

Catholicism and Garabandal in Korea

An interview with Fr. Gerry Farrell conducted by Marie FitzPatrick

In this interview (continued from the January-March 1987 edition of GARABANDAL), Fr. Gerald (Gerry) Farrell speaks of Catholicism in Korea, his own apostolate and the promotion of Garabandal in that Asian country.



Q. When and how was the Catholic Faith brought to Korea?

A. The Koreans are unique in mission history for having had the faith brought into their own country by a Korean layman in 1784 rather than through a foreign missionary. Korea's military location is strategically between Russia, Japan and China and for centuries wars were being waged among these powers. Finally, Korea ruled that any foreigner who entered the country would automatically be put to death.

Each year, Korea sent a delegation to pay tribute money to the Chinese Emperor in Peking. A layman in that group, in 1784, obtained a Chinese script catechism which Koreans could understand, brought it back and studied it with a group of fellow scholars. They were touched with grace and faith so they were able to believe. During his next visit to Peking, the layman asked for and received baptism. He came back to his country and started to instruct and baptize Koreans. There was no priest until 1790 when a Chinese priest, wearing mourning garments which covered his face, was smuggled in through an opening under the wall. There were 5,000 baptized Catholics awaiting this priest. He ministered to them for a while until he was discovered and martyred along with other baptized Koreans.

Then, through the yearly legation to contribute tribute, the Korean Catholics kept sending messages through the Bishop of Peking to the Holy Father asking desperately to send them missionaries since they had baptized Catholics but no one to give them the sacraments and instruction. Finally, in 1830 some missionary priests and a bishop from Paris were smuggled in the same way.

Madonnas done in traditional Korean style have an oriental charm all their own.

They also ministered only a short time before they were found and martyred with quite a few Korean Catholics. Martyrdom seemed to increase the grace to believe; there would be a wave of martyrdom then a steady secret spreading of the faith, then more missionaries from France and more martyrdom. During the nineteenth century, there were several waves of martyrs and among them were the ones the Pope canonized in 1984 to celebrate 200 years of Catholicism in Korea.

One hundred and three martyrs were canonized including four French priests and a bishop and six other priests, one of whom was a young, 25-year-old Korean, Fr. Andrew Kim, who had been ordained in 1845 and martyred the following year in 1846.

The total number of martyrs, estimated to be between 8,000 and 10,000, was evenly divided between men and women. For those canonized in 1984, documentation was available and more canonizations are expected in the future.

Korea has an extensive history of martyrdom and spread of faith. We attribute this mostly to the graces received through the martyrs.

After the Korean War, there was a surge of conversions because the Church was ready to help the poor especially through Catholic Relief Services. Arrangements were made with South Korea to distribute relief goods, particularly flour and clothing which were desperately needed. The people appreciated this great service and began looking into the Faith. It was an occasion of grace and there has been a steady flow of converts since.

As far back as 1923, when the Maryknoll Missionaries first went to Korea, they found there a great religious interest which had been fos-

tered by the large influx of catechumens and Catholics from earlier days.

Q. Do Catholics represent a large percentage of the population in Korea?

A. There is freedom of religion in South Korea and all religions can be propagated. The Archdiocese of Seoul, under Stephen Cardinal Kim, includes the capital city of nine and a half million people and the surrounding provinces. There is a total of 14 dioceses and some cover the same area as the provinces. Presently, there are over 650 parishes in Korea and the number is increasing. However, the Catholic population is only five percent of the total. Buddhism is the largest religion but it is not a strong religion as it is in other parts of the south Asian countries. Christianity is the most powerful with the Protestants outnumbering the Catholics three to one. The Protestants also make greater sacrifices, financially support their churches better, go to services more often and propagate their religion to others. Then, too, there are many people with no religion who are open to Christianity so that evangelization can be continued in the future.

There are no Catholics in North Korea nor is there anyone publicly practicing any religion.

Q. Are there any Catholics holding prominent government offices?

A. Christians are prominent in civil affairs in a greater number than their proportion of the population. Many have brought Christian principles to their practice and live those principles as government employees. One Catholic, John Chang, was the Korean representative to the United Nations. Later, he became president of Korea, but after a short time his government was replaced by the Pak regime.

In 1846, St. Andrew Kim, one of the first Korean priests, was martyred for the faith. He had been a priest for just one year.



Q. Missionary life must be lonely at times. How do you find it in Korea?

A. Being lonely is less likely in Korea than in some of our other mission countries. There are times in the rural parishes when people are very busy spring planting or fall harvesting, then it gets lonely around the rectory. But generally, no, this is not a problem because Catholicism is a very vital religion for them and they take it very seriously. Now, in Korea, many different Church movements have been introduced and they are all doing well but they need the priest's guidance and the laymen are constantly asking for it. In both the villages and cities, we are busy all the time. It's wonderful to be needed and to see the people profiting from the help we give them. They're so receptive!

