



ASIA / PAKISTAN - Asia Bibi is not alone: all over the world is praying for her

Lahore (Fides Service) - From the Clarisse of Lovere (Italy); the cloistered Poor Women of New York (USA); the community of Franciscans of Thu Duc, Hochiminh City (Vietnam); the diocese of Batouri (Cameroon), the Sisters of St. Joseph of Tarbes, in Brazil, the Christian communities of New Zealand; the maronites of Lebanon, to the Orthodox in Indonesia: today, April 20, 2011, community, religious institutions, associations, churches, and the faithful of all Christian denominations are praying for Asia Bibi, offering Masses, lighting candles, organizing prayer vigils, torchlight processions and Eucharistic adoration.

The initiative of a "Special Day of Prayer", launched by the "Masihi Foundation" - that intended to keep alive in the minds the suffering of a Christian woman wrongly sentenced to death in Pakistan, falsely accused of blasphemy –has seen the adherence of the five continents. "We believe in the power of prayer, that can move mountains, through the intervention of God", said Haroon Barkat Masih, Director of the Foundation Masihi to Fides. "We believe it is important to urge the universal communion of the faithful for cases of persecution such as Asia Bibi" he explained.

Many of the faithful, in fact, say they will pray for Asia and for persecuted Christians": "We join in prayer for Asia Bibi and for the other victims, hoping the situation will soon improve", write the Sisters of Clarisse of Lovere, who have joined together with the cloistered monasteries already involved, such as Escalona (Toledo, Spain) or the Benedictines in Rosano (Italy) (see Fides 11/4/2011).

The Franciscans in Vietnam, in a special evening prayer vigil, will remember Asia Bibi, the victims of the blasphemy law in Pakistan, and "also the victims of the repression of freedom of conscience and religion in Vietnam". In the United States, as well as the adhesion of the "Poor Ladies" of New York, many Christian communities have been active in passing the word through modern mass media as for example the social network "Facebook".

Many- comments the Foundation expressing a pleasant surprise –have adhered from the African continent: community of religious and laity from Senegal, the sisters of a village in Benin, communities in Chad, Central African Republic, Cameroon, South Africa have written. The same interest was expressed in Latin America, especially in Argentina and Brazil (even in the indigenous Christian communities of the Amazon), but also in countries like Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.

In Pakistan, Bishop Andrew Francis, Bishop of Multan and President of the Commission for Interreligious Dialogue in the Episcopal Conference, told Fides that he will pray on behalf of the Catholic Church, and also the Bishop Anthony Rufin, Bishop of Islamabad has adhered. The Pontifical Missionaries of Pakistan have mobilized children and school children, while other Christian communities in Punjab can be found in prayer in such a difficult moment for the faithful, victims of recent attacks (see Fides 18/4/2011). As reported to Fides, from the faithful of Christ Church and St. Paul Church in Rawalpindi, St. Thomas Church and Lady Fatima Church in Islamabad, the FGA Church, New Life Church, Gospel of God, United Pentecostal Church in Lahore; Holy Trinity Church, to Hunter Memorial Church in Sialkot will light candles.

Among the hundreds of adherences, we include also those of the Missionaries of the Consolata, the Friars of the Sacred Heart, parishes in various dioceses in France, Spain and the United Kingdom, Central St. Andrew of the small Republic of San Marino. A French believer wrote a poem for Asia Bibi, expressing the feelings and hopes of all the communities involved, and ends by saying: "Sister Asia, you will never be alone". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 04/20/2011)