



ASIA/UNITED ARAB EMIRATES - Year of Faith in the Arabian Peninsula: gathering of young Catholics in the Middle East

Abu Dhabi (Agenzia Fides) - More than 1,500 young Catholics in the Middle East will meet in Abu Dhabi, UAE, from November 15 to 17, for three days of reflection and prayer. At the center of the "Arabia Catholic Youth Conference" (ACYC), event in its second year, there will be the Year of Faith and its meaning for the faithful of that land, the theme of the conference, taken from the Gospel of Mark, is in fact " Everything is possible for him who believes "(Mark 9:23). The conference is organized by the Apostolic Vicariate of Arabia and North and South Arabia and, as reported to Fides by the local Church, will be held at St Joseph's Cathedral in Abu Dhabi. His Exc. Mgr. Paul Hinder, Apostolic Vicar of South Arabia, and His Exc. Mgr. Camillo Ballin, Apostolic Vicar of North Arabia will preside the assembly.

"The conference sessions - refers a note sent to Fides - intend to respond to emerging issues of faith among young Catholics in the region." Among the speakers there will be the young Matt Fradd from Australia, the American Catholic priest and musician, Fr. Stan Fortuna, Fr. George Gabriel from the Philippines, called "the Preacher in Blue Jeans," and Fr. Michael Ssenfuma, from Uganda. A concert entitled "reJOYce" with the performance of Christian musicians of international fame will conclude the conference: first time in the Arabian Peninsula, which is expected to have an audience of over 5,000 people.

Young Catholics living in the two Apostolic Vicariates of Arabia are mainly immigrants from different countries in the world (mostly from the Philippines, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Syria, Lebanon and African nations) who are in the Arabian Peninsula to work.

On presenting the event, Mgr. Paul Hinder, explained to Fides: "The future of a community lies in the young. Through our Youth Conference of the Arabian Peninsula, we intend to strengthen the faith of our young people who, in most cases, cannot participate in meetings such as the World Youth Day." Mgr. Camillo Ballin adds: "We hope that the ACYC can provide the youth of the Middle East the opportunity to come together and experience the joy of living their faith. The youth of our territories are often isolated in their experience of faith, in the circumstances of the region in which they reside. We want to try to answer the many questions they have about their faith." The first Conference of Catholic youth of Arabia was held in November 2009 at the Church of Santa Maria, in Dubai, always in the UAE.

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