
Avvenire. Tarquinio steps down as editor-in-chief after 14 years: “We reported on processes and persons with a free and insightful gaze”

"We managed to observe the life of the world with a free, unfettered gaze. We grasped the importance of major unfolding processes, acknowledging them and viewing them from the right perspective. We did this not just by interpreting those processes, but by narrating the stories of the people involved, their names and faces." After 14 years, Marco Tarquinio steps down as editor-in-chief of the Italian newspaper Avvenire. Speaking to SIR from his home town of Assisi, he offers an overview of his professional commitment. "We made the effort of spelling out the names of all those who are doing good work, those who are advocating for nascent life or dignified labour. That is one important thing that newspapers can do. It is often argued that newspapers serve other purposes: to be the mouthpiece of people's perceptions, sensationalism, and perhaps even nastiness. This is not the case. We have confirmed and proved this together with my colleagues." **What is the biggest crisis you dealt with in the past 14 years?** There have been three crises. First of all, we faced a crisis in the economic model. What the Pope calls a prevailing thought that tends to become the only one. But most of all the issue of migration inflows and their management. The social covenant of the life of the world, the movement of people, has been turned into a problem. Like blood circulation in the human body, if stopped, we would lose our vitality. There would be no exchange. Without differences nothing would be fruitful. These are not slogans. It is the life of our country. Even if prosperity may seem to have reached its peak, there is a state of well-being that we must know how to achieve. Because men are the wealth of society, they are not the problem. The second crisis is the crisis of war. There are 169 ongoing conflicts in the world - the armed conflict in Ukraine is a symbol of this. They represent the extent and the instrument for resolving international disputes. This is the exact opposite of what is enshrined in our Constitution, which Pope Francis quoted on February 27, 2022, speaking to the world. We should have been filled with excitement and pride. Instead, we were inconsistent with that plea for responsibility. Unfortunately. **What would you describe as the highlight of these last 14 years?** There are many. People in our profession are well aware of how many imperfections there are. Every day, every newspaper we publish, is a small miracle. One of the major events that impressed me most from a professional perspective was when our staff at Avvenire was received in audience by Pope Francis on the occasion of the newspaper's 50th anniversary, five years ago. I stood next to him for three quarters of an hour, introducing him to all the men and women who work at Avvenire: copy editors, administrators, typographers. I was tired, exhausted. And I gazed at this man of God, older than me, who had a special word for each one of them. It was a great lesson of what it means to be father and Pope. And how much grace this service entails. **What is the legacy you are you passing on to your successor?** I will be passing on to Marco Girardo a legacy full of imperfections, but one that is beautiful and true. He is a fine man with lofty values, a beautiful person, as well as a wonderful colleague. Over these years, he has been one of my closest collaborators. He was the Managing Editor in charge of economy coverage and an expert in the digital transformation of news media. I believe I should pass on to him the idea that quality journalism is possible, in a Country that is telling us that machines perform better than human beings. We are being told that machines can outperform humans also in the news media sector. But this is not the case. It is not a good service to people's lives if the human relationship that gives heart to all things, which helps to give a human heart also to the laws and regulations governing our living together, is missing. That is what journalists can do: to accompany the life and gaze of the people. *SIR's words of thanks. A heartfelt thanks goes to Marco Tarquinio also from SIR, for his remarkable work over the years in the field of Catholic information, forthright, consistent, and faithful to the Gospel. Thank you also for having promoted and supported cooperation between the media of the Italian Episcopal Conference, in particular with SIR. But above all, thank you for the friendship personally shown to me numerous times, and on many occasions, over these years. And in extending to the incoming editor*

Marco Girardo my most affectionate best wishes for his new commitment at the helm of the newspaper, assuring him of my immediate collaboration and availability, I hereby salute with equal affection the outgoing editor-in-chief, my friend Marco, with the words of Psalm 92: "In old age they will still bear fruit; healthy and green they will remain, to proclaim, 'The LORD is upright' A. V.

Filippo Passantino