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## Card. Zuppi: “Peace is the key to all problems.” Reforms call for a “constituent spirit”

(from Assisi) “Peace is at the heart of all problems.” The wars that are raging in the world, “with their tragic consequences of death, violence, destruction, barbarity and refugees, make us fear that a third world war fought piecemeal - as Pope Francis has been underlining for so many years - could eventually degenerate into a single war.” Cardinal **Matteo Zuppi**, Archbishop of Bologna and President of the Italian Bishops' Conference, opened the Extraordinary General Assembly in Assisi, ongoing until 16 November, with a reflection on the tragic global situation. “It's not a question of being pessimistic, it's a question of being realistic and responsible, which leads us to ask the world to stop going down the path of war,” the Cardinal appealed:

“May the world reject the idea that the only solution to conflicts is the use of weapons!

May political leaders reflect on the costs of so many conflicts, the poisoned legacy they are leaving to future generations, and opt for common and supranational instruments of conflict resolution instead.” “There is no peace without security, and security cannot be guaranteed by weapons alone,” Zuppi declared. He argued that “Peace is the remedy to all problems, because war is the source of all evil, spreading its poison of hatred and violence everywhere and reaching everyone, a pandemic of death that threatens the world.” **“The alternative to war is the recovery of good will and respect for the rights of others,”** the Cardinal said: “We must continue to believe that it is possible to reach an understanding! It is not naivety, it is responsibility”. He then turned to the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas: “All tears are equal. When a person is killed the whole world loses”.

“Hatred can never be a justification for violence against the innocent ones”,

the appeal of the Cardinal, who echoed the words of Pope Francis on Gaza: “May the hostages be released immediately and may humanitarian aid be guaranteed. Let no one give up the possibility of laying down their arms. Cease fire!” “We cannot allow the culture of war, that of hatred, ignorance, prejudice, to spread, fostered by the vacuum of thoughts, ideas, culture,” is the exhortation that accompanies the Italian Church's concern about “the resurgence of anti-Semitism”: “I want our Italian Jewish brothers and sisters to know that the Church is not only close to them, but that it considers any attack against them, including verbal attacks, as an attack against itself and as a blasphemous expression of hatred. We will not remain indifferent! The end of anti-Semitism is an educational, religious and civil duty of the Italian Church. The Italian Church does not underestimate the resurgence of hatred and racism, no matter by whom.” **The themes of the Assembly.** “The protection of minors remains one of our main concerns”, he assured, referring to one of the main themes of the Bishops' Assembly in Umbria: “The second report on the activities for the protection of children of vulnerable adults in the Italian dioceses, which will be published in the next few days, confirms the ongoing commitment of our Churches to consolidate a safer environment for minors through the formation of pastoral workers.” The first national meeting of local coordinators of these services will take place in Rome in the coming days, Zuppi announced. The meeting will end on Saturday 18 November with Holy Mass and prayer in St Peter's Basilica and with an audience with the Pope on the occasion of the Third National Day of Prayer for Victims and Survivors of Abuse. Regarding the rationale for seminaries, the other central theme of the bishops' meeting, the Cardinal challenged the idea of the priest as a “figure of the pas”: on the contrary, he said, “the figure and ministry of the priest are decisive in the Church today and in the Church of the future. The Christian community knows this and values its priests.” **Reforms and the country's priorities.** In his introductory remarks, the President of the Italian Episcopal Conference said that “in order to

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effectively carry out reforms that affect the delicate mechanisms of the democratic system”, it is necessary

create a "constituent" environment

that can fully involve the various actors, not only political ones, as is natural and as was the case at the beginning of the Constitution, but also cultural and social ones. “We are still far from achieving this, and I cannot but repeat the appeal that the Constitution should belong to everyone and be shared by everyone,” Zuppi recalled: “The Constitution also means legislating together. Italians must recover their attachment to the Republic, to the common home. If social bonds are weakening, they need to be strengthened, in order to regain a sense of belonging to a common destiny.” **“The Church in Italy is at the service of the people,”** said Zuppi, referring to the preparations for the upcoming 50th Social Week of Catholics in Italy, to be held in Trieste from 3 to 7 July 2024, with the theme: “At the heart of democracy.” The housing problem is one of the most pressing issues brought to the attention of politicians: “In tourist cities, people prefer to make money by turning apartments into B&Bs rather than renting them at affordable prices to families or non-resident students”, who are struggling with high mortgages and rents. On the issue of immigration, the Cardinal said that "what is needed is a conscious, responsible and truly united Europe that does not leave Italy alone to deal with this problem.”

“No government has ever seriously considered granting citizenship to people who grew up in Italy,”

he argued. The Cardinal made extensive reference to the issue of environmental protection, with COP28 on the horizon, which “could bring about a fundamental breakthrough”, also for Italy, with “environmental problems that pose a serious threat to several areas of our country.” He commented on another controversial issue, that is, “the crucial role of the Mediterranean, which has always been the cradle of civilisation, but today it risks becoming a crossroads of geopolitical interests and tensions.”

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