



ASIA/HOLY LAND - Catholics and Orthodox celebrate Easter according to the Julian calendar

Jerusalem (Agenzia Fides) - Most of the Catholic communities in Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan and Cyprus are preparing to celebrate the liturgies of Holy Week not these days but in the first week of May, according to the Julian Calendar followed by the Orthodox communities.

The unification of the Easter dates in most of the area is an application of the directive issued on October 15, 2012 by the Assembly of ordinary Catholic bishops in Holy Land, where it was established that within two years all Catholics in the Diocese of Latin Rite and the various Eastern rites will celebrate Easter according to the Julian calendar, coinciding with the Easter liturgies celebrated in the Orthodox churches.

The adoption of the Easter date according to the Julian calendar (which in 2013 falls on May 5) comes into force ad experimentum this year in the whole of Holy Land, with the exception of the areas of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, where the Gregorian calendar will continue to be followed both to respect the constraints imposed in the Holy City by the system of the "Status Quo" (which regulates the coexistence of the different Christian Churches in Holy Places), and to take account of the arrival of pilgrims from all over the world who come to celebrate Easter in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. "Even the community of foreign workers in Tel Aviv" refers to Fides Agency Bishop William Shomali, Patriarchal Vicar of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem – that was asked to celebrate Easter according to the Gregorian rite, even because they can enjoy some days off to coincide with the Jewish Passover."

The unification of the date with which Christians of different confessions celebrate Easter still raises some eyebrows among some Maronite bishops. It is however for Bishop Shomali an eloquent step at an ecumenical and testimonial level: "Members of the same family or the same village belong to different ecclesial realities," notes the Patriarchal Vicar "now they can celebrate on the same days the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In order to also give a witness of unity with our non-Christian neighbors."

By 2015, the provision for a common Easter date should be confirmed or recalibrated in accordance with the directions also given by the Holy See. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 25/03/2013).