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AMERICA/CHILE-Respect for environment and energy production: the Church intervenes to avoid violent clashes

Santiago (Agenzia Fides) - The Chilean Bishops intervene to promote dialogue and at the same time to remember that with regard to energy projects, "a decision based solely on economic interests is ethically unacceptable." The Permanent Commission of the Episcopal Conference of Chile has in fact released a statement "We take care of the gifts of Creation," also sent to Fides, which wants to offer a contribution, simply by reflecting, on the major social problem Chile faces concerning the environmental policy, with the project of the construction of dams in the region of Aysen.

On May 21, the President of Chile, Sebastián Piñera, will present to Congress a report of its management, and there announces to be a great popular mobilization, the Bishops ask to avoid direct confrontation between the various protagonists. In many cities of the country, on May 21, "theme" marches have been organized for the first time: the march on behalf of environmentalists against the project of the construction of dams like HidroAysén, the march of people displaced by the quake, the march in favor of the Mapuche prisoners, students for education reform. At the end of the day, in every city, all these marches will be joined in a mass demonstration against the government and the violent intervention of the police is feared.

"As Bishops we want to encourage a serious, open and conscious dialogue, avoiding clashes and promoting healthy discernment," said the director of communications of the Episcopal Conference of Chile (ECCh), Jaime Coiro. Before the heated energy debate in recent weeks, the spokesman of ECCh said that the dilemma is "how to reconcile respect for the environment with the growing demand for energy."

Subsequently, Coiro said that a "decision based solely on economic interests is ethically unacceptable and deplorable, because it is a bleak mockery of society," and continued: "The Church does not conceive development without considering environmental sustainability", therefore "before stating that the growing demand for energy is a prerequisite for progress, it is necessary to follow a process that must be dealt with as a country, to build together a model of development."

The Bishops finally warned that "a response that humanizes the energy challenge requires dialogue in which all individuals and communities, especially those most involved and interested in the initiatives, are to participate, and their views must be taken into account in decisions that concern them. "(EC) (Agenzia Fides 19/05/2011)

> LINKS

Bishops` statement (in Spanish): http://www.fides.org/spa/documents/obispos_chile_052011.pdf:

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