



WE Connect: Witnesses of Love

Theme: "Brothers and Sisters, this is the hour for Love"

– Pope Leo XIV

Introduction

The remarkable fruits of *WE Connect: A Journey of Hope 2024* and *WE Connect: Pilgrims of Hope 2025* have demonstrated the profound desire of young people across Asia for meaningful opportunities to encounter God, build authentic relationships, and journey together in faith. In response to the growing interest and encouragement from participants, youth ministers, and Church leaders from various countries, **WE Connect** has gradually become a flagship international youth program of the **Wake-Up International Youth Center**. As a continuation of this shared journey of faith and formation, the Center will once again organize an international youth gathering entitled ***"WE Connect: Witnesses of Love,"*** which will be held from **October 3–11, 2026** at the ***Wake-Up International Youth Center in Haemi, Seosan-si, South Korea.***

Inspired by the words of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, ***"Brothers and Sisters, this is the hour for Love,"*** this year's gathering invites young people to reflect on the central role of love in Christian life and mission. In a world increasingly marked by division, conflict, loneliness, and indifference, the Church continues to call the faithful to become witnesses of God's love through lives characterized by compassion, solidarity, reconciliation, and service.

The title ***WE Connect: Witnesses of Love*** finds its inspiration in the rich spiritual heritage of the Korean Church, particularly in the witness of the Korean martyrs who remained steadfast in their faith despite persecution and suffering. Among them are the countless Haemi Martyrs, whose unwavering fidelity to Christ transformed a place of suffering into a powerful testimony of God's love and mercy. This spirit of witness is further reflected in the lives of Saint Andrew Kim Taegeon, remembered as the *"Witness of Blood"* for offering his life for Christ and the Gospel, and Fr. Thomas Choe Yang-eop, honored as the *"Witness of Sweat"* for his tireless missionary service and dedication to God's people despite immense hardships and challenges. Though their witness took different forms, they shared the same self-giving love rooted in faith, sacrifice, and perseverance. Inspired by their example, this gathering seeks to encourage young people to become authentic Witnesses of Love in their own communities, bearing witness to Christ through lives of compassion, service, and faithful discipleship.



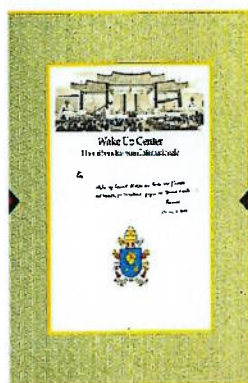
Introduction of Wake-up International Youth Center

Background

In 2014, during the closing mass in Haemi Castle, Pope Francis visited Korea for the 6th Asian Youth Day and imparted a message to Asian Youth: "Asian Youth, Wake up!" In response, Daejeon Diocese and Seosan City build the Wake-up International Youth Center, established at the site where Pope Francis arrived by helicopter in Haemi.

Cardinal Lazzaro You, conveyed information about the Wake-up International Youth Center to Pope Francis, who provided a handwritten message to the center: "I hope that the Wake-Up Center will be the place where world youth will gather, pray, and go forward." This defines the direction of Wake-up International Youth Center.

Officially inaugurated in April 2023, the center aims to serve not only to Korean youth but also to Asian and global youth, seeking companions through the "WE Connect" program to establish an Asian Network.



Pope Francis Handwritten Letter

Facility

Our center comprises three main facilities. The first is accommodation, offering two types of rooms: one for two people (three with an extra bed) and another for four persons (six with an extra bed), accommodating up to 65 persons (98 with extra beds).

The second contains program facilities, including a conference hall, multi-purpose room, seminar room, and meeting rooms, all equipped with projector screens. The largest space, the conference hall, can accommodate up to 100 people.

The third feature is the Pope Francis Museum, commemorating moments from his visit to Korea. The museum is evolving into a digital continent, as mentioned by the Pope, intending to evangelize. It incorporates eight VR machines and a metaverse space enabling visits to the Vatican and the pilgrimage road in Haemi. Further metaverse developments are planned, allowing youth to experience and discuss evangelization in this space.

