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HEALTH - "Ebola is affecting the poorest people and the poorest continent. This is why there is a call for the mission to be present in Africa: to collaborate with the government, to work on the formation of the people and to aid the families affected by the disease," says Fr. Miguel Llamanzares, delegation superior of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus (MCCJ) in Asia. In spite of the fears about the virus, the fears surrounding the last outbreak of hemorrhagic fever in the western part of the continent and the thousands of victims, the Filipino priest warns that the "yes" to mission must always continue.

According to him, these trying times of the epidemic in Africa is the "best time" to go on mission to the continent. "It's the time to be present. Those who are there have chosen to stay and help as much as they can," Llamanzares said, encouraging fellow missionaries to follow suit". Encouraging missionaries and Catholic volunteers, he cites the example of a nun who has sacrificed her life and died in Uganda, during the first phase of the epidemic.

Llamanzares urged the Catholic community to pray for missionary work to flourish in Africa and for support for their apostolate. "This World Mission Sunday, we are invited to support the missionaries in Africa by praying for them and for supporting them financially. Controlling Ebola and treating the disease is taking a great toll financially among those affected," he added.

The latest data provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that there are almost 10 thousand cases of infection with Ebola virus, and at least 4,555 deaths recorded so far in seven countries: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Senegal, Spain and United States. Most of them - about 9,200 confirmed cases and 4,546 victims - are concentrated in the three most affected African countries: Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In these days, Senegal and Nigeria have been declared "Ebola Free". However, for the experts the real number is higher and amounts to about 18 thousand cases; moreover, in some remote areas of Africa it is difficult to quantify the actual number of dead and sick.

Ebola is a virus that causes very aggressive hemorrhagic fevers and has a very high mortality rate; the current strain has an incidence at around 90%. The first case of infection occurred last February in Guinea, and then spread to Sierra Leone and Liberia. It is spread by coming into

contact with blood and body fluids of infected persons. There is no effective treatment and the epidemic of recent months has prompted the WHO to declare an international emergency.

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