crisis & High Suicide Rates



Korea consistently reports one of the highest suicide rates among developed nations. Extreme academic pressure, workplace stress, and cultural stigma around seeking help all contribute to the mental health crisis. Young people are burdened by competition and future uncertainty, while the elderly often suffer from loneliness and economic hardship. Although awareness is growing, mental health resources and public support systems remain underdeveloped.

Political and Social Divisions



Political polarization is a significant issue, with deep ideological divides. Recent political turmoil, including the impeachment of a former president in 2025, highlights ongoing issues with government corruption and instability. Gender-based conflicts are also a chronic problem, with a large gender wage gap and a rise in digital sex crimes. The government's use of criminal defamation laws and the National Security Law has also raised concerns about freedom of the press and expression.

Ready to travel to Korea for WYD Seoul 2027?

Let's Learn Hangul & Social Etiquette



King Sejong the Great 세종대왕

King Sejong the Great was the fourth king of Korea's Joseon Dynasty, reigning from 1418 to 1450. He is best known for creating **Hangul** 한글, the Korean alphabet, to help the public read and write. A wise and compassionate ruler, he also promoted science, technology, and education. His reign is considered one of the most brilliant periods in Korean history. Today, he is honored as one of Korea's greatest leaders.

Korean 한국어 101

Chapter 1. Hangul 한글 & Basic Sentence Structure

Hangul 한글, the Korean alphabet

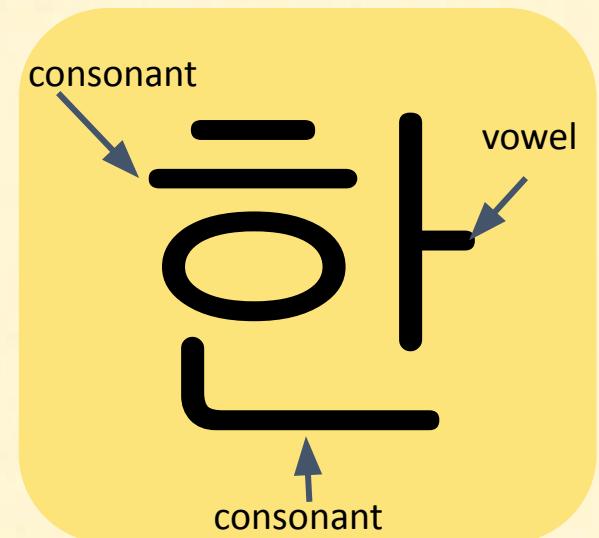
- **14 Basic Consonants:**

ㄱ (g), ㄴ (n), ㄷ (d), ㄹ (r/l), ㅁ (m), ㅂ (b),
ㅅ (s), ㅇ (silent/ng), ㅈ (j), ㅊ (ch), ㅋ (k),
ㅌ (t), ㅍ (p), ㅎ (h)

- **10 Basic Vowels:**

ㅏ (a), ㅑ (ya), ㅓ (eo), ㅕ (yeo), ㅗ (o), ㅛ (yo), ㅜ (u), ㅠ (yu), ㅡ (eu), ㅣ (i)

- Additionally, **5 Double Consonants** (ㅋ, ㄲ, ㅃ, ㅆ, ㅉ) and **11 Combined Vowels** (ㅐ, ㅔ, ㅒ, ㅖ, ㅕ, ㅘ, ㅙ, ㅚ, ㅞ, ㅢ, ㅪ, ㅫ, ㅭ).



consonant + vowel + consonant

ㅎ (h) ㅏ (a) ㄴ (n)
= "han"

Basic Sentence Structure

Subject

I
나는
na-neun

Object

rice
밥을
ba-beul

Verb

eat
먹어요
meo-geo-yo

Korean 한국어 101

Chapter 2. Essential Korean Phrases for Travelers

Hello

안녕하세요

An-nyeong-ha-se-yo

Thank you

감사합니다

Gam-sa-ham-ni-da

I'm sorry

죄송합니다

Joe-song-ham-ni-da

Good bye (I stay)

안녕히 가세요

An-nyeong-hi ga-se-yo

Good bye (They stay)

안녕히 계세요

An-nyeong-hi gye-se-yo

Hello, my name is [Name].

안녕하세요,

제 이름은 [Name]입니다.

An-nyeong-ha-se-yo,
je ireu-meun [Name]
im-ni-da.

I'm Catholic.

저는 천주교 신자입니다.

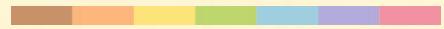
Jeo-neun Cheon-ju-gyo
shin-ja im-ni-da.

Please give me [water].

[물] 주세요.

[Mul] ju-se-yo.

Korean Catholic Vocabulary



God
하느님
Ha-neu-nim



Jesus
예수님
Ye-su-nim



Holy Spirit
성령
Seong-nyeong



Priest/Father
신부님
Shin-bu-nim



Church
성당
Seong-dang



Nun/Sister
수녀님
Su-nyeo-nim



Mass
미사
Mi-sa



Peace be with you
평화를 봅니다
Pyeong-hwa-reul bim-ni-da



Rosary
목주
Muk-ju

Korean Social Etiquette - 4 Key Values



Hierarchy

유교질서/서열 문화



Collectivism

공동체 의식/화합



Social Reciprocity (Jeong)

정



Modesty & Humility

절제/겸손

- Age matters in every social interaction
- Use formal language with elders or superiors
- Bow when greeting, especially to seniors or higher in rank
- Address others by title, not first name
- Let elders go first - in seating, eating, and entering spaces

- Prioritize group harmony over individual expression
- Avoid direct confrontation to maintain peace
- Use "our" instead of "my" for family, home, and even belongings
- Participate in group activities like meals and team events
- Share responsibility and success as a team

- Exchange small gifts or favors to show thoughtfulness
- Help others without being asked (i.e., carry bags, assist elders, etc.)
- Return favors promptly as part of unspoken mutual obligation
- Express warmth through action, not just words
- Maintain long-term loyalty in friendships and work relationships

- Dress neatly and modestly in public and social settings
- Downplay achievements and respond to compliments humbly
- Speak with restraint and avoid interrupting others
- Avoid showing off wealth, status, or success
- Reject praise gently and show deference to others

What is *Jeong* 정?

Giving heart



A deep, enduring emotional attachment that grows from living, working, and caring together.

Jeong is not directly translated into English, but it is understood as:

- a feeling of **affection** and **empathy**
- A long-lasting **connection**
- A sense of **loyalty** and **obligation**

Why *Jeong* matters in Korean culture

Not Love, Not Friendship - It's *Jeong*!

Korea is a **relationship-driven, community-based society**, emphasizing **interdependence, emotional ties, and long-term connection**. This subconscious sentiment prevailed when Koreans lived in **poverty**, under foreign occupation and authoritarian regimes.

Jeong in daily life



Family

Elderly parents keep giving food even when you say no



Friendship

Longtime friends help each other without asking why



Work

Coworkers cover for each other out of loyalty



Strangers

A shop owner might give away a free item out of *Jeong*

Queen
of
Martyrs



Queen
of
Peace

Pray for us