



## **ASIA/NEPAL - As strikes paralyse the country: Christians pull out 'special weapon', the Holy Rosary**

Kathmandu (Agenzia Fides) – In a country paralysed by three days of general strikes, Christians pull out their "special weapon": the Rosary beads. "We pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary to intercede that peace may prevail and bloodshed be avoided, that our rulers may be illuminated and reach a political compromise to end the crisis", Fr Pius Perumana, pro-Vicar Apostolic of Nepal, told Fides Agency. The local Catholic Church has called on the faithful to "live these days with serenity, and with the optimism of faith and hope, to recite a daily Rosary throughout the month of May, traditionally dedicated to Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary", the priest said. The Apostolic Prefect, Mgr. Anthony Sharma, has rallied Catholic parishes, schools and religious communities in Nepal to hold daily recitations of the Holy Rosary throughout the month of May and at least one hour of Eucharistic Adoration every week, with a special prayer intention "for national peace, and for a successful drafting and approval of a new Constitution without violence".

"Community recitation of the Holy Rosary – Fr. Pius told Fides – is an excellent means of deepening relations with family and neighbours, and also helps to form more groups for Bible reflection and prayer".

Fr Pius had this to say about the present situation in Kathmandu: "So far events have been peaceful but the situation could deteriorate any moment. Maoist protests have stopped even our Church activity and missionary work: we have had to close our schools. One of our priests, Fr. Richard Vas, was stopped while riding a motor cycle and threatened, but fortunately the police intervened and he was rescued".

Kathmandu was brought to a halt for the third day running today by a general strike called by the Maoist Opposition. Traffic in the capital is reduced to nothing, public transport has stopped, commercial activity has halted, and shops, schools, offices and factories are still closed.

Thousands of Maoist militants have poured into the city from all over the country, staging peaceful demonstrations with anti-government slogans and chants.

The Maoist party, which in the constituent assembly holds the majority, has called for the government to step down and in its place a national unity coalition charged with launching the new constitution and accelerating the peace process initiated in 2006 following the popular revolt which brought down the monarchy. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 4/5/2010)