



AFRICA/LIBYA - "Thank you, Holy Father, for your beautiful words of peace": testimony to Fides from the Apostolic Vicar of Tripoli

Tripoli (Agenzia Fides) - "The Holy Father's appeal was wonderful news and gives us great comfort. The Pope spoke words that affirm the need for reconciliation, peace and dialogue," says Bishop Giovanni Innocenzo Martinelli, Apostolic Vicar of Tripoli, to Fides. Yesterday, Sunday, 27 March, at the Angelus, Pope Benedict XVI launched "an urgent appeal to international organisations and political and military leaders for immediate dialogue, to suspend the use of arms."

"We have translated today's appeal by the Holy Father into Arabic and we will send it as a voice message to the Libyan Foreign Ministry, for their information," says Bishop Martinelli. The Apostolic Vicar states that he did not participate in the event of Saturday, 26 March (see Fides 26/03/2011), and that in any case, as he explained to Fides, he would join in only if it had been a peace rally. "They have not asked again for our presence," says Bishop Martinelli. "It was a manifestation to reaffirm the national unity of Libya. We have joined the tribal leaders, intellectuals and other personalities. I do not think either side wants a divide in Libya. However, this emphasises the need for dialogue to end the crisis," says the Vicar Apostolic of Tripoli.

Archbishop Martinelli also announces that "from yesterday, police have been stationed in front of our church, officially charged with protecting us. Perhaps to avoid attack, which according to some simple. We are beginning to run low on petrol. There is a two hour line to fill up the car's petrol tank. And there is even difficulty to buy food."

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"Tonight we didn't hear any bombing. We know that it occurred near Sirte. There have been civilian victims in recent days. I know of at least one person who died of a splintered skull, perhaps produced by a blow from an anti-aircraft which exploded at a very low altitude," concludes the Bishop. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 28/3/2011)