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Fondata nel 1927

OCEANIA/PAPUA NEW GUINEA - The Bishops to the Prime Minister: fight against corruption and more collaboration between Church and state

Madang (Agenzia Fides) - The Church and the state are called to work together for the common good: this is the approach of the Bishops of Papua New Guinea who yesterday, during their Plenary Assembly being held in Madang, met Prime Minister Peter O'Neill. As reported to Fides by the communications office of the Bishops, Archbishop John Ribat, the Archbishop of Port Moresby and the President of the Episcopal Conference, addressed a speech to the Prime Minister, pointing out the most urgent challenges: fighting corruption, abolition of the death penalty, environmental protection, greater collaboration between the Church and the state in fields such as education and the family.

In the Bishops' message, sent to Fides Agency, it draws attention primarily on the problem of corruption, defined as " systematic and endemic in government offices" and it praises the creation of an "Independent Commission against corruption." The Bishops also express concern regarding "problems of infrastructure and services in remote areas, and for the poor and the marginalized," pointing out that these populations live "a sense of abandonment."

The Church - the report continues - shares the efforts for the safeguard of law and order and to combat all forms of violence in society but appeals "to ethical conduct by the police" and reiterates the desire to the "abolition of the death penalty in the country "

Offering a contribution to social issues, the Church, the message explains, is guided "by gospel principles, first of all the fundamental dignity of every person." Hence the principle of "common good" and "integral human development", in other words to work so that "every person achieves its potential, a value that we share with the National Constitution of Papua." In this perspective, the Bishops call for increased collaboration and a "fruitful partnership" between Church and state, in areas where it is possible: for example, "consultations on important issues affecting education policy" or family are useful. It also asks "to carry out education and health services in freedom without having to endure, for example, an approach to the question of AIDS in conflict with Christian values."

The text cites, finally, the problems concerning "environmental and social impact of extensive deforestation," to start off mining projects or special economic areas, such as the Industrial Zone of the Pacific that have had negative effects on the marine environment. The Church asks that the criterion of such projects is "sustainable development." (PA) (Agenzia Fides 12/04/2013)

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