



## **AFRICA/EGYPT - Egyptian Catholics welcome with enthusiasm the election of the new Coptic Orthodox Pope**

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - The election of the new Patriarch Tawadros II as head of the Coptic Orthodox Church arouses reactions of joy and enthusiasm in the composite Catholic community in Egypt. "We are all delighted," confides to Fides Agency Anba Kirillos William, Coptic Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Assiut. According to the current Vicar of the Coptic Catholic Church in Egypt, "the three candidates for the succession of Pope Shenouda were all worthy people. But with regards to ecumenical relations and cooperation between the Christian churches, we hoped that Bishop Tawadros were elected, an open-minded and balanced person." Anba Kirillos took part, with representatives of other Churches, in the ceremony in which the blindfolded child drew the name of the new Patriarch, and was impressed "by the atmosphere of prayer, fasting and meditation in which everything was done."

Tawadros (nee Waqih Sobhi Bakky Suleiman) was not the most voted by the electorate in charge of selecting the set of three final candidates: he had obtained 1623 votes, against the 1980 of Bishop Rafael, given positions of greater continuity than his predecessor Shenouda III. Before becoming a monk and then Auxiliary Bishop of Beheira, he graduated in pharmacy and had worked for the state pharmaceutical plant.

The Bishop of the Latin rite Adel Zaki, OFM, Apostolic Vicar of Alexandria, is convinced that "among the candidates, Providence chose a moderate, open and educated person, foreign to all fundamentalism." Mgr. Zaki told Fides about the minute of prayer to the Holy Spirit that preceded the extraction of the candidate's name: "We were all pending God's choice. We too, with an open heart, prayed for this person to represent in some way all the Christians of Egypt."

After Pope Shenouda III's long reign, which lasted 42 years, Bishop Zaki hopes "that the Lord gives long life to the new Coptic Orthodox Pope. He will need the support of everyone's prayers, because he will have to face a delicate situation, collecting a legacy in many ways heavy and demanding."

The ceremony extraction of the name of the new Coptic Orthodox Patriarch was also attended by representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood Party. The Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi has been invited to the ceremony of enthronement, which will be held on Sunday, November 18. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 05/11/2012)