



ASIA/INDIA - Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the elections: "The leaders respond to the expectations of the people"

New Delhi (Agenzia Fides) - "The Catholic Church strongly hopes that the general elections give the country leaders who understand the anxieties of the people and respond to their needs": is what is said in the Indian Bishops' Pastoral Letter, in view of the general elections, to be held next May. The document, sent to Fides Agency, is signed by cardinal Oswald Gracias, President of the Episcopal Conference and was issued at the conclusion of the Assembly of Bishops, held in Kerala. The text calls on politicians to "uphold the secular nature of our nation and promote harmony and a spirit of dialogue and inter-religious understanding". Other important aspects are, for the bishops, "to take care of minorities and the weaker sections of society, protecting their rights and to work for their welfare" but also "to safeguard the rights of the tribals for land, water and forests, and grant equal rights to Dalit Christians, equal to those provided to Dalits of other religions". The Bishops hope that the elected "work for an economy that seeks in particular to help the poor and the marginalized, to protect their dignity by allowing them to participate in the building of the nation". One of the concerns expressed is to "ensure a totally safe environment for all persons, especially women and children".

The Bishops reaffirm that "the Catholic Church does not identify with any political party", and that "it invites every eligible citizen to exercise his right and duty to vote and to do so with prudence, caution and judgment". Every vote counts, the Bishops explain, in a time of "profound transformation of the Indian society", which has seen "a huge development in the areas of communications, infrastructure, public services, and globalization, which has influenced every aspect of our lives". In this context, warns the message, "ethics is losing its primacy as a guiding principle for society" and "God is slowly pushed towards the periphery".

"We invite the faithful to spend time in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, in order to be able to discern what is best for the common good. All of us must pray fervently for good government. With the strength of the Lord and led by the Spirit we can all work together for a better India". (PA) (Agenzia Fides 17/02/2014)