

ADDENDUM: Against the fair of intolerance

By Ambassador Vincenzo Del Monaco, Head of OSCE Presence in Albania



...The media duly covered the contents of a noteworthy event, i.e. the ceremony on the appointment of the new Archbishop of Tirana and Durrës, Mons. Arjan Dodaj, in presence of the highest institutional and political actors of the country. Regardless of being a believer or an atheist, or embracing one religion instead of another, the exercise of pastoral activity profoundly affects the social fabric of the territory. To put it in numbers, Mons.

Dodaj will exercise his ministry in an area with over 1.5 million Albanians. His appointment, the appointment of heads of other religious confessions, represents an occurrence of national importance and, therefore, its coverage by the free press is more than appropriate.

The contribution I wish to synthetically provide – with a cool head – is about the power of the unspoken and of images. The embrace stilled in film between the Archbishop and the other high representatives of religious communities is to me as worthy as the homilies, if not more. On the one hand, this is a glimpse of Mons. Arjan's culture, of standing together in diversity, collaborating, following this truth that wants us to be part of the same human mosaic as brothers. For no man is whole by himself. And, in faith, one nourishes creation, without expecting reciprocation.

In the cathedral, last Saturday, one could feel the warmth of this extraordinary people, just like the bouquet thrown in Banski's painting in Bethlehem. One could also feel the vision of Scripture, of the Bible, in the case of Christians, as an instrument of reconciliation and liberation of people. The poor are the ones who teach us how to be liberated. The poor, who are not to be counted, but embraced.

In a world where politics often feeds off slogans, such as "zero tolerance", where the fair of intolerance dictates the rate of enjoyment of TV programs, where the fear of losing one's own identity exasperates the particular, that embrace among the heads of religious communities reminded us of the greatness of the Albanian people, who see no reason for profound division. I am wondering whether this is not an inherent Albanian trait, before any religious dimension. The tolerance shown during their everyday lives is exemplary for those many corners of the world where there is an illusion that the solution to cultural crises is to be sought in the withdrawal to one's identity roots. It is an example that deserves to be praised aloud, without ever taking it for granted.