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ASIA/PHILIPPINES - Vote on the "Reproductive Health Bill ": Church opposes with prayer and fasting

Manila (Agenzia Fides) - The political struggle in the Philippines for the Reproductive Health Bill" gets to the heart of the matter, the document which is intended to introduce measures in the country such as abortion, artificial contraception, sex education, family planning methods. The bill, which is fully supported by President Benigno Aquino, for more than two years has found the firm opposition of the Catholic Church and pro-life groups that define the measure "anti-life", saying that it "contradicts the protection of life and existing family in the Constitution of the Philippines".
President Aquino today invited members of the House of Representatives belonging to his political coalition to pass the bill as soon as possible, even in a week. Juan Ponce Enrile, President of the Senate, the other branch of Parliament, said that Aquino's pressures will not be followed because, according to the procedures in force, the bill must pass through the Assembly three times before being voted, the more so because it is a very sensitive issue.
According to Fides sources, Aquino aims to make the bill pass before the expiry of his term (in 2016), bequeathing the country the peace agreement in the southern Philippines and a very important law on ethical issues, such as "The Reproductive Health Bill."
The Catholic Church, in the meantime, has invited all the faithful to use "the weapons of prayer and fasting against the measure." In a note sent to Fides Agency, His Exc. Mgr. Gabriel Reyes, Bishop of Antipolo and President of the "Commission for the family and for life" of the Episcopal Conference of the Philippines, announced that Christians "pray and fast as from today and and in following days so that our lawmakers do not approve the bill." "We ask God to protect life, family, marriage and the youth in our country," said the Bishop.
The Bishops also ask that, in case of a vote in Parliament, the voting procedure has to be "open and nominal" and not a secret ballot, so that "people know how they voted their representatives."
The Catholic Rene Bullecer, director of the pro-life movement "Human Life International" in the Philippines, told Fides that "the mobilization against this bill will go ahead at all levels: political, social, cultural and spiritual, through prayer vigils in all the dioceses. " (PA) (Agenzia Fides 03/12/2012)

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