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ASIA/MONGOLIA - From zero to 800 faithful: a booming community, working for the good of society

Ulaan Bataar (Agenzia Fides) - Sowing the Gospel, committed to the common good, to fight against poverty, contributing to human, cultural, moral and spiritual development: with these criteria, the Church in Mongolia is preparing her future, 20 years since her birth in the country. This is what is said, in a pastoral letter entitled "Celebrating 20 years of Catholic presence in Mongolia," by His Exc. Mgr. Wenceslao Padilla, Apostolic Prefect. The Letter sent to Fides, traces a historical and contemporary picture of the local church in Mongolia.
After the fall of the communist regime in 1991 - recalls the Prefect - there were no Catholics in Mongolia. In 1992, with the new Constitution which recognizes religious freedom, the first "Missino sui iuris" was established and diplomatic relations between Mongolia and the Holy See were stricken up. In that year the first three pioneer missionaries arrived in the country, who rebuilt houses of worship and helped the population, renewing the process of evangelization. In 2006 Catholics there were about 600, including 350 native Mongolians. Today's missionaries are 81 from 22 different nationalities and 13 religious institutes or different groups. After 20 years of evangelization, the faithful Catholics who are baptized are now 835 and many others are still preparing for baptism. The country's first vocation was born in 2008 and two young Mongolians are now in one of the most important seminars in South Korea, at the Catholic University in Daejeon, pursuing the path and formation for priesthood.
With the increase of church personnel (missionaries and local collaborators), pastoral, social, developmental, educational, charitable and humanitarian works have flourished. The Catholic mission now has 2 Centers for street children, a home for the elderly, 2 Montessori kindergartens, 2 primary schools, a center for handicapped children, a technical school. It has also created 3 libraries with study rooms and computer facilities, a hostel for university students, equipped with modern facilities, various centers for youth activities. Two farms are in full operation in rural areas, with programs that help rural communities, a doctor’s office and a clinic. Caritas Mongolia, concludes Mgr. Padilla pursues in water supply programs, building homes for the poor, sustainable agriculture, food security, social development, fighting human trafficking. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 07/07/2012)

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