



## **AFRICA/MALAWI - Malawi has a new President**

Lilongwe (Agenzia Fides)- Malawi has a new president. He is Peter Arthur Mutharika, 74 year old brother of Bingu wa Mutharika, President who died in 2012 while in office, succeeded by Joyce Banda who has led the country for the past two years.

The electoral Commission announcement came just after midnight yesterday May 30, after the High Court had allowed a recounting of the ballots. However the Court recalled that the law requires results to be made public within eight days after the voting . Voting for the 20 May elections was extended in some polling stations until 22 May because of serious organisation difficulties (see Fides 22/5/2014), and therefore the results had to be announced by midnight yesterday.

The new President won 36% of the votes. “This was a vote in which regional and clan divisions emerged clearly, as in the past the south is still the great elector of the presidents of Malawi” Fides was told by Monfort missionary father Piergiorgio Gamba, who has lived and worked in this country for decades. “ The north of Malawi gave 50% of its votes to Joyce Banda (who came third), the centre gave 50% of its votes to Lazaro Chakwera (who came second) whereas the south voted compactly for Peter Mutharika” the missionary explained. Serious irregularities in the voting and ensuing institutional clashes between outgoing president Banda and the Supreme Court, which had declared not valid the decision of the head of state to annul the vote and call new elections within 90 days, led to clashes in which at least three people were killed. “Black Friday in Mangochi- Fr. Gamba told Fides yesterday – with a series of demonstrations which police stopped with shooting, killing one demonstrator and filling the wards of Mangochi Hospital with the injured, some were inmates of Saint Monica's Hostel for Girls affected by tear gas”. “Situated just outside the Catholic cathedral, the Hostel is run by the Sisters of Divine Providence and has hundreds of girls” the missionary explained.

“Let’s hope that now Peter Arthur Mutharika will keep promises made during the electoral campaign, like the prison reform and lower prices for cement and metal sheeting to enable to people to live in more permanent buildings and abandon hut homes, standard for the great majority of Malawians. A small step, but if achieved, of great importance” concluded Fr. Gamba. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 31/5/2014)