



ASIA/VIETNAM-More space to privates in terms of education; the Bishops to the government: the Church is ready

Hanoi (Agenzia Fides) - The Catholic Church in Vietnam is ready to contribute to the development of the country working in the field of education - a key sector for the training of young people and of the conscience- and asks the government to "open the door to religious people of good will who wish to get involved in school education ": is what the Vietnamese Bishops say in the Pastoral Letter entitled " Let's build together a civilization of love and life ", addressed to the entire people of God in Vietnam and published in Vietnamese, with the date 1 May 2011, the day after the recent General Assembly of the Episcopal Conference.

According to Fides sources in Vietnam, the Church asks for space in the field of education as the Vietnamese government has recently expressed the will to strengthen the presence of "private subjects" in the field of university education. Currently, according to official figures, there are 23 private universities in the country, 11% of the total, but this percentage could soon widen to 30%.

The Assembly of Bishops have made the move since the conclusion of the Jubilee Year, celebrated in Vietnam for the 350th anniversary of the first two Apostolic Vicariate and for the 50 years of the erection of the hierarchy in Vietnam. The text of the Pastoral Letter - now available in the official translation in Italian and other Western languages, sent to Fides - after an introductory chapter, devotes a chapter to the mystery of the Church, one to a "communion in the family of God," the last one dedicated to the proclamation of the Gospel in today's circumstances.

In particular, in the fourth chapter on evangelism, the Bishops underline that "as citizens the Catholics from Vietnam have an obligation to love and build their country." It is "an obligation to be undertaken in the spirit of the Gospel, with a prophetic voice, sincere and responsible," trying to "love in the truth" and "carry out the truth in charity."

Urging the faithful to proclaim the Gospel "with courage and perseverance," the letter focuses in particular on education, which the Church assigns particular importance, as a means to achieve the mission of evangelizing today's society.

"It is recommended that the government opens the door to the religious people of good will who aspire to be involved in school education, which is considered the key to open the path for a bright future in the country."

"The Catholic Church - the Bishops explain - can offer the educational philosophy and experience that belong to it, to train people responsible for the good of others and society as a whole." At the same time calls for all ecclesial realities "to pay maximum attention to education and the support of poor students, even in the countryside", to raise the standard of education through Catholic teachers.

"More than career preparation or 'framed' in school, education should lead people to Christ, the perfect man" underlines the text. The Church believes that "the education of the conscience is essential" and that such path should be based "on human values, cultural dialogue, in the light of the Word of God."

In addition to the theme of education, the letter emphasizes the urgency of interfaith dialogue and service to others, especially the poor and suffering. Important References are also to the family and young people (given that Vietnam is a country with a high percentage of young people): to them the Church will give great attention to specific pastoral programs, especially in view of the World Youth Day. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 05/30/2011)