



POPE FRANCIS

Papal Visit: South Korea

Meeting with the Korean Bishops

14 AUGUST 2014, SEOUL

Dear Brother Bishops, I greet all of you with deep affection and I thank Bishop Peter U-il Kang for his words of fraternal welcome on your behalf. It is a blessing for me to be here and to witness at first hand the vibrant life of the Church in Korea. As pastors, you are responsible for guarding the Lord's flock. You are guardians of the wondrous works which he accomplishes in his people. Guarding is one of the tasks specifically entrusted to the bishop: looking after God's people. Today I would like to reflect with you as a brother bishop on two central aspects of the task of guarding God's people in this country: to be guardians of memory and guardians of hope.

To be guardians of memory. The beatification of Paul Yun Ji-chung and his companions is an occasion for us to thank the Lord, who from the seeds sown by the martyrs has brought forth an abundant harvest of grace in this land. You are the children of the martyrs, heirs to their heroic witness of faith in Christ. You are also heirs to an impressive tradition which began, and largely grew, through the fidelity, perseverance and work of generations of lay persons. It is significant that the history of the Church in Korea began with a direct encounter with the word of God. It was the intrinsic beauty and integrity of the Christian message – the Gospel and its summons to conversion, interior renewal and a life of charity – that spoke to Yi Byeok and the noble elders of the first generation; and it is to that message, in its purity, that the Church in Korea looks, as if in a mirror, to find her truest self.

The fruitfulness of the Gospel on Korean soil, and the great legacy handed down from your forefathers in the faith, can be seen today in the flowering of active parishes and ecclesial movements, in solid programs of catechesis and outreach to young people, and in the Catholic schools, seminaries and universities. The Church in Korea is esteemed for its role in the spiritual and cultural life of the nation and its strong missionary impulse. From being a land of mission, yours has now become a land of missionaries; and the universal Church continues to benefit from the many priests and religious whom you have sent forth.

Being guardians of memory means more than remembering and treasuring the graces of the past; it also means drawing from them the spiritual resources to confront with vision and determination the hopes, the promise and the challenges of the future. As you yourselves have noted, the life and mission of the Church in Korea are not ultimately measured in external, quantitative and institutional terms; rather, they must be judged in the clear light of the Gospel and its call to conversion to the person of Jesus Christ. To be guardians of memory means realizing that while the growth is from God (cf. 1 Cor 3:6), it is also the fruit of quiet and persevering labor, past and present. Our memory of the martyrs and past generations of Christians must be one that is realistic, not idealized or "triumphalistic". Looking to the past without hearing God's call to conversion in the present will not help us move forward; instead, it will only hold us back and even halt our spiritual progress.

In addition to being guardians of memory, dear brothers, you are also called to be guardians of hope: the hope held out by the Gospel of God's grace and mercy in Jesus Christ, the hope which inspired the martyrs. It is this hope which we are challenged to proclaim to a world that, for all its material prosperity, is seeking something more, something greater, something authentic and fulfilling. You and your brother priests offer this hope by your ministry of sanctification, which not only leads the faithful to the sources of grace in the liturgy and the sacraments, but also constantly urges them to press forward in response to the upward call of God (cf. Phil 3:14). You guard this hope by keeping alive the flame of holiness, fraternal charity and missionary zeal

within the Church's communion. For this reason, I ask you to remain ever close to your priests, encouraging them in their daily labors, their pursuit of sanctity and their proclamation of the Gospel of salvation. I ask you to convey to them my affectionate greeting and my gratitude for their dedicated service to God's people.

If we accept the challenge of being a missionary Church, a Church which constantly goes forth to the world and, especially, to the peripheries of contemporary society, we will need to foster that "spiritual taste" which enables us to embrace and identify with each member of Christ's body (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 268). Here particular care and concern needs to be shown for the children and the elderly in our communities. How can we be guardians of hope if we neglect the memory, the wisdom and the experience of the elderly, and the aspirations of our young? In this regard, I would ask you to be concerned in a special way for the education of children, supporting the indispensable mission not only of the universities, but also Catholic schools at every level, beginning with elementary schools, where young minds and hearts are shaped in love for the Lord and his Church, in the good, the true and the beautiful, and where children learn to be good Christians and upright citizens.

Being guardians of hope also entails ensuring that the prophetic witness of the Church in Korea remains evident in its concern for the poor and in its programs of outreach, particularly to refugees and migrants and those living on the margins of society. This concern should be seen not only in concrete charitable initiatives, which are so necessary, but also in the ongoing work of social, occupational and educational promotion. We can risk reducing our work with those in need to its institutional dimension alone, while overlooking each individual's need to grow as a person and to express in a worthy manner his or her own personality, creativity and culture. Solidarity with the poor has to be seen as an essential element of the Christian life; through preaching and catechesis grounded in the rich patrimony of the Church's social teaching, it must penetrate the hearts and minds of the faithful and be reflected in every aspect of ecclesial life. The apostolic ideal of "a Church of and for the poor" found eloquent expression in the first Christian communities of your nation. I pray that this ideal will continue to shape the pilgrim path of the Church in Korea as she looks to the future. I am convinced that if the face of the Church is first and foremost a face of love, more and more young people will be drawn to the heart of Jesus ever aflame with divine love in the communion of his mystical body.

Dear brothers, a prophetic witness to the Gospel presents particular challenges to the Church in Korea, since she carries out her life and ministry amid a prosperous, yet increasingly secularized and materialistic society. In such circumstances it is tempting for pastoral ministers to adopt not only effective models of management, planning and organization drawn from the business world, but also a lifestyle and mentality guided more by worldly criteria of success, and indeed power, than by the criteria which Jesus sets out in the Gospel. Woe to us if the cross is emptied of its power to judge the wisdom of this world (cf. 1 Cor 1:17)! I urge you and your brother priests to reject this temptation in all its forms. May we be saved from that spiritual and pastoral worldliness which stifles the Spirit, replaces conversion by complacency, and, in the process, dissipates all missionary fervor (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 93-97)!

Dear brother Bishops, with these reflections on your role as guardians of memory and of hope, I want to encourage you in your efforts to build up the faithful in Korea in unity, holiness and zeal. Memory and hope inspire us and guide us toward the future. I remember all of you in my prayers and I urge you constantly to trust in the power of God's grace: "The Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one" (2 Thess 3:3). May the prayers of Mary, Mother of the Church, bring to full flower in this land the seeds planted by the martyrs, watered by generations of faithful Catholics, and handed down to you as a pledge for the future of your country and of our world. To you, and to all entrusted to your pastoral care and keeping, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

Francis

From the Vatican, 14 August 2014