

Request for Prayers Sought for Youth of Korea who went down on the Korean vessel
SEWOL - Good Friday, 18 April 2014 Anno Domini



Mothers and fathers maintain a lonely and rain-soaked vigil from the Island of Chin-do off the southern coast of the Republic of Korea. Hope grows forlorn as each passing hour renders the likelihood of finding more survivors in the sunken ship less probable. The ship was travelling from the port of Incheon (harbor of General Douglas MacArthur's brilliant landing during the Korean War) to a resort Island out to sea from the southern tip of South Korea when he suddenly sank last Wednesday of Holy Week. The journey usually takes thirteen hours by sea, but for the majority of the 338 high school students, the journey took them into Eternity. There are still 279 missing as the ship listed and sank beneath the icy waters of the Yellow Sea. The water is frigid and the risk of hypothermia under such conditions is measured in minutes and not hours. The parents will be the last to abandon hope for their children, but the dark shadow of death is gradually sinking over the pitiful sight of hundreds of rescue workers and sea vessels doing all in their power to salvage the last possible soul.

I could not help but consider that these young people could have been the members of my church that are predominantly Korean. They are of the first order in character, discipline and respect. In fact, many of the youth that perished on the *Sewol* did so because of their discipline and respect for elders. The captain of the vessel, who was first to abandon ship, had directed the youth to remain in place until directed otherwise. So they crouched in remote corners of the compartments until it was too late to disembark. My soul is in anguish for these fine young students, and for their heart-broken parents.

It must be admitted that there was more than souls and cargo that went down on the *Sewol* - there was a rich treasure of love and affection. Korean youth highly respect their elders and their parents; and the Korean parent will typically dress in rags if it will help their sons and daughters to achieve a good education. But now, their eyes search, despondingly, the murky and billowing, rains-swept waves of the Yellow Sea in search of a tiny spark of hope. The vice-principal of the high school that escorted his students to the ship on Wednesday morning traveled to the Island of Chindo, near the tragedy, and committed suicide by hanging - such was his presumed guilt in sending the students on such a tragic journey.

The most moving of hymns I know for this occasion is the great Navy Hymn, *Eternal Father, Strong to Save*, written by William Whiting in 1860 to the tune Melita. In contemplating this hymn, we must remember that the same Lord Jesus Christ who walked upon the waters of stormy Galilee is also Master of the Seas of the ship-wrecked vessel. The hymn is based upon the beauty expressed in Psalms 107: "*They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the*

LORD, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." (Psalms 107:23-30)

Eternal Father, Strong to Save

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who biddest the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy Word,
Who walked on the foaming deep,
And calm amidst its rage didst sleep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

Most Holy Spirit! Who didst brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude,
And bid its angry tumult cease,
And give, for wild confusion, peace;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

O Trinity of love and power!
Our family shield in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect us wheresoever we go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

Let us remember Good Friday is good to us because we were purchased from our sins on this day by the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary, but on this day, God the Father paid a heavy price for our sins. The Goodness of the day is measured by the goodness of one who, though without sin, went to the cross in our stead.

O **ETERNAL** Lord God, who alone spreadest out the heavens, and rulest the raging of the sea; Vouchsafe to take into thy almighty and most gracious protection those Korean students who sank in the Yellow Sea on the south Korean Liner, Sewol. Preserve them from the dangers of the sea, and from the violence of the elements; that they may be restored some happy day to their loved ones, and we ask of thee to provide a security for them in the arms of your dearly Beloved Son who bled and died for them, and for us. We pray that this tragedy will serve to awaken many lost souls to the necessity of salvation both now, and at the end of life's journey, to the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*