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Press Conference “Towards World Youth Day Seoul 2027”

Intervention of Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell

Intervention of Archbishop Peter Soon-Taick Chung, O.C.D

Intervention of Bishop Paul Kyung Sang Lee

Intervention of Miss Gabriela Su-Ji Kim

At 11.30 this morning, a press conference, “Towards World Youth Day Seoul 2027” was livestreamed from the Holy See Press Office.

The speakers were: His Eminence Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, Archbishop Peter Soon-Taick Chung, O.C.D., of Seoul, president of the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) for Seoul 2027, Bishop Paul Kyung Sang Lee, general coordinator of World Youth Day Seoul 2027, and Miss Gabriela Su-Ji Kim, a young Korean.

The following were also present in the hall and available to the press: Dr. Gleison De Paula Souza, secretary of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, the Reverend Fr. Franco Galdino, coordinator of the Youth Office of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, and the Reverend Fr. Peter Yang, executive secretary of the Local Organizing Committee of Seoul 2027.

The following are their interventions:

Intervention of Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell

Good morning everyone and thank you for being here today!

The Holy Father has chosen the city of Seoul, Korea, as the venue for the next World Youth Day in 2027. For the latest WYD which was held in Lisbon, Portugal, young people went on pilgrimage to the western border of Europe, and now they are being asked to set out for the Far East as 'a marvellous sign of the universality of the Church and our dream of unity', in the words of the Holy Father.[1]

The Church in Asia and Korea

After World Youth Day in Manila in 1995, it is coming to Asia again, the 'cradle of the world's major religions', with its 'intricate mosaic of its many cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions, which comprise such a substantial part of the history and heritage of the human family' as St John Paul II said in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*. [2]

Every World Youth Day is a golden opportunity for the local Church hosting it to celebrate its distinct culture and faith together with other Churches. In Korea, Catholics make up 11% of the population. Although a minority, the Church is full of vitality and initiatives of all kinds. It is enriched by the heroic witness of so many martyrs, and it continues to radiate, very strongly, a light of faith and hope that reaches all believers in every part of the world.

So what are the opportunities presented by World Youth Day in Seoul? First of all, like every WYD, it is an opportunity for all young people to rediscover the beauty of Christian life, and to bring to the ordinary circumstances of daily life a renewed desire to be disciples of Jesus and faithful to his Gospel. The rediscovery of Christian life, then, can be fertile ground for the blossoming of many vocations, to marriage or to the priesthood and consecrated life. All of this will have great benefits for the Church in Korea, for the Asian continent, and for the Church globally.

Secondly, Asia is very receptive to the coexistence of cultures, to dialogue and to complementarity. This will be of great help to young pilgrims on their path of learning to become messengers of peace in a world so torn by conflict and confrontation.

Thirdly, the dynamic Asian context will help young people to think about the dialogue between faith and modernity. They live in a world where they are confronted by challenges of global scope. These include a loss of meaning and purpose felt in some societies, the digital revolution, the climate crisis, economic inequalities, etc. The big questions that these challenges raise will stimulate young people to make their personal contribution so that contemporary culture may be permeated and transformed by the Gospel, with its power, light and freshness.

The theme of the journey from Lisbon to Seoul: 2023-2027

As you know, every year young people are invited to celebrate World Youth Day in their local Churches on the Solemnity of Christ the King. Last week, the Holy Father's Message for the 39th WYD to be celebrated on 24 November was published, 'Those who hope in the Lord will run and not be weary' (cf. Is 40:31). This theme marks the stages of an inner pilgrimage that began with the invitation made in Lisbon to *arise and set out* (cf. WYD Lisbon 2023).

For the Jubilee Year of 2025, young people are called to be pilgrims of hope in Rome and, over the next two years, they will be guided along a path that will culminate in World Youth Day in Seoul 2027. The two themes for this path are included in the documentation you have received that has just been published. The theme chosen by the Holy Father for the 40th WYD is: '**You also are my witnesses, because you have been with me**' (John 15:27); the theme chosen by the Holy Father for the 41st WYD is: '**Take courage! I have overcome the world**'

(John 16:33).

That last theme -- I will repeat it, '**Take courage! I have overcome the world!**' (John 16:33) -- will therefore be the theme of the 41st WYD in Seoul in 2027.

Both themes are taken from the Gospel of John. They belong to what is known as Jesus' 'farewell discourse' (cf. John 13-17), when he prepares his disciples to experience the mystery of his passion and death, in the certainty of his resurrection. The two themes focus, therefore, on witnessing and on the courage that stems from Jesus' paschal victory.

The traditional handing over of the WYD Cross and Icon: 24 November 2024

As is customary after every international WYD, the young people of Lisbon will hand over the symbols of WYD to the young people of Seoul: the Youth Cross and the icon of Mary *Salus populi romani*. This is an evocative 'passing of the baton' that will mark the beginning of the Korean Church's spiritual preparation for World Youth Day. I am announcing that this handover will take place on 24 November, the Solemnity of Christ King of the Universe, during Holy Mass in St Peter's Basilica.

The Youth Cross, also known as the WYD Cross, is always a pilgrim cross. Young Koreans will carry it everywhere -- in the cities, in the countryside, among the suffering, the imprisoned and the poor -- to bring closeness and consolation to all. However, it is also a jubilee cross because it was entrusted by St John Paul II to young people at the end of the Holy Year of Redemption in 1984. This aspect takes on special significance this year because of the approaching Jubilee. St John Paul II entrusted it to young people with these words: 'Carry it throughout the world as a symbol of Christ's love for humanity, and announce to everyone that only in the death and resurrection of Christ can we find salvation and redemption.' [3]

The Cross will be taken by young people to Asia, accompanied by the icon of Mary *Salus populi romani*, a sign of Mary's maternal affection and of the Church's own maternal concern for all humanity.

Our hope is that many young people, even those who have never participated in a WYD, will walk a path over the next three years -- above all an interior one --, and come to meet each other in Asia together with the Successor of Peter, and may they all bear courageous witness to Christ together.

[1] Angelus, Apostolic journey of Pope Francis to Portugal on the occasion of the 37th World Youth Day, *Parque Tejo*

(Lisbon), Sunday, 6 August 2023.

[2] John Paul II, Post-synodal exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 6.

[3] John Paul II, *To young people when entrusting them with the Cross of the Holy Year of Redemption*, Sunday 22 April 1984.

Intervention of Archbishop Peter Soon-Taick Chung, O.C.D

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Holy Father for proclaiming the theme scripture for World Youth Day Seoul

2027.

In the coming year, young people from around the globe will gather in Rome to celebrate a jubilee year as pilgrims of hope who “hope in the Lord and will run without growing weary.”

This jubilee seeks to renew the young people’s hearts in Christ as they embrace the Pope’s invitation, carrying the newly declared motto with them on their pilgrimage to Seoul, resting on the eastern edge of Asia.

The Korean Catholic Church stands as a testament to the voluntary and dynamic faith of its first believers, who embraced the seeds of the Gospel without the assistance of missionaries, guided by the Holy Spirit. In 2027, numerous young people from all over the world will gather to meet the young believers of Korea, who have inherited the steadfast faith of their ancestors. Together, they will rekindle a passionate zeal for faith.

During times of persecution, the early Korean faithful sent earnest letters to the Pope, fervently requesting missionaries to preserve their gifted faith and to unite with the universal Church. This appeal moved Pope Gregory XVI to establish the Vicariate Apostolic of Chosun, thereby dispatching missionaries and enabling the faith to flourish despite persecution. Just as he did with the early Korean Church, the Pope has once again embraced our Church’s request, inviting young people from all over the world to join the WYD pilgrimage by attending the WYD Seoul 2027.

The pilgrimage of WYD Seoul 2027 will be more than just a large gathering. It will be a meaningful journey where young people, united with Jesus Christ, reflect on and discuss the modern challenges and injustices they face. It will be a grand celebration, allowing everyone to experience the vibrant and energetic culture created by Korean youth. It will also be an opportunity to immerse in and share the dynamic and passionate culture that Korea’s youth have created. Furthermore, through this celebration, Korean young people will gain the invaluable chance to exchange and engage with the concerns and passions of their peers.

Through this collective journey, WYD pilgrims will become “courageous missionaries,” inspired to live out the joy of the Gospel they have found. The Church, united through this period, will listen carefully to the young voices and accompany the youth throughout the pilgrimage. I pledge my utmost commitment to ensuring that the youth from around the world may experience the profound joy of being the integral members of the Church. To young people around the world, we warmly invite you to join us for World Youth Day Seoul 2027!

Thank you.

Intervention of Bishop Paul Kyung Sang Lee

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our Holy Father for providing the theme scripture that resonates deeply with the circumstances faced by the Catholic Church of Korea and the challenges confronting today’s youth.

Korea stands in a unique context distinct from previous World Youth Day hosts, characterized by the harmonious coexistence of diverse religious traditions. Within this environment, the Catholic Church of Korea has steadfastly embodied the Christian virtues of “forgiveness” and “sharing,” fostering these values in society while coexisting peacefully with other faiths. Amid the persistent reality as a “divided nation,” the Church has diligently worked to resolve the conflicts inherent in this division over the past seven decades, seeking peace and unity for the Korean people. The emergence of K-Catholic and K-faith among our youth is a testament to these sustained efforts. Our young people and young faithful remain open to interreligious dialogue and aspire towards harmonious and peaceful coexistence.

