



ASIA/SOUTH KOREA - The Archbishop of Seoul: "A year of pastoral service, with the smell of the sheep"

Seoul (Agenzia Fides) – To evangelize according to Pope Francis' words, when he says that "Pastors must have the smell of the sheep": is the pastoral perspective of the Archbishop of Seoul, His Exc. Mgr. Andrew Yeom Soo-jung, exactly one year after taking possession in the Archdiocese of Seoul, on June 25 2012. The territory of the Diocese, with over 10 million people, includes about 1.5 million Catholics, served by 930 priests, about 540 members of religious orders and about 2,000 nuns. A "pastoral army" that the Archbishop intends to put at the service of the proclamation of the Good News. On the occasion of the first anniversary, Fides Agency asked him an analysis of his pastoral service.

Your Excellency, how can you define your first year of pastoral service?

It has been a year of gratitude. I would like to express my thankfulness to all the brothers and sisters in our diocese, especially to all the faithful. Although there have been difficulties inside and outside the Church over the past year, I went through the year with good health, both physical and spiritual: I owe it to the prayers made by everyone of you

What were the most significant moments?

First, the walking pilgrimage on the occasion of the "World Day of Prayer for the Sanctification of Priests," in early June. We stopped at the Seosomun Martyrs' Shrine, the largest in the country, there are 103 people canonized as saints in Korea: 44 out of the 103 sacrificed their lives in Seosomun. The martyrs are considered to be pioneers who led Korea to become a more modernized country with the belief of human respect: Therefore, Seosomun is a very significant place in the modern history of Korea, not just for Catholics.

Secondly, I remember a meeting with the diocesan clergy, in February 2013: Communication between priests of different regions and pastoral work fields, is for me a very important point. I gathered their ideas and suggestions on the life of the Church.

Finally, I would like to mention the pastoral works in Southeast Asia and North Korea: as the Apostolic Administrator of Pyongyang, I feel sad about the disputes between North and South Korea. I really think that appropriate conversations are needed. I also hope that the Archdiocese of Seoul can give as much help as we can to the Church in South East Asia.

How do you intend to promote the work of evangelization?

Pope Francis said that priests should become "shepherds living with the smell of the sheep". We intend to bring the healing power of God's grace to everyone in need, and stay close to the marginalized. That way, we can touch the hearts of others and spread the Good News of the Lord around. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 25/06/2013)