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ASIA/PAKISTAN - Day of Prayer for Asia Bibi and for victims of the blasphemy law

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) – Around the world people will be in prayer for Asia Bibi, the woman unjustly condemned to death for blasphemy. On 20 April, Wednesday of Holy Week, a "Special Day of Prayer for Asia Bibi and for the victims of the blasphemy law" will be celebrated in Pakistan and in many countries around the world. News of the initiative by her lawyers, the Masihi Foundation, was given exclusively to Fides today and will be launched globally, officially tomorrow. The initiative intends to bring into communion all believers and all people of good in prayer and to light a candle, imploring God's salvation and freedom of this woman and all who suffer the consequences of being falsely accused of blasphemy," Haroon Masih, Director of the Masihi Foundation tells Fides.
Bishop Andrew Francis of Multan and President of the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Pakistan has already adhered to the initiative, telling Fides that "prayer is an important tool for the faithful of Pakistan, who trust in God's work." The Pontifical Mission Societies in Pakistan have also pledged their support and indicated that they "will help raise awareness among local communities."
Then there are "Asia Bibi's guardian angels" who have promised their prayers: several orders of cloistered nuns. The sisters from a Franciscan Monastery in Escalona (Toledo, Spain), those from the Benedictine Monastery of Rosano (near Florence, Italy) and those from the Franciscan Poor Clares Roasio and Sarzana (northern Italy) will also raise their voices for Asia Bibi, stating in a message sent to Fides: "In Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, we remember Asia Bibi, our sister in Christ, and we pray for the victims of any abuse of power throughout the world. We pray that the crucified and Risen Lord may open the hearts of all to contribute to the construction of his Kingdom of peace and justice."
In Italy, we will pray for Asia Bibi and for the victims of the blasphemy law even in Parliament, during Holy Mass to be celebrated on 20 April in the Parliament Chapel by Cardinal Jean Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. The Mass has been organised by the Association of Parliamentary Friends of Pakistan and the Association of Pakistani Christians in Italy (already one of the organisers of a pro Asia Bibi event held on 26 January) to recall the figure of Shahbaz Bhatti, the assassinated Minister for Minorities, a Catholic politician who defended Asia Bibi, paying with his life.
The Masihi Foundation, via Fides, launches an appeal to all communities, parishes, associations, schools, religious congregations, throughout the Christian churches of the world, to join the World Day of Prayer. For information on how to be part of the event, which is hoped to reach all five continents, please e-mail: specialprayerday@gmail.com (PA) (Agenzia Fides 11/4/2011)

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