



AMERICA/VENEZUELA - Maronite Patriarch Rai: "Venezuela is in good hands"

Caracas (Agenzia Fides) - "We are convinced that Venezuela is in good hands." This is how the Patriarch of Antioch of the Maronites Bechara Boutros Rai expressed himself after the meeting which took place yesterday, Tuesday, May 14, with the current Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, the successor of Hugo Chavez. Maduro received at the Miraflores Palace, the Patriarch of Lebanon who for more than forty days has been touring the Latin American countries to visit the local Maronite community. In Venezuela, Cardinal Rai expressed to President Maduro his happiness on his election and condolences for the death of Chavez, wishing that the Venezuelan nation continues to walk "along the path of peace." The patriarch also praised the Venezuelan people for the availability shown in welcoming and integrating Arab immigrants, starting from the Lebanese and Syrians. "We" said the head of the Maronite Church "thank Venezuela for having accepted and embraced our community, and having opened its doors."

In his patriarchal tour, His Beatitude Rai has already visited Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Paraguay. After Venezuela, the Patriarch's tour will also touch Colombia and Costa Rica

Maduro became president after winning the presidential election by a narrow margin last April 14. The outcome of the election, which was contested by the opposition, was ratified by the National Election Committee. The tension, violence and clashes erupted after the disputed election caused 8 deaths. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 15/05/2013).