



AMERICA/HAITI - Bishop Dumas, President of Caritas Haiti: "The people need a helping hand. Enough talk about this ordeal. Enough with the controversies. This should be a time for reflection."

Rome (Agenzia Fides) – "The first aid after the earthquake was distributed by personnel from the Catholic Church, beginning with the Nuncio and the various religious communities that are located throughout the country. Even for first aid medical care, health services of religious were always the first in helping the population in the first moments after the earthquake." This is what Bishop Pierre-André Dumas of Anse-a-Veau, President of Caritas Haiti, said in answering a question from Agenzia Fides after the press conference held at the headquarters of the Community of Sant'Egidio in Rome on February 3.

The President of Caritas Haiti has described the situation in the island, putting forward some proposals for the reconstruction, and appealing to the President of the United States of America. The Bishop told reporters that the press can turn the tragedy of this moment into solidarity and aid for the "post"-tragedy, to keep it from becoming a "forgotten emergency."

The figures supplied by the Bishop were: over 180,000 dead, most of 185,000 injured, over 200,000 missing, and only a community of nuns, the Daughters of Mary, lost 15 religious. 1,500,000 people are internal refugees in the country. Many people and families are still traumatized and feel sick every time the earth shakes, and this occurs repeatedly. In the capital, 75% of homes are destroyed, but there are other cities within the country who have lost almost everything and have not made the news. People are starting to go to Canada, France, and the USA. Even for those who remain, it is hard to find the essentials such as rice, beans, pasta. There are no more supermarkets, or even hospitals and government buildings. They have lost all the archives of documents, so there are no points of reference.

"But the Haitian people are a people who have dignity, they want to get up," said the President of Caritas Haiti. The reaction to the disaster of the common people is still free of violence and this is important, as the police have almost halved since many are dead and the survivors are trying to provide for their families. "People need a helping hand," the Bishop continued. "Enough talk about this ordeal. Enough with the controversies. This should be a time for reflection." The problem presents itself for the future. Education cannot take place because there are no schools. 15 major churches in Port-au-Prince are gone, starting with the Cathedral. There are no houses for priests and religious who were in charge of these parishes. We will rebuild and think whether it is worth going back to the drawing board. We must consider the local church; there are institutions that can channel the aid. A first calculation estimates that about 30 million Euros will be needed for this endeavor. But beware, resolving things does not mean without the collaboration of the Haitians."

As for the work of Caritas, the Bishop stressed that it must act "quickly and efficiently," and continued:

"Therefore, we demand that the aid is not militarized. We should not demean the people and the country. Now is the time for gratuity. I saw Americans and Cuban doctors work together; that says it all. Our neighbor has helped us so much. Santo Domingo has donated large amounts of food aid and of all kinds, and not everyone knows that Santo Domingo has often regarded Haiti as a being somewhat inferior." Bishop Dumas once again reiterated:

"The people of Haiti should become protagonists in their own story. Haiti deserves respect." So, he appealed to the President of the United States of America and Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Barak Obama, asking that America "do more" in light of its geographic proximity, and that President Obama may use all his authority to offer effective aid. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 04/02/2010)