



## **AMERICA/CHILE - "Water should not be anyone's privilege": the first congress for water in Chile**

Santiago (Agenzia Fides) - More than a hundred people gathered yesterday, 10 October, to attend the opening of the "First Cabildo for Water", a meeting organized by the Coalition for the Defence of Water and Life. The event will last three days and takes place at the headquarters of the National Congress in Santiago. The note sent to Fides Agency from a local source informs that the opening ceremony was led by the Bishop of Aysen, His Exc. Mgr. Luis Infanti and was attended by representatives of at least 50 communities that came from all regions of the country, and explained their demands and urgent problems.

Mgr. Infanti blessed the water brought by the delegates, which had been taken from lakes, streams and rivers in their region and pointed out that "water has often been captured, kidnapped and commodified, but we know that it must give life and reach all our brothers and sisters, flow in abundance and not be anyone's privilege".

The representatives explained the problems regarding their city or area. As a common element the lack of a legislation on priorities for water use was emphasized: household drinking, therefore for agriculture and, finally, for industries. In many areas this lack of legislation has given rise to disputes among the communities and the world of work, considering for example how the mining industry has exploited and polluted rivers and groundwater.

Associations of Rural Drinking Water in the meantime are looking for solutions to their problems in terms of quantity and quality of water. The Bishop of Aysen, in his speech, stressed the hope that this meeting was a step forward for a concrete legislative request, with laws that consider water as a human right for public use. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 11/10/2013)