Accommodation



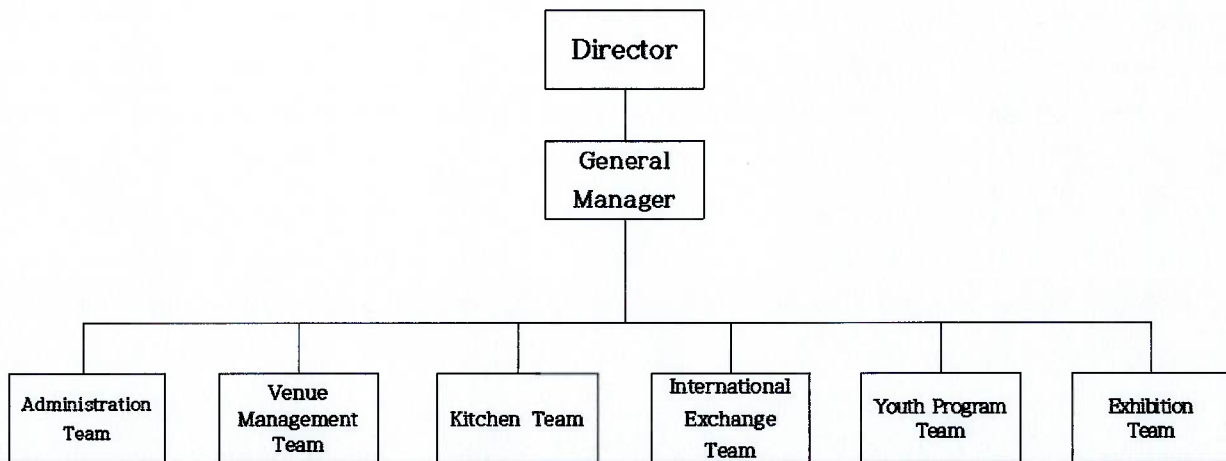
Program Facilities



Pope Francis Museum



The Structure of the Wake-Up International Youth Center



Wake-Up International Youth Center is managed by the Daejeon Diocese. The Daejeon Diocese has assigned Reverend Father Park Jin Hong Joseph as the director of the center. He served as the Youth Ministry Director when Pope Francis visited Korea and was responsible for preparing Asian Youth Day 6 in Korea and coordinating the visitation of Pope Francis.

Under the direction of the center's director, a General Manager assists in managing the center. Additionally, the General Manager oversees the International Exchange Team, the Youth Program Team for domestic youth programs, and the Exhibition Team for the Pope Francis Museum.

Reporting to the General Manager are three leaders, each responsible for managing the Administration Team, the Facility Management Team, and the Kitchen Team.

WE Connect is prepared and managed by the International Exchange Team, which is overseen by the General Manager.

Understanding of “WE Connect”

The name **“WE Connect”** reflects the vision of fostering communion, collaboration, and mutual enrichment among generations and cultures within the Church. The letter **“W”** symbolizes the **Wisdom of Elders**, representing the invaluable knowledge, experience, and guidance gained through years of faithful living and service. The letter **“E”** signifies the **Energy of Youth**, reflecting the enthusiasm, creativity, and passion that inspire renewal and growth within the Church and society. Together, they embody the belief that meaningful transformation takes place when the wisdom of one generation is shared with the energy of another.

This vision is inspired by the words of His Holiness Pope Francis in Christus Vivit:

“If we journey together, young, and old, we can be firmly rooted in the present, and from here, revisit the past and look to the future. To revisit the past to learn from history and heal old wounds that at times still trouble us. To look to the future to nourish our enthusiasm, cause dreams to emerge, awaken prophecies, and enable hope to blossom. Together, we can learn from one another, warm hearts, inspire minds with the light of the Gospel, and lend new strength to our hands.” (Christus Vivit 199)

Pope Francis emphasized the power of unity between generations by fostering a cooperative relationship between elders and youth, with the goal of strengthening the youth of Asia. It is within this spirit of encounter, accompaniment, and shared growth that WE Connect has developed over the years into more than an international youth gathering. It has become a platform where young people from across Asia encounter diverse cultures, share experiences of faith, learn

from one another, and build lasting relationships rooted in Christian values. Through these encounters, participants are empowered to become active contributors to the life and mission of the Church within their respective local communities.

Objectives

General Objective

To form young people as authentic Witnesses of Love who, inspired by the witness of the Korean Church, are committed to living and proclaiming Christ's love through faith, service, leadership, and missionary discipleship.

