



VATICAN - Cardinal Filoni in Guadeloupe: "the time has come for this local Church to reawaken the enthusiasm for evangelization"

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - "The time has come for this local Church to reawaken the enthusiasm for evangelization. Deepen the faith of those who are already baptized and share it with those who have drifted away from the Church, this is the pastoral urgency that your diocesan ecclesial Community has to deal with". This is what the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Cardinal Filoni Fernando said to the Catholic community of the island of Guadeloupe, the last stage of his pastoral visit in the Antilles, where he celebrated Mass on the feast of St. Francis Xavier, Patron of the Missions, on the afternoon of Tuesday, December 3.

In the Cathedral of the Diocese of Basse-Terre and Pointe-à-Pitre, where Bishops, priests, religious and laity gathered, the Cardinal pointed out that Saint Francis Xavier "is, no doubt, with the exception of Paul, the greatest missionary in the history of the Church". Since 1541, when he left Lisbon "he spent every moment of his life at the service of the Gospel". The Prefect of the Congregation continued: "In his ascension to the Father, the Lord gave his disciples the great commission to evangelize the entire world ... And St. Francis Xavier helps us to see more clearly what a man with a missionary heart can accomplish. In just eleven years, in fact, he managed to evangelize Goa, the southern part of India, Indonesia and Japan".

In his homily, the Cardinal recalled that "the evangelization of the island of Guadeloupe began in 1635. Today 84% of the population is Catholic, with a well-established local Church. However, the missionary task is far from complete. In fact, a well-established local Church is always in danger of losing its initial missionary zeal". Therefore the Prefect referred to Pope Francis' exhortation during the recent World Mission Day to spread throughout the world the light of faith and to be witnesses of Jesus Christ, and urged the local community: "It is time to encourage new vocations to priesthood and consecrated life and to invite the laity to participate actively in the various fields of the pastoral life of the diocese, such as catechesis and charitable works. It is also time to encourage new missionary vocations among priests, religious and also the laity, to help the universal Church to evangelize the regions of the world that have a great need of the Gospel". (SL) (Agenzia Fides 04/12/2013)

> LINKS

The full text of Cardinal Filoni's homily, in French: http://www.fides.org/fra/attachments/view/file/C.Fil_Om_Guad_FRA.doc: