



ASIA/PAKISTAN - Religious leaders: may 2014 be a "year of peace" in Pakistan

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) – May 2014 be "a year of peace and reconciliation" in Pakistan: is the appeal launched by the leaders of Christian and other religious communities during an interfaith meeting in Lahore, in the name of dialogue and harmony. As reported to Fides, Mgr. Sebastian Francis Shaw OFM, Archbishop of Lahore, remarked that "the effect of dialogue among us is to make us get closer to one another, and to eliminate fear and suspicion". "Our land of Pakistan is very fertile for dialogue and we believe in a merciful God who gives hope and energy to live together. It is nice to see and hear prayers for peace rise from churches, mosques, Hindu and Sikh temples: this helps to create an atmosphere of harmony in the country". The Archbishop launched an appeal so that "the light of God enlightens the darkness in our hearts, bringing a hope for peace".

Among the Muslim leaders participating, Sohail Ahmed Raza, head of the Muslim youth organization "Minhaj-ul-Quran" expressed the hope that may "2014 be the year of lasting peace in Pakistan", while the mufti Muhammad Ashiq Hussain, head of the local madrasa (Islamic school), spoke of the Christmas message of peace, saying that interreligious encounters "help Pakistanis to grow in mutual respect and build a prosperous Pakistan". The Sikh leader Sardar Gernail Sing said that "it is urgent to say to all of our children to be close to each other because our country is a peaceful place where to live". Even the Hindu leader Bhagat Lal pointed out that "it is a good tradition that leaders and believers of all faiths continue to meet often, we are all Pakistanis and we want peace in our country".

The meeting in Lahore was organized by the "Council for Interreligious Dialogue", an organization promoted by some Christian priests like Fr. Inayat Bernard and Fr. Francis Nadeem OFM Cap, which operates with the intent to "create a peaceful, tolerant and bright Pakistan". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 02/01/2014)