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AFRICA/ZAMBIA - 130 priests call for the revocation of Fr.Viateur's deportation

Lusaka (Agenzia Fides) - The government is taking into serious consideration the withdrawal of Fr. Viateur Banyangandora's deportation, the priest of Rwandese origin expelled by the authorities of Zambia at the end of July. This is what 130 diocesan priests ask for in a statement released on the occasion of the National Conference of the Association of Zambian Diocesan Catholic Clergy (AZADCC), which ended today, August 9.
In the document, sent to Fides Agency, the diocesan priests agree with what was written by His Exc. Mgr. George Cosmas Zumaire Lungu, Bishop of Chipata, in a message that will be read in all parishes of the diocese on Sunday, August 12 (see Fides 07/08/2012).
"Fr. Viateur was ordained in 2004, in the diocese of Chipata in which he served. Many of us have studied, lived and worked with him. We know he is a good priest and a man of peace and integrity " is what is stated in the declaration.
The priests claim to be "surprised and not satisfied" by the reasons presented by the government to justify Fr. Viateur's deportation, and reveal that they have received "an official statement from the diocese Ruhengeri in Rwanda, that Fr. Viateur should not respond to any inquiry by the government of that Country. "
Based on the foregoing considerations, it therefore calls for the government to reconsider the priest's deportation. The priests also ask the authorities to join the Church to promote harmony in the Church-State relations, and launch an appeal so that they face the real problems affecting the poor, such as the price of corn, cotton and other agricultural products. Fr. Viateur was expelled after a sermon in which he tackled the problem of the very low price of cotton, which threatens the ability of farmers to obtain a minimum income for subsistence.
"We implore the Catholic community and the priests of the diocese of Chipata, and all people of good will, to remain calm, peace and to pray during this time of waiting for Fr. Viateur's return. May the good Lord bless us and guide us through the intercession of Mary our Mother," the statement concludes. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 09/08/2012)

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