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## Card. Zuppi: "War is a pandemic, it involves us all."

"War is a pandemic. It involves us all." Card. **Matteo Zuppi**, archbishop of Bologna and president of the Italian Bishops' Conference, introduced the proceedings of the General Assembly of Italian bishops by sending his thoughts to the people of Emilia Romagna and expressing gratitude to Pope Francis - who has just entrusted him with a peace mission in Ukraine - "for his prophecy, so rare today, when talking about peace appears to avoid taking sides or failing to recognize everyone's responsibilities." "The Church and Christians believe in peace, we are all called to be peacemakers, even more so in the terrible storm of conflicts," the cardinal assured, recalling that "during World War II the Church was among the people and on the ground."

"We are the people of peace, beginning with Jesus who is our peace. We are so because of the history of our country, because of its location in the Mediterranean, a link between North and South, but also between East and West. We are so because of the deepest and most characteristic roots of our people."

**"There is a culture of peace among people to be generated and fortified"**, is Zuppi's thesis:

"Solidarity with refugees - the Ukrainian ones, but not only them - is an act of peace."

In the central part of the address, there were many timely reminders of the most urgent issues facing our country. **"Welcoming and birthrates are not only not opposed to each other, but complement each other and are born from the desire to look to the future,"** the cardinal reiterated in the wake of Pope Francis' recent statements at the States General of Birthrate. "Young couples often fail to establish a family simply because of job insecurity or the lack of supportive policies, beginning with housing," the IEC president stigmatized:

"We are a dying country." "We need migrants to live: businesses, families, society demand them. Let us not plant obstacles, with a punitive shadow, on their path to our country!" he called.

"The welcoming of newborn life is accompanied by closed doors to refugees and migrants," is the cardinal's analysis: **"It is the sad society of fear"**.

He then turned to the reality of migrants' conditions in our country: "There is a level of bureaucratic complexity that makes the path of integration and family reunification difficult; it takes a long time to obtain residence permits, the recognition of migrants' educational qualifications is neglected and **a decision on ius culturae keeps being postponed**. Meanwhile, the 2020 regularization is still waiting to be carried out in its entirety." "This does not provide security, in fact it expresses our insecurity," lamented Zuppi, who made the Pope's "serious, painful and challenging" words in the face of the Cutro shipwreck his own: "That shipwreck should not have happened, and we must do everything possible so that it does not happen again."

*On the issue of "work poverty" and job insecurity, the IEC president reiterated the demands of Caritas, which is asking the government for "anti-poverty policies" to reduce job insecurity and "work poverty."*

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The labor decree, on the other hand, "provides for de-taxation strategies that, while laudable, are not configurable as an income or anti-poverty policy. Not to mention that the decree envisions an increase in the duration and applicability of fixed-term contracts, as well as the expansion of the use of vouchers."

"There is no worthy life and no family without a home," Zuppi further denounced, "Why hasn't Italy, for years, made itself a hospitable home for young couples and the homeless? Converting part of the public stock for social housing may be helpful. There is a need for affordable housing." "The students' protest is a significant indicator of a broader silent unease," the cardinal stressed, "There is an Italy that is suffering: young people, families, the elderly, the homeless, the precariously employed, the poor. Loneliness is an additional poverty."

In short, there is a lack of "structural solutions" that address "not only access to the world of employment, but also the very dignity of the worker, his or her fair pay, equal pay for men and women, and social guarantees in case of one's own illness or that of a family member." He also made reference to the debate on reforms: **"In order to change the Constitution, it is necessary to rediscover a constituent spirit**, as was the case in the postwar period, in which all parties felt a common responsibility: it was not a time for political struggle, but a chance to found the political life of the future." "A first test," according to the Italian Church, "is an adequate and widely shared electoral law." More attention is also needed for the poorest and weakest, starting with the reorganization of elderly care, in favor of home care.

"Mafias have not disappeared today; on the contrary, they have expanded to the Center-North."

is the cry of alarm from the president of the Italian Episcopal Conference, who said that "there is a need for a broader awareness of the danger": "Where the social fabric is splintered, where the state is remote, where people are lonely, desperate, poor, where schools are weakened, there is ground for mafias to grow." On the pastoral level, it is necessary to "rethink more broadly the formation of the laity." The Italian Church is now living the Synodal Way, which has reached the stage of discernment, which "does not consist in the application of rules or in an endless sampling of interpretations."

"If we settle for the 'few yet pure' or the 'few yet our own,' we risk being irrelevant in the lives of too many and in history."

he stated, showing the way forward. "The synodal Church must be communicative," especially with regard to young people. Finally, he committed to continue the fight against abuse, beginning with listening to the voices of the victims.

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