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OCEANIA/PAPUA NEW GUINEA - Prohibit non-Christian faiths? For the Church, it would be absurd

Port Moresby (Agenzia Fides) - The Parliament of Papua New Guinea has approved a motion that asks to start a nationwide consultation on the issue of religious freedom and to "prohibit the worship of non-Christian faiths". The proposal, which has found wide coverage in the media, has shocked Christian communities. A nationwide consultation of this kind would be for the Church "absurd and shocking", says, in a note sent to Fides, Fr. Giorgio Licini, Director of the Communications Office of the Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The Church, in fact, has always defended the supreme value of religious freedom, the foundation of all other freedoms. "The simple question of prohibiting other faiths in the XXI century contradicts decades of achievements and progress in the field of human rights and civil freedoms. The ban infringes on the UN Declaration on Human Rights of 1948. In addition, it discriminates citizens on a subject that should never be a reason for discrimination: personal faith", said the statement of the Bishops Conference. The text then explains: "Christianity could be defined as a kind of cultural identity for modern Papua New Guinea and its 850 tribes. But one must not forget that true faith is something far beyond simple constitutional provisions, practices and rituals of daily newspapers. And no one can be prevented from freely professing their faith, both in a private and a public form".
Entering the merits of institutional mechanisms, the Director explains: "It is certainly a good thing that sometimes Parliament provides for a nationwide consultation, as in the case of the death penalty. And it is also good that our representatives confront themselves with Christian principles, which are also sanctioned by the Constitution.
But they should stop at this point, encouraging themselves, individuals, institutions, and even the churches to get rid of every kind of greed, corruption, selfishness, alcoholism, prostitution, domestic violence, brutality. It is not by prohibiting other faiths that one becomes a more authentic Christian".
The motion was presented by Anderson Agiru, governor of the province of Hela. After the approval of Parliament, the Minister for Community Development and the Commission for Constitutional Review will establish a bi-partisan group that should be responsible for writing the text of the nationwide consultation. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 16/07/2013)

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