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ASIA/PHILIPPINES - The Bishops on the upcoming elections: we need a law against political dynasties

Manila (Agenzia Fides) - The corruption and the cumbersome presence of "political dynasties", that heavily influence public life, are an obstacle to genuine democratization in the country and are part of a "long litany of storms" in addition to natural disasters: this is what the Bishops of the Philippines say in a pastoral statement issued yesterday, at the conclusion of their Plenary Assembly, signed by His Exc. Mgr. Jose Palma, Archbishop of Cebu and President of the Episcopal Conference. The Bishops' document, sent to Fides Agency, is meant to be a point of reference for the faithful in view of the elections scheduled on May 13, 2013, when the Parliament will be renewed, as well as numerous provincial Councils and local authorities.
Indicating as a compass the Social Doctrine of the Church, the reflection covers various areas of public life: the urgent need to promote genuine values, such as respect for life and human rights, with reference to the recent Reproductive Health Bill. The Bishops focus in particular, for the first time, on a sore point in the history of the Philippines: the presence of family dynasties that occupy the political and economic power, hand it down and deal with it in forms of oligarchy. It is the so-called "crony-capitalism", to which historians and academics have dedicated extensive studies to understand the dynamics of Philippine society, very closely linked to the presence of family clans.
The Bishops say: "Political dynasties increase corruption and inefficiency" and note that "political authority should not be monopolized for the interests of certain families, or a political party." They denounce the lack of approval, on behalf of lawmakers, concerning a measure expressly prohibiting political dynasties, as is provided by the Constitution of the Philippines. "This situation generates corruption and inhibits general access to political power, which is a fundamental sign of democracy", they say, announcing that" if Congress continues to ignore their moral and constitutional obligations, the Church will support the initiatives of the laity, to enact a law through popular initiative."
According to information Fides Agency received by the NGO "Center for People Empowerment in Governance", there are 178 "dominant political dynasties" in the Philippines, excluding those in local areas. About 100 of these are "old elites" (eg Marcos or Aquino families), the rest are "new elite" that emerged after 1986, the year of the fall of the dictator Marcos.
The declaration of the Bishops also touches on other social issues, such as the culture of impunity, extrajudicial executions, electoral fraud, vote buying, and recalls "the suffering of the poor", calling for social justice. (PA)
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> LINKS
The full text of the Bishops' document, in English: http://www.fides.org/eng/documents/CBCP_MESSAGE.doc:

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