



## **AFRICA/BURUNDI - Independence of Burundi is a treasure to be made fruitful: the message of the Bishops for 50 years of independence**

Bujumbura (Agenzia Fides) - "National independence is a gift of God and it is up to us to bear fruit." This is the meaning of the message of the Bishops of Burundi read in all churches on Sunday 1 July, for the 50th anniversary of independence of the Country.

In the message, sent to Fides Agency, it recalls that the Church has helped to spread the idea of independence by teaching that all men, blacks and whites are equal before God.

"Even the appointment of the first Bishop of Burundi, Mgr. Michel Ntuyahaga, as well as the erection of the diocese in 1959, was a sign that the time had come for the independence of Burundi," write the Bishops.

Thanks to independence, it is stressed in the Message that the Burundians have received many gifts: the right of citizenship and free speech in the concert of nations, political and administrative autonomy, organizational freedom in the economic and cultural field. "Besides - add the Bishops - when we give thanks to God, we cannot hide the fact that in some respects, we have acted as the servant who received one talent but has hidden it under earth, instead of making the most of it". Instead of advancing democracy and national economy, in fact, "we Burundians place primary emphasis on ethnicity, regionalism, social background and affiliations to political parties," write the Bishops, with a clear reference to several civil wars that rocked the early decades of independence.

"The wars that have followed have brought enormous destruction and the consequence is that now our Country is among the poorest Countries in the world," says the message. To overcome this situation the Bishops emphasize the need to consolidate democracy (which is not just regular elections but also the opportunity for all citizens to make their voices heard) and boost economic development.

"As you have seen, we are still far from having made fruitful the treasure of Independence that God gave us. There is still a long way to go. But there is no need to despair, the important thing is to start in the right direction. We can always make fruitful, for God and for Burundians, the treasures that the Lord has entrusted to us, if we work with determination to serve our country ", conclude the bishops. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 04/07/2012)