

From Mission to Mission: Missionary Experience from the Korean Catholic Church

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[Abstract] In the history of Christianity in East Asia, Korea was far from the activities of Western missionaries. Although East Asia had been a missionary field for the West, Korea was not directly related to Western missionaries before the founding of the Korean Church by lay people in 1784. With this historical event we can affirm that the Catholic Church in Korea was established, not by Western missionaries, but by the spontaneous efforts of the Korean people. However, in order to promote the propagation and deepening of their faith, the Korean church members saw a need for a missionary and tried to invite a priest. The Korean believers constantly appealed to the Holy See to send missionaries and wanted to have their own diocese. As a result, Propaganda Fide established the Joseon Apostolic Vicariate in 1831 and asked the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP) to accept the charge of supplying priests to Korea. Afterwards, the MEP missionary priests in Korea focused on evangelization, enduring several persecutions until the Hierarchy in Korea was formally established by Pope John XXIII in 1962. While it was Korean lay persons who began the faithful community without the cultivation of foreign missionaries, subsequent foreign missions to Korea from other Churches helped the Korean Church grow, and the Korean Church recently has changed from a mission-receiving Church to a mission-sending Church. In 2020, the Korean Catholic Church has 1,137 missionaries working in 80 countries beyond their own language and culture. In this article, following a brief history of foreign missions to Korea, I will focus on Propaganda Fide and the MEP missionary priests sent by Propaganda Fide. It then explores the Korean Missionary Society (KMS) as a pioneer group of the Korean Catholic mission. Finally, I conclude with some reflections on how the foreign mission vitalized and renewed the Korean Church.

Introduction

On the Southwest tip of Korea is the nation's largest island, Jeju, which has been designated as a World Heritage Site, with the Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes. On this beautiful island, there is a street with a very unique name, the "Road McGlinchey," named after Fr. Patrick James McGlinchey (1928-2018), a priest from the Missionary Society of St. Columban, who has been on the island since 1953. This designation commemorates the work that he has done to help the poor on Jeju. When Fr. McGlinchey arrived on the island, its political and economic situation was unstable and the people on Jeju were suffering greatly from poverty. So, he opened a large dairy and stud farm, trying to encourage people to overcome their poverty by working at the farm, as well as with efforts for missionary activities for evangelization. This missionary life of Fr. McGlinchey is one part of the history of the Korean Catholic Church, as well as the larger Korean society. Likewise, foreign missionaries who have lived in Korea are intertwined with the faith and life of Korean Catholics. But, in the larger history of Christianity in East Asia, Korea was far from the activities of Western missionaries. Although East Asia had been a missionary field for the West, Korea was not directly related to Western missionaries before the founding of the Korean Church by lay people in 1784.

With this historical event, we can affirm that the Catholic Church in Korea was established, not by Western missionaries, but by the spontaneous efforts of the Korean people themselves. However, to promote the propagation and deepening of their faith, members of the Korean Church saw a need for missionary help and tried to invite a priest. The Korean believers wanted to have their own diocese and, as such, appealed to the Holy See to send missionary priests. As a result, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda Fide) established an Apostolic Vicariate in Korea in 1831 and asked the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP) to accept the charge of supplying priests to Korea. Afterwards, MEP missionary priests in Korea focused on evangelization, enduring several persecutions until the hierarchy in Korea was formally established by Pope John XXIII in 1962. Moreover, Propaganda Fide assisted the Catholic Church in Korea with beginning her overseas mission in the 1970s by supporting Bishop Jae-seon Choi in founding the Korean Missionary Society (KMS).

While it was lay persons who began the faithful community in Korea without foreign missionaries, subsequent foreign missions to Korea from other Churches helped the Korean Church grow. Then recently, the Korean Church changed from a mission-receiving Church to a mission-sending Church. As of 2020, the Korean Catholic Church had 1,137 missionaries working in 80 countries, beyond language and culture. In this article, following a brief history of foreign missions to Korea, I will focus on Propaganda

Fide and the MEP missionary priests it sent. I will then explore KMS as a pioneer group of the Korean Catholic mission and the growth of this mission. This research contributes to a wider understanding of the mission both to Korea, as well as the mission from Korea.

The Birth of the Korean Catholic Church

Christian history in East Asia notes that Korea was far from the activities of Western missionaries. Instead, the Korean Catholic Church was started by the efforts of native Korean lay persons. The Christian faith was introduced to the Korean peninsula in the 18th century, at which time, in nearby China, there were religious texts written in the Chinese language, which were then transmitted to some Korean literati through cultural relations between Korea and China.¹ In this way, some Korean scholars gleaned the essence of this new religion by reading and studying these books, and then attempting to practice it among themselves. After more than a century in which Catholic teaching was studied in Korea, a series of seminars took place at Jueosa (주어사), a Buddhist temple in Gwangju, in the Gyeonggi province. The meetings at the temple were the roots of the first Catholic community in Korea. Byeok Yi, who initiated the meetings, heard that Seung-hun Yi was due to accompany his father to Beijing in late 1783 and so asked him to find information on Christian teaching, visit churches, and get baptism. Seung-hun Yi went to Beijing, and after being instructed, he was baptized by the French Jesuit priest Jean Joseph de Grammont in early 1784. Seung-hun Yi then returned to Korea, bringing with him books, crucifixes, images, and other religious items that he had been given.²

After he came back to Korea, Seung-hun Yi baptized Byeok Yi, and this baptism has long been considered as the starting point of the Catholic Church in Korea. Following the baptism of Byeok Yi, Seung-hun Yi baptized Il-sin Kwon, who was a descendant of a leading scholarly family at the time and who had studied Catholicism through Western books, which had been translated into Chinese. These first three Korean Catholics – Seung-hun Yi, Byeok Yi and Il-sin Kwon – are called the Founding Fathers of the Catholic Church in Korea. Seung-hun Yi was selected as the chief of the Church and his lay organization decided to bestow upon him the authority to supervise the celebration

¹ Sebastian C. H. Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 17.

