



## **AFRICA/ANGOLA - "Angola is a country in rapid transformation; poverty, sects and immigrants are a challenge and an opportunity for the Church" says the Bishop of Caxito to Fides**

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - "Our diocese is young, since it was established on June 6, 2007, derived from one part of the Archdiocese's territory of Luanda. It spreads out over two provinces of Angola, Luanda and Bengo, of which Caxito is the capital" says His Exc. Mgr. Antonio Francisco Jaca, Bishop of Caxito, who gave some answers to Fides with regards to the social and pastoral situation.

What are the pastoral challenges that the local church must face?

Among our pastoral challenges there is the material and spiritual poverty of the population. As regards to the first, the territory of the diocese is largely rural, and the population lives on subsistence farming. As regards to the second, the challenge is witchcraft and the spread of sects. Witchcraft is a cultural phenomenon that concerns the entire Country, and in Caxito it is largely practiced just like other parts of Angola. The sects instead are spreading rapidly taking advantage of the high mobility of the Angolan population, who by the end of the civil war, in 2002, is largely urbanized. In the new areas there are no parishes and sects are stepping forward launching their spiritual proposals. Our priority is therefore the formation of catechists, who are the backbone of our ministry. The formation of new priests is also important because we have a good number of vocations, but future priests have to be formed with care. We try to integrate the pastoral care of families and youth, with that of the formation of the laity and priests, because we see the Church as a large family where all the components work together for the good of all.

In terms of human development, in almost every parish of the diocese there is a school. Overall, in our diocese there are 35,000 students studying in Catholic schools, primary and secondary.

In addition to the presence of the sects, are you witnessing the spread of other religions in Angola ?

In Angola there are about 800 sects, most of which come from the Democratic Republic of Congo and the rest from Brazil. We are also witnessing a growing Muslim presence in the Country. The Islamic religion has not yet been recognized by the State, but thanks to the increase of immigrants from West Africa, the number of believers has increased greatly. Next to them we have Muslim immigrants from Lebanon, Egypt and Pakistan. This is a challenge at a pastoral level, especially in the case of intermarriages between Muslim and Angolan Catholic women.

Besides these, are there other foreign communities in Angola?

There are numerous foreign communities in the Country. The Chinese are distributed a bit everywhere, beside them are other Asians such as Vietnamese. Then there are Brazilians and Portuguese, but also French and other Europeans. This is also a pastoral challenge, because many immigrants come to our Masses, but do not speak Portuguese. In Luanda, for example, there are celebrations in English and French, to meet the needs of foreign communities.

In conclusion, is Angola a country which is rapidly changing ....

Certainly, Angola is experiencing a strong social transformation. This is demonstrated by the presence of immigrant communities. The Chinese are here to stay, they will not go away once the construction of large infrastructure projects by companies of their Country have been completed. Many have started businesses and are integrating into the Angolan society. Then there are still about 40,000 Angolans who have lost their refugee status in neighboring countries and who are returning home. These people need to be reintegrated into the Angolan

society. These are all challenges that the Church will have to face. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 18/10/2011)