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## Society. Card. Bassetti: "Recovery yet to be consolidated, thousands of jobs lost"

"The consolidation phase of economic recovery must extend beyond the present circumstances, while constantly safeguarding workers' rights." Card. **Gualtiero Bassetti**, archbishop of Perugia-Città della Pieve, President of the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI), outlined the situation in Italy, which is finally registering "some encouraging signs, while the Covid-19 vaccination campaign is progressing." "We are grateful to all public authorities and health workers who are working for this purpose, along with citizens' commitment to support what the Pope called 'an act of love'", was the heartfelt homage paid by the Cardinal in his opening address to the Permanent Council of the Italian Bishops' Conference, ongoing in Rome until September 29. ""We must continue along this path, which enables us above all to save so many human lives, especially the most fragile among us." "Economic growth does not represent an absolute value", he cautioned: "It must be assessed and defined according to social and environmental sustainability standards", as enshrined in the theme of the next Social Week, to be held in Taranto in just under a month's time. The Synod is "an opportunity to be seized with courage and wisdom, with a view to promoting processes of renewal and horizons of hope at a time of uncertainties and fear." *"The wounds caused by the pandemic in the economic and social fabric of the country remain severe"*, the Cardinal said: "Suffice it to say that despite the rebound of the last few months, as compared to two years ago,

**thousands of workers are yet to recover their jobs",**

The new Caritas Report on Poverty and Social Exclusion shows that close to one in three of new poor in 2020 asked for help at Caritas Centres in 2021. For Card. Bassetti, this "data has an ambivalent meaning: on the one hand, it could point to the first positive effects of economic recovery; on the other, it shows that we have not yet returned to pre-crisis times, when poverty was nonetheless a social emergency." For this reason, "it is crucial that the benefits of economic growth be distributed in such a way as to reduce - and not increase - the inequalities that have worsened as a result of the pandemic." Likewise,

**"the historic opportunity to allocate adequate funding to the new single allowance for children should not be missed, given the strategic task that this measure is expected to fulfil .**

Rebirth from the demographic winter requires a development model with clear principles and guidelines that not only takes charge of but also harmonises the various seasons of life within an organic framework." "Without mentioning the legal aspects, the president of the Italian Bishops' Conference referred to the euthanasia **referendum, "to decriminalise the murder of the consenting person", which is reason for "grave concern."** He underlined the "lack of compassion in helping people to die, coupled by an anthropological and nihilistic conception which leaves no room for hope or interpersonal relations." His Eminence noted "the stark contradiction between a solidarity-based mobilisation, that saw an entire country take action against a deadly virus, and an initiative that, regardless of the intentions of the signatories of the referendum request, proposes a solution representing the negation of humanity." "Those who are suffering must be accompanied and helped to find reasons to live", is the recommendation of the Italian Church: "The enforcement of the law on palliative treatments and pain therapy must be called for." **In analysing the international context, the Cardinal voiced his concern for the situation in Afghanistan:** "Although it may have disappeared from the headlines, it must not be forgotten", he pleaded. "We are witnessing the consequences of choices that failed to produce stable and lasting peace and development" in

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Afghanistan, "while the population is subject to severe violence, revenge and violations of fundamental human rights, which affect women and children in particular." *"We hereby reiterate our appeal to the international community to act as guarantors of peace and human dignity," Bassetti said. "We call on those in power in Kabul today to exercise responsibility, respect for the human person and commit themselves to guaranteeing access to humanitarian aid that will help the population in need."* "Lastly, "a fraternal thought" to the Christian communities in the area, "to whom we assure the solicitude of the Italian Church in participating in local relief and refugee reception programmes in agreement with national Institutions." The 20th anniversary of 9/11 World Trade Centre attacks - Bassetti concluded - "has once again evoked the issue of international terrorism and the closely related theme of peaceful coexistence between nations, cultures and religions.

**Now more than ever, our world needs dialogue, respect and mutual acceptance of the diversities that enrich the whole human family".**

In this light, "the Mediterranean basin can play a concrete and yet symbolic role of rapprochement and mutual support between Europe, Africa and the Middle East, for a peace that may return to blossom from what has been the cradle of humanity over the centuries." The proposals initiated by the Committee preparing the Mediterranean Meeting scheduled to take place in Florence in the early months of 2022 are a step in this direction.

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