



AFRICA/MADAGASCAR - "I have lived the experience of 5 cyclones, but this was worse than the others": the Bishop of Moramanga traces to Fides an initial toll of the damage

Moramanga (Agenzia Fides) - "The rivers have risen and in many parts of the city there were severe floods, the crops have been completely lost, in some villages epidemics are feared, many houses (huts or similar) have collapsed, a church was unroofed and the roofs of several schools have flown away": these are the first data sent to Fides by Archbishop Gaetano Di Pierro, Bishop of Moramanga, where the damage caused by the cyclone Giovanna, on 13 February, are very serious (see Fides 14/02/2012; 16/02/2012).

"From 8pm to 10pm it started drizzling which gradually increased in intensity. At about 10.30pm the wind started shortly after it became violent – says the Bishop -. Now electricity is interrupted and the city fell into darkness. Unable to get in touch with someone, because the telephone lines are not working. One could not see anything but felt that the trees were uprooted as well as metal sheets of many houses. One could not do anything".

"It was an endless night, I spent the whole night praying, thinking of the poor people living in huts - refers Bishop Di Pierro -. About six o'clock in the morning, we saw the disasters in the homes, the Cathedral, the Salle d'oeuvre, the Pastor's house (partly uncovered), but it was still impossible to go out because of the violent wind. At about 8.30, the wind calmed down, but the rain continued. Finally the Little Daughters of the Sacred Heart arrived, who brought the first news of their community: part of the roof was blown away and fell on a house nearby, wounding a young man who was sleeping in his bed. Luckily I managed to take him to hospital. One man found in a neighborhood of the city was reported dead."

Monsignor Di Pierro adds other information on the damage to the Catholic structures in Moramanga. The Carmelite Fathers of the parish of Ambarilava saw their great roof church torn off: the roof plates literally rolled up. The Salesian Sisters complain that the roofs of their kindergarten and fixed podium for the event were shattered. The Sisters Servants of Santa Teresa saw many of their trees uprooted by the fury of the wind, and one fell also on their wall. The Little Daughters of the Servants of the Sacred Heart also reported damage to their hospital. In all these communities crops have been destroyed. The Bishop managed to get in touch with some Centers of missionary districts: "It seems that the town of Andasibe has been seriously damaged due to the flooding of a river and the fall of many trees, several houses were destroyed and 6 deaths were registered. The school in Mahasoia, in the district missionary of Anjiro was literally uncovered. The same thing happened also in the Protestant church in Amboasary, newly built, and the state school in Andaingo".

"One really encouraging thing was to see the people helping to 'heal wounds' caused by the passage of this cyclone, without waiting for aid. In 36 years here in Madagascar, I had already had the experience of 5 cyclones, but this was the first which arrived during the night ... and was worst than the others", concludes Bishop Di Pierro who trusts in everyone's prayers. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 17/2/2012)