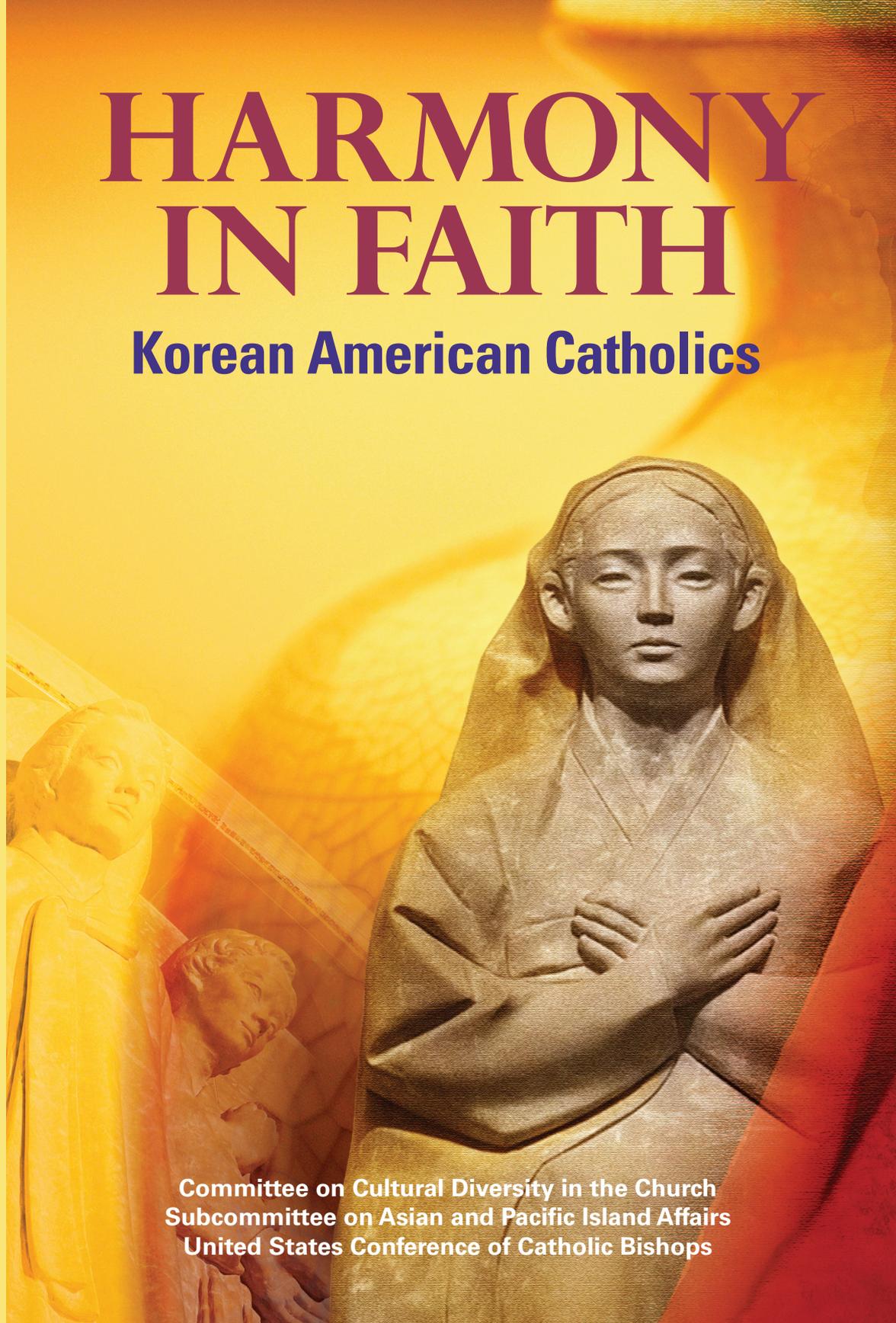


HARMONY IN FAITH

Korean American Catholics



**Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church
Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**

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Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church
Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, DC

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Msgr. Ronny E. Jenkins
General Secretary, USCCB

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Foreword

In 2011, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Island Affairs (SCAPA) celebrated the tenth anniversary of the statement of the USCCB, *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith*. As part of this celebration, SCAPA commissioned writers for a series of small books to inform clergy, ministers, and parishioners about the Catholicism of Asian and Pacific Island communities. Rev. Simon C. Kim, assistant professor of theology and the coordinator for the Catholic intellectual tradition at Our Lady of Holy Cross College, New Orleans, Louisiana, enthusiastically accepted this task of writing on Korean American Catholics.

This small book on Korean American Catholics connects each believer to their roots in Korea, weaving through thick layers of their history of faith. These roots, deepened by the blood of the martyrs, have spread through times of displacement and immigration, and now flower and flourish on U.S. soil. The presence of Korean American Catholics for more than five decades is recognized as a gift, and their faithfulness is a beacon that directs Koreans of any generation to come together and rediscover their oneness in God. Their martyrs awaken the world to the baptismal call to holiness; their tradition of lay and religious leadership reaches out to the periphery in the spirit of Pentecost; and their professionalism and scholarship propel the Church to a heightened level of awareness for pastoral actions. The SCAPA is grateful to Fr. Kim for this work and to Korean American Catholics for their shining contributions to evangelization in all corners of the Universal Church.

Most Rev. Randolph R. Calvo
Bishop of Reno
Chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia and Pacific Island Affairs
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Introduction

Over a decade ago, the Catholic Church in the United States recognized the presence of our brothers and sisters of Asian and Pacific Island descent living among us with the pastoral statement *Harmony in Faith*. This statement, promulgated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 2001, acknowledged Asians and Pacific Islanders living in the United States as a vital part of the social and religious landscape. Just as Abraham, the Father of our faith, was called to leave his home and follow God in a foreign land, our Asian and Pacific Island brothers and sisters have come to this country with a deep sense of faith and a calling to a more dignified life. These two elements of migration, the call as well as the response in faith, evident from the beginning of salvation history, are still operative today. The experience of leaving one's country to settle in the United States, along with our universal faith that continues to flourish wherever it is rooted, allows Asian and Pacific Island Catholics to contribute in both a social and ecclesial manner. *Harmony in Faith* recognized this gift in each ethnic community as it is expressed through the dynamics of immigration within the context of faith. Thus, over a decade ago, the pastoral statement began the necessary dialogue for such gifts to be realized throughout the Church and society.

Today, this dialogue needs to continue more than ever, as the 2010 U.S. Census indicates the continual growth of Asian and Pacific Island populations. With significant ongoing immigration, along with the presence of subsequent generations, Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States continue to create opportunities for social and ecclesial contributions. However, for this opportunity to be fully realized, Catholics of Asian and Pacific Island descent need more than the recognition they received before.

