



Young South Koreans cheer after Pope Francis announces that the next World Youth Day will take place in 2027 in Seoul. The pope made the announcement after the closing Mass for World Youth Day at Tejo Park in Lisbon, Portugal, Aug. 6. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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Expressing “profound gratitude” for Pope Francis naming his city as the host of World Youth Day 2027, Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taick of Seoul, South Korea, vowed to organize an event that will foster “fraternity, spirituality and social cohesion” across cultural and religious lines.

“World Youth Day is not just a Catholic event. It is a global celebration and a platform for interreligious encounters. It presents specific beliefs and ideologies, and invites all individuals of good will to come together and share fellowship,” Soon-taick told reporters Aug. 6 in Lisbon.

Speaking through an interpreter, the archbishop thanked organizers of the World Youth Day festival in Lisbon for promoting “brotherhood, friendship, and dynamism.” He said 2027 World Youth Day in Seoul would aspire to become “a radiant beacon of unity, embracing the rich culture of East Asia.”

“We pledge to uphold the universal spirit of World Youth Day that has embraced previous editions,” he said. “Our foremost objective is to foster meaningful connections and usher in substantial social and economic gains for the young people from around the world. We envision young souls from all corners of the globe converging in Seoul and throughout South Korea.”

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Pope Francis announced that Seoul will be the host city in 2027 at the end of his Sunday Mass in Lisbon’s Tejo Park, where an estimated 1.5 million young people from more than 200 countries camped overnight on the banks of the Tagus River. The Mass capped off a week’s worth of events in the Portuguese capital.

The Seoul event will mark only the second time that Asia has hosted World Youth Day. The Philippines hosted the festival in 1995.

Fr. Matteo Choi, a spokesman for the Archdiocese of Korea, told NCR after the Aug. 6 press conference told NCR that the Catholic Church in South Korea has hopes that young people from North Korea will be able to participate in the 2027 World Youth Day, either in Seoul or in a neutral venue. He said church leaders would be looking to have conversations with government leaders on both sides of the demilitarized zone.

“We would love to invite North Korean youths to come here,” Choi said.



South Korean Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taek speaking at a press conference, saying he is grateful for Seoul being named host city of 2027 World Youth Day. (Photo by Brian Fraga)

South Korea has hosted international events throughout the decades, including the 1988 Summer Olympics that helped catapult its capital city into the international spotlight. South Korea and Japan co-hosted the 2002 FIFA World Cup. South Korea [is also looking to host the 2030 World Expo.](#)

Seoul has hosted successful international events despite intermittent geopolitical tensions on the Korean peninsula, which has been in a technical state of war since an armistice ended the fighting between the communist north and Allied-protected

south in 1953. The heavily-fortified demilitarized zone that separates the two countries is about 30 miles from Seoul.

Choi told NCR there have been “so many problems” related to North Korea in recent years. “These have been hard times,” he said.

North Korean Leader Kim Jong-un has overseen several tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles, [including some fired over Japanese territory](#). North Korean state media [reported Aug. 6](#) that Jong-un had asked his country’s weapons factories to boost their arsenal capacity to hone the country’s “war readiness.”

Unlike the Philippines, which is nearly 80% Catholic, South Korea’s Catholic community comprises about 12% of the country’s population of 51 million people. Soon-taick said the Catholic Church in South Korea has a short but proud history of native lay people establishing the faith in that country and persevering through centuries of persecution, including martyrdom.

Soon-taick also said the Catholic Church in South Korea will work with government authorities and security officials to ensure a successful World Youth Day in 2027 so that young people will “experience a vibrant exchange of cultures and life stories, to nurture an even deeper love in their faith, and to find the strength to manifest the love in their daily lives.”

This story appears in the **World Youth Day 2023** feature series. [View the full series](#)