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EUROPE/ITALY - "In the land loved by Saint Justin De Jacobis 12 million risk dying of hunger", Prefect Filoni recalled in his homily for the 150 years since the death of the evangelizing Saint of Ethiopia

Rome (Fides Service) - "This land was fertilized by the heroic witness of the life of St. Justin De Jacobis" recalled His Exc. Mgr. Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, in the homily of the Mass that concluded the series of celebrations for the 150th anniversary since the death of St. Justin De Jacobis, organized by the diocese of Melfi-Rapolla-Venosa (see Fides 29 and July 30, 2011), which was celebrated yesterday, Sunday, July 31 at St. Fele birthplace of the Saint.
"It was correct-underlined Mgr. Filoni-to commemorate the exemplary figure of the missionary of San Giustino who, as the Servant of God Pope Paul VI said on Oct. 26 on the occasion of his canonization, " he has only one fault, that of being known very little ".
The Prefect of "Propaganda Fide" traced a biography of the Saint, pointing out that, after he went to Ethiopia in response to an appeal launched by Propaganda Fide, the Religious Lazarist had learned to love "the Abyssinian people, their culture and their traditions. He devotes himself to the study of ghe'ez, the liturgical language essential to understand the sacred texts of ancient Ethiopian theological tradition".
Ten years after the start of his mission in Ethiopia, St. Justin becomes Vicar Apostolic of Abyssinia and was ordained a Bishop by Cardinal Guglielmo Massaia. In his pastoral activity, as mentioned by Mgr. Filoni, St. Justin, "as well as creating a seminary for the native clergy, he gives life to many mission stations. To the evangelization of the city he prefers the rural and depressed areas of the country, populated by the poorest and most humble".
Prefect Filoni also recalled "the lifestyle of the itinerant missionary" of the saint who traveled with a small tent from one village to another, and the hardships to which he was subjected as a result of the persecution of Negus Theodore II ("He suffers hunger, thirst, and undergoes prison").
The celebrations for the 150 years since the death of the Holy Evangelist of Ethiopia took place while the drama of the Ethiopian people and other countries in the Horn of Africa (in particular in Somalia) continues. "Poverty continues to knock on the doors of history", remarked Mgr. Filoni. " Pope Benedict XVI has been saying it for weeks (who launched a new appeal yesterday during the Angelus), recalling that nearly 12 million Africans risk dying due to famine and drought that has hit the Horn of Africa. This was the land much loved by Saint Justin De Jacobis".
"To allow everyone to sit around the table of the Planet, children of a world that is often wasteful to share their resources with those who undergo the humiliation of malnutrition is required", said Mgr. Filoni.
The Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples concluded his homily by entrusting to the faithful of the Diocese and in particular those of San Fele, "the duty not only to live the values of the faith preached by Your Citizen Saint, but also to promote them as a missionary gesture, today, in a society that often forgets them". (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 08/01/2011)

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