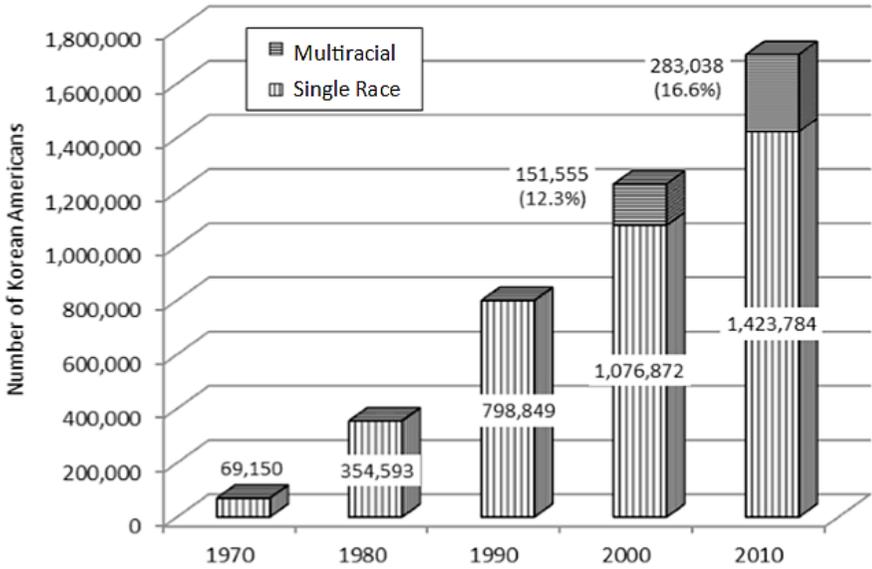
Church history has shown that, with each call for departure and entrance into a new environment, the faithful become more resilient in adapting their familiar religious practices to their new surroundings.

Many Asian and Pacific Island Catholic communities are living examples consistent with our Church history, gathering as God's People and creating spiritual homes in the United States. Since *Harmony in Faith*, these ethnic communities have grown as immigration continues and second and third generations emerge; however, many are still in the infancy stages of parochial life. In larger metropolitan cities, many of these ethnic communities resemble or truly act as actual parishes themselves. Others are smaller because of demographics and resources scattered across vast regions of the country. While diocesan parochial boundaries are always encouraged, these local structures do not always meet the lived reality of scattered ethnic communities.

As local churches in union with their bishops and in communion with one another through the Eucharist, Asian and Pacific Island Catholic communities are truly an authentic expression of the Church through their sacramental practices. The absence of parish structures, programming, resources, and parishioners does not undermine this authentic expression of the Body of Christ. Again, our salvation history has shown that this expression is true for every community rooting itself in society. From the beginnings of Christianity, the faithful gathered in small communities dedicated to the teachings of Christ, even to the point of martyrdom. Before Christianity was fully accepted in society, the early Church suffered persecution; thus, members lived scattered lives but remained rooted in the sacramental life. Although today's Asian and Pacific Island Catholics do not necessarily experience the same type of persecution that the members of the early Church did, their lives are often still scattered because of departure and resettlement as a result of the immigration experience. What stabilizes their community in the United States is what rooted the early Christians as well. The sacramental nature of our faith is truly the source of nourishment for displaced immigrants and the foundation for their resettlement as a community of believers.

Korean American Catholic Data

General Population



Korean American Population Centers



Korean American Data Bank
 The Research Center for Korean Community at Queens College



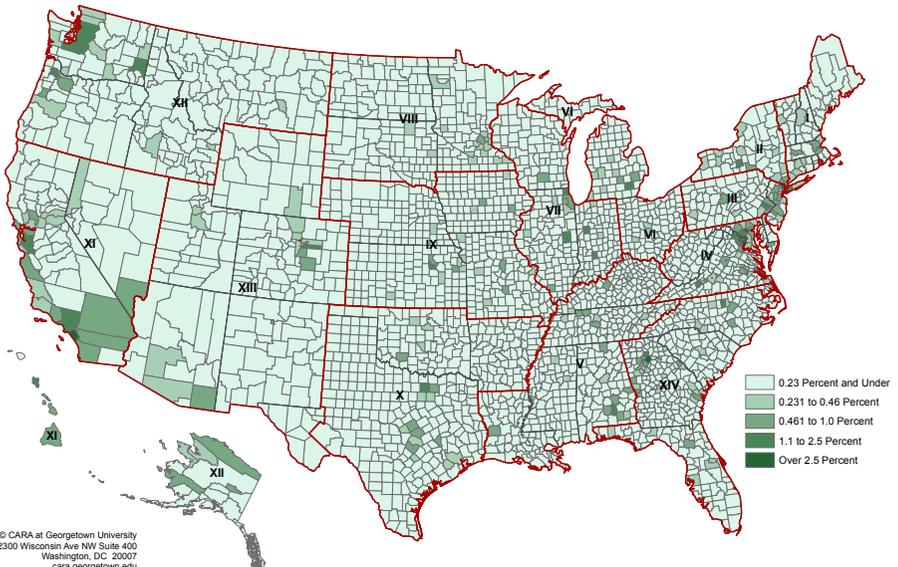
Cultural Diversity in
the Catholic Church
in the United States

November 2013

**U.S. Catholic Population:
Race, Ethnicity, & Birthplace Group Estimates, 2010**

	Population	Catholic Population	Catholic Affiliation %
White (non-Hispanic)	196,817,552	42,512,591	21.6%
Black, African American, African, Afro-Caribbean	38,929,319	2,919,699	7.5%
Black, African American, African, Afro-Caribbean (non-Hispanic)	37,685,848	2,091,565	5.6%
<i>Born in Africa</i>	1,249,811	329,950	26.4%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	15,214,265	2,905,925	19.1%
<i>Filipino</i>	3,416,840	2,214,112	64.8%
<i>Vietnamese</i>	1,737,433	483,006	27.8%
<i>Chinese</i>	4,010,114	340,860	8.5%
<i>Korean</i>	1,706,822	199,698	11.7%
<i>Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</i>	540,013	147,424	27.3%
<i>Indian</i>	3,183,063	146,421	4.6%
<i>Japanese</i>	1,304,286	56,084	4.3%
Hispanic, Latino	50,477,594	29,731,302	58.9%
<i>Native-born</i>	29,912,486	16,033,093	53.6%
<i>Foreign-born</i>	20,565,108	13,698,209	66.6%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	2,932,248	536,601	18.3%

Korean Catholic Population by Counties and USCCB Regions



The Spirit Moves the Church and U.S. Society

GAUDIUM ET SPES AND THE 1965 U.S. IMMIGRATION ACT

Gaudium et Spes, the last pastoral constitution promulgated on the last day of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), decreed an integral relationship between the Church and the world. By opening her doors to the world, the Church recognized the vital connection in the Holy Spirit's activities to both the Catholic faithful and to all peoples. In short, Vatican II recognized the Spirit's movement in both faith and secular communities. Thus, the breathing of new life into the Church by the Holy Spirit can be witnessed in the conciliar activities of the Second Vatican Council, just as the political and social acts of welcoming people of different races and cultures breathe new life into this country. In particular, two events—the promulgation of *Gaudium et Spes* and the 1965 Immigration Act—can be seen as foundational for the development of Korean American Catholics.

