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ASIA/MYANMAR - The Church: "A Jubilee Year, freedom and reconciliation, for Myanmar"

Yangon (Agenzia Fides) - What has just begun is "a jubilee year for Myanmar," in fact "after 50 years of suffocating darkness, today a bright light shines in the beautiful country of Burma": is what is said in a message sent to Fides Agency for the New Year by His Exc. Mgr. Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon and General Secretary of the Bishops' Conference of Myanmar, recalling that in 1962 the period of dictatorship in the country began, while today "the pain is slowly giving way to hope" . "This message – he notes - must be brought to every corner of the nation, in this year of new evangelization with a renewed vigor of faith."
The Archbishop recalls the painful past with poetic accent: "In 1962, the darkness engulfed Burma. Its history was frozen, its hidden beauty, its children reduced to slavery of silence, many to martyrdom, many to long nights of tears. Millions became refugees or illegal immigrants. Our innocent girls were sold as sex slaves and their tears buried in silent caves of inhumanity. Two generations have embarked on a journey into the dark tunnel of despair."
Today Mgr. Bo looks to the future with confidence: "After 50 years, we have gathered to see the light. The light of truth shines upon us, the light of freedom is slowly awakening our people, the light of the opportunities that are emerging. In our Christmas Christ was born, giving us a new light of hope. This is a very significant year for our people, it is a Jubilee Year, a year of grace for the people of Myanmar."
The Archbishop, emphasizing that "God leads his people in his way," applies to Myanmar today the practices of the biblical Jubilee: "In the Jubilee slaves are released. We, in this year, ask for the release of all political prisoners, prisoners of conscience, our men and women in prison." In the Jubilee, he says "all debts are canceled: We are a nation in debt. No family is free from suffocating debt. It is important to lift the weight of loans especially on the shoulders of farmers and fishermen." In the year of grace, "everyone returns to his property."
"Today - says the message - we are a nation of refugees. More than three million people are out of our country without proper documents. Some are refugees, many live in inhuman conditions. Our sons and daughters must return to their homeland." Another Jubilee message is to "proclaim liberty to the the oppressed": "Democracy brings great hopes. But - notes the Bishop - as we have seen recently, old habits die hard. If the monks are beaten, what kind of freedom is there in this land? The respect for human dignity and human rights need to grow in our nation."
The Jubilee is also a year of mercy and reconciliation. The Secretary of the Episcopal Conference calls for "reconciliation between all parties at war and the triumph of peace." "For too long – he stresses - this nation has been at war with itself ... thousands killed in senseless wars, many young people killed and the earth bathed in the blood of mutual hatred." Today, he concludes, "it is time to build peace" and "peace can only be built on justice."
(PA) (Agenzia Fides 09/01/2013)

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