



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND
**WELCOME CEREMONY ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
AT THE ARRIVAL IN KOREA**

International Airport of Seoul-Kinpo (Korea)

Thursday, 3 May 1984

Your Excellency the President of the Republic,

Your Eminence,

Beloved People of Korea, 1. "Is it not a joy indeed to have a friend come from afar?". We hear these words in the opening lines of Confucius' Analects. May I echo them by saying: Is it not a great joy indeed to go to visit a far-off friend? The gracious words of the President and the warm welcome accorded me by all of you, my dear friends in Korea, move me very deeply. For, ever since assuming the office of Peter's Successor in Rome some five years ago, I have always prayed that one day I might be granted the grace and joy of coming to visit the wonderful land and the dear people of Korea. And I have always felt particularly close to you in my heart. And now here I am, come as *your friend*, and as *an apostle of peace* - of God's own peace - to your entire land. 2. Yours is a beautiful land that through trials and tempests of a venerable history has known how to emerge ever new, full of life and youth. Yours is a proud and sturdy people which, in meeting great cultures and neighboring powers, has remained true to its personal identity, bearing splendid fruits in art, religion, and human living. Your ancestors embraced such overwhelming spiritual worlds as *Confucianism and Buddhism*, yet made them truly their own, enhanced them, lived them and even transmitted them to others. Wonhyo and Sosan, T'oege and Yulgok eloquently express this feat. So also today the marvellous flowering of the *Christian faith* in Korea promises to bring spiritual enrichment both to yourselves and to others. The Bicentennial of the Catholic Church in your country gives me the occasion to proclaim that faith in Jesus Christ can indeed bring that enrichment to the culture, wisdom and dignity of the Korean people. 3. Yours is an open heart full of human warmth, forbearance, and humor; a generous heart that has both suffered and loved much. never giving up hope. Nor would these eminent figures alone have borne such admirable fruits. They could do so only as the sons of *a great and good people*, yourselves, who in the daily life of loving and sharing have ever striven to seek the truth. Today, Korea is known and admired by all for its courage, its industry, and its will to build up a model nation from the ashes. The tragic division of a once peaceful people imposed from without, the deep wounds from the Korean Conflict, and further tragedies of more recent years - all this cannot, however, dampen or break your will to overcome obstacles and to be reunited again as one happy family. The untold sacrifices made to achieve this end through rapid industrialization and economic growth will, I sincerely hope, bring about first of all *a more human society* of true justice and peace, where all life is upheld as sacrosanct, where to live is to work for the good of others, where to govern is to serve, where no one is used as a tool, no one left out and no one

downtrodden, where all can live in real brotherhood. Thus Korea will be ever more admired as a people that achieves a progress and prosperity in which everyone is loved and respected in his or her *full human dignity as a child of God*, to the great honor of the nation. We know that, in order to be fully human, man must transcend himself, and seek the ultimate reality and *meaning of life*. This was the witness of a Yi Ch'adon in your own heritage. So it is, in another way, the witness of the hundred and three Martyrs of Korea, outstanding among ten thousand others, who followed the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth in dying for the truth of eternal life. Permit me, at this time, to extend my heartfelt good wishes to the venerable Buddhist community about to celebrate on the eighth of May the Coming of Buddha. I also desire to extend fraternal greetings to the Protestant community on their Centenary of generous service and witness in this land.⁴ I pray that your beloved fatherland, now tragically divided into two for over a generation, will be reunited as one family, not through confrontation and hostility, but *through dialogue, mutual trust, and brotherly love*, giving the lie to a world more and more given to mistrust, hatred, and the violence of arms. And all the sufferings of the past and present will not have been in vain, along the road of purification that leads to resurrection and new life. I thank you again for your warm hospitality. It is indeed as a friend that I come from afar, with a message of respect and esteem, and immense hope for the future. Upon you and your families and all the families of the Korean Peninsula I invoke God's blessings of peace, friendship and love. © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana