
Feast of Saint Francis. Card. Zuppi: “May the terrible wolf of war be tamed”

“With St. Francis we believe that the terrible wolf of war can be tamed and we share Pope Francis' heartfelt appeal directed to the two directly involved presidents - the aggressor and the victim - and to all those who can help facilitate dialogue and guarantees of a just peace.” With these words, which refer to the ongoing tragic situation, Card. **Matteo Zuppi**, archbishop of Bologna, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, concluded his homily given during Mass for the Feast of Saint Francis in Assisi, which started with a word of “thanks” to President Mattarella, “for representing and encouraging us to feel part of this beautiful country of ours.” This year, the Head of State was entrusted with lighting the lit the Votive Lamp of the Municipalities of Italy in front of the Saint's tomb, sign of special closeness to the Italian population that has been severely hit by the Covid pandemic over the past two years.

“Brothers All is the opposite of the pandemic”,

Zuppi said. Saint Francis, “meek and humble of heart like his Jesus - in a world that was and still is marred by wolves and by violent or fearful citizens, by towers and swords, by knights and brigands, by wars and hostilities, contaminated by so much hatred that speaking of peace is impossible - planned and started to create a fraternal, unarmed world, where there is room for everyone, starting with the poorest and most fragile,” said the president of the Italian Bishops' Conference: “We need light, which means hope. Our Patron Saint makes us feel at home - everyone feels at home in Assisi - and he helps us see difficulties through the powerful lenses of love.” **“In the storm of the pandemic we experienced unexpected and prolonged darkness”**, the Cardinal remarked, quoting Pope Francis' “memorable prayer” in St Peter's Square: “We were frightened and lost.” “We don't want to forget,” he appealed, “We don't want to forget, like when one overcomes pain by removing it or devouring it in the bulimia of emotions which never grow into feelings, awareness, choices, humanity:

everything is digital, and a digital heart is somewhat worrying,

because it fails to do what it was created for.” “Today, we collect the testament entrusted to us by those who are no longer here because of Covid”, the invitation: “Some of their names we shall place next to this lamp”.

“Lest this be yet another grave historical event we were unable to learn from”,

the hope: “On that terrible night - Zuppi said, recalling the experience of Covid, “we also saw many lights, all of them, whether consciously or not, reflections of a greater love. We understood that no one must be left alone and also that darkness can be defeated, even if only with a small lamp of humanity. Those were the lights that the medical staff, the nurses, the volunteers, lit with small but great gestures of humanity: consoling tears, shaking hands, offering security, even just a caress or a smile. I remember many of them, just like law enforcement officers, pharmacists, volunteers, charity workers, lost their lives in the line of duty, continuing to help during the emergency. They are among the righteous who listen to God's tender words of gratitude: I was sick and you visited me, share in the never-ending joy.” “Today we are in the dwelling of Saint Francis, Patron Saint of Italy, to remember, to give thanks, but also to decide because we don't want the lessons of history to be quickly forgotten”, assured the president of the Italian Bishops' Conference: “Heaven willing there might be no more 'others' in the end, but only a 'we'.” “Helping others makes us find ourselves!”, the

legacy of St Francis: "this is the sweet and gentle yoke that unites us to the One who first bound himself to us, Jesus: a bond of love that frees us from the yoke, the heavy and unbearable yoke of individualism. We can only overcome it together! The difficulties are by no means over. As we are tragically seeing in the world and in our country."

"We entrust Italy to the intercession of our Patron Saint,"

the central part of the homily. "May he sustain, in such a decisive moment, political love and of service to the common home, so that within the necessary diversity everyone may contribute to the national interest, indispensable to strengthen the institutions without which no plan can be realised and to face such great challenges," the first invocation:

"May our Patron Saint, a universal man, help Europe live up to the tradition that created it and may it help the whole world not to be resigned to war.

May he, the friend of all, help us defeat every rationale guided by speculation, whether small or large, anonymous or inhuman: speculation is always a form of profiteering that exacerbates injustice and causes widespread poverty, and it seems to me that there is no shortage of it." Brothers all, "starting with the most fragile, such as the elderly, a resource and not a burden, who must be protected at home where they cherish their roots and where they help us rediscover them": "Brothers all who look to the future, who wish it for others combating the precariousness of the young, offering them trust and security so they may prove their skills free of unbearable paternalism. A future that requires respect for the only home, for the environment, so that we may continue to sing the beauty of creation. **Let us heal the wounds hidden within the folds of the psyche - how many are caused by Covid!** - with professional competence but also by building communities and a sense of fraternity that offer security and make people feel protected and loved. Our community is strong, it has so much history and humanity, for it no one is a stranger and together we can create the future that everyone wants. We live the blessing that is always life, its beauty so that it may also be transmitted and bestowed with enthusiasm, guaranteeing the greatness of motherhood."

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