



## EUROPE/FRANCE - Cardinal Filoni: a new "missionary audacity" for the new frontiers of mission

Paris (Agenzia Fides) - "Evangelizing is never a simple thing. In some countries in order to evangelize, an authentic missionary boldness is necessary. This is the case of Tibet: not only today, but since the first attempts of its evangelization. Hence the need to send men of faith tempered by character, animated by an ardent apostolic zeal and enthusiastic about their mission." With these considerations Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, began his missionary conference dedicated to the missionary audacity, held on Saturday afternoon, September 29 in Paris, at the Society for Foreign Missions of Paris (MEP) after the inauguration of the exhibition dedicated to the mission in Tibet (see Fides 28/09/2012).

In his speech, the Cardinal traced the complex and turbulent history of the mission in Tibet, whose beginnings date back to the sixteenth century, with the Portuguese, until the custody, on 27 March 1846, of the Apostolic Vicariate of Tibet to the Society for Foreign Missions Paris. At that time, the Society of Rue du Bac had brave men, even heroic, as the first three missionaries martyred in Seoul, in the mission of Korea. Cardinal Filoni then quoted the first two Apostolic Vicars of Tibet, Mgr. Thomine- Desmazures and Mgr. Chauveau, "who repeatedly had to restrain the zeal and boldness of their missionaries. " .

The lives of these missionaries, as scholars point out, was marked by expulsion, destruction, reconstruction, violent and cruel deaths. "In this context, these pioneers of God lived boldness, adventure, faith, passion, in an absolutely unique way - said Cardinal Filoni -. From the ethical point of view, one cannot ignore that martyrdom and the heroic witness of so many missionaries were the fruits of this 'impossible' mission carried out by men in whom the Gospel had kidnapped heart, spirit and body." After nearly a century of missionary work, fertilized by the blood of many martyrs, in 1950, Tibet became an autonomous region of China and all the missionaries were expelled, forced to leave the work which they had just begun.

"But today can we still talk about missionary courage?" the Cardinal asked, emphasizing the profound differences in the pre-conciliar context with the current. "The fruit of the Churches 'audacity' in the past were led by the staff and western Bishops, the religious were mostly white, the material means were from the West, the projects were created by Westerners with forms of practical adaptation. Today the Churches in Africa, Asia and Oceania are very different: Bishops and priests are mostly indigenous, the seminaries are rich in local vocations, cultural institutions work with the staff of the place, the educational and social works respond to local administrators even Western missionary institutions, male and female, have welcomed indigenous staff to continue their activities, not to mention the new Institutes founded in mission lands. Meanwhile, we are witnessing a rapid decline in missionaries in countries of ancient Christian tradition, from the crisis of vocations, to the abandonment of traditions in Africa, Asia and Oceania."

The Cardinal continued: "This context makes me think, right now, of a historic depletion of this boldness, but at the same time, the emergence of new forms of missionary presence linked, for example, to laity more aware of their missionary role, with a wide awareness of young people, families, professionals, and why not, old people willing to give a few years of their lives as missionaries. "

On Sunday morning, September 30, Cardinal Filoni celebrated Holy Mass in the home of the MEP. In his homily, he pointed out, in the light of the readings of the day, the central role of the Holy Spirit in missionary work. The Cardinal said that "the Lord is sovereignly free: makes a gift of the Spirit to those who want it. The fruit of this gift is a profound attitude of openness and service, in contrast to our natural instinct to exclude, control, dominate." He then recalled that "the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of the whole mission of the Church .... Since it is the fire of love that develops the work of evangelization, it is essential to allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit in order to achieve a successful mission." (SL) (Agenzia Fides 01/10/2012)

> LINKS

*The full text of the conference, in French:*

[http://www.fides.org/fra/documents/MISSIONS\\_DU\\_TOIT\\_DU\\_MONDE\\_29092012.doc](http://www.fides.org/fra/documents/MISSIONS_DU_TOIT_DU_MONDE_29092012.doc):

*The full text of the homily, in French: [http://www.fides.org/fra/documents/Hom\\_lie\\_Card\\_FILONI\\_30092012.docm](http://www.fides.org/fra/documents/Hom_lie_Card_FILONI_30092012.docm):*