

## Bishops welcome South Korean president's peace initiatives

But the 'way to a peaceful Korea will not be smooth'

ucanews.com reporter, Seoul, [South Korea](#)

**July 17, 2017**

The president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea has welcomed President Moon Jae-in's peace initiatives, saying it matches the church's views on how peace can be achieved on the peninsula.

"I deeply agree with President Moon's direction for the future relations of the two Koreas," said Archbishop Hyginus Kim Hee-jung of Kwangju, the conference president.

Since taking office, Moon has said South Korea will take the lead in the peaceful coexistence with the North and presented principles aimed towards such a goal. Moon said his administration is planning for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula through guaranteeing North Korea's safety and the construction of a permanent peace system. There will also be economic and expanded civil exchanges, he said.

Such measures have been given full support by the Korean bishops. "First, we need a peace accord with support from surrounding countries and we should resume inter-Korean exchanges such as civil exchanges, the operation of Kaesong Industrial Complex and tourism to Mt. Keumkang," said Archbishop Kim.

The North and the South have been divided since Korea's liberation from the Japanese at the end of World War II. The Korean War (1950-53) made them bitter enemies.

In recent months, tensions have been high over North Korea's nuclear weapon and missile development.

In June, the Korean bishops' Committee for the Reconciliation of the Korean People held a [symposium](#) and stressed that a peace accord would help usher in better relations with the North.

"The local church has actively participated in the exchanges between [the two nations] such as sending medicines and supporting farming development in North Korea and it will keep doing it," said Archbishop Kim.

Father Timothy Lee Eun-hyeong, secretary of the bishops' committee, said, "President Moon's direction is the same as ours." However, Father Lee said it won't be easy.

"The way to a peaceful Korea will not be smooth with the North's missile development and ever-changing international affairs," Father Lee said.

"Just as the church in Germany took an important role in the reunification of East and West Germany, the Korean church will raise our voice for the peaceful co-existence of two Koreas," Father Lee added.

## Pope to pray for peace on the Korean peninsula

A Korean special envoy visited the Vatican looking for a peaceful solution to North Korea's nuclear threats

**June 2, 2017**

Archbishop Hyginus Kim Hee-joong, presidential special envoy to the Vatican, met Pope Francis and high Vatican officials to garner support to peacefully solve the conflicts surrounding North Korea's nuclear weapon and missile development.

Archbishop Kim visited the Vatican and met Pope Francis and Cardinal Pietro Parolin, secretary of state for the Vatican and concelebrated Mass at Casa Martha, the pope's residence. He also asked the pope to pray for improvement in inter-Korea relations.

Archbishop Kim said, "I informed Pope Francis of the election of the new president of Korea and asked him to cooperate and support President Moon's duty to keep peace in the peninsula. I asked him to pray for Korea and he replied 'yes.'"

"The pope understands the situation in the Korean peninsula and stressed that conflicts should be solved through dialogue and compromise," he added.

While meeting the pope on May 24 in St. Peter's Square, Archbishop Kim conveyed a letter from President Moon Jae-in. In the letter, the president showed his gratitude to Pope Francis for his visit to Korea in 2014 when he consoled the bereaved families of the Sewol ferry disaster.

Archbishop Kim said, "President Moon sent me to Vatican to get support from the pope now that peace in the Korean peninsula is threatened. I expect the Vatican will support us spiritually and diplomatically."