

Pope Francis meets Asian youth delegates in birthplace of Korean Catholicism



Prays that God may 'light up the life of this vast continent' Asian Youth Day delegates welcome Pope Francis to Salmoe, where Koreans commemorate the birth of Catholicism in the country

Solmoe Korea August 15, 2014 Pope Francis met young Catholics from across the region on Friday as Asia Youth Day kicked off in Solmoe, the birthplace of Korean Catholicism. After Christian rappers warmed up crowds of dancing nuns and students, the arriving Pope Francis immediately reduced the party to silence in a solemn prayer facing an image of Saint Andrew Kim Taegun, Korea's first priest martyred in 1846.

“Just as the Lord made his glory shine forth in the heroic witness of the martyrs, so too he wants to make his glory shine in your lives, and through you, to light up the life of this vast continent,” he told the young, multinational crowd. There were Timorese with football scarves, Mongolians in their national red and blue, and flags waved from across the region – Myanmar, Cambodia, Singapore and Thailand.

Only China was missing. In a series of speeches by young people from across Asia, a young man from Hong Kong spoke in Mandarin but there was no one in the crowd who understood what he was saying apart from a group of nearly 140 others from the Chinese territory. Before the event, one of his group spoke of the reported restrictions Chinese authorities had placed on Catholics visiting South Korea for Asia Youth Day. “We heard that they are not allowed. I read that some were stopped at the [Hong Kong] border,” said Lau Yan Yu, a 22-year-old student from Hong Kong Island.

On Thursday evening, Vatican Spokesman Father Federico Lombardi said he had not heard reports of Chinese authorities barring Catholics from this week's events in South Korea but that he would investigate. There has been no public mention of the recent upsurge in religious persecution in China so far during the first papal visit to Asia this millennium. Instead, the Pope's message on Friday focused on past martyrs in the town where Korean Catholics remember their faith began.

Of the 124 martyrs Francis will beautify in Seoul on Saturday, 49 are from this coastal area 100 kilometers south of Seoul. A shrine here commemorates the harassment and executions that plagued Christians who dared show their faith during the Confucian regime of the Joseon Dynasty, and it is a

popular place of pilgrimage for Korean Catholics. “I came to Solmoe to see the shrine,” said Kim Hyun-sik, 20, a recent high school graduate from Seoul. “But mainly I came to see the pope.”

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<http://www.ucanews.com/news/pope-francis-meets-asian-youth-delegates-in-birthplace-of-korean-catholicism/71705>

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