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AFRICA/EGYPT-The Copts today announce a protest march of 1 million people, "we must be careful not to give hasty judgements," said a missionary to Fides

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - Several Coptic movements announced that on Friday, May 6 there will be a protest march of a million people to protect the Cathedral of San Marco in Abbasseya. Last Friday thousands of Salafis had staged a sit-in protest in front of the Cathedral to ask for the "release" of Kamilia Shehata, the wife of a Coptic priest, who escaped from her husband, she became a Muslim , and then returned to the family of origin. According to the Salafists the woman is in prison and has been forced to return to the Coptic religion.
"We must be careful not to give hasty judgements. We must wait until the situation evolves, without excluding any possibility of development " says Fr. Luciano Verdoscia to Fides , a Comboni missionary who has been working in Egypt for many years. The missionary said that "according to some analysts, the Salafis do not actually represent a very large group, but tends to expose and make themselves heard".
Fr. Verdoscia also asks not rush to the conclusion that Egypt is heading towards an inter-religious conflict". It is important to observe that in Egypt religious sensibility has always been very high. This affects both Muslims and Christians. We religious coming from outside feel it, too: one tends to withdraw into a kind of ghetto, where life is pretty good and you can do your business. What is outside of one`s community is seen as a threat from which one must be protected. Of course, history tells us that in situations like this anything can happen. Think about the West: There were persecutions of religious minorities, there was Nazism, etc. ... Therefore work must be done to overcome that logic".
Regarding the fact that the boys from Tahrir Square, the protagonists of the Egyptian Revolution, traced out a new path, Fr. Verdoscia replies: "The boys of Tahrir Square, are in fact, a different logic. The big problem is that their way of behaving is primarily via the Internet, a media that is hard to reach 40% of the population living in poverty and ignorance. In this segment of the population remains only the religious identity which is easily influenced. Of course, not everyone is influenced by extremist preachers, but also a 20-30% of the population who are attracted by extremist speeches is always a significant number of people".
"As I have said on other occasions - said Father Verdoscia - all your sins will find you out , and this is positive, because the problems must be tackled in a global way: you cannot deal with an issue and leave out others. We hope that through education and greater economic prosperity, people can start thinking differently. The young people of Tahrir Square, who come from areas with some economic opportunities and are more educated, have in fact a different mentality". (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 03/05/2011)

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