Q. How did you manage to learn the language so you could communicate with the people?

A. When I first began my missionary

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work, we were sent to Korea and studied there. Prior to that, studies were done at universities in the United States beforehand. Our group was the first to go abroad and study. It was a better arrangement because in our free time we went out and chatted with the people and were able to use what we had learned. You couldn't do that in the States. By being in the mission country, we were also able to learn the culture. With us, it was either sink or swim!

Now in our overseas training program, seminarians are sent abroad to learn the native language and help out in the parishes long before they are ordained. It's a real advantage to get the language and culture down as soon as possible. The program now provides for one year to learn the language, one year as an assistant and the next year as a pastor. In the cities, the Koreans have learned to speak English but in the rural areas they don't have the opportunity.

Fr. Gerry Farrell, M.M., has spent a good part of his priestly life in Korea.



Q. Do you have a parish or mission in Korea?

A. For 11 years, while stationed at the Maryknoll Society House in Seoul, I worked "out in the sticks." Now, my apostolate consists of establishing Perpetual Adoration in parishes. I am invited to a parish, give a talk to the people on Sunday and invite them to sign up for at least one hour of adoration a week. I try to get enough people so that every hour of the week has at least two people adoring the Lord in the exposed Blessed Sacrament. In half of the parishes we are able to do that. If the number of adorers is not sufficient, we settle for fewer days, but always have the night adoration because we find that the sacrifice involved in the night hours is essential to its success. We tried daytime adoration only, but it failed. We learned that Our Lord wanted the sacrifice of night adoration and gives tremendous blessings and consolations to those who make these sacrifices.

Once the program is established, I train a lay committee to carry it out. I contact them from time to time to make sure they are progressing. Since Perpetual Adoration is basically a lay apostolate, the parish priest only has to expose the Blessed Sacrament for the adorers.

In my work of promoting Perpetual Adoration, I have included a word about the scapular. I point out in my talks that there may be people listening who would like to volunteer but perhaps lack the self-confidence as to whether they could spend the hour worthily or persevere in their commitment. I tell them not to worry because there is a person who wants to help them and that person is the Blessed Mother of God. So, I ask the volunteers to consecrate themselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and be invested in the brown scapular of

Our Lady of Mount Carmel as a sign of that consecration. I then give them a little booklet explaining the history of the scapular, its use and meaning. Each prospective adorer of the Blessed Sacrament signs a "consecration form" containing a promise of one hour each week of adoration then places the signed form on the altar and is enrolled in the scapular. The people are very eager to do this and every one of the 5,000 adorers in the ten parishes where the program has been instituted, has joined "The Eucharistic Society of Our Lady of Mount Carmel." Of course, they don't know why I chose that particular title. However, after the news of Garabandal becomes known, they will realize that that was the chief inspiration for it because when Our Lady came as Our Lady of Mount Carmel, she stressed in particular the Eucharist. I feel that since she has given us the cue, she wants us to use the sacramental — the scapular.

Q. It sounds as though your apostolate is progressing very well. To what do you attribute this success?

A. I think the people want to be challenged and they respond very generously. If, in some cases, the pastor of the parish fears there won't be enough response due to inner city violence, he has the people take longer shifts so that they don't have to travel back and forth as much. It works out quite well. Where the pastor has the faith, the people have always responded.

One half of the ten parishes that now have Perpetual Adoration are in the Incheon Diocese. Bishop William McNaughton, M.M., with whom I stayed during the first year of my apostolate, strongly recommended Perpetual Adoration to all his pastors when he visited for Confirmation or other reasons. A letter sent out at the beginning also had a lot to do with its

progress.

Before leaving Korea,* I contacted the parishes which had started Perpetual Adoration and found that the Catholics are faithfully taking their weekly hour or hours of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, and six more pastors have indicated that they would like to start it in their parishes. I was very happy to learn that the International Eucharistic Congress for 1989 will be held in Seoul, Korea, and Perpetual Adoration would certainly be a fine way to prepare for it in parishes.

Q. What has been the attitude of Bishop McNaughton to the Garabandal events?

A. Bishop McNaughton has been, for 25 years, the Bishop of Inchon where General MacArthur made his famous landing cutting off many troops from the south. I introduced the Bishop to the Garabandal events early in 1983 by giving him Fr. Pelletier's book, *Our Lady Comes to Garabandal*. Not long after that while he was home on vacation in Massachusetts, he went with his mother to visit visionary Mari Loli La Fleur who lived just a short distance away. He was very impressed by her as someone whose words can be believed.

