

Cardinal praises Catholics in Vietnam for their witness to the faith

Filoni praises Vietnam's Catholic community

Cardinal's pastoral visit comes at a time of improved ties between Vietnam and the Holy See



Cardinal Fernando Filoni, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, lauded the efforts of the Catholic community in Vietnam during his pastoral visit last week and encouraged them in the path of mission.

Cardinal Filoni's dicastery coordinates missionary cooperation throughout the world, and he visited Vietnam after having accompanied Pope Francis' visit to Sri Lanka and the Philippines earlier this month.

His visit to Vietnam marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Xuan Loc, as well as the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's decree *Ad Gentes*, on the mission activity of the Church.

Cardinal Filoni stressed in a homily in Xuan Loc January 24 that the diocese “is a fruit of the Second Vatican Council, and has committed in the course of these years to announce the Gospel and make of you the true family of God”.

On January 23, Cardinal Filoni said Mass in Da Nang, and wished the Catholics “happy apostolate! So many people are waiting to know today, here, Christ”.

The Diocese of Da Nang was established by St John XXIII in 1963, during the Second Vatican Council, and for this reason “it was one of the first fruits of that extraordinary ecclesiastical gathering, in which the Vietnamese bishops took part,” Cardinal Filoni said.

Cardinal Filoni's schedule included a meeting with the Vietnamese bishops conference on January 20; a visit to a parish filled with ethnic minorities on January 21; a January 22 visit to the La Vang Marian Shrine, where the Virgin Mary appeared in 1798; and finally the visit to the parish of Hoi An, the most ancient city in Vietnam, which was evangelized 400 years ago.

Cardinal Filoni's pastoral visit to Vietnam comes at a moment of improved relations between the Holy See and Vietnam.

Relations have improved such that next month, Pope Francis will make a cardinal of Archbishop Pierre Nguyen Van Nhon of Hanoi.

Archbishop Nguyen's appointment as cardinal is the second important move Pope Francis has made in Vietnam in recent years, in an attempt to ease relations between the Vatican and Vietnam.

In September 2013 he appointed Paul Bui Van Doc as Coadjutor Archbishop of Ho Chi Minh City.

Archbishop Bui in 2012 proposed that dialogue between the Church and the atheistic doctrine

espoused by Hanoi, emphasizing a distinction between the trend of secularization in the West with what happened in the East, so as to find a new way to evangelize.

Diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the Holy See were dissolved in 1975, when the communist north overran South Vietnam.

But since then, the visits of more than 20 Vatican delegations led to the 2007 visit of prime minister Nguyen Tan Dung to Benedict XVI.

After the 2007 meeting, the Holy See and Vietnam began talks to re-establish diplomatic ties, and for this purpose a joint working group was established in 2009.

In 2011, Archbishop Girelli was appointed as non-resident special envoy to Vietnam, and the following year, Nguyen Phu Trong, secretary of the Vietnamese communist party, visited Benedict, thus showing that Vietnamese authorities really wished to normalize diplomatic relations.

Further improvements on the diplomatic side are expected for the sixth meeting of the working group, which should take place in the Vatican.

In the mean time, Cardinal Filoni visited Vietnam and encouraged the activities of the Catholic community, in an attempt to join pastoral activity to the diplomatic one.

Original story: Cardinal praises Catholics in Vietnam for their witness to the faith

Source: Catholic News Agency

Andrea Gagliarducci for CNA/EWTN News