

E-BULLETIN #137

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 260

Pope Francis beatifies 124 South Korean Catholic martyrs

Pope Francis has celebrated a large open-air Mass to beatify 124 of South Korea's first Catholics at a ceremony in the capital Seoul. He paid tribute to the Koreans, who died for their faith in the 18th and 19th Centuries. Saturday's Mass came on the third day of his visit – his first trip to Asia since becoming pope in March 2013. The beatification ceremony was held at Gwanghwamun Square in central Seoul, with hundreds of thousands of people in attendance.



There is something in the manner of Pope Francis that seems to win people over, Catholics and non-Catholics, wherever he goes. And he has done it again here in South Korea.

His lack of formality has shone through. On Friday he stopped in the middle of a prepared speech to a gathering of young Catholics and said he wanted to "speak directly from his heart, without reading from a piece of paper," but that his English was not good enough". "No!" shouted the 6,000 teenagers in one voice.

There is also plenty of talk, in this status-conscious society, about the Pope's use of a tiny hatch-back as his official car, most of it approving. The Church is seen in South Korea as a supporter of the poor and the politically dispossessed, so much so that the Korean right has accused it of being 'socialist'.

The Pope is spending five days in South Korea, where the Catholic Church is growing. It currently has just over 5.4 million members, some 10.4% of the population.

Crowds of worshippers lined the streets leading up to Gwanghwamun Plaza for Saturday's ceremony. The square was the site where unrepentant Catholics were paraded before they were publicly executed.

"They were willing to make great sacrifices and let themselves be stripped of whatever kept them from Christ - possessions and land, prestige and honour - for they knew that Christ alone was their true treasure," Pope Francis told the crowd in his sermon.



"They challenge us to think about what, if anything, we ourselves would be willing to die for."

This is a very significant and poignant moment for the Catholic Church in South Korea because the people who were beatified today were the founders of the church 200 years ago. They were also unique because they were not converted by missionaries who came to Korea but they learnt about Catholicism themselves and brought the books back to Korea to spread the Catholic Church and were executed by the royal authorities for doing so, he adds.

analysis by Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, Seoul

BBC NEWS
16 August 2014

item 261

“Asian youth, wake up!”



On 17 August 2014, addressing thousands of young people from across Asia gathered in Haemi Castle, South Korea, on the occasion of the closing of the 6th Asian Youth Day, Pope Francis emphasized the urgent need to “wake up” and spread Christ’s love throughout the continent, pointing to the martyrs as examples.

“Asian youth, wake up!” the Pope exclaimed.

Pope Francis invited the young people of Asia to imitate the martyrs of the continent, including the 124 Korean martyrs he beatified the previous day.

The Pope pointed to the theme of the event – “Asian Youth! Wake up! The glory of the martyrs shines upon you!” – describing these words as being both a consolation and a responsibility for those who hear them.

“The Asian continent, imbued with rich philosophical and religious traditions, remains a great frontier for your testimony to Christ,” he explained. “As young people not only in Asia, but also as sons and daughters of this great continent, you have a right and a duty to take full part in the life of your societies. Do not be afraid to bring the wisdom of faith to every aspect of social life!”

Asian Christians are called to see the beautiful and true elements of their cultural heritage, and how the Gospel can purify and perfect it, the Holy Father said.

Reflecting on the particular call of the youth, Pope Francis encouraged those present to offer their natural enthusiasm as a gift to the Lord.



“Let Christ turn your natural optimism into Christian hope, your energy into moral virtue, your good will into genuine self-sacrificing love!” he said. “This is the path you are called to take. This is the path to overcoming all that threatens hope, virtue and love in your lives and in your culture. In this way your youth will be a gift to Jesus and to the world.”

In union with God and each other, young people are called to aid the clergy in building a holy, missionary Church, which worships God by serving the poor and marginalized, he explained.

The Pope warned of temptations that will arise to ignore the cry of those in need.

“It is the cry of so many people in our anonymous cities, the cry of so many of your own contemporaries, and the cry of all those martyrs who even today suffer persecution and death for the name of Jesus,” he said, adding that this cry for love and friendship with Christ can often be found in our own hearts as well.

Finally, the Pope emphasized, the phrase “Wake up!” in the Asian Youth Day theme offers a reminder of the “duty to be vigilant, not to allow the pressures, the temptations and the sins of ourselves or others to dull our sensitivity to the beauty of holiness, to the joy of the Gospel.”

“Young people of Asia: you are the heirs of a great testimony, a precious witness to Christ. He is the light of the world; he is the light of our lives!” Pope Francis said.



On 22nd July 2014 we blessed and inaugurated the first formation house of our Society in the Philippines. It is the youngest mission of Khrist Jyothi Province in this strongly Catholic country. The five candidates in formation gave all of us much joy and hope for the future. God willing, we will have a strong Pallottine presence in this country one day.

On 24th July 2014 Fr Peter Sticco, Provincial Rector of the Immaculate Conception Province and myself met with the Cardinal of Manila, His Eminence Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle. The Cardinal was most friendly and hospitable. He promised every assistance to the Pallottines. He also spoke about the possibility of bringing candidates to the Philippines from the neighbouring Asian countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, Myanmar and even China for initial formation. Once they are ordained, they could return to their respective countries to establish our Pallottine presence. Thus the Cardinal has placed a real and attractive challenge before us.

As Pope Francis discovered, there is a huge population waiting for Christ's message in Asia. There are also millions of people in many of these Asian countries who are waiting for a more dignified life. They seek compassion, justice and reconciliation. At the same time, there is an innate sense of God in the Asian culture whatever may be the religion they follow.

Another heartening factor about this Asian mission is that it is a missionary venture conceived and developed in a spirit of collaboration among Pallottine entities. This is the model to be followed in the Pallottine world today. The different gifts of nature and grace are to be shared as one family for the good of the Church. We are partners in building up God's kingdom. This is the spirit of the Pallottine charism.

The potential of East Asia is yet to be discovered and developed as far as the Pallottines are concerned. China and India alone constitute one third of the world population! Hopefully we will respond to this new challenge and possibility. We have already established our presence in India, South Korea, Philippines, Taiwan and Hong Kong. There are many other countries like Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and even China that await us. If anyone of us thinks it is impossible to go to these countries it is enough to have a glance at religious congregations like the Divine Word Missionaries or the Claritians. Most of these congregations are already working in China. May the Holy Spirit give the missionary zeal also to the Pallottines "to go forth".

After all, we cannot ignore these words of Pope Francis: "Asian Youth! Wake up!"

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sac asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #136 Thank you for an insight into the realities of the Ebola virus. I am saddened yet not surprised that communities are now seeing each other as possible carriers of the virus and hence treating each other 'at a distance' The breakdown of community trust and cohesion is devastating. I will hold them close in prayer.

JC 09.09.14

...excellent, though sobering, bulletin

MB 08.09.14