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## Floods in Emilia Romagna. Card. Zuppi: "Earmarked sums must be delivered immediately"

"I trust that the earmarked funds will reach destination immediately, irrespective of the appointment of a technical Commissioner." Card. **Matteo Zuppi**, archbishop of Bologna, president of the Italian Bishops' Conference, answered questions from journalists regarding the tragedy that rocked Italy's Emilia Romagna region. "The scale of this tragedy and the number of displaced persons are unprecedented", he said. "Working together in the best possible way, guided by common sense, is of the utmost importance," he said during the press conference closing the Assembly of Italian Bishops. Confronted with such large-scale challenges, any ideological interpretations or petty-mindedness must be tossed aside." The president of the Bishops' Conference outlined the activities of the bishops' Assembly that just ended, characterised - for the first time - by the presence of Pope Francis at the opening and closing sessions. As in his opening address, Cardinal Zuppi addressed the issue of the war in Ukraine, pointing out that the Holy Father's involvement, and the consequent hope for peace, is felt to "the point of tearfulness." With regard to the peace mission in Ukraine entrusted to him by Pope Francis, Cardinal Zuppi underlined - on the basis of the corresponding statement issued by the director of the Vatican Press Office, Matteo Bruni - that the project of the mission was "in agreement with the Secretariat of State, like many other formal and informal past missions." The overarching goal, the Cardinal confirmed, is to "help alleviate the tensions surrounding the conflict in Ukraine, in the hope - that the Holy Father has never renounced - that it may usher in paths of peace". This hope, the Cardinal said, "is felt to the point of tearfulness." Journalists asked many questions regarding the cases of abuse reported in Tivoli. The diocese's response, starting from the bishop's statements and of the person in charge of the protection of minors, the cardinal underlined, "has been to immediately accept responsibility, condemning and tackling the problem", Zuppi said.

"The Church of Tivoli and the Italian Church as a whole fully upholds respect for justice, but we cannot accept being accused of tacit complicity"

pointed out the president of the Italian Bishops' Conference. "This issue worries and pains us," Monsignor **Giuseppe Baturi**, archbishop of Cagliari and General Secretary of the Italian Bishops' Conference, confirmed. He remarked that

in the dioceses, as well as in associations, starting with Catholic Action, specific "practices, protocols and guidelines" on abuse are being put in place,

in accordance with those drafted at the national level: "most have been submitted to the Dicastery for the Laity." "Naturally, it is never enough to be vigilant, and even a single case of abuse is reason for firmer measures," the bishop added. With regard to mandatory reporting, Baturi remarked that in Italy "there is no legal obligation, but already in 2019 the bishops mentioned a **moral obligation**, which we comply with, and the need to collaborate with government authorities." However, he explained, "there are a number of constraints: the accusation must be verified as well-grounded, after prior investigation; the complaint must not meet with opposition from the child; there must be no imminent risk to the child's health". Following the first national Report on abuse, the General Secretary of the Italian Bishops' Conference recalled, the second Report will be released during the Extraordinary Assembly scheduled to take place in Assisi 13-16 November. The Report was drafted with the collaboration of qualified research bodies, such as the Innocenti Institute in Florence and the University of Bologna's Interdisciplinary Research Centre on Victimology and Security. During the press conference, along with the final communiqué, figures on **Eight Per Thousand taxpayer contributions** to the Catholic Church were released. These contributions, Msgr. Baturi announced,

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"recorded a 100 million Euro decline", which, however, will not affect the charitable activities of the Italian Church, that it will "compensate with other funds," "This year's figures relate to the year 2020, the year of the pandemic outbreak and the shutdown of industrial activities, with obvious repercussions on total income tax revenue." "If the total revenue decreases, so does the share of the Eight per Thousand tax contributions to the Catholic Church," the bishop pointed out. "The Catholic Church nevertheless remains the main recipient of these contributions. In fact, 71% of Italian taxpayers decided to devolve their tax deduction to the Catholic Church", he said. "The millions of Euros less that we receive, however, do not impact the allocation of charitable donations, as the Italian Bishops' Conference has decided to compensate these lost revenues with other resources. The Italian Bishops' Conference will allocate other funds for charity, so as not to impact the poorest brackets. So many acts of goodness are done with this measure: we will do all we can to avoid losing it." According to Baturi, the drop in Eight per Thousand contributions "further reflect a lack of participatory spirit in other areas of democratic life. This active participation deficit is a reason for concern for us." On the sidelines of the press conference, journalists asked the president of the Italian Bishops' Conference questions regarding surrogacy, especially the recent decision by the Constitutional Court to 'reject' this practice. "It is a very important decision," Zuppi commented: "It's a matter of common sense.

No human life can be purchased, ever."

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