Gaudium et Spes embraced the world in a positive light, exemplifying and affirming the previous sessions of Vatican II by acknowledging the goodness and truth found in cultures and peoples all over the world. While internal ecclesial renewals, such as accommodations of prayers in the vernacular, were instrumental in recognizing the richness of the Universal Church and implicitly reaching out to differing cultures and peoples, the external renewals provided the ecclesial environment and space for those differences to contribute to the wider Church through the preservation of differing cultural heritages.

Over fifty years ago, in a speech prior to the opening of Vatican II, Pope John XXIII addressed the world: “For the first time in history, the Fathers of the Council belong, in reality, to all peoples and nations. Each of them will bring his contribution of intelligence and of experience,

to cure and heal.”¹ Again in his opening speech at the Second Vatican Council, John XXIII emphasized the connection between the Church and the world so the Council might speak to all people and nations:

Venerable brothers, such is the aim of the Second Vatican Council, which, while bringing together the Church’s best energies and striving to have man welcome more favorably the good tidings of salvation, prepares, as it were, and consolidates the path toward that unity of mankind which is required as a necessary foundation in order that the earthly city may be brought to the resemblance of that heavenly city where truth reigns, charity is the law, and whose extent is eternity.²

In both remarks, the good pope saw the gifts of all peoples and sought to reap the richness of differing cultural backgrounds for the entire Church. His vision still inspires hope for so many today as immigrants continue to live out their authentic expression of church within the vibrant and diverse fabric of U.S. society.

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church marked the commemoration of this ecclesial event with the Year of Faith in 2012. Pope Benedict XVI recalled the opening of the Council:

It was a moment of extraordinary expectation. Great things were about to happen. The previous Councils had almost always been convoked for a precise question to which they were to provide an answer. This time there was no specific problem to resolve. But precisely because of this, a general sense of expectation hovered in the air.³

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- 1 Pope John XXIII, “Pope’s Address to World: Month Before Council Opened.” In *Council Daybook, Vatican II: Session 1, Oct. 11 to Dec. 8, 1962; Session 2, Sept. 29 to Dec. 4, 1963*, ed. (Washington, DC: National Welfare Conference, 1965-1966; the Italian original is in AAS 54 [1962] 678-85), 20.
 - 2 Pope John XXIII, “*Gaudet mater ecclesia*: The Opening Speech to the Council.” In *Council Daybook*, 25-29; the Latin original is in *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Vatican II* (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970), I/1, 166-75.28.
 - 3 Pope Benedict XVI, Reflections on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Opening of the Second Vatican Council, August 2, 2012, www.vatican.va/special/annus_fidei/documents/annus_fidei_bxvi_inedito-50concilio_en.html.

This excitement was the impetus for the renewals of the Church and continued after the Council, since reception of the conciliar activities is equally important. The reception of Vatican II is still being realized today as immigrants enhance the social and ecclesial landscape, thereby adding to the richness of the Council's vision and legacy.

The Church's fiftieth anniversary of opening herself to dialogue with differing cultures and peoples coincides with the U.S. celebration commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, which opened the way for immigration to the United States in greater numbers. Some may not connect this sociopolitical action of a superpower nation with the socioreligious changes of the Catholic Church. However, historians cannot simply dismiss certain connections between the two events, especially in light of Catholics from various ethnic backgrounds calling the United States their home. Theologians reflecting on these two events also cannot deny the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church and the world, as the intentions of Vatican II went beyond the European and North American context and truly embraced a Universal Church.

For minority Catholics, these two events are critical in the development of a people of faith living in this country. Immigrants and their offspring have become the cornerstone of the Korean American presence in Church and society. Therefore, it is difficult to deny connections in the activities of the Holy Spirit in opening the Church doors to the world and the willingness of the United States to embrace people from all over the world within the same year. Vatican II's willingness to allow different expressions of the local ecclesial reality along with the U.S. commitment as a country and Church of immigrants allowed for communities of Korean descent to form their new physical and spiritual homes on this religious and sociopolitical foundation across the United States.

Learning to Become a Sacramental People

*Foundations of Korean Catholic Faith*⁴

A NASCENT COMMUNITY OF FAITH INITIATED BY THE LAITY

From the very beginning, the Christian faith was spread by the preaching of the Gospel: “But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach?” (Rom 10:14). In the case of Korea, there were no missionaries initially proclaiming the Christian message on native soil. The Catholic faith was not planted by clergy or other missionaries, as found elsewhere; rather, Christianity took root in Korea through the curiosity and initiative of the natives themselves, through the faith of the laity. Through their contact with Catholics and doctrinal texts from China, the first Korean Christians embraced the faith through their own efforts.

The first written Korean account detailing an encounter with Catholicism was in *The Essays of Chi-pong* by Lee Su-kwang. In his reflections, Lee mentions his reading of Matteo Ricci’s *Tianzhu Shiyi* (*The True Meaning of the Doctrine of Heaven and Earth*). Although the Chinese people did not refer to God in the same manner as Westerners did, Ricci was still able to connect the Chinese belief of heaven and earth with the Judeo-Christian notion of the divine. Ricci’s influential work allowed many in China to embrace Catholicism once it was seen as compatible with their Confucian form of government and society. Upon bringing Ricci’s *Tianzhu Shiyi* back to Korea, many of

4 Based on excerpts from Simon C. Kim, “Remembering the History of Catholicism in Korea” in *Memory and Honor: Cultural and Generational Ministry with Korean American Communities* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013), 23-43.

the Korean Silhak scholars studied the text in the hopes of further understanding the Western world. The interest in Western culture eventually led to Korea's introduction to Christianity and its spread throughout the Korean Peninsula.

