
Msgr. Giordano, Apostolic Nuncio to the EU: “I believe in the diplomacy of peace, encounter, and dialogue”

Msgr. **Aldo Giordano** is returning to Europe after seven years as Apostolic Nuncio in Venezuela. On May 8 the Holy See officially announced the appointment of Bishop Giordano, born in 1954, as Nuncio to the European Union in Brussels. He left Europe in 2014, vacating his post as Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the Council of Europe and Strasbourg. He had already tackled European affairs between 1995 and 2008 in his capacities as Secretary General of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE). A trained philosopher, a man of dialogue, and a passionate mountaineer, Monsignor Giordano entered the diplomatic career out of pure obedience, separated from his original pastoral path, which he continued to cherish even as Nuncio. His diplomatic and official commitments, both in secular Strasbourg and in the problematic Maduro-led Venezuela, did not detract from his desire and time for meeting and interacting with people without any formal titles. Whoever is acquainted with that environment knows that the Nuncios are normally reserved, but anyone who has met Monsignor Giordano also knows that he does not shy away from questions. SIR contacted him upon the official announcement of his new appointment.



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Pope Francis told me on several occasions: “you have an excellent knowledge of Europe and we sent you into exile in Venezuela, but one day you will return!” Also friends expected that I would return to Europe, but I was expecting Africa or Asia, after seven years in Latin America. **What are your feelings about this?** I am overjoyed to return “home” and to resume my service to the continent’s great and complicated unification process, but at the same time I am afraid of finding myself in a changed Europe, in view of the current pace of historical events. My first concern will be to understand the new situation, on tiptoes. **What is your personal assessment of your past seven-year service in Venezuela?** The people of Venezuela have “stolen my heart” with their affection, their passion for life, music, dances, religious feeling, closeness to the Church, and, above all, their suffering and tears. I have fond memories of my visits to the Yanomami indigenous communities living in villages in the Amazon rainforest, to the wooden pile-dwellings of the Warao Indians living in Orinoco Delta, facing the Canaima waterfalls in the territory of the Pemon indigenous people. I witnessed the struggle of these people protesting on the streets; I was involved in dialogue initiatives and talks; I followed election campaigns; I observed global geopolitical games being played out in these lands. My relationship with the Church of this country, with its bishops, priests and young people has been very rewarding, especially during the various visits I conducted in all the dioceses. **You are leaving a country caught in the grips of dramatic situations - politically, economically, with regard to the protection of rights and freedoms, and now also in terms of health: what is your message to the people facing this predicament?** The oil crisis and rampant inflation have destroyed the economy, nullifying the value of the local currency. The minimum monthly wage amounts to just a few dollars and the people are suffering. But I have also seen the heroism of solidarity in parishes, in Caritas services, in associations, in NGOs, in international organisations, where the poor are often helped by the poor. People are grateful for global solidarity, also the Nunciature is involved in this solidarity effort. Time and again I felt that my most important service to this country was to foster the confidence and hope that flows from faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Feelings of abandonment, weariness and despair are insidious and dangerous evils. **What is your message to the political leaders of Venezuela?** When I arrived in Venezuela, on February 3, 2014,

I quickly realised that the serious problem of the country was the social (rich and poor) and ideological (Chavistas and opponents) division and polarisation. On 30 April last, the Holy Father Francis sent a message to the people of Venezuela to mark the beatification of Dr José Gregorio Hernandez - a doctor and scientist who devoted his entire life to the poor, beloved by the Venezuelan people - and which I had the great joy of presiding over. The Pope called for urgent and responsible progress on the path to reconciliation, national unity, prioritising the common good of the people and the rebirth of the country. To me this is the most important message to political leaders, as well as to members of the opposition and civil society representatives. **Have you cultivated relations with Europe over the years?** Europe plays a very important role in Venezuela, also owing to a large presence of Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and German nationals in this country. As dean of the diplomatic corps, I enjoyed friendly relations with fellow European ambassadors. Europe's position is decisive in all matters of the life of the country, economically, politically and culturally. I viewed it through the eyes of Venezuela and Latin America, and tried to understand how Europe viewed Venezuela.



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I accompanied the construction of Europe from 1995 to 2013 through to the activities of the CCEE, the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) and the Holy See. I co-operated with leaders of the various Churches in Europe, I took part in meetings between Muslims and Christians in Europe and I met with political leaders. I would like to resume these relationships, because I believe in a diplomacy of peace, of encounter, of dialogue, of initiating processes, as we are taught by Pope Francis.



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I believe that Europe's identity and roots remain a decisive issue, as is Europe's relationship with the rest of the world. Only a Europe with strong roots can play a significant role in global geopolitics, a sound relationship with religions, also tackling the major migratory challenge. In a tragic way, the virus has shown us that we are all in the same boat: either we save ourselves together or together we will fall into an abyss. The very dreams underlying the establishment of the European Union remain, namely to contribute to peace, to human fraternity, to an economy that will not let people die of hunger, to environmental protection and care. It should be remembered that Europe has a remarkable cultural and artistic heritage for humanity to enjoy.

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