



ASIA/VIETNAM - " Imitate the martyrs evangelize" the path for Vietnamese Catholics

Hanoi (Fides Service) - " Imitate the martyrs and evangelize": these are the main points suggested by the Vietnamese Catholic Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, during his recent visit to North Vietnam (5-18 June). In his second trip to the country the Nuncio, appointed by Pope Benedict XVI "non-resident papal representative in Vietnam", visited 5 dioceses in the north: Bac Ninh, Lang Son, Hai Phong, Bui Chu and Thai Binh, stopping two days in each of them. The Archbishop brought the affection of the Holy Father to the faithful of 20 parishes, some small, like that of Dong Dang, on the border with China (200 faithful), others bigger, such as Ke Sat, with ancient traditions of faith (both in the diocese of Hai Phong). Throughout his journey, the Nuncio found a vibrant and active community at a pastoral level, a fact that he greatly appreciated, and wanted to repeatedly underline two main themes: The imitation of the martyrs and evangelization. In fact, he celebrated Mass in a number of Shrines dedicated to the Vietnamese martyrs, "to stress the need for reconciliation, the message that comes from martyrdom", underlined a Vietnamese priest to Fides.

In fact, in the Mass celebrated in the diocese of Bac Ninh, the Nuncio said: "Many have become Christians due to martyrdom, because the blood of the martyrs does not cry out for revenge but brings reconciliation. Martyrdom was not a conviction, but insists that love is stronger than violence and division, creating a new community. In fact, thanks to the blood of the martyrs, the Church was born in Bac Ninh".

Another recurrent theme was the announcement of the Gospel: Archbishop Girelli invited each Vietnamese faithful to commit themselves to proclaim the Good News in his life, asking the bishops and priests to be "the first, patients, evangelists". He then called the religious "special missionaries", inviting them to live faithfully the professed vows, showing their love for Christ through the special gift of their lives. To lay people he recalled the "mission in the world and in society", where their task is to have strong faith and proclaim the testimony of life. Special attention was paid to young people. The Nuncio urged each of them to ask a question, decisive for the construction of the future: "What can I do for Christ, for the Church, for my country, to witness peace and justice and love?". He then invited them to bring the Gospel to their peers and "in every corner of the world".

The Nuncio's visit, local sources of Fides say, aroused a good impression among the faithful, raising their certainty of being in communion with the universal Church, and leaving a trail of joy and hope for the future. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 22/06/2011)