



## **ASIA/MYANMAR - The Bishops: education, federalism, interfaith harmony are the challenges for the nation**

Pathein (Agenzia Fides) - In order to progress in freedom, fraternity and democracy, Myanmar has to face some major challenges: the situation of indigenous peoples; the peace in conflicts with ethnic minorities; the protection of interfaith harmony; the protection of the environment; the issue of refugees. This is what the Bishops of Myanmar say in a message issued at the conclusion of the Annual Conference of Bishops. The message, sent to Fides Agency, is signed by His Exc. Mgr. John Hsane Hgyi, Bishop of Pathein and President of the Episcopal Conference. The Bishops say they "rejoice next to the people" for the recent political and social changes that constitute "a dawn of hope" for the country. Reaffirming that the basic criterion for judging the story is "respect for the dignity of the person", the message identifies the main challenges for the nation, in this historic moment. The first challenge is to ensure compulsory education for all, a step considered essential for the balanced growth of society. "The nation, says the second point, is hurt by the rejection for the rights and dignity of indigenous groups" who are victims of human traffickers. For this reason politics is called to make an authentic "journey towards democracy." Third point is the "lack of political will" in ending conflicts with ethnic minorities: one could open an era of peace and reconciliation through the choice of federalism. Speaking of the recent inter-faith conflicts between Buddhists and Muslims – continues the fourth point - the Bishops recall that the "keyword" of Buddhism is "compassion", indicating harmony as the supreme good and the urgency to appease all religious fundamentalism.

"God has given the nation natural resources to be protected and not to be exposed to international exploitation", indicates the next challenge stressed by the episcopate, recalling the "protection of creation." The last point raised is that of the millions of refugees and displaced Burmese, present at home and in neighboring countries such as Thailand and India: "Their silent and their inhuman tears cry justice."

The Bishops' text concludes pointing out "a new dawning era" that can turn Myanmar into a "golden land of opportunity for all" and reiterating that the Church is at the service of development and well-being of the nation.

(PA) (Agenzia Fides 20/6/2013)