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South Korean President Moon Jae-in addresses the 73rd session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York Sept. 26. The South Korean president's office said when Moon meets Pope Francis Oct. 18, he will pass along an invitation for the pope to visit North Korea. (CNS/Carlo Allegri, Reuters)

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Vatican City — October 9, 2018

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The South Korean president's office said that when the president meets Pope Francis Oct. 18, he will pass on an invitation for the pope to visit North Korea.

The Vatican confirmed Oct. 9 that South Korean President Moon Jae-in would meet the pope Oct. 18 at the Vatican. The evening before the meeting, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, will celebrate a Mass for peace on the Korean peninsula in St. Peter's Basilica, and Moon will attend.

Moon's office told reporters that North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un, said his country would offer a "fervent welcome" to Pope Francis if he accepted an invitation to visit.

Quoting Moon's spokesman, Kim Eui-kyeom, the Korean Times reported: "President Moon suggested that Chairman Kim meet the pope, pointing out that he is very much interested in peace on the Korean Peninsula."

The North Korean leader "promised Moon he would give a fervent welcome to the pope if he visited Pyongyang," the North Korean capital.

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