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ASIA / PAKISTAN - Christians are "strong in faith and prayer', after the recent attacks in Punjab

Multan (Agenzia Fides) - "Christians in Pakistan are not discouraged when faced with suffering, we are firm in faith, hope and charity and will continue without stopping to promote interfaith dialogue with moderate Muslims, peace and harmony in society" : the Bishop Andrew Francis, Bishop of Multan (Punjab) and President of the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue of the Episcopal Conference said to Fides, the day after the recent anti-Christian attacks. On April 16, in fact, near Gujarnavala (in Punjab), dozens of Christian families were forced to escape from a village attacked by Muslim militants. The incident that triggered the aggression is the false accusation of blasphemy against two Christians, Mushtaq Gill and his son Farrukh Mushtaq Gill.
"Our prayer for the victims of the blasphemy law does not stop, and so our efforts is to engage Muslim leaders, but also the civil authorities and all the believers, as men of good will, to build a peaceful and fraternal nation", added the Bishop.
Among the examples mentioned by Bishop Francis, the Christian community of Multan met with people of every creed, language, social class, for a large religious meeting, on 16 April, just as there were anti-Christian violence in Gujranwala: The meeting, sponsored by the local Church, intended to celebrate the birthday of Pope Benedict XVI. More than 5,000 children and young people were present, mobilized by the Pontifical Mission Societies, and the whole multi-religious assembly enjoyed a "birthday cake" made in honour of the Pope. The aim of the event was "to show the true face of the Pope, a man of peace and dialogue, he loves all those suffering in Pakistan", the Bishop explained to Fides, recalling the attacks regarding the Pope in recent months by radical Islamic groups, because of his words to the religious minorities in Pakistan (see Fides 02/02/2011). During the meeting a fund-raising was promoted, where everyone took part, and will be donated to the Holy Father to "support his missionary journeys": "We pray and hope that he will soon come to Asia", remarked Bishop Francis. Also tomorrow, April 19, on the anniversary of the beginning of the Pontificate, in the Diocese of Multan, we will pray for the Holy Father and for his ministry during the Mass (PA) (Agenzia Fides 18/04/2011)

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