
National Eucharistic Congress (CEN). Zuppi: “Rediscover the taste of bread to feed and be fed”

(from Matera) “The world breeds division, hatred, prejudice, subtle and tragically violent ethnic hatred, hate speech and hate encompassed by nuclear weapons. This Bread helps us to give taste to life and to work the great fields of our world to turn weapons into scythes, that we might finally build a world of 'Brothers all.’” The President of the Italian Bishops' Conference, Card. **Matteo Zuppi**, Archbishop of Bologna, concluded his homily from the platform in Vittorio Veneto Square, the venue of the inaugural ceremony of the National Eucharistic Congress in Matera, with a heartfelt appeal for peace. “Let us rediscover the taste of bread”, he said, echoing the theme of the Congress. “We

have been stripped of it during the pandemic. Let us rediscover it and enjoy it with greater familiarity.

Today in Europe we are experiencing a war that burns crops, deprives people of bread, causing widespread hunger.”

“From the city of Matera, as we return to savour the bread of the Eucharist, we want to recover to the taste of life”, said the “host” of the CEN Conference Msgr. **Antonio Giuseppe Caiazzo**, Archbishop of Matera-Irsina, to an assembly of 800 delegates, representing 116 dioceses, accompanied by 80 bishops: “From Matera, as we break the bread of the Eucharist and adore Jesus Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament, our message to all is that the opposite of confrontation is encounter, a hand extended to welcome, to provide support and to lean on each other.” Speaking from the 'city of Stone', following the Eucharistic procession that embraced all members of the people of God - including “our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, whom you have welcomed with their suffering” - Zuppi called for the rediscovery of the ancient gesture of the heads of families here in Matera who distributed bread among the members of their family. For Bread creates a family, which is the Church, whilst at the same time representing the family.

“Whoever stops before Jesus, is stopping before their younger brothers and sisters”,

the Cardinal said: “The more we put Jesus at the centre, in our personal lives and in the life of our common home, the more we will be one with each other”. An exquisitely Eucharistic image was chosen to illustrate Church synodality: “The monstrance is traditionally shaped in the form of the sun's rays emanating from it, thus we become luminous, because we are illuminated by His light, reflecting it because we are filled with His love.” And I also think that, conversely, this Body brings together and unites those many rays that comprise us: Jesus draws us to Himself, brings us together, and thereby makes us realise that we are not isolated, that we cannot live as islands, but that together we become one, like the wheat scattered on the hills”. “That is what defines the synodal Church,” Zuppi revealed. “By placing Jesus at the centre and nurturing, that is, by caring for others and nourishing ourselves with his love, giving and receiving. If we put this into our lives and if we change for the sake of it, we will find the answers we need for a Church that is Mother of all’. **The Mother Church is at the heart of the statement by the president of the Italian Bishops' Conference:** a mother who wants to reach out to all her children, with Jesus' compassion. Starting with the last: “She is a mother and wants to protect them from loneliness, from poverty, from insignificance, from violence, from all forms of exploitation.” Love is the secret: If we do not love,

everything becomes impossible, burdensome, as in the Gospel we have been listening to. If we love, strengthened by the love of Christ, by nourishing others we are nourished! Quenching the thirst of others makes us discover that we have a spring in our hearts, by dressing a naked person we wear the garment of heaven, which is the garment of love."

"That is why we cannot remain idle, removing the dust from the precious but lifeless artefacts in a museum",

the Cardinal actualised: "The Eucharist is the living bread, we will meditate on it during these days, and the altar teaches us to set the table for charity". "Rediscover the taste of bread to feed and be fed", the final invitation.

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