

## KOREA REGION

Official language: **Korean**

### Vision Statement

*To incarnate ourselves into the lives of the people with respect and openness.*

### Mission Statement

*Open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and attentive to the signs of the times, we strive to serve and cooperate with the Korean Church in its endeavor to understand and accomplish its local mission and to develop a wider vision of its universal calling. In the spirit of dialogue with people of different religions and cultures, we commit ourselves to promote justice and peace to the migrant workers, the marginalized of the society, spirituality to lay people and service in parishes.*

### 1. Societal Setting

South Korea is one of the few countries in the world in which ethnicity and nationality coincide. Rather than ethnicity, regionalism – mainly between easterners and westerners – is a source of social tension among the South Koreans. As one of Asia's economic tigers, South Korea takes pride in being the 13<sup>th</sup> strongest economy in the world. For this reason, since the early 1990s, workers from Asia Pacific, Africa and South America have been coming in search of jobs.



The present overall social and political situation of Korea is unstable. There is the threat from North Korea's communist regime. People are always living in anxiety and fear about the division of North and South Korea based on communist and capitalist societies.

South Korea's population is about 50 million. The culture of Korea has deeply rooted traditional values for the past five thousand years. But this culture has been influenced by Confucian ideology and Buddhist religion for the past 2000 years. Now the culture is being influenced by the arrival of Christianity over the past 200 years. It seems the country is Christianizing. However, half of the population does not have any official religion.

Korea is a homogeneous nation, but gradually it is becoming a multi-cultural nation due to the inflow of foreign workers and Korean men marrying women from South East Asia. This trend started about 10 years ago.

There is more and more division between North and South Korea. This is especially for the past 7 or 8 years. The tension between North and South Korea is at its height this year. The inflow of migrant workers and the intercultural marriage with South East Asian women is leading to various cultural and religious concerns and also problems of exploitation and maltreatment in the places of work and families. The role of the SVD in Korea is very important in the multi-cultural situations of family and places of work.

## 2. Ecclesial Setting

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Korean scholars in China learned about Christianity and some eventually were baptized there. These scholars brought the Christian faith to Korea. In 1794 when Fr. Ju Mun Mo, Jacob arrived as the first priest in Korea from China, he already found some 4,000 practicing Catholics in the country. After his martyrdom in 1801, the Korean Catholic Church was under lay leadership till 1836. Then from 1836, the Paris Evangelical Mission Society priests came to Korea. In the early and later 19<sup>th</sup> century thousands of Christians were martyred for following a foreign religion. The first Korean priest was ordained in 1845 in Shanghai and was martyred the following year.

The Korean local Church is predominantly diocesan oriented. The religious do not get much chance to play a role in the local Church. Most of the mission of the Church is done by the diocesan clergy. The religious are given less importance. There used to be plenty of vocations to the local dioceses. But now it is decreasing due to secularization, fewer children in the families, a kind of materialization of the Church institutes, and so on. There are hardly any vocations for the male/female religious congregations. The Korean Church is financially very affluent and it is helping the poorer dioceses of the world. It is also helping the dioceses of the world where there is shortage of priests. There is ecumenical and interreligious collaboration, but it is at a minimal level.

## 3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

### Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
<b>Parish</b>	4	22.2	10.0	15.4
<b>Education</b>	0	-	5.0	3.8
Schools	0	-		
Universities	0	-		
<b>Formation/ SVD Vocation</b>	2	11.1	10.0	11.5
<b>Administration/ Support</b>	3	16.7	15.0	15.4
<b>Other Apostolates</b>	7	38.9	55.0	30.8

JPIC	1	-		
Bible	1	-		
Communication	1	-		
Mission Animation	1	-		
Others	3	-		

### Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/Orientation	2	11.1	5.0	0
Retired/Sick	0	0	0	0
Others	0	0	0	23.1

### Main Ministries

**Migrant Ministry:** At present the main thrust of our ministry is for the migrants. We mainly concentrate on the migrants from the Philippines, Vietnam and East Timor. We also cater to the migrants from other nationalities. At present 7 confreres are involved in this ministry.

**Family, Retreat/counseling Ministry:** We are involved in retreat and counseling centered ministry with families. At present three confreres are involved in this ministry. Since we don't have our own center we are not doing this ministry on a full time basis.

