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## Appeal of the Italian bishops for the upcoming elections: “Not opportunisms but visions, Italy needs responsibility and participation”

“Italy needs the commitment of everyone. It needs responsibility and participation. We express our closeness and solidarity with those who suffer and seek answers to so many daily problems. We appeal to voters, to young people, to those who have lost confidence in the institutions and to the very representatives who will be elected to Parliament.” The statement is contained in an appeal to the women and men of Italy, signed by the Permanent Council of the Italian Bishops' Conference, gathered in Matera (Italy) September 20-22. “The war, the pandemic, the environmental and business crisis, widespread price increases, rising utility bills” are all issues that “sadden us and worry us deeply.” “We shall never become accustomed to seeing human life being trampled underfoot.” In the light of the above, the bishops urge to “dare to hope”, which “is not mere optimism” but “Christian realism.” The bishops remind all eligible **voters**, that “voting is a right and a duty that must be marked by awareness”, exercising “discernment among the various political proposals with a view to the common good, without prejudice to individual interests and focused on the construction of a more just society, a society that makes a new start with the 'last', a welcoming society that can be enjoyed by all.” For the Italian episcopate, “there is a widespread need for communities, which must be built and rebuilt locally in Italy and Europe, with an outward-looking gaze to the world, leaving no one behind.” The bishops remind **young people** : “With your vote you are sending a strong message to the whole of Italy to participate in the construction of the common good, respectful of the human person, of all persons at every stage of life. That is the only true criterion that should guide you in your choices.” Moreover, “your commitment for the care of Creation is an example for all.

The fact that young people side with those wishing to face and solve the problems that lie ahead is a hopeful sign.

At the same time, it is a commitment for us adults not to betray your dreams.” The bishops remind **those who feel discouraged** that “everyone's contribution is precious” and invite them to “set aside divisions and focus on the good of the country”, not allowing “disappointment to prevail”, because “democratic participation means love for our country. We encourage those who are facing serious problems and feel marginalised in society not to be disheartened and make their indispensable contribution.” In a central passage, the bishops address prospective **elected representatives**, to whom they ask “to never forget the lofty responsibility they have been entrusted with. They are there to serve everyone, especially those who are most vulnerable and those who have no opportunity to make their voices heard.” The bishops highlight a long list of challenges facing the country: “poverty is constantly and worryingly on the rise, demographic winter, protecting the elderly, local disparities, the ecological transition and the energy crisis, jobs protection, especially for young people, reception, protection, promotion and integration of migrants, cutting bureaucratic delays, reforms of the democratic expression of the State and election law”.

“This is the time for brave and organic choices,” the bishops conclude: “Not opportunisms, but visions. We encourage you to exercise political responsibility as ‘the highest form of charity’”, the bishops write in their message.

Finally, the episcopate asks to restart “from the living spaces” where “we recovered a sense of proximity during the pandemic.” The Synodal Path that the Churches in Italy are pursuing can indeed be “an opportunity to advance co-responsibility processes.” The bishops thus invite to rediscover and re-propose “the principles of Church social doctrine: human dignity, the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity.” “Let us love our country. The Church will continue reminding everyone of this and

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will highlight the importance of the common good versus self-interest, the defence of the inviolable rights of the person and the community, with severity if necessary," the appeal concludes.

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