



AFRICA/LIBERIA - The Liberians voted en masse, the Bishops hope ethnic divisions can be overcome

Monrovia (Agenzia Fides) - The electoral process to elect the new President of Liberia and the renewal of the House of Representatives and the Senate were carried out peacefully (see Fides 11/10/2011). Voters flocked to the polls despite the heavy rain, and were all neatly in a row. With a view to the elections, last August 7 the Catholic Bishops of Liberia had published a Pastoral Letter calling on the faithful to vote, because "our country is desperately trying to establish the democratic process".

A democratic process that needs mature voters, "who have a duty - wrote the Bishops - to learn about the needs of the Country, to assess the status of the candidates' service in Liberia and abroad, in order to determine whether the person who wants to be a member of the House of Representatives, the Senate or the President of the country, is able to perform his duty as a public servant, and in the first place put the Country beyond the interests of factions, groups, ethnic or party affiliation".

In the Pastoral Letter, social differences to be overcome to finally bring peace to the country after decades of civil war are also stressed. These include differences in social class, with a good portion of the population living below the poverty line, and a small percentage of wealthy individuals, while an embryonic middle class is forming. "A large number of Liberians continue to think first as belonging to an ethnic group and then as a member of the Liberian nation, it should be the opposite", write the Bishops. Other evils denounced by the Bishops are corruption, the scourge of ritual killings and the high rate of illiteracy. In concluding their letter, the Bishops recommend voting and putting Liberia in the first place, before the parties for whom one votes. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 12/10/2011)