² Antton Egiguren Iraola, *True Confucians, Bold Christians: Korean Missionary Experience* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 227-230; Antton Egiguren Iraola, a Spanish priest of the Order of Friars Minor. He worked as a missionary for 20 years in Korea and Thailand. In 2005, he was awarded a Ph.D. in theology at the Catholic University of Leuven.

of Masses and confirmations. He granted similar authority to ten of his colleagues, giving them the title of Priest. Seung-hun Yi and the ten others began to act as priests, administering sacraments, teaching, and performing other clerical roles. Under this pseudo ecclesiastical hierarchy, they sought active communication and relationships with each other, and formed a group to carry out missionary work. The Christian community developed rapidly, thanks to their ardent dedication to the mission under lay leadership, which was initiated with good intention by lay leaders who had learned about sacraments and liturgy through the books they studied, to meet the needs of the rapidly developing community.³

However, a group led by Hang-geom Yu questioned this pseudo ecclesiastical hierarchy, since church law allowed only priests ordained by a bishop to perform sacraments.⁴ Yu's group eventually consulted Bishop Alexander de Gouvea of Beijing regarding an authoritative interpretation of these practices. In 1789, one of the believers, Yu-il Yun, was dispatched to Beijing to meet with the bishop. Yun returned to Korea with the first pastoral letter to the community. In it, Bishop Gouvea issued no reprimand, since it was understood that the Koreans were doing what they thought was right but told them to prepare for a properly ordained priest to be sent from Beijing. Despite this promise of a missionary, an immediate dispatch was difficult because of the serious shortage of missionaries at the time. But Bishop Gouvea supported the propagation of Catholicism in Korea and, thus, actively promoted such a dispatch, eventually assigning Fr. Juan dos Remedios in 1790. In February 1791, Fr. dos Remedios arrived at the border of Korea but was unable to enter the country because of the Shin-hae persecution, the first persecution in Korea, which had just begun at that time.⁵

But after the Shin-hae persecution, the number of believers again increased. In response to the Korean Church's continued requests for a priest, Bishop Gouvea then dispatched a Chinese priest, Fr. Wen-mo Zhou (b. 1752 in Su-Tcheou, Jiang-nan Province, China). On Bishop Gouvea's orders, Fr. Zhou left Beijing in February 1794 and met the secret envoy from the Korean Church on an appointed date, at a designated border village. He entered Korea disguised as a native Korean on December 24, 1794 and became the first missionary priest to enter Korea.⁶ Fr. Zhou arrived in Seoul and

³ 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 Joseon Dynasty* (Cheltenham: The Hermit Kingdom Press, 2006), 37-38.

⁴ Choi, *The Origin of the Roman Catholic Church in Korea*, 39.

⁵ Choi, *The Origin of the Roman Catholic Church in Korea*, 42.

⁶ Choi, *The Origin of the Roman Catholic Church in Korea*, 43.

stayed at the house of In-gil Choi. There, he studied the Korean language and celebrated his first Mass with the Korean Catholics on Easter Sunday, April 5, 1795. Fr. Zhou performed the holy offices very secretly, but very fervently. He traveled around administering the sacraments and organized the Myeongdohoe, a gathering of the laity studying doctrine and scripture. He also carried out other activities, even writing catechism. Within six years of missionary dedication, the number of Catholics in Korea grew from four thousand to ten thousand.⁷

However, everything changed with the Shin-yu persecution of 1801 which, when it broke out, had countless Catholics arrested. The persecutors interrogated and tortured Catholics to make them confess the whereabouts of Fr. Zhou. Since Korean Catholics were being killed because of him, the priest decided to return to China. However, he changed his mind. Instead, he resolved to surrender himself saying, "I have to share the destiny of my flock and to mitigate their persecution and martyrdom."⁸ He died by beheading on May 31, 1801, with the final words: "I die for the Catholic Church."⁹ After Fr. Zhou's death, there were no other missionaries to Korea for many years.

The Growth of the Korean Catholic Church and Foreign Missions

The Korean believers enduring the persecutions began to campaign for another priest to celebrate the sacraments for them. In 1811, they wrote a letter to Pope Pius VII. But there was no progress, so they sent another letter to Rome in 1825. In this letter, they stated that a priest must be sent to oversee their exigent situation. This letter was delivered to Pope Leo XII in 1827 who, as a result, decided to establish an independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the territory of Korea.¹⁰ The one who showed the greatest enthusiasm toward the mission in Korea was Cardinal Bartolomeo Capellari of Propaganda Fide. Serendipitously, in the midst of promoting a missionary dispatch to Korea, Pope Leo XII passed away and Cardinal Capellari was elected to the Holy See and acceded as Gregory XVI in 1831.¹¹ Finally Propaganda Fide wrote to MEP to ask whether they could accept the charge of supplying priests to Korea for the immediate

⁷ Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK), 복자 윤지충 바오로와 동료 123 위 (*Blessed Paul Yun Ji-Chung and 123 Companions*) (Seoul: CBCK, 2014), 84-85.

⁸ Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK), 복자 윤지충 바오로와 동료 123 위 (*Blessed Paul Yun Ji-Chung and 123 Companions*), 85-86.

