



VATICAN - Catholic Prayers in the Languages of the World (2) AZERI: to mark the 6th anniversary of the Catholic Mission of Baku, Azerbaijan

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Azerbaijan is situated in the Caucuses region of Asia. It has an area of 86,000sq km and a population of about 7,600,000. Formerly a Soviet Territory, Azerbaijan became independent in 1990 and a member of the Community of Independent States. In 1992 the nationalist opposition came to power. In 1993 the Armenian troops from Upper Karabakh took control of the region occupying south west Azerbaijan. The Communist Party returns to power and Gueidar Aliev became President of the Republic.

Catholics in Azerbaijan were once a larger community, though always a discreet number, and were mostly linked to non-Azerbaijani ethnic groups, in particular of Polish origin. A beautiful Catholic basilica was erected in Baku in 1888 but Joseph Stalin ordered its destruction during the last century. During that difficult period Catholics turned to the Orthodox Church which generously assured them the sacraments.

After the fall of communism, Catholics were under the care of the Apostolic Administration of the Caucasus of the Latins; they are now in the care of the Salesians. The Catholic community is constituted of both local people, descendants of Catholic immigrants, who celebrate the liturgy in Russian, and the foreign community which uses English in its liturgy. There are also communities of Lutherans, Baptists and Pentecostals.

On 11 October 2000 Pope John Paul II instituted the Catholic "Missione sui juris" of Baku, entrusting it to the Salesian Fathers(SDB) and in May 2002 he visited Baku and said Mass at a sports ground.

According to the Pontifical Year Book 2006, Baku Mission has between 350 and 400 Catholic faithful, 1 priest, 3 Sisters and 4 Brothers. "This month we have formed two rosary Groups - Mission Superior Fr. Jan Capla, told Fides -: one of adults and the other of young people". Fr Capla sent Fides the most important Catholic prayers in Azeri. However he explains that only a few are available in Azeri and that texts are not official because Russian is used for the Liturgical prayer of the Catholic community in Azerbaijan. (J.M.) (Agenzia Fides 11/10/2006, righe 19, parole 263)

> LINKS

See prayers in AZERI: http://www.fides.org/ita/approfondire/preghiere/prayer_111006en_azeri.doc: