



## **ASIA/SYRIA - Prayer and fasting for Fr. Dall'Oglio and for peace in Syria at the monastery of Deir Mar Musa**

Damascus (Agenzia Fides) - At the monastery of Deir Mar Musa, that is the Monastery of Saint Moses the Ethiopian in Syria, on August 27, on the eve of the liturgical feast of Saint Moses (which falls on August 28), one prays and fasts for the release of Fr. Paolo Dall'Oglio, kidnapped about a month ago in the Raqqa, and for peace in Syria. This was reported to Fides Agency by Fr. Jacques Mourad, Head of the historic monastic community of the Syrian Catholic rite, re-founded in 1982 by the Jesuit Dall'Oglio, and currently houses ten monks. Over the years, the monastery opened its doors to accommodate members of other Christian denominations and launched a joint ecumenical spiritual community, which promotes dialogue between Christianity and Islam.

Contacted by Fides, Fr. Mourad explains: "On 27 August, the eve of the Feast of St. Moses the Ethiopian, annual celebration for our community and our monastery, we monks live a special day of fasting, meditation and prayer, also attended by faithful Christians and Muslims.

We will offer our prayer in particular to ask God for the protection and liberation of our confrere, Fr. Paolo. We do not know who kidnapped him and we have no news of him. We live these hours with sadness and trepidation, we are concerned but live in hope. We ask all the faithful throughout the world to join our fasting and our prayer, and we launch an appeal for his release".

Fr. Mourad, a Syrian Catholic originally from Aleppo, adds: "We also want to implore God the gift of peace for Syria, torn by war. We deplore all forms of violence, which is never the solution. We hope we can start some form of dialogue and a new era of reconciliation for the Syrian people".

In these two years of war, the community of Deir Mar Musa, a monastery 80 km north of Damascus, "has remained faithful to its charism of prayer, work, dialogue, peace and reconciliation", said Fr. Mourad. The community is present in other two monasteries: one in Syria, the monastery of St. Elias in Qaryatayn, one in Iraqi Kurdistan, the monastery of the Virgin Mary in Sulaymaniyah.

Saint Moses the Ethiopian (330; + Scete, 405), a known robber became a famous hermit, converted many and led them with him to the monastery. The Roman martyrology remembers him on August 28. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 26/08/2013)