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ASIA/NORTH KOREA - The Korean bishops: "The death of Kim Jong-il may be the beginning of a turning point, for reunification"

Seoul (Agenzia Fides) - "The death of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il may be the beginning of a turning point for the path of reunification of the Koreas. We hope that the Lord gives light and strength to the North Korean brothers so that there is a return for a policy focused on dialogue, peace, reconciliation": this is what was said to Fides by His Exc. Mgr. Peter Kang, Bishop of Cheju and President of the Episcopal Conference of South Korea, commenting on the death of dictator Kim Jong-il, replaced by the designated successor, his 30-year-old son Kim Jong-un.

Mgr. Peter Kang explains to Fides: "We did not expect such an event. We hope that this will become a reason to develop a path of reunification. We do not know in detail the current political situation in North Korea. There is also the possibility that there is a settling time, before having a defined stability, because the new leader Kim Jong-un is very young, only 30 years old, he has no political experience and does not seem to have the Korean people's confidence". The Bishop continues: "No one knows him. He is a leader who has suddenly appeared. Our hopes are always towards the beginning of a journey of peace and reconciliation. This event could be a sign that the Lord wants a fundamental transformation in the country".

According to rev. Kim Tea Sung, Deputy Secretary General of the "Korean Conference of Religion for Peace" (KCRP), "the country's future is a very delicate issue now." "The death of the dear leader - Rev. Kim explains to Fides. - could leave a void and create very serious problems at a social and political level. We hope that in the North there is no conflict, which would bring further suffering to the people".

Rev. Kim hopes to continue the relationship of exchange and dialogue between religious leaders of the North and South: "We have no official reaction yet from the North or the South. We have scheduled a meeting, most probably to be held on December 22 in North Korea, to prepare the arrival in the south of a delegation of religious leaders from the North. The trip should take place next year, as part of a path of bilateral meetings, after the visit of the religious leaders from the South, who went to Pyongynag in September 2011. Our hope is that this exchange process continues, even with the new political leadership in the North, to reinforce a climate of cordiality and friendship between North and South Korea". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 19/12/2011)

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