



ASIA/JAPAN - The Church asks the new Prime Minister Noda "more collaboration between state and religions"

Niigata (Agenzia Fides) - Yoshihiko Noda, the newly elected Prime Minister of Japan, "is a young politician, and this gives us much hope, especially in the present difficulties", says His Exc. Mgr. Isao Kikuchi, Svd, Bishop of Niigata and President of Caritas Japan. "Former Prime Minister Kan was not so quick in managing the rescue operations in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami. We hope that the new Premier shows stronger leadership in organizing the reconstruction and recovery of the country, after the tragedy that struck us – underlines the Bishop - even relying more and recognizing the work of religious communities".

"Caritas –he continues - has worked hard and has opened a center for humanitarian aid in the diocese of Sendai, the hardest hit by the tsunami. We have sent many volunteers and, after this painful experience, the name of Caritas is highly respected and appreciated, people have a good opinion of us".

On the management of aid, "we have worked closely with local civilian authorities, but we have not had direct contacts with the national government", explains the Bishop. "therefore the challenge today – notes Mgr. Isao Kikuchi - could be to establish closer contacts with the national government. The point is that the Japanese executive keeps its distance from religious organizations. This was established after the Second World War, to avoid past mistakes, when State leaders were very influenced by Shinto belief. But now times have changed: I believe that through humanitarian organizations such as Caritas and NGOs of religious inspiration, one can start a stable and fruitful collaboration between government and religious communities, for the good of the population and the entire country".

Yoshihiko Noda, 54, was today elected the new Prime Minister of Japan from the Japanese Lower House of Parliament. Yesterday Noda, a former Finance minister, was elected president of the Democratic Party, while on August 26 last year former Prime Minister Naoto Kan had resigned in the wake of criticism for the management of the earthquake of 11 March and the ensuing nuclear crisis. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 30/08/2011)