



ASIA/PHILIPPINES - Solidarity with Muslims: Advent message on behalf of the movement "Silsilah"

Zamboanga (Agenzia Fides) - Among the many disasters and conflicts in the Philippines and around the world, adding divisions and prejudices, and have re-opened old wounds, the movement for dialogue "Silsilah", active for about 30 years in the southern Philippines, invites believers to spend the season of Advent and Christmas in full solidarity with Muslims. The message - reads a statement sent to Fides by "Silsilah" - "gives voice to the hope of dialogue and peace present in every sincere heart that believes in God's love and compassion".

"Advent – points out "Silsilah" - is one of the historical events that unite Christians in the belief that God came at a particular moment of history as Emmanuel, God-with-us. Christmas is the feast of the visible presence of God who took the form of man in Jesus Christ". The movement calls on Christians and Muslims to celebrate Christmas - as well as "Ramadan", holy moment for Muslims - in the spirit of full fraternal solidarity, "to go beyond their own faith and to open up to a common spiritual celebration". The message one wants to share is that "God is a God of love and compassion". This mystery of love "is an invitation for Christians to reach everyone, because we are all God's creatures and all are loved by God, regardless of culture and religion".

The text notes that "the recent crisis in Zamboanga was a great test for us all. During the conflict, some said that it was a conflict of religion. Thank God some Muslim and Christian leaders managed to stop these rumors, avoiding what could have been a more dangerous conflict. Today we want to reaffirm with this message the need to continue to work together in solidarity". We feel a "special mission", says the note, "to rebuild trust and friendship between Muslims and Christians".

The hope is that "Advent becomes for Christians a time of deep reflection and conversion to God through prayer, meditation and fasting, which will lead them to be loving, compassionate and sympathetic towards others". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 04/12/2013)