



ASIA/SOUTH KOREA - Over 45 thousand faithful attend Cardinal Filoni's Mass for the Jubilee of the Diocese of Suwon

Suwon (Agenzia Fides) – The Eucharist celebration, which was held today at the stadium in Suwon, presided by Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, on a visit in South Korea, was attended by over 45 thousand faithful. "The Mass commemorated the 50th anniversary of the creation of the diocese, and was the culmination of a diocesan Jubilee Year, which we lived based on the theme of the Imitation of Christ", explains to Fides Agency His Exc. Mgr. Matthias Ri Jong-hoon, Bishop of Suwon. "We are grateful to the Pope and to Cardinal Filoni: the faithful feel encouraged and happy. This celebration was a sign of strong unity with the Holy See, which fills us with joy and hope. We give glory to God", the Bishop continued. "For the diocesan community it was a year marked by prayer and focused on the deepening of faith. We recall in particular the significant diocesan pilgrimage to the 14 shrines of martyrs in Korea".

The Bishop leads a diocese which in Korea is the second largest, after Seoul: "We have 430 priests, one million Catholics and many vocations. The interdiocesan Seminary of Suwon currently welcomes 190 seminarians, among whom 40 are from neighboring dioceses and two from China". They are the fruits of pastoral work that has lasted for 50 years, "characterized by a constant missionary commitment", he says. "The effort of evangelization - says Mgr. Ri Jong-hoon - has seen a steady expansion of the parishes that are now 202, with an average of 4,000 Catholics each. Here catechesis and liturgy have the objective of strengthening the faith of God's people. For us, events such as the World Youth Day with the Pope or the one celebrated at a diocesan level are very important". Another aspect that sees the Church at the forefront is social pastoral: "We are engaged in the acceptance and support of immigrants who come to work in Korea from countries like the Philippines, China, Vietnam but also from Africa and Latin America. We are active in pastoral work in prisons. A special section of Caritas is the accompaniment to the citizens of North Korea: we help them integrate into the social fabric: there are 30 thousand in all of Korea, of whom 7 thousand in Suwon", points out Mgr. Ri.

The Church is active in the field of education: the Church runs 40 kindergartens, 5 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, 2 high schools with more than 3,000 young people enrolled. "In these works, which highlight the living presence of the Church in society, the Catholic laity is very active, dynamic and well organized. Over 30 ecclesial associations and movements offer a fundamental contribution with regards to pastoral work", concludes the Bishop, hoping that "at the conclusion of the Jubilee, the people of God always have the heart, the mind and the forces aimed at missionary commitment". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 03/10/2013)