



ASIA - The next Pope and the hopes of Asia

Bangkok (Agenzia Fides) - "Rejuvenate" the world, launch new hope, raise a voice, "prophetic and merciful": these are the expectations of Asia regarding the next Pope, Fides learned from Franciscan Fr. Nithiya Sagayam, OFM Cap, executive Secretary of the Office for Human Development of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences " (FABC). In a report sent to Fides the Franciscan identifies the principal expectations of the vast continent of Asia, immense in its plurality of peoples and religions , with regard to the new Pope, soon to be elected.

"The task of the new Pope – says Fr. Sagayam – will be to 'rejuvenate the world , and not only the Church. The world has not lost faith in the Catholic Church. But the foundation of the Church is the Gospel. The Church's mission has its centre in Christ, not in canons or sermons. It is very important for the Church not to be like a secular organisation occupied with matters of money and power, instead it must heed the cries and the anxieties of people today, in particular the poor and the marginalised " .

This appeal comes from the Gaudium et Spes: "The cry of the Pope should be the cry of the world: very often the Church is seen as a body which concentrates on contraception, same sex marriage, the ordination of women, mass in Latin. The amount of energy used for these and similar questions is excessive compared with the energy spent on the burning issues affecting the world: violence, warfare, production of weapons, discrimination against and exploitation of poor and marginalised people. The peoples of Asia expect that rather than looking inwards at the problems within, herself, the Church will reach outside herself to bring the message of Christ to all the questions which agitate the planet, including poverty and oppression . May the teaching of the next Pope help the Church to overcome the temptation to be self-referent and, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, to draw near to the joys and the anxieties of all the peoples of the world".

"Today we see – he continues – signals of vitality in the young Churches: it would be no surprise if the Pope were to come from a developing country. However, whatever his origin, the next Pope should pay attention to the distant Churches and speak the languages of Asia , Africa and Latin America. The world expects the next Pope to be universal, and to be for the world a prophetic and merciful guide ". Lastly "may the Pope be the voice of conscience for the world's political leaders: this will be a most important role and we hope that to do this he may establish strong ties with other religious leaders in the world ". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 20/2/2013)