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ASIA/CHINA - Cardinal Filoni reaffirms the validity of Pope Benedict XVI's Letter to the Chinese Catholics and the internal path to the Church in China in fidelity to the Pope, hoping for a stable Commission of the People's Republic and the Holy See

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - The Letter addressed by the Pope to the Chinese Catholics in 2007 "remains valid" also to favour a restart of dialogue between the Holy See and the Government of Beijing. A dialogue that should be relaunched through the creation of a bilateral stable Commission and of "high level" between mainland China and the Holy See, on the model of those already existing between mainland China and Taiwan. The authoritative proposals that the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples are prefigured in an article on Tripod, the quarterly published by the Holy Spirit Study Centre of the diocese of Hong Kong, which today is anticipated on its site online.
Cardinal Fernando Filoni's intervention was inspired by the fifth anniversary of the publication of Benedict XVI's Letter to the Church which is in China. The events of recent years - notes the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples – have confirmed "the value, appropriateness and timeliness" of that papal text, which can really "represent a starting point for dialogue in the Church in China and can stimulate that between the Holy See and the government of Beijing."
The Papal Letter to the Chinese Catholics in 2007 – the Cardinal warns - did not have a primary political purpose. Its task was rather to publicly manifest what the Holy See's attitude in the face of the "complex situation" of the Church in China was. "After years of study - remembers the Cardinal - the Holy See had clearly perceived that as a whole, the Church in China was never schismatic." However, it continued to live on the lacerating division between those who over time did not accept compromises with the political control imposed by the civil authorities and those who supported them "for existential reasons." The deep wounds within the Church are not able to heal, even due to invasive external interference. For this reason - suggests the Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith - in the Chinese case any attempt to foster ecclesial reconciliation implies realistically even the need for dialogue between the Holy See and the Chinese civil powers.
The papal Letter in 2007 - recalls Cardinal Filoni - had reaffirmed the full availability of the Holy See in a "respectful and constructive dialogue" with the Beijing authorities, knowing that "the solution of the existing problems cannot be pursued through an ongoing conflict." But in these five years, instead of open and honest dialogue desired by the Pope, there have been misunderstandings, accusations,
hardenings of positions, often based on incomplete and incorrect news. "Maybe," admits the Prefect of the Congregation "reactions of the Holy See have not been well received." Above all, what weighed were what the Cardinal lists as real stumbling blocks: 1) The Eighth National Assembly of Catholic Representatives, organised by the Beijing authorities in December 2010, which " sharpened the control of the State over the Church"; 2) the heavy interference of the civil authorities over the appointment of Bishops; 3) the involvement of illegitimate Bishops in episcopal consecrations, who made "dramatic crisis of conscience, both in the consecrated Bishops, and in consecrating Bishops." Prefect Filoni cites among the latest worrying signs the case of Bishop Matthew Ma Daquin in Shanghai, deprived of his freedom because on the day of his episcopal ordination he had expressed his intention to devote himself to full-time pastoral ministry, releasing tasks in organisms with which the government interferes from within in the life of the Church. Bishops and priests, in fact, are not civil servants.
Faced with this impasse, the Prefect of the Vatican Congregation asks whether the time has arrived "to think of a new way to dialogue," that is even more open and carried out on a more equitable basis, "where it would no longer be possible for particular interests to undermine good will, trust and mutual respect." The models explicitly recalled by the Cardinal are eloquent and concrete: for example "high level" stable Commissions between Beijing and Taipei, and contact tools with which the Holy See and Vietnam "have found a modus operandi et

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progrediendi."
While the upcoming Congress of the Chinese Communist Party is preparing to profound changes in the profile of the national political leadership, the Holy See hopes for a new round of Sino-Vatican relations. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 25/10/2012)

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