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## Peace. Card. Zuppi: "Let's not allow hatred to prevail"

"Everybody needs the common good. If that is missing, then the concept of the fittest, the mentality of those who 'don't care', prevails. It's something that emerged strongly during the pandemic: we all need to help each other. We are all in the same boat", said Card. **Matteo Maria Zuppi**, Archbishop of Bologna and President of the Italian Bishops' Conference, addressing participants at a meeting promoted by the Casa Betania cooperative and 'L'accoglienza' non-profit organisation, on the theme of hospitality, held yesterday evening, Wednesday June 7, in St. Louis de Monfort parish in Rome. The meeting falls within the "2023 Family Network" programme, under way throughout the week to mark Casa Betania's 30th anniversary. We are all in the same boat, remarked the cardinal, referring to the floods in Emilia Romagna: "The floods were tragically overwhelming, but the show of solidarity and the willingness to recover and help one another prevailed. Outward appearance is sometimes more important than reality, but this disaster has taught us that we have to get back to work. We have to help each other, and not live as strangers or worse, as enemies." For Zuppi, this mentality must be rejected. Conversely, "it's important to remain united and be close to others."



**The welcoming process starts with kindness.** Referring to Pope Francis' encyclical 'Fratelli tutti' (Brothers All), the president of the Italian Bishops' Conference highlighted "the importance of kindness, which is not just a question of good manners, but rather a question of extending our gaze to all. It is not something useless, it is consideration, thoughtfulness, care. It all starts with kindness, by not seeing the world around us in a blurred or indifferent light." "Kindness is disarming, it makes people smile, it forces and helps others to become gentler", Cardinal Zuppi pointed out. "It is therefore the primary source of welcome: I encounter you; I meet you, I see you.

My fellow other exists!"

**Christians are always specialists.** "We tend to push people away," the Cardinal remarked, "and, at the same time, when we are pushed back, we feel hurt. There are many ways to be kind, enabling the other person to step forward. This is what a welcoming attitude is. It is not to categorise a person and eventually work out what we can do for them. It's to do, to ask, to care. We should take an interest in the other person in distress and not perhaps, for example, refer them to a specialist, which is also very helpful, claiming that we are not.

If we are Christians, we are specialists and we are expected to act as such."

**"How much security do we need in our lives?"** the cardinal asked. "We spend most of our time deciding who we should welcome and who we should not, when all we should be doing is recognising that the issue of reception is not just about migrants, it concerns everyone. This is a very slippery slope that we should avoid falling into. Similarly, birth rate and reception are two facets of the same coin. They are the same thing. Our grandparents had no certainty about the future when they gave birth to their children, despite countless difficulties." "But is a life without problems a beautiful life or one with futile problems that we create for ourselves?" asked Card. Zuppi, for whom "love is the way to resolve them and for a beautiful life. Security flows from love. Love is to be welcoming. A welcoming attitude always brings us the future and if it's missing, the future is also missing. Therefore, if we want a future, we must not be afraid." **Let us always seek life from beginning to**

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end. The cardinal went on to recall the tragedy of Giulia Tramontano, a pregnant woman killed by her partner. His Eminence expressed his "deep sorrow for two broken lives" and reaffirmed the importance of the "sacredness of life, which helps us to live well. When everything seems possible and I can choose everything, I hurt myself and hurt others. Let us always seek life from beginning to end. We will not find it in addictions or fears, but only in love." "Let us be peace builders!" In his concluding remarks, Card. Zuppi reflected on his recent journey to Ukraine. "We don't realise or have forgotten what it's like to live under constant shelling, to see our parents being killed. We forgot torture. Not only should we pray, we should spread the peace we have to those who don't. Peace is always vulnerable. So let us remember to pray for peace, and be postulators of peace. Let's not allow hatred to prevail. Let us be peace builders!"

Andrea Regimenti