Specific Objectives

1. **To deepen the participants' relationship with God and understanding of Christian love** through prayer, reflection, formation sessions, and pilgrimage experiences inspired by the witness of the Haemi Martyrs and the Korean Church.
2. **To foster communion, intercultural understanding, and solidarity among Asian youth** through dialogue, cultural exchange, and shared experiences of faith, reflecting the Church's call to journey together as one family of God.
3. **To strengthen participants' leadership, service, and missionary commitment** by learning from the examples of St. Andrew Kim Taegeon, and Fr. Thomas Choe Yang-Eop, whose lives exemplified courage, perseverance, and self-giving love.
4. **To inspire participants to become Witnesses of Love in their families, parishes, schools, and communities** by identifying concrete ways to promote compassion, reconciliation, hope, and evangelization beyond the program.

Participants and Qualifications:

We'll focus on 50-60 participants from ten (11) countries and one (1) region: ***Bangladesh, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and Hong Kong.***

Furthermore, the ***WE Connect Coordinators*** have the freedom to select the participants. Certain qualifications are necessary to ensure the success of this gathering. The basic qualifications are as follows:

- ✓ 5 youths per country/region
- ✓ Age: 18-35 years old
- ✓ Gender Balance: Female and Male
- ✓ Must have at least basic English proficiency. (All programs will be conducted in English)

- ✓ Must be a Catholic
- ✓ Religious persons (Priest, Nun, Missionary) will be limited to one per country/region.
(Countries/regions are not required to have a religious participant.)

WE Connect Program Structure and Components



The WE Connect Program consists of two integral components: the **Wisdom Program** (*Religious Formation Program*) and **Energy Program** (*Cultural Exchange Program*).

- The **Wisdom Program** or **the Religious Formation Program** focuses on spiritual growth and faith formation through prayer experiences, formation sessions, pilgrimage activities, and encounters with the rich spiritual heritage of the Korean Church, particularly the witness of the Haemi Martyrs, St. Andrew Kim Taegeon, and Fr. Thomas Choe Yang-Eop. The component may be regarded as the “*Wisdom Program*”, reflecting, the “W” in WE Connect, as participants are invited to gain wisdom from the faith, sacrifices, and missionary spirit of those who have gone before them, drawing inspiration and guidance for their own journey of discipleship.
- The **Energy Program** or the **Cultural Exchange Program**, focuses on intercultural encounter and mutual enrichment among the participants. Through activities as the Asia Festival, Cultural Night and other cultural sharing experiences, young people are given opportunities to share their traditions, stories, talents, and expressions of faith with one

another. This component may be regarded as the “*Energy Program*”, reflecting the “E” in WE Connect, as it celebrates the enthusiasm, creativity, diversity, and dynamism of the youth of Asia.

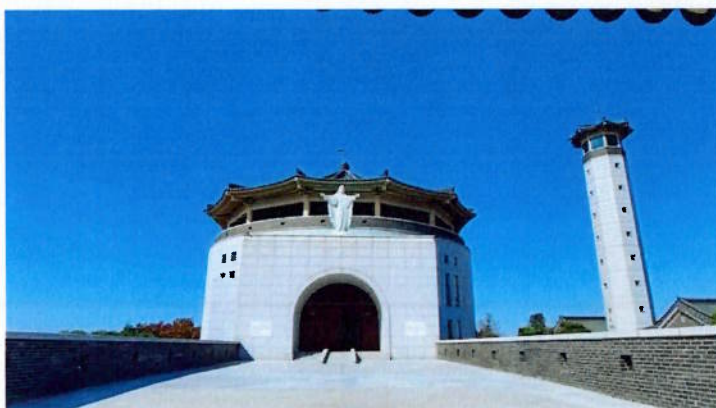
Together, these two components embody the vision of WE Connect by bringing together the ***Wisdom of the Church and Energy of Youth***, fostering a meaningful experience of faith, friendship, and communion among young people from different countries and cultures.

Schedule/Program

Date	ACTIVITIES
October 3, 2026 (Saturday) – Day 0	Arrival
October 4, 2026 (Sunday) – Day 1	Opening Mass Registration & Orientation Getting-To-Know Center Tour
October 5, 2026 (Monday) – Day 2	Haemi Martyrs – Witness of Faith and Perseverance Film Viewing: A Birth Korean Catholic History – Input Pilgrimage Site: Queens House and Sanghongri Chapel Evening Prayer
October 6, 2026 (Tuesday) – Day 3	Haemi Martyrs – Witness of Perseverance Pilgrimage Site: Sansu Lake, Haemi Castle, and Haemi International Shrine Evening Prayer
October 7, 2026 (Wednesday) – Day 4	St. Andrew Kim Taegeon – Witness of Blood Pilgrimage Site (Solmoe Shrine and Mirinae Shrine)
October 8, 2026 (Thursday) – Day 5	Fr. Thomas Choe Yang-Eop – Witness of Sweat Fr. Thomas Choi Yang Eop Pilgrimage Site (Baeti Museum/Baeron Shrine)
October 9, 2026 (Friday) – Day 6	Asian Food Festival Cultural Performance Night
October 10, 2026 (Saturday) – Day 7	Evaluation Closing Mass
October 11, 2026 (Sunday) – Day 8	Departure

Pilgrimage Sites

As part of ***WE Connect 2026: Witnesses of Love***, the pilgrimage experience serves as the spiritual heart of the program. Through sacred sites deeply rooted in the history of the Korean Church, participants are invited to encounter the powerful witness of the Korean Martyrs and to reflect on their own call to discipleship, love, and mission. Each destination becomes not only a place to visit, but a moment of grace where faith is deepened and love is renewed.



Haemi International Shrine

One of the most important Catholic pilgrimage sites in Korea, Haemi International Shrine honors thousands of Korean martyrs who remained faithful during times of persecution. The shrine is recognized as the ***second International Shrine in Asia***.



Haemi Castle

A historic Joseon-era castle where many Korean Catholics were imprisoned and martyred, now a significant pilgrimage site for reflecting on faith and sacrifice.



Sansu Pilgrimage Road

A prayerful journey in silence, following paths traditionally walked by Korean Martyrs, inviting reflection on faith and renewal.



Solmoe Shrine

The birthplace of St. Andrew Kim Taegeon, Solmoe Shrine is a sacred place for reflection on vocation, mission and a faithful response to God's call.



Mirinae Shrine

A beloved pilgrimage site and resting place of St. Andrew Kim Taegeon, Mirinae Shrine offers peaceful space for silence, healing, and spiritual renewal.

Support

The Wake-Up International Youth Center can provide some documents needed for the visa (e.g., Invitation Letter, etc.), but the participants will be responsible for the visa fee and plane tickets (*the exact amount will be announced by the WE Connect Coordinators*). Additionally, the Wake-Up International Youth Center will offer free transportation upon your arrival in Korea. The center also has accommodation facilities, so we will provide free accommodation to the participants, as well as support for all meals.

Participants are welcome to extend their stay in Korea for personal travel. If participants choose to utilize the accommodation provided by our center, it will be offered free of charge, along with meals. However, if a participant decides to stay elsewhere, they will be responsible for their own expenses. Our center can still assist in finding accommodation or arranging transportation, but all expenses related to personal travel will be the responsibility of the participants.

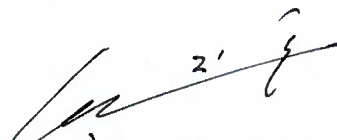
Note: *Participants who wish to have personal travel arrangements need to inform the center as soon as possible to reserve accommodation.*

Expected Outcome

Through **WE Connect 2026: Witnesses of Love**, participants are expected to experience a deep and lasting transformation in their faith and life. By the end of the program, they are envisioned to have deepened their personal relationship with Jesus Christ, embraced the call to live out the message **“This is the hour for Love”** in concrete acts of compassion and service, and gained a renewed appreciation for the witness of the Korean Martyrs as models of courage and faithful discipleship. The experience is also expected to foster stronger intercultural friendships, spiritual renewal through pilgrimage and communal prayer, and a clearer sense of missionary identity among young people. Ultimately, participants will return to their communities as witnesses of love, empowered to live out their faith with greater commitment, leadership, and a spirit of hope that inspires transformation in their families, parishes, and societies.



Cheon Seong Yeon
General Manager



Rev. Fr. Park Jin Hong (Fr. Joseph)
Director