

Message of the CBCK Committee for the Reconciliation of the Korean People

As we begin our journey for Peace

“Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” (LK 2:14)

I wish all of you a happy new year, filled with our Lord’s grace and blessings.

Looking back on the past year, we all have been through a time of turmoil. We all experienced difficult situations. We have impeached a president which is an unprecedented development in our constitutional history, held an early presidential election, and endured continuing crisis on the Korean peninsula because of the ongoing conflicts of the nuclear threats from the North. We had to live with anxiety as if we were walking on a thin layer of ice since the communication routes were all cut off between the South and the North. Realizing the grave circumstances around the Korean Peninsula, Pope Francis urged us for the peace on Korean Peninsula in Christmas messages and the message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace to pray and to remember the people who work for peace. He did not forget to add sincere words of encouragement as well.

With the coming of the New Year, peaceful breeze could be felt on the Korean peninsula. The 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, the peace festival, is to serve as the momentum for peace. Meetings between the officials from the South and the North became active once again. North Korea decided to send athletes, a cheering squad and performers to the Olympics. With this ground-breaking opportunity, the communication channels started to operate again and the military hotlines have been reopened as well. This will alleviate the tensions and become a turning point for the stability of peace on the Korean Peninsula. I hope we take this precious opportunity into meaningful opportunity of mutual prosperity. We must bring a new era where the future generation can fulfill their dreams freely in the world with no boundaries to the south or the north.

There is a famous saying in Korea. ‘A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.’ Now we should start on a long journey for peace. It is plainly written in the Bible about the way we must go in order to achieve a true peace. ‘They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.’ (Is 2:4). To settle peace completely on this peninsula, we must not raise all kinds of weapons of mass destruction and ‘the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula’ must be realized. To attain these goals, we need to restore trust between the South and the North through frequent dialogues and meetings. We also need enough time to accept each other as companions, not enemies. We could remain in true peace together when we continue to try overcoming the divided system and to create the peace regime.

After the long years of conflicts and confrontations, let us take a step forward to the path of peace leaving the past years behind. We are to welcome guests from the North with warmth. As Pope Francis once emphasized, we must welcome them with fraternal affection. We are one people and we speak the same language, but we have been living in totally different political

systems, environments, and cultures. When working for unity, accepting the differences are the fundamental principle of peace. We must avoid thinking the 'difference' as 'discrimination', or 'incorrect'. It is most important to show our strength through 'respecting each other' which is another important fundamental principle of peace.

For us who are weak and fragile, our Lord gave himself for us. And before the death on the Cross, he left us with his words on 'peace'. 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.' (Jn 14:27) The peace Jesus told us is not the power of this world but the sole commandment that is peace achieved through 'loving each other'. When we truly love, respect, understand and accept each other, true peace will be given to us.

Soon the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics will begin with spectacular opening ceremony. When the Inter-Korean athletes march holding hands together, people all over the world will see them and feel the echoes of peacefulness. Even though we are still under the Armistice System, people will have hopes for the world peace when they see the South Koreans welcoming the athletes and guests from North Korea joyfully. And I am sure these will become the firm foundation for unification when our sincere fraternal affection passes onto the athletes and the people of North Korea. I ask for your thoughts and prayers for this Pyeongchang Winter Olympics so that it can become a meaningful time to realize the value of peace, not only to us but also to people all around the world marred by conflicts and disputes.

'Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.' (Mt 5:9)

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