



ASIA/INDIA - The Church is cautious with regards to Hazare: "the fight against corruption is right, but attention to exploitation. Let's go ahead with dialogue"

Vasai (Fides Service) - "The fight against corruption is inviolable: the phenomenon is pervasive and a legislation to combat it is urgent. But with regards to the movement of Anna Hazare, caution is required, as Hazare, honest and sincere person, unknowingly exposes himself to political exploitation "This is what His Exc. Mgr. Felix Machado, Bishop of Vasai, and former undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue says in an interview with Fides, expressing himself on social mobilization and on the activist's fasting (he has reached the ninth day) which is shaking and dividing the nation. Mgr. Machado is Hazare's countryman (both are from the state of Maharashtra), he personally knows and respects him as a man "sincerely committed for the good of India". But recalls that "corruption is everyone's responsibility", he hopes that "we walk the path of dialogue between government and civil society", noting that "one man cannot take a whole country hostage", because "it is always a duty to respect the democratic means and the Constitution, for any reform or action concerning national life".

Excellency what do you think about social mobilization against corruption?

The issues raised by civil society are indisputable. In India, we are victims of pervasive corruption, from the highest echelons of politics up to the citizens. Everyone is involved. Even the person who pays a bribe is complicit in corruption. It is a very serious problem and people are tired of this, which involves every aspect of social life. Therefore, a decisive intervention to counter it is urgent and we are happy that today the fight against corruption is a priority in the national policy agenda.

What is your opinion on the movement created around Anna Hazare?

I personally know Hazare, one of my fellow countrymen and speaks my language, Marathi. Hazare is a simple and honest person, I respect him as he is sincerely committed to the good of the country and because he has dedicated his life to social promotion, to the fair rights and values. The problem, however, is that in the movement there are opportunists. Hazare is not a leader like Gandhi and he exposes himself, even inadvertently, at the risk of being exploited. Behind him there are groups and lobbies that seek power through shortcuts that do not have anything to do with democracy. Therefore, we must pay the utmost attention to how the situation evolves.

What does the Church propose? Does it agree with the proposal of an "independent anti-corruption authority", wanted by Hazare?

The Indian Church is concerned about the serious problem of corruption. It is clear that the battle is right and that the enemy, corruption is real. The Church has always made it clear that corruption is a disease of the country, which is against the morality of the person. We want social values as truth, honesty, transparency, sincerity in how everyone acts to prevail. But, like many intellectuals, columnists, writers, the Church is puzzled by the method chosen by Hazare's movement, which seems to make way to 'anti-politics' and is not very clear where it wants to go. The Church supports the Constitution, values and democratic rules, legitimate conventions and institutional channels through which to achieve political and social reform. India is a very democratic country and just one person, even if honest and in good faith, cannot take hostage the entire nation.

What do you hope for today?

We hope that the path towards peaceful dialogue between the government and Hazare's group is taken up. The government is ready, Hazare should not be too strict, we believe he should negotiate without insisting on a road that can be dangerous for the democratic structures. At the beginning, the government did not pay much attention to the anti-corruption movement, which has since grown a lot. Today there is more awareness, and it is right to reach an agreement. Today the leaders of all political parties in Parliament gather to establish a common platform, and Prime Minister Singh has written to Hazare, expressing willingness to meet. I hope a healthy dialogue for the good of the nation begins. Recalling that only through individual commitment and a clean moral life, on behalf of every citizen, the country will change.

(PA) (Agenzia Fides 24/08/2011)