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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Ecumenical funeral celebration for Minister Bhatti

Faisalabad (Agenzia Fides) – It was not a Catholic Mass but an ecumenical celebration of prayer, in the presence of other religious leaders, to give the final goodbye to Minister Shabhaz Bhatti, and which accompanied his burial. Fides sources on the spot report that the ceremony was held on 4 March in the village of Khushphur, in the diocese of Faisalabad, in Punjab, the Minister's birthplace known as the “Vatican of Pakistan”, because it has given so many Bishops, priests, men and women religious and sisters.
A Memorial Mass, says Fides sources, was celebrated in the morning. The local Church decided to celebrate the funeral with an ecumenical prayer due to the attendance of Catholic and Protestant Bishops, Muslim and other religious leaders, as well as numerous other civil authorities, among which was the Governor of Punjab, Sardari Latif Khosa (who stood in for Salman Taseer, killed in defending Asia Bibi).
Bhatti's eulogy, central in the ceremony – held outdoors, amongst tight security, in the Convent attached to the Catholic church in the village – was entrusted to Father Pervez Emmanuel, a priest and a cousin of Bhatti.
The authorities and the various religious leaders took the floor with short messages, while thousands of faithful Christians, as well as members of other religions – Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims – attended the ceremony, carried out in an atmosphere of contemplation, composure, emotion and silent prayer.
Bishop Joseph Coutts of Faisalabad, who did the honours, said: “Bhatti was the voice of Truth. And the voice of truth will not be suppressed, because the Truth will triumph. Bhatti was an emissary of Light. And the Light will not be beaten by the darkness.” After the service, Bhatti was buried in the Catholic cemetery in the village. (PA)
(Agenzia Fides 4/3/2011)

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