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ASIA/PAKISTAN – Inauguration ceremony for Archbishop Shaw in Lahore: "A new beginning for the Church", says the Nuncio

Lahore (Agenzia Fides) - "The arrival of the new Archbishop is a new beginning for this diocese, a new springtime in the Church of Lahore. It is an opportunity to strengthen the work of evangelization which continues to be today a major challenge in Pakistan": with these words, the apostolic Nuncio to Pakistan, His Exc. Mgr. Edgar Pena Parra, addressed his speech to more than 1,200 faithful who filled the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Lahore, for the inauguration ceremony of the new Archbishop, Sebastian Francis Shaw, OFM. Mgr. Shaw was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Lahore on February 14, 2009 and in recent years had been appointed Apostolic Administrator.
As learned from Fides, during the celebration, which was held a few days ago, Mgr. Pena Parra recalled the beginnings of faith in Punjab, and the history of the diocese, linked to the Franciscan presence. The "Vicariate of Punjab" was erected under the care of the Italian Capuchin Fathers in 1880. Six years later, on 1 September 1886, the Diocese of Lahore was erected, and the Belgian Capuchins took the responsibility to continue evangelization. "This Church in the heart of Punjab - said the Nuncio in his homily, sent to Fides, - was led by the Capuchin bishops until 1975, when the Pakistani Armando Trindade was appointed Bishop of Lahore".
The Nuncio continued: "We thank God, the Good Shepherd: since 1880, for 134 years, this local Church has grown in its mission of evangelization, strengthening its faith. For example, in 1950 there were only two diocesan priests and about 78 thousand Catholics. Today, the archdiocese has 30 diocesan priests and about 570,000 Catholics. The same can be said for the religious congregations. We also think of many generations of catechists who have lived their faith and even sacrificed their lives. Archbishop Shaw enters this great history as the 11th Bishop of Lahore".
Recalling Pope Francis' exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium", this is what the Nuncio said to the new Archbishop: "In the episcopal ministry you are called to be a teacher and preacher of the Good News, to be a father and a brother who is the source of unity within the diocese, gathering the community of faith around you. Above all, like Peter, you are called to be a person whose life is rooted in love and rooted in God". So you can "continue the work of evangelization in this wonderful land of five rivers", as the province of Punjab is often defined.
"In the task of evangelization - he concluded – I am close to you priests, religious and laity, eager to be your co-workers in the Lord's vineyard. And most importantly, you have the support of the Lord and the maternal protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary".
The new Archbishop, speaking to the assembly, said: "This is a day of hope for all of us. We are gathered to thank the Lord because He loves us and gives His Son for us. We are in a country crossed by many problems and unanswered questions, but God gives us the strength to go on: the Good Shepherd gives his life for all of us". The final thought was ecumenical: Mgr. Shaw spoke of the "joy of Pentecost", seeing representatives and members of other Christian denominations who took part in the celebration, recalling that "only if Christians are united they will be able to give authentic witness of faith in Pakistan". (IB-PA) (Agenzia Fides 19/02/2014)

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