



## **AFRICA/NIGERIA - "The Church urged to reduce poverty", says the Director of Caritas**

Abuja (Agenzia Fides) - "Nigerian Bishops are concerned that economic growth is real and not just on paper. They want a real growth that creates jobs for our people, especially for young people", said Fr. Evaristus Bassey, Executive Director of the Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria, in a recent interview with media in Abuja, dedicated to economic issues. Fr. Bassey noted that although economic statistics submitted by the Government denote an increase of national wealth, this has not meant there has been an improvement of the living conditions of the majority of Nigerians.

If state authorities are therefore required to adopt policies that encourage the creation of jobs, Fr. Bassey added that the Church must also do its part. "Many churches generate millions of naira every week through collections. Instead of putting all into the physical development of the Church, a percentage of these funds should be geared towards poverty reduction programmes for everyone", said the Director of Caritas.

Fr. Bassey also stressed that "the churches that can pay a good salary should stop paying below the minimum wage".

The Director of Caritas finally remarked that the programs for poverty reduction undertaken by some Nigerian institutions, such as the Central Bank, should be monitored to ensure that the funds reach those who really need it. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 16/10/2013)