



ASIA/LEBANON - Patriarch Rai launches a day of action and solidarity for Syrian refugees "without distinction"

Beirut (Lebanon) – On Sunday, January 27 in convents, shrines and nearly one thousand parishes of the Maronite Church, funds will be collected for the activities supported by Caritas Lebanon in favor of Syrian refugees who have found precarious refuge in the Lebanese territory. The special day of solidarity was called by Cardinal Bechara Boutros Rai, Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites, with an appeal to all members of the Church led by him. Even in the schools and academic institutions related to the Patriarchate will take initiatives to channel donations to all Syrian refugees, "without distinction."

The Syrian refugees registered in Lebanon territory by UN bodies are about 220 thousand. "Actually," explains to Fides Agency Fr. Simon Faddoul, President of Caritas Lebanon "Syrian refugees in Lebanon are many more. Probably they exceed the figure of 400 thousand. Many are living in desperate conditions, made even more unbearable due to the harsh winter this year. " Caritas Lebanon - said Fr. Faddoul to Fides - already directly assists more than 50 thousand displaced Syrians, distributing food, clothing, medicines, stoves for heating, hygiene products.

On Sunday, according to the Patriarch's indications, in all the Eucharistic liturgies celebrated in the Maronite churches, prayers will be dedicated to all the victims of the conflict and for peace in Syria. In his appeal, S. B. Rai calls for prayers for peace "in Lebanon, Syria and in all the Arab countries " so that the Lord will "inspire local and international leaders to seek peaceful ways to end the violence and war, and to find the right solutions ". For Christians - recalls the Patriarch - the aid to be offered to the brothers not only responds to a noble humanitarian sentiment, but also to the invitation by Jesus himself. The Patriarch - who will celebrate Sunday Mass in the patriarchal see of Bkerké according to the intentions indicated in the appeal - in particular cites the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: "Come, blessed by my Father, you inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the founding of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you gave me hospitality, naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to visit me ... When you do it also for the last of my brothers, you do it for me." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 26/01/2013).