Later that year, his mother died and upon his return to the States from Korea, he notified Mari Loli and asked for her prayers. She attended the funeral and several times during the following week the Bishop and his relatives went to see Loli. The other members of his family were equally impressed by her simplicity, ruthfulness and devotion to Our Lord and Our Lady, and family prayer as well, and to her husband, Francis. They saw that they were

leading lives in compliance with Our Lady's requests.

In the fall of 1983, Bishop McNaughton attempted to describe the Garabandal events to the Bishops of Korea at their episcopal conference. He was unable to do so because of a full agenda. Finally, after two and a half years, in March, 1986, he was able to show the Dick Everson documentary film to them and had invited me to answer any questions they might have. The questions were good and positive ones. One could see they were deeply impressed by the authenticity of what they had seen. They asked, "What are the fruits of these apparitions? What about the visionaries now, their present married and family lives?" I was able to give them a good report based on my personal experiences while I had been in New York. So, 11 of the 14 bishops said they liked the Message and gave permission to spread it in their various dioceses. That was a beautiful response well worth waiting for in the twenty-fifth anniversary year of the first apparition—a beautiful coincidence!

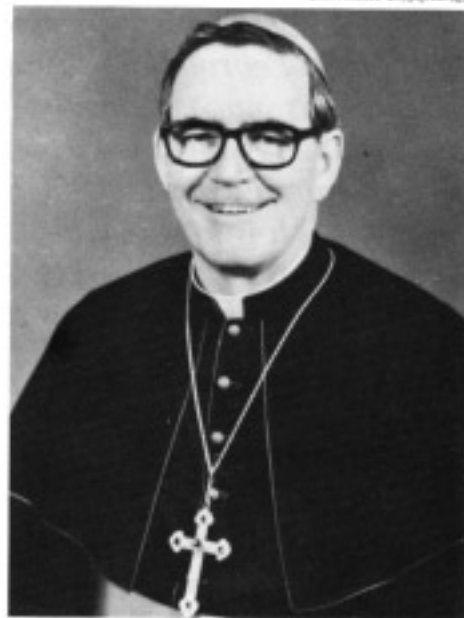
Q. Will you be promoting Garabandal as you go to the various parishes to set up Perpetual Adoration?

A. I don't plan to because I have a limited amount of time to get across the concept of Perpetual Adoration and to instruct the lay people on how to run the program. Bishop McNaughton has the Dick Everson film in his diocesan center and it has been shown in a lot of parishes. When the film is shown, it is pointed out that Perpetual Adoration is a beautiful way to comply with Our Lady's request for visiting the Blessed Sacrament frequently.

The Korean people receive Garabandal very enthusiastically; they love it and take to it completely. In

Bishop William McNaughton, M.M., Ordinary of the Inchon Diocese, was instrumental in having the Dick Everson documentary, "The Events of Garabandal" shown at the 1986 Korean Bishops' Episcopal Conference.

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having translations done, I have shown the documentary to some people so they could get the background and translate more easily. As soon as they saw it they asked if they could show it in different parish groups here and there. At the time, I told them that it had not as yet received the Bishop's approval. However, now that we have received approval from the higher level, we will seek it from pastors as well. In that way there will be no problems.

Providentially, I made contact with two Catholic laymen with movie projectors who show films and give talks on Fatima, Church doctrine and Holy Scripture. They have traveled all over the country and are known by many pastors and bishops who are glad to invite them to give film showings to large groups of people in church halls. They know all about the mechanics of showing films and know where the Garabandal Messages fit into the whole stream of Marian messages that have been given over the last century and a half, as well as into the whole of salvation history.

*At the end of 1986, Fr. Farrell had to return to the United States because of health problems. He is progressing and hopes to return to Korea as soon as possible.

Korea

Before I left Korea to come back to the States for my periodic vacation, these two laymen asked me if I could get a film for them to show. This request was a beautiful preparation for my return to Korea in September, 1986.

The documentary film I have come to me from the Little Company of Mary Sisters in Australia who had received the film from Joey [Lomangino]. They don't have the time to promote Garabandal themselves and learning of my interest, gave the film to me. Joey sent me a type-written copy of the script for the film which was translated into Korean. The Korean narration was then magnetically dubbed onto the film.

The Workers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, New York,* have given me two additional documentary films to take back to Korea. Korean sound tracks will then be added so the films can be shown throughout South Korea.□

On November 20, 1986, Fr. Farrell wrote:

"I've arranged for the publishing of the leaflet *The Apparitions of Our Lady at Garabandal* in the very near future. . . . A week ago, I gave the second Garabandal film (with Korean dubbed in) to Philip Choi of Pusan. He and Simon Pak of Seoul are my two Garabandal apostles (or rather, Our Lady's) who will be showing these films throughout Korea. I have received permission to show the Garabandal films from the head of the Mass Media Department of the Archdiocese."

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