⁹ Research Foundation of Korean Church History (RFKCH), *Inside the Catholic Church of Korea* (Seoul: RFKCH, 2010), 33.

¹⁰ Choi, *The Origin of the Roman Catholic Church in Korea*, 152-153.

¹¹ Choi, *The Origin of the Roman Catholic Church in Korea*, 154.

future. Bishop Barthelemy Bruguière, a French missionary, who was pursuing missionary work in Thailand, was the first to make the attempt. He knew of the laity's request for a priest and volunteered to become a missionary to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Korea, though he was well aware of the persecution of the Church there.¹² With these events, Pope Gregory XVI erected the Vicariate Apostolic of Korea on September 9, 1831, and appointed Bishop Bruguière as the first Apostolic Vicar of Korea.

Bishop Bruguière arrived in China in July 1832 and made several unsuccessful attempts to enter Korea. Sadly, before he could reach Korea, he became sick and died on October 20, 1835. In August 1836, the Pope appointed his assistant, Fr. Laurent Imbert to take his place. However, it was Fr. Pierre-Phillibert Maubant, MEP who finally crossed the border on January 12, 1836 and became the first Western missionary to enter Korea, followed by Fr. Jacques Honore Chastan, MEP who arrived in 1836, and Bishop Laurent Marie Joseph Imbert, MEP who came in 1837.¹³ With these events, the number of Church members steadily increased; the presence of the French missionaries helped revitalize the Korean Catholic Church.

Subsequently, the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America (Maryknoll) sent missionary priests to Korea beginning in 1923, and the Missionary Society of St. Columban (Columban) sent missionary priests to Korea starting in 1933. These foreign missionary agencies were characterized as a society of apostolic life: they were secular priests, who usually worked to stabilize dioceses, erect local parishes, and take care of some sacraments. In addition to missionary priests from societies of apostolic life, by 1950, there were also two men's and five women's religious communities who were invited to help with pastoral work in Korea: Order of St. Benedict (1909) and Order of Friars Minor (1937); Congregation of the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres (1888), Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic (1924), Missionary Benedictines Sisters (1925), Olivetan Benedictine Sisters (1931), and Discalced Carmelite Nuns (1939).¹⁴

During the World War II years from 1941 to 1945 as well as the Korean War years from 1950 to 1953, all the various Catholic foreign missionary groups greatly suffered, and many were killed or repatriated to their home countries. By 1945, due to the expulsion of many non-Korean missionaries, there were 132 Korean priests in Korea but only 103 foreign priests: 38 French, 54 German, 10 Irish, and one Japanese. There were

¹² RFKCH, *Inside the Catholic Church of Korea*, 52.

¹³ Choi, *The Origin of the Roman Catholic Church in Korea*, 155.

¹⁴ Institute of Korean Church History (IKCH), 한국천주교회사 5 (*Korean Catholic History 5*) (Seoul: Institute of Korean Church History, 2014), 181-261.

56 monks, 13 of whom were Korean, and the remaining 43 German; there were 382 religious sisters, 332 of whom were Korean, 13 French, and 37 German.¹⁵ By 1949, the number of foreign priests in Korea had dropped sharply, down to 58 from 103 in 1945, while the number of Korean priests had risen from 132 to 144. The same sort of change occurred among the sisters, the number of Koreans had risen from 332 to 385, while the number of non-Koreans had dropped from 50 to only 16.¹⁶

In the aftermath of the Korean War, there was an increased need for clerics and religious workers in South Korea, since many of the Christians who had lived in the northern part of the peninsula had moved south to escape communist persecution. Furthermore, the Catholic Church in South Korea had to recover from the war, which had destroyed not only a great number of churches but also many flourishing ministries and outreach programs, especially Church leadership. By the end of the war, 40 out of the 144 Korean priests had been arrested, killed, or were missing. Similarly, among the 153 foreign missionaries and religious, 28 had died in prison, 17 had been killed, and 12 were missing.¹⁷

In the 1950s, the nature of the Catholic clerical community began to change as various missionary groups came to Korea.¹⁸ For example, the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) was the first Catholic missionary community in Korea devoted primarily to higher education, having been invited by the Korean Catholic Church for this specific purpose. In 1955, the U.S. Wisconsin Province of the Jesuits was appointed to carry out the establishment of a college in Korea. To this endeavor, the German Jesuit Theodore Geppert and several others arrived and opened Sogang University in Seoul in 1960. Then on October 7, 1962, by decree of the Propaganda Fide, the Jesuits established the Dae-gon Major Seminary in Gwangju, with Fr. Andrew Bachhuber appointed as its first rector.¹⁹ At the same time, the Korean Catholic Church received another resource for its development, with the arrival of the Society of St. Paul (Apostolate of the Press), which published and distributed written material promoting Catholic beliefs and values. Then, in 1954, the Society of St. Francis de Sales (Salesians) of the Japanese Province agreed to erect a school for the education of Korean youth, led by Fr. Archimedes Martelli.

¹⁵ Chang-mun Kim and Jae-sun Chung, *Catholic Korea: Yesterday and Today* (Seoul: Catholic Korea Publishing Co., 1964), 325.

¹⁶ Kim and Chung, *Catholic Korea: Yesterday and Today*, 340.

¹⁷ RFKCH, *Inside the Catholic Church of Korea*, 116; Kim and Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity*, 138.

¹⁸ Don Baker, "The Transformation of the Catholic Church in Korea: A Missionary Church to An Indigenous Church," *Journal of Korean Religions* 4, no. 1 (2013): 26.

