



ASIA/PAKISTAN - 30 January: call by Episcopal conference for great prayer for peace in the Country

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) – In view of the polarisation afflicting society, in view of the divisions that often result in violence, in view of the use of religion as an instrument by extremist Islamic movements, the Catholic Church has called for a great prayer for peace throughout the Country. As communicated to Fides by the Episcopal Conference of Pakistan, the Day of prayer will be held in all churches, next Sunday, 30 January, and will have an expanded character at the ecumenical and interreligious level.

In fact, one reads in the message released by Archbishop Lawrence Saldhana of Lahore, President of the Episcopal Conference that the other Christian Churches in the Country have also been invited, as well as representatives from other religions, human rights activists and all people of good will who believe in peace as the “supreme good to protect Pakistan”.

It will be a Day of prayer and fasting to appeal to God for the essential gift of peace, and to show that “as Christians, our contribution is always that of unification, to carry a message of reconciliation and of forgiveness,” Fides was told by Father John Shakir Nadeem, Secretary for Social Communications for Episcopal Conference, remarking that mobilisation has commenced in all the churches and Christian institutions to call the faithful to prayer.

The Day of 30 January intends to be a peaceful response to mobilisation, often violent in nature, that “radical Islamic groups continue to call for throughout the Country, in defence of the blasphemy law”, explains the priest. A demonstration by radical movements was also announced for 30 January, “however we Christians do not wish to react nor respond to the provocations, instead to pray and fast, placing the difficulties that the Country is experiencing in God's hands”.

The social situation, Father Nadeem tells Fides, “is tense at every level: poverty afflicts large parts of the population; fanaticism is gaining ground; both political parties (ruling and the opposition) seem more concerned with their own interests than the good of the community.” In this way, “Christian minorities suffer from discrimination and marginalisation.” Regarding the blasphemy law: “I believe that, given the tension that has taken over the Country, it is not realistic to be thinking of its abolition or its revision. But they could at least bring out new laws that help to avoid the abuses,” concludes the priest. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 25/1/2011)