



## **ASIA/EAST TIMOR-Catholics on the eve of the election: peace, justice, prayer for the country's future**

Dili (Agenzia Fides) - To pray and work for a future of justice and peace in East Timor: with this spirit the faithful Catholics of East Timor took to the streets to launch a message to the nation on the eve of the presidential elections to be held on March 17. The atmosphere on the eve is tense after bombs were found outside the offices of the Commission for the Elections. The nation, where in June 2012 Parliamentary elections will also be held, was shaken by violent riots during the elections of 2006.

As reported by the local Church to Fides, the event, titled "Change your heart, change the world", was organized on February 21 by the "Conference of Religious Superiors of East Timor" in collaboration with the Commission "Justice and Peace" of the Diocese of Dili, and involved priests, religious, nuns, laity, students of the seven parishes of Dili.

"A peaceful and silent procession, characterized by prayer throughout the journey, led by the Bishop of Dili, Mgr. Alberto Ricardo da Silva, which crossed the city to give a testimony of faith, peace, hope," a local priest told Fides. The Bishop, calling for peace in East Timor, asked all the faithful to "pray and work for the success of the elections." "To do this, in the sense to change the external reality and society, internal conversion is necessary, that of the heart," he remarked. The participants at the conclusion of the event said the "Prayer for the general elections in 2012," which will be read in the three dioceses of the East Timor until June 12, the day of the parliamentary elections.

According to a Report sent to Fides by the think-tank "International Crisis Group" (ICG), the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in East Timor will be "an important step in the consolidation of internal stability" and "an opportunity to leave behind a violent past." The greatest risk for the country, the ICG noted, "is the almost complete impunity for political violence." "Candidates, must clearly say that these crimes will no longer be tolerated." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 25/2/2012)