¹⁹ Kim and Chung, *Catholic Korea: Yesterday and Today*, 728.

Despite the difficulty in finding funds to build the school and the scarcity of materials necessary for structure, the first Salesian School in Korea opened on March 19, 1956. Building additional schools in Korea, the Salesians also slowly developed a Korean vocation.²⁰

In addition to new missionary groups focused on education and the propagation of faith through printed word, there were also groups dedicated to medical missionary work. One example is the Hospitaller Order of St. John (St. John of God Brothers), a group of religious men who are not priests but live a communal religious life. At the invitation of Bishop Harold W. Henry, the Prefect Apostolic of Gwangju, five brothers from the Irish province came to serve in Gwangju in November 1958. They opened a clinic in January 1960 and treated over 5,000 patients during its first year of operation. In the early 1970s, these brothers also began to run a psychiatric facility in Gwangju.²¹

On March 10, 1962, Pope John XXIII established the local hierarchy of the Church in Korea, some 178 years after its founding. In addition to the establishment of a local, autonomous hierarchy, the elevation of the Archbishop of Seoul, Sou-hwan Kim, to the post of cardinal in 1969 was a signal of the “Koreanization” of the Catholic Church in Korea.²² The historian Kwang Cho²³ saw this as a “symbolic event that the leadership in the Korean Catholic Church was transferred to Koreans.”²⁴ Soon, there were considerable changes in the number of Korean priests, monks, and religious sisters, so

²⁰ Kim and Chung, *Catholic Korea: Yesterday and Today*, 725-727.

²¹ Kim and Chung, *Catholic Korea: Yesterday and Today*, 741-742.

²² Baker, “The Transformation of the Catholic Church in Korea: A Missionary Church to An Indigenous Church,” 27-28.

²³ Kwang Cho is Professor Emeritus in the department of History at Korea University. He earned his doctoral degree at Korea University in 1979 and has contributed to constructing the historical foundations for research in Korean thought, including that of Korean Catholicism.

²⁴ Kwang Cho, *한국 근현대 천주교사 연구 (The Study on Modern Korean Catholic Christianty)* (Seoul: Kyung-in Publishing, 2010), 360.

that the Korean Catholic Church showed a high rate of increase in vocations.²⁵ Even though many more Catholic missionary orders were operating in Korea in the second half of the twentieth century, the overall ratio of Korean priests, monks, and sisters to non-Koreans widened in favor of the Koreans. In the 1970s the number of foreign priests in Korea began to shrink dramatically, while the number of Korean priests grew at an even faster rate than the foreign shrinkage. In 1977, there were 749 Korean priests compared to only 279 non-Koreans, 153 brothers compared to 50 non-Koreans, and 2,700 Korean sisters compared to 178 non-Koreans.²⁶ By 1983, a mere seven years later, the number of Korean priests had risen to 1,056 (vs. 220 foreign), the number of Korean brothers had risen to 261 (vs. 41 foreign), and the number of Korean sisters had risen to 3,514 (vs. 153 foreign).²⁷ In 1998, there were 20 Korean bishops and two foreign, 2,606 Korean priests and 193 foreign, 933 Korean brothers and 212 foreign, and 8,095 Korean sisters and 195 foreign.²⁸

²⁵ Cho, 한국 근현대 천주교사 연구 (*The Study on Modern Korean Catholic Church*), 360-361:

Year	Total Priests	Korean Priests	Foreign Priests
1794	1	0	1
1839	3	0	3
1845	3	1	2
1859	9	1	8
1895	28	0	28
1910	62	15	47
1919	67	23	44
1944	241	134	107
1953	250	159	91
1960	448	243	205
1970	894	527	367
1980	1161	912	249
1990	1584	1383	201
1998	2800	2606	194

²⁶ Center for Research on Church and Society in Korea (CRCSK), 한국종교연감 1993 (*Year Book of Korean Religions for 1993*) (Seoul: Hallimwon, 1993), 182.

²⁷ CRCSK, 한국종교연감 1993 (*Year Book of Korean Religions for 1993*), 197.

²⁸ Mun-su Park, “제 2 차 바티칸 공의회와 한국천주교회 (The Second Vatican Council and the Korean Catholic Church),” in 민족사와 교회사 (*History of the Nation and History of the Church*), ed. Suk-woo Choi (Seoul: RFKCH, 2000), 686.

The Birth of the Korean Catholic Mission

Though the Korean Catholic Church has received many missionaries from other countries over the years, the Korean Catholic Church has also recently begun to send Korean missionaries to other countries; it is changing from being a receiving church to being a sharing church. The beginnings of the Korean Catholic missionary movement go back to the year 1975. At that time, with the approval of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea (CBCK), Bishop Jae-seon Choi founded the Korean Missionary Society (KMS) to participate in world mission by sending Korean missionary priests to other countries. KMS became the first foreign missionary society in the Korean Catholic Church and began training seminarians to be ordained to the priesthood. To understand the origin of this missionary movement, Bishop Choi's motivations for founding the KMS are presented here.

