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VATICAN - Cardinal Filoni to the priests, religious men and women of Gulu "In your lives, I read the history of the Church in this land: a history of much faith, love and sacrifice"

Arua (Agenzia Fides) - Two meetings were held this morning, December 14, by Cardinal Fernando Filoni reserved for priests, religious men and women of the ecclesiastical province of Gulu, as part of his pastoral visit to mark the centenary of the evangelization of the region of Uganda (see Fides 12/12/2012; 13/12/2012). In the Minor Basilica of Lodonga, the Prefect of the Congregation presided the Mass, and later met with priests, religious men and women. "I am delighted to have this opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist with you, who have consecrated your lifves to the Lord in the Priesthood and Religious life, especially as we gather to celebrate the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Catholic faith in this region, and the Year dedicated to Faith, " the Cardinal said at the beginning of his homily, recalling the teaching of St. John of the Cross.
To the priests he recommended to always remember that they have been "chosen from among the people, consecrated to act in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins" and urged them: "Believe in the power of your Priesthood!" On addressing the members of the religious communities, the Cardinal Prefect said inter alia: "every charism is an evangelical word which the Holy Spirit recalls from the Church's memory (cf. Jn 14:26). It is not by accident that in we have Consecrated life in the Church." Finally, the life of consecrated men and women "must testify to that personal encounter with Christ which has nourished your Consecration, and to all of the transforming power of that encounter," said the Cardinal, who concluded: "The Church needs your fidelity, rooted and built up in Christ. Thank you for your generous, total and perpetual 'yes' to the call of Christ. "
In the meeting after Mass, the prefect of the Congregation turned to the priests, religious men and women of the Apostolic Prefecture of Gulu with these words: "You are among the closest collaborators of the Bishops in their pastoral ministry. You are present in every area of the Church's life, hastening the coming of the Kingdom of God - the kingdom of justice, love and peace - through your prayer and work. In your lives, I read the history of the Church in this land: a history of much faith, love and sacrifice. I recognize the contribution made by Priests and Religious Missionaries, who have helped to strengthen the Catholic community here. Their commitment to the cause of the Gospel often moved from the extraordinary to the heroic, even costing some their very lives."
Cardinal Filoni also addressed some exhortations to the present. To the priests he said that "the priesthood is a gift to us; but, in us and through us, the Priesthood is a gift to the Church." The men and women religious, "through the practice of the Evangelical Counsels, you have become a prophetic sign of the eternal kingdom of the Father." "As consecrated persons, whose vocation involves active work in ecclesial service, you must make every effort to combine contemplation with your apostolic zeal." "Dear brothers and sisters - the Cardinal concluded - I leave you today with a word of encouragement and a message of hope. In all your work and stuggles, your joys and sorrows, there is one who walks beside you along the path of discipleship: Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who pondered everything in her heart and always did the will of the Father." (SL) (Agenzia Fides 14/12/2012)

> LINKS

The Cardinal's text, in English: http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/C.Filoni_Arua_Om_Clero_14122012.doc:

The full text of the Cardinal's speech, in English: http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/C.Filoni_Arua_Clero_14122012.doc:

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