Out of further curiosity, Silhak scholars requested that more information about the Catholic faith be ascertained from China. In 1784, the son of the Korean ambassador to China, Yi (Peter) Seung-Hun, encountered a Chinese Catholic priest in Beijing, and Yi's inquiries eventually led to his own Baptism. With newfound faith, Yi returned to Korea to pass on the faith by transporting texts across the closely guarded border and sharing his personal experiences. Soon after, many who became believers repeatedly crossed over to China under dangerous conditions to grow in their faith. Much of Ricci's foundational work bridging Catholicism and Confucianism came to an abrupt end during the Rites Controversy in the eighteenth century, when Rome no longer tolerated the Chinese reference to God in their own cultural terminology and cosmology. From that time, Christianity was suspiciously regarded in Asia because of the apparent conflict of ancestor worship with Catholic monotheistic beliefs.

MARTYRDOM

In obedience to religious authorities, many Catholics in Korea resisted societal pressures to continue the rituals required by Confucianism and instead chose to either burn or bury their ancestral tablets next to the graves of their deceased family members. These acts of defiance of ancestral worship moved governmental officials to retaliate in order to safeguard their long-standing societal traditions. By foregoing ceremonial rituals (such as keeping wooden tablets containing the names of deceased family members and offering food and wine to the deceased spirit), Catholics were viewed as disrespecting, and even completely abandoning, their filial duties. Thus, the first persecutions of Catholics in Korea became a campaign to preserve Confucian customs through the eradication of the newly introduced

Catholic beliefs that appeared to challenge Confucian-based society. The first persecutions resulted in either apostasy or bloody martyrdom on Korean soil, as the choice between one's duty to family and one's belief in God became irreconcilable in society.

All told, numerous persecutions took place throughout this early period of Korean Catholicism. "The first persecution occurred in 1785. It was followed by the Sinhae Persecution in 1791, the Ŭlmyo Incident in 1795, the Sinyu Persecution in 1801, the Ŭlhae Persecution in 1815, the Chŏnghae Persecution in 1827, the Kihae Persecution in 1839, the Pyŏngo Persecution in 1846, the Kyŏngsin Persecution in 1860, and lastly by the Pyŏngin Persecution in 1866."⁵ The 1866 persecution was so devastating that it reduced the Korean Catholic population by half. Over eight thousand Catholics, including French missionaries, gave their lives for the faith in Korea.

In 1984, Pope John Paul II beatified 103 martyrs in Seoul, Korea—a remarkable occasion, as these men and women were canonized outside of Rome, recognizing the uniqueness of the Catholic faith within salvation history. Following his predecessor, Pope Francis beatified another 124 martyrs on August 15, 2014, in Seoul, Korea, continuing to uphold the unique beginnings of the Catholic faith in Korea and remarkable growth of the Korean Catholic Church.

St. Andrew Kim Taegon was the first native Korean priest, ordained in 1845, and his priestly ministry lasted only a short duration, cut short by his martyrdom in 1846. Today he is known as the "martyr of blood" and revered as the martyr *par excellence* among 103 Korean martyrs. Thomas Choe Yang-eop, the second native priest of Korea, did not die a martyr's death but a "natural" one at the hands of typhoid in 1861. Soon after his ordination in 1849, Thomas Choe Yang-eop became known as the "martyr of sweat" because of the over seventeen hundred miles he traveled and four thousand confessions he administered yearly. Through the efforts of the laity and priestly

5 Jai-Keun Choi, *The Origin of the Roman Catholic Church in Korea: An Examination of Popular and Governmental Responses to Catholic Missions in the Late Chosŏn Dynasty* (Norwalk, CA: The Hermit Kingdom Press: 2006), 1n1.

examples of the “martyrs of blood and sweat,” the Catholic faith in Korea continued to persevere even in the midst of persecution and martyrdom. Yet today, Thomas Choe Yang-eop is rarely recognized in comparison to St. Andrew Taegon Kim, and his canonization is still in waiting.

ADAPTATION

Nowhere else did Christianity spread in this manner, as missionaries were invited into Korea only after the neophytes understood for themselves the need for ordained clergy in the celebration of the sacraments. After a decade of living out the faith in isolation from the Universal Church, the faithful in Korea became aware of the constitutive relationship between the ordained clergy and sacraments. The laity continued, however, to nourish one another through their prayers affirming their communion as a committed body of believers until missionaries from China and then France finally arrived. For this early Christian community, it was important to live out the communal presence as Christ’s Body in order to truly appreciate the Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist when the clergy finally arrived. This nascent body of believers felt it necessary to live out their faith sacramentally in the best manner they knew how until their connection with the wider Church through the celebration of the sacraments was fully realized.

The Migration of a Sacramental People

Foundations of Korean American Catholic Faith

AN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY OF FAITH INITIATED BY THE LAITY

Korean immigration to the United States has traditionally been categorized in three waves, with a fourth wave emerging. Korean immigrants in the first wave (1903-1945) were laborers seeking economic refuge, picture brides seeking social refuge, and activists seeking political refuge. The second wave, known as the postwar period, lasted from 1945 to 1965. Korean immigrants during this time period sought relief from the ravages of the Second World War and Korean War. From 1965 to the present, the third wave has generally been categorized as the post-1965 immigration period. Many Koreans during this period left for the United States out of economic concerns, and this group makes up the majority of the Korean American population. Today, a fourth wave is emerging as transnational mobility increases due to corporate and government activities within a global economy. Those in the latter wave are quite different from their predecessors, as many come to the United States already educated, with vast resources, and with the mentality of one day returning to Korea. Thus, the post-1965 wave of immigration gave rise to the communities that we often encounter in church and society. The previous waves of immigrants did not have the religious, cultural, and social consciousness to create and sustain a religious or secular identity.

A common feature between the nascent faith community of the nineteenth century in Korea and the immigrant faith communities of Korean American Catholics is the way the faith was nurtured by the laity. In both instances, the Catholic faith traveled from one country

to another and attracted many because of its communal aspect, which included the spiritual as well as the cultural. Just as the universal faith initially crossed over from China to Korea by way of the laity, Korean immigrants traveled with their faith to the United States as a way of preserving their religious identity along with their cultural heritage in a foreign land. The offering of faith integrated with culture also provided those away from their homeland a sense of security beyond just the spiritual. Unlike their European counterparts, Korean immigrants were not accompanied by their own clergy. Similar to the events over a century ago, the laity carried the faith across national borders and laid the foundations for ecclesial communities in the United States before the arrival of native-speaking clergy. Even today, most Korean clergy are missionaries assigned for a brief term and treat their ministries as simply an extension of the Korean Church rather than addressing Korean Americans in their immigrant context. Thus, the immigrant laity are truly the ones who bring stability and continuity to these ethnic ecclesial communities still today.