Bishop Jae-seon Choi, ordained a priest on May 26, 1957, is the sixth bishop of the Korean Catholic Church and the first bishop of Busan Diocese. As a decisive Church leader who laid the foundations of the Diocese of Busan, Bishop Choi resigned on September 19, 1973 at the age of 61. After his resignation, he moved to Germany and remained there for 18 months, during which time Cardinal Agnelo Rossi, Prefect of the Propaganda Fide, suggested that some office at the national level be given to Bishop Choi.²⁹ After receiving a letter from the Propaganda Fide regarding Bishop Choi, Cardinal Kim, President of the CBCK, assigned both the Episcopal Commission for Mission and the National Office of the Pontifical Missionary Union under the Pontifical Mission Societies to Bishop Choi on April 16, 1974.³⁰

With this assignment, Bishop Choi began to concentrate on the problem of the rapid decrease of vocations and the lack of priests in the universal Church. He sought possible ways to encourage priestly vocations, recalling the 200-year history of the Korean Catholic Church, during which foreign missionaries from other countries had provided great material support and sacrifices, so that the Korean Catholic Church benefitted from newly built parishes, social programs, etc. Most of all, Bishop Choi believed the Korean Catholic Church had developed numerous vocations through the efforts of missionary priests. As such, he concluded that Korean missionary priests could help the universal Church and recompense the assistance the Korean Church had received from foreign churches. He had the conviction that promoting missionary vocations would be a great

²⁹ KMS Archive, 창설자회고록 (*Reminiscences of the Founder*), 19.

³⁰ KMS Archive, 교황청 (*The Holy See*), "Letter from Archbishop Luigi Dossena, Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to Cardinal Sou-hwan Kim on February 5, 1973," 1.

contribution to the evangelization of peoples. He thought that the preparation of a group of Korean missionaries for overseas mission was significant – it would not only commemorate the upcoming 200th anniversary of the establishment of the Korean Catholic Church but was also a way in which the Korean Catholic Church could participate in world evangelization, as a task of the Church.³¹

The basic purpose of founding KMS was world evangelization. Bishop Choi articulated that: “the significance of founding the KMS is participating in world evangelization, which is the most important work of the Church.”³² He recognized the importance of the role of missionaries – especially missionary priests – for world evangelization and began to train them for foreign mission. He stressed the importance of the KMS to his seminarians: “World evangelization is the command of the Lord, the essence of the Catholic Church, and the missionary work that Jesus entrusted and again entrusts each day to his Church.”³³ Bishop Choi understood the Church’s missionary character and the responsibility of particular Churches to preach the Gospel to the whole world. He believed that the training of missionary priests was a duty of the Korean Catholic Church and that the establishment of KMS was God’s plan to meet the demand of the times.³⁴ Bishop Choi recognized that the universal Church lacked priests and anticipated that the problem would worsen; the Church cannot exist without the clergy.

He believed that a foreign missionary society should be established under the CBCK as one of the events to commemorate the Korean Catholic Church’s 200th anniversary. For this endeavor, Bishop Choi persuaded the bishops in the CBCK to acknowledge the importance of foreign mission, participate in founding KMS, and assist with his founding work.³⁵ Bishop Choi sent letters, dated May 30, 1974, to each bishop to express his desire to establish a foreign missionary society under the responsibility of

³¹ KMS Archive, 창설자회고록 (*Reminiscences of the Founder*), 20.

³² The Korean Missionary Society (KMS) archived official documents from 1973 to 1988 by year and classified them into eight by subjects: 교황청 (*The Holy See*), 주교회의 (*Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Korea*), 수도회 (*Religious Orders*), 신문기사 (*Media Report*), 성소 (*Vocation*), 후원 (*Benefactor*), 파견 (*Dispatch*) and 규약 (*Constitution*). Furthermore, the KMS archived some records related to Bishop Jae-seon Choi: 창설자자료 (*Founder Documents*) and 창설자회고록 (*Reminiscences of the Founder*): KMS Archive, 창설자회고록 (*Reminiscences of the Founder*), 20.

³³ KMS Archive, 창설자자료 (*Founder Documents*), “한국의방선교회 신학생들에게 (Letter from Bishop Jae-seon Choi to the KMS seminarians on March 11, 1989),” 76.

³⁴ KMS Archive, 창설자자료 (*Founder Documents*), “알림: 형제자매께 아뢰입니다 (Letter from Bishop Jae-seon Choi to All Korean Catholics on May 1, 1977),” 10.

³⁵ KMS Archive, 창설자회고록 (*Reminiscences of the Founder*), 21-22.

the CBCK.³⁶ He then collected the opinions of all the bishops on the establishment of a priest group for foreign mission in Korea, of which 11 of 18 bishops agreed and entrusted the work to him.³⁷

Meanwhile, he contacted the Propaganda Fide to explain the imminent need for a foreign missionary society in Korea, in light of the following situations: (1) the sharp decrease in priest vocations in the Church in Europe, which had sent many missionary priests; (2) increasing vocations in the Korean Catholic Church, from which a foreign missionary society could be established; and (3) the support of some Bishops within the Korean Catholic Church, who agreed to the establishment of a foreign missionary society. Reporting that he was preparing for the foundation of KMS under the CBCK, he requested the help of the Propaganda Fide.³⁸

Members of the Propaganda Fide – Cardinal Agnelo Rossi (Prefect 1970-1984), and Archbishop Duraisamy Simon Lourdsamy (Secretary 1973-1985) – expressed their thanks for Bishop Choi’s letter, with admiration for his missionary zeal. However, the Propaganda Fide deemed it extremely necessary that this project of founding a new missionary society be studied with the utmost care regarding all possible implications, including: (1) the specific nature and proper distinctive character of the proposed congregation; (2) the campaign of publicity given to Korean Catholics by the media or magazines and the reaction and cooperation of the clergy and laity; (3) the union with the CBCK, which must be always be kept informed of all the initiatives taken; and (4) the circumspection building upon a solid foundation for the future missionary activity.³⁹ This meant that the Propaganda Fide did not oppose the plan for the founding, and promised Bishop Choi with effective and appropriate help.

