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AMERICA/CHILE - "The Feast of Quasimodo": thousands of Catholics accompany Christ-Eucharist to give communion to the infirm

Santiago (Agenzia Fides) - Thousands of Chilean Catholics take to the streets of cities and small rural communities yesterday to "run with Christ" (Spanish expression used in Chile, which means "to accompany Christ-Eucharist") during the so-called " feast of Quasimodo, "which has taken place for 400 years in the central region of Chile. The event, which was presided by the Archbishop of Santiago, His Exc. Mgr. Ricardo Ezzati, has its origin in a recommendation of the Council of Trent , which exhorted the priests to give communion to the infirm and the elderly on the Sunday following Easter.
Mgr. Ezzati attended the ceremony which was held in the town of Colina, in the north of Santiago, where the caravan, consisting of about 4,500 men on horseback, is one of the largest in the country. Parades were also held in the cities of Quilicura, Renca, Quinta Normal, Puente Alto, Maipu and Penalolen, whose mayor, participated actively mounting a horse.
The note sent to Fides, which explains that the name "Quasimodo" derives from the Latin text of the antiphon entrance of the Second Sunday of Easter: "Quasi modo geniti infanti ..." (As new-born babies), is from the first letter of the apostle Peter. The tradition began in colonial times, when the priests, in their moves to give communion to the infirm, were often victims of bandits who robbed them also of the ciborium containing the Eucharist. So groups of men on horseback began to accompany them to protect them.
During his visit to Chile in 1997, Pope John Paul II called this holiday "a treasure of the people of God." Over the years, men on horseback have been joined by groups of faithful on small carts drawn by horses or bicycles, wearing colorful costumes. Even their vehicles are abundantly decorated with colored paper and flower garlands. In many towns and villages, the fraternities of "quasimodistas" were born who prepare themselves all year round for this occasion. The priest is led on a horse drawn carriage to visit the houses of all the sick of the parish. Participants do not wear hats and cover their heads only with white and yellow handkerchiefs, a sign of respect for the Eucharist. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 16/4/2012)

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