DEFERRED GRATIFICATION

The building of an ethnic church is a priority and necessity for the initial immigrant generation. Living in a foreign land out of necessity—whether for economic opportunities for themselves or educational advancements for their offspring—means displacement without many connections to the larger society. To provide some sort of rootedness in their community, Korean immigrants seek two homes: a physical home for their immediate family and a spiritual home for their ethnic community. The former is needed for daily survival while the latter is necessary for the preservation of a cultural heritage that is integrally connected with religious practice. Both homes carve out a place for Korean Americans in the United States and afford protection and preservation of Korean language, customs, and practices, while social and economic interactions allow U.S. traditions to strengthen this unique group of believers.

In order to create both homes in society as a method of survival and sustainability, the initial immigrant group defers much of their gratification for the future, primarily for the well-being of their offspring. Often, the initial immigrant group will only find consolation in their decision to leave Korea once their children have reached a level of educational and financial success. These two measures of success are so ingrained in the Korean Confucian mindset that they are often inseparable, and thus, both are required for immigrants to vindicate their decision to leave Korea, to endure long hours at their own businesses, and to live isolated lives from the larger English-speaking society.

This willingness to sacrifice for the next generation parallels the willingness and desires of the early Christian community in the Korean Peninsula over a century ago. The first believers risked alienation from family, loss of property or resources, and even their own lives for their faith. The belief in the Christian God was not an isolated act for these early Christians. The Catholic faith was a communal belief that allowed the Korean martyrs to sacrifice for one another and for future generations of believers. Thus, the Catholic faith has survived political and social pressures in Korea, while it has not thrived in other regions of East Asia, despite being the primary centers of missionary activity. The common characteristic of Catholics in nineteenth century Korea or in the United States today is the willingness to sacrifice for the future, a future not immediate to themselves but for generations to come. This desire for the well-being of future generations is also intimately connected with their sense of hope and even the decision to lay down one's life for another.

ADAPTATION

Just as the initial lay community took initiative and liberties in becoming a sacramental people until the arrival of foreign clergy missionaries in Korea, the faith communities of the initial immigrant groups in the United States adapted to linguistic and cultural challenges until Korean vocations reached a sustainable level for greater missionary

activity. Today, the majority of Korean American Catholic communities are staffed by visiting Korean clergy. However, the initial wave of Korean American Catholics did not have this luxury, as no Korean-speaking clergy journeyed with them. Thus, creativity and adaptation was necessary for the clergyless immigrants who built the faith communities we are accustomed to today.

While some Korean American faith communities came into being as early as the 1960s, most came into existence during the 1970s and 1980s. Others can trace their lineage as outgrowths of these early churches. The beginnings of these faith communities were truly creative adaptations of mainstream churches. When no Korean-speaking clergy were available, the initial Korean American Catholic groups would first participate in the English Eucharistic celebration even without knowing the English language. In addition, they would gather separately to further their prayers, catechesis, and other religious-cultural celebrations in the Korean language. Some faith communities, especially those with large populations of Korean Americans, had Korean clergy assigned to them as an extension of their home diocese. These communities had great advantages with numerous parishioners, many resources, and priestly leadership.

Other communities that were not so fortunate as to have a Korean priest assigned to them invited missionary priests who had previously served in Korea. Columban, Maryknoll, and other religious missionaries served in building the early faith communities after their assignments in Korea. Their linguistic abilities and cultural familiarity were truly a bridge for those living between two worlds. Others still merged both languages as they utilized the only resources at their disposal. Local diocesan clergy prayed in English while the faithful responded in Korean. These bilingual liturgies were not the preferred method of prayer but the only experience available for immigrants making their home in the United States. Today's Korean American ministries all developed out of these initial religious and cultural adaptations much like the early Christian communities on the Korean Peninsula over a century ago.

Taking Ownership in the U.S. Church

Korean American Catholic Contributions

ECCLESIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

On September 22, 2007, Catholics of Korean descent came together at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., to honor Mary and commemorate their migration history by dedicating two reliefs in the vestibule. *Our Lady of Korea at the Wedding Feast at Cana* and *Our Lady of the Korean Martyrs* are two Korean American Catholic devotions revealing Marian influence in the lives of immigrants today. Such a dedication recognizes the presence of an ethnic group at the Table of the Lord in the United States and, in particular, the contributions that these minority groups offer to the Universal Church by expounding on the transmission of Scripture and Tradition.

Not only do Korean Americans have a place in the Catholic Church in the United States, but more importantly, this minority group has a significant contribution to make to the wider Church. Korean American Catholics have paved the way for the fusion of the immigration experience with their spiritual journey. Rather than simply incorporating devotions held by other cultures, the two Marian reliefs reflect the uniqueness of Catholicism in Korean immigrants. *Our Lady of Korea at the Wedding Feast at Cana* and *Our Lady of the Korean Martyrs* are illustrations of the spiritual journey outside the Korean homeland, since these two Marian devotions do not exist in the same manner in Korea but are an outgrowth of those in the United States.

Korean American spirituality is a theological reflection of the life experiences of U.S. Catholics of Korean descent. Because these

people live between two worlds, they maintain many similarities to the Catholic faith found in Korea. At the same time, the social and ecclesial landscape of the United States allows for this faith to grow by accentuating certain religious and cultural aspects needed for a people resettling in a foreign country. Like the two reliefs, the experiences of Korean Americans are not just representative of themselves but also reflect their presence in the United States as well as their ecclesial contributions. These theological reflections are thus relevant for those in Korea as well as the Universal Church.

Our Lady of Korea at the Wedding Feast at Cana is a fitting representation of the Korean American religious and cultural reality, since marriage is one of the most important signs of success not only in Confucian society but equally in a society where immigrants look to preserve their identity and validate the departure from their homeland. The overarching goal of the immigration experience of all Koreans to the United States is to create a better life. Marriage is included in this hope, since it signifies stability for the offspring, one of the most powerful motivations for immigration. Thus, the devotion to *Our Lady of Korea at the Wedding Feast at Cana* encompasses the hope of the Korean presence in the United States. Through the intercession of Mary, our Mother, the faithful seek the beginnings of a new life signified by stability and future possibilities. Although many families pray for the well-being of their offspring initially through education, their hopes continue through their children's careers and marriages. Thus, this particular Marian devotion represents the aspirations of Korean immigrants for the next generation of Korean American families.

Our Lady of the Korean Martyrs is another unique Marian devotion found in the United States. Although devotions to the 103 Korean martyrs originally existed in the homeland, this particular depiction is unique to the U.S. experience, because it underscores the bridge or connection between the martyrs of old who laid the foundation for the Church in Korea and the men and women of today laying similar foundations for the future here in the United States. The presence of Mary in the midst of the people's suffering at the beginnings of

Korean Catholicism gave consolation to those living out their faith lives in the United States. The constant presence of Mary comforting us throughout the struggles of our daily lives and even unto death is a powerful image for Koreans who sacrifice everything through the immigration process. As people living in another land, lacking contact with family members due to the displacement process of immigration, they are consoled by the maternal presence of Mary. *Our Lady of the Korean Martyrs* does not simply depict the maternal presence in the lives of the first believers of Korea but represents the maternal care still being realized today. Therefore, with the help of Our Lady, Korean Americans are able to lay a similar foundation for future generations as the original martyrs did over a century ago.

