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AFRICA/EGYPT - Coptic Catholic Patriarch Sidrak: the encounter between Francis and Tawadros II helps us to rediscover ourselves united in baptism

Cairo (Agenzia Fides) - "The meeting between the Pope Francis and Pope Tawadros II caused joy especially among the very simple people. Now the hope is that the path on the way of unity can move forward with concrete and challenging steps." This is what was reported to Fides Agency by His Beatitude Ibrahim Isaac Sidrak, Patriarch of Alexandria of the Catholic Copts, outlining the hopes in the Egyptian Catholic community from the recent meeting between the Bishop of Rome and the Coptic Orthodoz Patriarch. According to His Beatitude Sidrak, "the very fact of sharing the same residence in the Domus Sanctae Marthae allowed Francis and Tawadros to find themselves not only on the occasion of the official meeting, but also to share other opportunities for discussion and prayer. And such a family setting allows one to bring out many things." On Thursday, May 9, at the time of his arrival at the residence of Santa Marta, Pope Tawadros was greeted by Pope Francis.
In his speech to the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch, the current Successor of Peter recalled the joy "to recognize ourselves united in Baptism, which is special expression of our common prayer." According to Coptic Catholic Patriarch Sidrak, "To reach communion the journey is long and maybe it will take time. But it would be already important to recognize in concrete terms that we and our Coptic Orthodox brothers share the same baptism." In the Coptic Orthodox Church the practice of re-baptizing new members who come from the Catholic Church is still prevalent. Patriarch Tawadros could put the issue on the agenda for a future synod. The practice of Christians "re-baptized" creates misunderstanding and scandal, contradicting the references to a shared witness of the Gospel.
Coptic Catholic Patriarch Sidrak appreciates the fact that the official speeches of the Pope and Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox had no direct references to the Egyptian troubled political and social phase: "It was an ecclesial meeting. Pope Francis' reference to the "ecumenism of suffering" was a very nice and spiritual reference. But every interpretation only in a polical key would ultimately reduce the scope of those same words. We Christians must be united to serve others. Our unity can never be reduced to a political alliance against a common enemy." (GV) (Agenzia Fides 13/05/2013).

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