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ASIA/SOUTH KOREA - The Archbishop of Seoul: "Cardinal Filoni's visit is an incentive for the Church in Korea that wants to be missionary"

Seoul (Agenzia Fides) - "We thank Cardinal Fernando Filoni for his visit, for the attention and support for the Korean Church. We are honored and we feel particularly blessed by the Lord for his presence among us". These are the words expressed to Fides Agency, by the Archbishop of Seoul, Mgr. Andrew Yeom Soo- jung, who today welcomes Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, on a pastoral visit to the country from September 30 to October 6. The visit has as main purpose the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Diocese of Suwon, where Cardinal Filoni will go on October 3. The Cardinal, who arrived in Seoul today, will meet the Archbishop and the local curia tomorrow, while on October 2 he will hold a meeting with the entire Bishops' Conference.
The Prefect's visit – says Mgr. Yeom Soo-jung to Fides - "is an incentive for us to be a missionary Church". The Archbishop explains: "The Church of Korea has received much support from other Churches. Now it is time for us to help Churches in need, especially in Southeast Asia, where there is urgent need of work of evangelization. I think this is the mission that God has given to our diocese and to the Church of Korea".
Tracing a picture of the Korean church and its roots, the Archbishop said: " Currently there are 16 dioceses in Korea with more than 5 million Catholics. The Archdiocese of Seoul is one of the largest in the world. The Church in Korea came this far thanks to God's blessings". "Catholicism – he stresses - began in Korea in the early years of the 17th century, thanks to the contacts of some Korean diplomats who met Jesuit priests in China. The priests gave them books on the Christian faith, so some Korean scholars began to study the new religion, comparing it with the neo- Confucianism, traditional philosophy in Korea. Later they organized the first Catholic community".
In 1824, the Korean Church sent a letter to the Pope asking for foreign missionaries in Korea. "The Holy See tried to send missionaries in Korea, but no one could enter due to a new persecution on behalf of the government: hundreds of Catholics were arrested and killed", said Msg. Yeom Soo-jung. On September 9, 1831, the Apostolic Vicariate of Korea was formally established and the missionaries of the "Foreign Missions of Paris" were asked to be responsible for the spread of the faith in Korea. "Since then, with the support of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Catholic Church in Korea has grown and prospered. Cardinal Filoni's visit today confirms the support and blessing of the Holy See and opens us to new opportunities for evangelization", he concludes. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 30/09/2013)

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