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AFRICA/COTE D'IVOIRE-"Our priority is the reconciliation of souls" the national director of the PMS says to Fides

Abidjan (Agenzia Fides) - "Our priority as a Church is the reconciliation of people," says Father Alphonse N'Guessan N'Guessan, National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) of Côte d'Ivoire to Fides. On May 21, Alassane Ouattara took office as head of state 6 months after the presidential elections on 28 November 2010, lost by the outgoing president, Laurent Gbagbo, who had refused to leave the office, causing a political crisis which led to military clashes between the two factions that caused 3,000 deaths and at least one million displaced. "The violence has left much resentment in the population, as can be seen even from acts of vandalism committed by ordinary people. There are deep wounds in the soul of the people who should be treated, " says Father N'Guessan.
"As PMS we have decided to dedicate this year and all of 2012 to national reconciliation, under the motto 'live together'. A first initiative is planned for the second week of September with a meeting of three days dedicated to children, entitled 'Learning to live together'. This meeting will be held in 7 cities across the country, it wants to encourage the spirit of tolerance and communion and love of one`s neighbor, " said the National Director of the PMS.
Father N'Guessan recalls that "the material damage caused by fighting is very heavy, especially in the districts of Abidjan where the fighting was very intense, also in Abobo, Yopougon and Plateau. The latter is a bit the heart of the Ivory Coast, because the administrative, financial and economic centers of the country are concentrated there. Even the building that houses the CHM (Center Home Mission) was damaged during the fighting. "
Besides material damage, the despair of the population is added because, as pointed out by Father N'Guessan, "various economic activities have been destroyed or damaged and many people have lost their jobs. This drama is multiplied by dozens of other people, since one salary is often used to maintain large families. Then there is the problem of internally displaced persons (some of which are welcomed by the structures of the Church) and refugees in neighboring countries (Liberia, Ghana), who find it hard to return to the Ivory Coast because their house was destroyed but also because they fear reprisals and revenge, "concluded the National Director of the PMS. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 25/05/2011)

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