



AMERICA/NICARAGUA - Closing of the Year of Faith, praying for peace, but churches are empty because of fear

Jinotega (Agenzia Fides) - "Sincere dialogue between the government and re-armed groups must take precedence over weapons, because war does not leave anything good", said His Exc. Mgr. Carlos Enrique Herrera Gutiérrez, O.F.M., Bishop of Jinotega, speaking to the press on Sunday, October 27. According to the note sent to Fides Agency, the meeting took place in the sacristy of the Cathedral of San Juan, after the closing Mass of the pilgrimage of Catholics who had left from Los Robles (20 kilometers north) to get to the city center of Jinotega. Three reasons for the celebration: to invoke the Lord for peace in Nicaragua, the closing of the Year of Faith and the Jubilee for the centenary of the ecclesiastical Province.

The Bishop's words were motivated by the terrible tension that is being experienced by the population in the area". The situation in communities of the municipalities of Pantasma and Wiwili even affects the religious celebrations of the parishes", said Mgr. Herrera Gutiérrez, reporting that in the last 15 days we have seen a significant drop of the faithful in the parishes of these peasant communities, as "especially young people are afraid of ending up in the midst of some clash that could start off in the area".

The Bishop is willing to act as a mediator between the government and rearmed groups "if there were sincere dialogue, an agreement to lay down their arms", and added: "We are inviting the faithful to pray, to trust in the Lord so that he helps us. Weapons, violence, war, bring sadness and cause death, and this is not what we want". Armed groups have appeared in the north of the country since 2009, and since July 2013 they have clashed several times with the army (see Fides 15/10/2013). In the past month, two members of the CPC (Councils of Citizen Power, a sort of committee that assists the mayor for the most urgent needs of the community) were killed in Wiwili and Pantasma, presumably by rearmed groups. This has resulted in the increased presence of the army and police in the area. The police prefer to label these groups as "gangs", while they call themselves "rebels against the government of Daniel Ortega". (CE) (Agenzia Fides 29/10/2013)