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ASIA/LEBANON - Christian political leaders will treasure the Pope's words: this is Fr. Paul Karam'a desire, National Director of the PMS

Beirut (Agenzia Fides) - "All political leaders appear to have agreed on a tacit suspension of their permanent conflicts, to make room for the Pope's arrival and listen to what He has to tell us". The is what Fr. Paul Karam, National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) in Lebanon confides to Fides Agency. According to the young priest, "it is a healthy pause for reflection, and we all need it: we need open spaces to a political procedure that is really concerned for the common good of the people, and not just a fight among factions to prevail over others". Father Federico Lombardi, director of the Vatican Press Office, reiterated that Benedict XVI is not traveling to Lebanon "as a powerful political leader." Simply for this reason his visit can show new paths also to civil life in common: "With his simple and essential teachings – explains Fr. Karam - Pope Benedict XVI shows everyone that dialogue is always possible."
The geopolitical position puts Lebanon at the center of excrutiating tensions. Fr. Karam recognizes: "We are in the middle between Syria and Israel. We could be a Country of peace, and instead we always pay for the political and military plans decided elsewhere. The big games in the world hammer away at our small territory. But even for this, as John Paul II said, Lebanon is a message: it can show everyone that here dialogue makes the coexistence of different groups and interests possible."
Father Karam hopes that especially Christian political leaders listen and treasure the Pope's words "Their vocation is simply to bear witness to the baptism in their initiatives, acting as children of God and always following what Jesus taught us with respect to political and civil institutions: we must give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. " In excruciating scenarios in the Middle East, the mission that the Pope will entrust to Christians is to be a sign of reconciliation. "For this - said Fr.Karam - the Church can never appear as a party. The Church is for everyone and wants the good of all. Their membership in the Church, even for Christian leaders, can never be manipulated and be presented as belonging to a political bloc in the fight with other factions. Who does this, sells the name of Christ and of the Church for their poor trade of power."
The fidelity to this vocation, according Fr.Karam can be made realistic and far-sighted even before the clashes of power that shake the Middle East. "In Syria - notes Fr. Karam - there was a dictatorial regime. But so far, the choice of armed conflict has produced only deaths, displaced, homes destroyed, so much suffering. Peace is based on justice. If there is no justice in the Middle East there will be no peace. And one will continue to hover between authoritarian regimes and theocracies." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 13/09/2012)

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