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ASIA/INDIA - Church launches “National Day for Indian Martyrs”

Bhopal (Agenzia Fides) – This coming August 29, all over India, faithful will be marking the anniversary of the massacres in Orissa, on the "National Day for Indian Martyrs." This is what Fides learned from the Ecumenism Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. The special day was established to recall all those - priests, religious, and laity - who "have sacrificed their lives for their faith in Christ" and are "modern martyrs" in India today. The last Sunday in August was chosen as the date for the commemoration of the Christians who have died in the massacres that occurred in Orissa in late August of 2008, events that still demand justice and will likely to remain unpunished.
The proposal of the Day has found unanimous agreement among all Christian denominations in India and will be celebrated, the Commission says, on an ecumenical level in order to gain more strength and visibility in social and civic life.
The Commission pointed out that "Christians have a common martyrology, which includes all the martyrs of the 20th century and of the current century."
Bishop Anil Cuto, Bishop of Jalandhar and Chairman of the Ecumenism Commission, said: “We request all Christians belonging to all denominations to remember those died for the sake of their faith. The Catholic Church has a very dignified procedure to declare martyrs, saints etc. but what we expect is to remember the sacrifice made by people. It is not declaring somebody a saint but an effort to preserve their suffering and sacrifice as a heritage of the Christians. It can inspire many generations.”
Fr. Anbu, Secretary of the same Commission, said: “We want to honor our martyrs. The Christians who sacrificed their lives are from different denominations and ecclesial communities, so it could be an ecumenical effort to unite the Christians towards their great sacrifice.”
On the occasion of the National Day, a major awareness campaign is being organized among all the Christians in the nation, to hold special prayer services, fasting, commemoration meetings, and symbolic gestures of solidarity such as blood drives at hospitals. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 20/8/2010)

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