Encouraged by the agreement of some Korean bishops and the Propaganda Fide, Bishop Choi began his founding work of KMS with the help of three regional superiors of the Maryknoll, the Columban, and the MEP. But the establishment of KMS was

³⁶ KMS Archive, *주교회의 (Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Korea)*, “모든 주교님들에게 (Letter from Bishop Jae-seon Choi to All Bishops on May 30, 1974),” 6.

³⁷ KMS Archive, *교황청 (The Holy See)*, “Letter from Bishop Jae-seon Choi to Archbishop Duraisamy Simon Lourdsamy on August 15, 1974,” 2-4.

³⁸ KMS Archive, *교황청 (The Holy See)*, “Letter from Bishop Jae-seon Choi to Archbishop Duraisamy Simon Lourdsamy on August 15, 1974,” 2-4.

³⁹ KMS Archive, *교황청 (The Holy See)*, “Letter from Cardinal Agnelo Rossi, Prefect of the Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples and Archbishop Duraisamy Simon Lourdsamy, Secretary of the Congregation of the Evangelization of Peoples to Bishop Jae-seon Choi on October 10, 1974,” 5-6; KMS Archive, *교황청 (The Holy See)*, “Letter from Luigi Dossena Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to Bishop Jae-seon Choi on October 16, 1974,” 7-8.

controversial. According to his report to Propaganda Fide in 1974, although many bishops evaluated the establishment of KMS positively, some were worried about the problems of missionary vocations and financial aid. But Bishop Choi argued that the promotion of missionary vocations for KMS would increase vocations in the Korean Catholic Church, and the Church was standing, not on a material base, but on the spiritual base. He reminded others that many religious orders and missionary institutes were growing, not by money but by grace.⁴⁰ Bishop Choi firmly believed that the faith of the Korean people and rich vocations had the potential to change the Korean Catholic Church, from being in debt to the universal Church to being able to help the universal Church.

Finally, at the spring meeting of the CBCK's General Assembly on February 24-28, 1975, the bishops approved the establishment of KMS and Bishop Choi was elected as its moderator, with the approval of 16 of the 18 attendants.⁴¹ KMS was now officially the first foreign mission society of the Korean Catholic Church. Bishop Choi worked faithfully in teaching and taking care of the KMS seminarians who would form the first foreign mission priests of the Korean Catholic Church. He recruited seminarians, opened a formation house, and collected funds for formation.

By the Korean Catholic Church's 200th anniversary of accepting faith in Korea, KMS was ready to send its first missionary priest for overseas mission. On October 11, 1981, *Catholic Times*⁴² reported,

The Korean Catholic Church also sends missionaries to other countries. For the first time in 200 years of the Korean Church history, four priests are being sent to Papua New Guinea. The Korean Missionary Society, which was established to proclaim the Good News to the nations, sends its first priest ordained in the 8 years since

⁴⁰ KMS Archive, 교황청 (*The Holy See*), "Letter from Bishop Jae-seon Choi to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples on November 4, 1974," 9-10.

⁴¹ KMS Archive, 주교회의 (*Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea*), "1975년 춘계 주교회의 회의록 (The Record of the Spring General Assembly of CBCK in 1975)," 48-52.

⁴² 가톨릭신문 (*Catholic Times*) is Korea's oldest Catholic weekly newspaper. The *Catholic Times* was founded by the Daegu Archdiocese of Korea in 1927. It is a historical source for studying the Korean Catholic Church.

its foundation, along with three diocesan priests, so that this dispatch will become a watershed event.⁴³

The article evaluated the dispatch as an important moment when the Korean Catholic Church changed from a receiving church to a giving church,⁴⁴ and requested that it should support mission overseas of KMS, at national level.⁴⁵ On October 18, 1981, *Catholic Times* noted that some of the faithful were worried that it was too early for the Korean Catholic Church to participate in mission abroad because it still needed many priests for pastoral care in Korea, but observed that sending priests to other countries would be a true sharing and charity that the Church could show.⁴⁶

The Growth of the Korean Catholic Mission

The Korean bishops resolved to establish a foreign mission society to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the transmission of Catholicism in Korea. It catalyzed foreign mission for the Korean Catholic Church and encouraged bishops, priests, religious, and laypersons to share their gifts from God with other Churches. The Propaganda Fide

⁴³ “우리도 외국에 선교사를 파견한다. 한국교회 2 백년 역사상 최초로 4 명의 사제가 선교를 위해 파푸아 뉴기니로 파견된다. ‘너희는 가서 온세상에 그리스도의 복음을 전파하라’는 복음 말씀을 실천하기 위해 설립된 한국외방선교회는 설립 8 년만에 배출된 첫 사제를 포함 모두 4 명의 사제를 타국에 파견함으로써 이땅 이교회에 새로운 이정표를 설정하는 한편 결코 지워지지 않을 한획의 굵은 선을 그었다.” See 가톨릭신문 (*Catholic Times*), vol. 1275, sec. 1, October 11, 1981.

⁴⁴ “타국의 선교를 위해 첫선교사를 파견하는 이 사실은 2 백년 역사를 바탕으로 성장해온 한국교회가 받는 교회에서 주는 교회로의 탈바꿈을 위한 전기를 마련한 중대한 사건으로 평가되고 있다.” See 가톨릭신문 (*Catholic Times*), vol. 1275, sec. 1, October 11, 1981.

