

## **KOREA — Archbishop Choi of Kwangju Issues Ultimatum To 'Miracle' Performer**

SEOUL (UCAN) -- The head of Korea's Catholic Church has warned a Catholic woman to stop propagating what she claims are private Marian revelations and has directed Catholics not to heed miracles without Church confirmation.

In yet another pastoral directive issued on May 5, Archbishop Andrew Choi Chang-mou of Kwangju, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea, said that Julia Youn Hong-sun must not insist on her divine revelations from a Marian statue and that her followers must obey the Church or face censure.

The directive urges Catholics at the alleged Marian miracle site to return to "normal and ordinary Church life" because staying there would "insult" the Church. "I make it clear that any clergy or Religious from any diocese or any country who participates in or presides at liturgical ceremonies at the Marian Shrine or Youn's chapel without permission from the Archbishop of Kwangju is destroying the universal and local Church," Archbishop Choi said.

He urged the Catholics to live their faith in unity and harmony, and to obey their bishop, a successor of the apostles and pastor of their local Church.

The archbishop noted that from Jan. 1, 1998, to April 3, 2005, he and his predecessor issued instructions on the matter three times, but Youn and her followers disobeyed and even challenged the Church by continuing to insist on "private revelations" or "miracles." He said "this clearly shows they (do not) have any intention to maintain normal relations with the universal Church."

Archbishop Choi also pointed out in his directive that between March and August 2003, he directly met Youn and her husband three times at a parish, in a diocesan office and even visited them to discuss the matter. He stressed that his predecessor, retired Archbishop Victorinus Youn Kong-hi, had the agreement of the Holy See and the bishops' conference when he issued a pastoral directive concerning Julia Youn on Jan. 1, 1998.

Father Gabriel Park Chul-soo, the chancellor of Kwangju archdiocese, told UCA News on May 10 that the two earlier pastoral directives did not work, so the third one is a final chance for Youn and her followers to comply. "This pastoral instruction is similar to the previous ones in content but it is more like an ultimatum," he asserted. "If they oppose it again, they can never take part in liturgical ceremonies, including Mass, as Catholics."

If Youn and her followers again ignore or object to the Church's official instruction, Father Park added, they will no longer be considered Catholics but followers of some sort of folk religion.

Julia Youn insists that she has received "private revelations" through her statue of Mary in Naju, 25 kilometers south of Kwangju, ever since it "started weeping" on Jun. 30, 1985. Since then, many Catholics, including several local and foreign bishops, have visited Naju. According to an Internet website devoted to the place (<http://www.najumary.or.kr/grace>), after Archbishop Youn issued his first directive, two bishops from Indonesia and the Philippines visited there in 2001-2002.

Youn, 57-year-old mother of four, insists that her weeping statue of Mary has even shed tears of blood and fragrant oil, and given her revelations, and that the Host fell "from heaven" several times when visiting bishops and her group were at Mass in her private chapel.

Youn and her group further claim that the Eucharist changed into a lump of bloody flesh in her mouth several times, including once in 1995 when Pope John Paul II gave her the Eucharist at the Vatican. At that time, the pope saw it but said nothing, the Naju website maintains.

Archbishop Choi warns that all who fail to follow his pastoral directive must be considered as intending to oppose the magisterium -- the Catholic Church's authority and power to teach true doctrine by divine guidance.

In a letter published on May 24, 2001, the archbishop urged Catholics to "obey the magisterium," and asked Youn and her volunteers not to propagate the so-called miracles concerning her and the Marian statue.

However, 60-year-old Rubino Park Yeon-hun, Youn's manager, disagrees with the instruction issued by Archbishop Youn and Archbishop Choi. Park says, "For us, it is basically invalid because the archdiocese has never investigated our case objectively and failed to bear any witness to its argument."

Park, who has been following Youn for 20 years, told UCA News on May 10: "We cannot follow the pastoral directive because its argument and explanation of the miracle phenomenon of the Eucharist is not true. Since we are Catholics who seek truth, we cannot follow the wrong instruction."

According to him, an average of about 4,000-5,000 people from within the country and abroad visit Julia Youn every month, "though they already know about the instruction." Park also maintains that they visit "just because they know and experience what the truth is here. They are the real faithful."

On Jan. 1, 1998, Archbishop Youn declared that visions and various strange phenomenon emanating from Youn's body and the statue of the Blessed Mother "produce no evidence which proves they are truly supernatural and thus from God." He thereby directed that publication or dissemination of material on the Naju events was "officially forbidden," and called on Catholics to refrain from reading such material.