



## **ASIA/MIDDLE EAST - "Pro-Syrian" prayers of the Custody of the Holy Land**

Jerusalem (Agenzia Fides) - The Franciscan friars of the Custody of the Holy Land were asked to include in the daily recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours some invocations and intercession formulas in favor of the "dear brothers and sisters in Syria, who are experiencing a difficult time." The suggestion to pray as a community for people affected by the Syrian conflict was addressed to his confreres by the Guardian of the Holy Land, Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, OFM, these days on a visit to India. "In recent months," father Pizzaballa wrote in a letter in June to the friars of the Custody, "the situation in the Middle East has become once again incandescent, and many new and old fears recur to our conscience. " With Christian realism, the Guardian acknowledges that compared to the scenario of the Syrian conflict and its geopolitical implications, "we find ourselves in situations that we cannot dominate."

Under the given circumstances, and "foreseeing even more difficult times," Father Pizzaballa reminded his confreres that "our only resource ... is to turn our eyes to the Father of all mercies, and to be guided by Him." Specifically, the suggestion offered freely to the Friars of the Custody is to add some "pro-Syrian" formulas of invocation and intercession in the daily recitation of the Hours. In the morning, the Morning Prayer, the friars who adhere to the suggestion of the Guardian turn to God the Father: "Look at the suffering peoples of the Holy Land and Syria and turn them into brave builders of your kingdom of justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. " In the evening prayer of Vespers, they ask the Son to give His Spirit "so that in the midst of the violence that afflict the peoples of the Holy Land and Syria we can witness you with courage, the only Truth that makes us free." We ask the Lord to infuse his spirit "on those who have in their hands the destinies of peoples, so that they really promote harmony, justice and human dignity."

"In Damascus and throughout Syria – says to Fides father Romualdo Fernández Ferreira, deputy vicar of the Apostolic Vicariate of Aleppo of the Latins and guardian of the memorial of St. Paul in Damascus-Tabbaleh –it is since March 2011 that in all the churches liturgies, prayers and worship for peace are organized to ask that the conflict comes to an end. The prayer for peace marks these troubled times for the whole Christian community. " (GV) (Agenzia Fides 28/09/2012)