Preparations for the World Youth Day, aimed at sharing our spiritual heritage with the youth worldwide, have

already begun in earnest. Following the selection of the host city last year, the Local Organizing Committee was inaugurated in December, alongside the formation of a preliminary research team of young individuals dedicated to spreading the spirituality of World Youth Day. Starting from February 2024, we launched a campaign dedicated to offering a billion Rosaries. This summer, we held a talk concert (at the front yard of Myeongdong Cathedral) fostering genuine conversations among young people and celebrated the Kick-off Ceremony of the World Youth Day Seoul 2027.

From this autumn, we will host Youth Masses and Youth Encounters in 19 deaneries across our diocese. In May of the coming year, we will host a diocesan-wide youth festival. Obviously open to all young people so practically it will be nationwide festival. More importantly, Seoul LOC is always collaborating with Doc of Bishops Conferences of Korea.

Through the Mystery of Life Awards, we encourage young scholars devoted to Christian spirituality to participate and share their scholarly contributions with the universal Church and the global community. As we approach the Jubilee Year, we expect to bring approximately 1,000 young pilgrims to participate in the Jubilee of Youth. It is our fervent hope that through this pilgrimage, they will come to discern the empowering force of hope bestowed by faith and experience a profound personal encounter with Christ within the universal Church.

The logo for WYD Seoul 2027, capturing the vision and aspirations of this momentous event, centered around the theme, "Take courage, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33), chosen by the Holy Father. Central to the logo is a cross; the red and blue colors symbolize Christ's triumphant victory over the world. The left element, reaching upward, signifies God in Heaven, while the right element, pointing downward, symbolizes Earth, illustrating the fulfillment of God's will on Earth through their unity.

Inspired by traditional Korean art, the overall design employs brushstroke techniques unique to Korean painting and subtly incorporates the Hangul characters representing "Seoul." At the same time, the logo captures the vibrant energy of youth and skillfully incorporates the letters WYD into its composition.

Additionally, the red on one side of the cross symbolizes the blood of the martyrs, harmonizing with the empowering theme, "Take courage." The blue represents the vitality of youth and symbolizes God's calling. Together, these colors echo the Taegeuk pattern on the Korean flag.

Finally, the yellow color that shines behind the cross represents the Christ, who is the "Light of the World." Christ has overcome the world. He shines upon our Church like the sun rising from the East. And He guides the Church towards unity.

Through this diverse symbolism, the logo for the WYD Seoul 2027 integrates the multiple meanings of martyrdom, youth, Seoul, WYD, and the cross, celebrating the glory of victory achieved through the Holy Spirit. It heralds the call to the young people of Korea and the world to proclaim the faith of the martyrs to the world of our time.

Beyond the symbolism of the logo, we are dedicated to ensuring that the fruits of World Youth Day lead to genuine growth and renewal within the Church. We will undertake this journey, moving forward step by step with unwavering trust in the Lord and with courageous resolve.

Thank you.

Intervention of Miss Gabriela Su-Ji Kim

Youth Leadership and opportunities for evangelization

Hello, my name is Kim Suji Gabriella and I am here to share my passion for youth leadership and the role I hope World Youth Day will have in rekindling our faith. First, I would like to express my gratitude to the Holy Father, who invited everyone to Korea for the next World Youth Day in Seoul, as well as to all those who are working to prepare for this event. My journey in serving youth began as a catechist for middle and high school students in my parish. After experiencing WYD Krakow in 2016, I had the honor of attending the Synod Journeying with Young People in Rome in 2017 as a Korean delegate. This precious experience of meeting and interacting with the Pope and fellow young people has fueled my commitment to serve in the Church.

The COVID-19 pandemic that swept the world prevented many from attending church. As the dark days stretched on, many young people drifted away from the faith, and community dissolved. Now that we can gather once more, we face the challenge of a scattered flock, struggling to pass on the experience of faith. However, I am confident that WYD Seoul 2027 will provide a crucial opportunity to rekindle the flames of faith, not only in Korea but also around the world.

We have been invited to embark on a journey to live the spirit of the Synod. With a joyful "Yes," we will join with young people from around the world. Through WYD Seoul 2027, we will forge a path of unity, hope, courage, and passion, welcoming people from all walks of life, not just Catholic believers, to walk together in harmony. I trust that our Lord Jesus Christ will walk with us on this pilgrimage to the "Far East" and beyond and I am hopeful that all of you in this room will accompany us as well. Thank you.
