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ASIA/TURKEY - Bishop Padovese's sacrifice will bring about greater good

Mersin (Agenzia Fides) - “At this moment of grief and sorrow, with eyes of faith we are convinced that the Bishop Padovese's sacrifice will lead to a greater good for the Catholic community in Turkey,” said Fr. Roberto Ferrari, OFM Cap, Superior of the Franciscan Community in Mersin, in an interview with Fides. Fr. Ferrari is one of the Capuchin missionaries who has dedicated his whole life to Turkey, where he has lived for over 60 years. Having recently returned from Iskenderun, the friar told Fides of the atmosphere at the celebration of the funeral for Bishop Padovese, which was held yesterday, and the feelings of the Catholic community in Turkey.
"Bishop Luigi was my brother and friend," he begins. "We shared many years of mission together, in loving service to the community, in our witness of Franciscan life," says the monk. "The funeral celebration was truly heartfelt and touching. There was an extraordinary participation of Catholics, Christians of all denominations, and of Muslims who came to pay homage to the figure of Bishop Padovese. There were major ecclesiastical authorities, such as the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Antonio Lucibello, many religious leaders, and also the highest civil and military authorities in the region. All expressed solidarity, closeness, and participation in our mourning. We must express our gratitude to all those who are close in this time of sorrow. This testimony has touched us deeply and we are confident that this will be a seed that will bear fruit in time," notes Fr Ferrari.
The celebration was presided by Archbishop Ruggero Franceschini, OFM Cap of Smyrna, who recalled Bishop Padovese as "a man of the Church, a Bishop who was a very close friend of the Turks and Turkey." “For us, Christians, his death recalls how fidelity to the Gospel, in certain situations, may be paid with blood," said the Archbishop, citing the words of Bishop Padovese in a recent letter: "Living with you and among you has been a grace for me." Archbishop Franceschini concluded his homily with an exhortation to the faithful: "Be not afraid! Do not lose heart! Be happy, like the Apostles, to live in suffering and trial, without abandoning your faith, which is the reason of our hope."
Words that all have fully shared in: "It is the Lord who guides the history - made of joys and trials - of the Catholic community in Turkey," Fr. Ferrari told Fides. "Our sure hope is that from this tragic event will come a greater good. The blood of our martyrs is the seed of Christians and will bear fruits for the Kingdom of God," concluded the friar. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 08/06/2010)

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