



## **AMERICA/VENEZUELA - "A process of reconciliation is necessary", Bishops call dialogue to discover the truth**

Caracas (Agenzia Fides) – “With deep concern we watch the events happening in our country. Above all we see the violence, with its tragic consequences, people dead and wounded. The dead and the wounded belong neither to the government nor to the opposition, they all, without distinction, belong to their families and to the people of Venezuela”. This was part of a statement issued by the presidency of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Venezuela, a copy of which was sent to Fides. The statement addressed the terrifying situation in the country. “The students and all the people have the right to protest as stated in our Constitution – the Bishops’ Conference affirms - but it is always necessary to ensure that protest never degenerates into violence. Police forces and the military have the duty to respect human rights. No social or political model has the right to impose itself on another. Venezuela’s constitution guarantees the conditions for a pluralistic society ”.

The bishops observe: “We are promoting the necessary process of reconciliation. This demands open minds and open hearts, able to acknowledge that we are all equal, we all possess the same human dignity. This dialogue has its own characteristics. The first is respect and acknowledgement for those who are different . The second is the search for the truth . It has been proposed to set up a Commission for Truth to reach the truth about painful events which

have devastated Venezuelan families. Venezuela needs to know who committed the crimes and to see them duly punished, whoever they are”.

The statement dated 25 February signed by the presidency of the Bishops’ Conference, concludes with an exhortation: “The Word of God reminds us that we are all brothers and sisters. The Church in Venezuela, through the bishops, is in favour of dialogue and calls on all the men and women of Venezuela to show the world that the teaching of Jesus, the Lord, leads us to become builders of authentic peace.”

After almost three weeks of demonstrations, students and people continue to clash with the National Guard . The clashes started in the province of, at San Cristobal and gradually spread to many different towns. San Cristobal, close to the border with Colombia, continues to be the scene of the most fiercest clashes and ferocious repression of demonstrators: army troops have been deployed in large numbers, we learn in a report from Bishop Jesús González de Zárate Salas, Auxiliary Bishop of Caracas. Bishop Mario del Valle Moronta Rodriguez, of the diocese of San Cristobal, has called for dialogue to start and violence to end: "In the name of the Lord Jesus, we ask that all forms of violence be stopped - verbal, aggression, repression – let us strive to show that we are men of peace". (CE) (Agenzia Fides, 26/02/2014)