



## **ASIA/JORDAN - Archbishop Lahham: the Church prays for all the election candidates, but does not sponsor anyone**

Amman (Agenzia Fides) - The Catholic Church in Jordan offers its prayers for all candidates, but says it does not support any one in particular. This is what Archbishop Maroun Laham, Patriarchal Vicar for Jordan of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, summarizes for Fides Agency with regards to the ecclesial's approach before the Jordanian parliamentary elections scheduled for January 23. "The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Fouad Twal," recalls Archbishop Lahham "has already addressed an official message to the Christians, inviting them to vote. Obviously I am going to vote too. In past days several candidates came to visit us, including Muslims. We promised all of them our prayers and blessings. But the Church does not campaign for any particular candidate." The Jordanian citizens called to the polls are almost 2 million and 300 thousand. 1,425 candidates, including 191 women will compete for the 150 seats in the lower Chamber of Parliament. Nine of the seats are reserved for Christian candidates. And candidates from various ecclesial realities are scattered in different lists. The elections were boycotted by the Islamic Action Front, the formation linked to the Muslim Brotherhood which represents the main opposition force. Among the candidates, supporters of the Hashemite monarchy and businessmen abound. According to Mgr. Lahham "everyone is waiting to see if the new Parliament will really be able to start the reforms that the Country needs." The Archbishop considers the fact that the Prime Minister will be appointed for the first time by groups of candidates who have obtained the majority, significant, and not by the king. Even the new severity shown towards the vote-buying is for Mgr. Lahham an eloquent sign. At the same time, in any assessment of the possible evolution of the political framework should take into account certain factors in the profile of the Country: "The call for stronger aggregation of political consensus," notes the Archbishop "remains the tribal. One chooses to vote for a member in view of their own tribe. The dynamics of the tribal clans and family count. Even today, the newspapers tell the story of a candidate forced to divorce her husband after she had refused to withdraw from the elections to favor a candidate belonging to his family." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 21/01/2013).