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AMERICA/PANAMA - "An inclusive democracy for the dignity of all the people in Panama": the Assembly of Bishops calls on people to vote on May 4

Panama City (Agenzia Fides) - "As part of the 500th anniversary of the Church in Panama and the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the "Gesta Patriotica" on January 9, historical events that have shaped the identity of our nation, we want to present the truth of the Gospel to illuminate the conscience of citizens and candidates in the upcoming elections to be held on 4 May": this is how the communiqué issued at the end of the Plenary Assembly of the Bishops' Conference of Panama begins.
This assembly, number 199, was held in Panama from January 7 to 9, and was widely followed due to the upcoming general elections.
"The Church does not seek any political influence. It simply aims, as pointed out by Pope Benedict XVI, at presenting the truth with all its moral strength and its experience in humanity. Our task is to form consciences, to defend justice and truth; build the Panama we all want and reaffirm a more participatory and inclusive democracy", reads the Bishops' statement sent to Fides Agency.
"We urge Catholics, men of good will, especially young people, to participate in the upcoming elections, and guided by the Gospel and by the ethical criteria, to elect candidates of proven honesty, sincerity and responsibility. In 24 years of democracy, the Church has promoted the adoption of criteria and ethical commitments in order to elect candidates who will form the new government, through the Electoral Ethics Pact 'Santa María La Antigua'.
The text concludes: "We urge the authorities to ensure that citizens can elect new leaders in a transparent manner, away from the demagogic practices and undue pressure, such as the buying and selling of votes and the illegal use of the assets and funds of the State". The document, signed by all the Bishops, is dated January 9, 2014.
With regards to the "Electoral Ethics Pact" see Fides 09/03/2013, 05/03/2013, 21/02/2013, 31/01/2013, 09/07/2012) (CE) (Agenzia Fides 10/01/2014)

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