

**Orthodox Youth Leadership Training Course  
Holy Transfiguration Monastery  
Ka-Pyung, Korea  
18-26 August 2001**

**A Historic Event, by *Evangelia Tsavou-Lases, Greece*  
(*SYNDESMOS Assistant Secretary*)**

25 participants from around the world—mainly from the Asia Region—took part in this event, including Orthodox youth from Korea, Japan, China, Australia, the Holy Land, Poland and Greece.

Initially inspired to give young Asian Orthodox the opportunity to participate in a SYNDESMOS event, the Training course was organised and hosted under the blessing and with the support of His Eminence Metropolitan Dionysios of New Zealand. Thanks to the hospitality and the presence of His Grace Bishop Sotirios of Zelon, SYNDESMOS participants found an open and warm home in the Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ka-Pyung. There, Bishop Sotirios, sister Silouani, Agathi and Fr. Daniel Na, SYNDESMOS Asia regional Representative, together with a large Korean resource team, contributed much to make it a successful SYNDESMOS event. And it was. Everything was well prepared, nothing was overlooked and we felt very welcomed. All of Orthodox Korea worked hard for this event. A group of ladies from the Korean parishes came to the Monastery (a journey of more than three hours for some) to offer their services. We are at a loss of words to thank all those involved!

An important presence for all was His Eminence Metropolitan Nikitas of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. He supported this program from the very beginning, promising immediately to come, to give a speech and to stay with us during almost the whole program. He brought with him a participant from His Metropolis, and even offered to host a SYNDESMOS event in Philippines in 2002. Indeed, the event had the blessing of all the Hierarchy of the region: Archbishop Stylianos of Australia, supported SYNDESMOS with a generous donation, and nominated a participant from Australia, and His Eminence Metropolitan Danilo of Japan, encouraged five participants from Japan and is keen for better contact between SYNDESMOS and the other members in the Region.

The training course was basic, addressed primarily to non-experienced participants, since it was the first time that Korea and the Far East in general was hosting such an event. In addition to the keynote speeches (see following article), the programme also included workshops on a variety of training themes, conducted by Alex Wasyluk (Poland), Kostas Tsilis (Greece) and Evangelia Tsavou-Lases (Greece). Participants also benefited greatly from the dialogue with Bishop Sotirios of Zelon, (our host) and Metropolitan Nikitas. In a very relaxed and open atmosphere they had the chance to speak sincerely with them, to ask them questions, seek advice and receive their blessing.

Participants also had the chance to discover the beautiful country of Korea during the numerous excursions, including to Jeon-Ju where we visited the church of the Dormition of the Theotokos, and the Art School & Education Center. Also, during the visit to Seoul, we met with parishioners of St. Nicholas Cathedral, who received us with great hospitality. Needless to say, we left Korea with very memorable impressions!

I would dare to call this SYNDESMOS event not only successful but also historical. It was the first time that SYNDESMOS gathered Orthodox youth from Korea, Japan, China and Australia in a venue in the Fareast. It was the first time that these young people worked together and shared ideas, experiences, thoughts, wishes, dreams, and concerns. All of them brought with them the blessings of their Bishops, all of whom expressed their support of the work of SYNDESMOS, showing keen interest for further cooperation. What is more, we all left Korea with many new and sincere friends—if only for that, the program deserves to be called successful.

I only hope that the good start which SYNDESMOS has made in the Fareast will be continued. The mission region of Asia is a very big challenge, and young Orthodox must take up this challenge—especially when there is hope. And as His Eminence Metropolitan Dionysios of New Zealand said in His address to us: ‘I would say without hesitation that our only but assured Hope is Christ our Lord. Only He knows how to unite people.’



*After the Divine Liturgy, participants with Metropolitan Nikitas of Hong Kong, and Bishop Sotiris of Zelon, Korea 2001*

**A Handful of Orthodox People in the heavily populated country of Korea, by  
*Kosmas Zisis (Australia)***

In response to an invitation sent by SYNDESMOS and the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop of Australia, to whom I am very grateful, I travelled to Korea: a country which for some seems to constitute a geographical obscurity. Sent as a representative of Australian youth, I joined the 25 other young Orthodox from nearly all corners of the earth to take part in the SYNDESMOS Orthodox Youth Leadership Training Course, 60 km out of Seoul.

Enjoying the hospitable company of His Grace Bishop of Zelon Sotirios and Sister Silhoune, we opened discussions on the topic of "Youth and Mission work in the Orthodox Church of Asia" according to the saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt, 28:19). Among the guest speakers were His Eminence Metropolitan Nikitas of Hong-Kong and Southeast Asia, who expressed ideas and advice on the work which youth in the church have to undertake in order to witness Christ in a post-modern society, and Mr. Perry Hamalis, from the University of Chicago and a graduate of St Vladimir's Theological Seminary in New York, who spoke on how to meet the needs of young Orthodox. In an atmosphere of open and informal dialogue, we could discuss the needs of the youth in the Orthodox church of Asia and outline the problems which clergy and laity of such regions face continuously. We were also able to see for ourselves the harsh reality faced by the Orthodox people of Asia who need people of other nations to help them in the missionary work provided in such forgotten continent.

The plentiful experiences in the world of Korea, its history, tradition and way of life cannot be contained in few words of this article which can not do justice to the emotions, the imagery, the words and actions taken by the members of the training conference.

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the members of SYNDESMOS who, upon the blessings and good wishes of His Eminence Metropolitan Dionysios of New Zealand, created history by organizing an international meeting of youth in the ever-distant country of Korea.

*For further reading about this event see article on [www.syndesmos.org](http://www.syndesmos.org) by  
Lina Tawil (St Jacob's Orthodox Youth Association of Jerusalem)*