Although they initially stood as devotionals of the immigrant experience, *Our Lady of Korea at the Wedding Feast at Cana* and *Our Lady of the Korean Martyrs* are no longer limited to a particular group or place. Rather, this localized experience and theological reflection highlight the universal aspects of our Catholic faith. In particular, Korean Catholicism lived out in the United States contributes to the rich and unique salvation history of both countries. In celebrating the devotion of *Our Lady of Korea at the Wedding Feast at Cana* and *Our Lady of the Korean Martyrs* in two worlds, the immigration experience is remembered and gives rise to the theological expression of a unique people deepening the faith both in the homeland and in the host country.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

The unique and successful story of Korea as a tech-savvy nation and as a religiously oriented people provides many resources for descendants living in the United States as well as other countries. Korean Americans are able to glean the richness of both countries and are today in a unique position to incorporate two realities filled with economic and religious prosperity. However, with prosperity and growth, disparities between the two worlds Korean Americans live in are

more apparent and even magnified. For Korean American Catholic communities, the lack of vocations to clerical and consecrated life compared to those in Korea is one of the most noticeable gaps. Not only is there a lack of Korean American clergy, but certain challenges place them at a greater disadvantage than their Korean counterparts. Korean American clergy are not always placed in assignments utilizing their ethnic heritage. Due to a lack of clergy in many dioceses, bishops are sometimes reluctant to place Korean American clergy in ethnic-specific ministries. In addition, some Korean American clergy are reluctant themselves to engage Korean Americans due to their lack of linguistic skills as well as concerns about cultural and generational sensitivities. Since many members of Korean American Catholic communities mainly speak Korean, priests from Korea are often invited to minister in this country. However, this invitation has certain drawbacks, as visiting Korean clergy do not always comprehend the Korean American reality, since they themselves are not true immigrants. While the Korean ecclesial, social, and political realities resonate with the lives of those living in the United States, the realities of the homeland are at the same time becoming more and more foreign because of differing historical, social, and political developments.

The abundance of religious vocations in Korea is reminiscent of the U.S. Catholic experience of the 1950s, when churches and seminaries were filled to capacity. Due to this overabundance, Korean priests minister in the majority of Korean American communities in the United States. The gift of the Korean presbyterate can also be a burden for Korean American communities—specifically when competing visions exist of what an ethnic religious community should be. Korean priests are formed in an environment where the local Church is a healthy, growing, and active part of overall society. When these missionaries come to the United States, they may encounter an ethnic ecclesial community that is underdeveloped—lacking resources, parishioners, and growth. Thus, they are tempted to implement Korean programs, structures, and models of ministries, the success of which are tied to the religious and social landscape of the country of

origin. Some of these implementations are universal to any faith community and even to the next generation, while other attempts seem foreign despite their familiar overtones because of the difference in context that the immigration experience and life in the United States provides.

Many visiting clergy comment on the lack of “excitement and fun” in ministering in the United States, since many parishioners work during the week and only participate on Sundays based on their busy schedules. The lack of contact with Korean-speaking parishioners during the week further isolates Korean clergy who are already disconnected from the local diocese due to linguistic and cultural barriers. One of the main concerns of the Korean American Priest Association (KAPA) is to incorporate and connect Korean clergy with the local structures and with other visiting clergy currently serving in the United States.

Another challenge the overabundance of Korean clergy presents is witnessed in the outreach to the next generation of Korean American Catholics, who are primarily English speakers. Due to linguistic and cultural barriers, many visiting Korean clergy avoid this subgroup, only ministering to their Korean-speaking counterparts. Often, a parallel ecclesial structure arises as ministries for the younger generations of Catholics form to address linguistic challenges. In addition, newly arrived young adults, college students, and even youths require dual ministries based on language proficiency. Visiting Korean clergy are drawn to the Korean-speaking groups in these parallel ministries based on their familiarity, comfort, and ease with this subgroup. Thus, English-speaking Korean American Catholic offspring have become the minorities of minorities and are further estranged and overlooked in Church and society.

The ongoing influx of immigration exacerbates this issue as newly arrived immigrants continue to garner resources and pastoral attention because of linguistic and cultural familiarity, not only with the next generation but also with the initial immigrant group. Rather than building an ethnic community of worship for the next generation, as

many of the older immigrants desired to do, these religious spaces have now transferred from the older immigrant group to the current immigrant group because of ongoing and increasing immigration. A positive aspect of steady immigration is that it promotes the ongoing gathering of Korean American communities for social, cultural, and religious purposes. Conversely, a negative aspect of this trend is that the next generation is being lost in the recent immigration experience. The original intention of the parent group in creating a religious and cultural space in a foreign land was to preserve and nurture their cultural and religious heritage for the next generation.

In addition to the issues surrounding the leadership of Korean clergy, leadership and support at the diocesan level is almost nonexistent. While there are a few dioceses that provide planning and development of Korean American Catholic communities, many do not garner any attention from the diocese. In fact, many diocesan strategies adopt a “wait and see” approach that stunts the development of local faith communities and their authentic sacramental Church life. This “wait and see” strategy arises from the negative recollection of the closing of many national churches that had grown out of the immigration experience of Europe. Rather than having to endure these difficult closures of parishes, many bishops have decided not to grant parish status to Korean American communities. Often referred to as having priestly directors rather than pastors of parishes, these communities are canonically labeled inferior and become secondary in the future planning of many dioceses. The 2010 U.S. Census indicates an increase in Korean immigration with little slowing in future projections. Although many Korean immigrants are or become worshippers in Protestant churches upon their arrival, Korean American Catholics have independently maintained their communities even in remote areas of the United States where distance and numbers of parishioners are quite challenging.

Being recognized as an authentic expression of the local Church within the Universal is important for the development of any nascent community. Although Korean American Catholic outreach is still

fairly young in its development, in 2016, it will commemorate the golden jubilee of being officially part of the U.S. Church. In 1966, the Archdiocese of San Francisco officially recognized the Korean American Catholic community at St. Michael's, and soon after, many other dioceses followed suit by acknowledging their Korean American brothers and sisters in their midst. Recognition for Korean American Catholic communities is achievable if the Church in the United States works together beyond diocesan jurisdictions because of the dispersed demographics of any ethnic community of believers. The Catholic Church in the United States would be well-served by understanding that Korean American Catholics identify themselves in a larger context not limited by parochial boundaries, as many parishioners travel from various locales, even crossing diocesan boundaries. Thus, pastoral approaches must also take this characteristic into consideration and provide a national outreach, especially to isolated communities. Due to the dispersed ethnic populations across the United States, the work of individual dioceses is often limited, lacking in resources, and not very productive. However, a national vision, pastoral outreach, and leadership could provide the much-needed recognition and support many of these worshipping communities require to foster their development as a local community within the wider Church.

