



ASIA/INDONESIA - In Flores there is "freedom of conversion from Islam to Christianity", notes the Bishop of Ruteng

Ruteng (Agenzia Fides) - Compared to other countries of the Islamic world, where conversion from Islam to another religion is punishable even by death "in Flores, the cradle of Christianity in Indonesia, in the diocese of Ruteng, there is, every year, a small group of Muslims, 5-6 people, who convert to Christianity and are baptized. But this does not raise a scandal nor any backlash": this is what His Exc. Mgr. Hubertus Leteng, Bishop of Ruteng tells Fides. His diocese covers an area with three cities, with over 700 thousand Catholics, who account for 93% of the total population.

"Flores – notes the Bishop - is impervious to forms of fundamentalism that run across Indonesia. For historical, geographical and cultural reasons, the local population has always been open to the proclamation of the Gospel". Moreover, notes Mgr. Leteng, "in Indonesia, a country with a Muslim majority, Flores is not seen as a foreign body: it is a witness to the typical pluralism of the nation and the embodiment of the principles of Pancasila, which are at the basis of the State".

The Bishop notes that there are "attempts to trigger an inter-religious conflict, on behalf of provocateurs, but the attitude of religious leaders, civil authorities and the common people has always meant that such attempts fail". The mission of the Church in Flores, he concludes, vigorously continues through the abundant vocations: for example the Bishop cites more than 800 aspiring nuns, who in his diocese carry out a valuable pastoral service in parishes, schools and communities. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 18/10/2011)