



## **AMERICA/VENEZUELA - The mediating Church of reconciliation: conclusion of the 98th Assembly of Bishops**

Caracas (Agenzia Fides) - The 98th Assembly of the Episcopal Conference of Venezuela (CEV) ends today, July 12. The words that were our guide in the work are those of His Exc. Mgr. Diego Padron, Archbishop of Cumanà and President of the CEV, who pointed out that the primary task for the Church in Venezuela is to "be the mediator of reconciliation and to continue her service to the people, without distinction." Mgr. Padron also stressed the Church's attention towards national life, to provide answers to questions about the fate of Venezuela: its democracy, its freedom and its security. In the opening speech of the work, the President of the CEV noticed the climate of "secrecy" with which one wants to manage some aspects of country's life, such as the President's health and the real situation of prisons. During this meeting, the Episcopal Conference addressed the issues of the new evangelization of Christian education and socio-political commitment. Mgr. Padron then said he hopes that election day in October can be lived "in a climate of respect and justice, so that the electoral process is fair and transparent". Venezuela will have to elect a new President for the period between 2013-2019 among 7 candidates, although the 2 who have a better chance are Chavez and Henrique Capriles.

In the context of the Assembly of the CEV, on July 10 a meeting was held between the authorities of the Episcopal Conference and the authorities of the government, represented by the Vice President of the Republic, Elías Jaua, and by the ministers of Interior and Justice, Tarek El Aissami and Youth, Mari Pili Hernandez. The Government thus sought to emphasize the value of the Church for the Venezuelan society, and thanked the Church for the work carried out especially against violence. On behalf of the Bishops, His Exc. Mgr. Mario Moronta, Vice President of CEV, reminded the government the emergencies affecting the country and the possibility to work together to resolve them.

According to data collected by Fides Agency, with this meeting, the government resumed a relationship of dialogue and collaboration with the Church. During the 13 years of Chavez government in fact the climate between the government and the Church was very tense, to the point that in 2010 there was a breaking-point, when President Chavez qualified the Bishops as "cavemen" after they publicly expressed their support for Cardinal Jorge Urosa Savino, who had accused Chavez of wanting to violate the Constitution (see Fides 28/12/2010). President Chavez then ordered a review of the Church-State agreement on the financing of social works, but the measure was not followed and on 27 April, the government gave 294 million dollars to the Catholic schools network that welcome more than 500,000 students. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 12/7/2012)