**Parish Ministry:** At present we are working in 4 parishes in three dioceses. Among our SVD

members, one is working as the parish priest, two are working as assistant parish priests, and two are working in an independent substation.

In all the above ministries the four Characteristic Dimensions are put into practice directly or indirectly. Bible/communication is used for retreat/counseling/parish ministries, justice and peace is practiced in our migrant ministries and mission animation is done in all our ministries.

### Priorities among Congregational Directions

**Family and Youth:** Our region has tried to put into practice the ministry centered on family and youth. This is mainly done through retreats and counseling the lay people. Through retreats and counseling we get deeper into the problems/suffering of the families, including the youth. Four confreres have been involved in counseling families and youth.

**Migration:** As thousands of migrants are flocking to Korea to find jobs, the Korean region is actively involved in migrant ministry. During the past 5 years we have expanded this ministry into more dioceses. We also cater to the multicultural families through counseling and addressing other problems.

**Social Justice and Poverty Eradication:** The coordinator of justice and peace is actively involved in the national/international issues of justice and peace with the collaboration of the local Church. One of the confreres is involved in

the ministry for the abandoned old people and the homeless. We need to expand the ministry on poverty eradication at the local level.

### Collaboration with SSpS

There is more and more collaboration with the SSpS as time goes on. Twice a year we have the combined SVD/SSpS celebration of the feasts of St. Arnold and St. Joseph. The sisters from the local community close to the Seoul house participate in the daily liturgy. We work together with SSpS in some migrant centers. Priests go to the SSpS convents and places of ministries for Mass occasionally.

### SVD Lay Association

We have five lay association groups with different characters. All the lay groups are centered on spirituality. They are healing Mass, family Mass, Mass for priests/religious, and devotion to the Sacred Heart and Mary. They also help the mission financially. The total number of lay associates would be approximately 1,000.

## 4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Clerics	16	18	13
Brothers (final vows)	2	2	0
Scholastics	0	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	46.0	43.6	38.2
Nationalities	5	7	8

**Spirituality:** For the past five years our region has been putting into practice the annual retreat based on the Bible, AJS retreat, and on other topics, along with quarterly Bible sharing/other topics. Every local community is devoted to daily Mass/mediation/common prayers, monthly meetings and Bible sharing once a month before the monthly meetings. We have organized annual retreats on AJS spirituality, biblical and on other themes. We have various devotions/spiritual activities in our region for lay associates and we enrich the variety of spiritualities with each other. We have conducted a one day AJS retreat for the lay people and we have planned to do that every year.

**Community:** The Korean region has 5 nationalities. We constantly strive to have an integral/intercultural way of life at the regional and local level. To promote genuine sharing and brotherhood, we have Bible sharing during the quarterly recollection, at the regional level and once a month at the local community level. We also have social gatherings once a week at the local community level, quarterly at the regional level, once a year family feast, and workshops on various topics to promote intercultural/international community awareness and living. We dedicate time for strengthening fraternal acceptance and respecting all the members in the communities and during the regional meetings.

**Leadership:** The regional council is trying to put into practice an attitude of solidarity, empowerment and shared leadership. Leadership workshops were conducted twice during the past five years for all the local superiors and coordinators of the four Characteristic Dimensions.

**Finances:** The region has been self-reliant for the past several years. Confreres contribute their remunerations/stipends to the region/local community regularly. The local benefactors' system is functioning quite well to raise funds under the leadership of the mission secretary. The mission office contributes to the generalate for world mission. A few confreres are visiting the parishes to raise funds for the region and the Society at large.

**Formation:** The Korean region has prepared a systematic initial and ongoing formation pro-

gram. Though we don't have many vocations, our confreres try to attract the youth through various ministries. The Korean Church is diocesan oriented; the religious find it hard to get vocations. We have an OTP/CTP program for Korea. We will invite scholastics from other countries for this program. During the past five years we did not have any OTP/CTP members. We have a systematic program for the newly arrived missionaries. Once a year we have a workshop on various topics for all the members of the region as part of the ongoing formation program. At present, we have two finally professed brothers. It is almost impossible to get vocations in Korea for the brotherhood in this very clerical Church, but our brothers are exemplary in this situation.

**To put into practice the ministry centered on family and youth.**