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The forces that move history are the same that make man happy

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The reconstruction and the return of Christians to Qaraqosh

WHEN THE DESIRE OF RECOMMENDING IS MORE STRONGER OF FEAR

Rimini, Friday August 24th – In the Intesa Sanpaolo A3 hall, at 11.30 am, Maria Laura Conte, director of AVSI communication, introduces the meeting which focuses on reconstruction and return of Christians to Qaraqosh, «a fragment of Middle East that helps us to understand what is happening in this tortured land, a destiny that concerns us». Attending: Maria Gianniti, sent by foreign editors of Tg1, Georges Jahola, priest of the diocese of Mosul, Kirkuk and Kurdistan, Edoardo Tagliani, coordinator of AVSI activities in Iraq, Mons. Alberto Ortega Martín, apostolic nuncio to Iraq and Jordan.

Gianniti states that one of the problems of current journalism is that they focus on the war but they neglect what happens next: few are the "envoys" who return to see the reconstruction of the places at the end of a conflict. After explaining the dynamics of the ISIS affirmation in Syria and Iraq, the journalist focuses on the campaign to reconquer the territories of the so-called caliphate, in particular on the city of Mosul (July 2017) and Raqqa (October 2017). The Gianniti reiterates that «the reconstruction is important above all because if you do not do something about it immediately, you could create again a discontent that would feed the birth of new cells related to ISIS».

Finally, the journalist emphasizes the importance of events such as the Meeting, in order to remain constantly updated on what is happening in the Middle East, addressing people who come from those places. «Today the envoys have become difficult - explains Gianniti - because it is more dangerous. Since the 11th of September it is hard to be welcomed in the war zones. There are shady areas of which nobody knows anything and to which we do not have access».

Georges Jahola, a priest of the diocese of Mosul, Kirkuk and Kurdistan for the Catholic Syrians, explains that since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the Iraqi people have lived an era of violence and social destruction. In particular, Christians have suffered the worst fate, going from one million in 2003 to 250 thousand in 2014. Jahola has collaborated in the planning of the return of refugees in the city of Qaraqosh and the organization of a campaign to file and document the city. Starting from April 2017, he also worked on projects relating the reconstruction of destroyed houses, farms and places of worship.

Regarding the role of the West in the reconstruction, Jahola says that the aid came only from the Christian organizations, but not from the states. «We do not want to blame anyone, we as a Church want to work for the return of Christians and for reconstruction. What ISIS did, did it for everyone and nobody can say they didn't know. Today, Qaraqosh remains the last bastion of Christianity in the Nineveh Plain in Iraq. In the future it will be said: "here is where the Christians lived"». Regarding the title of the Meeting, the priest affirms: «The Meeting gives hope to those like us who come from a tortured country, and within this hope there is also happiness».

Edoardo Tagliani, from Avsi, illustrates the project of the Tents Campaign for the construction of a nursery school in Qaraqosh and the project to reopen some farms planned for next September. Ta-



gliani speaks of a «silent war, which begins when the bombings end. A war that creates generations of displaced, uprooted people. Each of these children was born on the run, does not even have an image, a memory of their city. So much so that the return home is for them as being exiled home. This is one of the most serious damage of the war».

Monsignor Martín maintains that the testimony of faith of Christians in Iraq is a treasure for the West, a call to live more intensely. «Their “yes” cost him everything - says the guest - they left everything to not leave the faith».

Martin then focuses on the importance of the presence of Christians in the Middle East: «They create a bridge, they are architects of peace and must be supported with all our strength. They have a mission: they are the presence of Christ in the Holy Land. I ask all Christians to live with faith and unity which is very important for the church. In these lands, persecution has united Christians in a mysterious way. We are all one because we are witness to the good presence of the Lord, a promise for every man’s life».