



## **VATICAN - Cardinal Filoni to priests: "The fruitfulness of your priestly ministry and the effectiveness of your pastoral action essentially depend on your communion with Christ"**

Bangui (Agenzia Fides) – On meeting the priests of the Central African Republic at the Centre Jean XXIII in Bangui on July 24, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Cardinal Fernando Filoni, focused his attention on the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Africae Munus": "As Pope Benedict XVI points out, you have, as close and necessary collaborators of the Bishop, the responsibility to continue the work of evangelization. This is your primary priestly mission that the Church expects of you. To better fulfill this mission, it is important to further deepen, above all, your prayer life, your inner life. The fruitfulness of your priestly ministry and the effectiveness of your pastoral activity essentially depend on your communion with Christ".

The Prefect of the Congregation therefore emphasized the duty of every priest to deepen his permanent formation, which is at the same time both spiritual and intellectual: "gain familiarity with the Scriptures, the Word of God which you meditate every day and explain to the faithful. Deepen your knowledge of the Catechism, the documents of the Magisterium and of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Thus you will be able, in turn, to form members of the Christian community of which you are responsible, so that they may become true disciples and witnesses of Christ."

Even lay people need proper spiritual and intellectual formation to participate actively in the mission of the Church, and it is up to their pastors, priests to offer it. This is the reason why the Cardinal urged: "It is appropriate to promote biblical sessions, conferences-debates on major issues of faith, moments of catechesis for young people. Form the faithful so that they can better respond to issues raised in different areas, especially in relation to sects, which are a real pastoral challenge. Also invest in formation and accompanying the responsible in society. Develop family support, especially by encouraging their Christian education. Help families to fully carry out their role as 'the basic cell of the Church and society'."

After having urged priests not to forget that the best testimony that can convey is "their brotherhood and their life of communion", in obedience to their Bishop, in humility and brotherly love, the Prefect of the Congregation stressed that this same testimony is to be carried out by the local Church to the Central African society. He then concluded by thanking the priests who spend all their energy spreading the Kingdom of God on Central African land, always encouraging them to hope, despite difficult situations and difficult events that need to rekindle in them "the flame and the missionary zeal to proclaim the Gospel with boldness, source of liberation and salvation." (SL) (Agenzia Fides 25/7/2012)