⁴⁵ “이번 선교사파견을 계기로 그동안 소극적으로 전개되어온 외방선교회의 후원사업은 현재의 차원에서 탈피, 거교구적으로 과감하고 적극적인 대책과 아울러 전교회적인 후원이 뒤따라야 할 것은 분명한 사실이다.” See 가톨릭신문 (*Catholic Times*), vol. 1275, sec. 1, October 11, 1981.

⁴⁶ “국내에는 사제도 부족한데 하면서 시기상조임을 이야기할 수도 있겠으나 교회의 참모습을 나눔에서 발견할 수 있다면, 부족할 때 도움을 베푸는 것이 진정한 나눔이라고 생각한다. 한국에서 선교활동을 하고 있는 외방선교단체도 본국의 사제가 남아돌아 시작된 것도 아니요, 와 있는 것도 아님을 우리는 체험으로 알고있지 않은가” See 가톨릭신문 (*Catholic Times*), vol. 1276, sec. 4, October 18, 1981.

praised the great efforts of Bishop Choi, stating that the establishment of KMS would make the Korean Catholic Church mature and strong.⁴⁷

In trying to establish KMS, Bishop Choi acknowledged that the Korean Catholic Church was likely not mature enough to send missionaries to other countries. Yet he also believed that the Korean Church needed to share, after having been filled. He asserted that “the Korean Catholic Church should change from the church receiving help to a church giving help.”⁴⁸ Pope John Paul II stated that missionary activities would make the church strong, faithful, and refreshed:

I wish to invite the Church to renew her missionary commitment. The present document has as its goal an interior renewal of faith and Christian life. For missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others! It is in commitment to the Church’s universal mission that the new evangelization of Christian peoples will find inspiration and support (*Redemptoris Missio*, no. 2).

Bishop Choi’s foresight has manifested now for some decades. Many dioceses in Korea and religious orders now send missionaries to other countries, with the understanding that the national Church is being transformed from receiving to giving, and from owing to sharing. The number of Korean missionaries increased from four in 1981 to 116 in 1989. *Catholic Times* reported that 25 mission institutes sent 116 missionaries to 31 countries: 78 religious sisters from 13 religious women’s congregations, 18 religious brothers from five religious men’s congregations, and 20 priests.⁴⁹ Ten years later, in 1999, the number of Korea missionaries was up to 356: 289 religious sisters, 14 religious brothers, and 51 priests.⁵⁰ The number of Korean missionaries continues to increase. In 2020, the Korean Catholic Church had 1,137 missionaries working in 80 countries, beyond language and culture. According to the Statistics of the Catholic Church in Korea 2020, Korean missionaries consist of 245 priests (121 diocesan priests and 124 religious priests), 57 religious brothers, and 835 religious sisters. They work in 80 countries: 571 missionaries in 22 countries of Asia, 273 missionaries in 19 countries of North America and South America, 133 missionaries

⁴⁷ KMS Archive, 교황청 (*The Holy See*), “Letter from Luigi Dossena Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to Bishop Jae-seon Choi on October 16, 1974,” 13.

⁴⁸ KMS Constitution in 1975, 2.

⁴⁹ 가톨릭신문 (*Catholic Times*), vol. 1652, sec. 1, April 23, 1989.

⁵⁰ *Statistics of the Catholic Church in Korea 1999*.

in 15 countries of Europe, 118 missionaries in 19 countries of Africa, and 42 missionaries in five countries of Oceania. In total, about 50% of all Korean missionaries are in Asia.

The Korean Catholic Church has already recognized foreign mission as one of its pastoral works: defining mission as proclamation of the Gospel to all nations which includes both inviting converts to Christianity and evangelizing cultures and values.⁵¹ The *Pastoral Directory of the Church in Korea*, which was published by the CBCK in 1995, observes that world mission is an important activity of the Church: “The Korean Church should be a ‘sharing church’ by sending Korean missionaries devoted to world mission, in order that the Korean Church takes some charge of world evangelization” (no. 204).⁵² In addition, the Directory suggests some strategies to activate foreign mission in Korea: (1) all parts of the Korean Catholic Church should cooperate in bringing up men/women missionary societies, by promoting missionary vocations and by supporting financial aid to train foreign missionaries; (2) in addition to mission societies, dioceses and religious congregations should also participate in world mission by training and sending missionaries; (3) in order to help foreign missionary work, it is necessary to organize supporters’ association at the national level (no. 205); and (4) all pastors should encourage their parishioners to meaningfully celebrate a day for missions, that is, World Mission Sunday in order to foster missionary cooperation (no. 208).

While the missionary zeal and practices of the Korean Catholic Church are rapidly spreading, the Korean Catholic Church endeavors to improve their work of evangelization, by sharing missionary information and vision. The first example of missionary cooperation is the founding of a committee for overseas mission. The CBCK gave the Committee of the Missions Abroad and Pastoral Care of the Overseas (CMAPCO) special authority and charge to manage all missionary agencies from the Korean Church. In 2009, to foster the cooperation of foreign missions between mission agencies, CMAPCO created the Subcommittee for Overseas Mission, which supports three regional associations founded by Korean missionaries in particular: AMICAL

⁵¹ “선교는 교회가 온 세계에 복음을 선포하는 것이다. 선교는 비신자들의 개종뿐 아니라, 그 지역의 문화와 가치관을 복음화하는 일까지도 포함한다.” See Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Korea (CBCK), 한국천주교 사목 지침서 (*Pastoral Directory of the Church in Korea*) (Seoul: CBCK, 2012), 77.