Recognition on various ecclesial levels would provide the support and leadership for Korean American Catholics to become vital contributors to the religious landscape in the United States. On the local level, Korean American Catholic communities must be recognized as parishes once they have demonstrated viability. This recognition would allow the wider Church to appreciate the authentic expression of a local community that is similar to the nascent communities before the legalization of Christianity in the fourth century. The early Christian communities were authentic expressions of church because of their sacramental nature, and today Korean Americans continue this ecclesial reality with the hopes of growing into the structural realities of later-generation Christians. In addition, the status of these local communities as parishes would place them as equals to any faith

community in the Church in the United States. This equality is psychologically uplifting, since many immigrant communities lack confidence in making a home in both church and society because of their minority status. Recognition on this parochial level shows that Korean American Catholics have a place in the local ecclesial landscape and can make a valuable contribution to the wider Church. Most importantly, even though society continues to discriminate against them based on appearance, language, and culture, the Catholic Church in the United States can show that it has overcome these barriers.

Gaining an official status as a parish community allows Korean American Catholic communities to demand pastoral attention from both Korean-ordained and U.S.-ordained clergy. Official ecclesial status does not always mean separation through the creation of independent centers of worship within existing parochial boundaries. Such recognition can come from existing parochial structures that truly embrace a shared-parish model, in which ethnic communities are welcomed and their leadership taken seriously. In either situation, creating an integrated and stable environment is critical in the development of any infant community and would provide the opportunity for Korean American communities to grow and develop like any other local expressions of the faith. Installing pastors in actual parishes develops the relationship with local ordinaries, since trust is crucial—especially when one considers the linguistic and cultural hurdles present.

One avenue that would alleviate some fears would be a greater presence of Asian Americans, including Korean Americans, on the episcopal level. A bishop of Korean descent within the ranks of the episcopate would allow for a liaison for all Korean American Catholics with their ordinaries. Today, because of this absence of leadership, many Korean American Catholics still maintain their identity and allegiance with the Church in Korea, including the leadership overseas. Asian American leadership would signify a home for all Asian American Catholics in the Church in the United States, and not simply a place at the table as before. In addition, the Confucian heritage

of Korean descendants requires such fatherly leadership figures to complete the communal aspect of their lives. An ethnic episcopal leader not only serves in the local diocese but can also provide a bridge for bishops of the United States and local communities across the country. Thus, a native ethnic bishop could assist the entire episcopal conference, since Korean American Catholics are truly a local reality bound together by a national and international identity. Currently, Korean American Catholics have their local spiritual fatherly figure in their priestly leaders and their international spiritual fatherly figure in the Korean episcopacy; however, Korean Americans, in general, still do not have enough national figures in the political, social, or religious arena.

For Korean Americans, the Confucian belief system based on filial piety necessitates fatherly figures at every level. Certain Asian and Pacific Islander communities—such as Vietnamese and Filipino communities—have been recognized with the installation of bishops of their heritage. African American and Hispanic/Latino communities have also had their share of episcopal leadership. Of all Asian and Pacific Island Catholic groups, Koreans and Vietnamese are the two that consistently continue to build churches and expand their ecclesial presence. The growth of these local communities requires both a real presence and voice on all levels.

Today in Korea, foreign-born bishops have all left their dioceses and handed the Church in Korea to the local hierarchy. The Church in Korea numbers over five million, with much of the growth occurring in recent decades. Gleaning the richness of both religious experiences would strengthen leadership at the national level as well as at the level of the local faith communities. At the same time, the sharing of this richness would lessen the fears of many diocesan leaders who are unfamiliar with the faithfulness of this immigrant group. The depth of the religious and cultural heritage of both the Church in the United States and the Church in Korea presents unique leadership opportunities previously unseen in the Catholic Church in the United States. Both societal and religious successes can only add

to the strength and leadership of the USCCB by honoring Korean American Catholics on every ecclesial level.

Korean American Priest Association (KAPA)

THIRTY YEARS OF LEADERSHIP AND BUILDING FAITH COMMUNITIES

The Korean American Priest Association (KAPA) celebrated its thirtieth anniversary of serving Catholics of Korean descent in the United States and Canada in 2013. Formerly known as the North American Conference of Priests for Korean Ministry, KAPA continues to support the grassroots ministries of clergy and lay leaders in nourishing the spiritual and cultural needs of Korean immigrants and subsequent generations of Korean American Catholics. The support KAPA receives from the USCCB and Catholic Bishops Conference of Korea reflects the multicultural and global movement of Catholics today. As we continue to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, KAPA truly represents the expression of the Church in the modern world discussed half a century ago. Korean clergy continue to travel to North America to minister to Catholics of Korean descent; thus, an ecclesial and cultural exchange nourishes the faithful in a particular locale and enhances our understanding of the universal faith. For the past thirty years, KAPA has engaged in the task of receiving the faith within a particular culture—highlighting the cultural aspects of the universal faith to assist visiting Korean clergy in adapting their ministerial outreach to those living in the United States. As Korean Americans learn to be a particular people of God within the wider Church, KAPA has also journeyed and developed through this mutual and integral process.

Thirty years of ministry and service represent a significant accomplishment for any ethnic group. However, this milestone in the faith journey of Korean American Catholics and their leadership is not just a ceremonial reminder of our past but a celebration of our ongoing commitment as the People of God. The opening homily for the

Year of Faith reminds us that our work is not yet complete and that the recent celebration simply marks the continuing work of the Holy Spirit started at Vatican II:

The Year of Faith which we launch today is linked harmoniously with the Church's whole path over the last fifty years. . . . If today the Church proposes a new Year of Faith and a new evangelization, it is not to honor an anniversary, but because there is more need of it, even more than there was fifty years ago! And the reply to be given to this need is the one desired by the Popes, by the Council Fathers and contained in its documents.⁶

Thus, a celebration gathering priests, religious, and lay leaders of the Korean American communities took place in Southern California in May 2013 to honor their immigration history and, more importantly, to work together to embrace a common vision in building the Kingdom of God. KAPA's commitment and work to facilitate the encounter between visiting clergy from Korea and the local Korean American faith communities is needed more than ever as the differing realities between Koreans and Korean Americans are becoming more evident. In addition, KAPA realizes the strengths of Korean laity in maintaining religious communities across the United States as the laity did in the early Korean Church. KAPA also recognizes the role of the presbyterate in maintaining the sacramental reality of these ecclesial communities.

