



## **ASIA/SINGAPORE-Blogs and "social media" are growing, an opportunity to spread Christian values**

Singapore (Agenzia Fides) - The growth of social media and blogs in Singapore is for the local church an opportunity to spread Christian values and to witness the Gospel. As Joan O'Reilly Fix, new Director of the Social Communications of the Archdiocese of Singapore reports to Fides, "you can see positive signs of openness in communication and in the island's society: there is a greater involvement of people and more personal initiative, mainly due to social media and the web". In the past elections, held in May, for example, "people debated on political programs and candidates, exchanged opinions, and even the opposition had a say regarding social networks". In this development of communication, "the Catholic community is present and is inserted to promote the spread of Christian values".

In the diocese the Office of Social Communications was born in January 2011, which publishes a newsletter in English and Chinese, and intends to organize a diocesan Commission involving priests, religious and laity. Among the future plans, Joan O'Reilly Fix explains to Fides, is to establish a "Social Communication Award, which will reward the communicators in the world of the Internet, " available not only for Christians but to all those who are promoters of values".

Archbishop Nicholas Chia, local Archbishop, on the occasion of World Communications Day (June 5, 2011) wrote a message that retraces the contents of the Message of Benedict XVI's "Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age, and recalls: "Social media makes each of us a communicator. However, with this freedom of self-expression comes a responsibility". Our 'virtual presence', or 'digital profile', affords unlimited opportunities for spreading our faith", the Archbishop added, noting "the recognition of the missionary aspect of social communication, which represents a new type of pastoral presence on the Internet. In this infinite field the faithful are called to spread "Christian values of love, kindness, humility and charity ". Recognizing the immense potential of new media, the Archbishop concludes: " Let us pray that we make wise choices in our communications, opting always to educate and not to alienate; to build bridges and not to enclose ourselves in caves". According to official statistics in Singapore, with 5 million inhabitants, the rate of Internet penetration is 72.4%. 30% of boys between 15 and 24 years and 19% of young people between 25 and 34 years make use of social networks, and these data show a steady increase. In the city the Asian "Social Media WorldForum" meeting is held annually, the next edition is planned for the 1 and 2 September 2011. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 06/13/2011)