



ASIA/NEPAL - The Apostolic Vicar: "Less corruption, more unity: urgent need to finalize the Constitution"

Kathmandu (Agenzia Fides) - The political future of Nepal could be rosy if "corruption and patronage politics are effectively contrasted, if the forces come together for the common good. It is necessary to overcome the impasse and agree to finish work on the new Constitution, which protects the rights and freedoms of everyone": is what the Apostolic Vicar of Nepal, Archbishop Anthony Sharma, SJ says in an interview with Fides, while the constituent assembly is engaged in the drafting of the Constitution. The Charter, after numerous delays, should be completed by the end of May 2012, redesigning the architecture of the state and fundamental rules.

As far as the political situation is concerned, the Vicar notes that "the new Prime Minister, Baburam Bhattarai, has had a Christian education, he is a person of sound moral values, and this bodes well for the future of the nation." But, he continues, "the problem is the coalition that governs, all too composite, and the excessive fragmentation of political forces: in a small country we have over 600 MPs and a huge executive." Political action, notes Mgr. Sharma, is often marred by "corruption and cronyism," while "civil society complains that little public money ends up in development, labor, employment, aid to families." The Prime Minister is conditioned - continues the Vicar's analysis - "because all political parties play into their hands, but the purpose seems to be power and not the commitment to improving the people's conditions. The lust for power and wealth is the most serious handicap for the country".

An urgent step in this phase, according to the Bishop, is to finalize the drafting of the Constitution. "The work is hampered by the demands of the parties, conditioned by small groups: everyone wants to carve out a small space of power. There are three more months, but many are pessimistic. The Supreme Court has determined that there will be new extensions. If the work is not completed, a phase of great uncertainty and instability for the country would open: we are very worried. People have lost their patience and ask for a shake of consciousness to politics." In the Constitution, the Vicar recalls, "the Church has called for religious freedom, secularism, respect for fundamental human rights".

This phase of social and political impasse, he concludes, "has a strong impact on society. The prices are very high, wages are low, poverty and underdevelopment afflict the people. The Church is involved in social work, together with local NGOs, especially for women and children, often in areas where government assistance programs do not exist". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 14/3/2012)