The Council Fathers at Vatican II could never have envisioned the modern-day realities of the Church and, in particular, the implications of prayer in the vernacular. Rather than praying in an unknown language, the Council Fathers accommodated the native tongue of local peoples. However, the Council Fathers most likely did not envision a reality where two languages would be necessary to suit the needs of a community living in between two worlds. In order to accommodate both the Korean and English languages, bilingual missalettes are

6 Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, October 11, 2012, www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20121011_anno-fede_en.html.

widely distributed by KAPA to encourage full and active participation of both Korean and English speakers gathered under one roof. Weekly Sunday liturgies are presented with the Korean and English side by side so that Korean-speakers attending an English liturgy can follow along and vice-versa. Like other prayer media, these universally distributed missalettes are one of the binding characteristics of any Korean American community. One would be hard pressed not to find them in the hands of the faithful at liturgies on any given day of the week.

KAPA also addresses the needs of the presbyterate by conducting orientation workshops for Korean priests ordained outside North America. By providing a fraternal network, KAPA helps visiting clergy feel less isolated and more supported in their own local ministries. Due to the immigration experience, Korean Americans have developed into their own people with familiar characteristics of the homeland still retained. Therefore, similarities can always be seen between Koreans and Korean Americans, even as certain differences become more noticeable due to the developing history of the immigrants living in the United States. With longevity and historical development, a group consciousness arises due to the specific social and spiritual needs of Korean Americans. Thus, KAPA's work is more valuable than ever in bridging the needs of Korean American local communities with their visiting sacramental leaders. In particular, KAPA's presence is critical in assisting local religious communities to address and express their social, cultural, and spiritual needs as immigrants living in a foreign land. Additionally, KAPA is able to address and voice the needs of the next generation, which often go unnoticed by the parent group. By highlighting and voicing the concerns of Korean Americans, KAPA is able to assist in the adjustment process of visiting clergy. Although Korean priests assigned to the United States share many things with their lay counterparts, such as appearance and language, the difference in needs stemming from the immigration process is not one that is easily recognizable by the visiting clergy.

KAPA's work then is to represent the local communities with the continual clergy transitions.

While addressing the needs of a specific community, KAPA also understands its connection to the wider Church as Korean American communities continue to support global ministries. Through prayer and financial support, Korean American Catholics have been involved with the construction of the Catholic Church in South Korea as well as missionary efforts in Latin America, Africa, and other regions of Asia. Most recently, KAPA has been instrumental in bringing a food aid program to impoverished North Korea. Regardless of locale, KAPA's mission to walk with those in need is a sign of the ongoing and New Evangelization needed in today's global Church and society.

Conclusion

UPCOMING FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY AS KOREAN AMERICAN CATHOLICS

In 2016, Korean American Catholics will celebrate fifty years of establishing their cultural and religious heritage in the United States. The Korean American Catholic journey began in 1966, when the Archdiocese of San Francisco acknowledged the growing commitment of Korean immigrants in their neighborhoods by establishing the first officially recognized Korean American Catholic community at St. Michael's. Although several communities of this ethnic group existed throughout the United States prior to this declaration, the official sanctioning by a diocese meant that Korean Americans were now officially part of the U.S. religious landscape. This milestone of being officially recognized is important today, because it is truly the starting point for Catholics of Korean descent. In other words, the ability to create an identity by reflecting on what it means to be Korean, American, and Catholic would not have been possible without the cultural, social, and religious space afforded at this time.

This golden jubilee is also a culmination of the social and religious immigration experience based on the emergence of the Catholic faith on the Korean Peninsula over a century ago and in this country after the 1965 U.S. Immigration Act. Although liturgical prayers involving Korean American Catholics previously existed, Church authorities did not officially recognize these celebrations, since Koreans in substantial numbers were fairly new in U.S. society. With this new status as members of an ecclesial community, Korean American Catholics were allowed to begin expressing their spiritual needs—in particular, the lack of priestly leadership in their midst. This sacramental void within the immigrant community resembles the nascent faith community on the Korean Peninsula in the eighteenth century. Through the support of the Universal Church, in particular, through missionaries

from China and then France, the faithful in Korea laid the foundation for future generations of believers on the Korean Peninsula. Through the support of the Universal Church, especially through welcoming clergy and faith communities in the United States along with Korean missionaries, Korean American Catholics were able to forge their cultural and social identities in the United States.

Although the 2016 golden jubilee will recall past contributions, this commemoration will more importantly celebrate present realities, since without this focus, Korean Americans cannot continue to grow into the future as significant contributors to both Church and society. In order to move forward as a unique people of faith gleaning the richness from both countries of origin and destination, Korean Americans must not only respect their past but, equally important, properly engage in their current struggles and honor their achievements. The early martyrs acknowledged their foundational role in the nascent Christian community and were willing to offer their lives; today's descendants in the United States continue to do so by serving generously despite their situation of displacement and by sacrificing for future generations. However, the sacrifices of immigrants do not garner the same acclaim as the sacrifices of the early Korean Church, and without such acknowledgment in building a secular and religious community, the future is difficult to embrace with the hope that is afforded us in faith. Therefore, this fiftieth anniversary commemoration is a remembrance of the connection between the immigrant lives of those residing in the United States and the martyrs of Korea. It positively recognizes their present realities as they look forward hopefully to the next fifty years.

September 20 is the feast day of SS. Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang, and companions. This annual celebration of the 103 martyrs reminds the Church of the integral relationship between clergy and laity, especially in the formation of a unique Christian community found nowhere else in the world. Chong epitomizes the laity's involvement through which the Catholic faith rooted itself on the Korean Peninsula. Kim symbolizes the presence of clergy involvement

that nurtured the early community, allowing the Catholic faith to flourish. Korean martyrdom involved both clergy and laity, a foundation that has produced a vibrant Church today in Asia and a faith that is resilient in the United States. Today's Korean American Catholic communities continue this rich heritage. The laity were the first to root the Korean Catholic faith on U.S. soil, while the clergy followed by nurturing them and thus allowing Korean American Catholics to flourish and become unique contributors to both Church and society.

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By continuing the tradition of gathering as local faith communities characterized by sacrifice and adaptation, Korean American Catholics have emerged as part of the fabric of Church and society. With the jubilee celebration of Korean American Catholic heritage in 2016, necessary reflections allowed the faithful to see how God called them to leave their home country and begin anew. Through this process of incorporating the rich Korean Catholic heritage with the immigrant experience, the Church in the United States benefits because of her ongoing growth as a multicultural spiritual family.

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