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ASIA/JAPAN- The visit of Cardinal Sarah to the earthquake area has ended, " great encouragement to the Church and for the country"

Tokyo (Agenzia Fides) –The visit of Cardinal Robert Sarah, president of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum", in Japan, which ended today was very positive. As the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Alberto Bottari de Castello told Fides "his presence was that of a friend and fellowship, able to inspire great courage and to give precious spiritual help, as well as material, to the Church and the whole nation. " The visit was widely reported by the lay Nipponese media and the whole public, emphasizes the Nuncio, " liked this gesture of solidarity and closeness very much, a clear expression of will of the Holy Father." "That is what the Japanese need today, at this stage of reconstruction and difficult recovery, after the earthquake and tsunami," notes Mgr. Bottari de Castello.
Cardinal Sarah, in his speeches on various occasions, stressed several times that his visit was "an expression of the Holy Father`s fatherhood and love," and people perceived this message very well. The Cardinal went first to the Diocese of Saitama, where he met the local Bishop and attended a prayer service on the shores of the sea, leaving flowers for the victims of the tsunami. Then, Sunday, May 15, he celebrated the Mass in the diocese of Sendai, the worst hit by the tsunami: it was a very moving celebration, as it was attended by some survivors of the earthquake and tsunami, who lost their close family: Cardinal Sarah expressed closeness and comfort, praying for them and blessing them.
The President of Cor Unm visited the affected areas observing "the extent of the devastation but also the various centers set up by Caritas Japan in Sendai: here, through the generous work of volunteers, assistance to refugees and the victims is provided, trying to help them return to their normal life. The celebration on the boat in the Bay of Matsushima was also significant, in the presence of Buddhist religious leaders and civil authorities, to commemorate the victims, with the launch of flowers into the sea. Finally, the visit represented a moment of unity and solidarity and emotional involvement for the entire Japanese Church: Cardinal Sarah in fact shared a fraternal meeting in Tokyo, with the Nipponese Bishops who thanked him for his presence and attention shown by the Holy Father. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 05/17/2011)

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