⁵² “한국교회는 세계 선교에 헌신하는 선교사들을 파견하고 ‘나누는 교회’가 됨으로써 전 세계 복음화의 한몫을 담당하여야 한다.” See CBCK, 한국천주교 사목 지침서 (*Pastoral Directory of the Church in Korea*), 79.

(Asociación de Misioneros Católicos Coreanos de América Latina),⁵³ KAM (Korean African Missionaries),⁵⁴ and Pajonghoe (播種會).⁵⁵

As the second example in increased cooperation within Korean missionaries and promoting the missionary zeal in Korean Catholics, the Korean Catholic Church began in 2010 to celebrate an annual “Day of Korean Mission Abroad.” Fr. Yong-jae Kim, former Superior General of KMS, explains that this event highlights the consideration that foreign mission is not a commitment for a specific person or institute, but for all Korean Catholics.⁵⁶ Through this event, priest, religious and laity, who are interested in foreign mission, can share their experiences and cooperate in world mission.

Conclusion

World mission is helping the Korean Catholic Church become not only a local church but also a missionary church. In its beginning, the Korean Church accepted faith spontaneously, but experienced serious persecutions and needed missionaries to evangelize Korea. Despite great difficulty, the Korean Catholics invited missionary priests to build up the Church and collaborated with missionaries sent by the Propaganda Fide. Foreign missionary outreach to Korea laid the groundwork for the international mission of the Korean Catholic Church.

⁵³ AMICAL (Asociación de Misioneros Católicos Coreanos de América Latina) is an annual conference of Korean Catholic missionaries in Latin America. Since 1999 the AMICAL has been held for encouraging cooperation between missionaries, the training program for missionaries, and spiritual retreat. See Sang-duk Seo, “아미칼 16 차 정기모임 (The 16th Annual Meeting of AMICAL),” 가톨릭신문 (*Catholic Times*), vol. 2904, July 20, 2014, accessed January 5, 2016,

http://www.catholictimes.org/article/article_view.php?aid=262124

⁵⁴ KAM (Korean African Missionaries) is an annual meeting for Korean Catholic missionaries in Africa. Since 2012 some Korean missionaries have come together to share their mission experience and promote cooperation between Korean Catholic missionaries. See Sung-hwa Kang, “아프리카 한인선교사들 한데뭉쳐 (Meeting of Korean Missionaries in Africa),” 평화신문 (*Peace Times*), vol. 1186, October 14, 2012, accessed January 5, 2016, http://www.pbc.co.kr/CMS/newspaper/view_body.php?cid=428113&path=201210

⁵⁵ *Pajong-hoe* (播種會) is an annual meeting established in 2005 for Korean Catholic missionaries working in China. Its name ‘*Pajong*’ literally means “seeding” in Chinese and ‘*hoe*’ literally means “an association” in Chinese.

⁵⁶ Yong-jae Kim, “해외 선교, 한국교회의 사명이자 희망이다 (Foreign Mission, Commitment and Hope for the Korean Church),” 경향잡지 (*Kyong-hyang Magazine*), November 2013, 123.

World mission is a task for all Churches, not just Western ones. Bishop Choi, who experienced the importance of missionaries, founded KMS as the first native mission institute to specialize in overseas mission, thus encouraging the Korean Church to participate in world evangelization. The Propaganda Fide assisted the Catholic Church in Korea with beginning her overseas mission by supporting Bishop Choi's efforts for the local Korean Catholic Church to become conscious of the shift, from being a "receiving Church" to becoming a "giving or sharing Church," so as to contribute to the growth of world Christianity.

However, my own concern for further research regards lay missionaries. The laity played a very large role in establishing the local church in Korea, so that the Korean Catholic Church proudly claims to be a lay-inspired Church. But the portion of the laity in the international mission of the Korean Church is small. Even though the Korean Church is currently training lay missionaries, they usually work for mission at home, not abroad. Of the total of 1,137 Korean Catholic overseas missionaries in the Statistics of the Catholic Church in Korea 2020, there are no lay missionaries. Thus, we need to find a way to promote Korean Catholic lay participation within international mission, to cherish the tradition of Korean laity, which the Korean Catholic Church has enjoyed since its inception.

【摘要】在東亞基督宗教史上，韓國遠離西方傳教士的活動。雖然東亞曾是西方的傳教地，但在 1784 年平信徒建立韓國教會之前，韓國與西方傳教士並無直接關係。透過這一歷史事件，我們可以肯定韓國天主教會的建立，是朝鮮人民自發的努力而非西方傳教士的功勞。然而，為了促進信仰的傳播和深化，韓國教會成員看到了對傳教士的需要，並試圖邀請神父前來。韓國信徒不斷呼籲教廷派遣傳教士，希望擁有自己的教區。因此，傳信部於 1831 年建立了朝鮮宗座代牧區，並要求巴黎外方傳教會接受向朝鮮派遣神父的責任。此後，巴黎外方傳教會在韓國的傳教神父以傳教為重點，經歷了多次迫害，直到 1962 年教宗若望二十三世正式建立韓國聖統制。雖說韓國教會是平信徒在沒有外籍傳教士的協助下建立，其他教會在後來到韓國的外籍傳教團幫助了它的成長，而韓國教會最近已從傳教接收教會轉變為一個派遣教會。2020 年，韓國天主教會有一千一百三十七位傳教士，在八十個不是自己的語言和文化的國家開展工作。在這篇文章中，我在扼要介紹在韓國的外籍傳教團後，會將重點放在傳信部及其派出的巴黎外方傳教會神父，然後探討「韓國外方傳教會」作為韓國天主教傳教先驅團體的情況。最後，我會對海外傳教如何振興和更新韓國教會的反思作總結。