



## **ASIA/PAKISTAN - Acts of vandalism and insults against a church: a Muslim man forgiven**

Quetta (Agenzia Fides) - Forgiveness, reconciliation, trust: with this attitude, the community of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) in the Apostolic Vicariate in Quetta, Baluchistan province, handled a tricky issue. On the evening of June 23, a young Muslim, Muhammad Naeem, entered the complex of the Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception in Quetta, reached the top of the roof with a hammer and damaged the cross of the church. The caretaker and other faithful Catholics were able to stop him and the police arrested him. Days before Muhammad Naeem had entered the church, had threatened the Christians present and used insulting words towards Jesus Christ.

The Oblate missionaries, members of a local "Peace Committee", in agreement with the youth's family and the police, did not want to "exaggerate" by denouncing him, but forgave him. As explained to Fides by Fr. Abid Saleem OMI, the next day an agreement was written between church leaders, police officers and Naeem's family members, according to which the young man was released. "We have forgiven him. Naeem and his family have signed a written obligation stating that such acts against Christians will not be repeated." The police accepted the agreement and the young person was released. Fr. Saleem told Fides that "the young man was manipulated by fundamentalists. We thought keeping him in prison was not the solution: Our revenge is forgiveness, that makes him know who Lord Jesus Christ is, through an act of love and trust." The missionary says he is happy that "the representatives of religious minorities in the Provincial Assembly worked with us." Mgr. Victor Gnanapragasm OMI, Vicar Apostolic of Quetta, visited the Church of the Immaculate Conception, expressing his invitation to "keep calm and resolve the issue peacefully." (AG-PA) (Agenzia Fides 27/06/2013)