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ASIA/SYRIA - Bishop Nazzaro: authorities in Aleppo have welcomed the Pope's words, churches full at Christmas

Aleppo (Agenzia Fides) - The governor of Aleppo, Mohammad Vakhid Akkad, accompanied by other local political authorities, yesterday wanted to meet the Bishops and Catholic priests gathered in the Syrian cities to extend their best wishes for Christmas. On that occasion, the Governor expressed his appreciation for the words that Benedict XVI dedicated to the tragic situation in Syria in his Christmas Message. This is what His Exc. Mgr. Giuseppe Nazzaro, OFM, Vicar Apostolic of Aleppo of the Latins tells Fides Agency. "Yesterday - the Franciscan Bishop tells Fides - we Bishops and Catholic priests of Aleppo were gathered for our monthly retreat. This year, given the situation, we had canceled the traditional official visits that take place at Christmas. But the governor learned of our meeting and he wanted to come to greet us and tell us that he had also appreciated the intense words that the Pope delivered on Christmas Day for peace in Syria. Leaders of nations – commented Msg. Nazzaro - must do everything to stop the conflict: they are destroying a whole country, and anyone who will prevail in the end will be faced only a pile of human and material rubble. "
The region of Aleppo continues to be the scene of battle. In recent days rebel forces and loyalists are fighting for the the control of the military. In this situation turned upside down, the Bishop admits that many Christians in the city were able to live "the Christian holy joy" at least on Christmas day: "The Masses – he tells Fides – on the evening of December 24 were anticipated, to allow everyone to return home soon. I celebrated in the Cathedral at 4 p.m., while in the parish Mass began at 5 p.m.. Also on December 25, 10 Mass began at noon, the Cathedral and the Latin parish were packed with worshipers. The same happened in churches of other rites. An amazing thing when you consider the many who fled the city or who are displaced.In this period, everyone comes to church to seek comfort and a word of consolation, which is not found anywhere else. One can hear gunfire and cannon fire from all sides. We do not understand where they start and where they go: we only know that they bring death and destruction everywhere." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 28/12/2012).

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